

THE WHITE ROSE

The Parish Newsletter of Old Saint Paul's Church

February 2013.

Lent

The point of Lent is not denial.

It's easy to make the mistake of thinking that it is, because everything we hear about Lent is about 'giving things up' and self-denial. The focus is often on the act of denial itself, 'what I'm giving up for Lent.'

But notice that this is all about me. It has very little to do with what God might be doing, but about something that I'm doing. Each of these responses betrays a belief that I am the one in control, that I am the one, ultimately, who matters.

However, Lent isn't about denial, it's about change, about transformation. Lent, after all, is from an early English word for Spring, the season of Lengthening days, the season of new growth and transformation. Lenten transformation is about allowing ourselves to be shaped by God's grace. Our acts of self-denial are only for emptying ourselves enough to allow God to fill us. They are a means to an end. They prepare us to be transformed, just a little more, into the fully human beings that God is making.

The early Christians understood this when they developed the traditional disciplines of Lent – prayer, fasting and almsgiving. They have been used by Christians over the centuries because they are an effective means to opening ourselves to the transformation that Lent is about.

Prayer

Prayer is not about asking God for things. It is about establishing, maintaining, or strengthening your connection to God in Christ. We do this so that we can begin to see the world as Christ sees it. This is the first, most foundational Lenten practice. If you do nothing else during Lent, commit to the practice of daily prayer (preferably silent and contemplative). Lent is the perfect time to reignite your prayer life. It is the time of the year when we intentionally focus on dying in order to rise.



Fasting

Fasting (what we typically mean when we talk of 'giving something up') is not about doing without something you love, but doing without something you need. We should be limiting our chocolate and alcohol intake anyway. We don't need to use Lent as an excuse to go on a diet. The point of fasting is to

recognize our dependence on God's provision of life. Traditionally, fasting from everything except basic food (such as bread and water) is done once or twice a week, from sunset to sunset on Mondays to Tuesdays and Thursdays to Fridays. Why not try something like this, instead of giving up chocolate, go a little hungry (only if your health allows this), and give the money to charity?

Almsgiving

If you are opening yourself to grace through prayer and fasting, you will begin to see Christ in 'the least of these,' in those who have less or nothing. When you do, offer yourself to the Christ you find in them. It's really very simple, and it can be planned or spontaneous. Either way, it will be countercultural, and will involve sacrifice, often financial.

It's important that these Lenten disciplines have been handed on in the Church from generation to generation. That means they are a gift, not our own invention. They are the practices of the Holy Spirit that we are allowed to share in, through faith. In the end, whatever you do during Lent is between you and God, but I hope we can commit ourselves to engaging in disciplines that remind us of God's grace, not ones that try to make us the saviours of ourselves.

Fr Ian

Lent 2013 at Old S. Paul's

Sundays of Lent at High Mass

High Mass at 10.30am is shorter to allow time afterwards for those who would like to join in a discussion based on the sermon, ending by 12.45pm.

Sunday 17 February, Lent 1
Bishop Richard Holloway

Sunday 24 February, Lent 2,
Fr Andrew Bowyer

Sunday 3 March, Lent 3
Fr Kevin Francis,
Anglican Chaplain of Glasgow University

Sunday 10 March, Lent 4
Canon Ian Paton

Sunday 17 March, Lent 5
Deacon Kate Reynolds

Also on Sundays
8 am Mass
10.10am Morning Prayer
6.30pm Evensong & Benediction

Weekday Worship during Lent

Monday
Morning Prayer 8 am
Mass 12.20pm
Evening Prayer 5.45pm

Tuesday
Morning Prayer 8 am
Mass 12.30pm
(at S. Margaret's, Easter Rd)
Evening Prayer 5.45pm
Christian Meditation 5.30pm
(at S. Margaret's)

Wednesday
Morning Prayer 8 am
Evening Prayer 5.45pm
Confessions from 6pm
Mass 6.30pm

Thursday
Morning Prayer and Mass 8 am
Evening Prayer 5.45pm

Friday
Morning Prayer 8 am
Mass 12.20pm
Evening Prayer 5.45pm

Ashes to Ashes

Ash Wednesday – the beginning of Lent – is on 13 February, and I hope you will be able to come to one of the Masses with the Giving of Ashes, at 8 am, 12.20pm, or 7.30pm.

