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Found

The morning after a sleepless night
of shattering wind and clattering rain,
expecting damage, I opened the blinds
to find a bird clinging onto the garden fence –
a falcon with its back to me, storm-flung,
wings hunched like frozen shoulders, resting now.

A few strides separated the bird from me,
a space that felt like holy ground.
Enthralled by its stillness, its quiet authority,
I felt the ache of a rootless traveller,
within sight of home but unsure if loving arms,
or comforting wings, would welcome me home.

So I kept my distance,
hiding from this visiting raptor.
But then, in three deft moves,
the bird turned round,
revealing the glow of its mustard-speckled breast,
presenting the sharp potential of its hooked beak,
reaching my heart through its piercing eyes,
for its astonishing gaze was that of Love.

I knew it to be a messenger,
in a form I could not resist.
An inescapable God embodied
in this falcon.
The divine hunter who had sought
and found me
now stood on my garden fence,
waiting for my penitent return.

Maggie Jackson



Reflection on 'Found'

I am no ornithologist, but I do love wild birds and have some affinity with them. So my encounter with this bird (which I believe was a Peregrine Falcon) quickly became a poem.

While I was writing I had in my mind echoes of 'The Windhover' (by Gerard Manley Hopkins) and the visceral 'Hawk Roosting' (by Ted Hughes), and also the very different 'creature' in Francis Thompson's 'The Hound of Heaven'.

Psalm 139 kept singing to me too:

*'Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend into heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there Your hand shall lead me,
And Your right hand shall hold me.'*

How reassuring, mysterious and deeply humbling it is to experience, in unexpected ways, the nearness, the omnipresence of the God of all creation, to realise that God will make me stop and wonder and look – and if necessary be disquieted and disarmed into knowing His love.

My falcon also led me to 'The Goldfinch' the iconic painting by Carel Fabritius (1654). There is much to be found in this little prisoner whose gaze fixes me. It makes me see Christ looking at me and demanding my response.

I am grateful for the following comments by Sr.Joyce Rupp:

'We never know when there might be an interior turning toward the One who dwells within us and among us.... at any time and any place we can be surprised and drawn into communion by the unanticipated sense of God's nearness. ... When we choose to pray we accept the invitation to come and see who this God of goodness is, and to come and see who we are as God's cherished one. ... My experience of prayer has eventually become not so much seeking for spiritual benefits as a rejoicing for the way God reveals love in my life and encourages me to grow.'

Maggie Jackson

The Goldfinch, Fabritius



Sponsored Bike Ride

Arrangements are falling into place for the sponsored bike ride for Tariro Hope For Youth in Zimbabwe, beginning at Ford End near Chelmsford on Ascension day (21st May) and ending on the following Sunday at St Barnabas' Tunbridge Wells. More background is given in the previous issue of the CR Quarterly Review (Epiphany – January 2020). Arthur Shearly Cripps grew up in Tunbridge Wells, was vicar of Ford End, and ended his life in Zimbabwe revered as a saint. This bike ride in memory of him aims to raise funds for the amazing work the Tariro charity does for young people in Zimbabwe.

The name 'Tariro' comes from the word for 'Hope' in Shona, one of the two main languages of Zimbabwe. It is a small grant-making charity based in the UK that raises money to support orphans or young people whose one parent can't look after them any more. It funds between 45 and 50 young people who need our help and support 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, as a parent would. Tariro gives these children and young people hope when they have had none, it gives them a reason to live, and helps them to thrive. It originates from work Fr Nicolas CR has done and still does in Zimbabwe, and the Community of the Resurrection is represented on the Trustees. At current levels it needs to raise something over £200,000 per year if all the young people it supports are to complete their education (up to postgraduate level). The trustees are proud of the fact that running costs represent on 1% of total expenditure. Learn more on <https://tarirouk.com>.

At St John the Evangelist Ford End there is at present no vicar, but nothing daunted, the churchwardens have promised a congregation of at least 25 people for the Ascension Day Eucharist, celebrated by Fr George, which will provide a splendid start to the bike ride. You can find out more about the church and Arthur Shearly Cripps on www.greatwalthamchurch.org.uk/?page_id=253.



So far five people have volunteered to join me for at least part of the journey – the next thing to work out is where I/we can spend the night of the 21st, 22nd and 23rd. The first stop needs to be somewhere between

Arthur Shearly Cripps shrine



Billericay and Tilbury, the 2nd in the region of Lullingstone, and the 3rd in Tunbridge Wells. We would appreciate prayers for fair weather, and if the route lies across your path, you might like to come out and give us a wave. The total distance is about 90 miles according to my unreliable calculations, 30 miles a day (unreliable, because on the last sponsored bike ride my calculation of 40 miles for the first day turned out to be 60).

Donations can be made online to <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Unexpected-holy-places>. Or if you prefer to send a cheque, download a gift-aid form from the Tariro website (given above). Many thanks to those who have already donated on the website – making a total of £218 at the time of going to print, plus another £120 given directly.

George Guiver CR



Lullingstone Roman Villa



Not far from Dartford and Orpington in Kent lie the remains of the Roman Villa of Lullingstone. As our sponsored cycle ride for Tariro takes us through that area, I could not resist the opportunity to include Lullingstone in the route. Here in the 1st century AD, at a time when the Evangelist St John could still have been around, a large Roman Villa was built, which included a pagan shrine. In the 4th century the upper floor of this building was converted into a Christian church. Excavations carried out in the 1950s and 60s brought to light some amazing artefacts, which can be seen on prominent display in the British Museum. One is a wall painting showing the chi-rho monogram of Christ (two others were also found), while another, at the west



end, shows an intriguing row of people at prayer. They are holding their hands up in what is called the Orans position, hands held aloft, as is still done by priests at the altar today. In those times everybody used that gesture when praying. Each seems to be wearing an alb and a cloak, while their cincture combines with a vertical band to make the form of a cross. Fragments of other figures were found at the east end. At least one of the figures (second from the right) is considered to be a woman. Who they represent is a mystery. What was the worship like in this chapel? How did they celebrate the Eucharist? How we would love to know!



