

SPRING A.D. 2024

The
Anglican Digest

TM

VOL. 66 NO. 1



*The Rev. Canon Carl F. Turner lights the new fire
Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue*



The TM **Anglican Digest** SPRING 2024

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Anglican Digest
VOL. 66 NO. 1



*Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue
New York City, New York*



**The
Anglican Digest**

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The Anglican Digest

REFLECTING THE WORDS AND WORK OF THE
FAITHFUL THROUGHOUT THE ANGLICAN
COMMUNION FOR MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS.

CONNECTING GATHERING TELLING

For sixty-six years, *The Anglican Digest* (*TAD*) has been the leading quarterly publication serving the Anglican Communion. From its inception, *TAD*'s mission has been “to reflect the words and work of the faithful throughout the Anglican Communion.” At a time when print editions are becoming an endangered species, *TAD* remains a familiar presence in the homes and offices of many Episcopalians.

Founded in 1958 by the Rev'd Howard Lane Foland (1908-1989), our heritage is “Prayer Book Catholic,” and is open to the needs and accomplishments of all expressions of Anglicanism: Anglo-Catholic, Broad, and Evangelical. Thus, *TAD* does not cater to any one niche or segment of the Church, but finds its enduring ethos in serving the Church, including her clergy and lay leaders, those theologically educated and “babes in Christ.” Each issue, therefore, is unique.

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A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dear *Digest* Family,

A miracle happened to me recently. I am the chairman of a local homeless resource center called Resurrection House, and I like to drop in from time to time, particularly during lunchtime when we serve a hot meal to our guests. I'm not much help, but I like shaking hands and greeting our clients.

One of the things I always notice with sadness is the ripped, smelly, and torn rags most of our clients have to wear for a variety of reasons. But on my last visit, I immediately noticed how well-dressed and well-groomed and even spry our clients looked. It was a chilly morning, and everyone was wearing nice jackets, too. I went about greeting folks somewhat in shock at how beautiful everyone looked before going back to my office!

In the car on the way back, I began thinking again about just how put together everyone looked and even how the place smelled so good, which is not the norm. I then passed one of our clients on the street I had just seen at Resurrection House earlier, and he looked as terrible and worn out as ever.

It is crystal clear to me that God loaned me His eyes for His people, because our clients weren't put together at all! By the world's standards, they all looked terrible. But every human being is beautiful in God's eyes. What a difference it would make if we looked at one another with God's eyes.

Please keep the *Digest* in your prayers and give if you can. It is a worthwhile, Godly ministry.

Yours in the Lord's service,

CW+

(The Rev'd) Charleston David Wilson
Church of the Redeemer

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers of *The Anglican Digest*,

We rejoice with St. Thomas Episcopal Church on 5th Avenue in New York City as it celebrates the 200th anniversary since its incorporation on 9 January 1824. This vibrant parish in the heart of Manhattan will be celebrating its Bicentennial throughout the year. We are featuring St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue on the covers of this Spring Issue; their Rector, Fr. Carl Turner, has an article about the parish beginning on page 9.

Another unique aspect of this particular issue of *TAD* is “Letters to the Editor.” In response to the Fall Issue, I received a few letters that I believe will be of interest to our readers. I wish to thank the three persons who wrote the letters. It is always good to know what our readers think about the content of any given issue of *TAD*. In the future, if you particularly like something that you read, have questions about something you read, or disagree with something you read, drop me a line and let me know.

Finally, what parish will be our next Parish Partner?

A blessed Lent and joyous Easter to all!

Faithfully yours,



The Rev'd Dr. Fredrick A. Robinson



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Father Fred,
The autumn *TAD* this time made a special impression on me. I've received and read *TAD* for years, ever since I came back to the Episcopal Church and was confirmed as an adult at the Easter Vigil in 1984 at St. John's Cathedral in Denver. I've generally enjoyed it, sometimes very much.

I've certainly enjoyed it in recent years, but I was especially impressed by the current issue. Last week I went back and reread most of the articles. There is a depth that I very much like, and the authors have sufficient scope to explore their ideas. The subjects, too, are some of my favorites: St. Michael and All Angels, All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, Requiem Masses, St. Barbara, the Babylonian Captivity, and the essentials of the Faith.

Also, I see from the cover pictures the beauty of the Illinois church you're now serving. And I've appreciated all the art throughout the publication as well.

Thank you and best regards,

Susan Skelton
(Redeemer parishioner)



Articles by Rev'ds M Rowe and Andrew C Mead are confusing and inaccurate.

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The BCP has no Requiem Mass. Do we need to be perfected finally before entering heaven ie a sort of purgatory or in the intermediate state? Of course Anglo Catholics do believe that. You should have printed an article by an evangelical to balance things out. Also what do the 39 Articles say? Be more responsible in what you print!!!!

 Revd P W



Dear Friends:

As a longtime reader of the Digest, I write to commend you on the Fall Issue.

The two articles by the Rev. Andrew C. Mead in that issue were among the best you've ever published. Several other articles in that issue also were excellent.

This comes with best wishes and with prayers for you to continue your important ministry.

Faithfully,

David Kalvelage
Hot Springs Village, Ark.

THE BICENTENNIAL OF SAINT THOMAS CHURCH FIFTH AVENUE

THE REV'D CANON CARL F. TURNER
RECTOR, SAINT THOMAS CHURCH
FIFTH AVENUE

Saint Thomas Church stands on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 53rd Street in what is known as Midtown – it is in the center of Manhattan.



It is an oasis of prayer on the busiest shopping street

of the world, with its unique Choir School, of which there are only two now left in the Anglican World where the choristers make up the whole student body – here and at Westminster Abbey. Father John Andrew, the eleventh Rector and former chaplain to Archbishop Michael Ramsey describes falling in love with this church in his first book of published sermons: *“Most of the English cathedrals were known to me. But I was taken aback by this place, with all its splendor, its familiarity, as if it and I had known each other forever. The mutual recognition hit me with the force of a blow, and I knelt where I was. I got up knowing that life and my life were in some way to be shared. When I came out, I was secretly betrothed.”*¹

Being brought to ones’ knees by the beauty of a Church is not uncommon, but if you have ever visited Saint Thom-

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as' during the day, with the lights dimmed and the candles at the shrines flickering, as your eyes grow accustomed to the darkness, you will see – dotted around the church – people sitting still. Yes, in the city that never sleeps, the building is a gift, for it is an oasis of prayer that brings stillness on the busiest and most famous shopping street in the world. Those people have taken the courage to climb the thirteen steps and many of them arrive clutching designer shopping bags; they come as tourists but many leave as pilgrims.

The current building on 5th Avenue is the fourth iteration of a church dedicated to Saint Thomas. We have not been very fortunate with buildings since two of them were destroyed by fire, which is possibly why the Vestry decided to build the fourth Church in stone. But what a church they commissioned! The archi-



tects, Ralph Adams Cram and Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue created a Gothic masterpiece as authentic and sumptuous as any of the great Gothic churches of Europe, inspired by Westminster Abbey and the great cathedrals of England. There was to be nothing false about it – stone upon stone, and a ribbed vault that bears its own weight because it was built in the same way a 14th century cathedral of England or France was built. So, strangely, it can never be described as ‘Gothic revival’ be-

cause, in architectural terms, it is the “real thing.” As John Andrew famously said, “*Not neo-Gothic. Gothic. Mysteriously, the flame of Gothicism had leaped five centuries and four thousand miles, to burn gloriously on Fifth Avenue.*”

In 1914, writing about the inspiration behind the design of Saint Thomas Church, Ralph Adams Cram said:

“Architecture was, as always, the beginning; but it was far from being the end. Stone carving came to floriate shaft and cornice, pinnacle, panel, and niche;

Sculpture to crowd every aperture with saints and angels; Painting and gilding to make all burn with radiant fire;

Glass-making to pierce the opaque walls and set there fields of apocalyptic glory;

Needlework to hang rich arras over cold stone, to clothe altars, shrines, and priests in iridescent vestments;

Mosaic to sheet arch and vault

in burnished gold and azure and vermilion;

Metal work to fashion screens and candelabra of iron and bronze and brass;

Joinery to raise wainscot of intricate tracery;

Goldsmithing to furnish shrines and reliquaries and sacred vessels of precious metals and precious stones;

Poetry to create great hymns and canticles;

Drama to build up a supreme ritual;

Music to breathe the breath of divine life into all.”²

And there is the key - Music to breathe the breath of divine life into all – that fills that sacred space and connects people to it in a kind of organic way.

In the second story of creation in the *Book of Genesis*, God creates Adam from the dust of the earth and then we read that God “*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living*

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being” (*Genesis 2:8*). The word for Adam and the word for dust from the ground are related in Hebrew – the first human being and the first earth are related.