Ashes have traditionally been a sign of repentance and mourning. Ashes inherently represent the passing of something vital – a tree which once grew tall, a house destroyed by fire, all that is left of a body after it has been cremated. Ashes from the burned palms of last year's Palm Sunday carry the reminder that the triumph and tragedy are side by side in the life of Jesus as in our own.

On Ash Wednesday, as we observe the beginning of Lent, the season of penitence and preparation for Easter, the priest takes the ashes, and draws the sign of the cross on one forehead at a time, saying the words: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" and "Turn away from sin, and be faithful to Christ."



It is always amazing that people are eager to receive ashes, given that we already experience so many reminders of our mortality. Loved ones die. Our own bodies show signs of wearing out. We are in the midst of broken situations and broken communities, and we never have to look far to see decay and corruption. As someone said, "Life is serious and risky business, and no one gets out alive."

But it is often said that there is grace in truth. Despite the many reminders of mortality that surround us, we also live in a culture of denial. "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" simply puts the truth on the table. It is an obvious, if unwelcome, starting point for a relationship with God's grace.

The ashes are given to us in the sign of the cross on our foreheads. This is not just a sign of mortality, then, but a sign of Christ, in his cross which means life coming out of death. With that sign, in the hope of Christ, our mortality is not something to be feared or denied. We are not at our best, we are not at our most glorious, we are not most fully human, only when things are going well and we are lost in happiness and fulfilment.

We may also be at our best precisely when things are at their worst. How we respond to suffering, disaster, defeat and death can be just as glorious as our achievements, successes, and triumphs. Maybe the ashes are inviting us to have faith in our mortality, rather than to regret it.

As the prayer for blessing the ashes says:

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth: Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Fr Ian

Ash Wednesday, 13 February

8 am Mass with Giving of Ashes
12.20pm Mass with Giving of Ashes
7.30pm High Mass with Giving of Ashes

Ministry Team Developments

Welcome to Fr Andrew Bowyer

Fr Andrew Bowyer was licensed by Bishop John on 24 January, to serve as Assistant Priest (non-stipendiary) at Old S. Paul's, and we welcomed him to the Ministry team at mass on the Feast of the Conversion of S. Paul. Here he tells us a little about himself.

“As a small boy growing up in the Salvation Army in Australia I liked to perch on the back pew and mimic my uncle as he stood on a raised platform at the front of the church conducting the brass band. The band never tired of belting out stirring Wesleyan hymns week after week. I have some wonderfully rich memories of that time.



As well as the music, I remember the stained glass window depicting Holman Hunt's famous image of Christ 'knocking at the door', and I remember individuals standing up in their pews to give testimony as to what God's grace has wrought in them over the past week. The abiding conviction among those gathered was that God's presence was very real; constantly searching them out, constantly inviting conversion and constantly giving strength and wholeness.

It was there where I began to learn to love God and love the church. All this was pushed aside and largely forgotten in the haze of teenage years, but it wasn't long before I

found myself being drawn back in. It happened when I was at university studying for a business degree and I began helping a friend lead a youth ministry in a local Anglican parish.

Before long I was baptised, confirmed and eventually on the path toward ordination. This led me to theological college in Canberra, a curacy in a bush parish on the far south coast of New South Wales, and then to Sydney as the Assistant Priest at a busy inner city parish.

The next step is completing a PhD at New College. Being offered a place in the programme has been one of the most exciting opportunities of my life so far – something I would never have imagined just a few years ago. I arrived to begin the course in September and one of the added gifts has been finding OSP.

From my very first visit I've felt at home and for that reason I was delighted when Fr Ian invited me to join the team as an Honorary Assistant Priest. I'm very much looking forward to enjoying your company and contributing to the life of parish over the next 3 years.



