

**Vol. 2 No. 1 of the
SGM JOURNAL:**

"Refresh"

Spirit and Shadow

Winter 2002 ISSUE

Spiritual Growth Ministries has published a newsletter twice yearly since our inception in 1981.

This has now grown into our **SGM Journal of Contemplative Spirituality**, *Refresh*.

Each issue works with a theme that is both relevant and stimulating of thought, prayer and discipleship.

Previously the full version of the SGM Newsletter has been available on the SGM website. With the commencement of *Refresh* we are placing a nearly full selection of key articles from each issue on the website.

The full Journal is available by mail. There is a suggested donation of \$5 per issue to help cover costs of publication and postage. Simply fill out our [online request form](#), or email our Administrator, Carole Hunt, with your name and address and you will be added to our mailing list:

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of Spiritual Growth Ministries Journal of Contemplative Spirituality:**

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COMMENT by Andrew Dunn

One of my early discoveries in oil painting and sketching was that everything we painted or drew deepened in perspective and interest as the shade and shadows were added in. Light and brightness alone leaves little to see and enjoy without perspective, shape or form. Rembrandt's *Return of The Prodigal* uses much more shade than light to create a stunning glimpse of gracious embrace and forgiving love. Monet's series of paintings of London's bridges and of his beloved waterlilies use the light and shade at various times of the day as unique moments captured over a few minutes each day as the light moved and changed hour by hour. He saw clearly that shade and shadow, as much as light, are living and dynamic ingredients adding varying textures to life and how we experience it.

Mozart does the same thing with his musical interpretations of creation and life, as Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian, reminds us. Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel can sing winsomely, "Hello darkness my old friend, I've come to talk with you again" reminding us that making peace with our darknesses and with deep silence is a befriending central to life. Isaiah can even talk about discovering the "treasures of darkness". Jesus saw himself as light for the world, even "the light of life" amidst the darkness.

The stunning events in New York and Washington DC on 11th September last year scuttled forever American and Western spiritual, political, economic and cultural triumphalism. Why were we not stunned into new insight when greater pains have pounded other places in recent years – Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, East Timor - to name a few? Yet, even here in our small south Pacific corner of planet earth we have our own forms of proud and often triumphal ways. Listen to the rhetoric around recovering our top 10 placing in world living standards, the hurt when we lost our right to co-host the Rugby World Cup next year, the language used of growing successful churches of whatever persuasion, and the pre-election posturing we are entering as I write. Listen, and you hear the nuances of power and victory but very little of the weakness that leads to strength or the costliness of discipleship and service in a needy world.

There is deep joy of following Jesus from his baptism to desert temptations and beyond, from the hill top transfiguration to the struggles of Gethsemane, from the rich fellowship with friends in Bethany and companionship with disciples to desertion, betrayal and the abandonment of his dying, to the light and hope of the meetings on Easter morn and beyond and the delights and power of his Pentecost presence. That's the kaleidoscope of colour and shade that makes normal Christian life rich and textured for we who find him a companion worthy to follow.

In this issue of *Refresh* we offer various pieces of writing that capture something of this – a theologian reflecting on where God was on 11th September; biblical reflections; the Spirit's presence in a road fatality chaplain's work and in the declining health of a long-time disciple; poems and prayers crafted on the living and working edges of life and ministry. Again we have selected quotes and quips, photos and book reviews that add something to this exploration. The research project this issue is a fresh reflection on the place of spiritual direction in the movements of the spiritual life.

If contemplation is "a long loving look at the real" then we will not be surprised to be taken into places that expose us to ever-changing and varied experiences of light and shade. There we discover the pain, excitement and joy of being on the cutting edge of grace and the mystery of the loving presence of God in the darkest valleys as much as in the brightest places of the journey – and in the less vividly textured times as well!

Spirit and shadow are inseparable to life and to faith.

WHERE WAS GOD ON 11 SEPTEMBER? by Elizabeth Julian RSM

How could an all-powerful, all-loving God allow such evil and such suffering in the world? If you have been struggling with this question then don't feel alone. The question of God and evil has puzzled theologians for centuries and to answer it they have constructed a range of *theodicies* (explanations or theories as to why God allows evil in the world).¹ To do this they have used the accepted sources of Christian theology: human experience, Scripture and tradition. Over the past few weeks you may have heard elements of these theodicies in homilies, in letters to the editor, or on radio talkback programmes as all of us try to come to terms with what has happened. Unfortunately most of the explanations limp - they leave us without satisfactory answers.

Basically explanations concerning the problem of God and evil may be grouped into four categories. Some theodicies try to explain evil in terms of its causes. They suggest that there are two forces in the world, one good and one evil, and that the world is a battleground where these two forces fight for supremacy. For Christians such a dualistic theory is unacceptable because it suggests either that the Evil One is independent of God (which implies that there is more than one God of this world), or that the Evil One is dependent on God (which shifts the problem of evil from this world to another level). In "the world is a battleground" theodicy, the events of 11 September would be understood as the powers of evil doing battle with the powers of good. Some people of a fundamentalist persuasion would accept this logic.

A second group of theodicies puts evil down to original sin and holds that somehow evil and suffering are necessary conditions of life. Evil is not something in itself but the absence of good. Evil entered the world when humans turned away from God (the highest good) as explained in Genesis 3. The evil itself is not willed by God but is nevertheless permitted by God in that God allows people to choose evil. Many of us probably identify with this position. Thus we explain the evil events of 11 September as the result of original sin, and the suffering of thousands of innocent people as a necessary consequence, not willed but permitted by God. But ultimately this theodicy fails to explain convincingly why a God of love would permit all humanity, especially innocent children, to suffer for something that happened so long ago.

A third group of theodicies tries to get around the problem of God and evil by suggesting that suffering is good for us (the "no pain, no gain" logic), indeed that suffering is essential if we want to be worthy to share life with God. These theories, however make God into a rather harsh taskmaster, almost like a principal operating a school of hard knocks. And we know from our own experience that many individuals do not find that suffering makes them any better. Indeed we find quite the contrary. Thus, in "the suffering is good for us" view we needed the horrifying carnage of 11 September to strengthen our character and to make us better people. Some Christians may generally live out of this stance and find it personally helpful. They may have, however, been struggling since 11 September to relate to a God who could "demand" so much pain. Sin is ultimately an evil and can never be good for us. Furthermore, if sin is a necessary and unavoidable condition of life for humanity, as this theodicy would argue, then what does this say about the God who created such flawed humans?

A final group of theodicies tries to redefine key terms in an effort to get rid of the question about God and evil. So divine power becomes God's power to persuade or attract. Evil enters the world when people resist the attraction to the good. This implies, however, that God's goodness can be overcome by evil. In addition some theodicies in this group redefine evil as hidden good and limit God's love to only a few. The rest get God's wrathful vengeance. So the events of 11 September would be seen as a failure of God's power to attract the good or some kind of punishment by God on those outside of God's love.

Thus all the theodicies, all the attempts to explain the problem of God and evil, though they may have helpful elements, are ultimately inadequate. Some people have therefore given up developing theodicies and instead devote their energies to showing how it is possible to believe both in the existence of God and the reality of evil. Why is this a better way forward? Simply because when we are confronted with the mystery of evil and suffering there are no satisfactory explanations. Evil and suffering can neither be denied nor abolished. Rather they must be faced.

Like Auschwitz and Hiroshima, the "cloud by day" and the "fire by night" which New York experienced were not the great biblical signs of the presence of God which gave solace to the Israelites as they journeyed through the desert. No, they were signs of unspeakable evil etched forever in our memories. Moreover, if anything, they could be understood as signs of the absence of God.

So where was God on 11 Sept? Can we still believe in God? Where has God been since then?

For those of us with faith, on Sept 11 God was where God can often be found - right in the middle of the chaos and horror, alongside those who faced the evil and the suffering. God's compassionate presence was clearly visible in the actions of so many people. God was in the cellphone voices assuring spouses of their love in the last few moments before they died either on the hijacked planes or in with World Trade Centre; in the heroic acts of bravery of the rescue teams; in the outpouring of grief which enveloped the globe; in the countless gestures of kindness and solidarity as strangers reached out to one another; in the voices of those Kiwis on their OE who phoned home immediately to assure worried families they were safe; in the record numbers of those (especially men) who felt drawn to churches and church services; in the two Island Bay mothers who organised a peace march to Parliament; in the people who left flowers and messages of condolence at the American Embassy; in the Aucklanders who opened their homes to stranded American tourists; in the people gathered in Civic Square to stand alongside one another in prayer. And the list could go on endlessly. But it doesn't explain the evil - it explains where God was on 11 September and where God is today. God was and is among people throughout the world who immediately performed and continue to perform the corporal and spiritual works of mercy to alleviate the suffering. But what about the evil?

