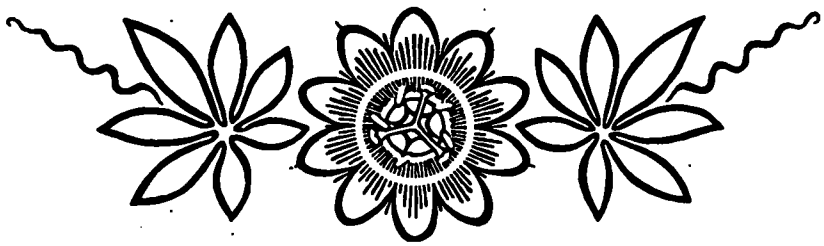
THE JULIAN MEETINGS *Magazine*



April 2002

£1.50

the holding cross

A holding cross is shaped for ease of holding rather than to be looked at, with a deliberately uneven cross beam. It is more comfortable to hold than a normal cross. This one is available from Saint Michael's Cottage Crafts, Bowthorpe, Norwich NR5 9AA. tel: 01603 746106

Loss of silence

Gail Ballinger

Avoid very noisy places and totally silent places . . . so reads an article on tinnitus and hearing problems.

And yet for years silence for me has been a natural environment – a bit like putting a fish back in water – and prayer largely silent. If there were times when I found silence difficult I could take comfort in or be inspired by the wisdom of the Bible, of our spiritual writers or of personal friends, especially within a local Julian Meeting.

Recently, however, I have experienced a more intractable problem. The slight hearing loss which began to be apparent in my early forties is worsening and for two or three years I have been increasingly bothered by tinnitus. At first the noise – variously described as ringing, tinkling, roaring, a hissing sound like escaping gas – was not too intrusive and did not greatly affect my times of quiet meditation. But the noise and the deafness are worsening and silence is becoming quite difficult. When the opportunity came of spending a few days with a small community with a listening ear available, I decided that I wanted to try to address the hearing problems and the increasingly distracted quiet times and try to find some coping mechanisms. Being away from a busy life and staying with very caring people was a good beginning. Someone to talk it over with was a real help and it left me feeling a shift in my position and renewed hope. I could actually do something positive about this. I came away with practical suggestions, for example learning to lip read and with details of a chaplain for deaf people who proved to be a valuable source of suggestions and encouragement and who has supplied literature and addresses.

The breathing space and support of the community left me in a better position to address the problem of the loss of silence in prayer. I realised how thin and short my set-aside prayer time had become since the problem worsened and that I was in fact beginning to avoid much silence. One of the difficulties is that though more apparent at some times than others the tinnitus is always there. I realised I was beginning just to sit and listen to the noise and it did not feel as if much loving attention was going on. "Quiet time" was becoming an endurance test. Strangely I would have

expected the solution to be rather similar to managing a noisy external environment, but I found this approach was no help. The noise was interior and I seemed to have lost the inner silence that can exist regardless of noise outside. It was more akin to managing chronic pain or grief than to managing a noisy environment.

All sorts of difficulties such as health problems or family worries affect our prayer, but for me a significant part of the difficulty of managing tinnitus, which makes it different from life's other difficulties, is that my own body seemed to be destroying the essence of prayer – silence – and to be in conflict with my deepest desires. And the result was a sense of guilt and frustration. I even wondered if I should give up silent meditation. Was I making an idol of silence? God is not bound by our silence any more than he is defined by our words. Nor are his love and power. Everything changes and our relationships change and hopefully grow so perhaps the quiet times needed to change.

As I thought and prayed about this I became convinced that I needed a different place – not necessarily physically; but if I used my imagination I could perhaps create a place where I could more comfortably meet God – a place where the background noise would mask the distracting racket going on in my head and make it less obvious. I experimented with this over a period of a few weeks. Two environments have been persistently helpful and have remained a resource now that the problem has eased. They had almost a "given" quality. The first was a high waterfall in a tropical setting – very damp, green and bright with colourful birds and a roar in the background which blended with the unwelcome noise, making it almost unnoticeable. As I revisited this place during successive prayer times I noticed that the site was now inhabited by two people standing not far from the falling water. In fact close enough to be getting rather wet from the spray. I could not recognise them. Their features were not discernible and they were rather stylised. One had his arm round the other, inclining his head to try to hear what the other was saying. Intuitively I knew these for Christ – who was the listener – and myself. On further reflection it seemed that in this picture Christ was saying "I will accept your limitations and inhabit your noisy place."

The second place was on a shingle beach in an English winter where the breaking waves were crashing on the beach, pounding the shingle and sucking the stones backwards as they retreated. There was wind and salt

spray. Unlike the first place there was an absence of colour – sea, sky and beach being various shades of grey. Again, after a few visits there, the scene began to be peopled this time with a group of people – either a family group or friends usually walking but not attempting to say much as the wind took their words away. An atmosphere of quiet companionship invariably settled on the group. They have come to symbolise the people who over the years have shared the silent spaces with me and the people who do so still.

As all these things had their good effect and I felt more at ease, I began to resume my normal habit of using relaxation and centring exercises as a way of settling into silence before any words or reading, though giving more time to this than before. Gradually the sense of loss has faded and a feeling of thankfulness is returning and sheer relief. There are good days and bad days. On bad days alternating silence with slow reading helps.

Wakeful nights are rather different. The quiet of the night and the horizontal position seem to make the noise of tinnitus more pronounced. My most useful aid is not vision but touch: a holding cross loosely held in one hand. Holding a cross is also helpful to me in a group meditation if I cannot hear the reading properly and a visual focus is not being used.

Apparently one in ten of the population suffers from tinnitus. On that basis it seems likely that it is not uncommon amongst members of Julian Meetings. If this is a problem that you share it would be interesting to hear how you deal with it. In your personal quiet times, or in a group, what helps and what hinders?