Thank you to Charles and Hilary Davies-Cole

The Rev Charles Davies-Cole was ordained in 1966, and has served as Deacon at Old S. Paul's for 46 years, supported by Hilary, who has made her own contribution to our life (see *A Coffee with ...* last month). At the Feast of the Conversion of S. Paul on 27th January we were able to mark Charles' long years of service, to say 'thank you' as he steps down from the active liturgical side of ministry as a deacon at high mass, and to present a gift to Charles and Hilary to mark our appreciation. And at the end of mass Charles dismissed us with his familiar authoritative voice, 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord', and we felt inspired and commissioned, as people have for the last 46 years.

S. Margaret's Church, Easter Rd

The Bishop has appointed Fr Ian as interim Rector of S. Margaret's, reviving the link which formerly existed between that church and OSP, and Fr Stephen as Assistant Priest with responsibility for S. Margaret's. This is an important stage in the life of S. Margaret's, which is a small but faithful congregation in a busy area of the city.

Fr Ian and Fr Stephen will be licensed by the Bishop in these new roles, at S. Margaret's on Sunday 10 February.

Canon David Jowitt OGS

We were very sad to hear of the death of Fr David Jowitt. In retirement, while still living in Edinburgh, Fr David assisted at Old S. Paul's, particularly at the 8 am mass on Sundays. Although he moved south in 1999, he is well remembered by many members of the congregation as a wise, gentle friend and priest. After a long period of illness, David died on Christmas Day 2012. A requiem mass in thanksgiving for his life was celebrated at Old S. Paul's on 19 January. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

A Lent Labyrinth Calvary stairlift dedicated

On 1 January Old S. Paul's was one of the venues for the city's Hogmanay Celebration. The church hosted two welcoming and reflective spaces in the nave, which was cleared of chairs for the day. Di Williams and her team offered a prayer Labyrinth, which is a traditional method of meditation while following the path of the labyrinth marked on the ground, and



Carol Marples constructed a reflective space for stillness and prayer. While live music was played by piano and harp, the church was open for the afternoon of New Year's Day, and over 700 people came through the doors to experience both the labyrinth and the reflective space, and the prayerful atmosphere of Old S. Paul's itself.

At the beginning of Lent a Labyrinth will be available again in Old S. Paul's for people to use for their own meditation and prayer. This time the lines of the Labyrinth will be formed by projected light, created by artist Jim Buchanan. The Labyrinth will be open, with guidance on how to use it, on

**Tuesday 19,
Wednesday 20,
and Thursday 21 February
from 6 to 9 pm**

Next Issue Deadline

The deadline for the March issue is **Monday 25 February**. Please email contributions to: media@osp.org.uk

At the top of the Calvary stair, just where the stairlift ends, a small plaque reads:

The stairlift was given in 2012
by Laserfiche
in grateful memory
of Robert Gilchrist (1938-1996)
+
May he rest in peace
and rise in glory

So who was Robert Gilchrist and why did Laserfiche choose to honour him in this way? He was born in Prestwick in 1938, went to Glasgow University and from the outset showed considerable computing and management skills. After a successful career in Europe he and his family moved to Orange County, California where he established his own company and then when his health deteriorated, initiated a consulting practice. He thought of himself as an 'entrepreneurial coach' assisting growing or struggling companies to succeed.

One of these companies was Laserfiche. Unfortunately his health declined, he had to have both legs amputated and he died at the relatively early age of 57. Laserfiche felt that they had never been able to thank Bob properly for his invaluable help and so, when their CEO, Nien-Ling Hacker, visited Old

Saint Paul's and read about our intentions to install a stairlift, this seemed an ideal way to acknowledge his assistance and to commemorate his memory in Scotland.