There is one theory that I have, evidence for which comes from 60-odd miles to the north in Cambridgeshire. There, near the town of Caistor in 1975, a plough revealed some metal objects. They turned out to be the oldest Christian Eucharistic vessels to be found anywhere in the world – the Water Newton treasure. These date from about the same time as the chapel at Lullingstone, and are now also housed in the British Museum. What we have is a small chalice with 2 handles, a large dish, 3 bowls, 2 jugs, what seems to be a thurible for offering incense, and various other items often bearing the chi-rho monogram. In the first 1,000 years of Christian worship the Eucharistic chalice normally had 2 handles like this one, and the large dish is obviously a paten for bearing a pile of broken bread. More mysterious are the bowls – two of them bear inscriptions: “O Lord, relying on you, I honour your sacred altar” says one, and the other, “Innocentia and Viventia offered this”.

What would they do with these bowls? I suspect we get a clue about 3 centuries later. There is a very old description of the Roman Mass from about the year 700. It describes a mass in Eastertide as celebrated by the Pope in one of the local churches of Rome. On the altar there was one double-handled chalice, but attendants stood in the body of the church holding bowls. They contained wine which was not consecrated. At the time of Communion the Pope tipped a little of the consecrated wine from the chalice into each of these bowls, so consecrating



the wine in them by contact. These bowls were then used, together with a large dish of the broken bread, to distribute communion. How did people drink from the bowls? They used silver straws. Such silver straws have been excavated in many places. It sounds a strange way to us for receiving communion, but was once common. No such straws were found at Water Newton – they would be easy to lose, and anyway part of the treasure was destroyed beyond recognition by the plough.

Returning to Lullingstone, its priest or bishop would have celebrated the Eucharist on Sundays perhaps distributing communion in the way I have described. They would surely have administered baptism and other sacraments, and it would also be interesting to know what their daily prayers were like. By the time this chapel was functioning, the ancestor of the Daily Office was in use across the known world – daily services usually in the morning and evening, whose main content was the singing of Psalms. When on our bike ride we pass by the chapel at Lullingstone we shall be conscious of the marvellous kaleidoscope of the life of the gospel – ancient Romans praising the Lord and serving their neighbours, Arthur Shearly Cripps witnessing to the gospel with a holy life in Zimbabwe, the parish of Ford End hoping for a new priest, and the busy parish of St Barnabas’ in Tunbridge Wells, and all the rest of the outworking of the incarnation in which all of these things, far from being disparate, belong together in one single manifestation of God’s love entrusted to the hands of struggling humanity.

George Guiver CR

Our Bookshop

Continuing our series on the departments at Mirfield, we follow last issue's portrait of the libraries here with something about the bookshop. The bookshop has expanded in recent years and become a very successful enterprise. Church bookshops are thin on the ground nowadays, making it greatly appreciated in the area. As well as meeting this need, the bookshop has become a favourite haunt of visitors stuck for something else to do when the weather is bad, not least because of its very popular second-hand section. Our publishing arm, Mirfield Publications, has also increased its output in recent years, largely thanks to the efforts of our volunteers Bruce and Jan Carlin, backed up by the indomitable enthusiasms of Fr Antony CR. Bruce and Jan write:

Both of us had past connections with CR, and having retired to live quite near Mirfield we started worshipping at CR, first on Festivals that were not celebrated at our local church, then CR became our principal worshipping base. We asked if there was some way we could offer ourselves as volunteers. Fr. Antony (whom Bruce had known by then for over 40 years) suggested that Jan might help in the Shop, while Bruce initially worked in the Library, but later on publications.

Jan writes: As an avid reader from childhood, working in the CR Bookshop is akin to the experience of a child in a sweet shop. My role involves sourcing and ordering stock, which I mainly do from home, and assisting in any way I can. Recommendations of books are always welcome, and the Brethren, and visitors on retreat, have been very helpful in this regard. We try to stock a wide variety of books, hoping that even regular visitors will find something new. At the heart of the shop is Fr Antony,



who is in the office day by day fulfilling the orders from the online shop and dealing with queries that may arise. It is a joy and a privilege to work with him. Overall I can say, that the experience of working in the bookshop, and enjoying conversations with visitors from far and wide, has certainly enriched my life.

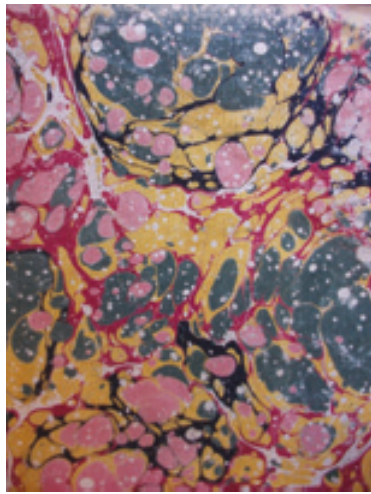
Bruce writes: At an early age an art teacher said I showed considerably more aptitude for technical design than for the subject he was trying to teach me, and I used this in my ministry to produce attractively laid out publications, from service books through notice sheets and the like. It was therefore perhaps no surprise that I should end up working for Mirfield Publications preparing their books and CDs for publication. Modern printing technology means that we no longer have to have thousands of copies of a book or CD printed to make the price competitive, and this has enabled us to go ahead with projects that once might never have been viable, and on preparing the latest Publications flyer I realised to my surprise that I have now produced nearly 20 books or CDs in the last 6 years. I hope that Brethren, along with the likes of artists & poets in residence, might continue their creativity so that there may be many more to come.