The following resources have helped:

- *People Need Stillness* by Wanda Nash. DLT, 1992 (there is also a relaxation tape with the same title)
- *At Ease with Stress* by Wanda Nash. DLT, 1988
- *Prayer in the Shadows* by Angela Ashwin. Fount, 1990 (very few copies left – we can put you in touch with the author if you are interested)
- *Noise Control: stop tinnitus clogging up your head* in Directions: Deafness knowing where to turn – a supplement to One in Seven magazine published by the Royal National Institute for Deaf People.
- RNID Helpline, PO Box 16464, London EC1Y 8TT.
  e-mail: helpline@rnid.org.uk; website: www.rnid.org.uk.

[redacted]

A Lake

Anne O'Neill

Am I a lake, Lord? – an expanse of water, whose depth is unknown, but whose surface is flat, clear, glistening in the sun.
Am I a lake, someone whose life is as clear as a mirror with a soul which reflects the glory of your creation and your love?
It's a lot to be asking, Lord.

Today my soul is still.
I am calm and there is nothing to disturb the surface of the water.
The sun glinting on the water mirrors the brightness within me.
It is easy to give thanks and reflect your glory, Lord.
In the stillness and solitude I feel safe.
The water is crystal clear and nothing is hidden from view.

Is my life like that, Lord? Crystal clear.
Or are there dark currents beneath the surface?
Are they submerged and secret or do I allow others to see them?
Do I reflect your glory then, Lord?

Today is grey.
There are changes within me and the clear bright image is distorted.
There are differences I do not understand.
The lake is no longer flat and calm.
The water is driven by the wind.
Its peacefulness is broken and shattered.

Fear stirs within me and I am unsettled.
The sky, your heaven, is dull, but I can still see you at work.
And I myself – blurred and becoming unsure – am still yours.
But it is harder to find you, Lord.
The lake is no longer beautiful. It is threatening and frightening.
I am losing control, Lord. I don't like the feelings within me.
Where has it gone? This peace I knew and felt.

The sky is black and I am surrounded by noise and tumult.
The anger within me and without is frightening.
I lash out, endangering myself and others.
Am I alone in this or do others feel as I do?
I can see no reflections, no images.
How can others see you reflected in me when I cannot find you for myself?
Where am I, Lord, and where are you?
You say that you love me. Then show me that love!

But I am the lake, Lord. And the lake is within me, isn't it?
You have given me a choice, which only I can make.
And I have allowed myself to be driven this way and that.
I have not always seen you at work in the whole of my life.
In my arrogance I have tried to do it alone.

I cannot find my own salvation, for it is a gift you have freely given me.
I cannot expect a life free from trouble. It is in the darkest depths that you are closest if I but knew it.
Lord, I pray that when the storms and tumult threaten to overwhelm me I will always feel you with me.
And teach me to remember that you are always within the lake of my soul.

An edited version of a meditation written during a Quiet Day at Llangasty Retreat House (pictured below) in the Brecon Beacons in South Wales.



Circles of Stillness

An excerpt from the foreword

Robert Llewelyn

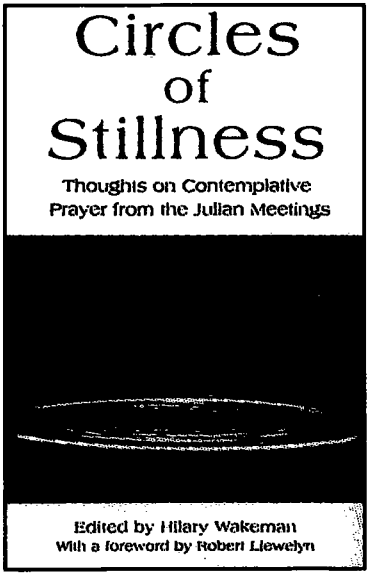
. . . Silence helps me to become a complete and whole person. In silence before God we meet the emerging, unfolding and deeper self and in this encounter new energies of the spirit are released. In silence resistances are overcome, prejudices are broken down, passions are subdued, fears are dissolved, memories are healed, relationships are enlarged and a new spirit comes to irradiate our lives which become increasingly marked with trustfulness and thanksgiving. Yet, good though that is, it fails to rise above enlightened self-interest and therefore should not be the prime reason for the keeping of silence. For those called to silence it is one of the love offerings to God we are called to make every day. It is only as we come to see silence in this way that we shall have the resolution to observe it and stay with it daily.

And yet how we try to escape silence! When the time comes for silence a phone call we might have made earlier becomes extraordinarily important. Or the writing of a letter, or a vist to the shops: the list is unending. In one of his retreat addresses, Bede Griffiths tells how the monks of Downside would come to their Abbot and say: "I feel I'm wasting my time. I sit there and nothing happens and my mind wanders about. I ought to do something." And the Abbot would always insist: "Don't 'do something' . . . Sit, and give that half hour to God." Bede Griffiths comments:

> "That is the essence: you take that half hour every day, morning and evening if possible, and you give that half hour to God. If he lets you have wandering thoughts all the time, or if he lets you go to sleep, you accept that, but you try to be open, to surrender to him and allow him to work in you. This is the crucial point: we can prepare ourself, we can have the body and the breath and the mind, but the prayer has to come from God. Contemplation is what we aim at. It is the activity of God, the Holy Spirit in us, it is not ourselves . . ."

"You take that half hour every day", writes Bede Griffiths.* This raises an important point. If you belong to a Julian Meeting you only take that half hour with the other members every month, or every fortnight, or at the most every week. The spirit of the Julian Meetings is not operative in our lives unless we make every effort to get a time of silence (whatever length of time we fix) at least once every day. I suppose that a solid meal once a fortnight is better than nothing, but our bodies will hardly thrive. Is it so different in the world of the spirit? And yet how difficult it is to keep this time when we are on our own. Let me say this: it becomes much easier if we have a companion. Happy are those who can find a prayer partner in their own household. But if you can't, and if you live for much of the day alone it should not be difficult to find one or more who would be glad to share for their sake as well as yours. I write here from experience, experience of my own failures when alone, and of the help I receive from others who join me in my home. Donald Nicholl, of beloved memory, once wrote that when two people share a silence they bestow healing upon one another. How true have I found that to be . . .