The evil of 11 September and the resulting suffering cannot be rationalised or explained away by theories. Rather they must be faced by all of us. As individuals, as communities and as a nation, we here in NZ have to engage in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy in order to alleviate the suffering. Our history has shown that we can be very good at this. But there is more that we must

do. We must also admit to our part in causing the evil that led to the suffering. This is, of course, far more challenging because it means we have to change. We have to admit our responsibility as New Zealanders. As a country we have benefited greatly from living in a western democracy. Thus we have played our part in creating and perpetuating the economic, social, political and religious frustrations that have encouraged the flourishing of such evil. It is only by owning our sin, by acknowledging the part which we have played, that we can expect divine forgiveness. Naturally, the temptation is to consign it all to the "too hard basket" as someone else's problem – especially the US's. As Christians, however, we can and we must help one another to admit our guilt, to own our sin, and to work more urgently towards creating a climate of justice for all. A climate steeped in the most profound respect for human dignity as well as for a diversity of religious traditions, cultures and economic systems. In a word, we can and we must "wage reconciliation" together. We can begin to do this right now in countless ways in our own families, neighbourhoods, parishes, schools and workplaces.

It is not "business as usual". It will never be "business as usual" again. The world has changed forever. We have witnessed on an enormous scale in our global village both the presence of God and the presence of evil. We have had all the proof we will ever need to know that they both exist. As is often said: "The writing is on the wall – how big do we want the letters?" But we cannot leave it there. As New Zealanders together we can and we must make the world a better place. Our Christian hope insists that we can and that we must. Why? For the sake of children throughout the world, for the sake of the children laughing and playing outside my office window, beacons of hope for the future.

Footnote:

1. Terence Tilley, "The Problem of Evil," on *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 360. I have used Tilley's description of various theodocies in what follows.

SPIRIT AND SHADOW by John North

There's something Tolkienish about the first words in the Bible. The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the sinister ocean while the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. There was a confusion of matter waiting to be shaped and formed into order, pattern and have life itself breathed into it. Then came the Word of God: *Let there be light* and there was light and yet also still darkness. The light was day and the darkness was called night. Darkness was not abolished but became part of the pattern of day and night, not only out there but in our souls too.

It is this mixture which bothers us. We want light all the time and some of the songs Christians sing encourage us to expect this:

"Not a shadow can rise
Not a cloud in the skies
But His smile quickly drives it away."

Such misleading words can create unrealistic expectations and lead people into a sense of failure and guilt.

It is true that the word "darkness" can often describe negatives like death, ignorance, sin and so on. The paradox is that darkness and shadows come to us all and by the grace of God can bring us to life-changing insights and experiences. It is fascinating to look up the word darkness and discover that it is the very place where humans discover God's mercy and salvation:

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abraham and a deep and terrifying darkness descended on him. (Gen 15:12) It was in this unnerving experience that God came close with blessing, promises and a new personal covenant. Jacob was running for his life and slept in a desolate place but awoke to say, *Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it.* (Gen.28:16.) The people of Israel were saved from the Egyptian army in the darkness caused by God. (Ex.15)

The same theme emerges in the passion story. There was darkness over the whole land and Jesus cried out, *My God, why have you deserted me?* There could be no darker place than Golgotha and yet precisely there, the gates were opening to a new relationship of God with humans. The centurion was the first to realise the new era had begun.

It was St. Paul who linked the creation and redemption stories together.

For it is the God who said; "Let light shine out of darkness" who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Of course it is much easier to study the theme of shadows in the Bible than to cope with our own darkness. Maybe our lives sometimes feel like a stormy ocean in deep darkness. But the Spirit is hovering over us too and the Creator is preparing to speak the Word to bring light out of darkness and new patterns of life out of chaos.

Are we not all participating in our own personal creation story?

SPIRITUALITY OF ADDITION, SPIRITUALITY OF SUBTRACTION by Andrew Pritchard

How I came to read Irvine Stone's biographical novel of Michelangelo "The Agony and the Ecstasy" I don't remember. Back then as a young engineer art and the humanities didn't hold much interest for me and spirituality was mostly about right belief and conforming reasonably closely to my good Baptist upbringing. How times change! Anyway I enjoyed the book enormously but at

that time had no idea that an image from it would deeply affect my life and form the core of a spiritual formation lecture that students some thirty years later would find so helpful.

From Stone's account two descriptions of Michelangelo's myriad of artistic works stood out. Towards the end of the book he describes the painting of the frescos on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel. Here was a new challenge for Michelangelo the sculptor. How to paint? ... and that on a scaffold forty feet high with the paint dripping in his eyes and through his dishevelled beard. The masterpiece he created that has enthralled thousands over four centuries was created in layers - plaster, then layer over layer of paint until he had created "the world on that Sistine ceiling as though it were being created for the first time".¹

But Michelangelo's first love was sculpture, transforming multi-ton blocks of roughly hewn marble into a Pieta, an Angel, a David. Here was art, not built up layer upon layer but rather the release of the figure contained within the block, the removal of all that was superfluous until only the creative, vital life and beauty remained. "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free."

Each human life is also a work of art and God the artist.

Sometimes God works as painter ...

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? ... For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little"² or as Peter instructs us "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."³ The spirituality of addition: adding virtue to virtue, steady growth towards maturity. This is a spirituality of success, a spirituality of the overcomer in the book of Revelation. The Conquering King and the Lion of the tribe of Judah are images of God that correspond to a spirituality of addition.

Sometimes God works as a sculptor ...

... chips fly, hammer strikes, chisel cuts ... dust clouds the air and blocks out the light. Crisis, mess - work of art? - creation of a master craftsman? "Not likely!" "The wages of sin", "the result of disobedience", "an attack of the enemy!" or the one who sees the angel in the marble releasing it and setting it free?

Paul's experience would make anyone think twice about aspiring to Christian leadership.

*"Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers."*⁴

Christ's downward progression makes it clear,

*"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"*⁵

Spirituality of subtraction: the removal from our lives of all that is not really "us". The suffering servant of Isaiah and the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world ... images of God that correspond to the spirituality of subtraction.

As I look back over my life it is so often the painful times, the crises, that have brought the most growth. Burnout that helped me to see that people respected me for who I was not what I achieved, the closing of a Bible College that left me without work only to discover a new vocation and freedom are but two examples that spring to mind. A spirituality of subtraction that I have learned to recognise and appreciate alongside the joyful times of addition.

A one sided spirituality, appreciating only addition, progress and victory, though prevalent in many churches in Western society, does not conform to reality or to scripture. Here crisis, set-back, failure is rejected as incompatible with the benefits of being a Christian so confidently promised by enthusiastic marketers of the church. Those who see through this one-sidedness find such churches toxic to growth and faith.

When disaster strikes or crises threaten, be they international, communal or intensely personal in scope,

*Jesus the Son of God has been there before us, so let's hold firmly to our faith. Jesus is in touch with our reality, he's been through weakness, experienced testing, endured suffering so we can be confident, especially in our time of need, that Loving God is with us in mercy and grace.*⁶

Footnotes:

1. The Agony and the Ecstasy, p468.

2. Isa 28:9-10 (KJV)

3. 2 Pet 1:5-8 (NIV)

4. 2 Cor 11:24-26 (NIV)

5. Phil 2:5-8 (NIV)

6. See Heb 4:14-16

DANCING IN THE RAIN by *Barbara Sampson*

I remember the day the drought broke
after months of below-average rainfall
a long dry summer seemed inevitable and costly
farmers looked heavenwards and prayed for rain

Then it came gentle silent persistent
not stopping for a whole day
next morning every tree was weeping with joy
cobwebs sparkled with diamond drops
the world washed clean

That was the day
war began in Afghanistan
the first bombs dropped on an evil terror
that was the day
an immigrant taxi-driver was bashed to death
that was the day
the little boy down the street was bullied and beaten
in the school playground

The world is weeping God
with bombs and bashing and bullying
yet your cross proclaims an Easter resurrection
surrounded by death you call us to live
in a world gone crazy with hatred
you draw us into your song of love
in a parched and weary land
you invite us to join you
dancing in the rain.

