"Serving the people and their parishes"

PARSON AND PARISH

is published by

THE ENGLISH CLERGY ASSOCIATION

PATRON: The Right Reverend & Right Honourable
The Lord Bishop of London

Founded by the Rev'd EDWARD G. COURTMAN in 1938, the Association has the following aims:

The English Clergy Association, as the successor to the Parochial Clergy Association, exists to support in fellowship all Clerks in Holy Orders in their Vocation and Ministry within the Church of England as by law Established. The Association seeks to be a Church of England mutual resource for clergy, patrons and churchwardens requiring information or insight; to support Clergy serving under Common Tenure as well as those still enjoying Freehold of office; to monitor ever-burgeoning bureaucracy and continued legislative and other processes of change; and to promote in every available way the good of English Parish and Cathedral Life and the welfare of the Clergy.

Membership is open to all who support the aims of the Association, including retired clergy, and clergy of the Church in Wales, the Episcopal Church in Scotland, and the Church of Ireland, and lay people. Each new application is considered by a Committee of the Council of the Association.

COUNCIL MEMBERS (EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE*)

Dr Peter Smith, LL.B., Ph.D., F.R.Hist.S., Chairman*
The Rev'd Stephen Seamer, A.K.C., *Vice-Chairman**
The Rev'd Canon Peter Johnson, M.A., *Hon. Treasurer**
The Rev'd Mark Binney, B.D.
The Rev'd Alec Brown, M.Sc.
The Rev'd Philip Corbett, M. Theol., S.T.M., M. Phil.
The Rev'd William Davage, M.A.
The Rev'd Canon Derek Earis, M.A., B.C.L.
The Rev'd Francis Gardom, M.A.
The Rev'd Canon Simon Godfrey, T.D., B.D., A.K.C.
The Rev'd Richard Hall, LL.B., M.A., *Hon. Almoner*
The Rev'd John Hanks, LL.M., F.C.A.
The Rev'd John Masding, M.A., LL.M.
John Wearing Esq., LL.B., *Hon. Secretary to the Council**

TRUSTEES OF THE BENEFIT FUND

Registered charity No.258559
The Chairman and The Almoner *ex officio*
Mark Binney, Simon Godfrey, John Hanks, Peter Johnson,
Stephen Seamer, *(all Council Members listed above)*
Clerk to the Trustees: John Wearing

Holiday Grant applications are made to the Almoner:

The Rev'd Richard Hall, LL.B., M.A.
45 Howard Park, Greystoke, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0TU.

Honorary Registrar: The Rev'd. Mark Binney

An enrolment form for Membership is found on the back page

Subscription: £10 p.a., or £5 if retired (for 15 months, if joining October onwards). PCCs may become Corporate Members.

We hope, too, that readers will encourage their PCCs to make donations towards our work in the Association and/or its Benefit Fund. We ask earnestly that subscription payment be made without reminder, and for similar reasons we send receipts only if requested.

If you change your address, please tell us.

PARSON & PARISH

the magazine of the
English Clergy Association
"serving the people and their parishes"

Issue Number 175 Autumn 2015

CONTENTS

Cover photographs:
Front cover: St Hywyn's Church at Aberdaron, at the end of the Lleyn Peninsula.
Back cover (top): St Beuno's Church in Pistyll, on the Lleyn Peninsula.
Back cover (foot): St Winefride's Well, Holywell, North Wales

From the Editor

Stepping into the shoes of so experienced, scholarly and wise an editor as The Revd Canon Peter Johnson is quite a daunting challenge, but also an extremely exciting one, for what a time it is in the life of the Church of England? Perhaps it was ever thus but the challenges, and opportunities, facing the Church in this second half of the second decade of the 21st Century are certainly many, and extremely varied – from falling numbers and increasing building costs to dealing with new and experimental forms of ministry and getting to grips with issues in human sexuality. As newly appointed Joint Editor with my fellow Council member Philip Corbett I hope that *Parson and Parish* will address all these issues over the coming years, and I will be drawing upon my own background of over 22 years of parochial ministry in the North West of England (including the last five years as Rural Dean) and also my experience of the Anglican Communion in Africa, specifically Zimbabwe where I was born and brought up.

Since my ordination in 1993 the life of an "ordinary" parish priest in the Church of England has changed in many ways, as witnessed by the increase in multi-parish benefices, the growth and development of lay ministry, the information technology revolution, pressure on numbers and finances, the introduction of common tenure, and Common Worship, the ordination of women to priestly and now Episcopal ministry, and same sex relationships and marriage – to name but a few! In its pieces over the years Parson and Parish has tried to deal with most of these subjects, and it is certainly my intention to continue in this vein – hence the inclusion in this edition of a very personal, challenging and sensitive piece on the current Shared Conversations within the Church of England by the Rt Revd Keith Sinclair, Suffragan Bishop of Birkenhead. Notwithstanding our own personal views and opinions on this subject it is clear to me that the Church will have to grapple carefully, prayerfully and positively with this and other related issues, and I would fully expect this magazine to play a role in this ongoing conversation. Elsewhere in this edition is reproduced an edited version of the most interesting and intriguing address given by the Dean of Windsor at the ECA's AGM in May, on poetry and faith, and in this spirit I have included a short piece about a recent sabbatical pilgrimage walk I undertook through North Wales which drew very much on the poetry of RS Thomas (a favourite of the Dean also) as well as the holiness of some of the earliest Welsh saints such as Winefride and Beuno. This was my first sabbatical in 22 years, and it was quite an effort to try and stand back and detach myself from the ongoing life of parish, deanery and diocese, so engaged and "embedded" are we as clergy. It was worth the effort though and I cannot recommend too highly the principle and practice of sabbaticals, and am extremely grateful for the support given to clergy in this respect in my own Diocese, and hope that this is the case across the Church of England.

