



Magazine

August

2018

The Julian Meetings

- *Foster the teaching and practice of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition*
- *Encourage people to practise contemplative prayer in their daily lives, and explore ways of doing this which are appropriate for them*
- *Support the individual ecumenical Julian Meetings — groups whose members meet regularly to practise Christian contemplative prayer together*



The Julian Meetings Magazine August 2018

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To be contemplative as Christ is contemplative is to be open to all the fullness that the Father wishes to pour into our hearts. With our minds made still and ready to receive, with our self-generated fantasies about God and ourselves reduced to silence, we are at last at the point where we may begin to grow.

And the face we need to show to our world is the face of a humanity in endless growth towards love, a humanity so delighted and engaged by the glory of what we look towards that we are prepared to embark on a journey without end to find our way more deeply into it, into the heart of the Trinitarian life.

St Paul speaks (11 Cor. 3.18) of how 'with our unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord', we are transfigured with a greater and greater radiance. That is the face we seek to show to our fellow human beings.

And we seek this not because we are in search of some private 'religious experience' that will make us feel secure or holy. We seek it because in this self-forgetting gazing towards the light of God in Christ we learn how to look at one another and at the whole of God's creation.

In the early Church, there was a clear understanding that we needed to advance from the self-understanding or self-contemplation that taught us to discipline our greedy instincts and cravings, to the 'natural contemplation' that perceived and venerated the wisdom of God in the order of the world, and allowed us to see created reality for what it truly was in the sight of God - rather than what it was in terms of how we might use it or dominate it. And from there grace would lead us forward into true 'theology', the silent gazing upon God that is the goal of all our discipleship.

*from pages 95/96 of 'Holy Living' by Rowan Williams
reviewed on page 23*

So many thoughts abound
As we settle into silence
This deep pervading Silence
Where Love abides
Where all is well
The 'place' to which
We are constantly invited
This place of stillness
In the depths of our heart
Where the every day
And all that is contained within it
Meets the Ever-Present Love
Which not only invites us
But which also welcomes us
And embraces us
This Love holds us
And all that we bring
In this precious habitation
Of prayer

Elizabeth Mills

Let us then labour for an inward silence, an inward stillness and an inward healing.

That perfect silence where the lips and heart are still and we no longer entertain our own imperfect thoughts and vain opinions.

But God alone speaks in us and we wait in singleness of heart, that we may know His will and in the silence of our spirits that we may do his will and do that only.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Be Still, and Know That I Am God

(Psalm 46:10)

Be still ...

and in the quietness, the stillness,
the silence ...
listen ...

listen

to all that is often passed by,
unheard, in the rush of the busy life ...

listen ... look ...

and wonder ...
in awe

at the softest sound,
the smallest detail ...

and in reverence,
give thanks to God, the Creator,
for the marvels of His creation.

Be still, and know that I am God.

For he knows the need

of the human mind and body
to 'Be Still'

to have time with Him,
to be nourished,

to be refreshed ...

in the quietness,
the stillness,

the silence

He created ...

Be still, and know that I am God.

Be still ...

and deeply in touch with your inner self,
be aware

of your Living, Loving God ...

whose presence is ever near for you

in your joys,
in your heartaches
in your times of deepest need
to rejoice with you ...
to comfort you ...
to encompass you in His love
and give you peace.

Be still, and know that I am God.

Alison
Aotearoa, New Zealand

At the Retreat Association conference in June, this was used as the lead in for a morning worship session of contemplative prayer with the Julian Meetings. We led out of the silence with music.

'As I sit with a blank sheet before me while I contemplate practising the presence in stillness, it occurs to me that this is a visual aid for what I am about to write!'

These are the opening words of a short booklet which is full of visual aids for contemplation in varied beautiful coloured photographs and thoughts for reflection, both the author's own thoughts and helpful quotations. Appropriate to stillness in a garden the author encourages looking 'with rinsed eyes'.

Practising the Presence in Stillness by *Mollie Robinson* is available for £3.50 inc. postage from The Quiet Gardens Trust (order via www.quietgardens.org under resources)

Mollie Robinson was Coordinator for the Quiet Garden Trust from 2004 - 14. She has worked as a pastoral counsellor and in spiritual accompaniment. She is a companion of Burnham Abbey.