In a similar way, the creation of Saint Thomas Church New York out of limestone is related to those of us who inhabit it. Just as the limestone was created hundreds of millions of years ago from the sediment in the great seas of the earth, so church communities are made up of many diverse people whose combined history creates an epic story of life and death, of struggle and joy, of hopes and fears, of a humanity consecrated to God the Creator. We may not have as many famous people buried in our nave in New York,

but the pattern of our Christian calling is the same.

Our church buildings are signs of God’s presence not just in sacred space, but a reminder that we, too, are to be dwelling places for God. And if we become dwelling places for God then it will affect our relationships with one another and help us create a Beloved Community that will become ever more attractive to others. The mission statement of Saint Thomas Church is “*To worship, love, and serve our Lord Jesus Christ through the Anglican tradition and our unique choral heritage.*” Worship, love, and serve; with Jesus at the heart of all that we do.

On the Fifth Avenue façade, the church has a traditional image screen with many images of the saints; biblical, ancient, and contemporary. At the center are words from the *Te Deum* – the Song of the Church – *Thou art the King*

of *Glory, O Christ*. Just to the left of the image screen, on the Tower, are images that are very dear to many parishioners. During the Civil Rights Movement the then Rector and Vestry decided to fill four empty niches with images of emancipators – *William Wilberforce, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mary McLeod Bethune*.



Building a Beloved Community demands radical change, brought about by love. In 1957 Martin Luther King Jr was asked about responding to hate with violence. He said this: “*Love is creative and redemptive. Love builds up and unites; hate tears down and destroys. Physical force can repress, restrain, coerce, destroy, but it cannot create and orga-*

nize anything permanent; only love can do that. Yes, love—which means understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill, even for one’s enemies.”³

This, then, is the radical love that we preach and live by day-by-day. It is the radical love of Jesus who showed us the way to the Father; the radical, outrageous love of the forgiveness of sins, which flows from his heart broken for those sins on the cross; broken through hate and evil in our world. It is the same radical love that is at the heart of so many Christian communities across the Anglican World. In all our music-making, in our worshipping, in our acts of hospitality and welcome, we worship, love, and serve our Lord Jesus Christ. As Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has said, “*we are called to become the Beloved Community whose way of life is the way of Jesus and his way of love.*”⁴

¹ From *‘Nothing Cheap and Much that is Cheerful’* by John Andrew, 1988, Erdmans, Mich. Page xiii.

² From *‘Church Building – A study of the Principles of Architecture in their relation to the Church’* by Ralph Adams Cram. Second Edition 1914. Pub. Small, Maynard, & Company, Boston. Page 219

³ From Martin Luther King’s column in the Magazine *‘Ebony’* - November 1957

⁴ The Most Rev. Michael Curry: Statement on the 20th Anniversary of 9/11 in New York.



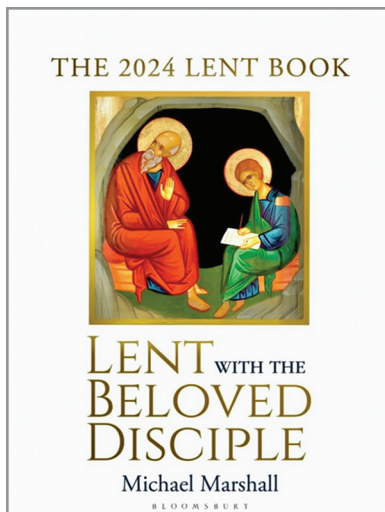
FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

**“LENT WITH THE
BELOVED DISCIPLE”**
by Bishop Michael Marshall
Bloomsbury Press, 2024

This study course for Lent 2024 is not written for would

be “armchair disciples” reading a book from the comfort zone of an armchair, but rather for pilgrims out on the road of an “inner” journey of faith, and for those who have resolved during Lent, Passiontide, and Holy Week to walk the talk of what we often speak of, by way of theological “shorthand,” as the Way of the Cross.

It is the contention of this Lenten study that such “map references” as we might need for that inner journey of faith can be found by continual reflective and prayerful reading of the narrative of the Fourth Gospel, informed from the perspective of one who is often referred to throughout the gospel as the “beloved disciple.” From his intimate relationship with Christ, he brings to our Lenten study deep spiritual insights, pointing the reader beyond and ever more deeply into the eternal significance of what occurred



and what was “*accomplished*” with particular reference to the death and resurrection of Christ, frequently referred to, as throughout this study, as the Paschal Mystery.

For the purposes of our study, we do not need to be overly concerned with the gallons of ink that have been spilt throughout the centuries on the question of authorship. Suffice it to say, as William Temple along with other notable bible commentators

concludes: “The view which now seems to do fullest justice to the evidence, is that the writer – the Evangelist – is John the Elder, who was an intimate disciple of John the Apostle; that he records the teaching of the apostle with great fidelity; that the Apostle is the “Witness,” to whom reference is sometimes made, and is also “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Furthermore, it is precisely because the Fourth Gospel never once refers to the beloved disciple by name as John, that it is not unreasonable to assume that in fact it was John the younger of the two sons of Zebedee, who as the beloved disciple was and is one and the same person who reclined next to Jesus at that final supper on Maundy Thursday evening, and it is from the perspective of that deeply intimate relationship, both of physical proximity as well as spiritual intimacy with

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Jesus, that everything in the Fourth Gospel is recorded.

Indeed, commenting on that intimate relationship with Christ as “the beloved disciple,” Origen, the great biblical exegete of the second century, in the introduction to his commentary on the Fourth Gospel, claimed that “nobody can really understand this gospel unless they too have lain upon the breast of Jesus,” figurately speaking, in what we often refer to as “a heart-to-heart relationship.” Some would go even further and insist that of all the New Testament writers, it is the eagle-eyed beloved disciple, who as a result of this intimate heart-to-heart relationship with Christ, enjoyed “the most penetrating gaze of all the *New Testament* writers into the eternal mysteries and the eternal truths and the very mind of God.”

“Many other signs truly Jesus did in the presence of the dis-

ciplcs, which are not written in this book.” So, although it would seem that our eagle-eyed eyewitness did not attempt to give a complete account of the Lord’s life, or to follow thematically the other three Gospels, yet nevertheless much of that which is recorded in the Fourth Gospel is recorded as being “a sign” - that is to say, a recorded event or a word which carries a greater significance as an outward manifestation of a hidden, spiritual truth or power than the eyes can see.

Not only Christ’s miraculous deeds, but also some observed object, or a spoken word is recorded in such a way as to imply a greater significance beyond itself and beyond time and space. Such “signs” - and not only the specifically designated seven signs in the Gospel — are intended to act as windows opening up into the eternal reality of the way the world was and always is, at all

times and in all places. It's as though the narrator of John's Gospel is not only interested in the facts and Christ's deeds which he observed from his specific perspective with the loving eyes of the heart, but far more interested in their deeper meaning and in the greater truths to which they point.

The author of the Gospel explains to the reader the reasons for recording what he specifically records in the gospel as "signs" and what they are intended to achieve: the

signs are written, he says, "*so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, you may have life in his name.*"

"*Life in his name*" and the signs which indicate and point to it, signify the "lifestyle" of that regime where God abides and rules in the hearts of those who have come to believe that "Jesus is the Christ." In the Fourth Gospel this lifestyle is referred to primarily as a quality of life rather than as longevity of life — as "abun-



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dant life (*John 10:10*) - as a quality of life which is stronger than death and therefore eternal. Furthermore, that new resurrection life in the person of Christ who is himself the “resurrection and the life” (*John 11:25*) and with all those who “abide” in union and communion with him and who are therefore one with his Father and ours, as “participants of the divine nature” (*2 Peter 1:4*). Then again that “resurrection life” as new, abundant life, is not only life after death in the hereafter, but even now, in the here and



now, for those who have come

to believe and trust in the person of Christ, the Son of God, and who abide and live in Christ as he abides and lives in them.

As the author of this Lenten study, it is my sincere hope that many disciples, churchgoers, or even “seekers” may be refreshed and spiritually reinvigorated from not only what they learn, but also from what they experience from a careful and prayerful study of the Passion narrative in the Fourth Gospel; that they might claim something more for themselves of all that Christ has “accomplished” so that, in the words of St. Richard’s prayer, they may daily come “to know” Christ “more clearly, love Him more dearly, and follow Him more nearly” both in time and for eternity.



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JUDAS

THOMAS H. HUBERT



The Kiss of Judas
Giotto, Fresco, 1303 - 1305

“How can I ask for something from God and receive it, when I have sinned so often against him?” Do not reason in this way, but turn to the Lord with all your heart and ask of him un-

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hesitatingly, and you will know his extraordinary compassion, because he will never abandon you but will fulfill your soul's request." -*The Shepherd of Hermas*, Ch. 39, Commandment 9
"Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually." -
I Chron. 16:11 (A.V.)

