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THE LIVING CHURCH

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Healing for Sri Lanka's Fractured Families

By Jesse Masai

In May 2009 the bloodied guns fell silent in Sri Lanka, leaving the government victorious over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and leaving tens of thousands of civilians dead.

With the decades-old civil war over, observers hoped the warring parties would beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, never to take up swords against each other or train for war anymore (Isa. 2:4). Eleven years later, however, social disorganization and a blind eye from the world community have enabled those responsible for war atrocities to evade accountability.

The war has, however, left deep scars across Sri Lankan society.

According to 2017 data from both Sri Lankan police and the World Health Organization, the South Asian nation leads the world in suicide cases, with 80 percent of them being male.

The country's Department of Census and Statistics and the United Nations reported that 20 percent of all Sri Lankan children grow up fatherless.

Post-traumatic stress disorders are a significant challenge, owing to perils of war and the countless children who bore arms against their compatriots. Intimate partner violence has also been on the rise.

Amidst all the pain, the nation's Anglican church is finding a way forward.

The Rt. Rev. Dhiloraj Ranjit Canagasabay, the outgoing presiding bishop of the Church of Ceylon, was elected in 2011, during a time of increased political and religious tensions. In the tradition of his predecessors, the primate spoke, wrote, and provided leadership in mobilizing the church against harassment of religious minorities and in protesting undemocratic actions of the state.

Twenty-four months into his leadership, Bishop Canagasabay recalls a per-



Revival in Sri Lanka

sistent South African minister — the Rev. Dr. Cassie Carstens — walking into his office and asking to see him without notice.

Carsten's role as a parent and an ordained minister in South Africa's Dutch Reformed Church has given him a ringside seat in the country's troubled apartheid past. Carstens, a former chaplain of South Africa's groundbreaking Springboks rugby team, has devoted much of his life to mentoring young leaders.

His concern for dysfunctional families led him and other South Africans to establish The World Needs A Father in February 2011. TWNAF seeks to combat fatherlessness in more than 100 countries, starting in his native South Africa, which is plagued by families torn asunder by multigenerational racism.

"Our main focus is the preparation of boys and young men to be fathers one day, to help fathers provide proper leadership to their families and to restore fathers to their God-given place as servant-leaders of their families," he says.

Carsten's visit was an answered

prayer for Canagasabay. "When our front office staff let Rev. Dr. Cassie in, he told me about the burden God had laid on his heart for fathers in the world, triggering memories of my own troubled teenage years, when my dad began drinking and wreaking havoc on our happy family, making me contemplate suicide while asking God to make my own marriage work," the primate said.

"My wife and I knelt before God and wept. Our two children are Sri Lankans. The brokenness of the nation touched us. We were moved to get involved in the ministry of reconciliation," he said.

After Carsten introduced the ministry concept in 2015, the Diocese of Colombo began reaching out to other churches, and nearly 100 clergy and lay leaders have been trained to lead the program in their local communities. The second phase involved training local trainers. Fifteen leaders were coached extensively, with a few even visiting South Africa for further formation.

"Once that groundwork was laid,



Canagasabey

they were then trained in the four primary roles of fatherhood, namely: To establish moral authority; to confer identity; to provide emotional security; and to affirm potential as parents and leaders across various sectors,” notes the primate.

Canagasabey adds: “The Diocese of Colombo is now engaging fathers both within and outside the Church, on occasion ecumenically, with the trainers helping rehabilitate many communities after the civil war. The ministry provides practical parenting tools, including resources and mentorship on bringing heaven home.”

At a second round of training, focused on forming mothers and sometimes children for their roles in family, many people openly testified about their personal transformation.

The ministry has so far reached 6,473 fathers across the diocese, and 185 people are now serving as trainers to extend the program to new communities.

Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the ministry has used periods of lockdown to encourage fathers to be with their families and hold joint daily prayers. Fathers have also been empowered to conduct Sunday worship at home, with liturgies provided in Sinhala, Tamil, and English.

“We are healing society, not just families. It is no longer merely a case of Hindu Tamils or Buddhist Sinhalese, but a Church for us all — drinking from one cup, kneeling side by side; a sign for the future. I feel we are just scratching the surface. We have a long way to go,” notes the primate.

Their outreach efforts have largely gone digital, augmented by food supplies to the poor, ferrying beggars to hospitals and preaching the crucified Christ to desperate souls.

“COVID-19 is teaching us that we need God, who is shaking the foundations of our lives, pointing us back to Him and Him alone. TWNAF is now one of the family-based ministries of the Diocese of Colombo, aiming to


restore fatherhood in a fatherless generation,” Canagasabey said.

He concluded: “It truly is a testament to the work of the ministry, when many fathers who engage and participate in these events testify to having their minds opened and, in some cases, express that they have really been touched personally and spiritually to change their lifestyles. They are now more family-centric and focused on being true disciples by doing their part

to usher in God’s kingdom.”

Having retired on November 15, the primate hopes to continue encouraging parents across Asia to find healing for their own father and mother wounds before stepping into their God-designed roles in society.

Jesse Masai is a freelance journalist based in Limuru, Kenya. For more information on TWNAF, visit www.theworldneedsafather.com




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General Convention Postponed to 2022

To the surprise of nobody, the 2021 General Convention has been officially postponed until July 2022, still in Baltimore.

The 80th General Convention is now set for July 7-14, 2022. Assuming the COVID-19 pandemic is under control by then, the convention will end two weeks before the twice-postponed Lambeth Conference, a gathering of bishops from the worldwide Anglican Communion, which is held roughly every 10 years.

The convention provides a considerable tourism boost for the host city, and that played a role in the decision to hold the meeting in person in 2022 in Baltimore, rather than try to do it online in 2021.

Bishops Note 2 Errors in Hearing Panel Decision

By Kirk Petersen

The Hearing Panel that found the Bishop of Albany guilty of violating his vows made two errors of fact in publishing their decision, according to two bishops who co-sponsored Resolution B012, the 2018 General Convention resolution that mandated the availability of same-sex marriage rites in every diocese where such marriages are legal.

The Rt. Rev. Lawrence Provenzano, Bishop of Long Island, and the Rt. Rev. Dorsey McConnell, Bishop of Pittsburgh, state in an open letter on their websites that the Hearing Panel erred in saying that Resolution B012 “was properly constituted and passed as an authorized revision to the BCP” (Book of Common Prayer).

In fact, “B012 did not revise the Prayer Book. B012 merely set the terms for the *trial use* of the liturgies in question,” the bishops wrote.

As reported in *TLC*, efforts to add same-sex marriage rites to the prayer book at the 2018 General Convention met with strong opposition, particularly in the House of Bishops, and Resolution B012 was introduced as a compromise.

The idea that same-sex marriage rites had been written into the prayer book caused considerable consternation on social media and elsewhere when the Hearing Panel issued its decision on October 5. Bishop of Albany William H. Love singled out that statement in a letter to his diocese that day, saying he disagreed with the decision, “particularly their argument that B012 was passed as an authorized revision to the Book of Common Prayer.”

“The second error is a bit more subtle,” the bishops wrote. “The panel states that B012 requires *Rectors or Clergy in charge to make provision for same-sex couples, where civil law allows, to use the liturgies in their local congregation or worshipping community.*” They point out that the actual text of the resolution is slightly different, and that it goes on to say “*provided that nothing in this Resolve narrows the*

authority of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge (Canon III.9.6(a)).”

The cited canon reads in part, “the Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall at all times be entitled to the use and control of the Church and Parish buildings.” As the bishops put it in their letter, “General Convention was not abrogating the final authority of rectors to decide what liturgies could or could not take place within their churches.”

In other words, bishops may not bar the use of the liturgies in an entire diocese, but the rector of a particular church may bar the use there. All parties to the debate have long since agreed that any priest may decline to take part in any wedding ceremony for any reason.

The bishops said these were “honest mistakes” and “it is clear to us that the panel reached an appropriate decision.”

Clergy Compensation Report Enhanced

By Kirk Petersen

Church Pension Group has issued its annual survey of clergy compensation for 2019. The latest survey is the first major milestone in CPG’s efforts to fulfill four compensation-related resolutions from the 2018 General Convention, to help determine pay disparities based on gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

The new online tool enables users to click on individual dioceses (or provinces) on a map and examine compensation by gender for half a dozen attributes, including clerical order (priest or deacon), average Sunday attendance (ASA), compensation range, years of service, and more.

A few insights based on exploring the compensation tool:

- Clergy compensation has increased slightly faster than inflation in the past two decades. From 2000 to 2019, median compensation for full-time

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clergy increased from \$52,428 to \$81,250, or 55 percent. In 2000 dollars, the increase was from \$52,428 to \$55,250, or 5.4 percent. (The tool provides the raw numbers, but the percentages require calculation by the user.)

- The number of full-time clergy in domestic dioceses has declined from 6,022 in 2000 to 4,677 in 2019.
- “Full-time clergy,” as defined by CPG, has nothing to do with hours worked. Ritter said any clergy person whose compensation exceeds an inflation-adjusted threshold is considered full-time for statistical purposes. The threshold currently is \$35,548.
- Of the 5,344 clergy persons who receive compensation, 60 percent are male. Median annual compensation for male clergy is more than \$10,000 higher than for female clergy, \$80,994 to \$70,722, leading to a blended median of \$76,734.
- The compensation gap by gender is on a course to continue to narrow over time. The gap for clergy aged 65 to 72 is more than \$14,000, while for clergy 34 and younger it is only a bit more than \$3,000.

In 2021, CPG expects to add racial data to the report based on 2020 data, also in response to a 2018 General Convention resolution. Ritter indicated the racial report takes longer because of the need to begin collecting new data, while the gender-based reporting involves massaging data that CPG already was collecting.

Same-Sex Blessings Advance in Australia

By Mark Michael

The Appellate Tribunal, the highest legal authority in the Anglican Church of Australia, has ruled that same-sex couples may have their civil marriages blessed and that a diocese may remove the possibility of disciplinary action against members of the clergy who enter into a same-sex marriage.

The 5-1 ruling, issued on November 12, was framed in narrow, legal terms — while it authorizes the blessing of civil same-sex marriages, it does not authorize the performance of Anglican same-sex marriages. The tribunal members emphasized that they were

not changing church doctrine or authorizing practices beyond the particular dioceses whose actions had been challenged.

Their decision, though, will inflame tensions across a church deeply divided between small and declining dioceses that are committed to progressive change on human sexuality and the GAFCON-affiliated Diocese of Sydney, by far the church’s largest, which has suggested it could break away if the church revises its traditional teaching. (GAFCON stands for Global Anglican Future Conference, a traditionalist movement.)

The one member of the tribunal who objected to both decisions was Ms. Gillian Davidson, a lawyer who serves as a Sydney diocesan delegate to the church’s General Synod. She filed a 54-page dissent to the 67-page ruling, rejecting the majority position that the issues fall outside the realm of doctrine. She argued two things: 1.) that same-sex marriage is appropriately seen as a doctrinal issue, thus subject to regulation by the national church; and 2.) “The witness of the Church Universal is opposed to same-sex practice.”

The Australian church’s primate, Archbishop Geoffrey Smith, a moderate conservative who ascended to lead the province in April after a highly contested election process, stated that that tribunal’s decisions do not permit Australian Anglican clergy “to officiate at weddings other than those between a man and a woman.” He also referred to a 2017 General Synod resolution, which acknowledged that the doctrine of the church “is that marriage is an exclusive and lifelong union of a man and a woman.”

Sydney’s powerful archbishop, Glenn

Davies, wrote to his clergy on November 23 that “the effect of the majority opinion’s legal interpretation undermines the clear teaching of Scripture and thereby dishonors God.” He added, “Next year the General Synod will have opportunity to reflect upon both the majority and minority reports of the tribunal’s opinion as to which one truly reflects the Constitution’s declaration that ‘the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testament as being the ultimate rule and standard of faith given by inspiration of God and containing all things necessary to salvation.’”