On Thursday 24 January, in a simple ceremony, with a liturgy written by the Rector for the occasion, Bishop John blessed the new entrance and the stairlift expressing the hope that both would provide a warm welcome to all who come to the church and especially to those who, for whatever reason, find stairs impossible. David McLellan, in his wheelchair, gave a demonstration, pressing the button from the safety of the new platform and slowly and solemnly ascending the stair – to enjoy a glass of celebratory wine with everyone present!

Sheila Brock

Divine Kitchen Makes Super Supper with De Vigne & Kitchen

It's not often I attend a later evening event at OSP, but I have to say how much I enjoyed the dinner on 19 December. The hall had been transformed into a pleasantly lit intimate space: candles, table covers and comfortable chairs completed the change. And a gastronomic delight of soup, pork, and chocolate torte (to die for!) as dessert. All this was masterminded by Alexander Glen-Bott, who was ably assisted by Paul Moore (as maître d') and Gareth Lloyd, both of whom gave attentive service.

Suitably feasted, we then sat back for wonderful entertainment by the "three Js". John Kitchen, with Jean Keltie on the piano and Janet de Vigne, recited and sang. All this in the usual, excellent OSP style and, of course, in the best possible taste!

Alex intends to organize a 'Songs and Silhouettes' evening on 14 February as a special Valentine's Day event, with 6 courses, costing £39.50, partly in aid of the Restoration and Renewal project; tickets at <http://songsandsilhouettes.eventbrite.co.uk>.

Peder Aspen



Welcoming a Student on Placement

It is lovely to have Grace Redpath (from S. Andrew's, Kelso) on placement at OSP until Easter. Grace is a part-time ministry student at TISEC, where she is training to be a lay reader. Grace will appear in the sanctuary as subdeacon, and generally be part of our life as a church for the time of the placement. This experience is an important part of Grace's training, so please make her very welcome, and help her to experience OSP in all its glory.

Here, Grace writes something about herself and her hopes for this placement.

"Let me introduce myself – my name is Grace Redpath and I'm a Lay Reader student with the Theological Institute of the Scottish Episcopal Church. As part of my training it is required that I spend a few weeks on placement to give me an opportunity to observe, participate in and experience the

liturgy of a church with which I have had no previous contact. It is part of my learning and seeks to enlarge my knowledge and understanding of a church different to the one I regularly worship in.



I live in the beautiful Scottish Borders and St Andrew's Episcopal Church, Kelso is my church home. My husband Keith and I have been part of that congregation for 10 years now. Our background, prior to St Andrew's, was evangelical where we were both involved in lay ministry. What we particularly love about the Episcopal tradition is the

richness of the liturgy – it seems to fit where we are on our journey with God.

We have always attended church in a rural situation and so it is appropriate that I broaden my horizons by working in a city church. I requested to come to Old Saint Paul's, with its anglo-catholic tradition, so that I gain confidence in the liturgy and grow in my understanding of another faith community.

On a personal note, Keith and I farm in the Borders. We have three daughters, Abigail, Joy and Rebecca, each married with children.

I look forward to meeting you all and feel privileged to have this chance to develop my gifts amongst you.

Grace Redpath

An Advent Poetry Group

For three Tuesdays before Christmas a small group of us met to read and discuss poems relating to Advent. These ranged from the 4th century Ephrem of Syria – "He was lofty but he sucked Mary's milk, and from his blessing all creation sucks, He is the Living Breast of living breath; By His life the dead were suckled, and they revived." - to the 21st century Rowan Williams – "He will come, will come, will come like crying in the night, like blood, like breaking, as the earth writhes to toss him free. He will come like child."

Mostly we discussed the poems read at the Advent Service on 2 December, struggling with meaning and syntax, paradox and allusion. Having unravelled the threads we

wondered at the precision and perception of the writers, and how often we could read into the Advent poems a pointing to the shadow of the Crucifixion.

While discussing TS Eliot's "The Coming of the Magi", I erroneously attributed the opening five lines to Thomas Becket. Later I remembered rightly that they are by Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester.