December 2001

ROAD FATALITY CHAPLAIN by *Peter Dunn*

The Fire Brigade siren sounded followed by a second call. I went into my study and collected my things together. Sun hat, sun glasses, prayer book, bottle of water and bowl. I made sure my shoes were handy and went and got changed out of my holiday clothes. Eventually the phone went. "Car versus car just south of you... There are fatalities and they need you right away."

I met the banked up line of cars a long way before I thought I would. Pulling out into the right hand lane I continued, noticing a hearse pulling in behind me. I was ushered through the roadblock with a friendly wave and arrived. A local policeman greeted me and gave me a briefing. "She's still in the car, can't get her out yet. Anyway, have to wait for the police photographer. Want to see her?"

I was taken to the mangled car in the ditch and left there. I was not prepared. I reached in and pulled the cover back up over the body. I looked up and they were watching me. I knew them by name. One by one they came up and said, "I'm so glad you're here!" or "It's about time you were involved." The firemen had already been there ninety minutes, an hour of that fighting to stabilise the young guy in the Ute before the rescue helicopter arrived. He was gone, but the drip bags and lines were still hanging from the mirrors.

My friends were stressed and troubled. You could see it in their eyes, see it in their movements. I moved around and talked. They were troubled by the senselessness of this accident. They were troubled by the young man and what they saw and suspected. The lady in the car troubled them. The strewn presents collected in a pile. The warm crock-pot with a family dinner that slid along the road intact.

It had been another hour, but the photographer had come and done her job. It was my turn. They all came. Standing in a semicircle around the car. The firemen, the policemen, and the towies. I stood there, my prepared prayers in one hand, the water for cleansing in the other. Those prayers were inadequate, so I prayed spontaneously and sprinkled. We stood in silence, heads bowed. The radio spoke, the boy had died. I began to pray. For the boy's family as they heard the news and grieved. For the family of the grandmother who would not have the joy of her arrival. For the firemen, for the policemen, for the towies, each in turn. I prayed for peace, comfort and release from memories and trauma. At the Amen, they still stood, heads bowed, some with tears.

Then they moved, without a word. An order here, an instruction there. I was told to move out of the way. The car was dismantled, the body retrieved. I made my way home wondering. In the days and weeks that followed they told me how much it moved them. Praying for the victims by name, their families. Praying for them and recognising their needs. "It was special." "It was as though God was looking down." "I felt anxiety go." "I went home and didn't drink like I usually do." "I slept peacefully that night." "You'll be there next time won't you?" "We've had an emergency vest made for you so everyone will know who you are." In the end, I received much more than I gave. I was amazed to find once more that God speaks powerfully in times of crises, to people in need who don't go to Church, in a place I did not expect.

FROM THE SHADOWLAND *by Bruce Prewer*

On the slagheap
of accumulated defeats,
plodding days
of grey despondency,
inhaling the smog
of stale apathy –

Come, Spirit of the Lord,
come and rescue us
from the shadowland.
Come, Spirit of truth,
with your tough grace,
your resolute love.
Come, Spirit of Christ,
and bring us out again
to the land of laughter.

(From Jesus Our Future. Openbooks, Adelaide 1998. P 34. Used with permission)

Light a candle
for someone you love
something you care about



Let it burn
as a prayer to God
as a gift of yourself

Let it be a sign
of letting go old sorrows
of hope for tomorrow
and gratitude for today

From the Candleabra in Christchurch Cathedral

WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN (Contributed)

assassinated. There is a new standard now, with almost everybody on earth sure to remember for the rest of their lives where they were on September 11.

We were on holiday in Europe, and saw it all on wide screen TV. Soon the email brought travel warnings from our embassy, then news that many of our good friends and colleagues were amongst the hordes of foreigners fleeing the Middle East.

A week later we got "home" to find a very different place, with some of our best doctors and nurses gone or going. It struck me immediately that the people first out the gate were the ones I would have rated as stayers in this sort of situation. True, some of them had had daily phone calls from family begging them to pack up, which must have been hard to deal with. We did not have that problem, with our children understanding that we were where the Lord had put us, and giving us the credit for being able to make a sensible on-the-spot assessment of what the risks were.

Neither of us felt any urge to leave, especially when we learnt that some of our rather anxious junior colleagues were looking to us for a lead. And I could not get it out of my head that these days journalists covering the world's trouble spots have a much more dangerous job than do Christian missionaries. We must have been encouraged by some senior colleagues' "business as usual" approach, but we also had personal experience from another country in which the Lord clearly told us to stay put in very unpleasant and testing circumstances where we were given the option to go if we wished.

We also knew that it would be difficult for our national co-workers to accept any reason we might give for a decision to leave them. They assured us that we were safe, and said that everybody out there knew that we were not part of the problem. There was, and is, a lot of anti-Western feeling in the community, but we were encouraged by our national colleagues' assessment of the situation.

The regular security measures around our hospital, unusual by most ordinary standards, were tightened further, and this on its own probably increased tension for some of our number. Fiery political sermons from the mosque were rather chilling, but neither my wife nor I ever felt that we were in any real danger. We were working harder, but had no discussion about the deeper implications of our colleagues' precipitate departure until one of my wife's friends remarked how odd it was that the most positive and vocal (if I can put it that way) Christians on the staff had gone.

It soon became apparent that other staff members were having difficulty in coming to terms with the whole situation, made worse by the fact that we were short staffed before all this began. Much worse now. Little was said, but it became clear to me that feelings ranged from mild surprise and disappointment to dismay and outright resentment.

I saw that we needed to face this festering aspect of the whole problem, and being rostered to preach late in September I chose to deal with judgmental attitudes. I told our team that I had to confess to passing judgment on some of those who had left us. The expressions on some faces indicated that I was far from alone. I reminded myself as well as them that the indication for St Paul moving on, especially early in his ministry, was usually because he or his friends felt it was too dangerous for him to stay where he was. Nobody judged him harshly for that. And we had no reason to suppose that God gives the same leading to everybody in this sort of situation.

Discussion brought out the fact that some of our number had been down this road some years ago, and had taken advice to leave the country during a previous emergency. To a man (well, to a woman, actually) they now said they had felt so guilty that they had decided to stay put this time. This was some encouragement to the rest of us, but whether it helped or hindered our efforts to deal with our attitudes is another matter.

Missionaries face many difficulties and temptations not even hinted at in Bible college. Dealing with actual danger is comparatively simple compared with handling the kind of emotional strain and potential for conflict that I have outlined here. A man with a gun is one kind of danger, and the fiery darts of the Devil quite another. If you are our friends, do not pray for our physical safety alone. Please pray for wisdom and grace for us to handle matters with much greater potential to spoil our work and witness.

DISCOVERING GOD IN DEEPER PLACES *by Leslie Hyde*

The early days of walking with God can be 'heady' days, marvelling at the power of God to heal, to deliver from binding sins and fears, and to answer prayer. How we worship this mighty God who seems to be there for us in amazing and sometimes miraculous ways!

Even in the hard times and through dark days, somehow God would break through, and in the end things would work out. With God's help I could overcome.

It was in this frame of mind that I had surgery for my first hip replacement. Numerous people were praying for me. I was secure in the knowledge that God was there for me. My faith did not waver, even when it became obvious that all was not well. I knew God could 'fix' it; healing was a matter of waiting in faith.

But it did not happen. Things went from bad to worse. Rheumatoid arthritis began to affect all my major joints. The surgeon warned me that I was going to face, in his words, surgery after surgery. My mobility became seriously impaired, and pain was constantly with me. Someone among those who were praying for me assured me there was some sin in my life which was blocking God's healing.

However, I was discovering something new about God!

Outwardly, my condition is not improving, and I have reluctantly begun to accept the fact that it will probably go on worsening. I struggle with that, yet what is happening inwardly is so significant, that somehow it over-rides the depression about my condition, that can hit me from time to time.

There is a radical change in my relationship with God, who is there for me in a very different way these days. No longer to 'rescue' me from pain and difficulty in physical ways, but oh how our God comes to us in compassion and mercy in the depths of our inner being! I know now why mystics and others have described God in terms of a lover. I have different names for God these days, intimate and tender. When things get me down, I have a haven to rest in, where words are not necessary, and where balm is poured into my soul.