Briefly...

The Rt. Rev. Luke Ken-ichi Muto was elected as the 19th primate and archbishop of the **Nippon Sei Ko Kai**, Japan’s Anglican church, at a meeting of the church’s General Synod held October 27-29. The synod, which was held online because of pandemic restrictions on large gatherings, elected him to a two-year renewable term. Muto succeeds the Most Rev. Nathaniel Uematsu, Bishop of Hokkaido, who has served as primate of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai for seven consecutive terms.

The Rt. Rev. Peter Kyongho Lee, Bishop of Seoul, was elected archbishop and primate of the **Anglican Province of Korea** at a recent meeting of the church’s General Synod. Lee, who has served as Seoul’s bishop since 2017, succeeds the Most Rev. Moses Nak Jun Yoo, Bishop of Busan, who had become primate in 2018.

The diocesan bishop and the indigenous bishop of **Saskatchewan** have

(Continued on next page)



Advent and Christmas Will Look Different This Year

(Continued from previous page)

both been diagnosed with COVID-19. The Rt. Rev. Michael Hawkins was hospitalized in mid-November and spent two days in intensive care. The Rt. Rev. Adam Halkett was at home in isolation. The bishops apparently contracted the disease independently of each other.

Police in **Zambia** have arrested a man who allegedly dragged an Anglican priest out of the pulpit during a sermon and began punching him in the face. The incident apparently involved a dispute over a parking lot at Kalingalinga Anglican Church, near the capital of Lusaka. The priest, who has not been identified, suffered swollen lips.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby will take a three-month sabbatical in the summer of 2021 to study the concept of reconciliation, which has been a focus of his ministry. Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell will lead the church while Welby spends most of his sabbatical in Cambridge or the United States.

By Neva Rae Fox

In normal years, with Advent and Christmas rapidly approaching, planning for the traditional observances and events, by this time, would have been completed, publicized, and posted, with rehearsals underway.

But 2020 has proven to be far from normal.

The status of churches is different across the country. Some are open, some closed, but there are whispers about the possibility of closing again because of the encroaching second wave of the coronavirus. That makes planning for Christmas and Advent difficult, with some still not sure what direction worship and seasonal events will take.

But the Episcopal Church is undaunted and will not let isolation get in the way. From worship to pageants, Lessons and Carols to decorations, Christmas 2020 will be different in presentation, but not in sentiment and

purpose. Pre-recorded services, organ music with no choir, outdoor services, and Zoom pageants are among the innovative plans.

Many are opting for a virtual rendition of the standards. The Rev. Susanna Cates, rector of All Saints Church, Scotch Plains, New Jersey, presented a scenario typical for many. “This year, we’ll have a virtual pageant — we’ve traditionally done the pageant tableau-style. The older kids serve as narrators from Scripture, and after a reading, a carol is sung while costumed younger children process down the aisle of the church and take their places for a manger scene. We’ll be able to do this online with the kids at home!”

The Rt. Rev. W. Michie Klusmeyer, Bishop of West Virginia, noted, “we weren’t hit as bad” in his diocese. West Virginia churches were shut down in March but “were allowed to reopen on Pentecost with protocols.”

Now, looking ahead to Christmas, West Virginia mirrors other areas, especially the absence of singing. “Lessons and Carols will be greatly affected this year,” Klusmeyer said.

Even far-flung Hawaii, Guam, and Micronesia were not spared coronavirus or the effects of the pandemic. “As Easter was hard, I think Christmas will be harder,” said the Rt. Rev. Robert L. Fitzpatrick, Bishop of Hawaii. “There are many who only come on Christmas. Decorations have to be different. Services will be different.”

Two Hawaiian congregations are trying drive-in lessons and carols, the bishop said, and others are the diocese is talking about how to do virtual children’s pageants.

But, Fitzpatrick asked, “How do you have Christmas without singing?”

Stewart Campbell, who provides online video services for Trinity Cathedral, Reno, Nevada, assured that the usual number of holiday services — albeit livestreamed — will go on. “We will be doing one on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, News Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day.”

In Houston, the Church of St. John



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Dioceses Innovate for Annual Conventions

By Neva Rae Fox

the Divine plans to canvass the congregation for their preferences. Director of Communications Andrea Meiers explained, “We are still trying to figure out what to do. Our tentative plan includes 2-3 outdoor services with social distancing. That being said, we just sent out a parish survey to take the temperature of what our parishioners feel is safe and desirable.”

Decorations, both inside and outside church, require a new design.

Typical of the scaling back for 2020, altar guild member Katrina Soto of St. Clement’s by the Sea in San Clemente, California, noted, “We will probably have a few potted poinsettias (fewer than usual)” along with the Advent Wreath.

Sally Eyman Price of St. Thomas Church, Newark, Delaware, said the church will be doing “*much* more outside decorating. Lots of lighting. We want to remind people we’re still here!” Similarly, a festive light show on the bell tower to illuminate the sky was promised at the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Honolulu.

Outreach is also an important component of Advent and Christmas celebrations, and many expect a significant increase in need.

Fitzpatrick pointed out that the visitor/travel industry is the major employer in the islands, and without visitors, there is widespread unemployment. “No one is traveling here. The economy is greatly affected.”

As a result, the need for outreach has skyrocketed. Fitzpatrick said diocesan emergency funds are going to help keep food banks open. “The story of the Incarnation is about God’s love for us. We get to carry that through by caring for others.”

Cates summarized the feelings of many for Christmas 2020. “I want our church to be very intentional about focusing on the humility and danger of Christ’s birth — his family’s peril, their status as oppressed and downtrodden in a hostile land, the absolute powerlessness that God takes on to be with us. While we want to include the bells and whistles of Christmas joy, we also want to acknowledge the pain and loss that so many people will feel very keenly this year, as in no other.”

From Alaska to Wiesbaden and all points in between, the Episcopal Church deftly revamped plans for 2020 diocesan conventions, transferring to an online format because of the pandemic. Although the move proved labor-intensive, by all indications it was worth the work.

Despite the limitations of not meeting in-person, it was business as usual with reports, elections, resolutions, and budget discussions. The different format prompted creative ways of presenting the usual info in a not-so-usual manner.

The Diocese of Pittsburgh decided to make the switch early. “The group was concerned that the longer a decision was put off, the harder it would be to change course if and when one option was ruled out,” spokesman Rich Creehan said. “The five-month lead provided ample time to work through the new logistics of holding an online meeting for approximately 150 participants, as well as having the appropriate diocesan governing bodies (e.g. Standing Committee and Diocesan Council) sign off on the plan.”

Many dioceses reported attendance did not suffer because of the online presentation, nor did it necessarily increase.

Josh Hornbeck, canon missionary for communications for the Diocese of Olympia, said “Holding Convention online allowed for wider participation from individuals who might not be able to make the trek to a central Convention location, and allowed for both workshop and presentations for a wider range of ministries and groups from within the diocese on a range of topics — from engaging young adults to one church’s novel approach to online funeral services.”

Stephen Richards, communications specialist for the Diocese of Rochester, was cognizant of people’s time and energy. “We actually shortened Convention time to be aware of Zoom-fatigue.”

Online pre-convention hearings provided the opportunity to iron out some technical wrinkles.

Bishop Mark Edington of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe,

who has churches “spread over seven countries and nine time zones,” is a strong proponent of pre-planning. “Thinking anew. Imagining way in advance, as well as we could, all the things that could go wrong, and trying to anticipate them. Developing a tutorial for delegates helping them learn how to fully participate in an online meeting. Upgrading internet connectivity at the central hosting site. Learning new tools and learning how to integrate them. Figuring out how to honor the letter and spirit of our canons — and French law, under which we are incorporated — to make it all happen. Rehearsing. And rehearsing.”

Communications Director Katie Clark of the Diocese of Maine explained, “Bishop Thomas Brown has instituted weekly Town Hall meetings for all clergy and lay leaders each Tuesday, and that has had an unintended benefit that we ‘see’ each other in one Zoom room weekly. We have a large geographical footprint in Maine so doing that in person is difficult on a regular basis. In that way, we have been able to stay in better communication with each other during Coronatide.”

In the Diocese of Lexington, an innovative idea — meeting at a drive-in theater — allowed for a necessary pre-convention gathering. The Rev. Canon Elise B. Johnstone, canon to the ordinary, explained, “On August 29, clergy and lay deputies headed to Mt. Sterling and the Judy Drive-In. They were checked in without contact, given the FM radio frequency to tune in to, and were shown where to park by Convention Planning Group members. After it was established that the necessary quorum had assembled, Bishop Van Koevering promptly called the Special Convention to order with a prayer from the back of a pickup truck, his voice resonating through the radios of attendees. Attendees answered the Bishop’s opening prayer with a chorus of car horns honking an Amen!” Johnstone added the closing prayer was “affirmed by a chorus of car horns.”

Visit livingchurch.org to read a longer version of this and other stories.

Sarah, Theodora, and Syncletica, January 5

By James Stambaugh

One notable feature of the Episcopal Church's new sanctoral calendar is that saints of the desert monastic tradition are represented to a greater degree than in previous calendars. By my count there are 10 desert monastics of the fourth and fifth centuries represented in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2018*. Of those, eight are women. This is appropriate given the instrumental role women had in the foundation of desert monasticism.

The prevalence of women in the desert hermitages and communities that sprung up in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria in the fourth century is sometimes obscured by the attention that male monastics received in subsequent devotional and historical inquiry. But the evidence for extraordinary women at the heart of desert monasticism shouldn't be ignored. Many thousands of women in the fourth and fifth centuries left home and devoted themselves to prayer in the desert. Their wisdom, spiritual authority, and stature shines through in the early writings about desert monasticism despite more attention paid to their male counterparts.

Three excellent examples, worthily deemed Desert Mothers, are Sarah, Theodora, and Syncletica, commemorated on January 5. Of the thousand women monastics whose names were recorded, and the thousands more who remained anonymous, these three were included in the collections of monastic wisdom known as the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. Forty-two sayings out of

just over one thousand are attributed to these women. Yet, their contributions to monastic wisdom are both significant and in continuity with the tradition as a whole.

The *Sayings* preserve 27 examples of Syncletica's wisdom, more than all but seven of the Fathers and Mothers who appear in the collection. Syncletica's sayings are characterized by a pragmatism that tempered the most extreme displays of asceticism, and a realistic understanding of human nature. In line with much of desert monastic wisdom, Syncletica taught that humility is central to the monastic life, "Just as one cannot build a ship without nails, so it is impossible to be saved without humility."

As a scion of a wealthy family and widow of a Roman tribune, Theodora began her time in the desert disguised as a man, hiding from any deferment she may have received. Eventually she became the amma of a community of women near Alexandria, where she was sought for spiritual counsel by many prominent monastics and clergy, including the Patriarch of Alexandria.

Sarah was a hermit who lived near Scetis in the northwest Nile Delta of Egypt. She was so devoted to prayer during her 60 years as a hermit that, it is said, she never once looked up from praying to take in the panorama of the Nile visible from her hermitage. Once, a group of male monastics visited Sarah with the purpose of humiliating and demeaning her. Their assumption of superiority over female monastics exposed their spiritual pride. When they confronted Sarah and ironically



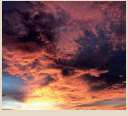
Syncletica of Alexandria

chided her for being a prideful woman, she said to them, "According to nature I am a woman, but not according to my thoughts." She is also recorded as saying to (presumably the same) monastic brethren, "It is I who am a man, you are the women." Her sayings demonstrate that Sarah refused to allow the gender bias of others to interfere with her own piety and vocation as a spiritual guide and teacher.