I will be very pleased to receive any comments on anything in this edition, and look forward to serving the people and their parishes, patrons and clergy of the Church of England as Joint Editor.

The Revd Alec Brown

PARSON & PARISH

is produced by an Editorial Committee of the English Clergy Association

Enquiries about the magazine or material for inclusion should be sent to:

Joint Editors: The Rev'd Alec Brown and The Rev'd Philip Corbett

Editorial contact details:

The Rev'd Alec Brown

The Vicarage, High Street, Great Budworth, Northwich CW9 6HF

E-mail: alec-brown@tiscali.co.uk

Our website:

www.clergyassoc.co.uk

POETRY AND FAITH
A Talk to the English Clergy Association
11th May 2015
(Edited and abbreviated)

It seems to be the case in this country that, except in the vaguest sense, a growing number of people claim no real allegiance to the Christian faith. Nevertheless, I want to suggest that things might not be, from our point of view, quite as gloomy as they at first appear. Perhaps a few thoughts about poetry might encourage us to hope that 'faith' is not entirely dead, and that there might be something for us to build on in the years ahead.

Whether or not poetry happens to be your particular thing, you will notice that there is a lot of it about. We have **Poetry on the Underground** and **Poetry Please** on the radio, and some of us even vote for **The Nation's Favourite Poem**. Poetry flourishes, even in what you might call a pretty 'prosaic' age. I wonder if it just could be that, as a form of art, it is what Peter Berger once called a "signal of transcendence". It might be, in itself, as a form of art, an echo of, or a response to, a reality that is 'out there' or 'deeply within'. It might be, in itself, as a form of art, a means by which a person moves somehow in the direction of God, even without knowing it. It might be, in itself, as a form of art, something prayerful.

I want to draw to your attention a poem by Elizabeth Jennings. Elizabeth Jennings was born in 1926 in Boston in Lincolnshire. When she was six years old, the family moved to Oxford. It was while she was a pupil at Oxford High that she discovered poetry. In her early teens, she came to discover religion in a serious and personal way. Having worked as a librarian, she came to devote her life exclusively to writing. Later, she suffered severe mental breakdown, and was hospitalised. I cannot be sure, but I think this experience will have enhanced something that seems to emerge from much of her poetry: deep sensitivity to other people's suffering, to the world around her, and to something mysteriously hidden sensed through that world. The poem that I have selected tells you, I think, a lot about what a poem is. It is called simply **Order**. The poet begins with the statement:

We shape, we cut, we steal, we wrap, we are
Makers of order where there wasn't one.

And she continues later:

In our wild world of misrule we insist
On shapeliness and balance.

She employs the rather domestic illustration of the way in which we insist on keeping our gardens in good shape and, remembering that first garden, she concludes:

O we exist
To make new order since our Eden loss.

We human beings, says this Christian poet, seem to insist on making some kind of order; seem to know there must be patterns. The persistence of an insistence on order must be taken seriously. Elizabeth Jennings chooses something rather homely in using the garden as her primary illustration of our determination to impose order on our world; to weave things into patterns. She could have chosen mathematics. She could have chosen music, or dance, or painting, or sculpture or liturgy. More significantly for us today, she might have chosen poetry itself – even illustrating it by looking at the psalms, with all that parallelism and all those acrostics! The making of patterns out of words could be one way in which we find ourselves in touch with, and echoing, (and I mean this reverently) an 'out there' or 'deep down' pattern-making Spirit; some primary source of order whom some people call 'God'. In writing or in reading poems, simply through the 'form' of it (and before we begin to think about its 'content') we express our hankering after that unity and order which we intuit to be the purpose and end of creation itself. Even in the absence of clearly articulated religious belief, the poem transmits a 'signal of transcendence', and keeps a kind of spiritual pulse throbbing.

The Welsh priest-poet R. S. Thomas wrote somewhere: "The nearest we approach to God ... is as creative beings. The poet, by echoing the primary imagination, recreates. Through his work he forces those who read him to do the same, thus bringing them nearer the primary imagination themselves, and so, in a way, nearer to the actual being of God as displayed in action." The word 'poet' of course comes from a Greek word that means 'maker'. In being part of some creative enterprise we touch, and are nourished by, something very profound. "O we exist / To make new order since our Eden loss." The writing or the reading of a poem is an expression, conscious or unconscious, of some faith that all things eventually cohere. Indeed, you might even go so far as to say that the writing or the reading of a poem is, in a sense, an expression of a kind of faith in a kind of love for, since nothing in our human experience unites and orders, restores and redeems, more than love, all our hankering after some eventual order is at least the start of our hankering after love.

I have mentioned R. S. Thomas. Ronald Stuart Thomas lived from 1913 until the year 2000. He was a Welsh poet and an Anglican priest. He had been born in Cardiff but, when he was five, his parents moved to Holyhead. Later, he was to read Classics at the University College of North Wales in Bangor. He trained for ordination at St Michael's Llandaff and, from 1936 to 1940, was Curate of Chirk in Denbyshire. It was here that he met Elsi, who was to become his wife in 1940. In 1945, their only

son Gwydion was born. Thomas continued to serve as a clergyman in various parts of rural Wales until in 1978 he retired from the Welsh- speaking community of Aberdaron to a cottage about four miles away. There he lived with Elsi until her death in 1991. Then, five years later, he married Betty, on her eightieth birthday. They had four years together before he died. It is on one of his poems that I wish to draw as I move on to the next stage of my argument.

I have said that, in writing or reading poems, we express our hankering after that unity which is intuited as the purpose and end of 'creation' itself. Implicit in that, of course, is that a poem, as a form of art, is an echo of 'redemption'. As we might find satisfaction in a symphony because, through sound and rhythm, music at its best weaves an increasing number of diverse elements into a new pattern, so we can find satisfaction in a poem as, through metre and rhyme and image and metaphor, it seeks to do the same. And what *is* redemption after all but the weaving of everything, mistakes and all, into a new pattern so that nothing should be lost, and everything should be known to have contributed to the perfect end? In his poem **The Musician**, R. S. Thomas sees music as a metaphor of redemption. Given that poetry might be described as 'music in words', you will easily make the connection.