'How could you, Judas?' might we all not say
To him, if we had been there at the time.
It beggars all belief thus to betray
The Lord of life with this, the foulest crime.

And yet the record's plain for all to see:
For thirty coins he sold his precious Lord—
The silver lining of iniquity—
And sealed him with a kiss, without a word.

Yet who among us stands entirely clear
Of hidden sins of avarice, lust, or hate:
Cold, hot, lukewarm, buried in time, or near?
—
Still, prone to see ourselves immaculate.

My God, forgive us as we seek your grace:
Transform the eyes that would behold your Face.



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GOOD FRIDAY

THE RIGHT REVEREND BRIAN
K. BURGESS
XII BISHOP OF SPRINGFIELD



Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (*I Peter 3-5*)

While a parish rector, I had the experience of a childhood friend reaching out to me quite unexpectedly. At the time, he was serving as a county sheriff and happened to be at the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia, for their Spring graduation exercise. Being less than two hours away at the time, he called to see if I could get away for the weekend to do some sightseeing with the opportunity to catch up.

Knowing that he was largely unchurched, I shared in a pastorally sensitive manner how the approaching weekend encompassed the Paschal Triduum. When there came no response at all, I shared the Cliff Notes version of that statement. “This Friday is Good Friday and this Sunday is Easter Sunday, I said. He responded, “Is that a problem? Can you get away?”

The good news is that he did arrive and he did attend a ser-

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vice. He attended the Good Friday service which included the silent procession, the reading of the Passion Gospel according to St. John, the chanting of The Solemn Collects, Veneration of the Cross, and Communion from the Pre-Sanctified.

At that moment, I remember experiencing uneasiness over his missing the proclamation of Easter. But then, I began to think and pray about that experience quite differently. What my friend experienced was the church — stripped, cold, and bare.

There were absolutely no adornments or accumulated appointments that would turn his eyes from the cross and altar. There were no sounds that would distract his attention from the Passion of Christ. Even the embroidered cushions at the chancel rail and within the sanctuary were removed, which made kneeling

for any period of time quite uncomfortable. It was tomb-like in an intentional way.

Now, if I had to pick one service, one observance of our Calendar that speaks to those who are unchurched and who have quite difficult career paths to navigate, I would choose Good Friday. I say that because I believe we lose sight of the essence of Easter when we have no concept of what it is we are being saved from. We can become distracted from the cross of Christ. To merely survive is to shoot too low. The goal of our Christian lives is our death and resurrection in Jesus Christ.

To take the liturgical to a different plane entirely, I was glad that he did not encounter flashy programs, pressing financial demands, or the astute polity of the Church. I am glad that our timidity when entering the mission field or our tug-of-war over Church

doctrine did not meet him at the door. Likewise, I offered a prayer of thanksgiving that our inordinate appetite when it comes to satisfying our own needs or our failure to commend the faith that is in us had not the opportunity to make his acquaintance. Rather, the church was empty. It was a place where death goes in order to be prepared for resurrected glory in Christ.

In a world that is intoxicated with Easter candy rather than Easter Communion, where images of holiness are censored but vulgarity and moral depravity are not, death and new birth both still involve blood, sweat, and tears. For a county sheriff who has experienced the worst of the worst when it comes to the human condition, and who by default has been given secular responsibility for broken and fractured lives, I was thankful to almighty God that he experienced the proper liturgy for



Good Friday. Why? Because this is where the very worst of our secular lives is turned into the sacred.

The time that this man spent in a stripped church before the cross of Christ was to the glory of almighty God. Or, as articulated by a colleague during a recent House of Bishops meeting, “Eternal life begins now. Holy Eucharist supersedes survival or even our thriving.” Say what you will. I believe because of his experience that Good Friday that he can no longer be considered unchurched. Lapsed, but certainly not unchurched. Pray with me that he and

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myriads upon myriads of others will find their way back to the source of their salvation.

Because we submit to the expectations of Holy Mother Church, Good Friday and Easter are not mutually exclusive; they are congruent. Together, with Maundy Thursday, they are an expression of God that demands to be told, as well as experienced, in one, complete, ongoing story. We have a story to tell to those people who are meant to complete us. Our dying in Christ while being stretched out on the hardwood of the cross is integral to that story. Or, as another bishop colleague stated during the same House of Bishops meeting, “What kind of good trouble does a resurrection Church make?”

In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your



faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 6-7)

From, *The Current, a Newsletter of the Episcopal Diocese of Springfield*, Eastertide 2023

ADORATION

THE REV'D JAMES P. HANEY V
RECTOR OF ST. PAUL'S-ON-THE-
PLAINS, LUBBOCK, TEXAS



“We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.”

Human beings are hard-wired for adoration. We often use the word to talk about a spouse or romantic partner. We also heap adoration on our favorite sports teams or athletes, musicians, actors or movies, particular politicians or political parties, favorite

authors or books, and on and on it goes. We sometimes feel an affinity with those of like interest. I know personally that I notice and often greet others who show their support for the Steelers, or the Red Raiders (especially when I'm outside of Lubbock), or the rock band Rush, or the movie “Star Wars.”



*Geddy Lee, Neil Peart,
Alex Lifeson ~ Rush Band*

Our propensity for adoration is a strong reminder that we are social creatures, and we find satisfaction not within ourselves, but outside of ourselves. Part of the reason we are hardwired for adoration is because that is how we were

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created to respond to God. Adoration, after all, is a synonym for worship. The ultimate object of our adoration must be the God who made us and redeems us because of his love for us.

If we make anything or anyone, except God, the focus of our ultimate adoration, we are going to be discontented or disappointed, and never fully satisfied. Only God can be the primary focus of our adoration.

From *The Epistle, A monthly publication of St. Paul's-on-the-Plains Episcopal Church*

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RECTOR OF SAINT PIERRE'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH, GAUTIER.



With the coming of Holy Week and Easter, it's a good time to reflect on the mysteries of our redemption. We speak of them as "mysteries" because their complete understanding is beyond us. There is always more to see, more to know, more to understand regarding their meaning. One particularly interesting doctrine appears in The Apostles' Creed.

We sometimes say of folks we know that they've been "to hell and back." Christianity says the same thing about its Savior. The Apostles' Creed is a profession of faith with origins that may go back to the questions asked of Roman baptismal candidates in the late second century. The idea that Jesus visited hell is a reminder that the saving power of Christ is for all times and all peoples, even those who lived and died before his death and resurrection.

Contemporary translations of the Apostles' Creed say that Jesus "descended to the dead," but if you check earlier versions of *The Book of Common Prayer*, you'll find the starker declaration, "he descended into hell."

The doctrine is also known as the harrowing of hell, from a medieval English word used to describe the plundering and ravaging that takes place

during times of war. It proclaims total victory of the divine conqueror over Satan, unable to escape his own abode in hell. Christ takes the fight to the devil himself and releases the just who have long awaited the day!



The Harrowing of Hell, Petites Heures, 14th-century illuminated manuscript commissioned by John, Duke of Berry.

Like many Christian beliefs, this one springs not so much from the exact teaching of Jesus recorded in the gospels,

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but from the experience of him as God's appointed agent of redemption. Sometimes challenged by their pagan neighbors, early Christians asked: if Christ is the salvation of all, how does he save those who lived before us? Those righteous who believed in the God of Jesus but who lived before the messiah's appearance in human history came to be known in Latin as *ecclesia ab Abel*, or "the church from the time of Abel." They've sometimes been known as "Christians before Christ."

Theories abounded about how the Savior accomplished their salvation, but the primary idea was that until redemption had been completed in his death and resurrection, they could not know the joys of the beatific vision, being in God's presence. They were believed to reside somewhere in hell, or in some outer chamber of the under-world, deprived of the benefits of Christ's re-

demptive work until it was complete.

Such understandings appear to be implied in certain New Testament texts. A prime example is found in *Luke 16* where an uncaring wealthy man is assigned to the netherworld and a suffering beggar given rest in "the bosom of Abraham" (*Lk 16:22*). *Acts 2* mentions more than once that God did not abandon Christ to the netherworld, and the idea of death as a pit or abyss occurs in other places in the New Testament and throughout the Old Testament.

During the time of Jesus' ministry, Jewish notions of death included the idea of Sheol, the underworld abode of the dead. It was described quite literally with the same depictions that one would apply to a grave: a place of dust, maggots, inactivity, and decay. The first Christians had to reckon with this reality because it was upon the foundations

of Jewish faith that Christianity came to exist. God was believed by this time to have power even over death (as portrayed in the parable of the dry bones in *Ezekiel 37*), and Christ Jesus came to be portrayed as the agent who finalized God's final victory over Sheol, even for those who were already there.

