

THE JULIAN MEETINGS



*gather in silence
with God*

Magazine

April

2016

The Julian Meetings

- *Foster the teaching and practice of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition*
- *Encourage people to practise contemplative prayer in their daily lives, and explore ways of doing this which are appropriate for them*
- *Support the individual ecumenical Julian Meetings — groups whose members meet regularly to practise Christian contemplative prayer together*



The Julian Meetings Magazine April 2016

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The Contemplative Response

The holiday company's advert leapt out at me from the travel pages. 'Life's too short to say no,' it declared. I pondered this for a little while. No. Life is not too short to say no. Yet again our surrounding culture was saying something which is simply not true, certainly if we aim to live according to the values and direction of Jesus.

I've thought a lot about what a contemplative life looks like in 21st century Britain. Part of me would like to move to a small house in West Wales or the Scottish borders, and try to live a life of quiet contemplation. But that is not a realistic option for me, or indeed for most of us. So we are faced with the challenge of working out a contemplative way of living which will be constantly at odds with the culture that surrounds us.

Getting entangled in the web.

We who feel this call to a contemplative way of life seem like missionaries living in a world which increasingly does not understand us and speaks a strange and different language. The world of the internet is one of the major challenges we face. We are pressured to join every sort of website to profit from the best deals and have access to all kinds of services. Some of these we do need. Others are simply ways to market what we would previously have gone to town to buy or find. We are then bombarded with further 'offers'.

I recently received a hospital outpatients appointment which said 'You are required to submit your patient registration and medical information online.' I groaned and decided to ignore it. When I arrived for my appointment I had a short form to fill in, which took me a quarter of the time that I might have spent setting up an online account and password.

Clearly the internet has the potential to make life simpler and to provide information that we'd otherwise struggle to find. Like most inventions it has the potential to be a curse or a blessing. A good question for each of us is this: how much time do I spend each day at my computer? Then we can ask:

what effect is this having on my life? I sense that I already spend quite enough time at the computer, and I do not use it very much. Then there are the tablets and smartphones: these are potentially very addictive little machines. A recent report says that children aged under sixteen now spend three hours a day at a screen based device. The world is changing rapidly around us.

God's view or our view

We need to reflect urgently on the shape of a contemplative response to all this. At the heart of the contemplative life is learning to let go: learning to live in the present moment. Most of my adult life seems to have reinforced in me the opposite of this. My life has been driven by plans and goals and the need to achieve. Constantly being in control and on top of things is essential when we live like this.

Since I became an adult I've aimed to live life to the full. The verse 'Taste and see that the Lord is good' (Psalm 34;8) was very attractive to me as a student, in the early days of my faith development. I saw God as the one who looks after me and supplies all my needs, so that 'my cup runneth over' with the goodness of the Lord. A great message for a young man eager to serve Jesus! And God has been very good to me, faithful and true, and wonderfully merciful. But over time I've learned that God is not primarily interested in making my life successful and happy, and in giving me all I need when I think I need it. In other words, God's ways are not my ways, and they are certainly not the ways of the consumer culture.

Freedom to choose

The contemplative response is a way of life which deliberately resists the demands and pressures of consumerism and the power of the market to control our lives. We choose to live differently, and it will not be easy. We choose detachment, simplicity, community, quietness and rest. We do not need to rush here and there, to travel the world in order to see the sights and tell people where we've been. We can stay at home the way our grandparents did, and be happy to do so.

We don't need to think about the points on our loyalty card or the money we can save with this week's special offer. We choose to say 'yes' to some things and 'no' to others. We then need the grace and courage to live each day according to these choices.

When we face problems or pain, our culture tells us to 'get over it', to fix it, or find someone who will make it all go away. This is my own first reaction to most difficulties that come my way. A lot of this, for me, is about control: needing to know what is going to happen and how I will deal with it. When we are thrown onto God, the real God, we have to give up our desire for control. We have to let go and let God be God in our lives. This radical trust in God does not come easily to many of us, yet it is at the heart of a contemplative way of life.

Our own path to contemplative living

As we grow into the practice of daily contemplative prayer, we will find ourselves being drawn, more and more, to this letting go, this radical detachment and trusting entirely in God. We live in an age of anxiety, preoccupied with control, significance and security. Jesus says to his followers 'let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.' (John 14:27) He calls us to live gladly in the grace of the present moment, knowing that 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' (Matthew 6: 34) Our culture continually tells us what will give us security and happiness, power and control. If we long for God's way of doing things, for lasting joy and the peace which passes understanding, we will choose to set our hearts on a different way of living and being. We then have to work out each day what this means.

