

Father Hoyal Writes

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

Our business is God, I often tell people. We are in the God business, and because he is the kind of God he is, we are also very much in the people business. God and neighbour: Our Lord puts the two side by side.

For myself, I'm certain that our primary task (and privilege) is worship – seeking to live in active relationship with God. That is why churches must always be primarily places of worship.

But Church is also very much about fellowship. Belonging is sometimes as important to individuals as believing. Belief often deepens as people come to feel that they belong.

That is one reason I am so glad that a host of activities other than worship also happen to take place at All Saints. I am always proud of the fact that we are home to regulars as diverse as AA, the Tai Chi class, our local Soroptomists, the Kindermusik children's groups, and the Bristol Psychotherapy Association. In their way they belong too. In this connection, I do hope we can repeat last year's experiment of hosting a reception for local business-people, and make more links in that direction.

It is lovely too that so many people choose All Saints as the venue for special celebrations such as birthday parties and wedding anniversaries. And then there are the splendid fun days we now organise for young people, our Epiphany parties, Harvest lunches, Burns Night celebrations and charity events.

The musical events we enjoy also bring us contact with people and groups we wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to meet and establish friendships with. And music is uniquely valuable as

a uniter, providing shared experience that touches spiritual depths without tying people down to verbal formulas that might be premature or divisive. The art exhibitions we are now hosting are another element in this provision of events that attract and unite.

I am particularly pleased, though, that All Saints Arts is promoting the forthcoming Lecture and Supper evening on *Darwin and God – Why is There a Dispute?* at which Professor Mike Benton is speaking. With Mike and Mary both involved, I am sure it will be a great success as an event that will both inform and entertain.

The new atheism of our times is hardening some of the secularist assumptions that underlie religiophobic attitudes and practice in many institutions of to-day's society. It is more important than it has been for a long while that there are people who, for example, can make sense of Darwin for us, and do so without misrepresenting the subtlety and richness of Christian understanding of God as Creator and Redeemer and Sanctifier.

I hope we continue to be able to stage opportunities for input and discussion in an inviting atmosphere about religious, moral, scientific and artistic questions that will be of interest beyond the confines of our regular congregation.

We can easily become spiritually stale, and I for one, as we say nowadays, need to "get out more." Events and opportunities that assist us in this will be beneficial to many, I am sure.

In this regard, we must express our gratitude also to Dr Christina Biggs (Tina to us) who has been working with scientists in our region to set up a local Bristol group of Christians in Science (CiS) as a network for those interested in the relationship between science and Christian faith.

Most fortunately for us, Tina has opted for All Saints as the venue for meetings. The inaugural meeting of the Bristol local group is here at 8 pm on Friday 27 November in the Randall Room. Andrew Halestrap, Professor of Biochemistry at Bristol University, will be speaking on *Science, Suffering and a God of Love*. I am sure this meeting will be the beginning of a highly profitable programme of events that help faith to seek understanding.

I do hope God really comes first in everything we are about as people of faith. I am certainly grateful that All Saints provides so many opportunities for fellowship and inspiration in the pursuance of our faith. I pray for more belonging and better believing, and I look forward to the exciting new developments that will nudge us to seek and share deeper understanding of our faith.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard Hoyle".

Our School at Clifton (an extract from *History of a Community*)

“A reference must be made to ‘our School at Clifton’. The work at Clifton, according to Sister Caroline Mary’s *Memories*, began ‘under Mr Randall of All Saints Church’ early in 1871. R W Randall was the first Vicar of All Saints, Clifton, from 1868. At the end of 1870 he was helpful to the Sisters in negotiating a three year lease on a house for them at 6 Buckingham Vale. There seems, according to a letter of 16 December, to have been a little suspicion as to what nuns might be doing in the parish. The school has been described as one ‘for young ladies’. Sister

Harriet, with her knowledge of French, was sent there early in 1871, straight from the Franco-Prussian War, where she had been serving with the Mother Foundress under the auspices of the Red Cross.. Sister Caroline Mary tells us that Sister Louisa succeeded Sister Harriet there. She tells us also that ‘our dear and holy Sister Mary Beatrix’ was one of her pupils. Sister Mary Stanislas was also there. She seems to have come to the Community at an early age, soon after leaving the School. Records show that she was not one of the happiest members of the Community. Sister Maria Francesca, with all her own learning and the culture of the Rossetti family, seems to have taught there during her brief life in the Community. It is fair to suggest that the School was a small one, and that the Sisters lived and taught at 6 Buckingham Gate [sic]. The 1891 list of the ‘Works of Mercy’ of the All Saints Sisters of the Poor makes no mention of ‘our School at Clifton’. Its life seems not to have been very long.”