Pennant Melangell

A thin place that is most special to me is the tiny hamlet of Pennant Melangell in North Powys, Wales. I first found it on a glorious Autumn afternoon, shortly after my father's funeral, when I was searching for where his ancestors lived. A narrow track, just wide enough for one car, leads down a beautiful valley and ends near a small, ancient church, the Shrine Church of St. Melangell.

I had been told by a relative that my great grandparents' grave was in the churchyard just behind the rear wall of a single white cottage that stood next to it. Sure enough, there it was! If I could have chosen a location it could not have been more stunning than this.

I entered the church and felt the thud of a most profound silence. I thought of the T.S. Eliot line: 'To kneel where prayer has been valid' and felt borne upon the shoulders of people who had prayed there in the centuries before I came.

I knew I must return to this holy place often, so bought a caravan and placed it in a nearby field (thanks to a generous local farmer.) it was about an hour's drive from the parish in which I then served, so I could easily spend my day off in the peace and tranquillity it offered, and I often did.

Through my visits I met local people and discovered that the white cottage near the church had been the home of my great grandparents, and one a little further along the lane had been where my great great grandparents lived. Shortly afterwards, that second house came up for sale and I desperately wanted to buy it. I prayed about it and asked God to block it if it wasn't the right thing to do. A retired priest and his wife bought it, and when I met them, the wife said she had heard I was interested in the cottage, but she had prayed and had a sense that they were to have it first and I was to have it later. I felt sceptical and I wanted it NOW!

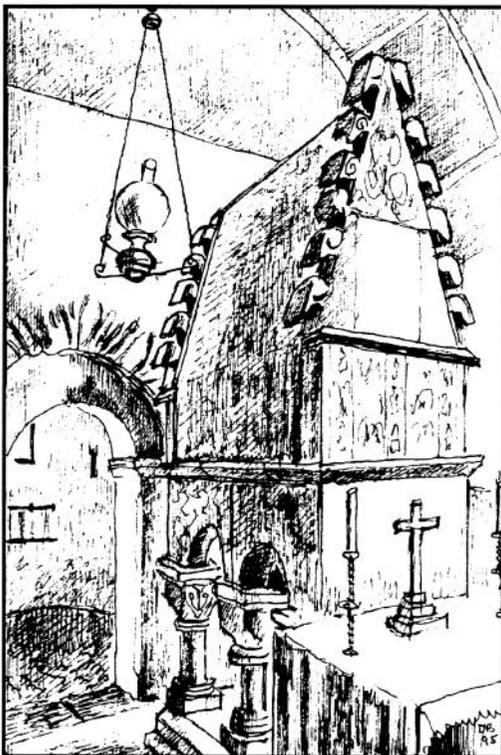
Twenty-seven years later, I was appointed to the post of Priest Guardian of the Church of St, Melangell, and the

cottage I had tried to buy all those years before, was the house that went with the job, so I moved in.

My seven years there were a tremendous gift and I enjoyed the privilege of being able to enter the silence of that amazing church every day to pray. I believe that experience is what drew me to contemplative prayer, and when I retired, I started a Julian Meeting in my present parish and we go on an annual pilgrimage to Pennant Melangell so I can share the specialness of that sacred place with them.

Linda Mary Edwards

Llandudno Junction Julian Meeting



Also, from an article by Jean Harrison in the Church in Wales Newsletter May 1995

A tangible feeling of peace overwhelmed me as I stood in the circular apse of the church of St Melangell. I was surrounded by silence and tranquility.

On our way up the Pennant valley from Llangynog we passed this little church, set in a circular churchyard full of yew trees. I went inside, and was totally unprepared for what I found. I was expecting a small dark place with a musty smell, but this was different, beautifully kept with the sweet aroma of wood. The church is narrow, with the Saint's shrine behind the altar in the chancel. Originally built in the 12th century, to house

St Melangell's shrine, which was then sited in the apse, it was restored in the second half of the 20th century. The shrine was moved to the chancel, where there was more room, and the apse rebuilt with the Saint's simple gravestone lying to one side.