It is long past time to understand and appreciate the pivotal role of women in monasticism, spirituality, and every other aspect of the Church's life and faith. It is beneficial to learn from the examples of Sarah, Theodora, and Syncletica and heed their wisdom, which transcends their ancient monastic context and speaks to our own. It is fitting to venerate these saintly women for their holiness and their devotion to prayer. They do the one job of every true saint—they point us toward Jesus Christ.

The Rev. James Stambaugh is rector of the Church of the Holy Apostles, Wynnewood, Pennsylvania.

Fix our hearts on You, O God, in pure devotion, that aided by the example of your servants Sarah, Theodora, and Syncletica, the vain pursuits of this world may have no hold upon us, and that by the consuming fire of your Spirit, we may be changed into the image and likeness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with you and the same Spirit be all honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.



Cæli enarrant

Movement of Unity

Approaching the end of this strange year, it has felt momentous to us at TLC to plan boldly for the future, as we have done in *Strategic Plan 2020* (printed in full in the November 15 issue of *The Living Church*). Shepherded to completion by our board and enthusiastically endorsed by our foundation of 43 international Anglican leaders, the plan sets out clearly and, we hope, compellingly, a detailed agenda for our ministry over the next five years. It is built upon three primary objectives: (1) to expand our global reach as a publisher and as a movement; (2) to expand the teaching resources that we offer; and (3) to strengthen parish ministry. These objectives mutually reinforce one another, since our publications and events are offered to the whole Church, at home and abroad, to support leaders at all levels and to enable faithful catechesis and mission.

Five years is a long time in the Church these days amid so much rapid change — decline *and* growth (see Luke 19:26), set within a rapidly evolving technological culture, steady urbanization, shrinking middle class, widening ideological division, broad mistrust of institutions, and forgetfulness of the past, all of which the pandemic is accelerating. Grappling with such challenges, we have been grateful to rearticulate TLC’s longstanding commitment to serve the cause of unity. As we say in our mission statement: “Rooted in the Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion, the Living Church Foundation seeks to champion the catholic and evangelical faith of the one Church and to hasten the visible unity of all Christians.”

Oneness, unity: the oldest call that may be found in Scripture, rooted in God’s singular identity, his simple *being*, offered to Moses: “I AM WHO I AM” (Exod. 3:14). The Christian Church makes this faith its own as we confess God’s trinity. In Jesus’ own profession: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD is one” (Mark 12:29; cf. Deut. 6:4). On this basis, Jesus prays to the Father that his disciples likewise “may *all* be one: As you, Father, are in me and I am in you” (John 17:21). And he demonstrates by his death that God *makes* the Church one, by “breaking down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Eph. 2:14).

Left to our own devices, unity of spirit and purpose, expressed through care for one another — “having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2:2) — remains out of reach. Who in the world, our nations, or our cities has the power to establish deep and lasting unity in service of truth, goodness, and beauty? Would-be united nations make declarations of universal human rights, setting

out minimal expectations for dignity, but these still need to be taught and defended in a bid to cut off selfishness and curb corruption, all of which is only preparatory to actual flourishing. Again, relative comity of global powers may be seen in truces, scaled-down defenses, and free-trade agreements, but these are adopted on grounds of national interest that function both as strategic means and all-too-exhaustive, diminished ends. In this and so many other ways, autonomy displaces communion. Sadly, we may be able to imagine no greater unity today — no more enduring institution or binding agent, capable of bridging distance and difference — than internet access for all, urged on by omnivorous markets. On the day that every human being on earth (*per impossibile*) stands on equal footing of communication and commerce, smart phone in hand, we still will not have asked, much less answered, the question of what we are made for, that is, what it means to think and speak in the first place. We will yet await direction, the purpose or call to mission, which we would “see and touch” (1 John 1:1).

Our Holy Scriptures provide just such a vision, rooted in the *experience* of unity that St. Paul describes as a call to *all* people, both Jews and Gentiles, to “welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7). This call to unity subsists in God’s own faithfulness in his Son, who is the only moral actor capable of delivering the full faith and credit of catholic and apostolic truth that we all long for, whether we know it or not. Here, at last, *real* universality in service of enacted dignity and persistent flourishing may be found. The proof is resurrection.

In place of assertion and bluff, God in Christ makes good on unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity by binding all who follow him to membership in his own body. Henceforth, his members are *unable*, Paul says, to refuse communion with one another, on pain of incoherence. Having consigned former alienations and hatreds to the dustbin of forgiveness, and having put on love, they — we — say to one another instead, *I have need of you*. For God has arranged “that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor. 12:25-26; cf. 12:21 and 1 Cor. 13). Offered to a world long since surrendered to division, such communion provides astonishing testimony to the power of God in history; truly, a new thing, demonstrable and visible: a miracle.

All of this may seem rather grand for a magazine, but that’s not what the founding editors of *The Living Church* thought when, in 1878, they published their

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first issue as an offering to a divided Episcopal Church, depleted by party strife. The vision of one Church *alive* in Christ and his Spirit, reconciled across denominations, struck them not simply as a desirable thing, but as a condition of coherence, and indeed obedience. Tapping into the bridge-building charisms of Anglicanism at its best, by which we speak bilingually as Catholics and evangelicals, they threw themselves into the work of Church

unity, alongside many similarly committed Episcopalians and Anglicans. Our greatest editor, F.C. Morehouse, a devout layman, edited and published *The Living Church* from 1900-1932 out of the offices of Morehouse Publishing Co. in Milwaukee. He served the Episcopal Church tirelessly, not least as a delegate to the first World Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1927. His son Clifford carried on the work for 20 more years before handing on the reins, serving in

later life on the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church and as president of the House of Deputies of General Convention. (See his wonderful *Layman Looks at the Church* [Seabury, 1964], an entry in the Episcopal Book Club that year.)

We hope that our friends, readers, and supporters will read our strategic plan in the light of this venerable commitment of TLC and join with us in working for the visible unity of the body of Christ on earth, for which our Lord prayed. I believe that TLC's resilience as a ministry, approaching 150 years, is attributable in large part to its having devoted itself to this sacred trust, given by God for the furtherance and defense of his Church. To serve unity is to honor God's own heart. It is to place others first, and to refuse to accept divisions as inevitable or insuperable. To place unity at the front and center of a communications ministry like ours is to say that truth *about others* will be a priority; that we will speak about them as if they were with us now, as the indispensable arm or leg of our own body that they in fact are.

We cannot think of more serious or difficult, nor more rewarding and ennobling, work. We find it to be as urgently needed now as ever. Starting at home, in our own church and communion, we venture out by dint of authenticity and obedience, recognizing that cooperation is the medium and means of the message itself. And we pray to be made faithful by the One who was and is and is to come: even our Lord Jesus Christ, whose name we confess with *all* our sisters and brothers, in every nook and cranny of Christendom. To them we are bound. With them we will be saved, by God's grace.

On behalf of all the staff at TLC, and of our governing foundation, thank you for the honor and joy of serving you. We pray for the Lord's strong hand on our work, guiding and equipping our service of the Anglican Communion and the Church Catholic as they make their way along the pilgrim path of repentance, reparation, and restored fullness in God's good time.

Merry Christmas. May we all be one!
—Christopher Wells



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As you consider your year-end giving, please keep us in mind. No matter the size of your gift, you can be sure your contribution will help heal a child or restore wholeness to a family.

Learn about all the ways you can help at SaintFrancisMinistries.org.

Colin Ambrose

I suggest a Solo Stove Bonfire. As we know, the safest place to visit with family and friends during the pandemic is outdoors. With the weather turning colder, there is no better place to gather than around the warmth of a fire. One of our favorite family activities is to spend an evening around an outdoor fire without the distractions of our electronic devices. Stay safe and stay warm!

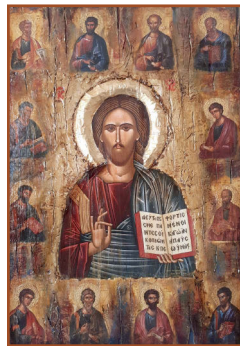
The Rev. Colin Ambrose is vice rector of St. George's Episcopal Church in Nashville and a new member of the Living Church Foundation.



Liza Anderson

Icons always make wonderful gifts, but even more so during these months when for many of us the only sacred space we have access to is whatever we can create in our own homes. Etsy has a wonderful selection of icons that are made by hand — including a wide range of icons from the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, which can help us to contemplate Christ and the saints in a new way.

Dr. Liza Anderson is an assistant professor of theology at the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota.

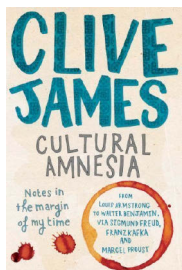


John Bauerschmidt

I have been a fan of the essayist and television presenter Clive James since reading his memoirs of life as a post-graduate Australian transplanted to Britain in the 1960s. In *Cultural Amnesia* (Norton, 2007), James, who died in 2019, collected a number of essays on people whose significance he thought we were in danger of forgetting. The collection is as idiosyncratic as its author, and can be dipped into at

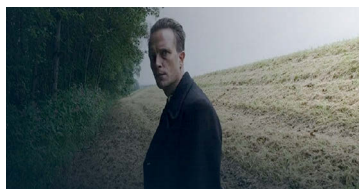
leisure for both amusement and edification.

The Rt. Rev. John Bauerschmidt is Bishop of Tennessee and president of the Living Church Foundation.



Hans Boersma

I'm not a movie fan; or rather, I like them too much. I think about movies like Saint Augustine thought about theatrical shows. All too captivated, he admits: "Like the scratches of fingernails, they produced inflamed spots, pus, and repulsive sores." But maybe Augustine's movie rule has exceptions. If so, Terrence Malick's *Hidden Life* (2019) is one, and would make a worthy Christmas gift. The saintly resistance of Franz Jäger-



stätter to Nazi propaganda models courage in the face of overwhelming cultural and ecclesial pressure.

Dr. Hans Boersma holds the Saint Benedict Servants of Christ Chair in Ascetical Theology at Nashotah House Theological Seminary.

Donavan Cain

Knowing that religious communities are offering unceasing prayer for the Church and world this year is a tremendous comfort. One way to support monks and nuns in turn is to purchase handmade gifts from monastic communities. I'm ordering some delicious dried Oyster & Shitake mushrooms grown by the Trappist monks at Mepkin Abbey in Moncks Corner, South Carolina, and picking up some homemade Bourbon Fudge from the Abbey of Gethsemani in Trappist, Kentucky.

The Rev. Donovan Cain is rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Jacksonville, Florida.



Joshua Caler

I suggest *All the Good Times* (2020) by Gillian Welch and David Rawlings. This record captures our moment in beautiful, stripped-down covers of classic Americana. As Rawlings wrote of their homemade pandemic record: "Sometimes we bumped the microphone, sometimes the tape ran out, but in the end, we captured performances of some songs we love." Here's to remembering beauty and joy are still possibilities, even when the tape runs out.

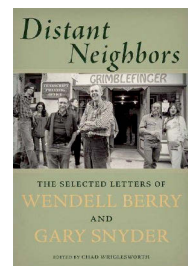
The Rev. Joshua M. Caler is rector of Christ Church, Pottstown, PA.



Andy Doyle

I am a sucker for slippers and commend the Men's Christmas Fleece Clog House Slippers from Lands' End. From my antiquarian book list (via eBay): Hilaire Belloc's *Hills and the Sea* (1906), a delightful travel book. A more recent gem: *Distant Neighbors* (Counterpoint, 2014) by Wendell Berry and Gary Snyder; see their interview on YouTube. For your beloved theologian on a warm winter night: Peter H. Sedgwick's *The Origins of Anglican Moral Theology* (Brill, 2018).

The Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle is Bishop of Texas.

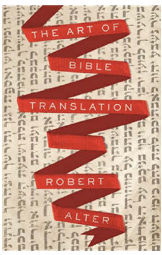


Elizabeth Elin

Robert Alter's *The Art of Bible Translation* (Princeton, 2019) is a marvelous addition to the library of any lover of Scripture. Alter's voice is wonderfully refreshing as he provides readers with an insider's look at his process of translation.

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Filled with comments on other modern translations of the Old Testament and a deep appreciation for the beauty of the Hebrew scriptures, Alter's work is sure to delight.

Elizabeth Elin is a sophomore studying theology and English at Saint Vincent College in Pennsylvania, and calls Cincinnati home.

Rob Hirschfeld

Thirty years ago, Ephraim Radner presided at our wedding on the sunny field of my wife's home on Long Island, and gave us a wonderful cookbook as a wedding present. It has sustained us and our three children through the years. In these pandemic days, when we have missed the *anamnesis* of the Divine Liturgy, there is still prosciutto, olive oil, and spinach to kindle our hearts. From Norman Kolpas, *Pasta Presto: 100 Fast & Fabulous Pasta Sauces* (Contemporary Books: 1988), here is "Frizzled Spinach with Prosciutto":

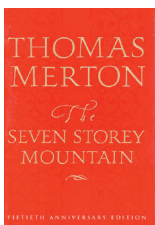


- 1 ¼ cups olive oil
- 6 medium garlic cloves, finely chopped
- ½ pound thinly sliced prosciutto, cut into ¼ inch strips
- 2 bunch spinach, stemmed, ribbed, thoroughly washed, cut crosswise into ¼ inch strips
- 2 teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes
- Freshly ground black pepper

In a large skillet, heat oil over moderate-to-high heat. Sauté garlic; add prosciutto and sauté until it begins to frizzle, 2 to 3 minutes more. Add spinach leaves and pepper flakes to oil; stir quickly until all shreds have frizzled, about 30 seconds. Spoon immediately over cooked pasta and season generously with black pepper.

The Rt. Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld is Bishop of New Hampshire.

Neva Rae Fox



As we prepare again to welcome our Savior, amid both winter darkness and pandemic worry, I commend re-reading, or enjoying for the first time, Thomas Merton's autobiographical *Seven Storey Mountain* (1948). Also excellent: *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning* (2012) by the late great Rabbi Jonathan Sacks; Dietrich Bonhoeffer's still-fresh *Cost of Discipleship* (1937); and this gem, recently recovered from a drawer: *Meditations for Women Who Do Too Much* (1990). *Neva Rae Fox is a communications consultant, a Living Church correspondent, and a member of the Living Church Foundation and the Bible and Prayer Book Society.*

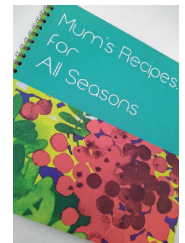
Emma Ineson

For the nearly 30 years of our marriage I have made home-made granola, every two weeks without fail. There would now be uproar if I ever tried to introduce shop-bought cereal to our breakfast table! Last year I gave a jar to every member of our bishops' leadership team. Mix 1kg of oats, a handful of bran, some chopped nuts and mixed seeds, with some oil, honey, and orange juice. Spread on a baking tray and bake on low for around 1 hour, turning regularly. Add raisins or other dried fruit once cooled. Enjoy!
The Rt. Rev. Emma Ineson is Bishop of Penrith in the Church of England.



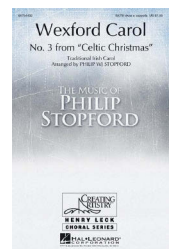
Eeva John

After my children left home, every once in a while one of them would request a recipe for a dish that was a regular part of the family repertoire when they were growing up. One Christmas I decided to gather up all these favourite dishes into a very limited edition, colourfully illustrated cookbook. It was so much fun to do and continues to be a way of connecting us around our different meal tables.
Dr. Eeva John is from Finland and serves the Church of England's Living in Love and Faith project.



Heidi Kim

My absolute favorite song to sing or listen to for Christmas is the *Wexford Carol*, especially the version arranged by Phillip Stopford. As a church musician and professional singer, that is really saying something! It reminds me of the hope and mystery of the Christmas season, and instills a sense of reassurance and comfort. I hope it will do the same for you.
Heidi J. Kim is an Episcopalian who came to the church via the choir. She lives in Minneapolis and is a new member of the Living Church Foundation.



Jeff MacDonald

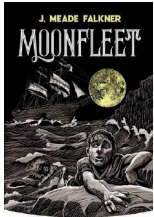
The Wilderness Systems Tsunami 140 Kayak. Kayaking has taken off this year as the perfect pandemic sport with inherent social distancing built in, and there's no reason to stop after a vaccine comes out. The Tsunami 140 makes for a fast, stable ride on ponds, lakes, rivers, and the ocean. Use your vehicle's roof rack system to bring her just about anywhere for a fun day of relaxing exercise that feels like a full week's vacation.
G. Jeffrey MacDonald is an independent journalist and long-time TLC correspondent.



Mark Michael

Moonfleet (1898), a classic adventure tale by J. Meade Falkner, was a favorite for bedtime reading in our family this year. Set in 18th-century Dorset, the story includes a ghost-haunted crypt, smugglers' plots, and a dramatic shipwreck. Pious parents will be delighted by its scriptural cipher and churchly piety, as well as the spiritual depth of its well-drawn characters.

The Rev. Mark Michael is editor of TLC and rector of St. Francis Church, Potomac, Maryland.



Ephraim Radner

In this commercially constricted time, use eBay: it is filled with small sellers who need help and have great things. I like to buy small prints as gifts. Try the amazing Container Corporation of America 1950's lithographs of "great ideas": Dr. Johnson, Spinoza, Aristotle in marvelous modern forms and colors. Or find an early 19th-century engraving of one of your (or your friend's) heroes or heroines of the faith — Donne, Hannah More.

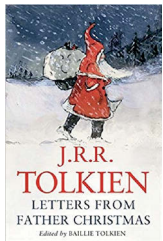
The Rev. Ephraim Radner is professor of historical theology at Wycliffe College, Toronto.



Joey Royal

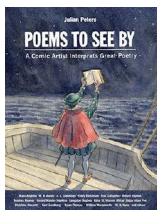
Several Christmases ago I received a copy of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Letters from Father Christmas* (1976). My hardback copy, published by Harper-Collins, contains full color reproductions of letters written annually by Tolkien to his children. The whole thing is whimsical and delightful, and includes drawings and tales of polar bears climbing (and falling from) the north pole, elves and reindeer running loose, goblins causing mischief, and many examples — some playful, some poignant — of Tolkien's love for language and mythology.

The Rt. Rev. Joseph Royal is a suffragan bishop in the Diocese of the Arctic.



Andrew Russell

Lovers of poetry, lovers of visual art, and those who would like a bit more exposure to both would all be perfect recipients of *Poems to See By: A Comic Artist Interprets Great Poetry* (Plough, 2020) by Julian Peters. Including selections from Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, Edgar Allen Poe, and many others, Peters pairs visually compelling illustrations with some of the greatest poems in the English language to help readers see poetry in a new way. *The Rev. Andrew Russell is TLC's digital media manager, and otherwise teaches classes in Bible and English literature at*

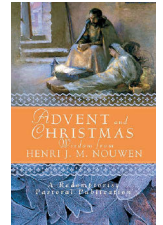


Evangel Classical Christian School in Alabaster, Alabama, and is curate at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Tuscaloosa.

Stephanie Spellers

Henri Nouwen is a dear spiritual companion any time of year, but his voice is especially poignant during Advent and Christmas. His conveniently collected *Advent and Christmas Wisdom* volume (Liguori, 2004) shows what it is to wait and truly yearn for God, and to finally experience God in Christ fully dwelling in our midst and calling us "beloved." What a gift!

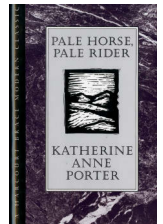
The Rev. Stephanie Spellers lives in New York City and serves as canon to the Presiding Bishop for evangelism, reconciliation, and creation care.



Leigh Spruill

As an avid reader of 20th-century American fiction, I am embarrassed it took coronavirus to introduce me to Katherine Anne Porter. Porter's classic novella *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* is about young lovers swept-up in the so-called Spanish flu pandemic and includes an unforgettable vision of what awaits us beyond this fever-wearied world. Thankfully, it also led me to take up her larger corpus of superb writing, conveniently gathered in her *Collected Stories* (Harcourt Brace, 1979).

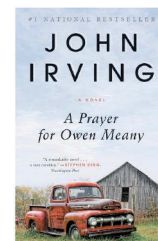
The Rev. R. Leigh Spruill will take up his new position as rector of the Church of St. John the Divine, Houston, in January.



Don Waring

When I was serving my first church a parishioner gave me a copy of *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (1989) by John Irving. I couldn't put it down. I have since bought many copies for friends and family and even made it required summer reading for staff retreats in parishes I have served. If someone on your Christmas list has questions about discerning and responding to God's call, this funny, heartbreaking, deeply theological book may be just the right stocking stuffer.

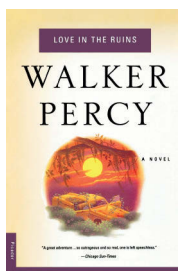
The Rev. J. Donald Waring is rector of Grace Church Broadway in New York City.



Christopher Wells

A gift for the weary and the wise, and for a precocious seeker: Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins* (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1971), a highly enjoyable romp in a comic-philosophical key, packed with edgy commentary on race, politics, and the anthropological questions of our day. Percy's

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novels provide inroads for uttering Catholic truth afresh in the modern world, and this one felt especially prophetic for the Time of the Virus. Percy is a sly evangelist and a large-hearted lover.

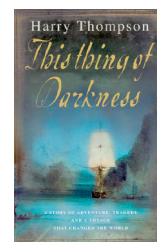
Dr. Christopher Wells is executive director and publisher of the Living Church Foundation.

Sam Wells

I was utterly absorbed by Harry Thompson's novel *This Thing of Darkness* (Headline, 2005), which narrates Charles Darwin's sea voyage to the Galapagos. It's a ravishing tale with marvelous characters. The heart of the book is a series of conversations between Darwin and his sea captain,

Robert Fitzroy, an earnest Christian, often about interpretations of creation and the flood. Fitzroy emerges as the true center of the book, and an unjustly neglected hero of his time.

The Rev. Sam Wells is vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London.



Charleston Wilson

It's almost time for Christmas 2020, and I suspect that many have a serious case of wanderlust. I'm giving (and hopefully receiving) travel-themed Christmas gifts this year. I love the scratch-off map that



Amazon sells.