The final sentence is an understatement. In the 1871 Directory 6 Buckingham Vale is empty. The Directories for 1872 and 1873 list The Sisters of All Saints, but there is no cross reference to convents or schools or even a listing in the alphabetical index, and they have gone by the time the 1874 Directory is published. Compare the references in the 1872 Directory to another small school (p 223 alphabetical index),

‘Robinson, Miss E, boarding school for young gentlemen, Tottenham house, Tottenham place, Clifton’

This is matched by the street entry under Tottenham Place.

In the absence of further evidence, one must wonder whether this was a school, or a hothouse for potential novices.

Anne Bradley

The Gardens & The Todd Walton Cross

I am sure you have all admired the gardens to the rear of the church with its extremely fine cross. (I believe it was constructed in the tradition of a preaching cross). Many of you may have jumped off it, eaten your picnics from it and used it as a seat but I am sure that not many of you will be aware of its history or importance as part of a major planned scheme.

The grand scheme for the development of the site (see Fr Peters notes below) was never fulfilled but the cross remains as a most outstanding feature of the garden. During my time at All Saints I have been privileged to work on the gardens and to give the opportunity (thanks to various incumbents and the trustees) to develop the large garden behind the church, the vicarage and the gardens of no 70 into three distinctly different 'garden rooms.' These are now connected and give one an opportunity to enjoy a big open space, a topiary garden and an herbaceous garden. These were greatly enjoyed on the Opera Picnic night and I hope there will be other similar opportunities for the public to see and use them. The grand building scheme may not have been completed but as a result we now have beautiful enclosed garden in the heart of Clifton which I hope will become of major local importance.

Notes written by The Revd Peter Cobb.

Who was Todd Walton? Round the base of the monument is an inscription which is not easily read: In loving memory of Thomas Walton Todd, some time churchwarden of the church of All Saints, and a most generous benefactor to that church. This is rather an understatement although it was presumably written by his widow who gave the cross in 1888, three years after his death. He was, in fact, the first People's Warden, from 1869 to 1877

and according to Forster Alleyne in his history of All Saints 'he might almost be called the Church's founder, so untiringly did he work to promote its building and to collect subscriptions'. He gave the original endowment of the church and many other gifts. Richard Randall, the first vicar, told the story that when the children were giving money for a collection for a window which was to cost £180 he said he would like to see whether the boys or the girls would offer most and amongst offerings of the boys appeared a note for £10, which he suspected came from Mr Walton who was sitting on the boys' side of the church.

All Saints was not the only church of which he was a major benefactor. He was instrumental in building St Mary's Tyndall Park, with which All Saints was united from 1962 until 1978. He was actually patron of the living.

He was quite a public figure. He was postmaster of Bristol from 1842 to 1871, after serving as chief clerk for ten years under his father. He was also High Sheriff for two years, 1872-74. One of his jobs as chief clerk was to organise the collection of mail. When the mail from America was first brought across the Atlantic in the Great Western steamship in 1838 the staff had to be on standby for two or three days. News that the ship was coming up the Avon came by means of a runner from Pill at 2 in the morning but Todd Walton immediately turned out, rallied his band of workers and worked on through the day until it was all distributed. His obituary in a local paper describes him as 'A man of considerable culture and taste' with 'a sense of humour and ready wit which made him an agreeable and intelligent companion'.

What of the monument itself? It is basically a cross mounted on three steps, made of limestone, not granite as Alleyne says.. At the bottom of the shaft is the figure of the Good Shepherd and at the top are four sculptures of the Annunciation, the Crucifixion,

the Resurrection and the Ascension. Over these rises a crocketed finial and the whole is surmounted by a cross.