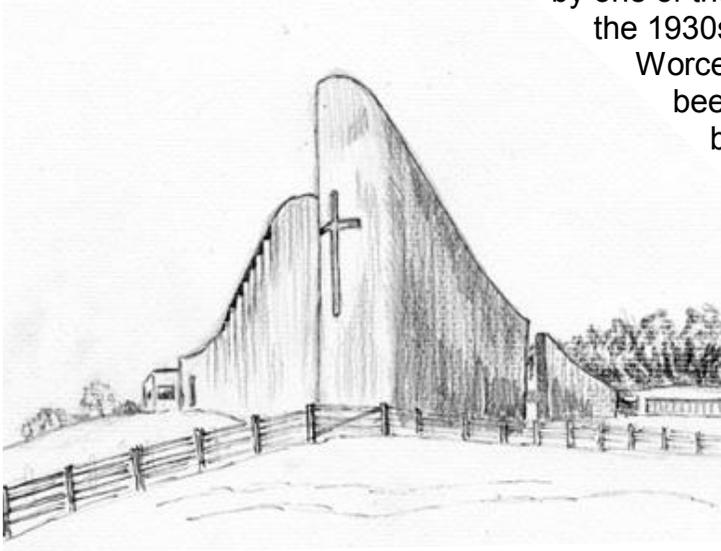
I was still carrying the sense of peace with me as our walk continued up the valley to the waterfall. This valley truly echoes the words of Ezekiel Hamer, once Vicar of Pennant: - 'There is not more than one step between our valley and heaven.'

Stanbrook Abbey

Summer 2017. Above me on the North York Moors stood the new Stanbrook Abbey, at Wass. My visit was somewhat of a pilgrimage. For many years a friend and I visited Stanbrook in Worcestershire for a few days at least once a year, since we lived in neighbouring Herefordshire. We were most upset when the Benedictine sisters moved north in 2009: indeed, we have found it hard to forgive them. We fully understood, though, their need to leave the over-sized Pugin-designed building, and applauded their courage in finding a site and building a new and ecologically designed home.

The Sisters' church is an austere but stunning building, standing gaunt, uncompromising and almost defiant on the edge of the Cleveland Hills. In contrast the enclosure and public rooms have a beautiful simplicity in their pale golden wood and polished stone, with touches of "old" Stanbrook in rescued tiles and chairs. The building has been designed for sustainability: wood-chip burner for heat, large tank to store rainwater, reed bed to deal with sewage and solar panels for electricity.

The interior of the church is a contrast from the exterior: calm, inviting and flooded with light. It has parchment-coloured walls, light sycamore choir stalls, and a gleaming silver-steel organ. But the first thing one sees is a large crucifix painted



by one of the sisters in the 1930s. Back in Worcester it had been in a shed, but it still travelled north with the nuns. It remained in store until someone suggested it would be suitable for the new church.

Beautifully restored, it hangs triumphant in the rounded apse. Otherwise the only colour is a glowing blue bowl that is the font and varied colours of the landscape seen through the tall shafts of the windows. It is peaceful and – joy – the congregational seating is within the main body of the church. I was able to stay for Vespers. As at Worcester, the singing and the silence settled upon me like silk.

The sanctuary to the side, behind closed doors, is altogether different. Dark, except for the clear glass cross which takes up almost the full length of the east wall, it is a place designed for contemplation.

When the Sisters bought the farmland on which the new monastery is built, there were already nine holiday lodges for rent. So, although there is as yet no guest house at the monastery, it would be possible to combine a holiday in the beautiful Yorkshire countryside and attend services at the abbey. It would be a recipe for sloughing off the snake skins of this restless and anxious world.

Janet Robinson

Alzheimer's Prayer

Please grant my visitors tolerance for my confusion
Forgiveness for my irrationality and the strength
To walk with me into the mist of memory
My world has become.

Please let them take my hand and stay awhile
Even though I seem unaware of their presence.

Help them to know how their strength
And loving care will drift slowly
Into the days to come, just when I need it most.

Let them know, when I don't recognise them
That I will I will
Keep their hearts free of sorrow when it comes,
Only lasts a moment, then it's gone.

And finally Lord, please let them know
How very much their visits mean,
How even through this relentless mystery
I can still feel their love.