*Bede Griffiths: The Mystery Beyond – On retreat with Bede Griffiths. (Medio Media/Arthur James, 1997)



"Circles of Stillness" is a second anthology of material from the Julian Meetings magazine, mostly from 1994 to 2001.

It is edited by Hilary Wakeman with a foreword by Robert Llewelyn, and is published by Darton, Longman and Todd in April 2002, price £9.95.

The excerpt and picture are reproduced by permission.

Contemplative prayer and the future of healing

John Hawkins

In Hilary Wakeman's excellent article *Contemplative Prayer and the future of Christianity* (December 2001), there is a point I would wish to question: her reference to "the continuing impact of science" as one of the marks of a "shifting and slipping" Christianity. The current tendency, surely, is for the long-held assumptions of Newtonian science to be in steep decline, no more so than in the field of health and healing.

In his keynote address at a recent Study Day in Croydon, attended by over 80 clergy and lay persons, Professor John Grange, a leading specialist in clinical immunology, spoke of a universe containing "a number of interactive network-like systems, the totality of each of which is more than the sum total of its component parts", the human body being no exception. Dr Grange's experience in the field of "network pathology" had led him to the firm conclusion that the increasingly popular holistic therapies involving the use of hands were entirely consonant with Jesus' own healing practice, which Our Lord both commanded and empowered his disciples – us! – to continue.

We in the sadly declining Western churches had manifestly failed to obey the unambiguous and inseparable dominical commands to "spread the Good News and *heal the sick.*" By contrast, remarkable growth was evident in the churches of China, Africa, and Eastern Orthodoxy, where community-based healing was an integral part of church life. Healing was not an optional extra, but of the very essence of Christianity. Unfortunately, our understanding of this was often distorted by the hyped-up character of "mercifully short-lived ecstatic missions" and the joyless and formalised atmosphere of so many healing services, based on the leadership of a single gifted person.

Again and again the gospels bore witness to the power radiating from Jesus. This power (*dunamis* in the Greek, from which dynamo, dynamic and dynamite derive) can be likened to the aura of energy surrounding the human body, observed by mystics and healers, and depicted by artists

through the ages. Potentially, we were all channels of that same healing energy, but in order to remove blockages, the practice of deep meditation – preferably in small groups, such as Julian Meetings – was vital. Contemplative prayer opened the door to direction by, and manifestation of, the Holy Spirit.

Reflecting on this fascinating talk, and the theme of Hilary's article, I began to detect another sign of hope for the realisation of God's Kingdom in this world.

Dr Grange is a regular member of a Julian Meeting. A transcript of his lecture is available for £1, including postage, from John Hawkins, 44 Castlemaine Avenue, South Croydon, CR2 7HR.



Murillo: *Christ Healing the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda* (1667–1670)

Journeying with God

Malcolm Rothwell

This book describes the experience of going on a 30-day silent retreat. At first there was a deep awareness of the presence of God. This excerpt from chapter 3 ("The need for forgiveness – a personal account") tells what happened next . . .

I was praying in the chapel. There were sisters from the community also praying. The atmosphere was one of great peace and tranquillity. I reflected on Romans 12.14–21. In particular verse 16, "Live in harmony with one another", rang bells. Feeling very much at peace after the troubles and torments of the previous few days I conjured up all sorts of images of peace and harmony, sitting in the garden on a summer's day, or wallowing in the sun on a tropical beach. A glance outside gave the impression that even the world seemed to have stopped. There was the vision of a new heaven and a new earth where there would be no more pain, no suffering and no tears. All was silent and at peace, within and without.

Suddenly, a searing shudder went through me. Where did it come from? I remembered deep within my being some occasions, long since repressed, when I had not lived in harmony with my fellow brothers and sisters. Indeed when there was, or could have been, the possibility of complete discord and disaster. There was a great feeling of agitation and physical sickness. I left the chapel in great distress with an intense desire to eliminate something from my body. This was not because of something I had eaten but because of a great psycho-spiritual need. A purging process was needed.

We fool ourselves into thinking an action is right when it is clearly wrong. We entertain a highly selective memory in that we recall only those experiences that we want to and it is usually the pleasant ones. Psychoanalytic studies have clearly shown us how we use defence mechanisms, unconsciously, to protect our psyche from all that would be too difficult or too painful to bear. On this retreat my defences were gradually being stripped away. I felt myself naked before God. This was a very chastening experience. Tears were plentiful. The tears were part of the process of purification. "Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance

of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10.22).

As a result of this morning of drama and tension I was absolutely ravenous. However, for the first time in my life I felt the need to fast. On this occasion eating lunch would have been wrong. An immense surge of energy welled up within me and I went for a long, long walk, in the rain and driving wind. I know not where the energy came from or where I walked. It did not matter. I was only aware that what on an earlier occasion had appeared to be a huge field with green shoots was now perceived as a green field.

Now I know what spiritual fasting is not. It is not the desire to lose weight. It is not refusing to eat because you do not feel hungry. It is not because it feels like a good idea or because it tells you to do so in the Bible or because you are being sponsored for some charitable cause. It is not even doing without something because then you might feel less guilty about having so much when others have so little. It is not about eating less so that you can more fully empathize with those who regularly eat very little or nothing at all. Fasting may include some or all of the above. However, fasting essentially is a spiritual desire coming from deep within. It is a hunger, a thirst, and a desire to purge yourself and thus be closer to God. For this to happen, food is no longer important except as a means for maintaining life.

