

Promoting A New Synthesis Of Faith And Reason

INTERVIEW: BISHOP MARK DAVIES

Editorial: Faith and the Future Act of Entrustment of England to Our Lady Our Lady of the Oak The Dream of the Rood FAITH Movement winter session, reports CROSSWORD Holloway on ... Jesus: The Self-Conscious Manifestation of God – Part II

Book Reviews:

Philip Miller on a faith-science failure to acknowledge evolution Joanna Bogle on George Weigel and converting the 21st century Pravin Thevathasan on whether it matters if religion is true David Baldwin on Our Lady of Walsingham



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Image: The second se

Faith and the future

Over to Mary

THE DECISION BY THE Bishops of England and Wales to renew the dedication of the country to Mary – following the original dedication by Richard II in the 14th century – taps into an important spiritual reserve. The Scottish Bishops similarly dedicated Scotland to Our Lady at the shrine of Carfin in 2017. And without ignoring that great nation, with its own heritage and noble story, we need to explore this English thing for a moment.

Running a bit low?

We use the word "reserve" in the sense that a reservoir holds water, or a good cellar a reserve of wine and food. A nation can have a reserve of spiritual strength, perhaps running a bit low – water can do that in a dry spell too – but still

available for use. There is, among Catholics in Britain, a reserve *a rich heritage kept* of faith, a recognition of a rich heritage kept with great courage with great courage by martyrs and cherished down generations, that exists in a

sort of collective family album. It is multi-racial, is not associated with nationalism and is not political. It does not seek to be *integriste* or to indulge in notions of a Church/State alliance that is associated with unhelpful examples abroad and a folk memory of bitter Reformation conflict at home. It is not even particularly nostalgic. It is more like a family album - perhaps one of those new on-line sort – muddled, but recognisable, with pages yet to be filled and new sections opened.

Bafflement

This spiritual reserve was opened up - and was also replenished by - the successful State Visit of Pope Benedict XVI in 2010, exactly a decade ago this year. There was goodwill and a cheerful neighbourly mood which - to the bafflement of the mass media in general and the BBC in particular – brought crowds into the streets to cheer the Pope and coachload after coachload to the Mass at Cofton Park for the beatification of John Henry Newman.

Newman – yes, he is an important part of this heritage. A very English saint in so many ways: Oxford, of course, and London up to a point, but more importantly also unfashionable Birmingham, and railway journeys, and humour, and a strong sense of justice. And, as a Catholic, being misunderstood, and regarded as marginal to national life until reality dawned and the public came to grasp the bigger picture. And attractive in an ecumenical spirit: we were touched by the moving message of HRH the Prince of Wales at Newman's canonisation, revealing as it did a real knowledge of the saint, and a love of his beautiful poems and hymns.

Who we are

A first point to grasp about the Catholic community of England and Wales is what a mix we are. By far the biggest annual pilgrimage to Walsingham is that of the Tamils. Another large group is Caribbean. Many of our parishes, and our priests - notably in South London, for example – are African. There are large numbers of Filipinos among us. There are substantial numbers of Indian people, many from Kerala. There are a good many Poles – they have their own churches and parish structure dating from the years following WWII, but are present in plenty of other parishes too.

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Saints

Newman is our newest saint, and he joins those whose names have become more and more familiar to Catholics in Britain since the canonisation of the Forty English and Welsh Martyrs by Paul VI in 1970. Here, too, there was a reclaiming of truth. How pleasing it is to note that many of our newer Catholic schools and colleges are named in their honour: St Edmund Campion, St John Payne, St Richard Reynolds, St Philip Howard, and the others are now familiar to Catholics and non-Catholics alike in the 21st century.

And more

We are not particularly tribal. Catholic events tend to have ecumenical guests, and there is a general and genial feeling that a common Christian witness is important and should be presented whenever feasible. We are uninterested in old polemics: there are new issues to tackle.

We are uncomfortably realistic about the state of the Church (revelations of sexual sins etc) and about falling Mass attendance and a shortage of clergy.

We know our Catholic schools are popular and successful, but also that many (most?) of the children and staff involved are not regular Massgoers.

We quite like sharing gloomy statistics and announcing solutions that reflect our varied personal opinions and loyalties.

Heritage

And now the Bishops of England and Wales unite us all again with all of this heritage: this March they will dedicate the country to Mary.

Who will be interested? Walsingham sees large Rosary processions each summer, notably with the New Dawn gathering and with Youth 2000. Thanks in part to St John Paul and the revival of the Rosary during his pontificate, Marian devotion is definitely a part of Catholic life in Britain in 2020 and cherished by many: anyone born since the 1990s grew

up with the "new" Luminous Mysteries and with a knowledge of vast pilgrimages to Lourdes and Fatima. Travelling to Lourdes a part of Catholic life to help with the disabled pilgrims is almost a rite of passage for many young Catholics, and even if the chief memories are

in Britain in 2020

social rather than spiritual, indelible images remain of massive candlelit processions, affirmations of faith, solidarity with the suffering, the hugeness of a worldwide Church

That said, it seems unlikely that there will be massive crowds at the re-dedication events this March. This won't be a rerun of a Papal visit. Nor will it be a media event, or one that impinges in any dramatic way on the national consciousness. But we can and should expect some spiritual fruits.

Mary

As we dedicate England and Wales to Mary we might think of things that we could ask of her. Hymns to Mary traditionally beg her, plead with her, for help, reminding her that she is a mother who cares for her children, and who intercedes for them. So FAITH magazine offers some suggestions for our readers to use in their prayers.

 We might first of all beg for courage –particularly for our bishops, tasked with leading us and directing us. And let's be specific: courage to tackle instructions from official Government bodies obliging schools to adopt "relationships a mother who cares education" forcing children to listen to false and crude for her children statements on sexual matters. We might ask for a clear and united statement from our Bishops announcing that Catholic

schools will use only material that strictly conforms to Catholic teaching both in style and in detail, centred on the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

- It's March season of spring and the traditional time for some house-cleaning and tidying up, work generally supervised by mothers. Might our household bureaucracy benefit from this? Some months back, the Catholic Education Service made a terrible mess of itself by adopting wholesale chunks of verbiage from a militant homosexual lobby group. We are overdue for a major tidy-out there.
- And let us beg for more and more men to respond generously a time for to the call to the priesthood, for more religious sisters, for more renewal and hope Catholic teachers. And those requests should come with a sense of discomfort: in today's culture making a firm commitment is not easy, and the call can guite easily be brushed aside as irritating.
- But not all prayers have to be announced publicly, and perhaps from the depths the most important will be those added from the depths of our of our hearts hearts on matters of the heart. Mary as mother is particularly open to pleas for personal help - for Catholics seeking good spouses, for the lonely and the forgotten, for the many broken families...

Solemn

With this prayer-list ready, let us approach this solemn re-dedication of England with open hearts. Walsingham is a popular place of pilgrimage, and is central to our selfunderstanding as Catholics in our country. The destruction of the shrine under Henry VIII and its revival at the end of the 19th century is echoed in the whole story of Catholicism

in Britain. And it's a death-and-resurrection story which is rooted in the centrality of what we understand as Christians. That is why we dare to ask for a revival of the Faith in our land. That is why what we understand re-dedicating England to Mary is not some exercise in goodwill or a feel-good thing for people who like Marian hymns. As so

the centrality of as Christians

often happens in the life of the Church, something offered with faith, hope and love will perhaps after some testing and some challenges and difficulties - be fruitful and achieve more than we can imagine.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee....



A C TO FE N T R U S T M E N TO FE N G L A N DT OO U RL A D Y

Based on Prayer of Erasmus 1532, Dedication of England to the Mother of God 1893, Prayer for England, Cardinal Griffin's Act of Consecration 1948, Act of Consecration St John Paul 1982



Prayer

O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England thy "Dowry" and upon us all who greatly hope and trust in thee.

Response

We your faithful people assembled here offer you this country in which we live. Once it was yours, all its children were your children and you were honoured throughout England as its Protectress and its Queen. Again do we consecrate it as your Dowry, and entrust it to your maternal care.

Prayer

By thee it was that Jesus our Saviour and our hope was given unto the world; and He has given thee to us that we might hope still more.

Response

To you we entrust the Church, which invokes you as Mother. On earth you preceded her in the pilgrimage of faith. Comfort her in her difficulties and trials. Make her always the sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race. To you, Mother of the human family, and of the nations, we confidently entrust the whole of humanity with its hopes and fears. Let it not lack the light of true wisdom. Guide it to seek freedom and justice for all. Direct its steps in the ways of peace. Enable all to meet Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Prayer

Plead for us thy children, whom thou didst receive and accept at the foot of the Cross, O sorrowful Mother.