'Sharing silence and speech: a Quaker perspective'

This was the title of one of the workshops offered at the Retreat Association Conference. Participants were invited to come to explore how Quaker practices embody an understanding of silence as:

- Communal - something we do together, which connects us to each other
- Attentive - somewhere we may encounter God and find guidance
- Generative - a birthplace of inspired speech and action

The Lord is my pace-setter ... I shall not rush.
He makes me stop for quiet intervals.
He provides me with images of stillness which
 restore my serenity.
He leads me in ways of efficiency through
 calmness of mind.
And his guidance is Peace.
Even though I have a great many things
 to accomplish each day, I will not fret,
For his Presence is here;
His timelessness, his all-importance,
 will keep me in balance.
He prepares refreshment and renewal in the
 midst of my activity
By anointing my mind with his oils of tranquility.
My cup of joyous energy overflows;
Truly harmony and effectiveness shall be the
 fruits of my hours ...
For I shall walk in the pace of my Lord
And shall dwell in his house for ever.

Toki Miyashina

*A Japanese version of Psalm 23
Sent by a member of
Llandudno Julian Meeting*



The Julian Meetings Core Group

Ian Bailey	Ann Moran	Deidre Morris	Sheana Barby	Sue Derbyshire	Helen Lems
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The Julian Meetings and Data Protection

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (EUGDPR) came into force on 25th May this year. You may have noticed that you are being contacted about this by many organisations you have connections with. There are many websites with information about this, here is one:

<https://www.eugdpr.org/key-changes.html>

To reflect the new standards established by this we have updated our Privacy Policy and Terms and Conditions. We have not had to make any significant changes, as our processes were already compliant with the proposed legislation. We have added some information about how we store your personal data and how it is shared. You can find

our Privacy Policy and Terms and Conditions prominently displayed on our website, and they can be downloaded from the website. If you are unable to do this, and would like a paper copy, please either send an e-mail to it@thejulianmeetings.net or write to The Julian Meetings, 263 Park Lodge Lane, Wakefield WF1 4HY enclosing a stamped self-addressed envelope.



The Regulation expands your existing set of rights regarding your personal data. These include the ability to withdraw your consent, the right to correction, and the right to be forgotten.

You can, for example, use your privacy settings to opt out of our general information emails, (but not system emails regarding your account operations), and to determine what information you share with other members or the general public. Our default is always complete privacy except for meeting information in our meeting directory where public display is part of our Terms and Conditions for a meeting.

We will not share your information with third parties. The exception to this is that we will continue to share the names, email addresses, and phone numbers of those of you who are the first contact for meetings, We shall only give them to people who wish to contact the meeting (we shall not display them on public website).

However, this information will not be shared with individuals or organisations who simply wish to advertise their own events. Meeting second contacts will be contacted by us before we share their information. This is because we do not at present have direct permission to share their contact details as these are supplied by the first contact.

We feel that our systems and procedures are as robust as we can make them at the present time, but would welcome any comments and suggestions you may have.

Fiona Elliott reflecting, during a Quaker Quiet Morning on the writing of Buddhist Venerable Ajahn Sumedo 'Noticing Space', introduced by Dick, and on The Holy Bible.

Connecting into Space

Space out there

Space here

SPIRIT

The Spirit hovered over the Waters.

In the beginning, GOD.

CREATION

Heavens and Earth

Heavens full, earth formless.

FORMLESS and EMPTY

DARKNESS over DEEP

Over the surface of the deep waters

The Spirit of God was hovering.

SPACE

CONTAINED

Space around me

Space to BE- in the Spirit.

Space....Form

Space being peaceful,

Form commanding attention.

Calming space

All space the SAME

God is the same

Yesterday, Today, Forever.

Sacred space

Thin places

Atmosphere? Spirit?

Walls containing space.

Old walls
Calm ancient atmosphere
Spirit, PRAYER
Walls holding prayers.

New walls
Space, Creation, Spirit
ENERGY
Reactions from form.

The earth was formless and empty,
Darkness was over the deep,
And the Spirit was hovering over the deep waters.

God said,
“Let there be light”
GOD formed in the SPACE.
And God created MANKIND.

In HIS LIKENESS.
IT WAS ALL GOOD.
In Him was LIFE.
REST.

In the beginning, the WORD,
God formed LOVE.
In the light of the world.

God is love.

In the beginning love,
The same yesterday, today forever.
God formed US
To be His likeness in the world.

JESUS said,
I AM, the LIGHT of the world.
REST.

Gaudete et Exsultate - Rejoice and Be Glad.