At the beginning of the poem, R. S. Thomas describes how, at a concert given by Kreisler, he had been seated on the stage. From this vantage point he could see the player very clearly, noticing the "toil of his face muscles", the "twitching of his fingers", and how he "…. so beautifully suffered / For each of us upon his instrument."

Thomas reflects that it must have been like this on Calvary with Christ:

> The hands bleeding, the mind bruised but calm,
> Making such music as lives still.

Of course, the poem is explicitly Christian. But it is to what is 'implicit' that I wish to draw attention. It is to the fact that music is itself a metaphor of redemption; a 'hint' of a possible 'outcome' to life. And, if music, then poetry too!

Music, poetry, pattern-making of all sorts: echoes and intuitions of creation and redemption. Their persistence might be evidence of the grace of God at work in the hearts and minds of people everywhere. Their persistence might be evidence of some natural faith; some understanding that, in the end, all shall be well.

So far, of course, I have talked only of a poem in terms of its being a 'form of art'; something 'shaped'. Now, I want very briefly to nod in the direction of the sort of language that a poem tends to use, and the way in which it uses it. I want to recognise that, through poetry, something deep can be touched and triggered off through the use of very particular words and phrases, images and metaphors, metres and rhymes, hints and suggestions and allusions and resonances; through the using of words to penetrate and pierce and awaken some kind of recognition.

Gillian Clarke was born in Cardiff in 1937. Her parents were Welsh-speaking, though she grew up using English and learnt to speak Welsh later on in her life. She graduated in English from Cardiff University, and has spent good chunks of her working life with the B.B.C. and in teaching. One of her poems particularly expresses something of what I am trying to convey about poetry in general. The poem is called **Miracle on St. David's Day**, and there is a superscription which reads: "They flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude." *The Daffodils by W. Wordsworth.*

Gillian Clarke describes an afternoon, "…. Yellow and open-mouthed / with daffodils" in which she finds herself in the gardens of what might appear to be a country house. In fact, it is a psychiatric hospital, and "I am reading poetry to the insane". She describes some of the people to whom she is reading, amongst whom is "A big mild man" who has "never spoken". Suddenly however, he is standing, and reciting 'The Daffodils'. Everybody is astonished. But the poet comments:

Forty years ago, in a Valley's school,
the class recited poetry by rote.
Since the dumbness of misery fell
he has remembered there was a music
of speech and that once he had something to say.

Poetry, it seems, has the power to penetrate and pierce and stir and awaken. It can reach the parts that other ways of speaking fail to reach. In Gillian Clark's poem of course, the remembering of **The Daffodils** could be a metaphor of a deeper 'remembering' that poetry can bring to the surface; things seemingly forgotten and relegated to the unconscious mind, and the heart, and the spirit and the soul. It could be an example of poetry bringing to the surface a clear, transfigured vision; or stark and hitherto buried questions; or primal perceptions; or things archetypal dragged up from the possibly collective unconscious. When so much 'God-talk' can sound so concrete and definite and cerebral, poetry can bring to life non-rational perceptions, and perhaps be closer to what 'God-talk' ought to be than to what, in the eyes of many in our generation, it has become.

When you think of that person reading poetry to the insane, you cannot help but make some connection to Jesus making the dumb speak and the deaf hear, and the blind see. Neither can you fail to make some connection to the sort of work that you and I are called to in our own ministries. It could even be, for some of us, that poetry will have its place. Be that as it may, reading poetry to the insane might prove to be a kind of guiding metaphor.

I have tried to suggest that the shape of a poem might be a sign of faith; and faith in the ultimacy of love. I have also tried to suggest that the language of poetry can be an 'awakening' language; a language that brings to the surface something, you might say, 'forgotten'.

However, so far I have hardly touched on the 'content' of poetry; what it actually says; what it is about. That would of course be to open a door onto such a vast amount of material as it would be quite impossible to organise in any meaningful way. Nevertheless, I might just hazard a suggestion that the 'content' of a poem always gives expression to an idea or a concern that is somehow 'in the air' at the time of the poem's composition. The poet therefore is the one who 'gives voice' to a particular generation.

As a possible illustration of this supposition, let me look at a little bit of the work of the poet C. Day Lewis. He is someone whom I understand to have been an agnostic, and therefore fairly representative of his generation. He was however once described as a rather 'churchy' agnostic, and therefore perhaps spoke for, and speaks for, many people for whom religion remains strangely and worryingly compelling.

Cecil Day Lewis was born in Ireland in 1904. His father, Frank, was a Church of Ireland clergyman. The family moved to England when Cecil was only two. His mother died just two years afterwards, and he was to be cared for by his aunt. During his adolescence, Cecil witnessed his father, in his Nottinghamshire parish, sitting at the bed-sides of miners, coughing themselves to death. His deep concern for social justice started here.

Though he had decided to dedicate his life to the writing of poetry, after prep school, public school, and Oxford, he became a schoolmaster for a while. For a short time, he became a communist. He was soon disillusioned. The Fifties saw C. Day Lewis at the height of his fame as a poet, broadcaster, translator and novelist. He defeated C. S. Lewis in the election for the Chair of Poetry at Oxford. Later, he was to be appointed Poet Laureate (revolutionary become establishment figure). This position he held for but a short time. He died of cancer in 1972.

C. Day Lewis said that the writing of poetry is "a vocation, a game, a habit, and a search for truth." I suppose it is because it is a "search for truth" that I believe all poetry to be, at some level or other, and however unorthodox, an 'act of faith'.