All this may seem very dramatic and even unreal. Let me assure those who have read so far that this experience was far more dramatic and real when I actually experienced it. The final act centred on Psalm 130. This was the meditation that had been set aside for me on returning from this long walk in the rain after almost literally being driven out of the convent chapel by my inner anguish. This is a psalm about waiting for the Lord . . .

However, on this occasion the main impact of the psalm hit home like an arrow splitting an apple. "If thou, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? . . . But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered." For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem (verses 3, 4 and 7b). What more needs to be said? Perhaps for the first time in my life I felt totally and completely at peace.

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"Journeying with God" is reviewed in this issue of the magazine.

The Ascension

John O'Donohue

With waves the ocean soothes the dark stillness of the shore.
With words the mind would calm the awful, inner quiet.
Offerings to the nothingness on which we trespass.
Our imprint no deeper than breath on a mirror.

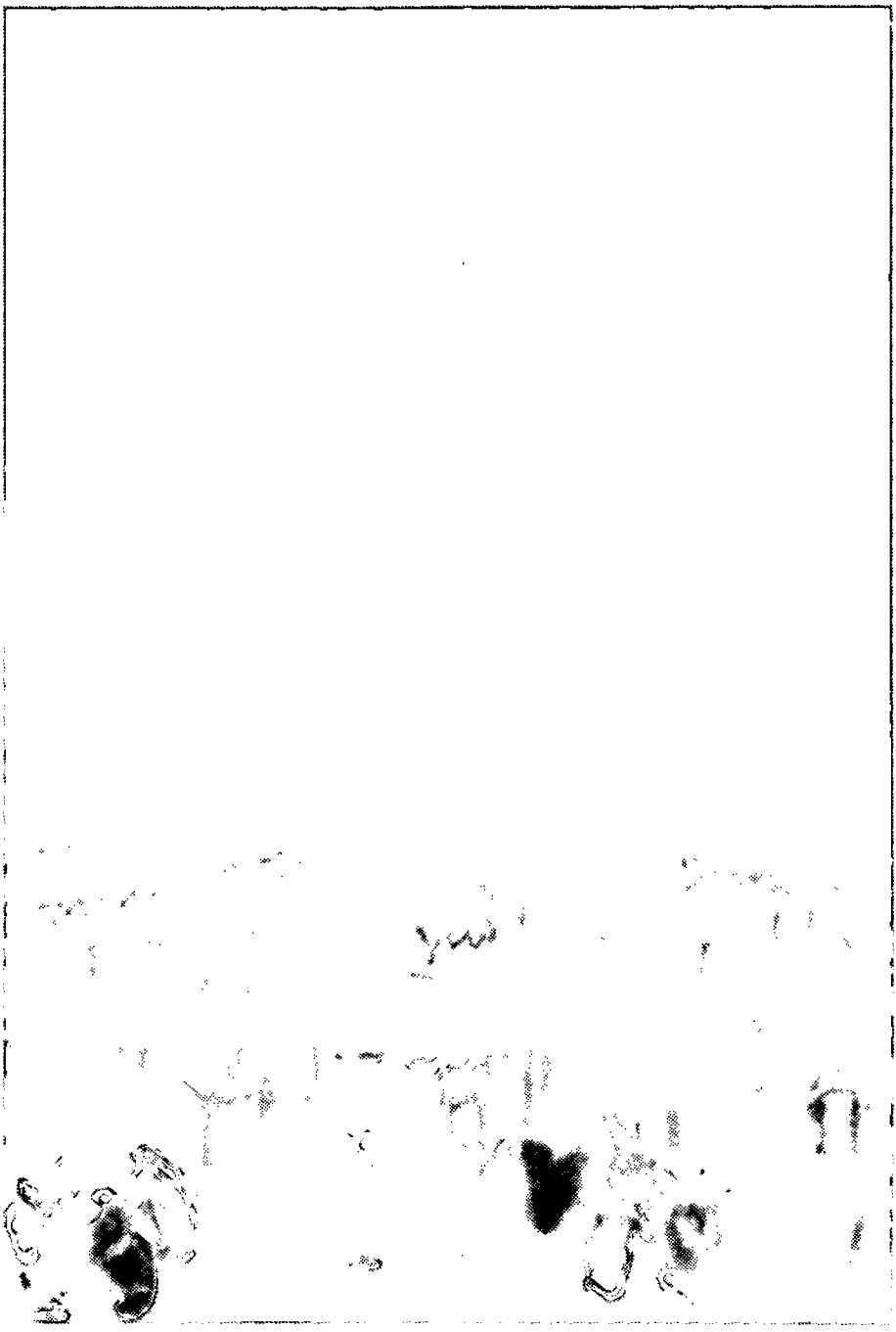
Though delighted by the wonder of your return,
To glimpse you is already too much for their eyes.
At your cadence of voice a bird stirs in the heart,
Its wings spread such brightness nothing can hold its form.

You are no longer from here, yet you still linger
In the lightness, wed to the dance you awaken.
As if in drudged-down lives, the song of your new hands
Could raise the soul towards horizons of desire.

You slip through a door of air. Memory comes home,
Bright as a dead tree drawn to blossom by the moon.

From "Conamara Blues" by John O'Donohue, published by Bantam Books. Used by permission of Transworld Publishers, a division of The Random House Group Ltd.

David Brown Milne: *Ascension No.3* (1943)
Primarily a landscape painter, David Milne began experimenting with biblical subject matter in the last few years of his life. Here he depicts the small rural town of Uxbridge, Ontario where Milne and his family lived. Overhead he paints an ethereal vision of Christ ascending into heaven. By setting this biblical story in the contemporary Canadian landscape, Milne, who was never a religious man, attempts to make the Christian story of hope relevant to his life. The familiar landscape contains a message that miracles are possible in any time and in any place—*Virtual Museum of Canada*



The JM Annual Retreat 2002

John Rackley

A cove in a South Devon estuary. A cliff path overlooking a restless sea. A lichen-covered tor near the East Dart. The view of Leicester at night from Old John. Great Missenden High Street late on Christmas Day night. The back room of Hettie's terrace home. A stretch of scrub and rock just off the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Pethybridge Road in Cardiff after visiting an infamous alcoholic. And I could go on . . .