St Paul's words: 'Give thanks in all circumstances....' (1 Thess 5:18) make a lot more sense to me these days.

I will arise when I see the dawn
 My spirit waits to see its light
 This darkness has become my cloak
 Its emptiness a pleasant place
 I will no longer fear the nothingness
 But embrace its chasm within my soul
 For in the darkness I begin to see
 The ebony eyes of silence.
 I will find rest in this place of no feeling
 Find solace in my quiet hell.
 A diamond spirit still beats within
 Pulsating with the rhythm of time
 I know its radiance no longer shines
 But I am sure the sun will rise,
 Its rays will touch my spirit jewel again
 And then the darkness will no longer be mine.
 I will wait for you as a lover waits for evening
 Again you will fill my being
 And I will have this longing satisfied.

HARMONY by *Karl Barth*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Why is it that this man is so incomparable? Why is it that for the receptive, he has produced in almost every bar he conceived and composed a type of music for which "beautiful" is not a fitting epithet: music which for the true Christian is not mere entertainment, enjoyment or edification but food and drink; music full of comfort and counsel ...; music which is never a slave to its technique nor sentimental but always "moving", free and liberating because wise, strong and sovereign? Why is it possible to hold that Mozart has a place in theology, especially in the doctrine of creation and also in eschatology, although he was not a father of the Church, does not seem to have been a particularly active Christian, ... apparently leading what might appear to us a rather frivolous existence when not occupied in his work? It is possible to give him this position because he knew something about creation in its total goodness that neither the real fathers of the Church, nor our Reformers, neither the orthodox nor Liberals, neither exponents of natural theology nor those heavily armed with the "Word of God", and certainly not the Existentialists, nor indeed any other great musicians before or after him, either know or can express and maintain as he does.

In this respect he was pure in heart, far transcending both optimists and pessimists. ... he heard the harmony of creation to which the shadow also belongs but in which the shadow is not darkness, deficiency is not defeat, sadness cannot become despair, trouble cannot degenerate into tragedy and infinite melancholy is not ultimately forced to claim undisputed way. Thus cheerfulness in this harmony is not without its limits. But the light shines all the more rightly because it breaks forth from the shadow. The sweetness is also bitter and cannot therefore cloy. Life does not fear death but knows it well

Mozart saw this light no more than we do, but he heard the whole world of creation enveloped by this light. Hence it was fundamentally in order that he should not hear a middle or neutral note, but the positive far more strongly than the negative. ... He never heard only the one in abstraction. He heard concretely, and therefore his compositions were and are total music.

Church Dogmatics, Vol. III, Pt. 3, pp 297-298

Faith is homesickness. Faith is a lump in the throat.
 Faith is less a position *on* than a movement *toward*,
 less a sure thing than a hunch.
 Faith is waiting. Faith is journeying
 through space and time.

Frederick Buechner

JESUS SAYS

You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

You're blessed when you're content with just who you are – no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink is the best meal you'll ever eat.

You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

You're blessed when you get your inside world – your mind and heart – put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

Not only that – count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens – give a cheer, even! – for though they don't like it, *I do!* And all heaven applauds.

Matthew 5:1-12. The Message

MYERS BRIGGS AND JESUS by *Maggie Smith*

During the lunch break of a retreat last Saturday, Jesus joined me in a walk - or did I join Him?

“Jesus, One of the things I admire about You is Your sanity Your balance - the way You accept ... and enjoy... and use all the facets of Your nature - a divine capacity for holiness, I guess.

You are “I” - who needs time alone, personal space, reflection in the desert, prayer before dawn, all through the night sometimes, on hillsides, in a garden.....

You are “E” - who teaches crowds, goes to parties, builds community with disciples, seeks the company of the lonely and unloved.....

You are “N” - knowing about people - what makes them “tick” an uncanny understanding of their hearts and minds. You see beyond the immediate and obvious to an infinitely wider kingdom. You live Your life from an amazing union with the Beloved.

You are “S” - noticing the wayside flowers, hearing the chirping of sparrows, appreciating the taste of bread and wine, feeling the tentative touch on the edge of Your garment and unafraid, Yourself, to grasp the hand of a leper. Your stories are full of the details of everyday illustrations. You smell the fragrance of nard and recognise the deeper fragrance of love poured out.

You are “F” moved with compassion for a crowd, lost and leaderless like sheep without a shepherd... moved with anger at an attitude that is careful for the law and careless for a woman with a back bent like a staple.

You are “T” - out-thinking your critics, silencing their arguments, loathing hypocrisy and injustice with Your logic and wit and rhetoric.

You are “P” - stopping spontaneously to take children in Your arms to bless them... and to charm a lonely little tax-collector out of his tree; open to receive the teaching of Sophia in the events of Your day, open to new possibilities in the words of a persistent Syro-Phoenician woman, open to the baptism of John...yet...

You are “J” - spending time after that immersion in the Jordan to work out strategies of mission. You planned each new stage - Capernaum to the rest of Galilee, synogogue to open road - and knew when it was time to set Your face towards Jerusalem.

You are all of these, wholly.

You are none of these, completely.

You are Truth - for Truth is not a doctrine or a formula, but is freedom to be fully who You are - fully I Am.

That's Myers-Briggs, by the way, in case You didn't know.”

“Uh, uh” He grunts, non-committal - but I'm sure impressed!

“Then,” I continue, warming to the idea, then there is the “Enneagram.”

He groans and chuckles. Perhaps it is just as well that our walk is over.

MOON by *Ken Baker*

You capture me!
 You rise up, up.
 Cloud might blot, sleepiness send
 me to bed.
 Next morning, you draw me again,

voyage across the sky,
 morning sun caressing,
 permitting life.
 Life-giving Spirit, continue to transform,
 I need to be captured!

May 2002

O THREEFOLD GOD OF TENDER UNITY *(Hymn)*

O threefold God of tender unity,
 life's great unknown that binds
 and sets us free:
 felt in our loving, greater
 than our thought,
 you are the mystery found,
 the mystery sought.

O blaze of radiance, source of light
 that blinds,
 fierce burning fire in clear
 prophetic minds,
 you live in mystery, yet within us dwell;
 life springs from you as from a living well.
 Most loving Parent, Child of
 joy and pains,
 Spirit creating, life-force that sustains,
 tissue and bone are touches
 of your hand,
 your face we see in water, air and land.

O threefold God of tender unity,
 life's great unknown that binds
 and sets us free:
 felt in our loving, greater
 than our thought,
 you are the mystery found,
 the mystery sought.

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THANKS FOR DEPRIVATIONS

Lord, I thank you that in your love you have taken away from me all earthly wealth and that you now clothe me and feed me through the kindness of others. Lord, I thank you that since you have taken away the sight of my eyes you serve me now through the eyes of others. Lord, I thank you that since you have taken away the strength of my hands and my heart you minister to me by the hands and hearts of others. Lord, I pray for them. Reward them for it in your heavenly love, that they may faithfully serve and please you till they reach a happy end. Amen.

Mechthild of Magdeburg (1210 c 1280)

GOD OF DEEP MYSTERY *by Colin Renouf*

God of deep mystery and surprising newness,
 how we fight your coming to us.
 We do not recognise you and yet are drawn
 irreversibly into your presence.
 Like a moth is drawn to a light
 or a metal filing is drawn to a magnet,
 You draw us and we long to come,
 but the mystery and the unknown frighten us.
 Who is this God that we now meet?
 He/she is not like the God we knew last week,
 last year.
 Yet we must journey on because our hearts are hungry
 and we will never be satisfied until we have

become one with you!

God of deep mystery and surprising newness,
 why are you so elusive, so hard to find?
 Is it because our feelings betray us,
 and we search for the wrong thing?
 Search for security and comfort,
 when you ask us to embrace risk and abandonment.
 Risk and abandonment, embracing the strange and the new,
 making discoveries we could never have imagined.
 Your love so deep and strong,
 it overshadows us and enfolds us.
 You gather us like a mother hen
 gathers her chicks under her wings.
 God of deep mystery and surprising newness,
 come to us again today.
 Amen

Tautuku - April 2002

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, SGM *by Mary Concannon OP*

You can't have a birthday without celebrations. At least that's what some of us felt when SGM turned twentyone this year. Doubtless there are people who have had their own private parties, celebrations of thanksgiving for what SGM has meant for them. There were also those who partied together.