Response

Pray, O Holy Mother of God, for the conversion of heart of the people of England, restoration of the sick, consolation for the troubled, repentance of sinners, peace to the departed. Queen of Peace, pray for us and give to the world the peace for which all peoples are longing, peace in the truth, justice and charity of Christ. Give peace to the nations and to the souls of all, that in peace, the Kingdom of God may prevail.

Prayer

Intercede for our separated brethren, that with us in the one true fold they may be united to the supreme Shepherd, the Vicar of thy Son.

Response

May your prayers bring back this country to the fullness of its ancient faith. May your intercession lead us to a closer union with your divine Son. We offer you all the people of this land, especially those who know you so little or not at all. May all in our country know Christ, the light of the world and its only Saviour.

Prayer

Pray for us all, dear Mother, that by faith fruitful in good works we may all deserve to see and praise God, together with thee, in our heavenly home.

Response

May we who follow your Son, be fruitful in the good work of building a culture of life in our world, where all human life is treasured and the gift of God's creation is respected and cared for, so that all may share the fruits of Gods generous love.

V: Pray for us O Holy Mother of God R: <u>That we may be made worthy</u> of the Promises of Christ.

Tuesday 3rd March Mother of the Church Sr Andrea Fraile

Tuesday 17th March **Devotion to Mary** Fr Richard Marsden

> Evenings for young Catholic adults 19:00, 24 Golden Square, London, W1F 9J followed by Q&A, cheese & wine, @FaithMov

Mary

My Journey to Our Lady of the Oak, Islington

Fiona Campbell Hicks tells the story of a campaign to revive Islington's ancient pilgrimage site

Driving in Islington one day I was suddenly overcome by a very vivid imaginative experience of the Virgin Mary's garden. It was an enclosed garden; centred around a large tree, completely filled with flowers and nature and suffused with sunlight, peace and happiness. Suddenly aware that I needed to concentrate on the road, I looked up and saw a van in front of me with the words, 'Signature Gardens – design it, build it, maintain it!' The song 'They paved paradise, put up a parking lot' ran through my mind.

Shrine

As an Islington resident, I had long wondered whether there might be a shrine somewhere here. I had recently developed a fascination with the lost medieval art of England that was destroyed after 1532. In order to understand Medieval English art, I looked at the Virgin Mary in a garden in stained glass. I started to piece together the hundred or so examples of Mary in stained glass that survive around the country and discovered that this was an important theme: Our Lady was almost always depicted in some the vast tradition of form of garden or *hortus conclusus* in English art. The English were

Mary gardens passionate about the Virgin Mary before the Reformation. If you

look at these examples of stained glass you can indeed gain an idea of what our Medieval artistic heritage was; vivid, sweet, opulent and utterly beautiful.

The garden aspect intrigued me. I did some googling and stumbled across the vast tradition of Mary gardens. Further research revealed that 'Mary gardens' were a major feature of English spirituality before the Reformation and since then the movement has been enthusiastically adopted across the world. There are around 600 plants with Marian associations, lilies, roses and marigolds being prime examples.

A Mary Garden?

It seemed only natural to begin a Mary garden at that point. We have a derelict, knotweed filled garden at the back of our property. It's hardly a promising

site; my neighbours smoke marijuana out of the window, giving a derelict, knotweed it a strong stench, whilst an enormous bay tree takes all the light. I started gardening in pots and despite the extreme shade, the

filled garden

plants did well. The garden became a refuge and inspiration for my spiritual life. Various 'Mary plants' self-seeded, including an oak sapling, even though there is no parent oak tree within a guarter of a mile.



Islington's Forgotten Holy Site: Our Lady of the Oak

Life in Islington can be stressful. It is the densest borough in the UK in terms of population, and yet has the least green space. There are some powerful gangs who intimidate the locals and suck young people into their clutches. A retired policeman warned me that my neighbour opposite was a violent gang leader who had gouged the eye out of a man in a pub. Shrines pop up all over Islington as tributes to innocent and not so innocent victims of gangs.

Islington also boasts some very affluent and influential people – the so called 'liberal metropolitan elite'. They are generally affable but an alarming number of these will boast about how they are on drinking terms with local gang

leaders, as if this was somehow a good thing. The borough is also full of artists, writers, thespians and politicians (not least Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn). In a way, the conversion of

Islington would have a knock-on effect throughout the whole of English culture.

The history

On a walk around Islington someone alerted me to the existence of an ancient shrine to 'Our Lady of the Oak, Islington,' that is now commemorated

at Walsingham. I did some research, and sure enough, for 408 one of the first eight vears Islington was a significant pilgrimage site. The archivists at shrines in England Walsingham believe that it was one of the first eight shrines in

England, founded in 1130 AD. The University of the Third Age point out that a church was founded in honour of the Virgin Mary in 628AD, so the shrine may in fact go back even further. Suddenly the self-seeded oak tree in my Mary garden, just a block to the north west of the ancient shrine, took on more significance. Even today the interior of St Mary's, now an open evangelical church, is largely clad in guess what? Oak.

Henry VIII

An original proclamation of Henry VIII;

"A proclamation yt no pson interrupt the king's game of partridge or pheasaunt. Rex majori et viccomitibus London. \vobis mandamus, etc. forasmuch as the King's most royal matie is much desirous to have the games of hare, partridge, pheasaunt, and heron pserved in and about his honor at his palace of Westm, for his own disporte and pastime; That is to say from his said palace of westm. to St Gyles in the Fields, and from thence to Islington to Or Ladye of the Oke, to Highgate. etc."

I have not been able to find any explanation of the Oak tree's significance. Did someone have a vision of the Virgin Mary in an oak tree? Certainly google reveals a plethora of instances where the Virgin Mary is associated with the oak, most significantly at Fatima where she appeared in a holm oak. But if there was an apparition in Islington I have found no record of it yet.

Reformation:

Most historians now agree that the Reformation was supported by an extremist minority. In 1532 most people would have been more or less contented with their Catholic faith. As

a result of this extremist minority, 95% of English artistic heritage was destroyed. The shrine of 'Our Lady of Islington' was famously artistic heritage was burnt in 1538 at Chelsea. It is mentioned in several documents which suggests that it was an important and prominent shrine.

95% of English destroved

Hopefully we have now moved on from such extreme positions and are ready to bring back our holy places and traditions.

"Latimer, Bishop of Worcester, in his oft quoted letter to Cromwell, Lord Privy Seal, named in particular five of the more celebrated English statues of Our Lady; Worcester, Walsingham, Islington, Ipswich and Doncaster; and that of Pen Rhys in Wales... the statues were taken to Chelsea, where... they were burned, together with many others whose titles remain for the most part unrecorded. " (Shrines of Our Lady in England and Wales - M Gillett and others, 1957)

Symbolism of Oak trees:

A shrine would have been an important landmark and a 'safe space' for Medieval English people, where they could travel safely. Practising their faith there would have been a

very ordinary and comforting matter, and they would have visited the shrine as often as they went to market. Major shrines often had many stories of miracles granted. It's important to remember that they are aids to faith, rather than talismanic magical places.

Oak trees have great significance for England especially. They were holy trees for the druids. They were also important landmarks. They represent endurance, constancy and faithfulness. Some legends have it that the cross was made partly of oak, which perhaps explains why they are struck by lightning more than any other tree. The Virgin Mary has appeared in an oak tree many times across.

'Hortus conclusus'; or enclosed gardens dedicated to Mary were important to Medieval Christians. From about the thirteenth century onwards the Virgin

Mary is often depicted in a 'hortus conclusus' or enclosed garden. St Bernard of Clairvaux wrote that the Virgin Mary is the lover in the Song of Solomon, 'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up.' In a way, a hortus conclusus is the ultimate 'safe space'. This tradition was embraced heartily by the English and on the eve of the Reformation Mary gardens were fairly common in England. This tradition of Mary gardens ties in rather well with the idea of "Our Lady of the Oak".





powerful gangs who

intimidate the locals

The New Shrine at St Mary's:

At first I thought a discreet shrine on a quiet side street might work rather well. But in prayer I was rather dismayed to learn that Our Lady appeared to be saying that she wanted to be commemorated with an enclosed garden of flourishing, unclipped box and flowers, right outside St Mary's, on Upper Street, in the heart of Islington! However, the most important shrine to Our Lady of Islington is ultimately a



spiritual state; a sacred place of sanity in our hearts. The physical wayside shrine provides a plumbline, a beacon of hope in our crazy, chaotic world.