Special moments in not particularly special places. They are my THIN PLACES. I enjoy that expression. It's not religious, like Holy Site. It's not pious, like Sacred Space. It's matter of fact. Slightly puzzling. Not exactly clear yet conveys an impression.

What it seeks to describe is the experience of a sudden or gradual deepening of awareness that emerges from a certain location. Such experiences come unbidden. They happen. For a moment the distance between what is seen and what is unseen seems to lessen. The gap between what is known and unknown becomes bridged.

In our Retreat together I will be inviting us to consider THIN PLACES. Our own places of pleasure, clarity and surprise. They may be the delights of the wild and remote, like Iona Island or the Rockies. They could just as easily be a brick-built terrace or a busy city street. We will consider this through music, scripture and visual aids. You may like to begin noticing them as you prepare for the Retreat.

The reflection "Prayer in the Wilderness" *(reprinted opposite)* comes from my own experience of time spent in Sinai. That was an intense experience which both enlightened what was already within as well as giving much that has still to be understood, affirmed and integrated.

I hope the time we will spend together will provide us with that sort of opportunity. Often we come on Retreat with our spiritual bags stuffed full of raw material which by the guidance of the Spirit we can begin to sort out. So I look forward to the autumn.

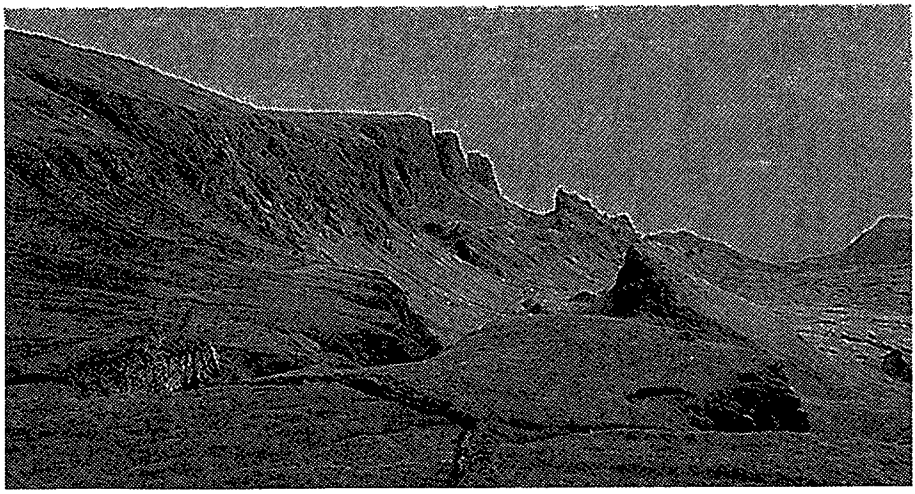
The 2002 Retreat is at the Woodbroke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham from 20 to 22 September. More details and a booking form in the UK Newsletter.

Prayer in the Wilderness

You tell me you are going
through a "wilderness
experience."

So does it mean:
—You don't know whether to sit,
stand or walk because your
backside is so sore?
—You long for the sun because
it's so cold at night and when it
comes you are beaten down by
its unrelenting glare?
—You've seen the tracks of
an animal by your sleeping
bag but not the maker of
the tracks?
—You've walked into a new place
and left only your footprints?
—You've walked and walked
but found nowhere to go?
—You've been confronted by
so much honesty that you feel
stripped bare?
—You've been seduced?
—You feel you've lost everything
but been given everything?
—You've looked in every
direction and each way forward
looks as confusing as the other?
—And it's been so quiet you've
been afraid to hear your own
heartbeat?

Now think!
Do not rush to say "yes",
because this is a thin place,
and it is very frightening.



A view of the Quiraing on the Isle of Skye

A poem of hope

Venetia Carse

Sleep, dear Child, in the crook of my arm,
Peace be with you,
may the Spirit of love protect you from harm.
Joy be with the young in our keeping,
kindness, wisdom and strength be theirs,
may they bring easement
to those who lose loved ones
and healing to the fount of the world's tears.
Peace be between Peoples, Religions and Nations,
a time come when hatred and violence shall cease
and the Spirit of love inspire each one of us
to build together the foundations of Justice
to work in concord for lasting Peace.
Then wake, my Child, to the joy of living,
to the wonder of flowers, the cool shade of trees,
reverence for life and smiling faces,
that daily you grow in mind and body
to work for and cherish our beautiful World,
Celebrate with joy the Spirit of Peace.

Book reviews

Perfect Freedom: Becoming the Person we were meant to be
Jane Williams
Canterbury Press, £4.99, 2001

This small book (in the Borders Series) is written with such clarity and directness that it packs a lot in on the subject of obedience – something we see today as restrictive. The point is made that however free we think we are, we are all constrained by, or in thrall to, or enslaved by something or somebody. Full obedience to God would set us truly free.

After explaining how she has experienced obedience in her own life, Jane Williams explores the life of Jesus as the only example we have of full obedience to God, and its consequences. Lastly she asks how this model can help us understand obedience to God in today's complex world.

She sees obedience as being primarily about being or becoming who we are meant to be in relation to God. Christian obedience is perfect freedom precisely because it challenges us not to be enslaved by anything less than God.