Each year on Christmas Day from 1605 to 1624 (except 1608, 1618 and 1621) he preached a sermon to King James VI and I at Whitehall. These sermons are worthy of study in themselves. It took me 20 minutes to *read* one of them – how long would it have taken to orate? (or perhaps they were written only to be

read?). Sermon 15 of 1622 has this nugget:

"It was no summer progress. A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey in. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, *in solstitio brumali*, 'the very dead of winter'. (Interestingly, the sermon also contains the phrase, "set down this"...).

May we not forget in these lengthening days of Lent that the shortening days of Advent brought also a time of waiting and awakening to a "Bright Sadness".

Margot Alexander

A Coffee with Sheila Brock

For the past 40 years, Sheila Brock has been one of the most "weel-kent" and much loved faces in Old St Paul's and to mark this impressive anniversary, we have decided to turn the tables on her - so the Michael Parkinson of OSP now finds herself in the hot seat!

Sheila told us:

I was born in Edinburgh, the only but happy child of my father who was a schoolmaster, and my mother, who is still remembered years after her death as a most extraordinarily kind and helpful woman. I attended George Watson's Ladies College (still in George Square in those days) and then read History at Edinburgh University and Theology at St Hugh's College, Oxford.

At Oxford I met my husband, Dave, a scientist and Rhodes scholar from South Africa, where we subsequently lived for several years (my eldest son Andrew was born in Cape Town). Later we moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts (where Graham and James were born). While in the USA, I was awarded a very enlightened scholarship which enabled married women to pursue academic research. This led to my doing a PhD in Ecclesiastical History at New College, happily combining my history, theology, Scottish and South African interests to write my thesis on 19th century Scottish missionaries in the Eastern Cape.

We had returned to Edinburgh in 1967 when Dave joined the staff of Edinburgh University (he ultimately became Professor of Human Genetics) and I've lived here ever since. My youngest son Martin was born here.

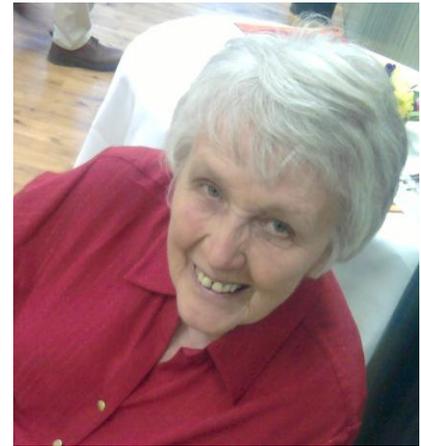
My working life began with spells of teaching (history and RE) but a chance conversation led to my first involvement with the National

Museum of Scotland, running a Saturday club for children. Then came a position as research assistant in the technology department – an eye-opener for an academic theologian/historian! In 1980 I joined the Education Department, becoming its Head three years later, eventually moving on to become Head of Public Affairs and Museum Services and, finally, Director of the campaign for the Museum of Scotland, in essence a mammoth fund-raising job. After the opening of the Museum in 1998, I thought "job done" and retired the following year.

40 years ago, my son Andrew was recruited as a chorister by his music teacher Alistair Pow, then organist at OSP. I was probably coming to the end of my Presbyterian life at about that time, but the experience of accompanying Andrew to High Mass, the exposure to the liturgy, the music, Richard Holloway and the beauties of the building proved irresistible and 40 years on, I'm still here! Since retirement I have had more opportunity to support the work of OSP including being Rector's Warden and becoming involved in several other projects including the R&R project.

What turns out to be a huge influence on our lives can sometimes happen in the most unexpected of ways. When I was 15, I wrote to John Dewes, a member of the England cricket team playing against Australia, expressing my faith in the England squad and urging him to "bring home the ashes". He took the trouble to reply but told me that it was more important to have faith in God. That letter and the subsequent correspondence between us changed the direction of my life.

My interest in the Church and in questions of faith burgeoned and I



started to attend St George's West (choosing that because my English master on whom I had a bit of a crush went there!) I learned much from its minister, Murdo Ewen McDonald, a man with a wonderful sense of humour, who fostered my growing faith without letting it become po-faced. So, much gratitude is due to John Dewes who took a schoolgirl's fan letter seriously.