This apostolic exhortation from Pope Francis was published this year by the Catholic Truth Society, which said of it:

Holiness is a gift that is offered to everyone, no one is excluded; it constitutes the distinctive character of every Christian'

Pope Francis wants the whole Church to promote anew the desire for holiness – in a practical way, for our own time. After analysing and forcefully dismissing two subtle enemies to holiness – contemporary gnosticism and pelagianism – as ‘aberrations and obstacles’ to holiness, Francis appeals in detail to the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke. Here lies the path to our happiness, or indeed our holiness, by living out the demands and joys of the Gospel. More deeply yet, the Pope identifies those harmful ideologies which today strike at the heart of the Gospel, where faith is divorced from deeds, where mercy is lost.

Our striving for holiness must be grounded in prayer and discernment so that our lives are transformed in the light of mercy and grace. This entails action, building the Kingdom through social action and care for the marginalised. Pope Francis offers five great expressions of love of God and of neighbour as signs of true holiness for today’s culture. Finally, he sets out the landscape in which today’s spiritual combat is fought against the great enemy, the devil. This calls for vigilance and discernment. Thus, the joyful holiness of the Gospel is revealed to the world in the everyday lives of ordinary people.

We include some quotes you may wish to consider:

Chapter 1 The call to holiness

This holiness to which the Lord calls you will grow through small gestures. (16)

It is not healthy to love silence while fleeing interaction with others, to want peace and quiet while avoiding activity, to seek prayer while disdaining service. (26)

This does not mean ignoring the need for moments of quiet, solitude and silence before God. Quite the contrary...How can we fail to realise the need to stop this rat race and to recover the personal space needed to carry on a heartfelt dialogue with God? (29)

The life of the Church can become a museum piece or the possession of a select few . This can occur when some groups of Christians give excessive importance to certain rules, customs or ways of acting. The Gospel then tends to be reduced and constricted, deprived of its simplicity, allure and savour. (58)

Chapter 3 In the light of the Master

It is not easy to “make” this evangelical peace, which excludes no-one but embraces even those who are a bit odd, troublesome, or difficult, demanding, different, beaten down by life or simply uninterested. It is hard work; it calls for great openness of mind and heart. (89)

Jesus himself warns us that the path he proposes goes against the flow, even making us challenge society by the way we live and, as a result, becoming a nuisance. (90)

Holiness, then, is not about swooning in mystic rapture. (96)

Chapter 4 Signs of holiness in today’s world

Far from being timid, morose, acerbic or melancholy or putting on a dreary face, the saints are joyful and full of good humour (122)

Growth in holiness is a journey in community, side by side with others (141)

Are there moments when you place yourself quietly in the Lord’s presence, when you calmly spend time with him, bask in his gaze? Do you let his fire inflame your heart? Unless you let him warm you more and more with his love and tenderness, you will not catch fire (151)

These quotes were included by Laurence Freeman OSB, Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, in

an article he wrote on **Gaudete et Exsultate** in The Tablet of 14 April 2018. Some points he made in the article were:

The Pope's idea of holiness embeds a prophetic anger against the dull mediocrity of consumerist individualism but, no less, against intellectualised religiosity. In five short chapters Francis speaks from a Catholic pulpit but his audience is the whole of humanity in its contemporary crisis of faith. He exposes the degradation of humanity produced by empty lifestyles, conspicuous consumption and the refusal to see God in the poor and marginal. Francis is driven by an incarnational spirituality, captured in his phrase: "Reality is greater than ideas".

Holiness is not individual moral perfection. "Not everything a saint says is completely faithful to the Gospel," he says. We need to contemplate the totality of a saint's life.

Holiness is not being a special person or living apart from the world but being a good next-door neighbour and doing the ordinary in an extraordinary way. Holiness needs times of quiet, solitude and silence but "it is not healthy to love silence while fleeing interaction with others"

Holiness is a practical life-long process grounded in the mysticism of incarnation. Community is both the laboratory and the flower of a way of life that runs through every moment of every day. Prayer is precious because it nourishes a daily commitment to love and that special benefit of deep prayer that St Ignatius identified as discernment, the intelligence of the heart.

Finding Christ within ourselves allows us to welcome him in everyone. The unceasing prayer of the heart does not separate a pilgrim from what is going on around them. "We simply cannot do without the silence of prolonged prayer," this active Pope reminds us.