The search for truth of course requires the asking of questions. In a poem called **My Mother's Sister** C. Day Lewis has a pretty important question to ask. The poem is about the aunt who looked after him for ten years or so after his mother's death. I mentioned that Day Lewis was an agnostic. No doubt many things contributed to his loosening hold on Christian faith. The question with which this poem comes to an end is almost certainly one of them.

It is rather a long poem. I pick up the story at the point at which Day Lewis's father re-marries, and the aunt, who had so lovingly looked after the family has to move on.

Exiled again after ten years, my father
Remarrying, she faced the bitter test
Of charity – to abdicate in love's name
From love's contentful duties. A distressed

Gentle woman housekeeping for strangers;
Later, companion to a droll recluse
Clergyman brother in rough-pastured Wexford,
She lived for all she was worth – to be of use.

But now, Day Lewis tells us, she is in an "Old peoples' home". She is "helpless, beyond speech" and "The battery's almost done". And angrily he concludes:

So, still alive, she rots. A heart of granite
Would melt at this unmeaning sequel. Lord
How can this be justified, how can it
Be justified?

This kind of question is to be found time and time again in the poetry of what you might call 'this generation'. I think especially of the poetry of the First World War: Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Edmund Blunden, Ivor Gurney and so on. I think too of the poetry of such people as Philip Larkin. There is a lot of protest in the air. But (and here I have to return to the poem as a work of art) the protest is somehow 'contained'. There is something of the Psalms in all this. The discipline of the poem somehow 'holds' the protest, and even hints at the possibility of some kind of 'answer'.

Of course, I am not suggesting that the writer or the reader is in any way conscious of this. But as I reflect on the impression that a poem can make on me, I am inclined to believe that the sense of 'satisfaction' felt on reading a poem is related to a deep intuition that, however bad things might appear, things are not 'out of control'. There is implicit faith here.

I have one more C. Day Lewis poem to mention. It illustrates something else that I believe is true of a great deal of the poetry that gives voice to this generation. It is a poem that C. Day Lewis wrote for and about his daughter Tamasin. It is called **Getting Warm – Getting Cold** and it describes a game of hunt the thimble.

We hid it behind the yellow cushion.
'There's a present for you,' we called.
'Come and look for it.'

Day Lewis describes the child moving "in a dream of discovery", but in a manner that suggests that she will never find the present. But the child herself is full of anticipation. The poet concludes with a kind of prayer:

May she keep this sense of the hidden thing,
The somewhere joy that enthralled her,

When she's uncountable presents older –
Small room left for marvels, and none to say
'You're warmer, now you are colder.'

"May she keep this sense of the hidden thing / The somewhere joy that enthralled her……" It is indeed a kind of prayer for his daughter that she should never lose the feel for life as mystery. He regrets the fact that life becomes duller, and that the 'marvellous' gets squeezed out. There is no doubt here that he gives voice to a sense of loss. At the same time, there is the hope that the sense of the 'hidden' will endure. There is the hope that we shall never be entirely free of an intuition that there is more to life than meets the outward eye.

That regret and that hope are to be found in the work of so many poets of our generation. I think of Hardy and Betjeman and Larkin in particular. There is a sort of wistfulness in much that is written. The edge of faith is touched. The regret, the sense of loss and the longing too, being held within a scaffolding of words that points to and hints at some final resolution.

This is all rather haphazard; more impressionistic maybe than systematic. But I hope I have conveyed something of my own belief that the form and shape of a poem (a poem as a work of art) might be a signal of transcendence, hinting at some final order, and pointing to redemption. I hope too that I have conveyed to you my belief that poetry, through its rich and varied use of language, can work at a subliminal level to bring what has been 'forgotten' to the surface. And I hope that I have conveyed to you my belief that, within that 'framework', within that 'scaffolding of words', the concerns of a generation can be expressed and held in such a way as to bring people to the brink of faith. Poetry might be preserving in our own time much that we might have feared to have been lost.

David Conner

"A Conversation Hardly Begun": reflections on shared conversations

Keith Sinclair, Bishop of Birkenhead

Introduction

In 2009 Oliver O Donovan published a book "A Conversation Waiting to Begin". It was a plea for the church to be "seriously patient" in trying to address her disagreements over human sexuality. The phrase recurred in my mind during the recent experience of a shared conversation for the dioceses of Chester, Liverpool and Manchester as part of the national series of conversations requested by the House of Bishops following the Pilling Report.

I approached the conversations with serious misgivings, in part because of the experiences of others in other parts of the country, but also with a fundamental question as to whether these conversations could bear the weight that would be placed upon them for somehow finding a way for the Church of England to resolve her differences. Could there be a "disagreement", good or otherwise, which somehow did not act as a cover for "disobedience" which is not good? Was human experience being offered as the basis for the Church's teaching and ministry which superseded her confidence in Scripture as the supreme authority? In the dissenting statement which was part of the Pilling Report I had said "continuing discussion, without reference to the authority of biblical teaching and its place in the evaluation of tradition, reason and experience in the life of the Church will create further division and impaired fellowship within the Church of England and the Anglican Communion."(para 484); would that be the outcome of these shared conversations?

It is to the credit of the facilitators that some of these concerns were recognised in the framing of the conversation including the emphasis that they were not part of some predetermined outcome. There was recognition of different readings of scripture without the intention or space given for exploring or resolving those differences. Whether they have created "further division" remains to be seen. I suppose that depends on the relationships and reports of those who attended and the ways in which the wider Church responds to those relationships and reports.

I would like to share three reflections on my experience of these conversations and preface these comments by thanking the facilitators and the other participants. I think there was considerable respect for the process, and I heard those present from right across the spectrum of opinion expressing views with courtesy and with what I think I would characterise as a growing appetite for listening, both to scripture and to each other.