You can scratch-off where you've been, which will then reveal where you may want to go when the pandemic is over. If you're more sensory-driven, I love destination scented candles, although my home state of Alabama is underrepresented! *The Rev. Charleston D. Wilson is rector of Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota, Florida.*

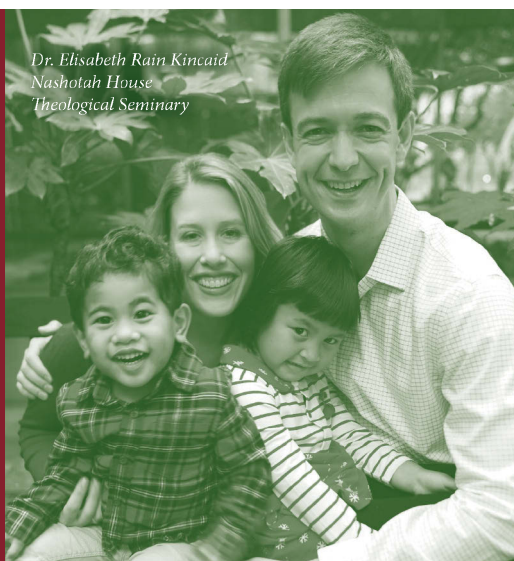
**This Christmas,
change a life
with a planned gift
to TLC.**

BEQUESTS

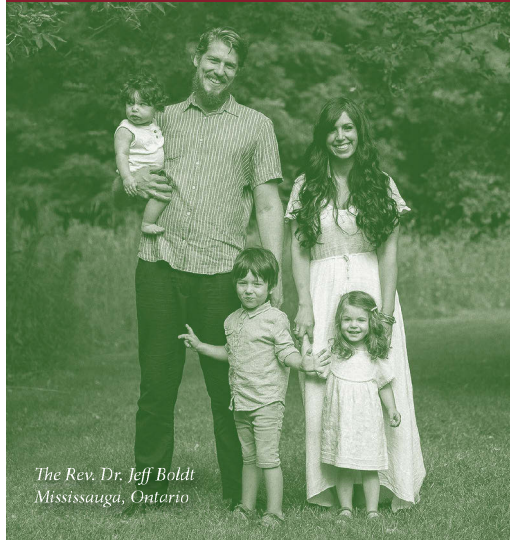
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During this Advent and Christmas, consider a planned gift that will leave a mark on God's family and his ministers of the gospel. Your gifts will go toward raising up the next generation of ministry and leadership in the Episcopal Church through the Living Church Endowment.

Contact Dr. Christopher Wells, Executive Director, at cwells@livingchurch.org or (574) 323-7095 to discuss options, or go to livingchurch.org/donate to give immediately.

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

Paul Zahl

I suggest the newly released Blu-ray boxed set *Deanna Durbin Collection I*, containing three timeless romantic comedies directed by Henry Koster. Pre-COVID, I knew Koster's work (e.g., *The Robe*, *A Man Called Peter*, *The Bishop's Wife*); he was a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany with a lifelong attraction to Christianity, which shows in most of his movies. Durbin, however, is new to me, though she was the second highest paid actress in the world in the mid-1940s. In this new collection, *It Started with Eve* beautifully reflects real life and self-giving love. Merry Christmas!
The Rev. Paul Zahl is a retired Episcopal priest living in Central Florida.



THE LIVING CHURCH
SERVING THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST

Ye Who Now Will Bless the Poor

Good King Wenceslas,
John Mason Neale, and
Sackville College

By Charles Hoffacker

Look at the index entitled “Authors, Translators, and Sources” in *The Hymnal 1982* reveals that the Church of England priest John Mason Neale (1818-1866) is among the major contributors to the Episcopal Church’s official hymnbook.

His two selections in the Christmas section demonstrate his skills as a translator and a writer of original texts. Thus Hymn 82, “Of the Father’s love begotten” presents in English a Latin hymn by Aurelius Prudentius Clemens (348- ca. 410), while Hymn 107, “Good Christian friends, rejoice” is a slightly edited original composition by Neale.

The Hymnal 1982 does not link him to Hymn 56, “O come, O come, Emmanuel,” a popular Advent hymn. However, Neale produced the first English translation of its source, the Latin hymn *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, which dates back many centuries to the Magnificat antiphons sung at Vespers during the final days leading up to Christmas.

Another contribution by the remarkably productive John Mason Neale is “Good King Wenceslas,” a magical carol for Christmas season. This text may be based on a poem by the Czech poet Vaclav Alois Svoboda (1791-1849). The carol’s subject is Wenceslas I (911-935), Duke of Bohemia, whose brother Boleslaus was complicit in his murder. Upon his death, Wenceslas was immediately declared to be a saint and



From “A Carol: Good King Wenceslas,” illustrated by Jessie M. King, *The Studio*, 1919

martyr and was venerated in Bohemia and England. He was even posthumously declared to be a king by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I. His popularity contributed to the medieval concept of the righteous king whose power stems from both princely vigor and great piety. He continues to be honored in both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. Since 2000, the feast day of St. Wenceslas, September 28, has been kept as Czech Statehood Day, a public holiday in the Czech Republic.

According to one legend, a certain

Count Radislas marched against King Wenceslas, who sent a deputation with offers of peace, which Radislas scorned. When the two armies drew up against each other, Wenceslas challenged Radislas to single combat. As Radislas advanced, he saw two angels beside Wenceslas who shouted, “Stand off!” Awestruck, Radislas dismounted, knelt at the feet of Wenceslas, and begged for pardon. Wenceslas raised him up and received him again with favor.

An enduring legend claims that an

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army of knights sleeps under Blánik, a mountain in the Czech Republic. They will awake, and at the command of Wenceslas, king and saint, rescue the Czech people in their time of greatest danger.

A traditional setting for demonstrations, celebrations, and other public gatherings, Wenceslas Square in Prague is the location of an equestrian statue of King Wenceslas. In 1918, the proclamation of the independence of Czechoslovakia was read in front of this statue. Crowds filed the Square in 1968 to protest the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia. In 1989, during the Velvet Revolution, hundreds of thousands of people again participated in demonstrations at Wenceslas Square.

Neale's carol "Good King Wenceslas" ends:

Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
shall yourselves find blessing.

This moral need not just be a general admonition to follow the king's kindness to a poor man. It may also stem from Neale's own vocation as warden of Sackville College. For 20 years he oversaw that institution founded in 1608 by Robert, second Earl of Dorset, to provide sheltered accommodation for elderly people without other means. Neale may even have come to count himself among the poor, struggling with chronic lung disease, and enjoying only a small income to support his large family. Neale may also have considered himself poor due to the ecclesiastical persecutions that long suffered for his Catholic convictions.

Sackville College may have been for Neale not only an institution that he served as a priest, but one from which he benefited as a poor man. Its founder was a Christian of wealth and rank who blessed him across the centuries, his own King Wenceslas. Thus Neale was among the many who called down God's blessing on the generous Earl of Dorset.

The Church's ministry with those who are in any sense poor must not simply help them maintain an adequate lifestyle; it must also empower



John Mason Neale ©National Portrait Gallery, London

them to flourish. Sackville College empowered the poor man John Mason Neale to use his extraordinary gifts. All who have been touched by Neale's spirituality and scholarship, have sung hymns he wrote or translated, or have been benefited by the Sisters of St. Margaret, the religious community he founded, owe a debt of gratitude not only to that warden of Sackville College, but also to the even more distant founder whose legacy "blessed the poor" over so many generations.

Sackville College still exists today (sackvillecollege.org.uk) and pursues substantially the same mission as it did in the time of John Mason Neale. It testifies to the need for organizations that practice justice and mercy. In their own way, abiding institutions of justice and mercy such as Sackville College bear witness to the religion of the Incarnation.

The Rev. Charles Hoffacker is an Episcopal priest who lives in Greenbelt, Maryland.

For further reading

Michael Chandler, *The Life and Work of John Mason Neale 1818-1866*. Gracewing, 1995.

Good King Wenceslas

Good King Wenceslas looked out,
on the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
deep and crisp and even;
Brightly shone the moon that night,
tho' the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither, page, and stand by me,
if thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence,
underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
by Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
bring me pine logs hither:
Thou and I shall see him dine,
when we bear them thither."
Page and monarch, forth they went,
forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament
and the bitter weather.

"Sire, the night is darker now,
and the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know not how;
I can go no longer."
"Mark my footsteps, good my page.
Tread thou in them boldly
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod,
where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
shall yourselves find blessing.

— John Mason Neale, 1853

ETHICS

The Challenge and Joy of Christ-like Hospitality

By E.S. Kempson



Hospitality is not what it used to be. Because of COVID-19 the hospitality industry has suffered, meeting friends or family is discouraged or forbidden, and even corporate prayer and worship have been curtailed. It's difficult to find anyone who doesn't long for the joy of hospitality. This longing — for a good time in the company of familiar people whom you enjoy, sharing together in food, drink, or entertainment — is a natural and healthy human desire. But the hospitality to which Christians are called is something more.

Nostalgic COVID-tide longing runs the risk of forgetting hospitality's shadow side. For instance, when the hospitality industry calls people 'guests' instead of 'customers,' this obscures the common practice of only treating people who can pay as worthy of a welcome. The mutual appreciation of social circles, families, and some institutions often slides into denigrating those outside the group; when exclusivity itself is valued, others *must* be left out and put down. Hosts, from governments to next-door neighbors, can use 'hospitality' as a means to display their own power or prestige, at worst turning welcome into intimidation or belittlement. The characteristics of Christ-like hospitality work against these challenges.

When one looks at the table-fellowship of Jesus' earthly ministry, at least three traits stand out. First, as an array of biblical passages indicate, Christ-like hospitality involves not only those who are dear to us, but also the stranger (Luke 14:12-14; Matt. 25:34-40; Tit. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:9; Rom. 12:13). Even the Greek word often translated as hospitality

(*philoxenia*) breaks down linguistically into "love of stranger."

This idea is deeply rooted in the Old Testament. As the late Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks pointed out, the Hebrew Bible commands "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" once, but thirty-six times it says to love the stranger. The idea of hospitality for the stranger includes embracing the marginalized, welcoming the oppressed, and receiving foreigners — ideas many Christians are comfortable with, but find more challenging in practice. Furthermore, the stranger, for Jesus, includes the estranged and sinners, not just the wrongfully marginalized but those who have truly done wrong. Everyone, exactly the people you would not want to spend Thanksgiving dinner with, is welcome.

Second, Jesus is not always the host. Yes, he calls people to eat with him, he feeds them by the thousands. And yet, Jesus also accepts invitations to be a guest at other people's tables. He washes his disciples' feet, which a host would never do. He teaches his followers to see him in the guest, the one who is in need. When Christ is both host and guest, it shows that hospitality is not a one-way gift from the host-who-has to the guest-who-doesn't. There is a mutuality in the encounter, both needing and having something to offer the other, and there is no permanent distinction between guests and hosts.

Third, these gatherings are not (as it is all too easy for hospitality to be) simply a rectification or reinforcement of the status quo. Normal meals are part of an ongoing cycle: fill the hungry with good food and camaraderie so they can

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ETHICS

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go back out and later return to be filled again. But in Christ's encounters, the status quo has been radically changed. Those who were strangers or estranged from each other are reconciled when they break bread together with Jesus. By partaking, the sinners are turning over a new leaf, as one does in baptism, taking part in a new life. As Jesus says, he came to *heal* the sick; the sick are welcome and then they are transformed. The late theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg is right to point out that Christ's meals are not just community gatherings: in them the kingdom of heaven comes near and breaks in upon those present. The bread of life ensures you will never go hungry. The opposite of being left wanting is being filled without the possibility of going hungry again.