The "plain English" language of the book makes the theology accessible.
Deidre Morris

Let All the Peoples Praise Him: the Psalms and Lectio Divina
Michel de Verteuil
The Columba Press, 2000, £3.99

Michel de Verteuil CSSP has taught Lectio Divina for years. Lectio Divina goes back to the early centuries and continues to be a source of deep spiritual growth. He applies this method of Bible reading to the psalms, inviting his readers to discover how to pray with the imagination, integrating all our emotions into our prayer by relating Bible text and experience and allowing them to enrich each other.

The method of Lectio Divina is explained under the headings of reading, meditation and prayer.

The author writes from the Roman Catholic tradition but it is a form of reading the Bible that has no denominational barriers; it is very much part of the ecumenical scene.
Brenda Smith

Journeying with God
Malcolm Rothwell
Epworth Press, 2001, £9.95

Going on retreat for the first time can be a daunting experience. Here Malcolm Rothwell, a Methodist minister, shares with the reader his experience of "jumping in at the deep end" with a thirty-day retreat: "There are times in our lives when we feel drawn to a particular course of action. It just seems the right thing to do. God has put his hand on us. We have experienced, as it were, the divine touch . . ." The author writes about his experience of thirty days of silent retreat, the journey with God deeper into God. He writes with refreshing honesty about his anger and defiance coming face to face with God, the feelings of being drawn towards a deeper life of faith, hope, love and trust and the negative feelings of inner battles and torment.

This book provides a unique experience of being taken stage by stage through the Ignatian Exercises with comments on prayer, silence, listening to experience and tuning in to the tension between facts and feelings. Throughout the book Malcolm Rothwell turns to writers on spirituality and prayer, from Thomas à Kempis to Thomas Merton to anchor his experience with the affirmation of relevant quotations from a widely-read background of spiritual authors. A selected bibliography is also provided for further reading. Sharing the genuine transformation experience of God in the context of a thirty-day retreat is an opportunity not to be missed.
Yvonne Walker

Wayfaring: a Gospel Journey into Life
Margaret Silf
DLT, 2001, £9.95

Margaret Silf invites us to walk our own path along with Jesus of Nazareth through his lived ministry and to discover what it means for us by reflecting step by step on the Gospel story personally and prayerfully. There are gentle exercises to reflect upon.

The book welcomes all "wayfarers" – those who are just beginning to explore the spiritual journey and those who are seasoned travellers. If you have used Margaret Silf's earlier book "Landmarks" then "Wayfaring" will accompany you further along the way.
Brenda Smith

The Everyday Journey: Moments of Reflection
Betty Maher
The Columba Press, 2001, £5.99

Betty Maher is a Roman Catholic laywoman whose reflections on life and faith are broadcast regularly on Irish radio. What she talks mostly about in this collection of pieces is the beauty and the wonder of everything in creation. Small daily events, encounters with people in the Dublin hospital where she works as a chaplain, or walks in various regions of Ireland, all inspire thoughts that are both personal and universal. The subjects of these many short pieces include moving anecdotes of pastoral care, the connection between paintings and prayer, the night sky, fear, patience, friendship, the ministry of hospitality. Just occasionally she mentions a story from the Bible, such as the honesty of the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well: "Total lack of pretence and no punches pulled on either side." But mostly her "theology" is that of everyday life. That is not to say it is shallow or sentimental: far from it. Clearly it comes from deep roots of faith and of devotion to the Creator God. A book of comfort; but also a book to embolden and enlarge us.
Hilary Wakeman

A Charmed Life – the Spirituality of Potterworld
Francis Bridger
DLT, 2001, £8.95

Francis Bridger, Principal of Trinity College, Bristol and author of the award-winning book "Children Finding Faith" writes as a theologian, a Christian, a pastor and a grandparent about the Harry Potter phenomenon, examining the qualities of the stories and why they appeal to young and old alike. He examines the moral complexities of the characters and plots, the theology implicitly reflected in Potterworld and the spirituality of the underlying theme of self-sacrificial love. The author examines the hostilities expressed by some people who would have the books banned and explores the spirituality of the series within a wider landscape of CS Lewis and Tolkien. This is not just an excellent read for all Potter fans, but it could be a useful text for discussion by home groups and young people. "Encountering the moral universe of Potterworld enables us to reflect upon the moral nature of our own."
Yvonne Walker

Seeing Beyond Depression
Jean Vanier
SPCK, 2001, £4.99

Many of us have times when life gets on top of us and we suffer from depression to a greater of lesser extent. Down the years a number of Christians have written about this, from H A Williams in "True Wilderness", through Dr Jack Dominian in "Depression." In his last book "Seeing Beyond Depression", Jean Vanier goes beyond empathising with those who suffer to seeing positive outcomes of depression.

While welcoming many of the positive things he says about facing reality, I find his thoughts about the cause of depression (on p.75) "Depression is the emergence in our consciousness of a hidden pain that has its origin in our early childhood" very Freudian and over-simplistic. Nevertheless it is a book worth reading, and who am I to disagree with his conclusion:

"We are all called to
love and be loved,
wherever we may be.
We are called
to be open and grow
in love and
thus communicate
life to others."

Francis Ballinger

Praying the Jesus Prayer Together
Brother Ramon and Simon Barrington-Ward
Bible Reading Fellowship, 2001, £6.99

When a Bishop and a Franciscan Hermit write a book together it is worth taking notice! Prior to Brother Ramon's death these two men met together to "pray" the Jesus prayer and share their experiences. Both have also been helped through the same Orthodox monastery that uses the prayer in daily worship.

Each has found "healing power" in the regular use of this prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." For them it is letting the name of Jesus accompany every breath. An important Biblical basis is given for the Jesus prayer and there is a linking of personal, corporate and

cosmic elements. The simplicity and the profundity of the Jesus prayer are held together. Both writers have found a "drawing together of divided souls" as they prayed it. A fascinating chapter relates to the Lord's Prayer.

Yes, there is risk when entering any new form of prayer. But, as they say, it is worth it "to explore the solitary wonders and wastes of humanity." There is an attempt to relate it to the local church: maybe some readers could do this more effectively just because they actually belong to a local church.