It was a lovely autumn day in late April when Dunedin spiritual directors met for networking but this time with a difference. We had a celebratory lunch at a café rented by the local Anglican parish. Aptly named **Loaves and Fishes** it is used for services on Sunday and run as a business during the week. Situated in Macandrew Bay it provided us with a scenic view as we exchanged memories of our experiences with SGM. One person spoke of how her participation in the Clearness Committee discernment process during a training event for spiritual directors had helped her discern the right path in ministry. Others spoke of how their lives had been enriched through the ecumenical education provided by SGM events.

In some way each of us had reasons to be thankful for our association with SGM. Nola Myles, our local co-ordinator, invited us to express our gratitude by writing a word or phrase on a balloon which we then let loose. We stood in the sunshine and watched as the balloons floated away in all directions. The symbolism was eloquent. What we had gained through our association with SGM had passed from us to so many others till like the balloons, gone from sight, we no longer know where the benefits had spread. Perhaps no more fitting symbol could be found to illustrate the significance of SGM for New Zealanders and others further afield.

Lengthier and somewhat more formal celebrations were held in Auckland on the first Sunday in March. A thanksgiving Eucharist was held in the Albany Presbyterian Church. This was the usual Sunday service which the parish generously shared with us. The service was led by Warren Deason, minister at Albany and one of the newest Workgroup members. It was fitting that Andrew Dunn, the present SGM Convenor, officiated at the Communion and that John Franklin, one of founders and first Convenor, preached. It was also fitting that our celebrations should begin this way since Eucharist and prayer in all forms has been integral to SGM's work.

In the evening a sizeable group of people who had wide associations with our work shared a dinner at Albany Church. The tables were beautifully decorated by parish members who also served a lovely meal supplied by the local Thai Restaurant.

While there was much informal exchange of memories, at the conclusion of the meal John Franklin, one of the founders of SGM, who had come with his family from Palmerston North gave the early history – the beginnings in Gisbourne, the first retreat held in a farm house at Loisselle's Beach in October 1981 and subsequent retreats held at the Pastoral Centre in Palmerston North. John is a superb story teller, a gift which enabled us to see the rapid growth and development of something which had started with four people (John, Anne Hadfield, Shirley Pyper and Selwyn Jones) in a small New Zealand town. Andrew and Margaret Dunn, newly returned missionaries from Papua New Guinea, were among the retreatants in those early days in Palmerston North. They spoke movingly of how the retreat had affected them, a sentiment obviously shared by others present. One of these was John North who told of his introduction to SGM through a suggested retreat to enable him to work with fellow Baptists. Mary Concannon continued the ecumenical story by her account of seemingly accidental meeting with Shirley Pyper and Selwyn Jones (both no longer with us) and Anne Hadfield (unable to be present). Marion Taylor, our first Registrar, cut the cake made by Margaret Dunn and iced attractively by Elaine Maisey.

A special vote of thanks is due to Andrew and Margaret Dunn who planned and organised the Auckland celebrations

Have you celebrated yet and thanked God for SGM's twentyone years? It's not too late. Get together with a few friends and say "Thank you, God" and "Happy birthday, SGM".

THE TAUTUKU WILDERNESS RETREAT EXPERIENCE *by Lyn Haines*

Lying in bed with my morning cup of coffee watching the sun rise over the hills, bell birds singing to welcome the morning, fantails flitting around in their morning dance; and Silence! Glorious Silence! – what more can one ask for?

That was my morning ritual recently on the Wilderness retreat at Tautuku in the Catlins. My initial attraction to this retreat was definitely the location. Being in the midst of any form of wilderness, in silence, had been a desire of mine for a while, but safety always prevented me from going bush alone. Needless to say when this retreat was advertised I was quickly on the list. I wasn't disappointed. The location was wonderful. The bush walks, the beach so close, the bird life, all of it beyond description.

To keep the cost as low as possible we stayed in an outdoor adventure centre built by the Otago Youth Trust primarily for use by school children but used by other groups outside school terms. Each of us chose a room which we occupied on a single basis – mine had 16 beds so I wasn't short on space! Most others were in one or two bed rooms. Needless to say I found my room wonderful. To keep the cost low we also supplied and cooked our own food. I imagined the chaos. 16-20 people cooking their meals in the kitchen, supposedly in silence – not a chance! A small price to pay for the opportunity to go on a retreat in this location. Well I was pleasantly surprised. Not only was silence maintained but the accommodation had three kitchens, so spread amongst us all we hardly saw each other preparing meals let alone getting in each other's way. It was just not an issue.

After my morning ritual, then what? The only planned activities were spiritual direction and worship in the evenings which varied slightly every evening but included readings, homily, reflection and Communion. My favourite evening worship was on the last evening - low lights, candles placed over a display depicting a rough road through sand and rocks and bushes! – readings from Scripture, silence and Communion given in a style that we went forward to serve ourselves receiving it directly from Jesus. It was a very powerful and moving worship time for myself and, I believe, for many others as well.

I must mention the focus for many of us – the wonderfully large open fire, with heaps of wood and lots of willing hands to light, to poke, to refuel, and, my specialty, to lie in front of! It was the centrepiece of our worship and, I venture to say, this was not only our planned worship but also our unplanned, in the midst of our silence.

The creativity of the directors, their sensitivity in creating silent worshipful space was obvious. On the opening night the team leader said he hoped that at the end of the retreat we could say we had encountered God in this place. Well we did! To put words on that encounter has the danger of trivialising it, reducing it in some way so I will say nothing else except WE DID!

The venue is booked again for 2003 and I for one am planning to return. How about joining me there?

THE TRANSITION FROM A DISCURSIVE WAY OF PRAYER TO CONTEMPLATION AND THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR'S ROLE AT THAT TIME *by Anne Oakley*

"Among spiritual masters in the Western tradition there is general agreement that perhaps at no other time in our spiritual journey do people need more the assistance of knowledgeable, experienced, and discerning spiritual guides than at the transition from a discursive way of praying to contemplation."¹

This statement caught my eye and sparked an exploration of this important transition.

Historical context

For the first fifteen centuries of the Christian era, contemplation enjoyed a specific meaning and was viewed positively. *Lectio divina*, the main method of prayer, began with reading and listening to scripture or sacred texts. Reflection on the text moved easily into spontaneous prayer then simplified into a state of resting in the presence of God. Contemplation was regarded as the normal fulfilment of prayer.

For various historical and societal reasons² *Lectio divina* fell into virtual disuse towards the end of the Middle ages and was replaced with systematised categories of "mental prayer". Discursive meditation, affective prayer (prayer of the heart), and contemplation (mystical prayer) became distinct, separate forms of prayer, each with its own aim, method and purpose. By the end of the sixteenth century contemplation was considered an extraordinary grace reserved for an elite few.

Contemplative prayer is receiving renewed attention in our time. The rediscovery of the integral teachings of John of the Cross and other masters of the spiritual life, and the post-World War II influence of Eastern spiritual disciplines have contributed to this. Today's trend towards contemplative prayer and life among people of diverse culture and

spiritual background suggests that it is mediating something of immense significance for our times. Deep silence is emerging as a primary mode of connecting with the Divine.

Clarification of terms

The terms meditation and contemplation are often used synonymously. I am using the word **meditation** to mean a discursive reasoning process in which words, events, etc., are prayerfully pondered with the object of drawing from them some personal meaning or moral. It is basically an activity of the intellect and reason, aided by grace.

Contemplation is basically a prayer and experience of pure faith; its central marks are stillness, simplicity, silence, and darkness. Contemplation is the name we put on whatever means we use in order to turn within and go from our conscious, through our unconscious, into the experience of pure truth or God. It is a transformative rather than a passive experience.

Some people move into contemplation via the "gentle path" where, by gift or chosen spiritual discipline, they are able to give attention simply and easily to the encounter with God which arises in the emptiness rather than to anything which they may see as missing, taken away, or given up.

However, most people come to contemplation via the more painful and bewildering experience of involuntary loss – the dark night journey. Sandra Cronk, suggests that the "gentle way" may be a misnomer and that following any spiritual discipline with integrity and consistency will at some stage lead us to confront the broken places in ourselves that block us from loving God, self and others.³

"The term "**dark night**" is often used wrongly to mean any form of dryness. St. John is quite clear that this is not a passing phase, but a definite and irreversible crisis point in the evolution of the spiritual life."⁴

(See Keating for detail of Dark Nights)

Signs of transition⁵

John of the Cross presents three signs by which the praying Christian can recognise the onset of the transition to contemplative prayer.