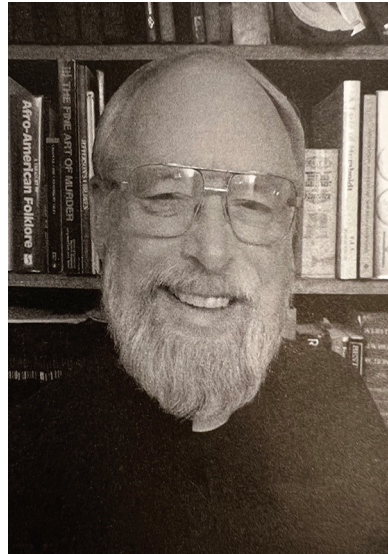


Harrowing of Hell Icon
Christine Hales, Iconographer
Sarasota, Florida

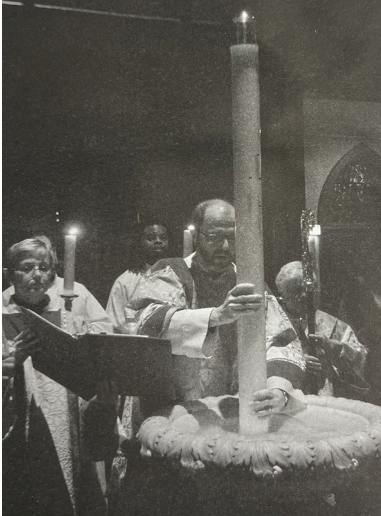
From *The Mississippi Episcopalian*, April 2023

RECOVERING THE EASTER VIGIL LITURGY

THE REV'D JOHN RAWLINSON



In 1973 the Diocese of California introduced an experimental Easter Vigil liturgy at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, which became the model for the rite included in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*.



At the 2008 Easter Vigil at St. James Cathedral, Chicago, Bishop Jeffrey Lee dips the Paschal candle in the baptismal font water, an action included in the experimental Easter Vigil rite at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco in April 1973. The blessing of the water in the 1973 vigil was a more involved rite with multiple exhortations and ritual actions, including the celebrant's quartering and scattering of the water in four directions and breathing on it three times.

Massey H. Shepherd, Jr. had written about many aspects of Easter beginning in 1946. Included in these writings was one which was titled "The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse," which was later awarded first prize in a research and writing competition in 1959. So, when the Standing Liturgical Commission considered the possibility of including a rite for the Easter Vigil in the 1976 proposed revision of the *Book of Common Prayer*, he was already knowledgeable and well-prepared to address the issue.

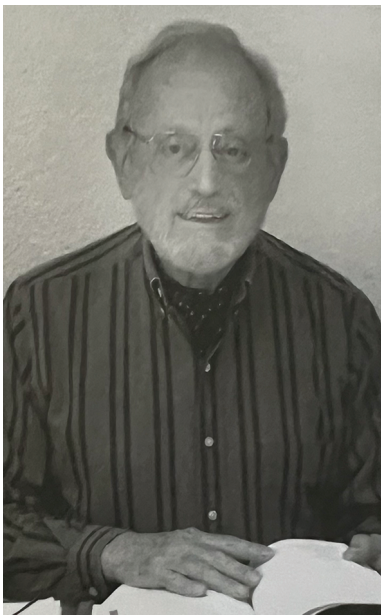
As it happened, one of Shepherd's doctoral students, the Rev. Raymond Hoche-Mong, had a deep interest in the apocalyptic dimension of the historic practice of the Easter Vigil. At the time, Hoche-Mong was the newly-appointed chairman of the group which Bishop C. Kilmer Myers intentionally labeled the "Commission on Liturgical

Renewal” of the Diocese of California. During his seminary years, Myers was a student of Dr. Shepherd, and was deeply interested in liturgical creativity and renewal which he signaled by the group’s title. Due to his own earlier studies, Bishop Myers was aware of ancient Easter vigil services, and talked about them with Hoche-Mong. They agreed that Hoche-Mong would make preparations for an experimental Easter Vigil to be conducted in Grace Cathedral, in San Francisco, and that Myers would preside. So, there was a tri-partite interest in the vigil on the part of Myers, Shepherd, and Hoch-Mong. It was also possible to use the members of the commission to help create and conduct the service.

As a part of his studies Hoche-Mong reviewed information and texts of many early Easter vigils. He found that many were only disjointed fragments

so they were unable to provide a pattern for an entire vigil. One early and complete ritual for the vigil which he encountered was the one attributed to St. Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339-ca. 397). It was an outline, rather than a text. In a general way, that outline was similar to the baptismal and Eucharistic outlines in the *Didache*, commonly dated between 70 and 120 A.D. Hoche-Mong decided that the Ambrosian vigil provided a good model, though it should be adapted to the contemporary situation. One aspect of his doctoral work in liturgy was the adaptation of liturgical materials to contemporary language, theology, and culture. While Shepherd was well known for his attention to precise language, and the careful preparation of texts for worship, he also had great fondness for the outlines of the *Didache*. As a result, he encouraged the use of the Ambrosian outline approach to the vigil.

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As chair of the Diocese of California's Commission on Liturgical Renewal, the Rev'd Raymond Hoche-Mong adapted the vigil outline of St. Ambrose for his composition of a contemporary vigil rite. Hoche-Mong, shown recently in his Montara, Calif. office, is an author and principal of a regional economic development firm. Photo courtesy of Raymond Hoche-Mond

Hoche-Mong used the Ambrosian model as the skeleton upon which he would “build” a contemporary vigil rite, placing key concepts and phrases in their appropriate places in the outline. The experimental vigil which resulted was based on the outline but had specific prayers and Scriptural lessons. In harmony with Shepherd's understanding of a theological connection between the nature and purposes of the Easter Vigil, and the apocalyptic perspective of the early church, Hoche-Mong offered a series of four Scripture lessons, each of which was followed by a Collect.

Genesis 1:1-31 (God creates the cosmos), *Exodus 14:24-31* (God protected the Hebrews from the Egyptian army), *Isaiah 4:2-6* (Jerusalem restored), and *Deuteronomy 31:22-30* (the people will become wicked). The last Collect petitioned “that all sin may be forgiven by your reconciling

grace.” Some elements—such as the Exultet—were merely mentioned by title.

The understanding was that the entirety of the vigil was an opportunity for teaching and reflection on the theme of a Christian apocalyptic. After the several Scripture lessons were read without comment, there was a meditative silence. The congregation was left to muse about the lessons without the didactic presentation of a sermon.

This rite included an extensive blessing of the font, and prayers over the water including the hope that “by the mystery of this same element there should be an end to sin and likewise a beginning of virtue.” There was a point at which the bishop quarters the water and scatters it towards the four quarters of the world.” That was an asperges and reminder of the baptism of those present, as well as a

blessing on the whole world.

Later Hoche-Mong commented, “I was leading a fairly prominent team in charge of liturgical developments for the Diocese and much support to the SLC [the national Standing Liturgical Commission] for the greater Church.” That group of clergy and lay persons included liturgists, historians, musicians, poets, educators, theologians, Biblical scholars, a lawyer, a dancer, and doctoral students. Through the agency of Dr. Shepherd, the SLC established relationship with this diocesan commission.

The commission was invited to offer fresh and creative textual contributions for the forthcoming *Book of Common Prayer*; the Easter Vigil was one such product.

In providing and revising some precise words for a few textual elements, many others

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were consulted, and added their ideas. One consultant was Anna Crossley, a poet, history graduate of Cambridge University, and local designer/creator of beautiful and symbolic ecclesiastical vestments she designed and created was one consultant. The Rev. John Oda-Burns, who had parochial experience in England, South Africa, the Bahamas, and a wealthy and “up scale” California community, added his diverse international cultural and linguistic perspectives. The Rev. Angus Dun, Jr. also contributed to the formation of the initial outline of textual elements.

When there was a proposed text, it was presented to the diverse membership of the Liturgical Renewal Commission for review and suggestions. Finally, Hoche-Mong’s wife, Emily, a professional editor, polished the whole structure. The service booklet was

relatively simple and while specific traditional sung canticles and psalms were mentioned, neither they nor the music was included.

Once everything was in good order, it was given to Dr. Shepherd, and Bishop Myers, of California for their final review. Based on that review, and as a part of the over-all doctoral project, it was agreed that a “public” vigil would be somewhat quietly conducted at Grace Cathedral, in San Francisco, California on Easter Eve, April 22, 1973. It was the first known Easter Vigil in an Episcopal Church cathedral, and was only three years before the issuance of the *Proposed Book of Common Prayer* which included a substantially altered form of the vigil.