For all who know their need to "reintegrate their heart and mind" this book will be a great help. For some it could be, as for these authors, finding a pearl of great price.

Paul Hunt

Learning To Love
Martin Israel with Neil Broadbent
Mowbray/Continuum, 2001, £7.99

This is the first book written by Martin Israel in co-operation with Neil Broadbent, an Anglican priest who runs Sozein, a churches' healing trust in Derbyshire. It is aimed mainly at "an intelligent but uncommitted enquirer" who "may have moved from agnosticism to tentative belief in a Higher Power beyond the limits of human reason . . ." Some readers may find the earlier chapters to be rather dry and heavy going in trying to describe the nature of God and his son Jesus Christ. Hopefully they will persevere at least until Chapter 9 ("The company we keep – what we do with thoughts and feelings") which I have used as a reading at one of our Meetings. The final chapter ("The sequel to life – the four last things") contains a superb overview on the themes of death, heaven and hell.

Each chapter ends with a selection of relevant quotations, entitled "Upon Reflection", from historic spiritual writers such as William Law, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich and Brother Lawrence and from more recent writers such as Dag Hammarskjöld and Robert Llewelyn. The final words of the foreword effectively summarize the main theme of the book: "Our life on earth is a mystery, a brief time span during which we may discover that our greatest calling is one of learning to love."

Incidentally, the texts of some of Martin Israel's out-of-print earlier books may be found on his website. This is: www.martinisrael.com.

Michael Tiley

A School of Love – the Cistercian Way to Holiness
Basil Pennington OCSO
Canterbury Press, 2000, £7.99

Here is an expert and yet digestible view of Cistercian spirituality, with succinct chapters on the lives of its founder, Bernard of Clairvaux, and three of its leading teachers: William of Saint Thierry, Guerric of Igny and Aeldred of Rievaulx. The author brings them to life with descriptions and brief extracts from their writings.

The final chapter of this short book, "Let's be practical – very practical" contains a short, practical and effective tutorial for anyone wanting to try a basic form of Cistercian contemplative prayer, including the Lectio Divina. It makes a pleasant change to find a spiritual guide book that actually gives any reader access to its basic method and does not leave you up in the clouds at the end.There are also two helpful one-page appendices on "The method of Lectio" and "Centering Prayer."

Michael Tiley

Christ the Golden Blossom – a Treasury of Anglo-Saxon Prayer
Douglas Dales
The Canterbury Press, 2001, £9.99

This is a remarkable collection of Anglo-Saxon prayers written during the 450 years between the arrival of St Augustine at Canterbury from Rome in 597AD to re-convert Anglo-Saxon England to Christianity, and the Battle of Hastings in 1066AD at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. It is a treasure-trove of prayers and 23 colour prints of some wonderful illustrations and religious artefacts from this mysterious period of English history often called "the Dark Ages."

The book contains three main sections:

1. Temporale which contains Anglo-Saxon prayers for the major feast days of the Christian year.
2. Sanctorale which includes prayers for the feast days of the English and other saints known at that time.
3. Peregrinatio which consists of a pilgrim's alphabetical guide to major Anglo-Saxon church sites which can be visited.

From this list and from "Sanctorale", I know that Saint Frideswide of Oxford lived as a recluse at Binsey near Oxford, that she is commemorated on 19 October having died on that day in 735AD, and that the site of her

cell may still be seen at Binsey Church. Could her life have been a model for Mother Julian?

Some of the prayers in this book could be used on appropriate days as "lead-ins" for Julian Meetings. My only regret is that the original Old English and Latin texts have not been included alongside the modern translations to enable one to capture more of the atmosphere and context of the prayers. However, that would be an expensive option which would probably more than double the size and price of this very reasonably-priced and beautifully-produced hardback book.
Michael Tiley

Landscapes of Light: an Illustrated Anthology of Prayers
David Adam; photographs by Robert Cooper
SPCK, 2001, £7.99

This hardback book is very well presented. Many will be familiar with the prayers of David Adam. In this book they are linked to beautiful photographs of Holy Island by Robert Cooper, around the theme of light. Linked prayers and photographs can easily be used to start a time of meditation. Or the book can be used just to glance at, gracing any coffee table. All who have looked at my copy have desired to possess it; this would be a good choice for a gift.
Francis Ballinger

A Celtic Psaltery
compiled by David Adam
SPCK, 2001, £6.99

The name of David Adam seems to be synonymous with modern Celtic writing, with a regular stream of books having appeared over the last few years.

Each of the twelve sections in this book brings together prayers that make often inaccessible Psalms come to life, through prayers that are mainly taken from original Celtic sources such as Carmichael's Carmina Gaedelica.

As a personal companion to prayer it should be possible to find something regularly to inspire in this book and the headings should enable it to become a valuable resource in many situations.
Francis Ballinger

First Light
ed. Eldred Willey
DLT, 2001, £9.95

This book offers a rich source of prayers and liturgies taken from "New Christian Communities." There are no fewer than thirty-three of these, the best known probably being the community on Iona. In these secular times, it is enormously encouraging to find so many groups of people who are trying, in unexpected places, to live prayerful lives and also lives which engage with real issues (one of the sections of this collection is entitled "We care passionately about..."). Some of these contributions would work well as "lead-ins" for contemplative prayer at a Julian Meeting. At the end there is a useful description of each Community, with a contact address.
Diana Cooke

Praying with Power
edited by Bishop Joe Aldred
Continuum, 2000, £9.99

This is a collection of essays on prayer by black Christians from a variety of denominational backgrounds and with roots in Africa or the Caribbean. Contributors include a former Sikh and a former Hindu. The approach too is varied: personal, anecdotal, sociological and theological.

It includes the memories of childhood prayer of people now middle-aged and recent experience.The author has a Black Pentecostal background and is director of The Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership in Birmingham.