1. The inability to meditate as before.
2. Lack of interest in ideas of God. (because the distinction between God in himself, and concepts of him, is now realised.)
3. Despite the inability to meditate and the lack of satisfaction in anything else, one is still attracted to solitary prayer – attentive, general and loving, but obscure: "passive attention". This is the most certain sign, because the first and second might be experienced due to depression or lack of earnestness.

How does this translate to the present day?

Directees in this transition often describe the following aspects of the experience:

- Distress that something has gone wrong with their prayer. It doesn't work as it used to - seems a waste of time, boring.
- Guilt that they must be doing something wrong - backsliding, not trying hard enough.
- Feel sad, confused and fear losing their faith; tempted to give it all up.
- Feel lonely; unable to share the experience with church friends; doubt anyone will understand.
- Disenchantment and impatience with church life.
- Deep conflict with past awareness of service and duty to God.
- Scripture, which in the past was alive, now seems like "reading a telephone book".
- Feel a fraud, living a sham; giving impression of spiritual joy but empty inside.
- Despite all of this they feel strangely "drawn" and "held" and want to pray.

The "right" Spiritual Director.

A major factor for someone in the transition to contemplation is having the "right" director. One who:

- Understands enough of the subtlety of the directee's experience not to misguide them; not necessarily more "advanced", but sensitive and learned enough to provide patient, prayerful support. "The more subtle and incommunicable your experience, the more intuitively perceptive and empathetic your spiritual friend needs to be."⁶
- Is aware of the different spiritual paths and can help a directee move appropriately (without guilt or pressure).
- Has basic humility (one cannot presume to know more than one does without becoming dangerous), willingness to travel the road regardless of the roughness and a willingness to allow spiritual guidance to come from God rather than trying to engineer it in any way.⁷
- Respects strict confidentiality and participates in regular supervision.
- Is qualified by faithful practice of contemplative prayer and regular retreats to deepen their own experience of the path.

G. May states that a director with a solely kataphatic approach simply cannot provide apophatic guidance. Referral to another director should be explored in supervision if there is uncertainty about supporting a contemplative path.

THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR

Discerning

The darkness and confusion of the transition can be faced as a challenge to a more mature faith and practice rather than a problem to be diagnosed and solved. However, careful discernment is required to see if prayer is being blocked because of other factors such as stress, grief, trauma, sinfulness etc.

Distinguishing the "dark night" from clinical depression also takes some sensitivity. (See May for details).⁸ Clinical depression needs professional diagnosis and treatment whether a person is in the "dark night" or not.

Naming the transition; reassuring; listening; affirming; interpreting

The director helps by:

- Naming the transition for what it is; a time of movement from one stage to another, a time of change and transformation; a time to be still, patient, and open.
- Helping the directee to understand absence in the context of normal growth patterns and the context of the Christian tradition.
- Listening to the experience of loss that accompanies self-transcendence and new growth. Listening gives the directee an opportunity to express guilt, confusion, fear and vulnerability. Listening also for treasure which will gradually emerge in the darkness: the growing discovery of the expansiveness of God; a deepening sense of life and love as sheer gift; a renewed sense of Mystery; a shift from presumption to reverence; a clearer sense of the interconnectedness of all life; a sharper sense of engagement with life.⁹
- Exploring ways of being gentle/nurturing and assertive/protective of the directee's needs. This is important when moving from busyness into solitude.
- Encourage the directee to find their own, authentic voice and language to express their experience. They may use the language of the senses, movement, nature, sexual love, pure meeting, agape love, unity consciousness, or abiding.¹⁰
- Appreciating and "holding" in reverence the art, poetry, music or other creative work which directees use as an expression of their frustrations, desires and experiences.
- Dreamwork may be helpful. Dream images at transition times are often those which relate to death, birth, rearrangement and journeying. The image of moving houses is common. Some images of the inward journey include cave, well, forest, womb, cocoon, desert, tunnel, black hole, underground, seeds in soil, roots of trees. Our images are unique, but common images of coming to wholeness for people in the 2/3/4 Enneagram space include nest, vessel, cup or inner home. For 5/6/7s the image of step by step, day by day journeying is important. For 8/9/1s it is that of yielding to a Being who is clearly in charge e.g. moving one's hand on the rudder of a sailboat in order to join personal energy with that of the wind.¹¹
- Through appreciating personality type, directors can gain understanding of the more effective approaches to direction and are better able to avoid those which encourage people in their particular compulsions. For example, an Enneagram Three whose persona needs to be positive, will resist the dark night process, while an Enneagram Four with a melancholy streak may enter too much into the pain. Extroverts will come to contemplation via a very different route and rhythm from introverts. Too much silence and reflection can lead to boredom and emptiness for the extrovert. They need to talk and even more to interact.¹²

Waiting; acceptance; encouragement

The director needs to patiently give time and space to the present reality.

Patterns and rhythms may emerge – often alternation between turmoil and peace. The director encourages an attitude of availability, following the attraction to interior silence, simply staying in loving attentiveness and when it is possible to meditate again to do so.

Kenneth Leech adds that because the mind has become inactive *in* prayer, it needs to be more consistently nourished *outside* prayer by study, reading and discussion which build up the contemplative outlook. "The mind is not abandoned: but in the actual work of prayer it is not central."¹³

Balance

The director needs to be alert that the directee maintains a balance of inner and outer activities. A purely apophatic prayer may stagnate without some conceptual input through spiritual reading, liturgy or teaching that speaks to the contemplative person's state of prayer. He/she encourages a balance of intellectual, affective and intuitive elements in prayer. "Contemplative prayer frees us from *attachment* to the use of our faculties in going to God, not from their use."¹⁴

Also, contemplative prayer has to be manifested in daily life. The contemplative dimension of the gospel demands not just prayer alone or good deeds alone.

Guidance

John of the Cross urged directors not to get in God's way. Less is more. Rather than teaching techniques it is more a matter of encouraging in the directee an attitude of quiet availability, of a gentle continuous desire to be there for God in the silence, of being kind and gentle with themselves, rather than anxious to achieve success in prayer.¹⁵

However,¹⁶ Leech suggests that the rhythm, repetition, and even monotony of chant, rosary, mantra or litany are helpful. Psalms of protest, doubt, waiting and alienation may be useful for directees who are experiencing dark night pain.

Directees may need guidance in finding some practical "methods" such as centring prayer, Lectio Divina or in meditation using art, music or dance. There is a great deal of helpful written material on contemplative practice. (See bibliography of any of the books already mentioned). This assistance is offered while remembering that the first task is to be still, accept the reality and await the word of God. As Thomas Merton succinctly advises "keep still, and let Him do some work."¹⁷

Footnotes:

1. Carolyn Gratton, [The Art of Spiritual Guidance](#), p136.
2. See Thomas Keating, [Open Mind, Open Heart](#) for details.
3. Sandra Cronk, [Dark Night Journey](#), p35.
4. Kenneth Leech, [True Prayer: An Invitation to Christian Spirituality](#), p152.
5. Thelma Hall, [Too Deep for Words](#), p48 (summarised from John of the Cross' [The Ascent of Mt. Carmel](#), [The Dark Night](#), and [The Living Flame of Love](#))
6. Tilden Edwards, [Spiritual Friend](#), p111.
7. Gerald G. May, [Will and Spirit](#), p292.
8. Gerald G. May, [Care of Mind, Care of Spirit](#), p109-110.
9. Andrew and Margaret Dunn Seminar, [Deepening Prayer](#), 12 June, 1999.
10. Andrew and Margaret Dunn Seminar, [Deepening Prayer](#), 12 June, 1999.
11. Suzanne Zuercher, [Enneagram Spirituality](#), p89-91.
12. J. Neraas and H. Applewhite, [Extroverts and the Spiritual Life](#), Review for Religious, May-June 1989, p401-408.
13. Kenneth Leech, [True Prayer](#), p47.
14. Thomas Keating, [Intimacy With God](#), p105.
15. Peter Ball, [Growing Into Quiet](#), Presence 5.1, Jan 1999, p30.
16. Kenneth Leech, [Soul Friend](#), p185.
17. Thomas Merton, [New Seeds of Contemplation](#), p261.