The Chasm

The first reflection is the extent of the chasm between those who read scripture differently. This is in part reflective of the different weight given to scripture in the different spiritualties of those present. These differences are seen not only in the interpretation of individual texts but also the way the "big picture" of scripture is conceived and believed. Are creation, the gospel and final judgement seen to be relevant to our identity as male and female in the image of God, our potential as married or unmarried in the kingdom of God, and our destiny as part of the union of the bride and bridegroom in the new heaven and earth? Apart from recognising differences and noting them, the conversations did not devote time to allow exploration or resolution. If we were representative of the whole Church of England to any extent, then this chasm in our reading is deep and the conversations were not designed to achieve convergence. It is a question as to whether there could ever be good disagreement in the Church, where such disagreement in the reading of scripture remains unaddressed.

There were two glimmers of hope for me. One the plea from another for the "patient reading of scripture" to take place in our parishes, dioceses and provinces as a way to seriously let the Holy Spirit instruct us; would we be patient? The other the description of a bible study in one of the three dioceses including people of radically different perspectives which, it was said, significantly contributed to unity. These glimmers took me back to Oliver O Donovan's book. Could our shared conversations have been the beginning of the conversation he envisaged, could we still be "seriously patient"?

What would such a "patient reading" cover? I think there are at least three distinct areas.

First, that we should consider the "big picture" of scripture as well as the key texts. One guest posed the question of "what is core?" thinking especially of the Creeds. Is our human identity, male and female, part of "the all things" made by our Creator and redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and can we accept God's gift of that identity or must we redefine it?

Second, that we should consider the numerous warnings in scripture about assimilation with the surrounding culture and the presence of false teaching within the church. These concerns do not seem to weigh heavily in any discussion I have been part of with those who advocate a change in the Church's teaching. Of course we can all be mistaken; if that possibility can increase humility on all sides, could it not also help us to be patient.

Third, many times I hear an appeal to Romans 14 as the text for helping Christians disagree well. I do not think Romans 14 applies to questions of human sexuality, for a number of reasons, mainly because I cannot believe that St Paul who refers to same sex practice in Romans 1:24-27 as being under the judgement of God, could by Romans 14 think it a matter indifferent. But even if Romans 14 does apply and the strong are those who want revision and the weak are those who insist on upholding the prohibitions of the law, according to Romans 14, the strong should be making

allowance for the weak, which means there should be no pressing for change thereby injuring the consciences of the weak.

There are, no doubt, many other matters to be addressed in any patient reading, not least how we are to love those with whom we most passionately disagree and with whom we wonder "can we still walk together?"

The Schism

The second reflection follows from the first. Given the chasm in the different readings of scripture, if the good trusting space for speaking honestly from the heart is overtaken by a political process I believe there will be schism in the Church of England.

Precisely because the different readings of scripture do not allow legitimacy to the other, if the matter is pressed, and people have to choose between "agreement" and "obedience", many will choose "obedience". The schism I have prayed against since consecration as Bishop in 2007 will happen, and the Church of England will experience, perhaps in a politer form, the rift seen in North America. I pray from my heart this will not happen. Those who will suffer most will be those who have not yet heard or believed the gospel, because the prayer for unity is so that the world may believe. And then the suffering of so many more because of what we cannot do if we are divided.

Returning to Oliver O Donovan's book he has much to say on the subject of schism and none of it easy to read, but all of it salutary, especially in the light of the upcoming Primates meeting in January 2016, especially pages 28-34. I quote at some length

Disagreements, he says, "*are openings for those who share a common faith to explore and resolve important tensions within the context of communion. This kind of proposal is ..easy to mishear*" and he goes on to say how. This is his conclusion page 33 "*every approach to resolving disagreements may turn out to fail. In the end God may have so hardened our hearts that we can see no way through our difficulties and simply find ourselves apart. God may in his judgement scatter a church that lacked the common will to search for its unity in the truth of the gospel. And then there may come a point at which this situation has to be given some kind of institutional expression. Nothing can exclude a priori the worst possibility that certain persons or groups, or even whole churches, may be declared to have left the communion of Jesus Christ. But it must be a declaration, a formal statement of what has come to pass. It cannot be an act to produce a result. The problem with the notion of separation is its expressive self-purifying character. It will not wait for God to purify his own church in his own time. Schisms may come, but woe to that church through whom they come! There is no right, or duty, of schism. As unity is given to the church as a gift, so it is taken away as a judgement. But on no account can disunity be a course of action that the church may embrace in pursuit of its mission or identity. The only justified breach is the one we have taken every possible step to avert, the one that lies on the far side of every conciliar process that can be devised*"

Which I take to mean in the light of these conversations, if the attempted processes at conciliation have not worked, nationally and internationally, the church keeps looking for ways of finding a conciliar process that may work. At the end of O Donovan's by no means favourable review of the Pilling process, thinking back to the St Andrew's Day Statement of 1995 and the follow up discussion this provoked, he comments "*In 1997 some of us thought we saw a way forward. Were we simply deluded? Or is it simply that nobody wanted to take the time to follow a slower, more exploratory path?*"

If we compare our disagreements to the question of the ordination of women, it is asked "could the church now follow the same path", were there not different readings of scripture then? This is true, there were differences, there still are. But if the comparison is to be pressed, there must be a look at how the Anglican Communion did wait, and explore, and find a way through in relation to the ministry of women. Scripture celebrates the equality of men and women, we are given examples of women in ministry and leadership in the Old and New testaments; supremely we have the Lord Jesus counter-culturally giving special honour to women. Nowhere in scripture is there a positive commendation of same sex marriage that authorises the Church to recognise this development as of God. This remains the overwhelming assessment of past and present scholarship (see Martin Davie's "Studies on the Bible and same sex relationships since 2003" Gilead 2015) and is why most of the bishops of the Anglican Communion in the 1998 Lambeth Conference (resolution 1:10) expressed themselves opposed to this development, warning that pressing the matter would lead to schism. North American Anglicanism is now in schism because that process was refused. What will happen in England ?