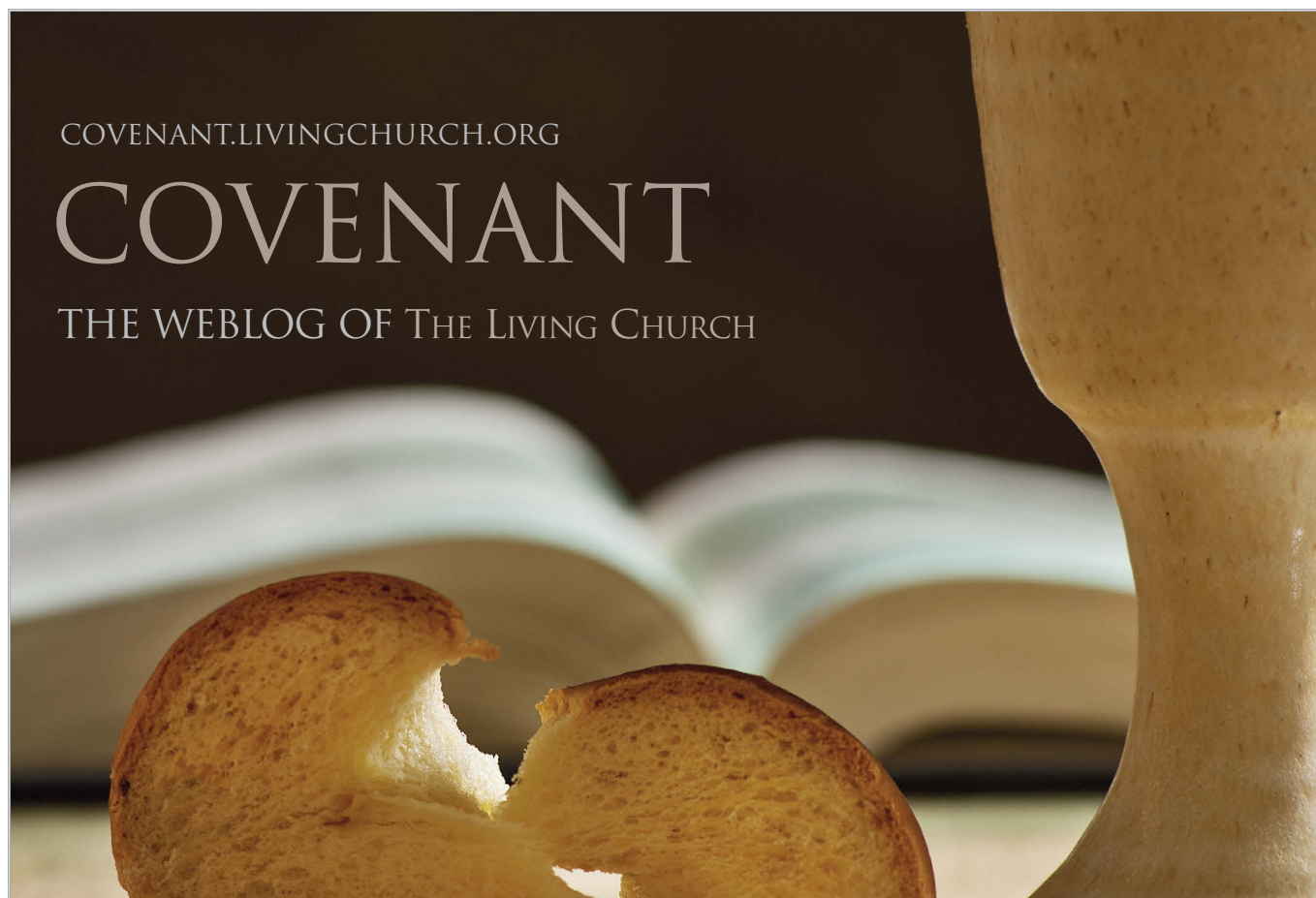
If one compressed the heart of Christ-like hospitality into an invitation, it would say: *come as you are, receive and give life, and be transformed*. And what an incredible joy this is! Greater than going out to a restaurant with friends or being treated to a king's feast. The Christ-like hospitality Christians are called to offer should have the same character: inviting people, especially the stranger, as they are, acting to receive and give life, and looking for transformation to occur.

There are, of course, challenges. Even Jesus faced them. We may lack the means or health to host the way we would like to. The stranger may be so different that we are not sure how to be genuinely hospitable. The sinner may be so atro-

rious that we do not know how to engage without becoming complicit. Invitations may go unanswered. When these challenges arise, one can easily be at a loss. When I lived in a Christian community dedicated to offering hospitality, I often found, when at a loss, that the answer was to return to God in Christ. (The story of this community is told in *A Kind of Upside-Downness: Learning Disabilities and Transformational Community*, ed. David Ford.)

This was because Jesus is not only a model for giving and receiving hospitality; he is also the source of the Christ-like love that animates a true welcome. One must spend time as God's guest and receive divine hospitality in order to offer Christ-like hospitality. When we, as Christians, find ourselves loved as we are, and received into the household of God, and transformed by this encounter, it instills a love in us that enables us to show Christ-like love to others. This, I have little doubt, is what Jesus wished to convey to Martha when Mary sat at his feet while Martha was consumed with the responsibilities of hospitality. Jesus was calling Martha, and so giving her the necessary justification, to leave her hostess-tasks and to be *his* guest, receiving his infinite wisdom, forgiveness, and love.

Dr. E.S. Kempson is lecturer and tutor in theology at St. Melititus College, London and a member of the executive committee of the Society for the Study of Theology.



Incarnational Abstraction in an Ancient Icon

By Dennis Raverty

In the little church of Santa Francesca Romana near the ruins of the Roman Fora, above a small side altar, there is what little remains of one of the most compelling of ancient Christian icons of the *Madonna Hodegetria* gesturing to her divine Son. Painted in encaustic (i.e. pigments suspended in hot wax) the original painting dates from the sixth century, making it

among the oldest Christian icons in existence anywhere. The scale is more than twice life-size, which gives it a far greater impact than can be sensed in any reproduction. What struck me when I saw the work in person last year was how modern the work appeared, with its hauntingly expressive distortions. Rarely have I encountered such a powerful sense of presence in any image.

If examined closely, it can be seen that the faces of both Mary and Christ have been cut from the original fabric on which they were painted and glued to the present wooden panel. We assume it to be a reconstruction of the damaged icon from which it was salvaged, and which was assembled in its present form only later, scholars say — per-



Icon of the Madonna and Child from Santa Maria Nova

uiowa.edu

haps centuries later. The original cloth from which the faces were cut, was probably one of those wonder-working images that was preserved

over the centuries not so much for its uncanny beauty as for its spiritual power and efficacy.

The face of Christ is so damaged as

(Continued on next page)

CULTURES

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to be difficult for us to make out, but in the visage of the God-bearer (as she is known among the Orthodox) the expression is wonderfully preserved. She gazes at us with a wise, penetrating, yet humble expression, deferring to her son and redirecting our attention from her to him, while at the same time, acting as an intercessor and mediator on our behalf. The obscurity of Christ's face only adds to the sense of wonder and mystery for the contemporary viewer, as if she were gesturing towards a transcendent being whose ultimate form is entirely beyond the powers of human representation itself.

During the 19th century, works like this, from what art historians call the Late Roman period, were routinely dismissed, as such work was considered to be a degeneration from classical style into an abstraction driven by a loss of technical ability, sinking ever lower from lofty Greek idealism to vulgar Roman realism to Late Roman "decadent" abstraction.

It was Austrian art historian Alois Riegl during the first decade of the 20th century who instigated a paradigm shift in the field, beginning to look at Late Roman style sympathetically, on its own terms, as opposed to seeing it as merely a degeneration of classicism. They began to see the abstraction in Late Roman art in a more positive light, as a turn away from the harsh realism and materialism of earlier Roman art toward a new sense of transcendence and spirituality.

It is no coincidence that this newfound appreciation for the expressive power of non-classical art occurred in Vienna, one of the most important centers of *Jugendstil* and Expressionism during the decade before the First World War. It is as if seeing the distortions in the work of contemporaneous artists opened up critics and art historians to the nearly forgotten power of such ancient and venerable works as this icon.

Abstraction of form was not at all



From the Late Roman period, portrait of 4th-century Emperor Gaius Galerius

incidental to the early Christian icon painters, but was actually an integral part of the theology that eventually was developed around the cult of images and image veneration in the Early Church. It was held that a merely realistic representation of Christ captured only his human nature, but not his divine nature. A stylized, more abstract treatment of his countenance more perfectly represented the Incarnation, transfiguring his face and figure in a sacramentally abstract manner.

The saints, including his mother, the Queen of Saints, as "mirrors" of Christ also partake in his divine nature and uncreated light, although

to a lesser degree, through a process of "growing up into him, who is the head" (Eph. 4:15). Thus, they too are also shown as if transformed by grace into a semi-abstract stylization of form. Through engagement with the iconic image, we too are intended to become transformed into his image. This compelling Madonna draws us to herself and urges us to seek the advent of her son in our hearts by means of her enigmatic, compassionate, and sublime gaze.

Dennis Raverty is an associate professor of art history at New Jersey City University, specializing in art of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Plumbing the Depths of Divine Compassion

Review by Mac Stewart

The practice of “receptive ecumenism,” or the willingness to learn from other faith traditions, sometimes suffers from a reluctance about dogmatic commitments that makes traditionalist Christians of all sorts rather uneasy. At its best, though, it can be a genuine outworking of a solid ecclesiological principle sketched out at the highest levels (from John Paul II to Rowan Williams), namely, that in God’s providence the untold wealth contained in Christ’s Gospel has been brought to light precisely through the historical (and, we pray, ultimately provisional) retreat of the various ecclesial communions into their own respective enclosures.

This is certainly the spirit that animates this new book by Robert Stackpole, a Roman Catholic theologian and former Anglican priest. Stackpole clearly has no interest in dwelling on the inadequacies of his former tradition. Rather, his explicit intention with this book is to identify a strand of theological reflection among Anglicans of the last few centuries that he takes to be a uniquely fruitful approach to the heart of the Christian mystery.

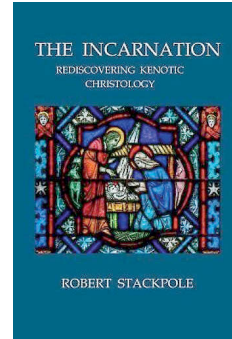
He claims the tradition of Kenotic Christology, presented in its most paradigmatic form by Charles Gore and Frank Weston (among others), is not only coherent and orthodox but should in fact be the preferred understanding of the Incarnation by Christians of all traditions.

His method is largely to allow the principle proponents of this strand of theological reflection to speak for themselves, and so the book will serve as a useful “anthology” of key passages from a wide range of Anglican authors on the topic. “Kenotic Theory,” as Stackpole ably shows, comes in a wide variety of iterations, but the basic claim he wants to endorse is that in the Incarnation, the eternal Son or Word

“in some way reduces the scope or operation of his divine attributes in order to dwell among us in human form.” The incarnate life “truly affects the divine nature” such that the divine Son “has added to his store of experience an experience of all the conditions and limitations of an authentically human life.”

The sharp edge of the theory, therefore, is its qualification of at least two classical Christological commitments: the impassibility (inability to suffer) of the divine nature even in the Incarnate One, and the relative omniscience of the Son even in his human nature. But Stackpole wants to argue that, while these qualifications by early 20th-century theologians were partially motivated by certain tenuous claims of 19th-century biblical scholarship (e.g., that Jesus mistakenly believed in Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch), the theory that they produce is nevertheless worthy of serious consideration by orthodox Christians inasmuch as it may actually provide a better and ultimately more compelling account of the depths of divine compassion in the Incarnation. He worries that a standard account of “two-nature Christology” cannot avoid presenting the divine Son as an “impassible spectator” in his divine mind or consciousness to the sufferings of the human nature in Christ, and that the only way genuinely to secure the truth that God suffers alongside us in Christ is to affirm that God takes that suffering into the divine nature itself.

Stackpole’s mastery of this strand of theology is thorough and impressive, and I heartily endorse his efforts to address substantive dogmatic matters in an ecumenical key. I wonder, though, whether this particular strand of Anglican theology is indeed one of its lasting treasures. It is striking that among the more contemporary the-



The Incarnation Rediscovering Kenotic Christology

By Robert A. Stackpole

The Chartwell Press, pp. 748, \$38

ologians whose advocacy of classical Christology Stackpole wants to critique are not only traditionalist Thomists like Eric Mascall but also more creatively speculative thinkers like Marilyn McCord Adams and Kathryn Tanner.