UNITY & CONTEMPLATION

We believe that welcome progress has been made recently in overcoming the ancient divisions between Christian churches. The power of the Gospel has often been veiled by the failure of Christians to love one another and to celebrate diversity as a sign of the richness of unity that there is in Christ. We believe however, that a new era is opening. In these times there is less call for words and ceremonies and more need for the authentic spiritual knowledge that arises through the silence of contemplation.

The spiritual hunger and the widespread suspicion of religion in our society firmly points Christians to this depth dimension of their common faith. The contemplative dimension of the Gospel is not a speciality of particular churches or groups. It belongs to all and summons us all, through the signs of the times, to recover it. Nor is this contemplative dimension of faith to be identified only with the vocation of some to solitude & quiet. It applies equally to the life of good works, prophetic protest against injustice and the patient labour of peace making. Indeed, the integrity and vigour of the Christian life and its witness to the world depends upon the marriage of contemplation and action in the full experience of the mystery of God that passes understanding but is intimately known in daily acts of kindness.

If we cannot understand the silence of Christ we will not be able to understand his words, as an earlier Christian teacher asserted. Because we are convinced of the urgent need to recover the contemplative dimension in our prayer, worship and ministries, we have committed ourselves to search for ways in which this can be better appreciated by all Christians and by the whole of society. The new Christian Meditation Centre at St Mark's Myddleton Square is an ecumenical sign of this resolve to co-operate at that deeper level where unity in Christ is already achieved.

We invite our brothers and sisters in all churches to reflect on and join in this contemplative endeavour and so enrich its vision with their own special insights and traditions.

We believe too that in this age of violence and terror, friendship between the world religions is an indispensable foundation for the work for global peace and justice. If this friendship is to be sincere and transformative it also must be rooted in that experience of silence, stillness and simplicity that is the common ground of contemplation.

If we really can achieve a fuller harmony between contemplation and action in this way we will surely better fulfil the greater desire of Christ that we "may all be one".

Signed by:

- The Rt Hon & Rt Rev'd Richard Chartres, *The Anglican Bishop of London*
- Dom Laurence Freeman OSB, *The World Community for Christian Meditation*
- His Eminence Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, *Archbishop of Westminster*
- Rev Dr Leslie Griffiths, *Supt. Minister of Wesley's Chapel and Leysian Centre*
- Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Gt. Britain.

CONFESSION

Say to our Lord, 'Penetrate these deep murky corners where we hide memories, and tendencies on which we do not care to look, but which we will not disinter, and yield freely to you, then you may purify and transmute them. The persistent buried grudge, the half acknowledged enmity which is still smouldering; bitterness of that loss we have not turned into sacrifice, the private comforts we cling to, the secret fear of failure which saps our initiative and is really inverted pride; the pessimism which is an insult to your joy. Lord, we bring these to you, and we review them with shame and penitence in your steadfast light.'

Evelyn Underhill

BOOK REVIEWS

WHEN GOD DOESN'T HEAL NOW

by Larry Keefauver

Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville. 2000

Reviewed by Lionel Brown

This book seeks to deal with the questions that arise when people full of faith in the healing power of God are not healed when they have received prayer for healing. The writer presents the case of two women with severe cancers. Both have implicit faith that God can heal them; one is healed while the other dies. Why is this? Keefauver's basic thesis is that God heals both in time and eternity. All people of faith are healed spiritually but some may not receive physical healing until after death. Spiritual healing is far more important than physical healing. Out of this come three critical questions which he seeks to answer:

- Is it possible to walk by faith through pain, suffering, and even death?
- Can one believe in the God who Heals even if healing isn't manifested now?
- Are you trusting for your healing or trusting the healer?

He goes on to deal with some of the myths of healing. These are things that people believe about healing. They have some truth in them, but are not universally true. He deals with:

- the myth of being healed by faith
- the myth of being healed by prayer
- the myth of disease being God's punishment
- the myth of being touched by the right person

The writer then goes on to deal with God's timing and sovereignty and God's ways of walking by faith. This is a book that many people who have questions about the healing ministry should find very helpful. I found my copy in a Manna Bookshop.

A CITY POSSESSED The Christchurch Civic Creche Case - Child Abuse, Gender Politics and the Law by Lynley Hood.

Longacre Press 2001. Dunedin. pp 672. \$59.00

Reviewed by Ian Stephenson

A City Possessed is a carefully researched and extensively documented record of the Christchurch Civic Creche Case. Lynley Hood's analyses of the events of this case are discussed within a historical, sociological and legal context. Before publication in 2001 *A City Possessed* was extensively previewed in the media and it was widely reviewed subsequently.

Why draw readers' attention to this book again. Here are three reasons:

Firstly, it deals with much wider issues for our society than the "Peter Ellis" case. Despite the prediction of some reviewers, this book has not provoked the anticipated public reactions. The Justice Minister, Phil Goff, has been reported as saying that he would not read this book – the legal system had taken its full course. Yet well-argued rebuttals could have been expected. The analysis and critical conclusions regarding the procedures, as well as judgements made of the behaviours of some of the people involved are evocative. Part of the answer may lie in the author's discussion of the balance between the government in power and the bureaucracy at large, but especially the police and judiciary.

Secondly, it is possible for the professional person dealing with cases of sexual abuse – child care workers, social workers, sexual abuse counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, police, lawyers, members of the judiciary, etc – to read through the extensive documentation and reach their own conclusions on the information provided. Would you have acted in this way? Do you agree with Hood's analysis and conclusions?

Thirdly, any adult citizen who could be called for jury service can read this book and develop some understanding of our current laws with regard to sexual abuse, their interpretation and the procedures used in giving evidence. You might then ask yourself what you would have done had you been a juror on this case.

A thought provoking read for all, including spiritual directors ... but set aside sufficient time to cope with the 672 pages of text and references!

This book has won a place in the finals of the Montana Book Awards, Historical Section, June 2002.

THE COSMIC DANCE An Invitation to Experience Our Oneness

By Joyce Rupp. Art by Mary Southard

Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545. 2002. pp 128 - hardcover US\$25.00

Reviewed by Aileen Martin RSM

This is a beautifully crafted book. There are eight chapters each with full colour art, exquisite poetry and powerful prose. It is a book to pause with, to contemplate with, to savour. It becomes "easy for us to experience our unity with each other and all of life." At the same time we are called to "Live compassionately with each person and particle of creation" and challenged to "hear the pain of the planet and care for the earth and all its inhabitants." As our awareness and enjoyment of the cosmic dance is heightened so is our hope in inherent goodness. I recommend Joyce's thirteenth book highly. It can be used to pray with, to deepen our cosmic awareness for discussion or simply to enjoy.

Joyce Rupp is internationally known for her work as author, spiritual midwife, retreat and conference speaker. Mary Southard is probably best known as the creator of the Earth Calendar. She works as a visual artist, educator and student of the earth.

SGM NEWS

As you have read above we are celebrating 21 years of enriching the spiritual life and worship of congregations and people, so it was with a sense of joy and thanksgiving that we met in early March at Oasis, Albany Heights, for our first of two Workgroup meetings this year. It was good to share Sunday lunch with John and Trish Franklin and Marion Taylor all earlier members of the Workgroup. Anne Hadfield, one of the founders of SGM, is writing our story and hopes to publish her book around the end of the year.

We made a significant decision in accepting Andrew Dunn's resignation as Workgroup Convenor and member and Trust Chairman, and have set about the search for a replacement for Andrew. He wants more time for writing and for developing the Oasis Retreat and Study Centre. Andrew will continue to edit **Refresh** for a few more issues.

The transition of Co-ordinator of our Training Programme from Mary Concannon to Margaret Dunn to Sue Pickering has gone smoothly. We have 16 first year trainees and 19 in their second year. This year for the first time the Year One Training Event at Waikanae will be a full week enabling a more relaxed time and greater depth and variety in themes offered.

Our two Supervision Training Workshops (Dunedin last year and Albany in February this year) have extended the skills of participants. We hope to repeat these in the future.

Refresh has been well received and we continue to hear from readers who have found it very encouraging. For example, "I feel a sense of homecoming as I read ... and discover other people with the same desires and longings for a contemplative lifestyle"; and "The Summer 2001 issue *Soul-Tending* is wonderful", from recent arrivals from South Africa. We have appointed Warren Deason, Margaret Dunn, David Crawley and Andrew Dunn as our Editorial Group.