This is the contemplative way of living. This is the way of life in which we depend utterly, each and every day, on the grace and goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ian Cowley

Ian's book 'The Contemplative Minister: learning to lead from the still centre' was reviewed in our last magazine

The Door

"I need", he said, "a hurdle for my sheepfold.
The usual size." "By Friday?" I enquired.
"I'll have it done before the Sabbath starts.
Better than having sheep out on the hills
And you at prayer."

The chestnut, now well-seasoned,
but not the quality I'd hoped to find
for finest work, would serve him well
for twenty years or more.

No nails to rust
In its construction; joint and dowel and peg
would better fit the safety of the sheep.
And so, with plane and saw, mallet and chisel
I wrought what was required.

It all came back
to me, that day I found their minds closed
like a gate; their thoughts, their dreams, their hopes
penned fast, not understanding what I spoke.
"I am the door", I said; "now open me.
Go in and out, and graze on God's good love;
find satisfaction where before was desert.
The wood's well-seasoned; Calvary drains the sap
that gave it human life, and iron will work
to shape it for your need. For those who use
this door, this path, all shall be well,
and all be well."

Brian Morris

Some Thoughts from Taizé

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its flavour, how can it be made salty again?” (Matthew 5:13)

To be salt of the earth is a gift from God that we want to welcome with joy. By being salt of the earth we can communicate a zest for life. And when we make life beautiful for those entrusted to us, our life becomes more meaningful.

If, faced with the great number of obstacles, we ask ourselves: “Why keep on struggling?” we should remember that just a little salt is enough to give flavour.

Through prayer we learn to look at ourselves as God looks at us; God sees our gifts, our abilities.

Not losing our flavour means committing ourselves body and soul, and trusting the gifts of God within us.

“When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you realise that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there and first go and be reconciled to him or her.” (Matthew 5:23-24)

In all of us there is the aspiration to live together as one human family, but that does not happen by itself, neither in a family, nor with friends, nor in our cities or towns, nor between nations.

When Christians are reconciled, they become a sign in the midst of a humanity that is seeking its own unity.

There are situations where reconciliation is urgent. To commit ourselves to this, we need to understand the fears that imprison others in prejudices; we should also realise that other people may have something against us.

The gospel calls us not to transmit around us, or to the next generation, resentments inherited from the past.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

Peace is more than an absence of conflict. It is happiness; it

gives everyone their rightful place; it is fullness of life. When we welcome God's peace within us, it extends to those around us and to all creatures.

The desire for peace makes our heart more encompassing and fills it with compassion for all. It comes to expression in an attitude of hospitality and kindness in our families, in our neighbourhoods, in our daily activities.

Peace is also at the root of justice on a larger scale. In societies where luxury and poverty exist side by side, should we be surprised that different forms of violence arise? Sharing wealth relieves tensions and is a major contribution to the common good.

Some people make a commitment to promote peace by taking on responsibilities in the public life of their country - in an association, in the company where they work, by serving people with special needs.

"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."

(Matthew 5:5)

The gentle are those who do not impose themselves. They make room for others. They do not monopolise the earth. Gentleness is not resignation but mastery of the violent impulses within us.

The earth is not our property. It is entrusted to us; we are called to look after it. The resources of our planet are not unlimited. We have a duty of solidarity among individuals and peoples and for future generations.

In the way that we consume and use natural resources, a good balance needs to be found between basic needs and the desire always to have more.

To find a style of life that allows sustainable development, all our skills of imagination and creativity are required. They must be put to use in daily life and also stimulate scientific research, artistic inspiration, and the invention of new projects for society.

Quiet Day in the Welsh Marches

Last summer some members of the Julian Meetings on the Welsh Border- Hay, Hereford and Llandrindod Wells - met at Llangasty Retreat House for a Quiet Day with a difference. 'Difference?' It was different because we did not have a live speaker.

In the morning, after opening prayers, we sat in the chapel in a circle and listened to a CD of Rowan Williams speaking on 'What Grows in the Gaps: Silence and human maturing'.



This was a lecture which he had given to Silence in the City at Westminster Cathedral in May 2014. The talk, which lasted 45 minutes was wise, clear and thought provoking.

Some members stayed on for the Question and Answer session on the tape. Others used the time for quiet prayer, reading, or a walk. Llangasty is situated beside Llangorse lake, with fine views of the Black Mountains in the distance, so it is perfect for meditative walking.

After an excellent cooked lunch, which we had in silence with quiet music (to offset the clatter), we gathered in the sitting room to watch and listen to a DVD. This was a sensitive reading by the late Jim Cotter of R.S. Thomas' poems illustrated by short films of the Llyn peninsula in North Wales, the area where both the poet and Jim Cotter were priests. You may remember that the book 'Etched by Silence', edited by Jim Cotter, was reviewed in the JM magazine.

