

THE CLARION

The Magazine of The Parish of St Mary The Boltons

DECEMBER 2008 & JANUARY 2009

Science and Religion

“Will you be diligent in ... all study and discipline which will equip you as a servant of Christ?”

Words asked at my ordination and again at my renewal of those vows at my licensing on 29th October: “By the help of God, I will”, I replied. So it was that the following week I found myself at a Faraday Institute conference in Cambridge on Science and Religion, a conference that I had signed up for in January. The Faraday Institute exists to provide scholarly research, publications and courses on science and religion.

The November course was for Church leaders and in three days we whistled through a range of topics including: miracles, the historical roots of the myth of the conflict between science and religion, human evolution, stem cell research, creationism and intelligent design. Vast and complex areas were opened up to us by scholars in their field: by scientists, historians and theologians. It was particularly interesting to hear scientists at the ‘cutting edge’ connecting their work with their faith. I came away with many questions, and also a wish to explore more deeply the history behind the “myth” that science and religion are necessarily in conflict with one another – and to challenge it when I come across it, and also to read more on the ethical frameworks that we are using to engage with some of the core questions at the heart of contemporary research.

It was a huge privilege to spend time with scientists with faith, like John Polkinghorne and John Bryant. But also challenging to hear Darrel Falk, an American Evangelical evolutionary biologist teaching in a Christian liberal arts college. He shows that his Christian faith is compatible with evolution, and finds himself occupying an extremely uncomfortable middle position between evangelical creationists and atheists scientists, at times at the risk of losing his job. I came away feeling the need to learn more, but also to affirm and support scientists in their vocation, and especially today, scientists of faith.

Ruth Lampard

Send my roots rain’

The poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

There have been many creative people - artists, writers, painters, mathematicians, scientists - whose work has been so original, so far ahead of their time, that it has been largely ignored during their lives, only recognized after they died and bringing them posthumous fame. This essay is about such a man and I hope to follow it with others in successive issues of Clarion. I begin with the poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, about whom Anne Garten wrote an excellent piece in the March issue of Clarion discussing the poems.

Hopkins was born in July 1844, the eldest of nine children. His parents were moderate High Church Anglicans. His father was head of a firm of Average Adjusters, who wrote books on marine insurance and a volume of verse. Two of his brothers became professional artists, and Gerard himself was a good draughtsman. He took the poetry prize at Highgate School and in 1863 went up to Balliol College, Oxford, on an Exhibition, to read classics. He was influenced by the aesthetic teaching of John Ruskin and Walter Pater, and his first ambition was to become a painter-poet like Dante Gabriel Rossetti, but he was also deeply influenced by the Oxford Movement. In 1866, after a period of turmoil, and to the great distress of his parents, he was received by John Henry (later Cardinal) Newman into the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1867 Hopkins graduated, having taken first class honours in Classical Moderations and Greatsⁱ, and next year he entered the Society of Jesus to begin training for the priesthood. He burnt (as he thought)ⁱⁱ all the poetry that he had written up to that point and resolved ‘to write no more, as not belonging to my profession, unless it were by the wish of my superiors’. For the

next seven years (1868-75) he wrote virtually nothing.

From 1870 he spent three years studying philosophy at Stonyhurst, the principal Jesuit school and training college. Here he was to discover the work of Duns Scotus (1265-1308), a Franciscan and one of the most important and influential philosopher-theologians of the High Middle Ages. The work of Duns Scotus is complex and subtle, but it had a profound effect on Hopkins. Scotus taught that individuality or 'thisness' (*haecceitas*) was the final perfection of any creature, that the 'individual' is immediately knowable by the intellect in union with the senses. Dry and academic as this may sound, it meshed precisely with a notion that Hopkins had already formed, for which he coined the term 'inscape'. Inscap, as applied to any thing, is what makes up its individual and especial unity of being, its 'individually distinctive beauty'. As an example:

'there is one notable dead tree ... the inscape markedly holding its most simple and beautiful oneness up from the ground through a graceful swerve below the spring of the branches up to the tops of the timber.'