One of the things that shines through is the commitment to prayer: long prayer meetings such as a regular monthly all-night meeting for prayer or daily prayer together at 5.00AM for an hour before work, though we do also find regret that "The least-attended meeting of the Christian Church is the prayer meeting, they are boring, irrelevant and archaic in language . . . and need a new dynamism."

The chapter "Praying in the Spirit" seems to assume that praying in tongues and intercession depend on contemplative prayer. It reads "We all tend to make the same mistake – we seem to be in too much of a hurry to tell God everything we can, to give him a list of requests. We leave very little time for meditation and contemplation. Listening and reflecting on what the Spirit says are as essential as our words."

Other topics include praying for a marriage partner, prayer and fasting, and prayer in the family, particularly the way faith is fostered by listening to other people's prayer; and an international development consultant relates prayer to poverty and global (in)justice.

What this book has to offer is an insight into the place of prayer in black churches and plenty of food for thought – and action.

Gail Ballinger

Sacred Tongues: The Golden Age of Spiritual Writing
David Scott
SPCK, 2001, £10.99

I was first attracted to this book by the names of Andrewes, Herbert, Donne, Vaughan and Traherne. They were all familiar names although some more so than others, but I knew next to nothing about them. This book by David Scott (Warden of the School of Spirituality for the Winchester Diocese) is not one to read through lightly or quickly but the reader is well rewarded on several counts.

The introduction to the life and setting of each writer gives enough to satisfy and there is a bibliography for those who wish to follow up. The link between each writer is explored and the ways in which their writing and thought influenced each other. Only the lives of Andrewes, Herbert and Donne overlapped in any real sense but there is an interconnectedness between all five writers which Scott explores in his "Interludes" between chapters.

There is also the spirituality and teaching of David Scott himself acting as a kind of glue throughout the whole book holding it together and giving some valuable insights. In particular a piece about writing prayers on p.39 shows how Andrewes constructed his prayers drawing on the bible. It is a valuable tool for those who lead intercessions in public worship.

I first read this book before the events of the 11th September and have read it again since. In his work on Donne, Scott speaks of how Donne meditated on death. Scott writes, "Underlying his theology, his thoughts about the nature of God and human death, there is a close relationship with God and human death. It is an experienced and felt theology." This is a book with many fascinating insights and pointers towards our own times and how the spirituality of those 17th century writers can help us today.

Bill Elliot

Learning to Dance
Michael Mayne
DLT, 2001, £9.95

This book is a real delight. There are twelve chapters that move not only through the months of the year but also through our lives of longing, doubting, hoping, suffering and celebrating. All clearly illustrated via poetry, science and spirituality. It leads us to a growing sense of wonder and encouragement in our own lives.

JM members will find particular help with the March chapter on silence and the stillness at the centre of the dance. I have already given this book to those going through particular suffering in their lives, who are dancing in the dark.

This is theology and spirituality with pzazz!

Graham Johnson

Mixed Life
Walter Hilton (translated by Rosemary Dorward)
SLG Press, 2001, £3.00

I imagine a person seeking advice from Walter Hilton and saying, "I feel guilty if I am not praying. How much time should I give to prayer and how much to my family and business? How do I keep the desire for God alive from the moment I wake up till the time I go to bed?"

Walter Hilton, an Augustinian Canon, answers, in what for the 14th century seems a gentle and balanced way: "Christ is served at our prayers and in our business, do not neglect one for the other. Be a mixture of Martha and Mary, aim for charity in your heart and in your outward deeds. Desire for the contemplative life shows itself in compassion for the whole of life. The best example is Jesus – active in preaching and healing yet spending long hours waiting in the Silence which he called 'Father'."

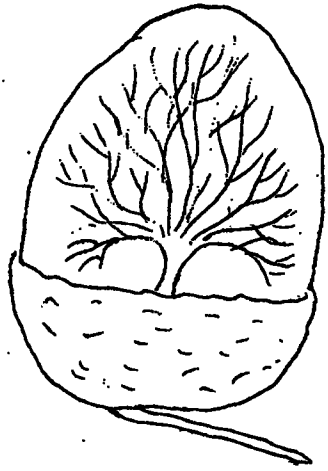
Graham Johnson

Reading is good prayer. Reading teaches how, and for what, we ought to pray; and afterwards prayer obtains it. In reading, when the heart feels delight, devotion is increased, and that is worth many prayers.

—The Ancrene Riwle (c.1190–1230)

One so small

Valerie Colgate



I held an acorn in my hands,

And then I thought,

"How can it be,

that a mighty oak can grow

from one so small as thee?"

AND I MARVELLED.

I held a baby in my hands,

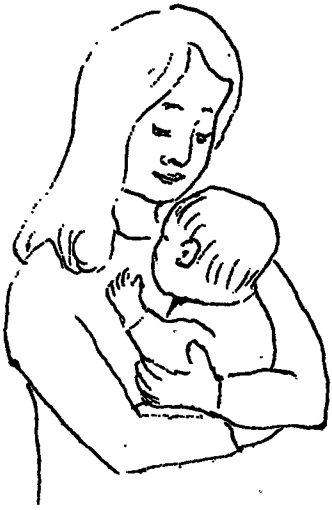
And then I thought,

"How can it be,

that Almighty God came

as one as small as thee?"

AND I WORSHIPPED.



Written at an Open Door retreat led by Colin and Mary Rowe

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 views expressed in this magazine are those of each writer, and are not necessarily held by the Editor or the Advisory Group.

The Editor is always pleased to receive original articles, short meditations, stories, poems or artwork for use in the magazine. Book reviews for publication should include date, publisher and price.

Contributions for the next magazine should be sent to the Editor by **15 June 2002.** Please type, or write clearly, on one side of the paper. Contributions by e-mail are welcome.