We then had a further time of quiet, concluding with prayers and a cup of tea before departure. Everyone took away a card containing details of the CD and DVD and also short

quotations and poems from the texts.

It made for a day of peace. The content of both sessions complemented each other, the morning session offering material for thought about silence, the afternoon giving a different slant and feeding the mind with beauty.

It is not easy to find appropriate material for such a day but we all agreed that these two sessions worked well together and would recommend them. They are available from:

Rowan Williams CD:

www.agapeministries.co.uk

£12.00 inc. postage.

Etched by Silence DVD:

www.cottercairns.co.uk £14.95

Come now,
put aside your busyness for a while,
take refuge for a time
from your troublesome thoughts;
throw away your cares
and let your burdensome worries wait.
Take some time off for God:
rest for a while in Him.
Enter the secret room of your mind,
put out everything except God
and whatever helps you to find Him.
Close the door of your mind
and seek God.
Say now to God with all your heart
'I seek your face, Lord, your face I seek.'

St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury 1109

Cloud of Unknowing

The Cloud of Unknowing is a text I return to again and again. Sometimes, when there are many editions of a classic work on contemplative prayer, it is useful to have a comparison of a few editions to help people choose one. The editions below are by no means all that are on offer, but I think they are representative of the various approaches that have been made over the years - and are all available.

Before I comment on them I would point out that there are other editions in Kindle books but beware if you are using them in a book group for it is difficult to refer to specific passages, there being no proper pagination. And lastly, before I get to the comparisons, for those who prefer to listen there is a CD audio of William Johnston's translation at www.wordery.com for £17.59 and there are others online if you like to search.

- (1) The Dart of Longing Love: Daily readings from the Cloud of Unknowing.

Edited and introduced by Robert Llewelyn.

Enfolded in Love Series 2nd edition

The Julian Shrine, 2004. 76pps.£3.50

- (2) The Cloud of Unknowing for Everyone: .

Simplified and illustrated by Elizabeth Ruth Obbard.

New City, 2007 86pps £5.83

- (3) The Cloud of Unknowing.

Edited by Halcyon Backhouse.

Hodder Classics Series, 1985 92 pps £7.99

- (4) The Cloud of Unknowing and other works:

Edited A.C. Spearing

Penguin Classics 2001 230pps. £8.99.

Also available as a Kindle e-book £3.99

- (5) The Complete Cloud of Unknowing with The Letter of Privy [private] Counsel.

Translation and Commentary by Fr. John-Julian

Paraclete Giants Paraclete press 2015 292pps.£19.99

While there is no substitute for practising contemplation, nonetheless advice from wise, experienced guides is very helpful. I believe the anonymous 14th century author of *Cloud* is one such. Robert Llewelyn, in (1) comments that “The language of spirituality changes from one generation to another while the underlying experience remains the same” I believe we do need to look at several texts, if possible, to find one that accords with us.

(1) Has readings that fill one small page each. As the editor says, it does not take the place of a complete edition. The readings do not show progression. I feel that it would be better used after reading the whole work as a guide into prayer and stillness, but it would give a taste.

(2) Is a simplified but not dumbed down text with delightful illustrations. The chapters are short and could be the basis of morning reading. It reads easily, is succinct and memorable. For me, this is the ideal introduction.

(3) James Catford’s comment in the introduction sums up the way we need to read the *Cloud*: “Some books can be eaten whole. Like fast food they fill a gap in a busy day focused on other things. Not so the *Cloud of Unknowing*. It is to be savoured with a small spoon, one tiny piece at a time.” This edition follows the original in having 75 short chapters. All the editions have reading lists - differing in length - and a discussion about the unknown author. This version also comments on other meditative writers of the time, discusses its purpose and the way to read it. I find it very approachable and it can be bought cheaply and in a used as well as a new copy. The translation flows and is easy to read.

(4) The Penguin Classics edition has the advantage that it also includes, by the same author: *The Mystical Theology of St Denis*, *Letter of Privy Counsel* and a treatise on Prayer. It is scholarly and is really valuable for information about the time when the author lived and other comparable writers. The previous Penguin Classics edition, edited by Clifton Wolters, is, in my opinion, comparable and can be got at very little cost.

(5) Ruth Obbard's review of this in the December magazine says it all: 'Could not be bettered for a clear translation and good accessible notes'. However, it is more costly than others and is a text that one would use perhaps for comprehensive study rather than for quiet early morning reading.

I've not tried to compare the varying texts. I write for those who may have seen quotations from *The Cloud* or references to it. If I were to choose a 'taster' quotation it would be this:

God may well be loved, but not thought.
By love God can be caught and held,
but by thinking never.