The service began with the lighting of the “new fire” in a brazier on the porch outside the closed doors of the cathe-

dral. Then the Paschal candle was lighted from that new fire, followed by the lighting of individual participants' candles. Then the bishop ritually banged on the doors with his crozier, and the doors were opened from inside, with the participants flowing into the cathedral like water gushing from an opened dam. This was a service arranged by the bishop and the Commission on Liturgical Renewal, so the dean of the cathedral did not consider it a cathedral event. It was "in" the cathedral, but not "of" the cathedral. As a result, cathedral records have no mention of the service—not in the register of services, nor in the baptismal records, nor in the extensive collection of worship-related papers.

Some weeks later the Liturgical Renewal Commission had its regular meeting, and it was time to evaluate this first of its kind experience. Comments were made about the text, the

lessons, the arrangements, the music, and all other factors. Reports were heard as to the reactions of those who were baptized and confirmed. All these comments were considered.

After that first round of evaluations was conducted, revisions were made based on ideas from participants, the Commission on Liturgical Renewal, and the Standing Liturgical Commission. A second experimental version resulted. It had only two Old Testament lessons, followed by a congregational sung canticle. Then a New Testament lesson and a Gospel reading were followed by a sermon—an addition from the Standing Liturgical Commission.

The Litany before Baptism and laying-on-of-hands was totally different. In the first version the New Testament lesson and the Gospel followed the baptism and there

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was no sermon. However, in the second version they preceded the baptism. Most of the prayers were different. By this time the Standing Liturgical Commission had agreed upon a form of baptism which was to be included in the *Services for Trial Use* book, so that form of baptism was inserted in the second version of the Vigil.

Second Easter Vigil at the cathedral

A year later, on April 14, 1974 another experimental Easter Vigil was held in Grace Cathedral using the revised and more “Ornate” service. The service booklet was more professional and included all the texts, and notated music. The organ and a flute accompanied a local “Compline Choir.” There were 12 dancers from the Oakland Civic Ballet School. A portion of the written comments is worth repeating to indicate the nature of the service: “Please use

the pews only for short rest periods. Since there will be a troupe of dancers accentuating the movement of the Liturgy, please give them all the room they require—that is, move out of their way whenever necessary.”

As an expansion from the first experimental vigil, there were five candidates for baptism and laying-on-of-hands, and an additional 11 persons for laying-on-of-hands. In addition to Bishop Myers, the cathedral dean and 10 other clergy participated, and there were four communion stations. It was a much more public event, with an invitation sent to all diocesan congregations.

Throughout that second experimental vigil there was calm motion, a mixture of sound and silence, and the realization that this was a new experience for all who were present. The congregation gathered around an hiba-

chi-like charcoal brazier in the darkness on the porch of the cathedral in front of the Ghiberti Doors. Bishop Myers lit the fire and spoke the opening words. Then, with the butt of his crozier, he banged on the great doors while the sound echoed inside the poured concrete walls. When the doors were opened, the Paschal candle, situated near the large baptismal font which sits a few steps above the cathedral floor, and a few feet from the doors, was lit. From the light of that single large candle the fire was spread to the myriad of individual candles held by those who formed the congregation. No single light penetrated far nor gave much light, but the collective candle light dispelled the darkness at the ground level of the cathedral.

In the cathedral's *Register of Services* some eager participant initially recorded 580 communicants, but an-

other person reduced that number to 200—in keeping with Hoche-Mong's memory. However, that is the only cathedral record of the event. Though three adult men were baptized in behalf of the cathedral congregation, the cathedral records do not mention them. Another three cathedral parishioners received the laying-on-of-hands; those are not found in cathedral records. It was as though this experimental worship event had never happened. By comparison with the size of the diocese, the number in attendance was not great. However, at least symbolically the diocese was present in the form of candidates from the cathedral, and Hoche-Mong's parish, and the Compline Choir from St. Mark's Church, in Berkeley. One member of the Order of the Holy Cross, and two from the Society of St. Francis had formal roles. One university chaplain partici-

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pated as did an archdeacon and three parish priests. It is uncertain how many congregations were represented among the laypersons in the congregation.

With the congregation revealed and bathed in candle light, the tall and lean figure of Brother Paul, O.H.C. began his relaxed striding down the center aisle swinging the thurible, emitting the smoke and smell of sweet incense. Eventually gaining the courage to swing it in complete circles to his side, Brother Paul then swung it in figure eights in front of himself. The procession included the nearby parish choir, the cantor, the baptismal candidates, the bishop, and all others in attendance. The lone and unhurried *a cappella* voice of the Rev. Ed Parrott preceded the procession when, holding the lighted Paschal candle, he sang “The light of Christ.” When he reached the center of the

cathedral, followed by the organized procession, he again sang, “The light of Christ.” When the procession reached the high altar, he sang it again, and placed the candle on its stand. With the congregation gathered around the altar, his lone and rich voice sang the Exultet in mellow tones which bounced off the walls and demonstrated the famous seven-second echo of that building: “Rejoice now, heavenly hosts and choirs of angels...” In the stark darkness of that cavernous building the promise of salvation, and the light of God was heard, with the punctuation of the occasional “clang” of cable car bells from the street outside.

Then there was a procession back down the central aisle to the font near the great doors. In the final weeks of preparation leading to the vigil, there was some uncertainty as to whether or not there would be a willing adult baptismal



Current view of the nave of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. There was no labyrinth or free-standing altar in 1973. The Gothic structure, built in four phases from 1928 to 1964, and modeled on several French cathedrals, is the third largest Episcopal cathedral in the nation. Source: Grace Cathedral Archives

However, as the bishop mounted the steps to the font, he was joined by a lone adult baptismal candidate,

and several persons seeking confirmation, and all were surrounded by the entire congregation. At that point, a spotlight was turned on to illuminate the font in a bright light which bathed the crowd in diminishing light as it spread to the outskirts of the group. One could feel the change of mood from the solemnity of the darkness outside and in the dark recesses in the high arches of the cathedral roof, to the joy of incorporating new persons in the community of the faithful. Accompanied by the great organ, the congregation sang a joyful paean of praise to God. In the midst of the darkness outside, and the sounds of cars, cable cars, and Saturday night revelers resounding in this high tourist area, the congregation exuded the joy of faith in action. At the font the baptism was conducted, and several persons were confirmed. Throughout these events various members of

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the Liturgical Renewal Commission had been engaged in supportive tasks—preparing decorations, arranging the brazier, lighting candles, marshaling the crowd, and reading the lessons before to mention only the more obvious ones.

In a festive mood, the entire assemblage joined yet another procession to the high altar. There the bishop presided at a festal Eucharist in which the newly baptized persons and the new confirmands joined the whole congregation in the ritual of bread and wine. Then with a prayer of thanksgiving, the second experimental Easter Vigil in a cathedral of the Episcopal Church ended in a mood which was at one and the same time solemnly meditative, and joyful. In general, it was the reinvigoration of the 4th Century Milanese outline for an Easter Vigil.

It was, after all the academic investigations, the prepara-

tion and revision of the text, the ecclesiastical permissions, the conduct of the event, and the evaluations and “final” round of revisions was done, that the text and rubrics were provided to Dr. Shepherd for transmission to the Standing Liturgical Commission. For obvious reasons, Hoche-Mong spent many nervous weeks after the materials were in the hands of the national Standing Liturgical Commission. He later was told that the commission had forwarded the text to W. H. Auden, the noted British poet, for comment. As it turned out, Auden had no suggestions for changes. Then the vigil outline and related materials were formally presented to the Standing Liturgical Commission for discussion and action. Shepherd quietly reported that the Standing Liturgical Commission had accepted this vigil for inclusion in the *Proposed Book of Common Prayer* without changes.

One element of the experimental version of the vigil was that the bishop was to both baptize and lay hands on (confirm) the candidate(s). That element became highly controversial. At a meeting of the SLC, in Amarillo, Texas, Hoche-Mong and Shepherd reported on the Easter Vigil. Representatives of other diocesan liturgical commissions were present. Extensive discussion followed, and the group from the Diocese of New York offered strong objections to joining baptism and confirmation, saying that such a practice would cause the bishops to lose their function as the sole agents of confirmation. Bishop Paul Moore, of New York, was one strong opponent of the proposed style. The matter was postponed by the SLC. Later, the material was sent to Church offices in New York for inclusion in the soon-to-be-published *Proposed Book of Common Prayer*.