The idea of erecting a cross where it now stands seems to go back to a Bristol architect, Henry Edwards. It was part of a grandiose plan to create a cloister behind the church with a parish room or library on one side and a clergy house on another, linked by covered walkways on three sides. The only part constructed was the Parish Room, built 1884-85, now Garden Court. This was built to Edwards' plans and seems to be his only surviving major work in Bristol. The Todd Walton Memorial Cross was designed, however, not by Edwards, but by John Logan Pearson who had succeeded Street as architectural advisor to the church. Best known as architect of Truro Cathedral he also took over from Street at Bristol Cathedral where he was responsible for the chancel screen and the modified design of the west towers.

The monument has been stabilised, pointed and lightly cleaned. The only repair was to the finial. The work was carried out by just one mason, C J Pearse, under the supervision of Mary Maggs, the church architect of the time.

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Fr Peter was assiduous about keeping notes and preserving historical documents and I thought that some of you would be interested in reading about the cross. If history is “not your thing” continue to enjoy the gardens and the imposing cross and do use it as a picnic table. All of us should rejoice that Todd Walton was just the first of a series of outstanding churchwardens that have maintained this unique building and its splendid liturgy until the present day.

The gardens are owned and maintained by All Saints trustees.

Andrew Morgan

OUR HARVEST CHARITIES 2009

This year we are supporting two charities, one 'home' and the other 'away'.

R.A.B.I.

The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) is a charity that supports members of the farming community facing need, hardship or distress.

RABI supports people who have worked full-time on the land for at least 10 years as a farmer, farm manager or farm worker, or who is dependant on someone who did. To qualify for help, they will be on low incomes and with limited savings.

RABI provides:

- Practical support and welfare visits
- Retirement support
- Quarterly and seasonal grants
- Home helps
- Nursing home top-up fees
- Lifeline telephones
- Organised UK holidays for retired and disabled beneficiaries
- 2 residential homes
- Development of specialist rural housing for retired members of the farming community to rent.

Self-Help Africa

Approximately 80% of Africans live in rural areas - their options to improve livelihoods largely restricted to agriculture. Self Help Africa is a charity that enables families to grow enough food to feed themselves and to earn a sustainable living.

Self Help Africa believes that real and lasting change can only be achieved by enabling and empowering local people - so that they have the tools, the training, and the necessary support to anticipate a future free from hunger and poverty.

Self Help Africa has almost twenty-five years experience in bringing lasting solutions to poverty for Africa's rural poor. They work in Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia, tackling poverty and improving the lives of local communities.

The organisation works both with its own African staff, and through local partners to undertake a range of integrated development programmes amongst rural communities.

We can help at this Harvest-time by giving through the special gift-aid envelopes that will be available. Find out more from the atrium displays.

IN THIS MONTH ... OCTOBER 1982

Dorothy Fulford writes of her experience of Christians in China

I have just returned from a three week visit to mainland China, visiting seven cities. In Shanghai during a trip on the river Huan Po I met a Chinese Christian Esperantist, who told me that the Christian religion is attracting more and more young people.

Services were forbidden for about twenty years prior to 1980. In October of that year three churches were reopened in Shanghai and in 1981 a further five were reopened, and it is believed that others will follow this year. There are two services each Sunday. At first they thought that only old people would attend but now about half the congregations are young people. Mr Pandisho told me that hearing for the first time in their lives the valuable teachings of Jesus Christ they want their friends to go to church too, to learn the joy of being a Christian.

The churches, which generally hold about 1,600 people, are always so full that they have to open side rooms to accept further hundreds of worshippers. Foreign Christian tourists who visit the churches are often moved to tears when they see the ardent devotion displayed by Chinese Christians. Unfortunately I was not in Shanghai on a Sunday and could not participate in a church service.

Mr Pandisho was given several copies of the New Testament in Esperanto, which some of our group had taken to China in the hope that we would find someone to accept them. Mr Pandisho has seven children, all of whom are married. Of the seven children and their spouses, nine are Christians.

It was a wonderful trip and we met many splendid young people who have learnt, or are learning, the international language.

Despite China's relative isolation from contact with foreign Esperantists they have mastered the international pronunciation admirably, although a few still have difficulty with the letters L and R.

As a means of getting to know the ordinary people of a country Esperanto has no equal. Our group consisted of twenty one people from five countries and our only common language with each other was Esperanto.