Parish

When I spoke to my parish priest, Monsignore Seamus O'Boyle, he suggested that the shrine be a traffic island, like the ancient site of Tyburn at Marble Arch. Upon closer inspection of St Mary's I realised that it is in a natural piazza, at the top of a gentle hill. It has a rather special atmosphere and beautiful quality of light. A line of plane trees have been planted along the road with no regard for the positioning of the beautiful classical Church and a bus stop dumped right in front. Lorries thunder through this major artery out of London. Someone has put up a large amount of parking that is barely used. You might say that someone has literally paved paradise and put up a parking lot!

Vision

My vision is for there to be an enclosed mandorla garden in honour of 'Our Lady of the Oak, Islington,' right in the centre between Islington Square and St Mary's. It could even be in the shape of a mandorla, as the Virgin Mary was often depicted in a mandorla as a symbol of her femininity. It will commemorate this extraordinary aspect of Islington's history and bring us back to better ways. It will call for the ecological conversion that Pope Francis has called for.

I believe the parking and buses could be shifted relatively easily to give this area the piazza feel that it originally had without undue disruption to traffic flow.

devotion to Our Lady of Islington in our hearts

To me, it seems important that this shrine be re-established physically. It offers a sacred space amidst what can be a very threatening urban environment. But most important is the devotion to Our Lady of Islington in our hearts, which will enable us to hold to goodness and prevail against evil.

The Campaign

Monsignore Seamus O'Boyle at St John's Church on Duncan Terrace in Islington has given his full support to the campaign for an ecumenical shrine to the Virgin. A small group of Catholic friends in Islington is gradually forming around 'Our Lady of the Oak, Islington.' We meet on Marian feast days to eat, share our faith, pray and witness in Islington.

The Anglicans at St Mary's Church are so far cautiously supportive. They had never heard of the tradition of Mary gardens and are now thinking of establishing a Mary garden within their parkland. The developers of the large development of Islington Square just opposite the Church have also expressed interest in supporting the initiative.

The people of Islington clearly love shrines. By commemorating criminals and ignoring our heritage, what kind of message are we sending our children? My goal is to have a beautiful shrine to the Virgin Mary visible from Upper street that lifts people's spirits as they drive by. We need this shrine reinstated. Please pray for the shrine, and for Islington. I am hoping to relocate the oak sapling to St Mary's, as a symbol of Islington's spiritual life. At the moment it has leaf mould, perhaps because of Islington's pollution. There is much work to do before Islington can once more be a place of holy healing!

Our Lady of the Oak of Islington Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father

Praise you that Your Love is steadfast and constant And that your Son, Jesus, defeated death by dying on a tree, Grant us streams of living water roots deeply planted in Your Love Help us to stand firm as the oak in all seasons A faithful symbol of your Love and your Truth And an enclosed garden of innocence Grant that we may revive the holy shrine to Our Lady of the Oak, Islington In our hearts, in Islington and in the world And lead us to life everlasting Amen

Holy Mary of the Oak of Islington Mother of God and of the Church The new Eden; a sacred enclosed garden of love, peace and holiness Pray for us Drive out all evil from our lives Bring us alive to love In our hearts and minds In Islington And in the world Amen

If you want to be involved, you can email OurLadyoftheOakN1@gmail.com or follow @hortus_ conclusus2018 on instagram or @OurLadyoftheOakIslington on Facebook

WELCOME to Joseph Ryan

FAITH magazine welcomes Joseph Ryan, newly appointed to run the subscriptions and financial administration of the magazine.

A distinguished retired chartered accountant, who began work with Coopers & Lybrand (now PricewaterhouseCoopers - PWC) in the 1970s. Joe has links with the Faith Movement going back to the 1970s when he ran the financial aspect of the magazine with Ursula Nash in charge of subscriptions. Both were parishioners at St Elphege's church in Wallington, where Joe remains an active member of the parish, and



Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist taking Communion to the sick and elderly.

Joe married Jeannette in 1976 and they have five children now married with families of their own: four grandchildren and three more will arrive during 2020.

The subscriptions department of the magazine can be reached at: FAITH magazine, 58 Buckingham Way, Wallington, Surrey SM6 9LT or via our website www.faith.org.uk

And grateful thanks to Sister Andrea!

FAITH magazine takes the opportunity to thank Sister Andrea and Sister Roseanne of the Sisters of the Gospel of Life who have run the subscriptions to the magazine for a great many years. We are glad to extend this gratitude to include their magnificent work with women and babies in Glasgow, which has not only saved the lives of many children threatened with abortion, but has offered practical help, friendship, and support to families over years. Their work continues to expand, along with their involvement with the Faith Movement including the Summer and Winter sessions. They can be contacted at www.gospeloflifesisterswordpress.com



For RE teachers, years 7-11:

Take part in this simple competition project, with no complicated lesson-planning, which has been run for over 30 years with schools across Britain

CASH PRIZES are awarded to schools producing entries of an exceptional standard, plus individual book prizes for the pupils. A large number of runner-up prizes are also awarded.

The main prizewinners are invited to London for a prizewinning ceremony which includes a TOUR OF PARLIAMENT and TEA at Westminster.

1st prize: £500 for the school • 2nd prize £250 for the school 3rd prize £100 for the school • 4th prize £50 for the school

Children are invited to submit essays reflecting on an incident in the life of Christ, based on their reading of the stories in one of the Gospels.

For full details contact schoolsbibleproject@gmailcom

A large attendance, a time of friendship and celebration



The 2019/2020 Faith Movement Winter Session, held at Stonyhurst College, Lancashire, brought a good crowd. The talks explored the theme "Be ambitious for the higher goods" (1 Cor:12)

- 1. Virtue: "Your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees" (Mt 5:20) (Fr Dylan James)
- 2. Faith: "Faith come through hearing" (Rom 10:17) (Sr Andrea Fraile)
- 3. Hope: "Put your trust in nothing but the grace that will be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:13) (Fr Ross Campbell)
- 4. Love: "... the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13) (Sr Anna Christi Solis OP)

Fr Dylan was able to condense a year's worth of seminary lectures into a thorough and powerful 45-minute exposé of Virtue. Sr Andrea spoke lyrically on the 'not so gooey virtue of Faith' and the nature of receiving this virtue.' Fr Ross' talk on Hope the steadfastness of Christ was an excellent prelude to the reconciliation service which is always time of great grace. To finish the conference Sr Anna Christi Solis OP from the Nashville Dominican community in Scotland spoke beautifully on the virtue of Love to provide a fitting end to a wonderful series of talks. .

The talks are available on the Faith social media feeds. More information: www.faith.org.uk Faith Community News and see next.

Faith Movement winter session

The 2020 Winter Session was my first experience of a Faith event and I found it both spiritually uplifting and an enjoyable chance to meet new friends. The series of four talks on the theological virtues were highly informative and engaging and I felt were at a good level for me to grasp. One of the key take-home points for me was thinking about receptivity to God's love and trying to enter into what He offers rather than striving with our own efforts. There was a really good balance of talks, liturgy and free time, and it was wonderful to be in such a beautiful setting at Stonyhurst. I was glad to have come with some people I already knew but there was lots of time to get to know others, especially over meals, which I appreciated and in particular I enjoyed getting to know some of the priests from my archdiocese who I didn't know well. The liturgical celebrations were all lovely - I was really impressed especially by how the music was pulled together from scratch – and I felt it was a highly appropriate way to continue the Christmas season amongst joyful fellow Catholics (this concluded with an impromptu carol concert with the Dominican sisters on the bus back to Edinburgh!). I have been intending to come to Faith for a few years and really enjoyed myself so I'll definitely come again in the future.

RL Edinburgh University



For Good Friday, 2020

From The Dream of the Rood

The earliest Christian poem in English

The Rood (cross of Christ) speaks:

"It was long past – I still remember it – that I was cut down at the copse's end, moved from my root. Strong enemies there took me, told me to hold aloft their criminals, made me a spectacle. Men carried me upon their shoulders, set me on a hill, a host of enemies there fastened me.

"And then I saw the Lord of all mankind hasten with eager zeal that he might mount upon me. I durst not against God's word bend down or break, when I saw tremble all the surface of the earth. Although I might have struck down all the foes, yet stood I fast.