From this time on Hopkins was to insist that poetry, down to its least separable part, must have an individualizing touch. Design, pattern, inscape is what he will aim at above all.

In 1874 Hopkins went to St Beuno's College in Wales, where he learned Welsh, ostensibly to convert the inhabitants. His character was being formed by The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, and by the quasi-military discipline of the order. In his work after this we find the Ignatian ideal of self-abnegation, selfless heroic endeavour battling with his intense self-consciousness and a dwelling on selfhood as the 'final perfection'. In 1875 he started work on the first of his mature poems, a massive ode called 'The Wreck of the Deutschland'. The Deutschland was a passenger ship containing emigrants and exiles bound for America. She was caught in the mouth of the Thames by a hurricane of wind and snow that drove her on to a sandbank. For a whole night without help the crippled ship was buffeted by the elements. Many of the crew and passengers were drowned, including five Franciscan nuns exiled from Germany. During the tumult the voice of a nun was heard calling on Christ to 'come quickly'. But what

did she mean? With a length of 280 lines, this was much the longest poem Hopkins ever wrote. It was also completely innovative in style. He used a method of scansion which he called 'Sprung Rhythm', in which the length and sequence of feet is completely loosened up and the succession of stressed and slack syllables dictated entirely by the meaning. He coupled this with alliteration, assonance and internal rhyme, all freely adapted, it seems, from his reading of Welsh poetry. He thus created a completely novel style that has led to him being described as the 'first of modern poets'ⁱⁱⁱ. He offered the poem for publication to the Jesuit magazine *The Month*, but it was refused, mainly because he would not tone down its 'metrical oddities'. He was encouraged by his rector to write more poems and in 1877 he produced ten superbly original sonnets^{iv}, among them the best loved of his works today. He was also ordained, his education as a Jesuit priest being formally complete.

For the next seven years he was continually on the move: first teaching at Chesterfield, then back to Stonyhurst as an assistant master, then to Oxford as curate of a parish church. In 1880 he was posted to the poor Liverpool parish of St. Francis Xavier. In 1882 he was back at Stonyhurst to teach classics. There is no sign that he derived any satisfaction from these jobs as school teacher and parish priest, though there is no doubt that he was extremely conscientious. He suffered from 'a certain nervous debility', and sense of failure. He was also highly sensitive to the environment and was distressed at the squalor of our great industrial towns. In Liverpool and Chesterfield his muse turned 'sullen'. In 1884 he was made professor of Greek Literature at University College Dublin. This might have seemed like an ideal posting after years on the treadmill, but many things worried him: Catholic support for Irish nationalism, heavy examination duties, and doubts as to the usefulness or moral value of the work he was doing. Because the Jesuit aim was to spread Christianity, he was grieved by what seemed to him a regression in the world of his time. His melancholy

began to take an acute form, which bordered, as he said, on madness. There are two ways of looking at this. From one point of view what he was suffering was not unlike the desolations prescribed in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, the aridity and sense of deprivation known as the 'purgative way' or 'the dark night of the soul'. On the other hand he must have felt that his creative powers were being throttled by lack of recognition. He admitted that fame was 'a spur very hard to find a substitute for or to do without'. In 1889 he started the year on retreat, but later contracted typhoid. He died on 8 June and was buried in the cemetery of Glasnevin, Dublin.

None of his poems were published in his life time. The First Edition of his poems was published almost thirty years after his death, by his friend Robert Bridges, in 1918. The relatively small print run of 750 copies took ten years to exhaust. A Second Edition, in 1930, led to something approaching a 'Hopkins cult'. One enthusiast described The Windhover as the greatest poem in the English language. In 1940 I sat at the feet of a remarkable form master who lost no opportunity to sing Hopkins's praises'. He remains hugely admired to this day. However, here I am concerned chiefly with the irony of a man so gifted that he was denied all recognition in his own time. There can be no doubt that he felt this deeply. Was it, perhaps, God's fault? What are we to make of this desolate poem, written three months before Hopkins died?