Anglo-Catholics make changes

In ways which are still shrouded in mystery, additions were made by an Anglo-Catholic group—which seemed to include Bishop Paul Moore. Whereas the experimental service included an abbreviated version of the Exsultet, a longer historical set was included. Whereas the approved material included multiple suggestions for Scripture lessons, a fixed set of lessons was provided. The experimental rite made no provision for and included no sermon. What was printed included a homiletic option related to each lesson, and a sermon was added after the renewal of baptismal vows.

The changes which were made seriously offended Shepherd, especially because they were done in a hidden way. Several years later, on behalf of the Liturgical Renewal Commission of the

Diocese of California, under a different chairperson, I was inviting Shepherd to speak at a forthcoming diocesan conference about the Easter Vigil. That seemed to me to be an “easy ask” with a guaranteed acceptance. To my surprise he firmly and curtly refused. I stammered in surprise and tried to importune him. He said, “No, that part of my life is over!” That, too, was a stunning comment attended with a tone of great and firm finality. When I inquired as to why he was of that stance, since he had been intimately involved in the development of the vigil, he responded, “We did what we did on the vigil, and sent it to New York, then those damned Anglo-Catholics in New York did what they did with it and I want no more to do with it.” I commented that I was asking in behalf of the local commission, and for a local conference, and that in our context he would have the full freedom to say whatever

he wanted to say—including criticism of what had been done to the service. He continued firm in his refusal. The issue was that what had been submitted and approved included a great deal of flexibility, while what emerged from New York was much more limited in options, and more rigid in requirements.

The Rev. John Rawlinson is archivist of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley, California; and former archivist of the Diocese of California

Sources

The Papers of Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., Series 4.A.5-3, and Series 9.D.I, in the Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, TX.

Multiple interviews and e-mail messages with Raymond Hoche-Mong.

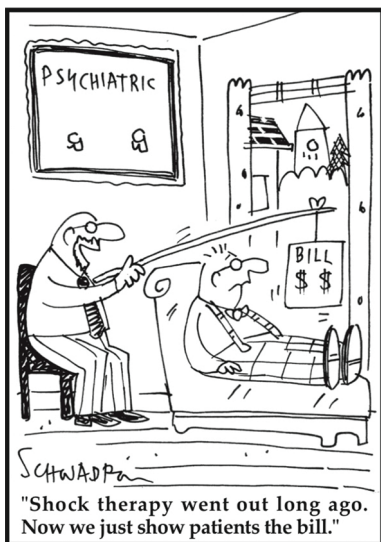
Records of the Liturgical Renewal Commission, Diocese

of California.

Michael Lampen, Grace Cathedral Archivist, e-mail to the author, March 31, 2022.

Personal memories of the author.

From *The Historiographer*, Autumn, 2022



from JoyfulNoiseletter.com
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WHY BELIEVE IN THE RISEN LORD?

THE REV'D GAVIN DUNBAR
RECTOR, ST. JOHN'S CHURCH,
SAVANNAH, GA AND PRESIDENT OF
THE PRAYER BOOK SOCIETY USA



Easter is more difficult for us to grasp than Christmas is. The birth of children lies well within our experience; but resurrection of the dead? — not so much. God's coming into our world connects with human experience; man's going into God's world leaves human experience behind. Moreover, the skepticism of our culture assumes that belief in the resurrection is like

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belief in Santa Claus—it’s something you leave behind around the third grade. The general view is that science has “proved” that resurrection cannot happen, though it’s not clear just how science is supposed to prove any such thing: shall we crucify several sinless Sons of God and see if any of them rise from the dead? I suspect that when people invoke “science,” what they really mean is what humans have always known—and all that they have known—that dead men do not come to life again. Well, duh.

The common explanation for the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ resurrection—an explanation often presented as if it were some brilliant insight, though it is in fact utterly conventional—is that “resurrection” means that Jesus “lived on” (metaphorically) in the memories of his friends, and in their transmission of his teaching and example to oth-

ers. (Not insignificantly, those who hold this view about the resurrection always view Christ as only a great moral teacher, not a redeemer, and are legalists who look to earn divine favor by their performative virtue.) Over the passage of time, they say, in a process like that of the children’s “telephone game,” what were originally vivid metaphors for a cherished memory were treated as literal statements by the credulous and the conniving. Such a process would require the passage of more than one generation, and certainly the death of all the eyewitnesses, who would have set the record straight; yet there is simply not enough time between the events of 33 A. D. and the appearance of the first New Testament writings for this generational rollover to have taken place. Those writings start to appear about 20 years after the crucifixion (and possibly even earlier), and when they did so,

the claim that Christ had risen from the dead was already the core conviction of the entire Christian community.



*Mary Magdalene
In the Garden with Jesus
Icon written by Christine
Hales, Sarasota, Florida*

Early Christians disagreed vociferously about many things (as Paul's letters bear witness),

but the resurrection of Jesus was not one of them. As Paul writes to the Corinthians, in a letter that can be safely dated to the early 50s AD, "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:17-19). Christians who (in accord with conventional pagan thinking of their time and ours) deny a future resurrection would have to deny the resurrection of Christ taught by the apostles, which would deny any kind of salvation worth having and render Christian believing pointless. Paul could only make this *reductio ad absurdum* if he were confident his readers would see it was absurd also.

There is no trace of Christians who deny Christ's resurrection anywhere in the

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New Testament, or in its earliest dateable elements: which means that with astonishing speed after 33 A.D. Christians



The Resurrection
Woodcut
by Albrecht Durer, 1511

accepted and proclaimed that Jesus had risen from the dead. In that time so close to the events in question, with numerous living eyewitnesses active in the Christian community, any simple misun-

derstandings (wrong tomb, grave robbery, resuscitation, overgrown metaphors) would not have survived or taken root. They not only believed and preached it, they were willing to die for this belief, as Stephen and James did in the late 30s or early 40s A.D. No one dies for a metaphor! They died because they were confident that Jesus had overcome the powers of sin and death, and made it possible for human beings who trusted in him to live a new life in God's favor.

Arguments for the resurrection are not just about what actually happened way-back-when, they are about the meaning and purpose of human life now. We may put it this way: if there were no resurrection, then there is no justice for those who died unjustly, nor for the victims of a mass-shooting dictator. If there were no resurrection, there is no justice; justice does

not exist; there is no hope. But if there is resurrection, then there is justice even for the dead; and if there is justice for the dead, then there is justice for all; then none of our labors in the cause of right and the holy are in vain. Knowing “that our labour is not in vain in the Lord,” we may be (as St. Paul says) “steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (15:58). If there were no resurrection, what is the point in doing anything at all? But if there is, then it’s all worth it — every tear, every drop of sweat, every drop of blood, if it’s done in the Lord, it is not in vain, for the Lord is risen.

From The Parish Paper of St. John’s Church, Savannah, Georgia, April 9, 2023.

THE OLD PRIEST

AMY ABERCROMBIE



Many years ago I was teaching fourth grade at an Episcopal boarding school called Greer School at Hope Farm near Milbrook, New York. I’d landed this job through an agency, which paid \$3500 a year plus room and board. I wasn’t a trained teacher, but did the best I could with a class that included a non-reader, a boy who read Ian Fleming novels all day, and every student in between. I loved the kids, but I was in way over my head.

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My friend Andrea worked in the office. Andrea especially liked old people, and one day asked if I would take an elderly priest for a drive. I didn't particularly want to, but I'd just bought my first car, a cream-colored Volkswagon Beetle, so how could I refuse? The priest was ancient, must have been a hundred if he was a day. He wore his clerical collar. His small body was thin and wasted. I noticed the back of his neck which had layers of dry, papery skin that could not have seen a bath or a towel in ages.



It was a glorious autumn day, the most beautiful day you could imagine. We drove around the woodlands, here and there, leaves painted in brilliance, a marvelous gift. But I barely noticed. I didn't attempt conversation; after all, he was probably hard of hear-

ing, anyway. Besides, I didn't know what to say. But the old priest did. He said something that I had never heard said before, or since.

"This is a day when God stoops and man soars!"

Amy Abercrombie is a retired teacher and member of Church of the Epiphany, Nelsonville, Ohio where she plays keyboard.



from JoyfulNoiseletter.com
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CATHY'S CORN CASSEROLE

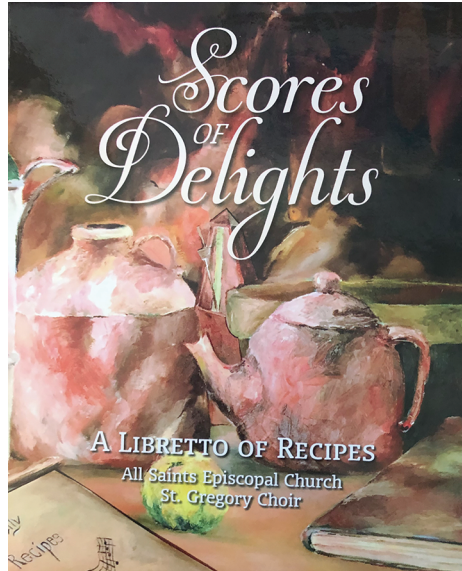
DEACON LIZ AND TRIP TUCKER
ST. GREGORY CHOIR
ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

2 cups fresh, frozen, or
canned corn, drained
½ cup butter, melted
2 eggs
1 cup sour cream
½ cup corn meal
1 cup diced Monterey
Jack cheese
1 (4-ounce) can
diced green chilies
1½ teaspoons salt

Preheat oven to 350°.
In blender, blend corn,
butter, and eggs.