"Then the young hero (who was God almighty) got ready, resolute and strong in heart. He climbed onto the lofty gallows-tree, bold in the sight of many watching men, when he intended to redeem mankind. I trembled as the warrior embraced me. But still I dared not bend down to the earth, fall to the ground, upright I had to stand.

"A rood I was raised up; and I held high the noble King, the Lord of Heaven above. I dared not stoop. They pierced me with dark nails; the scars can still be clearly seen on me,

"The open wounds of malice. Yet might I not harm them. They reviled us both together. I was made wet all over with the blood which poured out from his side, after he had sent forth his spirit. And I underwent full many a dire experience on that hill. I saw the God of hosts stretched grimly out. Darkness covered the ruler's corpse with clouds his shining beauty; shadows passed across, black in the darkness. All creation wept, bewailed the King's death; Christ was on the cross....

"Now you may understand, dear warrior, that I have suffered deeds of wicked men and grievous sorrows. Now the time has come that far and wide on earth men honour me, and all this great and glorious creation, and to this beacon offers prayers. On me the Son of God once suffered; therefore now I tower mighty underneath the heavens, and I may heal all those in awe of me. Once I became the cruellest of tortures, most hateful to all nations, till the time I opened the right way of life for men."

Anglo-Saxon, 8th century, trans. Richard Hammer (1970)

Interview

A response to a call – and a look ahead

Joanna Bogle talks to Bishop Mark Davies, Bishop of Shrewsbury

AITH magazine was delighted to be able to interview Bishop Mark as the Faith Winter session drew to its close. A graduate of Durham Bishop Mark University, trained for the priesthood at Ushaw and was ordained a priest at Stockport in 1984. He served in parishes in, among other places, Swinton, Blackley and Wigan before his consecration a bishop in 2010.

You have been a warm supporter of the FAITH movement for many years. Can you tell us a bit about that?



I remember signing up to attend my first FAITH summer session as a Sixth Former back in the 1970's. I have been delighted to see in subsequent years how new generations have found the same encouragement in their Catholic faith as I found myself as a teenager. I saw in the FAITH movement a positive approach to the orthodox Catholic faith fully in harmony with the Second Vatican Council and intellectually unafraid of the challenges of modernity. FAITH remains ready to address those challenges and provide for young

Catholics solid teaching on which they can firmly base their lives and be part of the New Evangelisation. Then as now, it is a youthful movement where all of the great Christian vocations have flourished. Such spiritual fruitfulness is a clear sign of the authenticity of the approach pioneered during the past forty or fifty years. In the Faith Summer Sessions I first attended, I

a youthful movement where all of the great Christian vocations have flourished

will always remember the spirit of prayer and the sense of community among young Catholics which I am happy to say endures to this day. One of the happy developments in the FAITH movement has been the growing number of priests, some twenty of whom concelebrated Mass with me at the recent Faith Winter Session.

Priesthood

A man's response to a call to the priesthood is, obviously, in a sense a very personal story. But a Bishop also wants to inspire others. Tell us something about how and why you came to understand that God was calling you to be a priest.

Yes, the story of every vocation is a deeply personal one. The Lord calls a man to the priesthood at a specific moment in his life. I was 12 years of age when my Parish Priest quite unexpectedly asked me to consider this calling. It was the first time I had ever thought that I might be called to be a priest and that moment would set the course of my life. Looking back, so much helped me understand and respond to my calling, not least the faithfulness of my family and parish life. My vocational story now seems very conventional compared with the heroic paths along which men respond to this same calling today. In establishing a House of Discernment which is happily flourishing at Shrewsbury Cathedral, I was conscious of offering to new generations the same supports I knew in authentic Catholic faith, the life of prayer and devotion especially to the Blessed Sacrament and the simple atmosphere of Christian family life. These gifts helped me to first respond to my vocation almost half a century ago are now helping men in our discernment house take that same step today.

Catholic schools

A big problem for the Church in Britain is that most pupils at our Catholic secondary schools are not attending Mass with any regularity. What can be done about this?

It is terrible to contemplate the situation you describe precisely amongst those young who have been entrusted to our schools. It is a situation we can never be resigned to. The explanation seems to me very simple: many in our schools at every level do not

recognise the reality of the Holy Eucharist. They have been failed either by catechesis or by the witness of family and community, in most cases by a combination of both. I remember before the celebration of a whole school Mass hearing a senior teacher tell the students he knew the next hour was going to be incredibly boring for them, yet they were still expected to behave! The most

the witness of teachers and sometimes students themselves

wonderful thing which ever happens on earth was within their reach and the assumption was that the miracle of love which is the Eucharist would be devoid of any interest to the young.

My own experience suggests, it is the witness of teachers and sometimes students themselves which can have the greatest effect in helping young people re-discover the wonder of the Mass and that sense of Eucharistic amazement which Saint John Paul II prayed that we would share. It is, of course, a re-discovery found in the new ecclesial movements to which the young are drawn today.

Mary's Dowry

Do you think that the March re-dedication of England to Our Lady is of significance, or will it pass unnoticed by most people?

I think this is a truly inspired initiative to re-entrust England to the Mother of God at this hour in our history. It was my first action as Bishop to so entrust the Shrewsbury Diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a dedication which was the promise of many graces. The unique aspect of this national re-dedication is seeking to engage the greatest number of Catholics by the simplicity of the prayer and preparation proposed. It is not something the Hierarchy alone undertakes; it is a prayer to be embraced by the faithful in every part of the country. To a large extent it will be unseen and unnoticed by the mass of the population. However, I see this act as a deeply significant event in the spiritual order and one we must seek to encourage as many Catholics across England to share in. It will surely be a decisive step in the New Evangelisation of our land by so asking Our Lady to re-claim her dowry.

Recent years have seen the emergence of notable new Catholic media apostolates, including the phenomenon of EWTN, Bishop Robert Barron's "Word on Fire", and now Shalom TV. Will these be helpful in the New Evangelisation, or are they preaching to the converted?

The new media apostolates offer a window for a countless number to glimpse the truth and beauty of our Catholic faith. The days of public speaking on street corners may have passed yet here we see an apostolate reaching potentially into every home. It is an expression of the New Evangelisation in the newness of its

a prayer to be embraced by the faithful

methods and the ardour of its witness to the faith. However, these same apostolates also serve to build-up "the converted" in their faith which is also an essential pre-condition for the New Evangelisation. I notice the apologetic element common to these apostolates and how much we have need of such apologetics harnessing all the influence of the new media.

Culture

The everyday culture in modern Britain, especially as it relates to sexual relationships, marriage (now at an all-time low) and care of the elderly, is somewhat out of chime with Christian belief and practice. Can we hold out, and help to promote a new way ahead?

I don't think it is a matter merely of holding out against a cultural tsunami which is presently sweeping away the foundations of British society so long based on the sanctity of marriage and family and the value of human life itself. All that is being lost will inevitably lead future generations damaged by the breakdown of family and the value of marriage facing old age as a barely tolerated burden to society to a sober reassessment. I am sure this will lead to a major re-evaluation of the value of marriage and the precious value of human life. I

think it is vital Christians at this moment in time leave a clear and unambiguous witness to those generations who will follow us. The Youth Catechism observes that the ancient world was first converted by the witness of faithful families who formed "islands of living faith" in the midst of an unbelieving world. This is surely how the re-Christianisation of our own society will also come about and we must all be part of this.

A threat to freedom?

Is the move towards increasing imposition of political correctness a threat to the freedom of the Church? For example, in our understanding of human anthropology, the significance of differences between male and female?

We are certainly seeing growing intolerance in British society which does pose a threat to the freedom of the Church to teach and pass on the faith. Christians can feel increasingly constrained from expressing their faith by forms of political

correctness. I am told of teachers now fearful of proposing marriage as the union of man and woman. This would have been wholly unthinkable only a few years ago. Pope Francis and Pope Benedict before him, have warned of these insidious developments in western societies.

In the assault upon Christian anthropology we can never compromise the truth about the human person. In the efforts to make us conform to passing ideologies and to employ

their language the space for Christian witness may be reduced. However, we must never lose sight of the highest charity in caring for the truest good of every person and recognising their dignity given by their Creator. The ideologies which have emerged in the

the truest good of every person

vacuum left by Christianity may be with us for some time. However, we must be confident that the truth will ultimately win through.

And, finally: your thoughts on the 2019 canonisation of John Henry Newman. What is Newman teaching us today? Is his canonisation a sign of hope?