The Love

My third reflection has me asking "Why Lord is this happening?" After the conversations, I with many other bishops of the Northern Province took part in an evangelistic mission in the diocese of Sheffield. It was a good experience with many open doors for the gospel and many faithful Christians seeking to pray and reach out to their communities. Why, I ask, has God opened these doors at just the moment the Church seems to be heading for ship wreck.

I have wondered if God is allowing this to happen to show us the meaning of love. There may be elements of judgement present too, but I believe that ultimately even judgement is an expression of divine love. Will we know what it is for God to love us, and will we know what it is to love one another. I have been reading 1 John during the summer, and "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10). 1 John is a commentary on that love, weaving in the role of the commandments, the expulsion of sin from the life of the believer, and the call to love one another deeply so the world may believe.

For all my doubts about the conversations before they began, during and subsequent to the experience, I found the threefold listening (where three share personally and

confidentially their own stories) to be profoundly moving and important. In one sense I have not progressed from those conversations which were at the core of the whole experience of the shared conversations, and I do not want to progress other than to know how each of us is loved by the Lord and how we might love one another more.

And this for me is the greatest difficulty and pain. I know how what I have said above will seem to those who long for their love and relationships to be welcomed and honoured by the Church. I have no wish to diminish anyone's giving or receiving of love, only to celebrate it, but within the gift of the love of the Lord that is behind and before and above and below and within us. I know that my call for a patient reading of scripture will seem like mere avoidance and a refusal to love. But I believe scripture to be a love letter even in its strictures that seem hard and restrictive, given for us to know the reality and presence of the divine love of the Father Son and Holy Spirit. We are God's community of love. He is the one who enables us to love, who shapes our love and refines our love. I believe those sisters and brothers in same sex relationships have nothing to fear from such love, even if it means accepting God's word that the place and glory of sexual union is to be found in heterosexual marriage.

The shared conversations opened me still more to the depth of love and pain in my brothers and sisters who pray for the Church to change her doctrine and discipline. Of my need to repent I am in no doubt. The further I go on in these encounters before, during and after Pilling, the more sure I am that we all need to feel the force of Romans 1 taking us on to Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and Romans 5:8 "But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us". The St Andrew's Day Statement said long ago"That the issue should have become so highly dramatised calls for repentance on the part of all members of the church. It suggests that the Gospel has not been directing the acts, words and thoughts of Christians on this subject."

Our diocesan group was keen for the conversation to continue. So am I. If it was waiting to begin and has now hardly begun, could this be the place for the love that is patient and kind, in its continuation. 1 Corinthians 13 was rightly quoted at the end of our conversations. If the Church of England is anything like the church of Corinth in the first century, we surely need this love now more than ever; without it synodical resolutions will mean nothing.

September 2015

Walking the walk – the North Wales Pilgrim's Way

August, 2015

During the month of August and as part of a long overdue sabbatical, I walked most of the North Wales Pilgrim's Way from Basingwerk Abbey in Flintshire to Aberdaron at the end of the Lleyn Peninsula. The total distance is about 130 miles and I did about 100 miles, over six days, missing out a section in the middle of the walk, around Bangor. Arriving late in the afternoon at Aberdaron I was unable to take the boat trip across to Bardsey Island – Ynys Enlli – the traditional finishing point for medieval pilgrims, but will be doing the crossing in the very near future.

In the spirit of medieval pilgrims I carried what I needed on the walk, made use of local hostelries along the way and slept in the open, under the stars (though I did have a small tent for emergencies), marvelling at the beautiful countryside through which I was walking, and at the wonderful churches, chapels and historic sites, not to mention ancient yew trees, medieval standing wheel crosses and streams, rivers and holy wells (St Winefride's of course at Holywell but also St Beuno's outside Clynnog Fawr). For company along the way, apart from the people I met (and some of them could have come straight from the pages of Chaucer!) and the birds and animals I encountered, I carried the poems of RS Thomas, who was the Vicar of Aberdaron in the 1970s, one of whose successors at Aberdaron Jim Cotter has recently published a wonderful book of Thomas' poems with reflections and comments alongside them, relating especially to the last part of the pilgrimage through the Lleyn Peninsula and along the Wales Coast Path.

Familiar as I am with North Wales and the Lleyn Peninsula I was nevertheless unprepared for just how staggeringly beautiful the countryside was, and also for how difficult, at times, the pilgrim's path was – threading its way as it does through very mixed terrain with lots of steep ascents, some very overgrown paths through which I literally had to hack my way with my stout pilgrim's staff, ladder stiles and gates a plenty and some very fierce and territorial farm dogs! On a few occasions I was temporarily "unsure of my position" and it was with great relief whenever the official Waymark for the path, a green and white Celtic Cross, came into view on a gate, stile or tree! All in all the journey was physically and mentally challenging as I was on my own for a great deal of the time, in some quite remote parts of North Wales, and wasn't sure where I would be laying my head to rest each night, but the views, holy places and sites and people I met along the way more than made up for this. On a journey of faith I was not surprised by the small miracles that took place over the course of the walk – from my lost camera being found by a group of volunteers in one of the most overgrown stretches of the path to some complete strangers on the train back from Penmaenmawr, at the end of the second stage of the walk, sharing their bottles of water with an exhausted pilgrim! And wanting to know all about the pilgrimage.

Overall I found the whole experience incredibly enriching and spiritually uplifting – and cannot wait to take to the road again with hat, staff and my treasured cockle shell badge (given to me by my Chapter colleagues), the emblem of pilgrims since the early middle ages and which is still known and recognized today, as I found out on my journey. Two poems by RS Thomas were very close to my heart and soul during the walk and, for me, sum up something of the essence of the pilgrimage experience:

Some verses from **"Arrival"**
"The river dawdles
to hold a mirror for you
where you may see yourself
as you are, a traveller
with the moon's halo
above him, who has arrived
after long journeying where he
began, catching this
one truth by surprise
that there is everything to look forward to."