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend
With thee; but sir, so what I plead is just.
Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
Disappointment all I endeavour end.

Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
Defeat, thwart me? O, the sots and thralls of lust
Do in spare hours more thrive than that I spend,

Sir, life upon thy cause. See banks and brakes
Now leavèd how thick! lacèd are they again
With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes

Them; birds build – but not I build: no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, but not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

Acknowledgement. This essay has drawn heavily on 'The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins', edited by W.H. Gardner and N.H. MacKenzie, Oxford

University Press, 1948, reprinted 1970 with corrections.

Hugh Beach

¹ In the school of Greats the student is required to re-read the Greek and Latin classics as literature and philosophy.

² In fact some 26 'early poems' have survived and are printed in the anthologies.

³ George Sampson, The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, 1942, p.1005.

⁴ God's Grandeur, The Starlight Night, Spring, In the Valley of the Elwy, The Sea and the Skylark, The Windhover, Pied Beauty, Hurrahing in Harvest, The Caged Skylark, The Lantern out of Doors.

⁵ This master went on to become the first Vice Chancellor of York University and a member of the House of Lords as Lord James of Rusholme.

Thursday Lunch Club

The speaker on Thursday 11 December will be The Revd. Ruth Lampard, The title of the talk will be 'A life of graphic design'. Please put your name on the sign up sheet at the back of the church.

December Years Mind

Ethel Doris
Margaret Payne
Alexander English
Anthony Gowan
Patricia Coghill
Harry Dwight
Kathleen Mundy
David Lidderdale
George Priest
Jaqueline Lewis
Edward Slone
Doris Stone
Georgina Davson
Ethel Sutcliffe
Beatrice Spices
Basil Robinson
Albert Beauchamp
Keith Kerry
Timothy Pringle

PCC Update

At the end of September PCC members attended two important all day events on consecutive Saturdays. They were not deliberately planned to follow each other, but they did, and this was very useful as the themes were very much interlinked.

The first event was the Kensington Area Conference. This is an annual day conference for clergy and PCC members from parishes throughout the Kensington Area. This year the theme was “Mission Shaped PCC” and its purpose was to address one basic issue: what fundamentally needs to change about a PCC if it is to serve a “mission shaped church”. The day was led by John Truscott, an experienced church consultant and trainer.

I took away three important lessons from the day. The first was to “think big”. PCCs (council and councillors) should aim high. But at the same time they should be very clear about their goals, setting them down in writing and sharing them widely to get maximum buy-in. The second lesson was to banish trivia from the agenda of the PCC. We were reminded how very easy it is for PCCs to get bogged down with details that would be better left to an executive group. Mission-shaped PCCs should work hard at being a governing body rather than an executive leaving detailed work to others. Leaving day to day work in the hands of others only really works where there is a high level of trust between the PCC members and between the PCC and the Parish. Trust requires communication, and so the third lesson was just that: communicate, report back, stay in touch with each other using as many different channels as possible. This article is an attempt to put that into practice.

The second event was the PCC Away Day which took place on Saturday 4th October – its purpose was to generate “ideas for growth”, to find an opportunity away from the usual meeting of the council to develop specific projects that will help us grow. We spent the day in the comfortable surroundings of the University Women’s Club in Mayfair, kindly hosted by Joanna Hackett. We did think big, lots of specific ideas for growth were generated, and in the end we decided that in the coming months we will focus on 3 areas:

- Youth – this will work on the development of opportunities for growth in our

community for young people, from teenagers up to young adults.

- Adult formation/education. This group will work on opportunities for developing and expressing faith and encouraging spiritual journeys to develop outside our main Sunday worship
- St Judes – we will work on bringing back into the fold those parts of the parish to the north of the Old Brompton road which we have lost touch with or paid insufficient attention to since the united parish of St Mary with St Peter and St Jude was formed in 2006.