Jan & Bruce Carlin



Early Books in the Library Collections – First Impressions

Working as a volunteer with the library collections at the Community of the Resurrection has opened up a hitherto completely unknown world. While the three ‘c’s – counting, cleaning and cataloguing – loom large at present, the early books also have their catalogue entry checked and revised. This includes the interesting task of attempting to discover more about them and their creation, to add depth to the record.



Marbling, Octagon Chapel, 1826

Once a book is opened and the title page is revealed, it is something of a detective story to trace the history of the authors, and following this can also open a window onto a different world. For someone new to theological libraries there is much to discover, an endless source of fascination and pleasure. The unprepossessing exterior, battered by time and long usage, may open to reveal the most exquisite hand marbling, each version unique and to its own style. These interiors are a terrible distraction from the job in hand, a subject for investigation all in themselves.

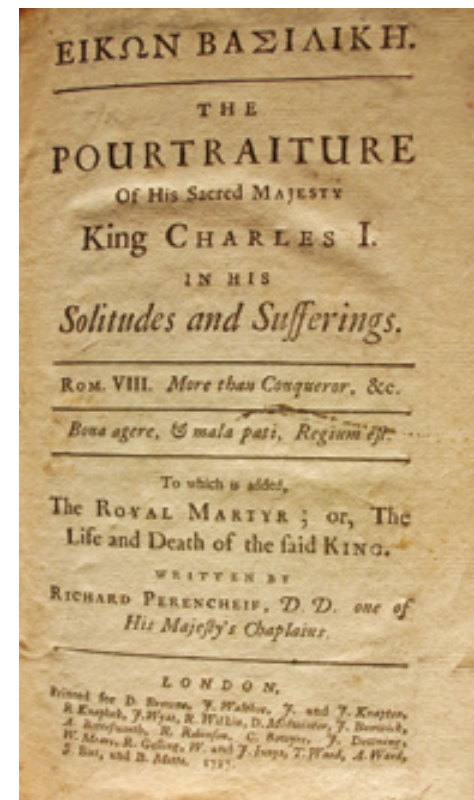
The evidence of past owners is an engaging sideline also, when compiling information about individual volumes. The library is home to many collections, given over the years, ranging from the well-known Wilberforce family to members of the monastic community and from Victorian bishops to the earlier occupants of Nashdom Abbey. As books come down from the shelves for dusting, it becomes almost routine to recognise the beautiful gilded bindings which formed part of the library for one Yorkshire bishop. Several of these had been given as gifts and, while not strictly speaking early books, their workmanship certainly earns them a place in memory.

One volume of *The Altar Services according to the Use of the United Church of England and Ireland* (1824) in a binding created for the Octagon Chapel in 1826, had been carefully revised to take account of a new monarch. Each reference, presumably to William, and previously George, had been carefully pasted over with a printed ‘Victoria’, varying with such styles as our ‘Lady Queen’. There are several Octagon Chapels recorded, but a possible site for the previous home of this volume may have been the Wisbech Chapel.

In the same vein of alteration, some unknown later contributor has carefully crossed out words of the liturgy in *The Book of Common Prayer and Psalter or Psalms of David* (1770) – this is a greatly abbreviated version of the extraordinarily long title – writing in a more acceptable version reflecting changed beliefs. A study in itself. The copy is extremely large, which apparently (courtesy of the volunteer team’s expertise) was a copy for the church clerk’s desk.

Perhaps one of the most poignant annotations appears in an inscription on *The Anatomie of the Service Book*, written about 1641. It appears to read, ‘But it is goode for me to houlde me faste by the Lord God and put my whole trust in the Lord God.’ Written in a distinctive hand, it gives a real feeling of being spoken to directly from the past. Whose religious fervour compelled them to mark their book in this way, with words that still have resonance today?

One of the first texts that appeared in the box of ‘work to be done’ was *A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England with Collects for each Solemnity* (Nelson, R., 1704). It needed a little investigative work at first, as the title page is missing, but the author’s preface carries his name and the date 1703.



Title page, *Eikon Basilike*

In its first printing, it represented a kind of Anglican compendium which became hugely popular and ran to more than thirty editions. What seemed particularly of interest was that this successful volume was created by a layman, Robert Nelson (1656-1715) and as such seems to have spoken to other gentlemen of the eighteenth century in a way that more erudite works perhaps did not.

Imagine reading a book which may have been written by Charles I. *Eikon Basilike*, *The Pourtraiture of his Sacred Majesty King Charles I in his Solitudes and Sufferings* (1727) has a rather obscure origin. This edition is a later one, but it first appeared in 1649 only days after the King was beheaded and was reprinted many times. Its portrayal of the King made it a popular book of the Restoration period. John Gauden, the Bishop of Worcester, claimed authorship, but

if this claim is true then much appears to have been taken from King Charles' own writings, which contemporary sources witnessed. The print at the beginning of the book shows Charles as a martyr for the faith.

Benedictus (Baruch) de Spinoza (1631-1677), growing up in a Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam, was excommunicated for unknown heresies as a young man, presumably linked to the very thoughts and opinions that were to appear later in his *Ethics* (1677), published posthumously. What drove such a man, who turned down offers of academic positions to continue work as an optical lens grinder, possibly in order to have the freedom to write? His book on ethics, not available in English until the late-nineteenth century, was translated and written out by hand by an unknown translator, a huge task. It seems as if the author could no longer wait for an English printed copy to become available, and it is this hand-written, privately bound copy that the library has in its early collection. So far, despite its similarities to known translations of a later period, this work's translator is unknown.

Perhaps unsurprisingly to the people involved in religious life there are many different editions of *The Book of Common Prayer*, and these appear regularly in the early books 'to do' box. In trying to track down a little more information on some of the people who produced these early prayer books, *The Bibliography of the Book of Common Prayer, 1549-1999* (Griffiths, D., 2002) shows just how many printers were prepared to provide their own versions. Further research also really gave emphasis to the important role of religion in the establishment of printers and publishers who made their early fortunes from ecclesiastical literature. The Cambridge University Press began its life printing bibles.