I wonder, too, whether Stackpole’s own account of the classical view is entirely sufficient. He worries that two-nature Christology keeps God at a distance from Christ’s actual suffering, and therefore from our actual suffering. But the point of the classical view is that it is precisely *God* who is hypostatically united to the man Jesus Christ, neither a thing among other things that in any way lives “alongside” him nor a being subject to passivity of any kind. And it is precisely for this reason that God can take to himself the particular human suffering of Christ and make of it the fountain of divinizing grace. His bliss free of any attenuation imposed from without, God can take the initiative to transform miserable humanity from within.

Still, this is a generous and thoughtful book, and will press readers to think deeply about the self-emptying love of the Incarnate One with the help of a venerable strand of Anglican theology.

Fr. Mac Stewart is studying for a doctorate in historical theology at the Catholic University of America, and is a priest of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina.

The Original Revolutionary

Review by O.C. Edwards, Jr.

Tom Holland has collected and, I assume, commissioned a fascinating collection of essays about contemporary attitudes toward Jesus, referring to him as a revolutionary. The term is a surprising one and is made even more so by the cover of the book, which has as a background a black and white painting of Jesus' crucified torso over which the word "revolutionary" is printed in large red letters divided into several sections with the subtitles written in much smaller red under the sections. I tend to think of revolutions as being military and political, but Holland justifies this designation of the Prince of Peace by saying:

What would Jesus have done? We are all of us in the West — believers and non-believers alike — shaped by answers that for two thousand years have been given to that question. If that does not constitute a revolution, then it is hard to know what would.

Holland begins with a paragraph on Jesus that takes him through his crucifixion to his ascension and the way that his memory was cherished on earth. Then he compares him to the Roman ruler who came to be called emperor and Augustus, a divine being, in control of much of the civilized world, and shows how Jesus exceeded him so much that the Venerable Bede started the custom of measuring time *anno Domini*, in the year of our Lord. With two billion followers, he is still the most influential person on earth.

The first chapter is by Joan E. Taylor, who teaches Christian origins and Second Temple Judaism at King's College, London. She considers Jesus to have been a "visionary empowered by God, although he lived in very different times and his belief system needs translating." She admires him greatly, and wonders what the conse-

quences would be like today if Jesus' teachings were translated into contemporary terms.

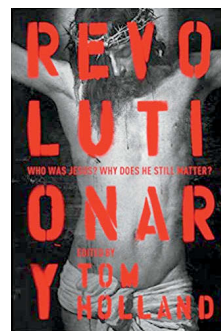
Robin Gill, who taught applied theology at Kent and is editor of *Theology*, deals with the question of whether Jesus' ethical teaching was revolutionary or not. He demonstrates that a great deal of what Jesus taught was not unique to him, but the way he taught about the Golden Rule, love of neighbor, and love of enemies was. The first two of these also appear in other religions but the love of enemies was unique to him and Gill cites examples of the difference it makes.

Amy-Jill Levine, a Jewish scholar who teaches at Vanderbilt, sees the revolutionary teaching of Jesus to have been in his parables. She uses a good bit of space to argue that many of the qualities of Jesus' teaching are not revolutionary but ends by showing why she thinks the parables are. She thinks that many of Jesus' parables have been spoiled by Christians who have turned them into allegories, but in their pure form they are powerful:

Short stories that make us think, that make us question ethics and economics, need and desire, justice and vengeance, our ancestral texts and our present relations, can revolutionize the way we live. If only we had the ears to hear.

The voluminous author of many fictional and non-fictional books, A.N. Wilson, writes about the lack of royal status of Jesus in the Synoptics and the great deal of it in the fourth Gospel where it is recognized that Jesus and the Father are one, but their kingdom is not of this world. Thus the revolution involved is that of the inward person rather than society. It is the discovery that Jesus can save and that he does so on earth.

For me one of the most delightful



Revolutionary

Who Was Jesus?
Why Does
He Still Matter?
Ed. Tom Holland
SPCK, pp. 188, \$25

essays is that of Tarif Khalidi, who teaches at the American University in Beirut and translated the Quran for Penguin Classics. It deals with the way that "Islamic literature, sacred, pious and profane, and both pre-modern and modern" contains the biggest library of Jesus literature outside of Christian tradition. Khalidi begins with the Quran and traces the treatment of Jesus through four periods ending in our contemporary period. It makes a wonderful read.

For me, the least enjoyable piece is that of Julian Baggini, who grew up as a Roman Catholic, lost his faith, and became a philosopher. He begins by saying: "No one really knows who Jesus was, what he said and did, or even whether he really existed." It must be admitted that Our Lord's existence cannot be proved absolutely any more than that of most people in history can, but Christians have a lot to invite and encourage belief. There has been a much ambiguity about what Jesus did and what he was like, but believers have faith that grows out of experience and our faith is hardly baseless.

It is lucky that the book ends with the essay of Rowan Williams, who has taught theology at both Cambridge and Oxford and who has been Archbishop of both Wales and Canterbury. He ends all these discussions with a wonderful affirmation of faith that on the one hand can be taken for granted and on the other is intellectually defensible. It is a celebratory ending. *Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

The Rev. O.C. Edwards, Jr., is the former president and dean of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Appointments

The Rt. Rev. **Scott A. Benhase** is vicar of St. Cyprian's, Oxford, N.C.

The Rev. **Mitchell Bojarski** is rector of Incarnation, Penfield, N.Y.

The Rev. **Stephanie Chase Bradbury** is bridge priest of Trinity, Melrose, Mass.

The Rev. **Amy Smith Bradley** is rector of St. Andrew's, Maryville, Tenn.

The Rev. **Mantelle Bradley** is priest in charge of St. Peter's, Clarksboro, N.J.

The Rev. **Jane Brady-Close** is interim rector of St. Andrew's, Albany, N.Y.

The Rev. **Jana Branson** is rector of St. David's, Gayles Ferry, Conn.

Ms. **Desiree Brattin** is canon for finance and administration in the Diocese of Missouri.

The Rev. **Anna Broadbent** is associate for outreach of St. James Cathedral, Chicago.

The Rev. **Clint Brown** is curate of St. Mark's, Beaumont, Texas

The Rev. **Emily Rowell Brown** is rector of St. Anne's, Scottsville, Va.

The Rev. **Cynthia Brust** is rector of Hope, Melbourne, Fla.

The Rev. **Jacob Dell** is priest in charge, St. Peter's, Lithgow, Millbrook, N.Y.

The Rev. **Tommy Dillon** is priest in charge of Nativity, Rosedale, La.

The Rev. Canon **Joel Dingman** is priest in charge of St. Peter's, Sheridan, Wyo.

The Rev. **Ha'aheo Guanson** is parish priest of St. Matthew's, Waimanalo, Hawaii

The Rev. **David Goldberg** is assistant rector of St. Mark's, Houston.

The Rev. Dn. **Judy Harris** is deacon of St. Martin's, Copperas Cove, Texas.

The Rev. **Paul Jacobson** is rector of Grace, Muncie, Ind.

The Rev. **Kellaura Johnson** is transition minister of the Diocese of Texas.

The Rev. Dn. **Lydia Johnson** is deacon of Trinity, Mobile, Ala.

The Rev. **Michael Kurth** is associate rector of Christ Church, Wilmington, Del.

The Rev. **Mary Alice Mathison** is missionary for Mobile, Ala.

The Rev. **Scott Maxwell** is pastor of St. Christopher's, Linthicum, Md.

The Rev. **Brent Melton** is interim chaplain of Trinity Episcopal School, Charlotte, N.C.

The Rev. **Julia Offinger** is associate rector of Grace Church, New York.

The Rev. **Rebecca Ogus** is associate rector for youth and young adults of Redeemer, Baltimore.

The Rev. **Brent Owens** is rector of Good Shepherd, Jacksonville, Fla.

The Rev. Dr. **Samira Izadi Page** is vicar of Holy Nativity, Plano, Texas

The Rev. **Scott Parnell** is rector of Ware Church, Gloucester, Va.

The Rev. **Lance Schmitz** is associate priest for youth and families of St. Augustine's, Oklahoma City, Okla.

The Rev. **Jean Scott** is interim rector of St. Stephen's, Lubbock, Texas.

The Rev. Dr. **Kara Slade** is associate rector of Trinity, Princeton, N.J.

The Very Rev. **Aidan Smith** is dean of Trinity Cathedral, Pittsburgh.

Ordinations

Priesthood

South Dakota: **Cody Maynus** (rector, St. Andrew's, Rapid City, S.D.)

Retirement

The Rev. Canon **John Tidy** as canon to the ordinary of the Diocese of Southeast Florida.

Deaths

The Rev. Dr. **Robert Crafts**, Jr., Captain, MC-USN retired, a mission-focused priest who served congregations in the Diocese of San Diego, died November 7, aged 85.

He was born in Cleveland, and earned a degree from Yale before being trained as a medical doctor at Case Western Reserve University. After retiring from the Navy, he prepared for the ministry at Nashotah House, and was ordained in 1989.

Crafts first served as priest in charge of St. John's, Indio, California, conducting services in both English and Spanish to serve the needs of the diverse community. He moved to San Diego in 1998, and served for many years as port chaplain to the Mission for Seafarers, where, as his family remembered, he "combined his commitment to Christ, a desire to connect with and serve others, a deep love of languages, the joy derived from sharing a good book, and his long naval experience." He was also vicar of St. Elizabeth's in San Diego for six years and assisted in several other congregations.

Crafts was preceded in death by two children and a grandchild and is survived by Carol, his wife of 57 years, two brothers, three children, seven grandchildren and a great-grandson.

The Rev. Dr. **Albert Dashiell Perkins** III, who served Alabama congregations for more than three decades, died November 7, aged 91.

Perkins was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and after attending the University of Mississippi, he served for three years in the U.S. Air Force and was later a Navy reservist.

He studied at Sewanee Theological Seminary, and after his ordination in 1961, served for 13 years as vicar of St. James, Alexander City and St. Barnabas, Roanoke, Alabama. He became rector of St. John's Church in Montgomery in 1974, where he served for 21 years,

returning to St. Barnabas to complete his active ministry. He was secretary of the Diocese of Alabama for 29 years, and was a leader in diocesan commissions for mission, youth ministry, and renewal. He was an active supporter of Camp McDowell, the diocesan camp and conference center.

He was a leader in numerous civic organizations, and received the Episcopal St. George medal for his long service to scouting. He was part of the ecumenical preaching rotation at the Church of the Pines at Lake Martin for 50 years. Perkins led a men's Bible study on Fridays for more than 30 years, conducting the final session the day before he died.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Virgie, their three children, and 13 grandchildren.

Sister **Letitia Prentice**, CSM, who had a long-time ministry to campers and retreatants, died November 25, aged 95, in the 67th year of her profession.

She was born Charlotte Seabury Prentice, in Tacoma, Washington, the youngest of five children. She studied at Washington State College and worked as a bookkeeper at Bank of America in San Diego before moving to Wisconsin in 1953 to enter the novitiate of the Western Province of the Community of St. Mary.

She took the name Letitia, "joy," and her friends remembered that her many decades in religion "were filled with kindness, dedication to others, deep friendships, joy and hard work." Her early years in the convent were spent scrubbing floors and baking altar bread, but her gifts for leadership and teaching were also nurtured. She ran the community's summer camp for many years and was the director of the DeKoven Retreat Center in Racine. She served as sister superior of the province and on the board of numerous ministries.

In retirement, she joined Sister Dorcas in founding Mary's Margin, a house of hospitality in Mukwango, Wisconsin, where they guided individuals in the "Inner Peace Corps," created an organic garden, and built a labyrinth with prayer stations in the woods. She spent her final years at St. John's on the Lake in Milwaukee. She is survived by her sisters in the order, and by many friends, former campers, and members of her extended family.