"I think that maybe"
I think that maybe
I will be a little surer
of being a little nearer.
That's all. Eternity
is in the understanding
that that little is more than enough.

The Revd Alec Brown
Vicar of St Mary and All Saints Great Budworth, Priest-in-Charge of St Mark's Antrobus and Rural Dean of Great Budworth Deanery, Chester Diocese.
September, 2015.

References

Andrew Jones 2011 Pilgrimage – The journey to remembering our story. Bible Reading Fellowship
Jim Cotter 2013 Etched by Silence – A pilgrimage through the poetry of R.S. Thomas. Canterbury Press
Anthony Thwaite (Ed) 1996 R. S. Thomas. Everyman JM Dent

The Revd John Masding: An Appreciation

The Revd. John Masding retired as Chairman of the Association at the last AGM in 2015 and it is my pleasure and privilege to write a few lines to record an appreciation of all that he has done for the Association. He had been the Chairman since 1991 of the then newly created English Clergy Association which he had helped to form out of the earlier Parochial Clergy Association. During his chairmanship he has overseen the growth of the Association and steered it with great skill and wisdom through difficult times for the clergy, and will be particularly remembered for his eloquent campaign against the abolition of the Freehold and the introduction of Common Tenure.

After taking a history degree at Magdalen College Oxford and completing his theological training at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, John became the incumbent of the Parish of Hamstead in the Diocese of Birmingham for 26 years. Later in life he acquired a sound legal knowledge that he used to obtain the LLM degree in Canon Law from Cardiff University and over the years has written a number of articles in *Parson & Parish*. After retiring to Norton Hawkfield near Bristol, he assisted in a number of churches in the area. He was a particular supporter of Christ Church in Bristol that maintained the tradition of the Book of Common Prayer. This reflected his great love of the Book of Common Prayer, and he was for many years a Trustee and the founder Secretary of the Prayer Book Society. He recently celebrated 50 years of ordained ministry.

Always particularly aware of the needs of clergy and their families, for a number of years he sat on the Court of the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy where he was greatly involved in securing the education and welfare of clergy children who found themselves being brought up in deprived areas or having little financial support.

John was always willing to help and give good advice and there are countless clergy all over the country who over the years have benefitted from his wise counsel and support. Through his work with the English Clergy Association, John has made a very distinctive contribution to the life of the Church of England and its clergy that will be appreciated and remembered by many for a very long time.

Peter Smith
Chairman

The Royal Society of St. George

"The Premier Patriotic Society of England"

Founded 1894

Incorporated by Royal Charter Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

Are you proud of your country and her glorious history?

Then why not become a member of The Royal Society of St George.
Membership provides an opportunity to take part in our determination to honour England and Englishness, and to celebrate our nation and its achievements.

The Aims of Our Society:

– To respect the Monarchy; Duty to our Sovereign and our Country
– The cause of England and Englishness

In accordance with our Constitution, the Objects of the Society are:

1. To foster the love of England and to strengthen England and the Commonwealth by spreading the knowledge of English history, traditions and ideals.
2. To keep fresh the memory of those, in all walks of life, who have served England or the Commonwealth in the past in order to inspire leadership in the future.
3. To combat all activities likely to undermine the strength of England or the Commonwealth.
4. To further English interests everywhere to ensure that St. George's Day is properly celebrated and to provide focal points the world over where English men and woman may gather together.

Subscriptions: Full UK Individual Membership: £25.00 p.a. – Full UK Joint Membership: £35.00 p.a. – Other memberships are available.

For your subscription you will receive a membership pack with a unique RSStG badge, membership card, car sticker, welcome letter from our Chairman, information on the Society, including members' benefits, St George's Day petition form and two previous issues of our Journal. Thereafter you will receive 3 copies of our Journal per year, updates via e-mail and you can become involved in the many events and activities that are held around the country.

Membership Application Form:

Name .....
Email .....
Address .....
.....
Postcode ..... Tel No. .....
Where did you hear about the Society? .....

I / We wish to further the Aims and Objectives of the Society (as printed in the 'St George For England' Journal) and now apply for membership of The Royal Society of St. George.

Signature:……..……..……..….. Date:.....……

For more information or a brochure on the Society, please contact us at Head Office:
Address: The Royal Society of St George, Enterprise House, 10 Church Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 1LA, England
Telephone: 020 3225 5011 – Fax: 020 8508 4356 – Email: info@royalsocietyofstgeorge.com
Website: www.royalsocietyofstgeorge.com
Facebook page – www.facebook.com/RoyalSocietyofStGeorge
Twitter account – @RSStGeorge – LinkedIn – The Royal Society of St George Official Group

Our Society is non-political, non-racist, non-sectarian and membership is open to all those who agree with our aims and objectives.

GRANTS FOR "A REST FROM DUTY"

THE ENGLISH CLERGY ASSOCIATION BENEFIT FUND

(registered charity no. 258559)

From the Almoner

The English Clergy Association can sometimes help by way of a grant towards a holiday. We know from the postcards and letters we receive how much our help has meant to the recipients. We are able to make in the order of 50 to 60 holiday grants a year. These grants are specifically for holidays, or rests from duty, for serving or retired clergy of the Church of England (as set out below).

Eligibility

The Association is able to make grants towards "a rest from duty" to those who are:

(a) clergy of the Church of England, engaged in full time ministry or part time ministry in the Church; or
(b) clergy engaged in some other employment, occupation or calling; or
(c) clergy who have retired from ministry in the Church or from other employment, occupation or calling but who perform duties calculated to advance the work of the Church of England.