Finally – and though I like (3) very much, it does not contain the Letter of Privy Counsel, which has one of my favourite quotations – one for the middle of the night:

Take good, gracious God just as he is,
and without further ado lay him
on your sick self just as you are,
for all the world as if he were a poultice!

Janet Robinson



Today we can easily become paralysed by a sense that there is nothing we can do in the face of so much suffering, such lack of love and justice in man's relationship with man. But the cross of Christ stands at the heart of it all, and the prayer of Christ, now as always, is the answer to man's need.

We who pray stand at the inter-section where the love of God, and the tensions and sufferings we inflict on each other, meet and are held up to the healing power of God.

We must learn to wait upon the Spirit of God. As the Spirit moves us we are led into deeper purgation, drawn to greater self-sacrifice, and we come to know the stillness, the awful stillness, in which we see the world from the height of Calvary

Mother Mary Clare SLG

Keep us, O Lord, while we tarry on this earth,
in a serious seeking after you,
and in an affectionate walking with you, every day of our lives;
that when you come,
we may be found not hiding our talent, nor serving the flesh,
nor yet asleep with our lamp unfurnished,
but waiting and longing for our Lord,
our glorious God for ever. Amen

*adapted from **The Saints' Everlasting Rest**
by Richard Baxter 1615-91*

Meditation in His House

He came to me in the beauty of holiness,
In the silence, enfolding, embracing, warm -
The Lord Himself, smiling through the golden
candlelight,
From the aura of the cross - outshining,
Meeting the blood-red blossoms nearby -
Stretching out in blessing.
'Twas as though I saw Christ's blood shed on the cross
For me - the weak and wayward one.
How could I turn away unmoved from such a sight?
This cleansing gift so freely offered
From the Lord of life Himself.
And all that was requested by my Lord
Was to accept the joy of everlasting life,
Won for me through the precious blood outpoured.

Dorothy Stock

*From 'The Hands of Jesus and other poems' by
Dorothy Mary Stock, reviewed on page 22*

My Long View of JM

20 years ago I took on the job of sending out JM publications. We'd moved to West Wales, and had room for the boxes of pamphlets etc. and I had time to deal with orders. With the role came membership of the JM Advisory Group. This met three times a year, usually in London, so it helped that our son still lived in Kent and I could stay with him. AG members paid our own travel expenses then, so seeing family as well as going to the meeting helped to justify the cost - it's a long way from Pembrokeshire.

Minimal admin.

JM has always sat lightly to administration. No minutes were taken at those early meetings I attended: individuals noted what was significant for them, or what they had agreed to do. Discussion was wide-ranging, with silences integral to the meetings, and decisions were reached by consensus, just as they are to this day.

Hilary Wakeman had hoped that contemplative prayer would become so normal a part of the mainstream churches that JM would soon not be needed. However, it proved otherwise. So for our 21st anniversary retreat we developed our logo and 'house style'. Several long-standing members of the Advisory Group retired after the retreat, and their replacements brought new ideas and ways of doing things. Hilary moved to Ireland, and Yvonne Walker took over as convenor.

Yvonne's business experience and my administration skills put JM on a more organised footing, while still keeping the paperwork etc. to a minimum. We are not a charity, but have always tried to follow the Charity Commission guide-lines.

Change is normal

Over the years I have taken on many of the roles carried out by Advisory Group/Council members: mailing out publications; updating publications due for reprinting; producing new publications; editing the UK Newsletter; mailing the magazine in three emergency situations; dealing with magazine

subscriptions; editing the Magazine; and being National Co-ordinator. It has given me a good insight into most aspects of how JM runs. I confess that much of the new IT is more than I personally wish to be involved in, but JM must keep up with the times. In my 20 years on the Advisory Group and Council, roles have been re-allocated as people retire and suitable volunteers join us. Some things, such as the annual retreat and the Postal Group, ceased but others grew.

Current organisation

JM now has a JM Council of 14 members, which meets for 26 hours once a year. Six of the Council members form the Core Group, which meets for 22 hours three times a year. In a charity the Council would be the Board of Trustees, with an overview of the organisation, and the Core Group a Steering Committee who deal with day-to-day decision making. Between meetings we are often in e-mail contact. This is where IT has made such a difference to how we can work.

The meetings of the Core Group are held at the Convent of the Holy Name, Derby - a handy, and economical, location for people from East Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Gloucestershire and Derby. The Council currently meets at Shallowford Retreat House in Staffordshire. It is amazing how much work we can cover between noon, or 3.00pm, on one day to lunch on the following day, including two periods of silence together and the chance to socialise over meals etc. We can also travel at reasonable times of day, as the Council includes people from as far as Hampshire. Today we do get travel expenses, but often share cars, or use a railcard.