One of the great downsides of the library catalogue research task is the knowledge that there is insufficient time to research each story to its conclusion. It is great fun to dip a toe in the water, though, and begin to find out a little more about the great theological works and writers of their day.

Rosemary Preece



Fold out detail from Eikon Basilike

Railway reflections – England and South Africa

Many readers of the CR Quarterly will know that for several years we have offered a Railway Retreat Weekend here at Mirfield, something that arose out of some lateral thinking on the part of Fr. Aidan CR and myself. We are both non-working members of the nearby Keighley and Worth Railway, and the Railway weekends have always included a visit to this fine Heritage Railway which revived the 5 mile long Worth Valley branch line shortly after it was axed in the 1960s. The locomotives, carriage stock and railway stations all reflect railway history and locomotion from the Victorian and Edwardian eras, right through to the epoch of 1950's British Rail.



No.s 80008 & 75078 heading out of Keighley (Courtesy of Keithley & Worth Valley Railway)

Now I am not a rail buff in the sense of knowing, or wanting to know, all the technical details of different locomotives and carriages, signalling, loco numbers etc. What interests me is the general atmosphere and ambience of a traditional railway, with all the sights, sounds, smells, movements of a good old-fashioned train journey, to say nothing of the interesting people you meet on the way. And if there is a good meal to be had on the way, so much the better. Having said that, there is little that in my opinion can beat a journey behind a steam locomotive doing its thing in style, with your head stuck well out of the window, relishing the sensory overload that such a precarious position affords! (Don't try this at

home.) This can be something of a religious experience for me, but sadly such experiences are no longer possible on our sealed-up modern trains.



The Blue Train departing Cape Town

and gave such a smooth ride that you were hardly aware you were moving at all. In subsequent years I must have taken the much more ordinary Trans Karoo train between Jo'burg and the Cape at least a dozen times, an overnight journey of about 26 hours. With air streaming in through the open windows to quell the fierce heat, the sturdy sounds of the locomotive, and the never-ending movements and clankings of the carriage, you really knew you were on a train! I recall that well into the 1980's, the train was often steam-hauled in the middle section of the journey across the Karoo semi-desert, and that the journey was at least an hour longer than it is now, before a tremendous tunnel was dug through the Cape mountains to shorten the route. With more than a thousand miles to cover, the good old Trans Karoo was invariably running late, and I recall one journey that arrived in Cape Town some 12 hours behind schedule. In more recent years the Trans Karoo has been rebranded and is now called the "Shosholoz" after the famous song sung by men working in the gold mines.

My experience of interesting and memorable train journeys began early as a boy in South Africa, with a trip on the legendary Blue Train from Johannesburg to Cape Town; but to be honest, as a ten year old I would really have preferred the ordinary Trans Karoo train, as the Blue Train was air-conditioned with sealed windows



Br Philip and the Trans Karoo, 1992.

What did you do on such a long journey? Well, if you were travelling alone, you might share a compartment with several others of the same sex, and apart from reading or conversation, there was always the landscape and scenery to enjoy as the train wound its way down from the Highveld, through the vast expanse of the Great Karoo, and eventually through the Hex River Valley and the spectacular mountains of the Western Cape, and so to the sea. For those easily bored, or who tired of this endless parade of glorious landscape, there was



Entering the Hex River Valley, 2003



Through the mountains of the Western Cape

always the 24-hour bar service, which some made good use of, with the result that conditions could get quite deplorable as the journey progressed!

Among my fondest memories of my earlier journeys on the Trans Karoo are those of battling along the long hot corridors to the air-conditioned dining car for a silver service Dinner which usually began with green pea soup, and ended with the steward offering biscuits and cheese and a small coffee. In between these courses might perhaps come a helping of Karoo lamb and vegetables, with a glass or two of good Cape red wine and an interesting dessert course to follow. Meals enjoyed on a train journey always have something special about them, probably something to do with the ever-changing landscape that glides past the window. What a pity we have given up our dining cars in this country! But the strangest and most memorable experience of all was the sensation of undressing in the moving compartment and climbing into the bunk which the steward had carefully made up with bedding for the night. Settling back, relaxing and



Dining Car, Trans Karoo Express, 1970's



Dining Car, Blue Train

relishing the sounds and smells, and above all the ceaseless movement of the carriage as the train thundered through the night sounding its siren at regular intervals. Truly not far from a mystical experience.

An unexpected pleasure on a more recent trip was to discover the compartment next door to be occupied by two much-loved South Africans - Archbishop Desmond and Leah Tutu! That was indeed a wonderful surprise, as was their invitation to join them in a simple Eucharist in their compartment, with the rocky and arid Karoo desert forming a vivid backdrop to the sacred mysteries. A real memory to treasure.

Journeys are important, it has been said - as important as the destination you eventually arrive at. I agree heartily! So do enjoy your own journeys of whatever kind, and take the opportunity they give to relish the present moment, to be open to meeting others who are also on the way, and to give thanks to God for the wonders of human ingenuity that enable us to arrive safely and happily at our journey's end.

Philip CR

Humphrey Whistler CR 1905-1980: Request for Memories



I am writing a biography of Humphrey Whistler CR and would be most grateful for any memories or other information relating to Humphrey that readers of this review might be able to share. My email address is: andrewwakehamdawson@yahoo.com

Born in East Anglia to a clergy family, Humphrey Whistler attended Gresham's School (1919-1924) and went up to Jesus College, Cambridge (1924-1927) to read history. After teaching at Trinity College, Kandy in what was then Ceylon (1927-1930) he trained for ordination at Westcott House (1930-32). Ordained in 1932, he served as curate in Kenilworth before joining the Coventry Cathedral Staff as domestic chaplain to Bishop Mervyn Haig (1936-39). In the 1939-45 war he was chaplain to the North Somerset Yeomanry in Palestine and Syria, and then ministered to the Green Howards in the Western Desert, where he was 'taken by Rommel'. He spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner of war in Italy and Germany (including Stalag Luft III) and he took part in the Long March.