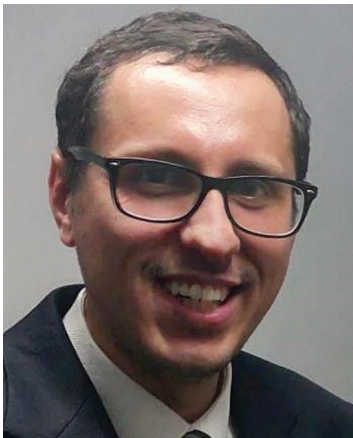
In medium bowl, mix sour cream, corn meal, cheese, chilies,
and salt. Put both sets of ingredients together and stir well.
Bake in greased 2-quart casserole dish, uncovered, 50 to 60
minutes.

Yield: 8 servings



THE UNCANNY EXPERIENCE OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN

MARIUS BĂGU
ROMANIA



As someone who grew up in a contemporary Christian household, I was led to believe in the peculiar and unusual notion that if I accepted Christ and became a born-again Christian, my life would be filled with ease, happiness, and tranquility, free from stress and worry, with all my needs taken care of.

Later in life, I realized that it

was a misunderstanding. Yes, the Christian life is the most incredible experience a person can have here on earth, but not how I was led to believe. It is instead experiencing Christ's inner peace despite life's difficulties, which is very different.

Though it may be hard to believe, being a devout Christian and fully committed to following Christ can be strenuous and challenging. Despite the incredible rewards of living a Christian life, it can also be filled with hardships and adversity.

The Apostle Paul, in *2nd Timothy*, chapter 3, verse 12 (MEV), makes a perplexing statement: "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." There are no ifs or buts in what he says. In unambiguous terms, Paul makes it very clear that those who truly desire to live a godly life in Christ will suffer persecution.

It is interesting to note that Paul himself was not a disgruntled apostle. Far from it. While in prison, he prayed and praised God (*Acts 16:25 MEV*), which is quite strange, at least for modern times. Though he had to suffer so much for Christ, time and again, he can be seen experiencing such happiness and joy, which was, in a word, uncanny.



St. Paul in Prison, 1627
Rembrandt

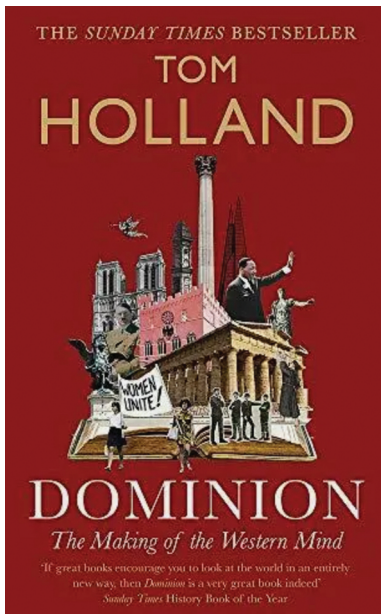
Paul's statement is an axiom, so time, place, or setting are irrelevant. Whether pagan or Christian world, barbarian or Roman society, old or modern times, it applies evenly. No matter where he may find himself, a genuine Christian will surely face persecution, claims Paul.

The term persecution may seem unfamiliar, and understandably so in modern times. The connotation the word persecution has, of having your hands and legs in handcuffs, being imprisoned indefinitely, being slapped, beaten, or even killed in the streets by vigilantes, and all this for Christ and his righteousness, specifically in Western countries, has changed.

Not only that, but things have significantly improved, as Tom Holland, a modern scholar, points out in his book *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind*. True, the world is still wicked, true, but infan-

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ticide, rape, violence, and murder have all been criminalized. Slavery has been abolished. Workers now have a right to unionize. And universal suffrage has become a reality.



Regardless, Paul's assertion remains steadfast. As for now, persecution may have changed its connotation in the West, but the grim reality

remains. While it may not be typical for Christians living in the West to be physically assaulted, killed, or imprisoned, they will still be unjustly treated, reviled, ridiculed, insulted, threatened, and alienated from society. Moreover, they could lose a promotion or their job altogether.

The world has an affinity for conduct that is rebellious, unfair, deceitful, cruel, spiteful, quarrelsome, malicious, violent – in a word – unjust, and hates behavior that is orderly, fair, forthright, merciful, kind, peaceable, benevolent, gentle, in a comment, godly.

A Christian's thirst for justice and desire to do what's right will not go unnoticed because the world hates justice and what is good. And because he, as a true Christian, will peacefully refuse to do what is unjust, they will not be able to tolerate him and cannot do so.

The persecution a Christian suffers is directly proportional to his desire to live a godly life for Christ. The deeper he walks with Christ, obeys God, loves the Scriptures, shows practical love to his neighbor when he needs it, hates sin, injustice, and cruelty, and does his best to live a just life, the world will hate him even more.

Christ's life is the blueprint for a faithful Christian. Just as He was unjustly treated, Christians will also be unfairly treated. If Christ did nothing wrong but live in a godly way, and was still persecuted, even condemned to death, can his faithful followers expect anything else? (*John 15:20 MEV*) Unfortunately, not.

In *Luke* chapter 9, verse 23, Christ tells his disciples, "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Taking up one's cross means suffering. Christ was

never ambiguous about what it entails to be His follower. He never said it was going to be easy. Never.

When someone comes to Christ and becomes a genuine Christian, a true follower of Christ, they undergo a complete change. They are made alive through the blood of Christ Jesus, and all their sins and trespasses are forgiven (*Ephesians 2:1-5 MEV*). Not only are they saved from eternal damnation, but also their life gets a new direction and eternal life at the end.

Even here on earth, a faithful Christian will enjoy the abundant life that Christ promised His disciples (*John 10:10 MEV*). Amid life's difficulties, hardships, and adversities, and even amid persecution, they will experience Christ's inner peace (*John 16:33*).

Walking deeper with Christ will lead him to enjoy the

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abundant life Christ promised. In a way, Christians do have freedom in their walk with Christ. They can decide whether they want to know Him more. They can choose how to spend their time and resources. Whether they want to experience Christ abundantly is up to them.

Thus, when Paul boldly claims that “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution,” he clearly distinguishes between those who genuinely desire to live a godly life and those who don’t. The more a Christian does what is right, loves mercy, and walks humbly with God (*Micah 6:8 MEV*), the more he will be persecuted.

In the end, a genuine Christian’s reality may be grim along the way, but it is crucial to remember that God will also bless him in ways hard to imagine. Those who have walked this road have experienced the true inner peace of

Christ, the joy of suffering unjustly, and the ability to love one’s neighbor when treated and reviled unjustly, which is uncanny, and nothing compares to it.

Sources

Holland, Tom. *Dominion: The making of the Western Mind*. Abacus. 2019, 2020.

The Bible. Modern English Version. Military Bible Version. 2014.



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MEETING THE TIMELESS CHALLENGE OF CRISTIAN FAITH

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A comment often heard among members of Christian churches in the contemporary United States laments the ascendancy of secular society. This collective experience is hardly new and should not diminish hope for inspiring others to join the community of the faithful.

In a third century A.D. polemic the Roman philosopher Porphyry of Tyre claimed

that Jesus of Nazareth “did it all for money,” manipulating “poor and country-dwelling men, seeing that they used to have nothing; certain wonders were worked with magical arts. Not that it is unusual however to do wonders; for the magicians of Egypt also did wonders against Moses...” (Fragments from the *Tertullian Project*).

Other non-believers issued their own diatribes as Christianity emerged within the Roman Empire. In his study of early Christian communities, Henry Chadwick noted that many intellectuals of the era customarily described believers as people ensnared by myth or mental fabrication. (*The Early Church*)

Until Roman imperial officials adopted Christianity near the end of the fourth century A.D., Christians faced far more than denunciations. Systematic acts of tar-

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gedet imprisonment, torture and murder inflicted by government authorities posed a near-constant terror.