Francis explains how important are times of daily prayer, and he is regular in his Divine Office and personal prayer.

(The Tablet: The International Catholic News Weekly. Reproduced with permission of the Publisher) <http://www.thetablet.co.uk>

Beyond Science and Religion

Where there is no longer time
or place,
No longer word
or even thought,
There in the silence
and the waiting,
There in the darkness,
in the longing and confusion
Seeps our true knowing -
Honey from the rock.

From 'Songs of a Seeker', reviewed on page 21

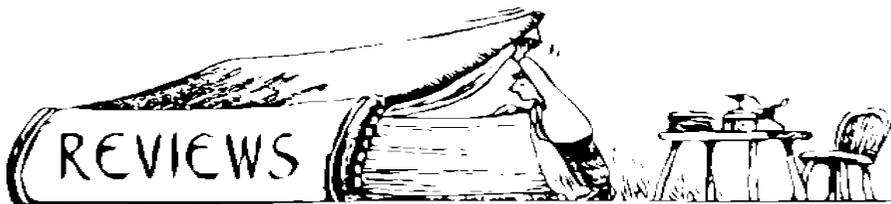
God the Creator
as I tend my garden each day
I give thanks for your tender care of me

God the Son
as I feed my family each day
I give thanks that you feed me
with word and sacrament

God the Spirit
as I lie down to sleep
I give thanks for your guiding
through each day
and ask for your guarding
through the night

Trinity of love and power
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Bless your creation
Feed your children
Guard and guide us all

This day, this night
and for evermore. Amen



THE LUMINOUS WEB: Faith, Science and the Experience of Wonder

Barbara Brown Taylor

Canterbury Press, 2017 £10.99

ISBN 978-1-84825-965-2

The author explores the centuries long rift between science and faith, and their competing explanations of the universe. Science was objective, interested in the 'how', while religion looked at what things meant - you can't see faith and love through a microscope. Then, in the Age of Enlightenment, science found wonder, awe, mystery: Abraham Heschel said the excitement of new discoveries made religion irrelevant. Everyone was assumed to be either a science or an arts student, the one being rational and the other imaginative. But times are changing.

Brown Taylor looks at how this breach is healing, as they are no longer mutually exclusive. Both are fuelled by curiosity, driven by exploring doubts. Incarnation takes the physical world seriously. Becoming human mattered to Jesus, and it matters to God. Science may rely on observation and faith on revelation but both seek truth: both take facts of the universe, but interpret them to answer different questions.

The last century saw the theory of relativity, quantum physics and chaos theory. Only poetry can convey their amazing possibilities, which suggest life is not predictable, but that there are boundaries giving rise to the patterns that shape our lives. The physicist Niels Bohr said: "when it comes to atoms, language can be used only as poetry because you can't describe what you can't see."

Brown Taylor knowingly violates the boundary between scientific facts and their meaning for her faith, but it is clear where science ends and her own interpretation begins. "When

I am dreaming quantum dreams, what I see is an infinite web of relationship, flung across the vastness of space like a luminous net. It is made of energy not thread. As I look, I can see light moving through it as a pulse moves through veins... God is the web, the energy, the space, the light - revealed in that singular, vast net of relation that animates everything that is." What relativity, quantum physics and chaos theory suggest to her is that we belong to a web of creation in which absolutely nothing is inconsequential. Reality is an ever-unfolding process that defies precise prediction. Randomness has never appealed to mankind - but order and chaos shape our lives together. Patterns provide the order, the web of creation holds us in unity, free will ensures that nothing is inconsequential, that every one of us will change the world. Reading this lyrical book could enlarge your image of God and of our amazing universe.

Ann Morris

SONGS OF A SEEKER

Frank Parkinson

Omega Point Press, 2017: £5.00

There is a group which meets regularly and describes itself as being 'for those living on the edge of faith from the inside.' I suspect Frank Parkinson would feel at home there.

Theology has traditionally used language with caution: limitations arise when to choose one expression of a truth can be seen as excluding others. As Terry Pratchett said, 'All stories are true, for a given value of true'.

One escape from this conundrum is to use poetry. Poetry can act as a prism; it can split invisible light into a range of colours, enabling different facets of a complex subject to be examined more closely, and the interactions to be observed. This is what Frank Parkinson has done; his reflections offer alternative views on the nature of God, creation, humanity, and the interactions between them.