Humphrey was admitted to the Community of the Resurrection as novice in 1948, after serving as a priest at St Augustine's, Tonge Moor (1945-48). He professed as a brother of the Community in 1951. Teaching and preaching took him around the world including to Codrington College in Barbados, Guyana, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Fiji and New Zealand. He experienced several transformations in his churchmanship from his middle of the road rural Church of England childhood, through Anglo-Catholicism to Pentecostalism. He considered becoming a Roman Catholic at one stage. Humphrey has variously been described as a challenging presence and prophetic soul (with characteristic lack of balanced judgement, tact and common sense) and as a saint (and saints are notoriously difficult to live with!). He was a passionate, faithful and gifted servant of Christ with a heart full of compassion for any in need: a charismatic soul who inspired and nurtured the vocations and spiritual journeys of many people. He died while on a visit to Lee Abbey in 1980.

Humphrey lived a life 'containing much adventure and much suffering', and his witness to the Gospel was spread widely. Many thanks to the people who have already provided helpful leads and anecdotes. I am making this final trawl for information as a manuscript is now beginning to take shape. The image shows Humphrey after an early morning service with B Squadron, North Somerset Yeomanry on patrol near the Sea of Galilee in 1940; his bed is behind him.

Andrew Wakeham-Dawson

Annunciation

Whether it be by internet, books, Christmas cards or visiting a gallery, there are plenty of pictures available to us which portray the angel Gabriel's appearance to Mary, bringing her the amazing news of a very special birth. Familiar to us as 'The Annunciation', it is a scene which naturally attracted the attention of devotional art. Here is just one example, a fresco painted by Fra Angelico for the Dominican Priory of San Marco, Florence. Located at the top of the stairway to the monks' dormitory it wasn't so much for public display, more a piece to prompt prayerful reflection. Incidentally 'Fra Angelico' simply means 'brother Angelico' for he was a monk, living the Religious Life. He did not paint for fame, but for devotion and is said at times to have wept as he painted.

There is a general, imaginative, approach to portrayals of the Annunciation which I would like to dwell on shortly in Part 2, but before doing so we may ponder some features of this picture in particular in Part 1.

Part 1 - An Annunciation by Fra Angelico

Despite the startling message which we know Gabriel is bringing, (and those amazing rainbow wings!) Gabriel and Mary bow toward each other calmly, showing kind acceptance and respect with a confiding look as they incline toward one another in meeting. Through familiarity, perhaps their haloes do not surprise us much but they speak volumes about their shared priorities. In this moment their mutual understanding is silent, there is no apparent speech; a practical point, for times of silence are a key ingredient of the Religious Life. Note that both figures have their arms crossed, not only in their heartfelt sincerity but maybe also hinting at the sign of the Cross.

Surely the placement of Gabriel is most suggestive, see how the slender pillars around him form a triangular pattern around the ground on which he stands. A triangle is a natural sign for God as eternal Trinity, hence Gabriel's movement toward Mary from this pattern graphically underlines his role as the messenger sent by God. Whilst the haloes are clear, in our age we easily miss a remarkable honour given to Mary: she is not standing to receive a visitor, without a trace of censure she is permitted to receive a herald whilst remaining seated; this is a high status privilege. That adds to the impact of Gabriel's knee which we see bending toward her with its striking suggestion that heaven might bow to earth! For Heaven has asked a favour, God will not seize Mary regardless, like some demi-god would from Classical legend. It is for her to say 'yes' before God's plan moves forwards. Mary's 'yes' to God breathes through her expression, bearing and posture.



Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*

Note Mary's clothing of heavenly blue, a constant feature of so many portrayals of her. What might her red head-band indicate though? Perhaps the idea of a coronet, with the red to suggest motherhood, for it is from Mary that the promised Child will take His flesh and blood. It could be a mark which confirms her as a person of flesh and blood like us, contrasting with Gabriel the heavenly visitor.

There is a very important piece of symbolism to the left of the picture, where we find an enclosed garden. See the verdant lawn with flowers upon it, the concealing fence which runs continuously to veil it from outsiders, a privacy amplified by the screen of trees. This enclosed garden indicates Mary's virginity and purity, it speaks of dedicated fruitfulness and it takes up images from the Old Testament book The Song of Songs, for example.

To aid our understanding, it is helpful to recall something about Mary in the Bible, how she is regarded as a contemplative, prayerful person. Twice St Luke's Gospel says of her during Jesus' early life how she kept things concerning Him in her heart and pondered them. Further, after Jesus' resurrection, the book of Acts includes her among those who with one accord devoted themselves to prayer. Not only was she His mother, she was also a prototype believer. See Luke 2:19, 2:51b, Acts 1:14. We see this as we turn again to the picture. Seated she may be, but Mary is not given a throne; there is no luxury or opulence. With her flowing garments we could miss that; she is seated on a plain wooden stool. Moreover, despite the fine structure portrayed here, we realise that it is not decked out with any particular furnishings at all. Beyond Mary there is a doorway into a sparse chamber with a small window. Some people would have recognised it immediately; those in the religious community would see that it is remarkably like one of their own cells or rooms, one of the places where, spiritually speaking, Christ is formed in them. By including this chamber here, Mary is flagged up as a person of prayer; someone to emulate, she has been chosen not least because she is hungry for God. Christ is physically formed in Mary, and is spiritually formed in each believer as we mature in His discipleship, not least by prayer.

St Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians [4:19] "My little ones, I am in birth pains until Christ be formed in you!" Looking at this picture we too can imagine going into that simple chamber, as a vantage point from which any contemplative observer could imagine beholding this scene, praying for Christ to be formed in us, and for us to be formed in Him, pondering these things in our hearts too.

Part 2 - Would you like a Coat of Arms?

Now, what about the imaginative approach to Annunciation pictures in general which I referred to earlier? It all starts from a very simple question which occurred to me years ago while looking at pictures of the Annunciation. In this regard the picture we've just looked at is typical; here and in many more from

Medieval/Renaissance times, a pattern keeps on recurring. Given that there are only two main characters, it's striking how time and again the basic compositions are alike: the angel Gabriel keeps on appearing to the viewer's left and Mary the mother of our Lord on the right. Why, just why, should this be so? There's the odd exception but a very clear preference.

One factor could be that in our culture we read from left to right and this influences our instinctive presentation and processing of the information before us. Upon doing some searching this seems to be the favoured 'one line explanation' and I have come across it more than once as the alleged answer. However it somehow doesn't satisfy or fully convince; to an extent you could take the point if it applied to pictures where written words actually appear but many Annunciation pictures have no words however, and those centuries were largely pre-literary times for so many people. In any case you could visualise the scene, and therefore portray it, either way round: you could say Gabriel visits Mary and present them left-to-right in that order or you could equally say Mary is visited by Gabriel and reverse the picture. Therefore this doesn't seem to explain the matter fully.

You could imagine a craftsman following a trusted model when a patron requested an Annunciation picture, assuming that 'this is the way they like it' and then copying accordingly, but the pattern is too prevalent across Western Europe to be explained by this alone too.

Is it somehow to do with humanity's traditional general bias for right-handedness in which the right hand side is the prestigious one? Note that our word 'sinister' derives from Latin for the left hand side! It's a widespread bias; the Old Testament languages of Hebrew and Aramaic were written from right to left, unlike ours, yet even that culture displays the same honorific preference for the right hand side. Look no further than Psalm 110 'The Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand....' among others. In more specifically Christian terms the sheep are on the right in Matthew 25:33 for example, whilst the Creeds refer to the right hand side of the Father. Pictorially, the favoured right side appears to the left as we look. Incidentally this seems to explain another compositional choice concerning Mary: portrayals of the crucifixion typically show her to Christ's honorific right hand side because she is the most revered saint whilst John the beloved disciple is placed on the other side. So this seems a very relevant point when viewing pictures.

I'd like to draw attention to another factor though. In addition to the above, could there be another, visual, language at work to influence pictorial representation a few centuries ago? That was a world where the visual code of heraldry was a concise announcement of the illustrious person bearing a particular coat of arms. Such a device might include symbols portraying the various strands of one's ancestry and the arrangement of these followed the conventions of heraldry.

Now, as it happens, a picture of the Annunciation is by its nature also a simple

way to show Jesus' immediate ancestry, for His parentage is shown there; God His Father represented by the messenger Gabriel and Mary as His mother.

In heraldry a major division runs vertically down the middle of a coat of arms. As we look at it the side to the left is called the 'Dexter' side and the side to the right is called the 'Sinister' side. Those terms are simply the Latin for 'right' and 'left', that's all. We may be tempted to think that the terms 'Dexter' (right) and 'Sinister' (left), are the wrong way around. Not so however, and here's a vital point: the orientation is given from the point of view of the person *behind* the coat of arms, not the viewer.

Broadly, the greatest honour is given to the 'Dexter' side; whilst lesser, albeit still honourable, regard is given to the 'Sinister' side. To a lesser extent there is also something of a tendency for the male line to be shown on the 'Dexter' side and the female line on the 'Sinister' side. The formulation of this 'picture language' may perhaps also be influenced by preferences for left-right reading and also by bias for right-handedness as outlined above, but as a picture language in its own right heraldry seems to offer a more convincing and immediate explanation of why the composition of Annunciation pictures should be so arranged.

When seen in terms of heraldry Gabriel appears as if on the Dexter side representing Jesus' Divine, and therefore most honourable line of descent; whilst Mary His mother appears as if on the Sinister side representing Jesus' still very special human descent. Now, remembering that a coat of arms is oriented from the point of view of the person bearing them, if we add this heraldic layer of interpretation in looking at a picture, we realise that we should be particularly aware of the person behind it, namely the living presence of Christ Himself. So for example look at Fra Angelico's picture now and try imagining that today Christ is showing His coat of arms to you. He is of course a very different sort of knight and among other things He has a very different sort of dragon, or serpent, as His enemy to fight!

Take another step: imagine that the living Christ behind the picture is also presenting you with His coat of arms today to be your coat of arms too, awarded to each of us as someone called to be a member of His family, God's family. We may not feel very noble, brave or knight-like, though recall how St Paul writes that we should put on the armour of light (Romans 13:12) or how Ephesians 6:13 exhorts us to put on the whole armour of God. That includes the shield of faith (6:16), a very suitable item on which we can show the coat of arms He has given us, our true colours as disciples!

Finally, accepting the Annunciation as a coat of arms showing our membership of God's family in Christ also means that when we look at it, the characters it shows remind us that whilst on the one hand our descent may be human, on the other our destiny is Divine.

Neil Rundle

Religious life in the Western Cape

Last May Fr Oswin and Fr Rob Parker McGee made a visit to South Africa's Western Cape in response to a generous donor's wish to foster religious life in that area. In February I made another visit accompanied by a fellow Zimbabwean, Sr Blessing Moyo from the Benedictine Monastery of the Holy Spirit. It was a fascinating visit for us.