Just as Jesus had warned, Christians and their faith would always be confronted with rejection in various forms – including violent suppression. He told his disciples that, as they set out to “proclaim the good news,” they would “be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (10 *Matthew: 22 NKJV*)

Internal divisions over the very text used to guide and promote the faith also plagued Christian communities from the beginning of their formation. Once a common Bible was adopted, questions about how to interpret it created different approaches to the faith, sometimes fracturing groups of believers into serious discord.

If extreme threats decreased in number over subsequent centuries, rejection of the faith by non-believers remained ever-present. Such a viewpoint appeared even within new na-

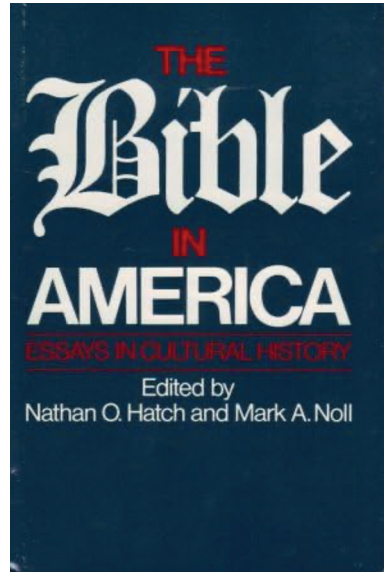


*Holy Trinity Church
Gainesville, Florida*

tions founded largely by adherents of Christianity. It was noticeable among some individuals in the United States long before the secular trends of the 20th century became clear.

Author Herman Melville, for example, expressed such a view in an 1851 letter. If any “Powers choose to withhold certain secrets,” he wrote, “let them; that does not impair my sovereignty in myself; that does not make me tributary. And perhaps, after all, there is no secret.” (Alfred Kazin, *God and the American Writer*)

By the 1920’s a number of physical scientists, educators, journalists and others had concluded that human knowledge is a product of time-bound social processes. Under this paradigm, explains Biblical scholar Grant Wacker, the mind of the individual must be understood to be shaped by ideas and notions conditioned by a particular historical era far more than eternal truths. (Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds., *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*)



What may have been a strain of thought a century ago is now visibly apparent to any contemporary observer of our nation. Of course, Christians in the 21st century United States are not threatened with death by government because of their religious beliefs. But their sense of being outside of an increasingly secular society does parallel, in far less draconian ways, the outsider status of their brothers and

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sisters who lived within the pre-Christian Roman empire.

Expressions by contemporary individuals who reject the faith mimic the barbs hurled since the original disciples first took up their mission. Internal dissension over belief and practice also continue to roil Christian communities.

Yet there is a striking fact about our nation's people. Religious faith lives as a meaningful, vital force among them. According to a recent Gallup Poll, more than three-fourths of all adults across the country identify with a specific religious faith. The overwhelming majority of them say they are Christians.

At the same time, less than half of the respondents claim membership in "organized religion." That is, they are not affiliated with a particular religious institution. Less than 30% of all adults in the Gallup Poll claimed they had recently

attended services at a house of worship, regardless of their faith.

There is clearly a lack of a connection with institutional religion among those who claim no spiritual home at a church, a synagogue, or a mosque. Most U.S. public opinion surveys of this century indicate a declining level of trust for institutions in general, not just "organized religion." Membership in Christian churches is certainly affected by this social force. Outrageous examples of clergy misconduct, fanned by media purveyors, give ostensible credence to an attitude of mistrust.

But a church can utilize a straightforward approach toward commending its sacred gifts to those who are not currently members.

In our own parish there are nascent signs that it yields positive results. The first step is to show that the institution

is worthy of attention because of how it operates. Such showing is within reach through good stewardship – exhibited by both leadership and members.

As our rector, Fr. Fletcher Montgomery, has often counseled, a church must proclaim the faith. That is, members must strive to obey the Lord’s commands in their Christian journey, despite their flawed state of earthly existence.

A church must avoid politicized use of its worship services or ministries. It is not a public policy platform, but rather a place of spiritual guidance and renewal. Fr. Fletcher has repeatedly instructed that the church’s purpose is not to adopt a current political position. Individual members enjoy the freedom of choice to do so as they wish.

Our parish offers a “Great Middle Way” that is open to members who bring a variety

of educational backgrounds, working careers, family lives, individual histories, and political views to each service. What is *unimportant* is who you are or who you have been. What is *important* is your open invitation to become a part of a nurturing community of belief and fellowship.

A church must also conduct the business aspects of church life with transparency. Frequent and open financial reports available to our parishioners and others eliminate doubt about how tithe money is managed.

By far the best means of encouraging interest in the church is through our members themselves. Through living as an example, any member can implicitly deliver an invitation to join. Demonstrating faith in actions as well as by proclamation offers proof of the Gospel in daily life and a personal recommendation to non-members.

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The results of such an approach for our parish are still pending. There is surely no guarantee it will sustain a continuous membership growth into the future. But, much like the striving of the early Christians, a collective commitment to follow it answers the fundamental call of faith – even in 2024.

As Paul remarked to the believers at Thessalonica, “He called you by our Gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 *Thessalonians: 14 NKJV*)



OBSERVATIONS ON GROWING OLD

We must recognize that, as we grow older, we become like old cars – more and more repairs and replacements are necessary. – Will Rogers

“Time may be a great healer, but it’s a lousy beautician.”
– George Burns

“I’m at that age where my back goes out more than I do.” – Rita Rudner

“You know you are getting old when everything either dries up or leaks.”
– Mark Twain

“First you forget names, then you forget faces, then you forget to pull your zipper up, then you forget to pull your zipper down. – John Wagner

“At my age ‘getting lucky’ means walking into a room and remembering what I came in for. – Josh Billings

“My wife never lies about her age.

She just tells people she’s as old as I am. Then she lies about my age.”
– Patty Wooten

(Compiled by senior citizen John Chamberlin, Kalamazoo, MI)

JoyfulNoiseletter.com

LENTEN CLOUDS & EASTER LILIES

HENRY SCOTT

How can we know the light without darkness?
And dear Christ's love without knowing sadness?
Then wouldst forsake these forty days of Lent,
What sorrow teaches, days of mourning spent?

Not always sunshine, but dark clouds and rain.
Shadowless light would be to us but pain.
And wish for days without the rain? Not so.
Or Easter lilies fair would never grow.

When suff'ring comes with torment, grief and loss,
And darkness falls, the shadow of His cross.
Give faith to know His constant saving grace,
Let fall the light from our dear Savior's face.

The notes joy wakes are zithers, fleeting made,
The chord is built when sorrow's notes are played.
Our Christ shall lift our darkened veil to light,
With glorious harmonies of His great might.

(Can be sung to "Eventide", the music of Hymn 662, "Abide with Me", by William Henry Monk)



IN BETHANY

JOSEPH MIRRA

In Bethany, what might the Lord have said
Had Martha never questioned Mary's ways;
If Mary were the one to speak instead?
A very different question she might raise:
"Lord, don't you care that Martha will not sit
And be attentive to your tender voice?"
"O Mary, Mary, this I will admit:
It's true that you have made the better choice.
But just for now let's let your sister be.
She's used to working hard for every guest;
Her nature's one of hospitality;
In time in me alone she'll find her rest."
For sins of men he came not to condemn;
But silently to bear the weight of them.

From First Things, April 2023



*Christ in the Home
Mary and Martha,
1654
Johannes Vermeer
Photo: Wikipedia*

FINAL CURTAIN

PHILIP M. WILLIS

The deepening shadow does
not disturb my joy,
The years of Grace have
drawn me close to God,
I recall Bible reading when I
was a boy,
And the long journey upon
which I've trod.

Of course there were things I
ought not to have done,
Oh yes, many sins along the
great hard way,
It was a distant and difficult
run,
There are regrets of many a
yesterday.

These eighty years, more than
I could have thought,
Some years of grief, days in
which I wept,
Amazing forgiveness, for
which I had not sought,
God guarded the road along
which I crept.

He called me often, though I
heeded not HIS voice,
HE provided Light I would
not see,
Out of Divine Love, HE made
me HIS choice,
Lifting me up, towards
eternity.

I give my soul to JESUS now,
HE gave years of prevenient
Grace,
It is with shame I kneel, my
heart I bow,
Knowing Christ reveals—
God's Loving Face.
Home at last, my conversion
certain,
JESUS calls me to final
curtain.





*Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue
New York City, New York*



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You can help the ministries of *The Anglican Digest* and SPEAK by remembering us in your will. You may do so by using the following wording:

“I hereby give, devise, and bequeath to the Society for Promoting and Encouraging Arts and Knowledge of the Church (SPEAK), a not-for-profit corporation, with the present address of 805 County Road 102, Eureka Springs, AR 72632-9705 and its successor, the greater of \$_____, or _____ percentage of my gross estate, to be used in such manner as determined by its trustees.”



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