Our website (www.sgm-org.nz) now has a new look and greater facility for moving around within it and to related sites. It is receiving a significant number of "strikes".

Finances are stable and we are gratified by the response both to donations for **Refresh** and for the general work of SGM. We enclose another donation form in this issue for your prayerful consideration. Every donation however large or small is very useful and we thank all who support this faith venture in this way. Thankyou for your support.

Carole Hunt, our Administrator, and Richard have bought a home in Plimmerton, north of Wellington, nearer to family members and made the shift in May. Carole's new address and phone number are listed in the front of the Journal.

Spiritual Directors' Training Programme 2003 – 2004

This comprehensive, proven, 2 year course is open to Christians of any denomination. It offers :

- Systematic study of spiritual direction
- Regular training events conducted by an ecumenical team of qualified leaders
- Supervised practical experience

For details contact the Co-ordinator:

Rev. Sue Pickering , 83 Vivian St, New Plymouth, Ph/fax (06) 759 2331
E.mail : sgmtp@xtra.co.nz or visit our website : www.sgm-nz.org

Applications close 31st August 2002.

THE SGM STORY

Anne Hadfield, who is writing the SGM story, would like responses from those who have been helped by SGM Retreats and other activities. She is inviting answers to the following two questions. "Your comments would need to be publishable. Please indicate whether you are happy for your name to be used or if you would prefer to be *anon.*"

Question 1: What is the most important grace (learning, gift, experience) you have received personally through the work of SGM?

Question 2: What in your opinion is the greatest gift (achievement, contribution) that SGM has given to Aotearoa New Zealand?

Send to Anne Hadfield: Email: soulscape@paradise.net.nz

17/8 Girton Tce, Mt Cook, Wellington.

BOOKS

William Barry

God and You – Prayer as Personal Relationship.

Paulist PB 1987. pp 83. \$20.50. A new printing of an important book.

Frederick Buechner

The Hungering Dark

Harper and Row PB 1985. pp 125.

One of Buechner's best statements on contemporary belief challenged by doubt. Many of Buecher's books are in local libraries.

Nan Burgess – editor

A Braided River of Faith – The lives of one hundred women

Published by Association of Presbyterian Women, PCANZ. 2002 pp 190. Brief sketches of the lives and faith of women in parishes and mission work, some historic and some present day.

Anthony Campbell S.J.

God First Loved Us – The Challenge of Accepting Unconditional Love.

Paulist Press 2000. pp 111. US\$9.95. A NZ writer (living in Australia) reflects on the challenges of accepting an unconditionally loving God.

Rose Mary Dougherty

Group Spiritual Direction – Community for Discernment

Paulist Press 1999. pp 122. \$31.00

Hugh Feiss OSB

Essential Monastic Wisdom – Writings on the Contemplative Life.

Foreword by Kathleen Norris. Harper PB 1999. pp 218. \$44.95. "An excellent guidebook to the literature of monasticism" – Norris.

Roger Housden

Retreat – Time Apart for Silence and Solitude.

A Labyrinth Book – Harper and Collins, London. 1995.

217 pages. Comparing and contrasting retreats in most of the world's spiritual traditions.

Available in some local libraries.

Joyce Huggett

Joy To The World

Eagle PB. 2001. pp 220. \$29.95. Reflections and meditations on the story and characters of the Gospel narratives of Christmas.

Simon Peter Iredale

The Interior Mountain – Encountering God with the Desert Saints.

Abingdon. 2000. pp101 \$29.95.

Thomas Keating

The Human Condition – Contemplation and Transformation

Paulist Press 1999. pp 45

Kenneth Leech

Soul Friend – Spiritual Direction in the Modern World.

Moorehouse Publishing 2001. pp248. \$53.95. A new revised edition.

Bruce Prewer

Jesus Our Future – Prayers for the Twenty-first Century.

Open Book Publishers 1998. pp 144. \$19.95. Prayers with an Australian flavour for a wide range of worship themes and areas of devotion and life.

Joyce Rupp

Inviting God In – Scriptural Reflections and Prayers Throughout the Year.

Ave Maria Press. 2001. \$36.95. Invitations to daily prayer based around a scripture verse and personal comment.

John and Agnes Sturt

Celebrating Service – Loving and Serving our Neighbour.

Eagle PB. 2000. pp 223.

Carolyn Thomas

Will The Real God Please Stand Up – Healing our dysfunctional images of God.

Paulist Press. 1991. pp 76. \$16.95.

Jane Vennard

Be Still – Designing and Leading Contemplative Retreats.

Alban Institute. 1999. pp 110. \$35.00. A fresh guide, methods and resources for retreat leading.

CONTRIBUTORS

Ken Baker is a rest home chaplain and Presbyterian minister in Dunedin.

Lionel Brown is minister at St Andrew Presbyterian Church, Balclutha, and is involved with the Order of St Luke in Otago and Southland.

Colin Renouf from Gore enjoys a variety of work including forestry advising, parish visiting, gardening and spiritual direction.

Mary Concannon from Dunedin works as a spiritual director, supervisor and trainer of spiritual directors.

Peter Dunn is minister of Waipu Presbyterian Church, Northland, and is heavily involved with community projects and School Boards of Trustees.

Lyn Haines looks after the Sr Evelyn Retreat House at Sumner, Christchurch and is a spiritual director.

Lesley Hyde is an Anglican Rest Home chaplain and spiritual director in Hamilton.

Elizabeth Julian teaches at the Catholic Education Centre, Wellington, in theology, Scripture and spirituality.

Aileen Martin is a spiritual director, supervisor, retreat and workshop facilitator based at Mercy Spirituality Centre in Auckland.

John North is a Baptist pastor working in spiritual direction and teaching English as a second language. John writes a monthly spiritual column for the NZ Baptist. He lives in Manurewa.

Anne Oakley works at Rotorua Hospital in medical lab science and as a spiritual director and supervisor.

Bruce Prewer is an Australian poet and writer of crunchy prayers.

Andrew Pritchard grows lily seedlings hydroponically at Raumati and also works as a spiritual director, supervisor and lecturer.

Barbara Sampson lives at Trentham where she writes the Salvation Army devotional guide **Words Of Life** and works as a spiritual director.

Maggie Smith is an Anglican priest (retired from parish work) and lives near Hororata in Canterbury where, with her husband, she is developing a place of retreat on their farm. She also leads retreats and works as a spiritual director.

Ian Stephenson is an educational psychologist and College of Education lecturer, now retired and living in Glenfield.

Bill Wallace is a Methodist Presbyter and a hymn writer who promotes current hymnology through various publications in NZ, the USA and Britain. Bill lives in Christchurch where he and his wife are developing a prayer garden.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

Wherever rules matter most and people take second place,
we have darkness, even if they are divinely warranted in Scripture. Obsession with observance is a characteristic of religion which makes it very dangerous. It is also at home when people read the Bible to "win" instead of as a testimony to divine compassion which puts people first. As the blind man might have said "Well, I don't understand much about all of that, but I know when I see people getting helped and I'll run with that!"

Bill Loder

Whenever we encounter
dry bones feelings
let us enter the valley of death
patiently and with hope.
Let us look for what or who has
stolen life from us,
and then give ourselves to
the Breath-Maker, the Life-Giver.
Let us trust that this
experience will draw us more
deeply into the heart of God
where we find our true selves.

	<p>Joyce Rupp</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">To return violence for violence does nothing but intensify the existence of violence and evil in the universe. Someone must have the sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chains of violence and hate.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Martin Luther King</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A living faith in God requires/invites us to ask questions of how things are now - to not be satisfied with how things are now, but to be welcoming of the thing that God is already doing, in our lives, our church, our community, our world. We join in this work when we ask the question, and become restless.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John Heberton</p>
<p>We bring to the table not just the stories of triumph and laughter but confessions of failure and uncertainty. We gather at the table not only with people with whom we are comfortable but also with those with whom we feel discord and difference. We are inviting the stranger not to a fellowship that magically dispels the pain and suffering of life, but to a community that is learning that each one's gifts build up the Body and each one's burdens are lighter when shared.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Kate Cudlipp</p>	<p>If I were called upon to state in a few words the essence of everything I was trying to say both as a novelist and as a preacher, it would be something like this: Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Frederick Buechner</p>

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