Robert Farrar Capon's 'Hunting the Divine Fox' begins with an oyster speculating on the nature of ballerinas, only to be told,

‘All this stuff really is, but it can’t possibly *be* the way you *think*’. An immovable oyster can never fully grasp the possibility of ballerinas. He can only argue from what he knows. The same is true when we try to talk about God. Frank Parkinson may annoy some people, but many will gain new insights as they reflect on his, sometimes challenging, poetic explorations of what a life of faith might mean.

Brian Morris

INCARNATIONAL MINISTRY: being with the church.

Samuel Wells,

Canterbury Press, Norwich. 2017. £15.30
ISBN 987-2-848-25926-3

Samuel Wells writes with the authority of extensive hands-on ministry in urban priority areas, which has resulted in a highly developed compassion and a deep love of people. He is the vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, and a regular guest on BBC radio’s “Thought for the Day”.

I found this a roller-coaster of a book. Wells describes and explains vast concepts....the trinity, discipleship and the offertory to name but a few....with a breath-taking clarity and a profound understanding of the human condition. Some paragraphs are so enlightening that I found myself coming up for air, to allow ideas to take root before reading on. I also found myself reaching for a dictionary sometimes, but not so often as to deter me from seeking more gems of wisdom and insight. This book has a “forever home” on my bookshelf, as a resource for many aspects of discipleship and ministry.

Wells proposes that being truly “with” requires a series of stages; presence, attention, mystery, delight, participation, partnership, enjoyment and glory. These stages are often (but not always) sequential. In the early chapters Wells applies this theory to “Being With” God, Oneself, Creation, and The Church. There follows a somewhat astonishing

chapter on “Being With Child”, a brave attempt at a reflection on parenthood in just 8 pages.

The final six chapters are used to carefully identify five types of need, and describe appropriate approaches for each. The chapter headings are: “Being With” the Troubled, (those who have largely brought trouble upon themselves), The Hurt (mainly victims of others), The Afflicted (those experiencing distressing but hopefully transient disease or setbacks), The Challenged (those with permanent, often overwhelming disabilities), and The Dying. I find him rather optimistic in suggesting that accompanying others through death can be congruent with enjoyment, but Wells makes a good case for staying with people through the mystery of the end-of-life process, however difficult that may be.

While each subject explored by Wells could warrant an entire book, his lucidity and depth of perception make each chapter a useful springboard for looking at ways in which we all need to be **with** others when ministering to them. I regard the time I spent reading it as time very well spent.

Jennifer Tann

HOLY LIVING: The Christian Tradition for Today

Rowan Williams

Bloomsbury 2017 £12.99

ISBN 978-1-4729-4608-9

Rowan Williams suggests that Christians are continual seekers, and that ‘holy lives point us to the scope and beauty of God’s action.’ By looking at ways in which people in the past grew in Godliness, (scripture writers, religious heroes and heroines) we can note how their practice of reflection and action built community – and how we might benefit from this today. The book aims to help us accept that Jesus’ work of living sacrificially for us asks us to commit to hearing the pain of the world, and be co-workers with God in our time and place. This book emphasises individual holiness, not in and for itself, but in order to live a holy life in community, and

suggests how we might achieve this.

Williams describes how Benedict's rule, revolutionary in his age, enabled the monks to live in 'God's workshop' by staying with it, however hard. Also by controlling their tongues, since grumbling destroys relationships, in a regime of equality that respects others and eliminates the abuse of power. This is a challenge in our isolating urban environments. We should look to the Bible, that begins in a garden and ends in a city, and concentrate on the bigger picture: social possibilities - not economic relationships.

Teresa of Avila recommended the contemplative way. 'Christ has made the way open for the Father to reach right into the depths of who we are, to reconnect with the buried image of God at our centre.'

For Julian of Norwich prayer is bound up in self-awareness and a keen eye for seeing what is getting in the way of God's active being in us. She challenges us with the question: are you content to believe you are loved?

Self knowledge is the key to allow God to love us, to accept that we are lovable, and to look at others through the eyes of love – to arm us with the habit of hope, and trust in the possibilities of compassion. Then we can fulfil our human destiny to show and share love with the world.