Of course my children have also influenced me hugely. You can't raise four boys without becoming an organiser and multi-tasker, but more importantly, their different personalities and interests keep me fascinated and on my toes. I am obliged to notice that my biggest influences as listed here are all men. Yet I would say that all my best friends are women. Answers please on a postcard to...

To relax, I read – fiction and non-fiction, for edification or simply for entertainment. I love my Kindle. I listen to music, do crosswords, enjoy spending time (talking!) with friends and family, and travel at home and abroad. And then there's also *Downton Abbey* and *Holby City*.....

Most of my reading at the moment is around my current research work – missionaries, empire, African education. Currently I am reading *Capital* by John Lanchester, a novel about money, greed and (I assume) comeuppance!

*continued opposite
media@osp.org.uk*



I could probably rattle off some things that make me angry but I don't honestly feel that anger is a big part of me – maybe it should be. What I feel in the face of, for example, extreme violence and cruelty is great distress and despair. I cannot comprehend what prompts acts of violence against others and how there can be such an apparently total lack of empathy to imagine the impact of these acts upon others.

I'm at my happiest with my friends, sharing stories, ideas and opinions and having a good laugh. I love to spend time with my family, especially my grandchildren, who keep me young and a paid up member of the 21st century. I enjoy my garden especially sitting in it doing nothing. I also love a good sermon – honestly!

What gives me hope? Kindness. Full stop.



My favourite part of the world has to be the road from Port Elizabeth to Grahamstown, in the evening light. It's just pure Africa for me. Brilliant.

My fantasy dinner guests are all to do with my South Africa research I'm afraid. Dr Jane Waterston, who was a Scot, one of the first women to qualify as a doctor. She was a fervent imperialist but she loved South Africa and worked and lived there till her death. Dr James Stewart, the enlightened principal of Lovedale College, the subject of my PhD and with whom I have "lived" for so long and "know" so well that I think it's high time we actually met! And Archbishop Desmond Tutu who would ask the other two all the right questions – and make us laugh!

*Sheila Brock was talking
to Mhairéad Monelle*



An Advent Calendar through our Church doors

On Saturday 1 December the Diocese encouraged people to journey by bus around various churches of the city, including Old S. Paul's. Sheila Millar tells us about her pilgrimage:

St Columba's by the Castle

I set out from home at 9.45am and boarded a bus to Princes Street at the Mound. I walked past the German Market, up the Playfair Steps and through the Lawnmarket. As I was passing the United Free Church a lady asked me if I was looking for the Episcopal Church. She told me she was a member and was going to help with the visitors for the "advent calendar day". I was warmly welcomed and met the Rev. Canon Zachary Fleetwood who hails from Ohio, USA.

I was given a length of elastic and a silver bead and a few coloured beads so that I could start making a bracelet to remind me of my visit and told I could collect more beads on my journey. After a cup of coffee and signing the visitors book I thanked them for an interesting and friendly time and was given directions to help me find my next Advent Calendar Church.

St Cuthbert's, Colinton

A number 16 bus delivered me right outside the gate. After a warm welcome, I was shown round this beautiful church by Alan, who told me its history. The architect was Rowland Anderson. The font is exquisite – Moroccan style with a carved canopy which can rise and fall. The wooden ceiling in the church is painted throughout with floral and abstract designs.

The ceiling in the Lady Chapel is a more delicate design. The chancel retains the original pipe organ – sadly not in use now. The tracery design at the altar rail is lovely and the stained glass windows are a joy

to behold! I collected a few more beads for my bracelet and was given directions to find my next Advent Calendar church.

Christ Church, Morningside

I was warmly welcomed and enjoyed a cup of tea and coffee before having a look round. This was a return visit for me as this is where Anderson Jeremiah was married – curate at OSP for a few years. I then set off to find my next Advent Calendar church.