It was a great joy to be present at the Canonisation of Saint John Henry Newman. Seeing his portrait hanging as a banner from Saint Peter's Basilica, it struck me there is always a providential moment when the Church raises a new saint in the sight of the whole Church and indeed the whole world. The beginning of 21st Century was to be this moment for our own Cardinal Newman. The efforts made by the Prince of Wales in

travelling to Rome on the eve of the State Opening of Parliament and a great sign the equally strenuous efforts of the British Ambassador to the Holy See,

of hope

seem significant. Sanctity has such a powerful attraction which reminds

us how our own striving for holiness is central to the New Evangelisation, especially amid the scandals of recent history.

Every Saint is such a great sign of hope which everyone can recognise. Cardinal Newman leaves us a special legacy of teaching for these times of ours not least on the true nature of conscience; what constitutes the authentic development of Christian doctrine; and how relativism has become an insidious adversary for the Church. Above all, England's newest Saint invites us amid the very infidelity of the times he foresaw to share his unwavering faith and confidence in the final victory of Christ and His Church.

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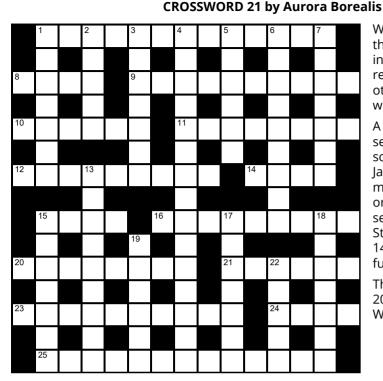
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Joanna Bogle is editor of Faith magazine.



Across

- 1. Spiritual being assigned to protect and guide (8,5)
- 8. One error, back to front, produces a kind of decree (4)
- 9. The study of evil spirits (10)
- 10. Say no? Rubbish! (6)
- 11. Party people make contribution (8)
- 12. Event which took place forty days after Easter (9)
- 14. Gathering of bees, mostly rather hot (4)
- 15. Systemic examination conceals tiny creatures (4)
- 16. Entire part good for you (9)
- 20. Get to know a hundred charming (8)
- 21. If one is on these, then things are down at heel (6)
- 23. Landlord has even altered date at first, at the top of the page (10)

24. Tantum (Benediction hymn) (4)

25. Then she's cut or mangled tree (5,8)

Down

- 1. Hear these creatures can keep off the mud (7)
- 2. So long a day one starts to expect updates (5)
- 3. Daughter with overdraft takes pearls for ride (7)
- 4. Battle ready and biting the bullet? (5,2,3,5)
- 5. Beginning with no cover, keep off the rain with this (6)

6. A Pauline epistle (9)

- 7. The French husband gets enough space (7)
- Meeting company, nobleman is next to queen (9)
 Play with Scots (7)

We invite you to complete this crossword. The clues

in bold involve general religious knowledge. The

others are cryptic clues with secular answers. A prize will go to the

sender of the first correct solution opened by January 31st 2020. Entries

may be the original page or photocopy and may be sent to 45. East St.Helen

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14 5EE. Please include your

The winner of crossword

20 was Amanda Hill of

full postal address.

Wallington, Surrey.

17. Marian pilgrimage site (7)

- 18. Bishop is into power lady would like to meet him (2,5)
- 19. Wild fire flickers beside church (6)
- 22. Congratulate oneself quietly about contents of tent (5)

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Solution crossword 20

Holloway on...

Jesus: The Self-Conscious Manifestation of God -Part II



Edward Holloway

t is not a polemic of theology which interests us, in the attempt to enter into the consciousness of Jesus Christ. We try to thrill to the majesty of that unique personality, divine made human, which enthralls us in all the New Testament. If we can enter into understanding, it will lift us up to communion with God whose divine life we are to share. Immediately another aspect of the same question comes in before us: did the Twelve, and the other close disciples of Christ, enjoy the same uplifting and transforming communion with the divine as an *experience*, as a communing with the Son of God? If they did not, how could they pass on the word that teaches us? If they did not, they had less than we have. It would be absurd to claim that our teachers, the Apostles, had the same fulness as we have, if their Jesus did not know consciously the Godhead that He was.

Conscious divinity

Besides the Prologue, the Sacerdotal Prayer, the promise so explicit of the Bread of Life to be eaten, there are those other amazing passages which juxtapose the words I AM, the all

holy, unpronounceable Name of God, against claims which are also synonyms for the prerogative of God. Could this have been accidentally, shall we say *unconsciously*, done? I AM: the Way, the Truth, and the Life. What creature, even the Messiah that was to come, could speak that way, for only God is the Way and the

What creature, even the Messiah that was to come, could speak that way?

Truth and the Life? Even if you are able to think that, as the greatest conceivable of mortal guides, the supreme prophet could indicate himself as the way and the truth, no created being can ever be, or claim to be, *the life* of men. It is this claim that John makes for the Eternal Word, also in the Prologue.

As he goes on to explain to Philip that 'he that sees Me sees the Father also', Christ also promises the sending of the Holy Spirit to keep them, and the Church after them, in the truth of God. The unity and equality of the Godhead between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is so manifest in these and similar passages. There is here the echo from the Synoptics, Matthew and Luke, of the baptizing in *the Name*, the holy, the incommunicable Name, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' by the Father, *'taken up into heaven'*; and the sending of the promised 'Spirit' by the Father, *in my Name*: all of this makes sense of conscious divinity. It makes sense no other way.

Eternal truth or explicit blasphemy

I AM: the Light of the World. Again, a title which made without the slightest qualification,

could apply to none but God, and which no Jewish prophet, no matter how holy, could, psychologically, ever conceivably apply to himself. Once more, it echoes that supreme Prologue of John, in the opinion of this writer the greatest thing in the whole of the bible, where we are told that in the Word, through whom were made all things, visible and invisible, there was Life, and that Eternal Life was both the light and the Life of humankind. This chapter of St. John, like the sixth chapter, leads up to a mighty climax, as Jesus, challenged by the Jews, answers their demand to know who He is and what are his credentials. It is in the eighth chapter (v. 25) to the query *Who are you?* that we have the answer, *'the Beginning, who also speaks unto you'*, ending as the confrontation deepens with the supreme statement of Christ in St. John's gospel that 'before Abraham was made, I AM' (v. 58). Therefore they took up stones to cast at Him. It was either the most eternal truth or the most explicit blasphemy.

No parts in God

Can we go on to say, in some childish way, 'Jesus had no hot line to God, his Father ... Jesus did not always know what to do ... He had to pray like us ... He was uncertain ... He had to work his way out and find the Father's will in the darkness ... Jesus did not know at first (or, as a variant, 'until after his resurrection') who he was'? It makes the most utter nonsense and shows a total lack of understanding that Jesus IS God. And being God cannot be part

of your IS, of your I AM, without that consciousness defining your whole being and your whole personal consciousness. There are no parts in God, no faculties in God, no aspects of created limitation in Him whose Essence is defined, and experienced as 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit'. It is not possible to slough off Divinity, nor that Consciousness which spans all Eternity in the Presentiality of I AM, as if it were a shirt of which one divests oneself in the heat of the day to put it on afterwards when the toil of one's work is over.

Divinity incapable of being 'exaggerated'

One asks, how can Jesus be God the Son, made also for us Son of Man, unless He communicates to us *the Communion of God's own being*, in Himself? We seek upwards towards God for knowledge, for truth and goodness, for law and for life. We don't seek a creature; we seek the Uncreated Light and Life, for whom we are made, and in whom, by gift and grace, we find our meaning. That meaning is — to be co-sharers in the Divine Nature. How can God do this for us, unless He communicates *Godhead* to us, not Manhood, the creature only? How can God work the work of the Life of God, which is what we call 'the supernatural order', if God is not *consciously* 'God for us' at all times, and in all things?

It is absurd and the taint, though usually unconscious, of the Arian heresy, which teaches

that in the past we have overemphasized or exaggerated the *Divine* in Christ to the loss of the 'human' in Our Lord. It is *impossible to exaggerate the Divine in Jesus Christ*; you cannot have too much of good thing in

Taint of the Arian heresy

the subject matter of the being and communication to us of God Incarnate. You cannot overemphasis the *God* against the *Incarnate*. It might be possible to fail to appreciate and to express rightly the humanity in Christ, but we do not need to play down the divine to appreciate the human. We can only understand the human in Jesus Christ, by first rightly understanding the Divine.