This work will to be taken forward by people who were identified on the day (both PCC members and others). They will report back to the PCC on a regular basis. They will use some of the ideas that we generated, but trusting those mandated to get on with their work will be important as we grow in size. We cannot all be involved in everything and, as we learnt at the Area Conference, if we are to grow, the PCC will need to act as a governing body rather than an executive committee.

To achieve real growth we recognised this work, like all the work we do, will need to be undertaken to the highest standards and by those best equipped to do it. In this context we discussed how to manage rotas for readers, intercessors, sidespeople, and PCC membership and questioned whether fixed terms may be appropriate in all these areas. There is a link here also to the point made at the Area Conference. PCC membership is challenging and worthwhile but like many of the functions we perform at church it is not a reward and does not confer status; it is an act of service and should be seen as a role model for the church’s values. Another point made on both days concerned the need for training for the tasks we undertake, in order to ensure that the level of skill is appropriate to the task involved. As far as PCC members are concerned this is

reinforced by the responsibilities PCC members have as charity trustees and this is increasingly important as most PCCs will soon have to register themselves with the Charities Commission. But where there is no external regulator checking up and no legal obligation involved, we each have a responsibility to continually monitor the level of skill we have to the task being undertaken, if we are to ensure that we offer the very best in the service of God.

The outcome from each day placed emphasis on a lot of doing and activity by a few people, and this is not surprising given that both days were about leadership and change. But leaders and councils should not work in isolation. As were reminded at the Kensington Area Conference, PCCs should encourage the whole church to be involved in prayer and concern for PCC business. As well as through prayer and reflection, you can offer support by talking to those involved in doing the work and by asking them what they are doing, what they hope to do. There is nothing like an open question for concentrating the mind, or, equally, an open exchange of experiences for developing a way forward. No complaints, no carping, just a friendly interest in what is going on. The names of all those involved in each of these groups and other groups through which the PCC works can be found on the Parish notice board in the Narthex at church.

If we can together breathe life into all this work, we will have put into practice the point that underpinned both days: mission is not a separate subject to be worked at but should infuse all we do and growth in all sorts of areas results.

Leo Fraser-Mackenzie

The papers from the Kensington Area Conference are available from the Parish Office and there is much useful free information on planning, management, communication etc in the context of church life on the resources page of John Trustcott's website <http://www.john-truscott.co.uk/resources/articles/index.htm>

January Years Mind
Anstice Goodman

Tilly Halliwell
Mary Millbourn
Dorian Chinner
Clarissa Morse
Fances Perry
Noel Patrick
Leonard Waight
Emily Greenland
Francis Mundy
Margot Macpherson
Francis Spicer
Anthony Glyn
Alexander Fleming
Harry Dwight
Ffeebairn Simpson
Violet Berry
Jean Ommanney
Jane Hawker
Ellen Payne

Nonsuch Singers concert

Southwark Cathedral

Friday 5 December 7.00pm

BACH – CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

(parts 1-3 & 6)

Rebecca Outram *soprano*

Andrew Radley *countertenor*

Thomas Hobbs *tenor*

Stuart MacIntyre *bass*

Canzona

Graham Caldbeck *conductor*

Tickets on sale at the door

Thursday Lunch Club

The speaker on Thursday 11 December will be Revd Ian Phelps (DJ!), and will play music from the 1920s to 1960s interspersed with chats. The title will be "Down Memory Lane", Please put your name on the sign up sheet at the back of the church.

Nonsuch Singers Concert
St Martin-in-the-Fields
Saturday 31 January 2009 at 7.30pm

Richard Pearce *organ*
Graham Caldbeck *conductor*

Choral Classics

German & Austrian music from three centuries

Favourite works by Schütz, Bach, Handel,
Haydn, Mozart,
Schubert, Brahms, Bruckner & Rheinberger

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Online www.smitf.org

Boxing Day Saturday 26th December

We at St Mary's are going to provide a meal at St Jude's Church on Boxing Day, as our contribution to the Earl's Court Project's Christmas Outreach. The meal will be prepared in our church kitchen and taken up to St. Jude's. If you can help in any way with this, either practical or financial, please talk to Margarete Geier: 020 7373 1639