A request for an application form should be made either by letter or by e-mail:

The Rev'd Richard Hall, LL.B., M.A.
45 Howard Park, Greystoke, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0TU
e-mail: revrichardhall45@gmail.com

A note from the ECA Treasurer

You can now nominate the English Clergy Association Benefit Fund to receive all or part of any tax refund due to you. Please complete page CH2 of your Self Assessment Tax Return, entering code UAH88UG in box 5. If you are able to tick the Gift Aid declaration your donation will be augmented by a further 25%.

Postcards

Very many thanks to the ECA for the grant which enabled these two weeks in Andalucia – a very relaxed and agreeable break from the parish!

Dear John and all at the ECA – we are having an absolutely wonderful time here in Italy, thanks in no small way to the ECA and their generous gift. We would not be here otherwise. Our heartfelt thanks from a warm and sunny holiday.

Very grateful thanks again for the ECA support for this once in a lifetime sabbatical trip to Kenya.

We recently returned from a restful and revitalizing holiday in Normandy, made possible by the generous grant from the ECA. We enjoyed the beach and countryside, took in some WW2 sites and of course sampled some fine local food and wine. Thank you so much – it makes such a difference to family life to be able to get away properly.

This holiday has made all the difference to us – thank you and God bless.

Writing to thank you for the ECA cheque which helped to pay the cost of a holiday to Budapest – we had a wonderful time, both stimulating and relaxing and just what I needed. I cannot thank you enough for the generosity of the ECA.

A postcard from our holiday in South West France this summer, so generously made possible by the ECA grant. We have been thoroughly refreshed by our trip, the first for us as a family by ourselves for a number of years.

Thank you all for the holiday grant which enabled us to go to Little Walsingham in Norfolk. We had a lovely time – making sandcastles on the beach, walking and riding the little train. Thank you again.

We are having a lovely break in France. Many thanks to the Trustees for helping make this much needed break happen.

Just to say we are having a fantastic time here in France – thanks again for your generosity.

With much gratitude to the ECA for helping me to travel to North America and visit Niagara Falls.

I am so grateful to the ECA for generously supporting a holiday of a lifetime in India. It was an absolutely wonderful experience…and we all learned so much, of the country, the culture and the faiths – an inspiration for years to come. Thank you!

Thank you for your kind and generous holiday grant. We are all having a relaxing and quiet time enjoying the beautiful English countryside in Wiltshire. Our boys are relaxing after exams. Please pass on our thanks to the Trustees.

This last year has been very demanding and it has been wonderful to have this time to relax (be 'anonymous') and do things as a family. Thank you ECA! Every blessing.

WILLS — Making a Donation in your Will

The Association and our Benefit Fund are helped greatly if there are legacies and bequests. By making a posthumous gift of money or property you may also reduce your estate's Inheritance Tax liability.

The options for a donation in your Will are:

- a legacy of a specific sum
- a bequest of specific property
- a bequest of the residue of your estate or a share of it with other charities or individuals

What to do to help us in your WILL:

If you wish to include a donation in your WILL please first consult your solicitor.

A simple form of legacy might include the following words:

"I hereby bequeath, free of tax, the sum of £ to

the English Clergy Association Benefit Fund (Registered Charity No. 258559) OR to The English Clergy Association (4 St John's Road, Windsor, Berks SL4 3QN) and the receipt of the Hon. Treasurer or other proper Officer for the time being of the English Clergy Association shall be a complete discharge of such legacy."

This wording can easily be adapted to cover the bequest of a property or of all, or part of, the residue of your estate. In any case of doubt please ask your solicitor or get in touch with the Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer. This is especially appreciated if you intend to lay down conditions as to how the bequest should be used.

CAMBRIDGE JOURNALS

Journal of Anglican Studies

Published in Association with the Journal of Anglican Studies Trust

Journal of Anglican Studies provides a serious scholarly conversation on all aspects of Anglicanism. It embraces history, theology, worship, ethics, scripture, canon law, aesthetics and education. With its international reach, the Journal is able to focus on the position of Anglicans within many different cultural contexts, offering a unique contribution to our understanding of Anglicanism today.

Journal of Anglican Studies
is available online at:
http://journals.cambridge.org/ast

To subscribe contact Customer Services

in Cambridge:
Phone +44 (0)1223 326070
Fax +44 (0)1223 325150
Email journals@cambridge.org

in New York:
Phone +1 (845) 353 7500
Fax +1 (845) 353 4141
Email
subscriptions_newyork@cambridge.org

For free online content visit:
http://journals.cambridge.org/ast

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

To THE ENGLISH CLERGY ASSOCIATION:

***New Members** I desire to become a Member of the English Clergy Association, and to receive its Journal, and herewith enclose the Annual Subscription of £10.00 (year ending December 2016). *(For the retired, or students, the subscription is £5.00 p.a. including the Journal.)*

***Renewal Subscription for Members**
I enclose my Subscription of £10.00 for **2016** *(retired subscription £5.00)*.

***Non-Members subscribing to *Parson & Parish* only** I would like to take the ECA Magazine *Parson and Parish* for one full year and enclose the sum of £6.00 *(£5.00 for the retired)*. **Delete the inapplicable sections.*

Name in full:

Parish and Postal Address:

Post Code Telephone

Diocese and Deanery

Date

Please complete as clearly as possible. Receipts *on request*: please tick here if required { }

BANKERS ORDER

Messrs (Bankers and branch)

Address

Post Code

Please pay COUTTS & CO. (18-00-02), 440 Strand, London WC2R OQS, for the credit of the ENGLISH CLERGY ASSOCIATION. account 21299490,

the sum of £10.00/£6.00/£5.00*

on the…….. day of ……..…… 201….. and annually, until further notice.

Name Signature

Address

Sort code and account no.

Please complete the Banker's Order, remembering to sign it, and return it through the post to **The English Clergy Association**, Hampton Vicarage, 54 Pershore Road, Hampton, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 2PQ. This Order entails no liability beyond your Annual Payment and you may withdraw it at any time.