Wild flowers in Namaqualand

The day after stepping off the plane we set off in a minibus to visit the Northern part of the Diocese of Saldanha Bay. With us was the Bishop Raphael Hess and our oblate Fr Michael Bester. That first day we drove 700 kilometers from Cape Town up to Port Nolloth near the Namibian border. (The Bishop walked it on pilgrimage during Lent a few years ago!). I had never been up there before and it was fascinating country: semi-desert, vast, rocky, dry, hot and beautiful once you had adjusted to such scenery. Actually, although the interior is hot (38 degrees when we were there) the coast is washed by the cold Benguela Current and can be 10 or 15 degrees colder. The communities are small, often poor and almost entirely Afrikaans speaking. They are also very hospitable and we ate and drank more than our fill throughout that week! What contribution CR could make to the life of these Anglican communities is not yet clear. In a quiet way we could support the clergy who tend to be young and isolated with some structure like the Companions. The Bishop would like us to explore that.

Back in Cape Town we had a meeting with local clergy to talk about religious life and then Michael and I, leaving Sr Blessing in the tender care of the Bishop's wife, went to stay a night with the OHC brothers who have recently moved from Grahamstown to Volmoed, a Christian retreat centre near Hermanus. The three brothers are living a contemplative life of prayer. Clearly if any vocations to religious life emerge as a result of our visits that should be their first port of call.

Another possibility that emerged would be work of an Ignatian sort to foster prayer within the parishes of the Cape. We made some very good contacts with Jesuits and an impressive laywoman who works alongside them. We discovered too that the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape, formerly high and dry Calvinists, are working very hard to reinvent themselves after apartheid, taking spirituality seriously and are developing retreats in a new retreat centre near Wellington. In this they work with Roman Catholics on Ignatian prayer. This is ecumenism indeed when one remembers that in the past the *Roomse gevaar* (danger of Rome) to the DRC was almost as extreme as the *Swart gevaar* (danger of blacks)!

The week finished with a Quiet Day for our Cape Town Companions in a beautiful retreat centre in Constantia. On the next day I preached and celebrated at St Stephen's Pinelands, where Brother Philip comes from while Sr Blessing enjoyed a much longer and louder celebration at a Xhosa speaking church where, as a Zulu speaker, she was quite at home.

From Cape Town Sr Blessing and I moved on to Johannesburg to attend a conference of Benedictines. Three of us Anglicans were generously welcomed by our RC brothers and sisters and greatly enjoyed the contact. An 86-year-old Ampleforth monk, Fr Mark Butlin, gave an excellent talk on the Papal exhortation *Gaudete et Exultate* which inspired me to want to read it, and Fr Robert Igo from Zimbabwe gave a superb talk on the Theology of the Body drawing strongly on Pope John Paul II. This is something all talk of monastic formation should take serious account of. Roman Catholic religious do have amazing theological resources for living monastic life when they choose to use them.

It would be foolish to comment much on the political or economic state of South Africa. I was impressed at how, in the Church, racial barriers seem to have disappeared and people of different races work well together. There is, however, much disillusionment and even despair at the failure of the Rainbow Nation to achieve its dream. Corruption is very bad, and under Zuma took place on a breathtaking scale. Despite a good independent judiciary little has been achieved in bringing perpetrators to justice. Until some of that happens no one will believe the ANC Government can do anything serious about reform. The new South Africa remains as sinful (in different ways) as the old. That should not surprise anyone with a sound knowledge of the fundamental sinfulness of human nature demonstrated over the ages even within the Church. Clearly the Church is needed in South Africa to confront the evil and show the loving mercy of God. What role CR can play in that remains to be seen. However, going there is good for us as it broadens our horizons away from insular little Britain and moves our hearts to see the faithful and heroic work done in tough situations. As always Africa has more to teach us than we have to teach them.

Nicolas Stebbing CR

Companions

New Member: Susan Bedford

RIP: John Wilmer

Fr John's Latest Run

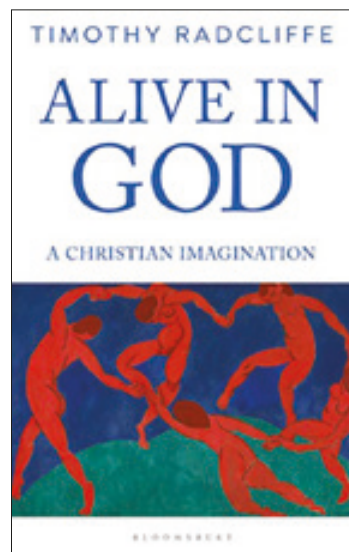
I ran in the British Masters Athletics Grand Prix at the EIS Stadium in Sheffield on 8th February. I came first in my age group: 60 metres in 12.30 seconds, and 60 metres in 12.03 seconds, 200 metres in 43.44 seconds, and 1600 metres in 7minutes 43seconds. The times were good but there was no opposition.

John CR



Book Reviews

Alive in God: A Christian Imagination. *Timothy Radcliffe OP.*
Bloomsbury. 2019. £12.99. ISBN: 978-1-4729-7020-6



This is a superb book and I can't possibly give it a proper review; there is too much in it. Fr Timothy's basic thesis is that we in this modern age are trapped in all kinds of straightjackets and we need to escape. The only means of escape is the imagination. Imagination is not fantasy; it is a different way of seeing the world, one that is not confined in boxes of so-called facts (see Mr Gradgrind of *Hard Times*) but sees dimensions of human existence outside these artificial walls. "Stone walls do not a prison make/ nor iron bars a cage."

Politicians, economists and society in general try to cage us in. Even the Church does it when it falls in with the assumptions of our society. Only the rich are powerful; only those in power have authority. As we move down the ladder of wealth we become less and less important. We categorise people. Anything that categorises people dehumanises them. That is what racism does. That is what language like "asylum seekers", "refugees", "benefit scroungers", "the unemployed", "the poor", "sex offenders" tends to do. These are all real people like you and me with the same hopes, fears, griefs and joys. See them as people. Treat them as people because that is what God does.