'Kenotic' theology

The implicit and usually unconscious pressure of the 'kenotic' theology of Jesus Christ has been to deny the real Divinity and emphasise a human personality in Jesus. To this *human* personality they add, as if it extrinsic, the 'dimension of the divine'. They put the mystery of the full understanding into the *divine* dimension, so that Jesus becomes in fact a subject of human understanding, analysis and appreciation, on our terms, not on his own. The *divinity* of Christ, as the existential, i.e. the real impact of Jesus Christ upon the Twelve, the disciples. the Jews. and upon the life and ethos of the Church herself, is subtly denied and then lost as the centre of prayer and personal spiritual life. If we read the Pastoral Letters which make up the New Testament proclamation of the Christian Faith after the Ascension of Christ, we can be in no doubt that the men who walked with Jesus Christ, and the all-important apostle who knew him by direct revealing 'as one born out of due time', were in no doubt that they had experienced *the personality of God*, God become a man for them.¹¹

One personality in Christ

If we are going to make an emphasis in the elements of what is *Mystery* in Christ, then let it be in the affirmation of the human in Jesus Christ, and not in the affirmation of the Divine. It is the Divinity which is revealed through the Word made Flesh: it is not, as some actually dare to say, the Godhead which is revealed through 'the perfect Humanity'. There is only *one personality* in Jesus Christ, one centred reference that says *me*: in Jesus Christ that centre of reference is through the nature of God, which IS; and Jesus experienced it and declared it as I AM.

If you are God, then you experience yourself as God at all times and all the time. This is necessary philosophy, necessary theology, and the totally clear witness of John, Paul, the author of Hebrews (if not Paul) and indeed clearly enough in claims made by Christ, and the self-psychology it implies, also in the synoptic evangelists.

Destroying the magisterium

The Christ of the kenotic theology accords well with a God who is immanent within the creation, but not its transcendent creator. It accords well with a Jesus whose real consciousness is *human* as 'personality' in the sense in which we feel our own: a consciousness bounded with ignorance, doubt, and the temptations which derive from

the war of the 'two laws' (Romans 7.23) within the flesh of fallen mankind. This is the Christology preferred by the theology of The Dissent. It is no accident that it is so, for it destroys *Magisterium* in

The theology of The Dissent

the Church on earth. By so re-defining Christ in terms no longer of dogmas, but more potently of psychology, it is possible to keep the dogmas as ciphers but to destroy the actual, existential Christ of living Divinity in the flesh — the flesh that walked on earth, and the flesh that lives in the magisterial claims of the Church. It becomes possible by so emphasizing the 'human' in Christ (but not the *human* as we find it in the gospels, never except *through* the Divine personality and nature) to correct Jesus as the ages pass by. For we have as authority in the bible, only what he said or is alleged to have said while teaching on earth, and we know that Jesus 'did not have any hot line to the Father', that 'Jesus did not always know what He had to do', that 'Jesus had to pray, trust, agonize, and walk in faith as *we* do, in the dark' etc.

Reinterpreting

Once we have thus changed the authority of Christ's personality in all the pages of the gospel, especially in the pre-resurrection pages, we can reinterpret Christ's appeal to the 'Coming of the Spirit', who will lead the People of God into the future knowledge of the things that are to come, and of 'the things that belong to Me'. lesus, we can say, knew that as Man-God, even He did not know all the answers, but his Abba- experience² made Him certain that his Father would provide through 'the Spirit of God' among the chosen community. Then 'the Breath of the Spirit', especially the spirit of change, can become community-based within the People of God, known through prophetic spirits (like Charles Curran, for instance, and Hans Kung?) who are recognised and accepted by a majority of the Assembly of the People of God. Then it can be whispered 'in the cloister'³ that St. John's gospel, though very beautiful is not literal fact nor history, but 'Haggadic Midrash'⁴; after all there are many who already insolently say as much of the chapters of St. Luke. In the opinion of this writer the lerome Commentary comes near to this position in the matter of St. Luke, because it does not add the comment that the technique of clustering 'stories and tales' around a fact is perfectly compatible with history if only the stories are true and are not legendary, although still of human interest!

The witness of Mystici Corporis

How many are aware of this passage from the Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis* (1943) of Pope Pius XII? It is hardly ancient history: 'But the loving knowledge with which the divine Redeemer has pursued us from the first moment of his Incarnation is such as completely to surpass all the searchings of the human mind; for by means of the beatific vision, which He enjoyed from the time when He was received into the womb of the Mother of God, He has for ever and continuously had present to Him all the members of His mystical Body, and embraced them with His saving love.⁶

The presence of this passage in a major Encyclical may not add up to its establishment as solemn doctrine, but it does declare this vision of the personality of Jesus, even in the womb, as the safe and certain doctrine of the Church. It is totally incompatible with the modern kenotic theology. The theology of the humanity of Christ, through its communion with the divine Person as taught in the Encyclical of Pope Pius XII, does however fit very well with another interpretation of the Agony of Christ in the Garden, *incompatible* and the horrific meaning of the vision of sin, total and individual, *with the modern* through all the ages of mankind (see *Catholicism: a new synthesis*, *kenotic theology* Faith-Keyway, 1976, ch.17, p.267).

'The Father is greater than I'

A further consideration concerns that passage 'If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad that I am going to the Father, *because the Father is greater than I.*' We all know the basic orthodox interpretation, but the passage causes uneasiness to many, especially in the age of a falsely kenotic theory of Christ's knowledge before the resurrection. St.

Basil seems to have the perfect answer. In the *koine*, the Greek of the Romano-Hellenic civilisation, he says *meizoon* – 'greater' like *major* in Latin – means also 'ancestor', source, origin, or cause of being. Thus Christ means 'Sad of heart as you are, because I have told you that I am going back to the Father, *if you loved Me you would gladly let me go*, because I go from a valley of tears to *my own home*: I return to the Father, the centre of my being, my source, and my joy.' How perfect a sense this makes in the context (John 14.25-31)! Some ten years ago one referred this text to Dom. David Knowles OSB, perhaps the greatest Greek scholar of our time. He confirmed it as from St. Basil *Contra Eaminsion* (Migne P.G. 59-62, vol ii, col. 566) and judged it an excellent exegesis, entirely compatible with usage at the time of Our Lord.

Start from the Divine I AM

From the same theme, and probably the same discourse of St. John,⁶ what do we make of the following, acclaimed by the disciples as 'clear. plain speaking indeed' – 'I came out from the Father and have come into the world; again I leave the world, and return to the Father.' Did Jesus have a body when He 'came out from the Father'? But it is the same I, the same person, who speaks of Himself in both states, as the eternal Word, and also as the Word made Flesh. The 'I' who speaks about Himself is the same conscious Jesus,

equally aware of Himself, all the time, in either respect. And by the way, did any human being in history ever speak in this way? If we want to begin to understand the consciousness of Jesus, we must start from the Divine I AM. There is the abiding reality

the same person, who speaks of Himself in both states

and self-possession of Jesus. From that position we may try to understand something about his human knowledge and to develop if we can, our 'experience' of the pain of God made man. The kenotic approach is a nonsense of theology, philosophy, psychology and of course exegesis.

'I must be in my Father's house'

Let us take finally that passage in St. Luke where his frantic parents burst in upon that wonderfully good boy who had never done so strange and cruel a thing to them before.⁷ There are times when God just has to let people suffer in faith, because there is no way of teaching the lesson beforehand. 'Son, why ever have you done so to us? Your father and I have sought you sorrowing.' 'Why ever did you go looking for Me? Didn't you know that I must be in My Father's House, about His trade and business?' They had never told Him a word, never discussed 'Christmas Night' with the child. But now, He told them, and us, that as He came up to dedicate his manhood to God, in the ceremony of *bar miswah*, that *He knew who He was* and was not as other men are. They were astounded and awed, and of course 'his mother kept all these words, pondering them in her heart'. Naturally she did. There is nothing of 'haggadic midrash' about it. So we end where Jesus taught us to begin and to end, conscious of His divine being in the unity of God: 'In *the Name* of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' Amen!

This is a slightly abridged version of the second half of Fr.Holloway's Editorial for the January/ February 1987 issue of FAITH.

Book Reviews

But what about Evolution?

The Realist Guide to Religion and Science by Paul Robinson, Gracewing, 527pp, £25.00

reviewed by Philip Miller

This book by American priest Fr Paul Robinson is a long read, but one that is for the most part straightforward and takes logical steps towards his goal of showing how a 'realist' perspective on the world as opposed to an empiricist (materialist) or idealist one — allows him to analyse both religion and science, and set them in right relationship to each other. Throughout the book he continually posits realism as the via media, holding both faith and science as true in their respective fields. and complementary. As a Thomist scholar, but also with a scholarly background in Engineering Mathematics and Computer Science, Robinson is well placed to examine the field of faith-science relations.