OCTOBER MUSIC AT ALL SAINTS

4.00 pm Saturday 10 October

“CONCERT MATINEE EXTRA” *Don't Miss!*

STATE YOUTH CHOIR OF NORTH RHINE WESTPHALIA/GERMANY

Established in 1979, the choir consists of young singers from over 25 towns in North Rhine and is supported by the State Council for Music. The 70 members of the ensemble are aged between 17 and 27. France as well as Czechoslovakia and Israel., Russia, England, Spain Italy and China.

Expect an excellent standard of performance as they sing Sacred and Secular music mainly classical, but with some more popular modern pieces. Do be with us, if you can, to welcome our very talented young guests from abroad.

Admission free. Retiring Collection. Tea and cake after.

4.00-5.00 pm Saturday 31 October

CONCERT MATINEE

Making a popular return visit...

Shelly Ezra (clarinet) & Jennifer Carter (piano)

Admission free. Retiring Collection. Tea and cake after.

SEA AND SWINE

Address given by Fr Hoyal at Evensong on Sunday 20 September.

[Matthew 8.23-34: Jesus' stilling of the storm at sea and his healing of the Gadarene demoniacs].

Fitting that tonight's second reading is from Matthew, since to-morrow is St Matthew's Day.

But what different scenes the reading brings before us. The first is one we always warm to: Jesus asleep in the boat as a dangerous storm blows up on the lake – his terrified companions rouse him –and with a word he calms wind and sea. They are astounded.

The passage highlights two things: first, how we must marvel at one whom even winds and sea obey – just who and what can he be? And second, the need to keep faith with Jesus even in turbulent and dangerous times.

As believers, we can cope with these two things. If Jesus is the Son of God, we needn't be surprised that he displays divine powers. And certainly, like the disciples in the boat we too need reassurance. We can panic so easily, causing our faithometers to swing rapidly down towards zero. We need to be reminded again and again that the Lord is with us in the boat, albeit unseen.

But the Gadarene affair is quite another matter. Demon possession is not in our society's official script. The usual tack is to see this gospel passage as another case of Jesus' healing what we would term severe

mental disturbance. If a herd of pigs subsequently stampeded to their death, were they simply frightened by the attendant carry-on? Or was their behaviour just a strange coincidence that people who believed in possession picked up on to explain what happened to the supposed demons that Jesus drove out?

All this is very difficult for modern westerners. But, in fact, in many parts of the world, demon possession such as described in the Bible is part of common experience. Many cultures attribute strange behaviour and untoward events to evil spirits that need to be exorcised.

We might prefer to say that it is mental illness and severe psychotic disturbance that are the cause of the frightening behaviour that is stopping the local inhabitants go near the crazy men from the tombs.

We might prefer to say that healing in such cases, if possible, comes usually from the God-given sources of medicine and psychiatry.

But I have to tell you that I have often come across seriously ill people who themselves certainly believed they were possessed. Whatever the objective cause of their disturbance, being with them certainly made you feel as if they were possessed by something evil or dangerous.

So all this is very difficult for us, and - not least - making sense of the seemingly senseless destruction of a whole herd of pigs. What had they done to deserve their fate? I wonder how long it will be before we have animal rights extremists effectively seeking to bowdlerise the Bible, as other interest groups rather try to do these days?

For Matthew, the scene he paints is no doubt intended to demonstrate that the Lord whom even wind and wave obey possesses all power and authority, even over the evil forces of our world. And as a Jew he might well think that the place for expelled unclean spirits is in a herd of unclean animals – evidently Gadara was far from being a kosher Jewish village.

But we must also note that Jesus exercises his authority with compassion, out of concern for people in serious affliction. And

certainly, there is often a connection, albeit sometimes not direct, between evil situations and personal health. Sheer greed, for instance, too easily builds factories where safety is ignored and many suffer as a result. And people who persist in dissolute lives often reap what they sow.

I don't ask you to feel at home with the story Matthew tells us to-night. But sometimes Holy Scripture is valuable precisely because it puzzles and disturbs us. And whatever else the Gadarene episode is about, it vitally draws attention to important spiritual truths: that, sadly, evil is an alarming reality in people's lives: that God cares for the welfare of the individual, that he *is* concerned, and that he is powerful to heal.

That's well worth being reminded of. We are not on our own against irresistible forces, any more than those disciples in the boat were.