St Michael and All Saints, Tollcross

This is a delightful little church. The Rector, David, gave me a warm welcome and encouraged me to have a look round as it was my first visit. Before I left, I collected my silver bead and some coloured ones for my bracelet. I then walked to my next Advent Calendar church.

St John's, Princes Street

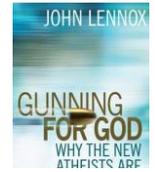
I was welcomed by a huge display of charity Christmas cards! I walked round the church and picked up a booklet entitled "The Peace Garden – A Haven of Peace in the City Centre". I intend to return to explore this garden which is in the graveyard off Lothian Road. I then walked along Princes Street and through the busy German market stalls and Christmas entertainments on my way to my final Advent Calendar church.

Old Saint Paul's

I arrived in time for the short service at 3:45 to end my day in reflection and prayer. I found it a refreshing contrast to be in a quiet holy place and in the presence of Christ after the crowds in the city. Father Ian conducted evening prayers – a fitting end to my day.

Sheila Millar

Book review



Gunning for God, John Lennox. Lion Hudson 2012, 248pp, £9.99

In the debate with atheism, most books just give the hardline package case for their side. This reflects the interests behind publishing them. Other angles get missed, because only the occasional famous voice has any chance to raise them. It is a hypocrisy towards injustice to politely never mention the emotionally crushing gulf in society between published and unpublished. It causes this debate's confinement between two polarised camps.

So when I find a book which quotes both sides at enough length to serve as a reference book for both their key arguments, I find it a salve to the bruised spirit. With *Gunning for God*, we cease to have to let reality be decided for us by listening to conversations between the published. Here, the liberal believer who agrees with the sceptics on some points is seen to get just as satisfying a read as a reader who agrees with the author wholly.

John Lennox is a maths professor who has debated publicly with Richard Dawkins. The book's mission is for a believing scientist to show how the bleak "new atheism" is closed-minded towards evidence. It is not at all confined to Dawkins, it answers several atheist pens of present and past. Not only with Christian answers: pleasingly he quotes and builds on the neutral John Humphrys' chiding of the aggressive atheists too.

Fair minded readers can celebrate that a book has been published on the Christian side that argues reasonably without bullying. For I particularly like that it does not answer the atheists with any evangelical threats of perdition. That said, it is a gap in his argument that he does not mention the moral problem of fear based religion, either in his answer to whether religion is harmful, or in his defence of the atonement idea.

He skilfully gives a liberal sounding take on the atonement, as a kind-spirited instrument for making moral relationships with God work. But because he does not offer a case against the mean spirited voices who turn it into a threat of "buy into this or else", in my view he fails fully to answer the critics' moral feelings against the atonement idea, though he quotes them.

He conveys a thought on the nature of forgiveness that is a challenge to some Christian pictures. He does not see any healing effected by just glibly letting go of personally damaging wrongs. He objects that it amounts to saying the damage does not matter and the sin was okay. So do I. To create any healing process requires that repentance exists in exchange for forgiveness.

This has a particular interest coming from a writer from Northern Ireland.

He illustrates it mainly from hurt relationships. He says "a great deal of unnecessary pain" has been done by urging victims to forgive one-sidedly and go on taking more. I am always thankful whenever any book raises this. I was hurt by a minister using the glib one-sided idea cynically against a situation's justice.

But where do overtures of compassion and understanding come into this picture? He risks sounding too stern about it. That he finds a striking apparent disagreement with "turn the other cheek" the only way to hold together his atonement theology, may be an inadvertent insight not quite intended to give us in a book of answers to atheism! Without answering it easily, the book illuminates this moral question vividly. It well helps to inform each reader's own reflections on it.

Many of his conclusions he derives from sparring with our local philosopher Hume. He shows how ethics can never be concluded only from physical facts. He shows with poetic justice how faith's opponents totally take a faith position of their own, that physics will continue to work the same as observed so far. Whence he leaves us with the happy thought that observed regularities by unguided nature do not disprove intentional miraculous events.

Maurice Frank

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