Finances

Setting up the new website and database was quite a costly exercise, but has proved its worth and we are certainly being 'found' by new people all the time, while many members are using the facilities it offers. We had money in reserve to pay for this, and it was money well spent. However, JM's on-going admin. costs need to be met from annual income, as

will the inevitably rising costs of printing and posting out the magazine. It is quite amazing that the annual subscription to the magazine went up to £6 in 2004, and still remains that price today. For a similar time we held down the costs of our publications, but postage and printing costs finally forced us to increase these last year. They are still remarkably cheap, and we are very grateful that our printer can cope with basic software and yet produce a good publication at a very competitive price.

During my time on JM 23 people have taken on roles with JM and 24 have retired. Gail Ballinger was already on the Advisory Group when I joined, and is still a member of the Council. We are currently the longest serving members, but we have done various jobs in that time. Having both new people with fresh ideas and approaches, plus some long standing members, has given a balance to our discussions. It can be helpful if Gail or I can remember why a particular decision was made, as it may have a bearing on the choices we make today.

What makes us distinctive?

During the November 2015 Core Group meeting we had an interesting discussion on what made JM distinctive. How did we differ from the other contemplative prayer networks that are available? What was particularly 'JM'? We agreed that partly it was not being prescriptive: encouraging people to find what is right for them, rather than dictating how things should be done. The other thing that was important to us about JM was the *meeting together* to share silence with God. We can, and hopefully do, all practise contemplative prayer as a solo activity. But gathering with others to share the silence gives it a whole new dimension: a depth and a quality that is rarely encountered alone. And this is the most difficult thing to describe to anyone - it has to be experienced to understand it. What do you think makes JM distinctive, special?

Deidre Morris

JM IT Update

Online Registrations, Renewals and the Shop

We are glad so many people use this facility, which mostly works smoothly. Not every problem could be foreseen, and we are very grateful to those who persevered with problems and worked with us to resolve them with grace and patience. The new e-mail renewal reminders led to a lot of feedback! Some people had posted their cheque before the reminder went out, but the paper processing had not caught up..... So apologies if we appeared to be hassling you. Next year we'll send reminders later in January, but they do work, we've far fewer renewals outstanding than at this time in earlier years.

We need your ideas and feedback – please send us your suggestions to improve our website, forum, membership facilities, social media accounts - anything at all to do with IT.

NEW on the WEBSITE

<http://www.thejulianmeetings.net/publicity-resources> for printable downloads of press releases and publicity resource leaflets. See under Starting a Meeting.

New meetings log in button – is on your meeting record. This should make it easier for you to find your log-in page

Facebook group – open to all, although you will have to apply first before approval. See the Facebook page.

<http://www.thejulianmeetings.net/quiet-places> a page for members to recommend and share quiet places. Send your recommendations to Ann Moran it@thejulianmeetings.net

Photos of Meetings Upload photos onto your Meeting record - pictures of where you meet, quiet days etc. If the photo includes people, please ensure all have agreed to this.

Online Privacy and Safety

We do not recommend putting personal details - private addresses, phone numbers, e-mails - on your public meeting details. Please check your record to ensure you are happy with the information displayed.

DATE FOR YOUR 2017 DIARY
Saturday 20 May in Derby
A Julian Meetings National Gathering
Speaker: **The Rev'd Malcolm Guite**
poet, priest, musician
More details in the August Magazine

Coming Soon

A Members Directory, in response to requests by members who wish to contact or be contacted by others in their area. On the directory you will be able to be as public or private as you wish, with complete privacy as the default setting. Keep an eye on the website, Forum, Facebook and Twitter for when it becomes available.