Making intelligent sense of the world

The three great sections of this book treat Reason (philosophy); Religion (theology); and Science (especially physics, biochemistry, and biological evolution). In each section, Robinson argues that only the rationale of a realist approach to existence allows the human mind to make intelligent sense of the world. Thus, for example, in the conclusions of the first section, on Philosophy, he shows how it is our philosophical choices that set up (or avoid) a conflict between Science and Religion in the first place:

> "Science relies on realism, because it must assume the existence of reality

and a consistent universe in order to pursue its object. These assumptions are provided coherent rational support by the natural theology that directly follows from realism. Religion also needs realism, because religion needs to be reasonable [and] can only be reasonable if it accepts the truths of natural theology which realism argues, and seeks to convince the intellectual judgement of prospective believers of its supernatural dogmas by rational arguments. Religion and science come into conflict only when their practitioners step away from realism." (p. 107)

This is the basis of this book, then, which seems a common-sense approach to reconciling what other thinkers might hold to be in conflict.

Religious approaches

In the central section of the book, on Religion, Robinson contrasts the approaches of paganism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism, and subjects them all to this test of where on the Idealism-Realism-Empiricism scale they lie. Paganism is principally pantheism, identifying the universe with God Himself; and even Aristotle, the subtlest of the pagan thinkers, falls short of a fully balanced physics, because of his assumptions about the nature of God. Islam is characterized by a "wholly wilful and transcendent God" as opposed to a reasonable one, and the Koran is to be taken literally, without any considerations that human reason might bring to bear on the text, even in its contradictions.

Protestant Christianity is characterized as biblicism, i.e. the notion that the bible is the only source of religious authority, and that one's reason is not to be brought to bear on the questions that arise, e.g. the interpretation of the Genesis account of Creation. Instead, Catholicism led to a burst of scientific creativity that Robinson assigns to its Christian realism: "That Christian worldview flows ultimately from the doctrine — believed on faith — of creation in time by a transcendent God ... Catholics understand that creation proceeded from God's Wisdom and so the mark of rationality pervades all of Creation." (p. 158)

Christianity and scientific endeavour

The last of the three main sections of the book considers Science under a variety of titles. Robinson begins by analysing the seventeenth century departure from a happy harmony between mainstream Christianity and scientific endeavour, as both Protestant believers and scientific professionals took leave of philosophical realism, and modern science set sail for materialism. The book then goes on to dedicate a chapter each to: physics, biochemistry, and biological evolution, interpreting each in the light of modernscience's philosophical stance. In the chapter on physics, the evidence is presented that shows how the universe, with its 'Big Bang' beginning 13.7bn years ago and fine-tuning, points convincingly to a Creator, but the predominant materialism amongst physicists seems to prevent them from making that connection and leads them instead to adopt elaborate fictions for an uncaused, godless universe. This chapter on physics ends with these words:

> "We here come face to face with the premise of this entire book: human understanding of reality is an all or nothing proposition. You either take reason with realism, science and

religion all together, or you reject them all. Many modern scientists rejected realism, clamped themselves tightly to empiricism and, inevitably, led by it on its natural course, embraced antiscience, atheism, and irrationality." (p. 387)

Evolution

In the chapters on biochemistry and biological evolution, however, Robinson begins surprisingly to deviate away from what would seem the obvious happy harmony of faith and science that he has been constructing all the way through the rest of the book. In the former chapter, he sides with "Intelligent Design" (ID) proponents, though without detailed explanation: there is, he says, "the impossibility of the order of the cell arising by purely natural forces." But he acknowledges that his great hero, Stanley laki, himself does not endorse ID and finds it akin to creationism — the problem is that Robinson does not examine how the Intelligence that truly lies behind all existence, i.e. God Himself, acts as ID says He does in biological history.

In the final main chapter of the book, the discussion of biological evolution leads Robinson away from any affirmation that man could be descended bodily from lower life forms. He takes issue with macroevolution in general, i.e. the development of one species from a previous one; and even 'theistic evolution' — God being the reason, and providing the purpose, behind the playing-out of the laws of nature which cause evolution to take effect — Robinson dismisses: "I have argued ... that this is not possible," he says, "because God must create directly the major lines of life. Still, this position is intellectually respectable ..." So the book ends very unsatisfactorily, without the fullest possible explanation of faith-science harmony that it set out to deliver.

Fr Philip Miller is a parish priest in the diocese of Westminster and holds a PhD in observational radio-astronomy.



We must convert the 21st century

GEORGE WEIGEL WEIGEL MODERN CATHOLIC HISTORY

The Ironies of Modern Catholic History by George Weigel, Basic Books, 122pp, £18.99p

reviewed by Joanna Bogle

Well-researched and readable, George Weigel's analysis of the Church from the mid-19th century to the present day is an important contribution to the Church's self-understanding as we move into the third decade of the 21st century.

An analysis of the French Revolution and its aftermath introduces the reader to the era of Gregory XVI and of Lamennais, and then on to Ultramontanism and Pius IX. At issue is the relationship of the Church to a changing world.

Even-handed

Weigel takes an even-handed approach to contentious issues, noting, for example, that Pius IX's famed *Syllabus of Errors* "does not quite tally with its frequent caricature as a reactionary, even silly, catalogue of alleged horrors", even while showing the problems raised by the commitment to temporal power in the Papal States.

But Weigel's laurels go to Leo XIII who had the courage and vision to write of "new things" in his great encyclical of that name. Weigel notes the figures who shaped the thinking that led to a creative engagement with modernity: Mohler, Rosmini, von Kettler and of course most notably Newman.

The power of truth

This is an energising, even uplifting book. While it is forthright about the mistakes and muddles of policy-makers in the Church, it also reveals an understanding of the realities of history and especially of how ideas and culture shape things. And the author clearly has a deep belief in the power of truth. Thus there is a sort of gentle joy that runs through some of the pages describing the work of Archbishop Karol Wojtyla and Father Joseph Ratzinger during and after the Second Vatican Council, and the pages describing the JPII/ Ratzinger pontificates.

The book is a must-read for every seminarian, for every serious historian and for all Catholics involved in debates on current issues in community and national life, notably the pro-life movement. We do not have a well-educated laity in the West at present: there is profound ignorance, especially about the Second Vatican Council and about the core teachings of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Converting the 21st century

At the turn of the Millennium, John Paul II urged the Church to "put out into the deep". Weigel urges that the message needs to be understood: we must seek to *"convert* the twenty-first century world to Christ and to help strengthen the moral and cultural foundations of modernity's noblest aspirations and achievements". The italics are Weigel's, and he sees that millennial call as central to the Church's relationship with post-modernity and all that lies ahead. Reading this book will help equip Catholics to fulfil that call – and they will enjoy it as a good read, too.

Joanna Bogle, DSG, is the Editor of Faith magazine.

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But is it true?



Why We Need Religion by Stephen T. Asma, Oxford University Press, 272 pp, £20

reviewed by Pravin Thevathasan

Contrary to secularist predictions, religion is still with us. Why is this? The author of this informative work is a professor of philosophy and an agnostic. He argues very persuasively that we have an emotional need for religion. Science, he says, may lead us into a state of wonder. However, especially in times of crises, we need something more to fulfil us as human beings. Religion provides us with this.

A Darwinian defence

The author discusses the case of the mother who has had to come to terms with the tragic murder of her son. She grieves and she prays. She hopes that one day she will see her son again. She does not turn to science. Instead, her emotionally grounded beliefs give her the energy and vitality to continue to exist and care for her other children. The author can thus come up with a Darwinian defence of religious emotions and the cultural systems that manage them. Once we take the metaphysics out of the language of soul when, for example, a minister tells parents that the soul of their son is in a better place, then the objections of an agnostic will fall away: "Metaphysics aside, the minister's language seems to suggest that there are emotions so deep and bonds so strong that not even death should end them. That is a beautiful sentiment no matter what

you think of the soul."

Morality, trauma and moods

The author also argues that religion plays a vital role in our moral behaviour. If you take religion seriously, you are more likely to be faithful to your spouse. You are more likely to be supportive of your children. You are more likely to forgive people, and psychology has demonstrated the vital importance of forgiveness in our emotional lives. Religion helps us live more self-sacrificing lives, caring for others without expectation of anything in return.

The author cites evidence that religious people are better at rebounding from trauma. The religious life usually contains three elements in responding positively to adversity: a strong social support group, a focus on empathy and an ability to infer meaning.