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Visitation

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The Virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26-27). The angelic visitation and Mary's eventual *fiat* (let it be to me) is of great significance to the Universal Church and all her members. In a sense, every conversion imitates this pattern, arising not from human agency but divine act and gift.

When, for instance, Peter confessed, saying, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." . . . Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah! *For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven*" (Matt. 16:16-17). Similarly, the prologue of John's gospel states, "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, *he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God*" (John 1:12-13). Elsewhere in John's gospel, Jesus highlighted divine election, "You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last . . . I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another" (John 15:16-17). God in Christ makes the first move: I choose, I appoint, I give. Conversion, therefore, is never a human accomplishment. Conversion is the Spirit's overshadowing and the declaration that we are the locus of a "daily visitation" (collect).

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The Word's *dwelling* or *tabernacling* among us suggests not only Mary's reception of the Word but also the mysterious mode in which God has long dwelt among his people. "I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle," the Lord says to David in protest against David's plan to "build a house for the Lord to dwell in" (2 Sam. 7:6). This recalls St. Paul's

admonition, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Mary's vocation as the Mother of our Lord is a recapitulation of Israel as the unique abode of God, and an anticipation of all the Church is called to be.

Having touched upon Scripture, the augmenting voice of tradition will reinforce the point that the Spirit overshadows us, and we become a womb to the Word. By grace, we carry Christ.

"In a way, every Christian is also believed to be a bride of God's Word, a mother of Christ, his daughter and sister, at once virginal and fruitful. These words are used in a universal sense of the Church, in a special sense of Mary, in a particular sense of the individual Christian. . . . This is why Scripture says: I will dwell in the inheritance of the Lord. The Lord's inheritance is, in a general sense, the Church, in a special sense, Mary, in an individual sense, the Christian. Christ dwelt for nine months in the tabernacle of Mary's womb. He dwells until the end of the ages in the tabernacle of the Church's faith" (Isaac of Stella, *Sermon 51*).

Mary is not only the Mother of our Lord and the Mother of the Church Universal; she is also what every Christian is. She and we are together a tent of meeting.

Look It Up

Read Romans 16:25-27.

Think About It

How can this be? A mystery is disclosed, the Spirit overshadows, grace prompts the "obedience of faith."

1 Christmas, December 27

Isa. 61:10-62:3; Ps. 147 or 147:13-21; Gal. 3:23-25; 4:4-7; John 1:1-18

True Light and a True Christmas

We celebrate the birth of Christ, remembering this: "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world" (John 1:9). And we almost thrill to hear the famous line, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). We see perhaps, in our mind's eye, the infant Jesus settled in his crib, surrounded by his parents, acknowledged by shepherds, adored by Magi, praised by a heavenly host. Never mind that stories from different gospels are conflated in how we remember the birth of Jesus; this event is really one event. In Christ, God is here, among us, where we live and breathe, suffer and rejoice, grieve and hope.

"And the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not accept him" (John 1:9-11). In three small words, "yet the world," the world's opposition is announced, and a firm and resolute resistance is set up against the Word. Embracing Christmas means embracing the shadow cast over this story.

Because "all things come into being through him," the Word always arrives to "what is his own." Of course, we may hear a particular emphasis on the historical context of Jesus's ministry to the Jews, Israel, the Promised Land, but this interpretation, if pushed too far, risks seeing his rejection as a rejection primarily or exclusively by the Jews. Karl Barth sees "his own" and "his people" as "characterizing the human world as a whole," and this is certainly consistent with St. Paul's teaching that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). It is also compatible with what we know of ourselves as Christians who are still sinful people. "We have not loved you with our whole heart; we

Every Blessing

have not loved our neighbors as ourselves" (BCP, p. 360). We have turned away from God and away from the image of Christ in our neighbors.

We are the world, his own, his people, and as such, we stand under judgment. "And this is the judgment, that light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed" (John 3:19-20).

Though dead in our sin and lost in our rejection of Christ, Christ continues to pursue us in judgment and mercy. He gives us power to become his children, so we receive him and believe in his name. A real Christmas is, therefore, a breakthrough, a disruption in our routine and narrow tendency to push Christ out of his world. He comes in by his own will and power to make us new. Taking us to himself, he builds a New Jerusalem, gathers exiles, heals the brokenhearted, binds up wounds. He adorns us with garlands and jewels, a crown of beauty and a royal diadem (Ps. 147:2-3; Isa. 61:10-62:3). Jesus Christ is the restoration we need and yet the restoration which, at first, we rejected.

He has not rejected us. "He sends out his command to the earth, and his word runs swiftly" (Ps. 147:16). The Word cannot be stopped. "He whom the Son sets free is free indeed" (John 8:36).

Look It Up

Read Galatians 4:6 and John 1:19.

Think About It

The Son is in the heart of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son is in our hearts. Immanence and absolute transcendence have met each other.

"O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature." In the opening line of this Collect, we learn who God is, the one who created and restored the dignity of human nature, and who we are, the ones so created and restored. To know God is an apt form of self-knowledge. To know and love God is to have the right sense of one's dignity and a corresponding self-love.

Christ was born into the world, a world intent upon destroying his life from the beginning (Matt. 2:16). Divinely protected, he grew in stature and grace. At only 12 years old, he sat among teachers in the temple, listening and asking questions. At this young age and before and forever, he was "in my Father's house" (Luke 2:49). Indeed, Jesus lives "in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18). The Father is the house, heart, and breast where the Son lives. "The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands" (John 3:25).

The Son, though in possession of all that the Father is, humbled himself, became what we are so that we might become what he is. Thus, the dignity and fullness of the Son are shared with all members of the Church. "All who receive him, who believe in his name, he has given power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12,13). "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

We have been blessed, in Christ, by all that the Father gives to the Son, which is an inexhaustible treasure. The gifts of grace and adoption and fullness are rooted in God's eternal and inscrutable will. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ in every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to

be holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph. 1:3-4). It bears repeating that we have "every spiritual blessing" and that "we have been chosen in Christ" and this election occurred "before the foundation of the world." In Christ, God has called and enriched the elect beyond all imagining. We will never, therefore, fully know "his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

Because our spiritual blessings are inexhaustible, there is always something to discover, and prayer is one means of doing so. "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation *as you come to know him*, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the *hope to which he has called you*, what are *the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints*, and what is *the immeasurable greatness of his power for us* who believe, according to the working of his great power" (Eph. 1:17-18).

Christ, we know, has assumed our human nature. So, he has taken into himself the fullness of human history and experience, transforming it, moment by moment, into the image of a New Humanity. He gathers people from the farthest places, the blind and lame, those with child and those in labor, a great mass of humanity who weep and yet feel consolation. He refreshes with brooks of water, grain, wine, and oil. He calls for music and dancing, joy and comfort, and gladness (Jer. 31:8-14).

Feel and know your worth and beauty in the New Being.

Look It Up

Read Ephesians 1:3.

Think About It

Every spiritual blessing.

Every Creature

Jesus Christ came to his own (John 1:11). In the fullness of time, he was revealed to the Gentiles, the whole human world, and, lest we forget, he was manifest to all beings. A long and venerable tradition interprets the Baptism of Jesus as a sign, among other things, of the sanctification of the water in which he was immersed, and, by extension, of all creation. The world he created, he more wonderfully restored by assuming into himself all spiritual and material being, everything seen and unseen. Therefore, all creation is a sacramental sign of the presence of God. While this was true before the coming of Christ, it is infinitely more true, more pronounced, more majestic since the arrival of the Son of God in our midst.

Look for Christ in this way! "Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his Name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:1-2). The phrase "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" is a well-known antiphon in Morning Prayer, and it reminds the faithful of the need to offer their absolute best in the presence of God. The Church, however, makes an offering of beauty and holiness of which the Church is only one part. Nature joins in praise. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters, the God of glory thunders . . . The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees . . . The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire" (Ps. 29:1-7).

God is in the rumbling and roaring of creation. God is present no less in a thin whisper. God is speaking a language we cannot fully know, but a language nonetheless to which our heart should be attuned. This requires deep spiritual listening. "One day tells its tale to another, and one night imparts knowledge to another. Although they have no words or language, and their

voices are not heard. Their sound has gone forth into all the lands, and their message to the ends of the earth" (Ps. 19:3-4). Creation has been touched and redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ. "Go into all the world," Jesus instructed his disciples, "and proclaim the good news to the *whole creation*" (Mark 16:15).

We, the sons and daughters of God, who have emerged from the waters of Baptism, bear in our bodies, minds, and souls the sanctifying presence of Christ. That is why Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit often evoke inward and outward responses. Hearing that Christians in Ephesus had not even heard of the Holy Spirit, "Paul laid his hand on them [and] the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). Are we not profoundly moved at the realization that we are temples of the Holy Spirit?

St. Augustine describes the moment immediately after his Baptism. Imagine his experience as your own. "I wept so much hearing the hymn and songs, *delightfully and deeply moved by the voices of your singing church*" (*Confessions* ix, iv). Even one not easily given to tears may feel and know that Jesus Christ wounds the soul in its deepest center, a wound of love.

Go into your room and close the door. Pray in secret to Christ your Lord, and he will speak secret truths to your soul, inspire thoughts in your mind, give vigor and calm to your body. Go out into all the world and meet Christ in every person and in all creation.

Look It Up
Read Psalm 19.

Think About It
Listen to the day and night.

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You Don't Know What It Is

“You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16). These words of Jesus challenge the idea that we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior and that *our accepting him* is what *saves us*. Our help is in the Name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Our help is not in the strength of our will or a choice we exercise. Our help and salvation are rooted in the inscrutable will of God who deigned to call us before we were, in any sense, aware that God was calling

The boy Samuel hears the voice of the Lord, but Samuel does not know that it is the Lord. Although Samuel ministers to the Lord before the ark of the covenant under Eli's direction, he ministers without personal knowledge of the Lord. For, “the word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread” (I Sam. 3:1). The Lord calls out to Samuel three times, but “Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the Word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him” (I Sam. 3:7). God speaks, but, at first, Samuel (and we) do not know who is calling or what is happening. Providence is confounding and confusing! “Something is happening here, but you don't know what it is. Do you, Mr. Jones?” (Bob Dylan)

Turning to another character, we see Nathanael under a fig tree. Philip arrives to tell him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth” (John 1:45). Nathanael follows Philip but with some reservation, asking, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). Jesus, perhaps respecting Nathanael's honest doubt, says, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit” (John 1:48). Nathanael, wondering how Jesus recognizes him, asks, “Where did you come to know me?” (John 1:48). Then, Jesus reveals the mystery of divine election, saying, “I saw you under the

fig tree before Philip called you” (John 1:48).

Now, turning to you (my reader), another one upon whom the mysterious will and love of God work without your knowing it. What are we to say of the wonderful workings of God? While your body was hidden from you, made in secret, woven in the depths of the earth, God was looking and working, forming and guiding. Even in infancy, God was searching you and knowing you. As you have grown, God observes your “sitting down” and “rising up.” God sees your journeys and resting places. God knows your ways and all your words. In all this, God is not asking for your permission. God will do what God will do.

God acts without your permission, but never contrary to your nature. Grace perfects nature; it does not destroy it. God is making you who you are and who you are meant to be in ways you can never fully know. Eventually, God allows providence to arise in your consciousness, and, mysteriously, you consent to the working of God. You say, like Mary, “Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). Even this consent, however, is hidden in the prevenient grace of God.

Listen to St. Augustine as he traces his actions toward God to God as the ultimate source.

“I seek you, O Lord, calling on you; and I will call on you, believing in you; for you have been declared to us (me). My faith, O Lord, *which you have given me, which you have inspired into me, calls on you*” (*Confessions*, i.i).

Look It Up

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19.

Think About It

Think About It: You are a temple of countless and unknown blessings.

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