Ann Moran

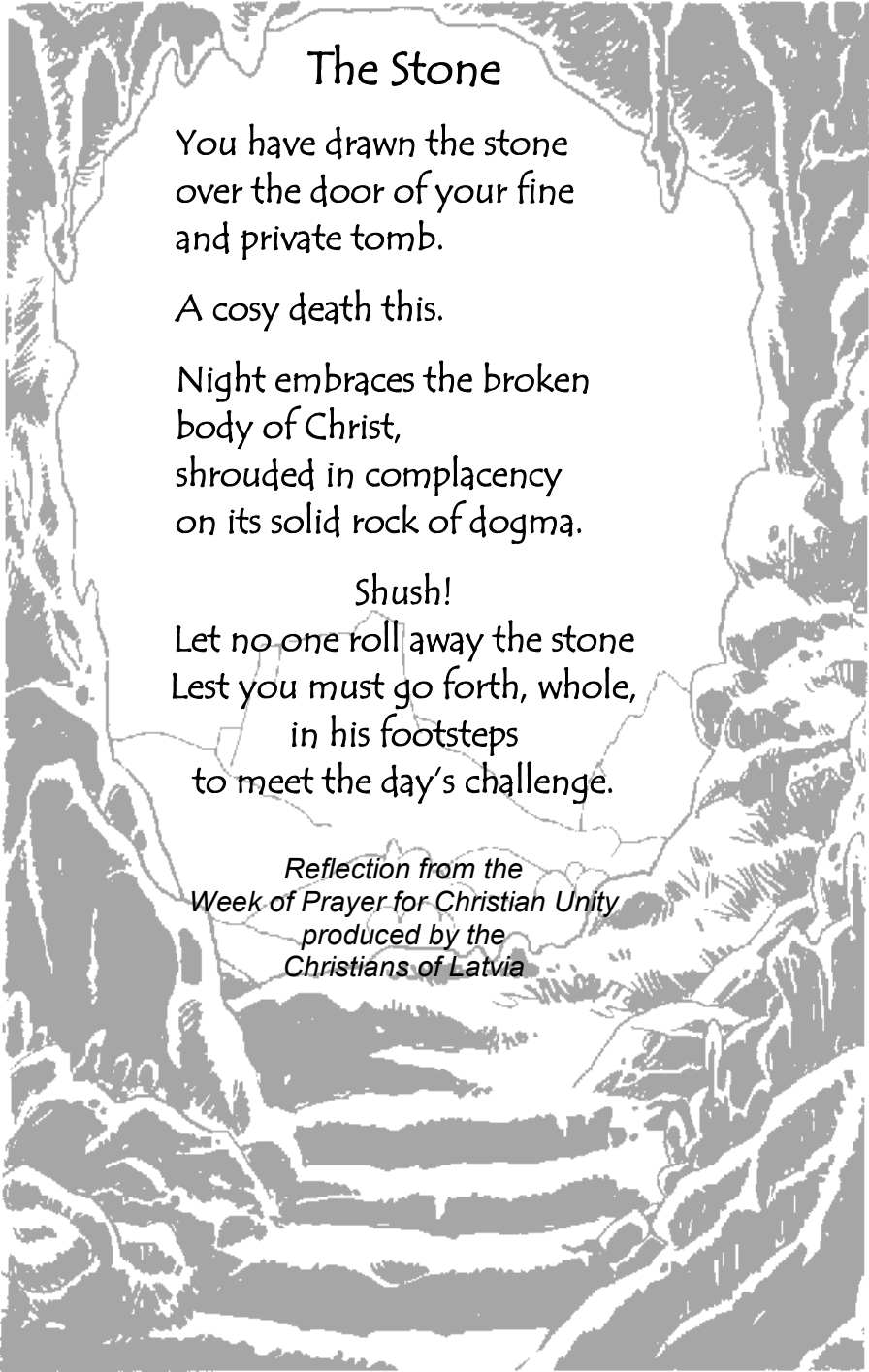
Julian Meetings Forum is now easier to view, and has new content. Membership is now open to anyone, so do join and encourage others to; tell anyone who might be interested.

The web address is <http://thejulianmeetings.proboards.com>
To become a member, click on the Register button and follow instructions: please note your chosen username & password.

A lot of the content is publicly visible: some areas only Forum members can see. Only members can join discussions/share things of interest – quotations on silence/prayer; titles of helpful books; useful web-links; details of quiet days etc. 'Lone Julians' can encourage and support each other on the Forum.

As a valuable resource it would be good to see more people actively participating - it is as easy as posting on Facebook.

Michael Cayley



The Stone

You have drawn the stone
over the door of your fine
and private tomb.

A cosy death this.

Night embraces the broken
body of Christ,
shrouded in complacency
on its solid rock of dogma.

Shush!

Let no one roll away the stone
Lest you must go forth, whole,
in his footsteps
to meet the day's challenge.

*Reflection from the
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
produced by the
Christians of Latvia*

Cell Talk

2016 is the 700th anniversary of the death of Julian of Norwich. Dana Bagshaw has written an award-winning script called 'Cell Talk'. This is a duo-logue about life, love and God between Julian and the mystical writer Margery Kempe, 30 years younger than Julian and a source of scandal in her lifetime.

It is known that the two did meet a few years before Julian's death. In the play Margery receives advice from Julian about pilgrimages, her resolution to live in celibacy with her husband, her troubled early life and her turbulent relationships with the priests who minister to her. Julian tells Margery about her own visions of the divine.