What about meditation? The author examines the work of neuroscientist Dr Richard Davidson who has found that even limited meditation practices produce measurable changes in our neuroplastic system and our psychological mood. Spending ten minutes a day compiling a 'gratitude list' also generates beneficial brain changes. Repetition of these behaviours slowly creates stable personality traits.

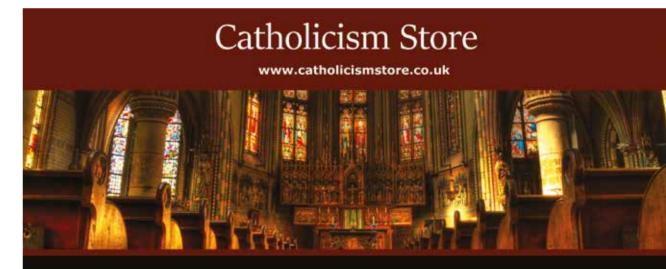
Irrationality

The author has convincingly demonstrated his case that religion can be good for our emotional lives. It refreshes the parts of our nature that other disciplines cannot reach. But is it true? That, says the author, does not really matter. He states that he will not 'spend much time trying to rescue religion as reasonable. It isn't terribly reasonable. But therein lies its secret power. Contrary to the radical atheists, the irrationality of religion does not render it unacceptable or valueless.' This is because the human brain consists of three major operating systems: the ancient reptilian brain which controls our fight or flight type of instincts, the mammalian brain which controls our emotions and the recent neocortex which controls our rationality. Religion nourishes our emotions even while it irritates our

rationality.

The intellectual life, says the author, asks 'Is this claim accurate?' But the emotional life asks the more ancient question: Does this or that feeling help the organism thrive? So, for the author, religion is a mere feeling. It has nothing to do with truth. I beg to differ. There is overwhelming evidence from studies in mental health that religion can be good for us. The author's view that none of it may be true is quite clearly a personal view, and he puts forward no reasonable argument for this, at least in this work.

Dr Pravin Thevathasan is a consultant psychiatrist and author of the CTS booklet Catholicism and Mental Health.

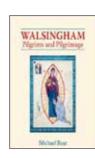


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One holy place of Our Lady



Walsingham Pilgrims and Pilgrimage by Michael Rear, Gracewing, 398pp, £19.99

reviewed by David Baldwin

I have to confess to feeling a touch daunted and diffident when my review copy of Walsingham Pilgrims and Pilgrimage landed with a heavy thump through the letterbox. It is sizeable, and looked very scholarly and slightly intimidating. Pilgrim I am, scholar not. But as soon as I opened it for a quick flick-through for first impressions, my eye caught the opening sentence in the first Chapter: "Centuries before the first pilgrims found their way to the little Holy House that Richeldis built in Walsingham, other pilgrims had been travelling those same roads". Flicking stopped, and held by that intriguing prospect, I started reading on. Soon after, a feeling of relief, because I immediately sensed that here is a book - that in what could have been a very heavy, dry and dusty historical account - is actually quite the opposite.

Appealing, intriguing and relaxed

To start with, it is structured in an appealing and intriguing manner – as indicated by the Chapter headings: 'From Mercury to Mary', 'From Walsingham to Nazareth', 'The Conquests of Islam', 'The Mediaeval Church' and so on, in a clear indication of not only wide historical progression, but building to a very positive and aspiring conclusion to 'Unity in Walsingham, The New Evangelisation, The Glorious Vision'.

Next, the style is relaxed, making it an easy and undemanding read, easy to follow, encouraging one to read on. It tells of the fascinating account of Our Lady in England, and all that went before those Christian times and what developed afterwards: Reformation, Destruction, Restoration, and Walsingham today. I make the point of saying 'Walsingham', and not the 'RC Shrine of Walsingham', because this book is about Our Lady of Walsingham and how it came about that from one shrine, she is now venerated at two national Shrines – Catholic and Anglican. With this duality is detailed the sometimes painful struggle of both Shrines emerging to the pilgrim world, both individually and also as putative rivals.

England and the Holy Land

On the big picture, Rear skilfully weaves the synchronous but geographically separated strands of happenings in England and East Anglia, and in Nazareth and the Holy Land, all inexorably coming together as history progressed: the Holy House in Nazareth, its destruction, is angelic 'translation' to Loreto, its replication at Walsingham, its destruction, its recreation, and all the other major events that swirled around those circumstances of the Holy House.

Popping out of the big picture are some delightful little nuggets, adding a certain piquancy, like, Henry VIII, in his agony and remorse on his deathbed, reportedly bequeathing his soul to Our Lady of Walsingham, but clearly on the record, declaring in his Will: "...we do instantlie desire and require the Blessed Virgine Marie his mother.... continually to pray for us while we live in this world, and in the passing out of the same, that we maie the sooner obtayne eternall life after our departure...". I also learned something that had always puzzled me, that amongst her many accolades, why Our Lady is called 'Seat of Wisdom'. And many other little gems, such as Walsingham's miracles, and the two white doves that settled on Our Lady's statue and remained there on the procession down the Holy Mile returning to the Slipper Chapel from the crowning ceremony in the Abbey grounds, attended by 15,000 pilgrims in 1954, a Marian year. The doves remained on the statue in the Slipper Chapel overnight. Mysteriously, the same phenomenon occurred to the statue of Our Lady of Fatima after it was crowned in May 1946.

Anglicans and Catholics

What also emerges powerfully are the major players in this story – of whom one gets a real sense and feeling of who they were, how and what they were striving for, how they overcame seemingly impossible obstacles. The Anglo-Catholic priest, Fr Alfred Hope Patten, "one of the most significant figures in the Church of England in the twentieth century", and his determination and drive to restore the Anglican Shrine; Catholic convert Charlotte Boyd and her vision of restoring the Catholic Shrine with her purchase of the Slipper Chapel (in use as a cow shed at the time), and her lovely personal comment

that her persistence was "unsavoury in the Bishop's nostrils", and many others involved in the developing and running of the Shrines.

The author wryly observes that the making of the present Catholic Shrine had a lot to thank for the Anglo-Catholic input - many of whose priests involved were ordained into the Catholic church, himself included. But still shrouded in mystery, which Rear forensically analyses, is Richeldis de Faverches, the Norfolk noblewoman, who acting on visons of Our Lady, is credited with replicating the Holy House in Nazareth at Walsingham in 1061. The tantalising question is also asked of the 13th century oak statue of Madonna and Child discovered at the V & A, whose look and circumstances steer a close course to the original statue, which is depicted on the Walsingham Priory Seal granted by Henry III in 1246. The book is richly illustrated with many colour and black and white pictures, which in themselves are so evocative in bringing the text literally in to picture.

Only one Holy Mother of God

What is most encouraging – with this second edition catching-up with recent events – is the drive for closer co-operation and strengthening unity of the ministry of the two Shrines - Catholic and Anglican – which was sealed by the Ecumenical Covenant declared by both Shrines on the Feast of our Lady of Walsingham in 2018. In Michael Rear's words, "there is only one Holy Mother of God", and that he hoped that his revised book "will contribute to a fuller understanding".

So, this is the challenge posed explicitly by this book: "For Our Lady originally had, and still wills to have, but one Shrine at Walsingham. Yet she has two; and the two do not do her a double honour, but rather diminish her glory, because they are really the one Shrine of other ages, now split in two by the Christians who ought to be joining together in propagating her honour".... Fr Hope Patten's piercing comment in 1953.

One Walsingham

Fr Rear promotes this desire by seeking to persuade in drawing a comparison with the deep and sincere ecumenism of Taizé: "For everyone goes there... of all persuasions... It has found a way to welcome everyone, and no theological argument or disagreement spoils its peace. It may not be an exact model for Walsingham, a better one may present itself, but it shows what can be done. No-one ever thinks of asking, 'is Taizé Catholic, or Anglican', or 'is it a Protestant community?' It is just – Taizé". His final plea is: "Please God, before Our Lady's Shrine at Walsingham celebrates, in 2061, the one thousandth anniversary of its founding by Richeldis, it will be just – Walsingham".

For those who have been to Walsingham several times, like myself, and may have the feeling that you know the most of it by association or an assumed familiarity forget it. This is a book that will take you to, and hold you at many levels. I was humbled in realising how much I did not know, and how much this book has enriched my practical and spiritual knowledge of this *one* holy place of Our Lady – Walsingham. Read it and go!

Retired Royal Marines officer David Baldwin MBE, has written several Pilgrimage booklets for the Catholic Truth Society.

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