Nothing in human life is alien to God; therefore Fr Radcliffe uses every possible way of breaking open our imagination. Apart from his very considerable (but lightly worn) knowledge of theology and his vast experience of human life travelling round the world as Master of the Dominicans, he seems to have read every good novel published in the last fifty years and seen every film; and remembered them! The book is filled with quotations from poems, speeches, incidents from fiction and real life (a false distinction, I suspect!).

He is particularly good on issues of poverty, climate crisis and the technocratic domination of our world. Yet, like Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*, he is full of hope. God is here and he is a God of hope. We can work with God and defeat these problems. We must not be intimidated by the scale of the problems, or the seeming power of those who create them. Satan's

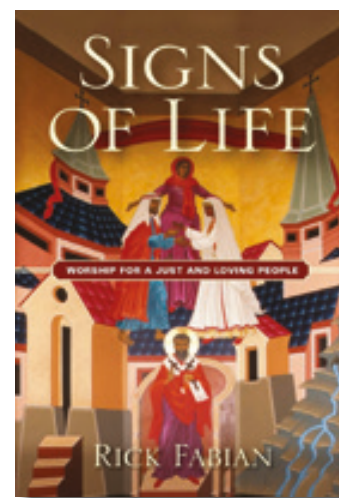
power is never as great as he makes us believe. A small teenage Swedish girl has confronted governments and power blocs on climate change, and discountenanced them. We can do the same. We just need to start. Imagine a different world. Imagine a different way of relating to people around you. Imagine relating to God as Jesus did. Just imagine, and you can start, and you will be surprised how possible it becomes.

The motto of the Dominicans is "Veritas" – "Truth" and Fr Timothy speaks deep truth, the truth that is of God. Reading him, though, I often think his motto should be "laetitia" – "joy" or "libertas" – "freedom". His writing on poverty, climate change, human growth or any of the vast range of subjects he touches on is never depressing or gloomy. He shows that when you seek truth you find God and God is never dull or boring. He is full of life.

A word of warning: read slowly, thoughtfully, a few pages at a time. Fr Timothy is deceptively easy to read, but he is saying very important things and his many quotations and examples are rich in possibilities and could be learned by heart. And at £12.99 for 400pp it is excellent value for money!

Nicolas Stebbing CR

Signs of Life. *Rick Fabian*
Church Pub Inc. ISBN: 978-1640652187



I have always regarded the role of the priest to be a conduit of the sacraments: a means through which God's grace may be known to all within a community, acting not so much as its guardian, or its gatekeeper, but rather as John Francis-Friendship described in his excellent reflection on priesthood "one who holds open the door to the mysteries of God." (John Francis-Friendship (2018) *Enfolded in Christ: The Inner Life of the Priest* Canterbury Press.) This has been manifested in my own parish through a dangerously open approach to the sacramental life: children receive the Eucharist if they desire him alongside their parents, or weekly in school as part of the Nursery Rhyme Mass: a eucharist set to fondly loved rhymes which has borne much missional fruit in this parish. Here adults and children are welcome to the altar whether baptised or not. In my experience, baptism is often initiated as a direct result of Eucharistic inclusion.

Unfortunately, this radically inclusive approach is likely to cause disquiet amongst some; particularly in reference to the history of the Church and the Scriptures which arise from that. To this end, Rick Fabian has sought to bring his concrete experiences of radical inclusion from the Church of S. Gregory Nyssa in San Francisco to provide an inspiration to reinforce the conviction that many of us hold: that the Sacraments are the tools of mission and at the heart of the life of our worshipping communities.

Signs of Life is not so much a narrative of S. Gregory's as a set of preaching and teaching resources, a conscientiously Scriptural and Patristic exploration of the sacramental life and the way that this has influenced the experimental liturgies lived out in San Francisco. Fabian provides new insight which often subverts traditionally received norms and draws from a wide range of references and traditions, including Daoist and Confucianist thought to augment the Orthodoxy-inspired spirituality of his worshipping community. This approach challenges the traditional Anglo-catholic focus on the sacrificial death of Christ and focuses upon his incarnation and life: an "immanent eschatology" which not only inspires life-giving ritual but underpins a call to social action and embedded ministry with the poor of the City, more fully documented in Sara Miles' inspirational *Take this Bread*. (Sara Miles (2008) *Take this Bread: A Radical Conversion* Ballantine Books).

This is not a liturgical resource: there is only a single appendix with a handful of the Church's distinctive chants at the back, but instead explores a variety of sacramental signs of God's loving action within a Church community, including not only the Eucharistic table and the Baptism of the world, but also love, family, reconciliation and aesthetic beauty. These signs are appreciated historically and liturgically and often given an interpretation which challenges many Anglican-influenced assumptions.

Some of the photographs used are delightful, not just of the worship at S. Gregory Nyssa but of the ikons and the community. Unfortunately, the Black and White rendition does not do them true justice and the dancing Desmond Tutu or the whirling circle dances would have been so much better had the budget permitted colour.

The influence of CR percolates through these pages: the scholarship of Benedict CR and chant of the Upper Church are both explicitly referred to in the text; and I was impressed by the seamless way that the way the community seeks to worship is a natural spring feeding the way the community seeks to serve the wider world. From prayer, chant and dance comes food pantries and a radically inclusive mission to a liturgically impoverished world.

From Fabian's work I have found a renewed thread of scholarship to help explain my priestly convictions about sacramental mission: a resource which

enables me to defend a radical approach to inclusion. He believes, as I do, that "Churches have good reason to make the Eucharist our formal Christian incorporation rite" and that all of life and community is imbued with sacramental signs of God's action in the world. The sacraments are not a passive repository of Godliness, but a living action through which God is made manifest. Priesthood is one of the means through which that action flows into the world and Fabian shows how the liturgy opens the door to these holy mysteries.

Simon Rundell



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

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