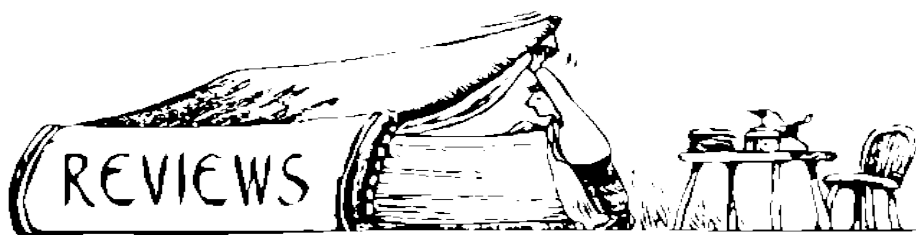
Both funny and profound, 'Cell Talk' was joint winner of the Radius (The Religious Drama Society of Great Britain) 2001 playwriting competition. The play is for two women, is simple to stage and lasts an hour. Copies are available from Radius for £7 inc. p&p. Radius@ www.radiusdrama.org

Cell Talk is being performed this year at:
Emmanuel United Reformed Church, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, CB2 1RR. Wednesday 18 May at 7.30 pm. A costumed, rehearsed reading of "Cell Talk", followed, for those who wish to stay, by the reading of passages from the writings of Julian and of Margery Kempe. Also an exhibition about Julian and her contemporaries

St Mary's Church, North Stoke, near Arundel, Sussex, on 30th July at 3.00pm and 31st July at 3.30pm. Details from Janet Aidin - Tel: 01798 872531 E-mail: janet@aidin.co.uk

A Julian Meeting might like to read the play as part of a Quiet Day.





THE DRAMA OF LIVING: becoming wise in the spirit

David F Ford

Canterbury Press 2014 £12.99

ISBN 9781848255388

David Ford is Regius Professor of Divinity and Director of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme of the University of Cambridge. This book is a sequel to his *The Shape of Living* (The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book 1998).

This is a complex, unusual but enlightening book. In it David Ford draws on a combination of classic writings, poetry, contemporary life and biblical text. This includes reference to his own personal experiences and to the work of his lifelong friend the Irish poet Micheal O'Siadhail, whose poetry is quoted extensively. This is interwoven with a theological look at St John's Gospel and finally, unexpectedly, jazz.

In chapter 2, headed Improvising Wisdom, within and between traditions, he describes some of his experiences in interfaith dialogues where common ground rather than conflict is discovered: from Textual reasoning to Scriptural reasoning. In chapter 3: Face-to-Face: The Heart of Life's Drama he refers to his experiences at a retreat led by Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche community, and in chapter 6, Improvised Lives: Timing, Aging, Dying he writes movingly about the death of his Father-in-Law Dan Hardy.

This was not an 'easy read', but worth the effort as it shed light for me on some aspects of spirituality that I had not considered before.

Anne Stamper

**WHEN SILENCE SPEAKS: the spiritual way of the
Carthusian order**
Tim Peeters

Darton, Longman and Todd 2015. £12.99
ISBN 978 0 232 53202 9

You may have seen the long, largely wordless, documentary *Into Great Silence* showing life at La Grande Chartreuse, the Carthusian mother house - for me, a rich spiritual experience. This book gives more insight into the Carthusians. Much of it is written from a historical perspective, with copious extracts from writings of early members of the Order. What I found of more interest were later sections explaining what being a Carthusian involves, and the reasons for the Carthusian way of life.

As the book says, in a sense Carthusian communities are, from a practical perspective, "useless", but they show up the shallowness of much of our modern world. In ascetic, largely solitary and silent, lives dedicated to God, they stand witness to a higher reality. Theirs is a calling few people will have: but many of us can learn much from them.

The book was originally written in Dutch. Some of the English translation reads a bit oddly, and there is the occasional (obvious) translation error.

Michael Cayley

THE HANDS OF JESUS and other poems
Dorothy Mary Stock

Onwards and Upwards (01483 282706
www.onwardsandupwards.org), 2014 £5.99
ISBN 978 1 90750990 2

There is a real freshness to these poems. Dorothy Stock (1913-1990) wrote poetry throughout her life. Her son, Geoff, (in the foreword) says her earlier poetry is mainly about God in nature but that after a major spiritual experience when on retreat at Park Place, her poetry changed. "The love and

power thus released ('infilling, outflowing') were the catalyst for her later poems."

Written in various styles, some rhymed some not, the poems mostly tell a story or describe an experience simply, rather than ask questions. I found I would carry an image from a poem for days and that their simplicity and directness sat well with silence.

The poem The Hands of Jesus, which gives this collection its title, shows the hands of Jesus throughout his life: in the manger, in the workshop, healing and leading, at the Last Supper, in Gethsemane, on the cross...

The twelve are at table with Jesus their friend.
The meal lingers on; can they guess how 'twill end?
Then Jesus breaks bread and hands round the wine,
He blesses it, making the whole meal divine....