Williams says the shape of the Eastern Orthodox Church symbolises the divine presence in the world: the cross in square shape, representing the earth; the icons the presence of holy people; the baptised congregation being the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit – and finally the sacramental gift where the divine energy of the incarnate Christ is made available in the bread and wine. In our faith communities, we are brought into presence to become a kind of presence.

This is not an easy read – especially the last chapter, where William's academic side cannot be contained! But it is well worth persevering, as each essay is a treasure trove of nuggets of gold, insights and knowledge that I have not discovered anywhere else.

Ann Morris

THE GRACE OF WAITING: Learning Patience & Embracing its Gifts
Margaret Whipp

Canterbury Press 2017 £10.99
ISBN 978-1-84825-977-5

This is a deep, challenging book for today's world: a strong reminder to examine our own reasoning for busyness. Being disabled has slowed me down, and taught me patience, but Margaret's quote by Stephen Cherry is quite uncomfortable: *'Chronic busyness, should be seen as more a vice than a virtue, because it conspires to deaden our moral and spiritual sensitivities to the true value and purpose of God given time'*. Being 'busy' is often seen as socially admirable, but Margaret has developed a reflective answer to the question, 'Are you busy?': *'Chaplains try to avoid unthinking busyness'*. This has led to colleagues and friends saying how they'd like to break free from escalating hyper-activism: it is addictive and can lead to impatience, feelings of self-importance, burn out, and distorted perceptions.

Margaret was a consultant oncologist before ordination in the Church of England, and is currently a hospital chaplain. She gleaned much wisdom about waiting while standing alongside patients and families in hospital. Of the book's 8 chapters, the central 5 describe 5 vivid metaphors to explain practices / our experiences of waiting, and the consequent gift:

Wilderness	surrender and struggle	Sustenance
Winepress	steadfastness and solidarity	Simplicity
Watch	compassion and contemplation	Consolation
Winter	rootedness and resilience	Renewal
Womb	noticing and nourishing	Naming

The quality of our contemplation, the silence we share, is affected by the preceding activities of the day. Margaret suggests approaches to life experiences which allow us to adjust and be open to receive the above gifts through the Grace of waiting-learned patience, for a more gentle, creative life.

Fiona Elliott

HIDDEN WINGS
BORN TO FLY:
Margaret Silf

ISBN 978-0-232-53333-0
ISBN 978-0-232-53331-6

Darton, Longman & Todd, 2017 £12.99

In these two books Margaret Silf uses a scientific metaphor to illustrate the Christian idea of conversion – when we see our lives as lacking something essential and make the decision to change: the first and second half of life, separated by a dark night of the soul experience. She has shaped her language to be accessible to all searchers: kingdom becomes ‘kindom’; competition and cooperation merge into ‘coopetition’ to describe her vision of a new world order when individuals are transformed from caterpillar to butterfly.

She encourages us to find a spiritual roadmap in the chaos of world events so that together we can change the world. If we aim high we can succeed: ‘opposition can kill the dreamer, but never God’s dream.’ Deep in each of us is the ‘imaginal cell’ of our unborn future, that remake a caterpillar as a butterfly. *Hidden Wings*, narrated by an imaginal cell, combines insect evolution with current affairs, and our human need to understand our own caterpillar preoccupation with self. The rich mixture of similes, analogies and stories can be confusing, but there are some gems: opportunities come as a flat pack of the materials we need, but it’s up to us what we make of them. *Born to Fly* uses the same metaphor, but is a story from her own experience, leading to reflections and then questions. It is designed for use by individuals and groups.

Silf has a grand vision, but simplifies both the problem and the solution. There is much repetition. History shows change will cause chaos and violence – we live with crisis both caused and healed by individuals. We have choices: we can live with or against the dynamics of transformation. Human genes produce protestors, questioners, campaigners, rogues and prophets. Silf’s core message is that to become butterflies dancing into the future we must become the change we long for.

Jennifer Tann

The views expressed in this Magazine are those of each writer and are not necessarily held by the Editor or by the Julian Meetings Council.

Magazine Contributions

The Editor is always pleased to receive original articles, short meditations, stories, poems or artwork for the Magazine, but cannot guarantee that they will be included, and they may be edited before inclusion.

Book reviews (300 words max) should include title, author, ISBN, publisher, year published, hard- or paper-back, price.

**Please send contributions for the December Magazine
by 25 September 2018**

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