The poems are grouped under headings: the Hands of a Creator; The Hands of a Child; The Hands of a Healer; The Hands of a Saviour, with themes such as gorse and bluebells, transfiguration, the glory of Easter, waiting upon God. Creative Word out of Stillness describes children in a city school playground finding a tiny plant that had burst through the concrete overnight, their excitement and wonder:

. ..'And sure enough there was a growth of green,
A reaching plant -
That had burst in silence through the concrete
ground...'

With the poems' varied writing styles and subjects, this book should have a wide appeal. If you like poetry try it.

Gail Ballinger

This book was sent to us for possible review by Dorothy's friend, Heather Phillips, who has been a member of Henleaze Julian Meeting for many years. A poem from the book can be found on page 13

**A TASTE OF HILDEGARD: selected passages from
Hildegard of Bingen's Scivias
*edited and introduced by Elizabeth Ruth Obbard***

New City 2012 £5.95

ISBN 978-1-905039-17-3

Elizabeth Ruth Obbard, a member of the Carmelite order, has written and illustrated a number of books on the spirituality of well-known mystics, including Julian of Norwich, St John of the Cross, Therese of Lisieux and Theresa of Avila. This book, also illustrated, is about the less well-known Hildegard of Bingen, recently declared a Doctor of the Church.

Hildegard was born in 1098 and was given into the care of an anchoress, Jutta, at the age of eight. They were at first attached to a Benedictine Abbey but, as other young women joined them, they established their own monastery. Hildegard became Abbess after the death of Jutta and later established a second monastery.

The length and scope of Hildegard's life is breath-taking. She wrote on theology, natural sciences and medicine; she corresponded with prominent political and ecclesiastical figures; she travelled, preached and wrote music and poetry, and all within the context of being an Abbess, with a life of prayer, study and work.

This short book is a collection of passages from Scivias or Know the Ways. Hildegard writes of the History of Salvation in three parts, comprising The Creator and Creation, The Redeemer and Redemption and The History of Salvation symbolised by a Building. The book is based on Hildegard's visions; her unique charism seems to be the ability to link her visions to rational interpretations informed by the Old and New Testaments.

Although the selected passages are short, I found myself struggling with the language and concepts, but I think the difficulty is mine because I am unfamiliar with medieval writing. Having said that, I have little difficulty with Julian of

Norwich. The difference may be that whilst Hildegard's visions were not concerned with love of God, prayer and relationships, Julian's writings were emphatically to do with God's love and our relationship.

The illustrations are simple but good, because they emphasise the points made in each part. Elizabeth Ruth Obbard writes that "Hildegard is not a woman one easily loves so much as admires", a view with which I concur. She concludes by asking that Hildegard may open the eye of our mind, that we too may benefit from her seeings and her sayings; this book is a good place from which to start.

I wrote this review whilst listening to *A Feather on the Breath of God* - sequences and hymns by Hildegard of Bingen (Hyperion CDA66039) which is readily available. Hildegard's music is stunning, I recommend it!

Sue Derbyshire

THE TWELVE DEGREES OF SILENCE

Marie-Aime'e de Jesus OCD

BRF 2015 £5.99 (Novalis, Canada 2014 CDN\$10.39)

ISBN 978-0-85746-407-1

This small book has an enticing cover of a beautiful candlelit labyrinth in a large, probably French, cathedral. It reads like an old, quite academic history book, having been translated from French by editor Lucinda M. Vardey and a colleague, who are both described as living quiet secluded lives of contemplation and study of the sacred. I would suggest that this book is for the serious contemplative, as the 12 degrees of silence were written by Marie to guide and teach novices about the interior life for their lives as a religious.

It begins with a 25 page biography about the natural young mystic Marie-Aime'e de Je'sus (1839-1874), presented to us by Lucinda from the original, written by Edith Stein around 1939. Edith herself was a successful philosopher, feminist thinker and lecturer. She was called to a Carmelite Vocation

after reading Saint Teresa of Avila's autobiography, and died in Auschwitz in 1942. Edith suggested that Marie-Aime's depth of wisdom and disciplined mental attitudes on the path of perfection of the soul were where her own convictions found fellowship.

The following 45 pages cover The Twelve Degrees of Silence, which are: Silence....in words; in actions; with one's imagination; memories; others; one's heart; to self interest; of the mind; to judgements; to the will; towards oneself and lastly Silence with God.

Most of Marie-Aime's silences are described in less than half a page, written in the language of the last century. Lucinda, a writer on Catholicism and contemporary spirituality, adds her own Guided Reflections in a similar style. These consist of bullet points, mainly deep searching questions and exercises to do, framed with a bible verse and prayer.

So this is not a book for the faint-hearted, but may be a useful resource for your own silent retreat. A small book with a big deep punch!

Fiona Elliot

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