

Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal



Autumn 2020 — Volume 4.3

*A quarterly journal for debate on current issues
in the Anglican Communion and beyond*

Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal

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EDITORIAL

The Autumn 2020 issue of the *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal* lends attention to pilgrimage. The College of Bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church has designated 2021 a [Year of Provincial Pilgrimage](#). The Rt Revd **Anne Dyer**, Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney, is the lead bishop in this initiative. Bishop Anne says: ‘In this designated year of pilgrimage we will be encouraging as many people as possible to make a holy journey of some kind. This can include taking part in an organised pilgrimage or spending time individually or in groups simply focussing on our own spiritual journeys.’

The Year of Pilgrimage was announced prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is unclear how the Year will pan out in 2021. Nonetheless, this issue is conceived as a resource for all who consider pilgrimage in one way or another. It includes papers from a Conference at the Church of St Margaret of Scotland, Aberdeen, in September 2018. The Conference was organized by the [Church in Society Committee](#) of the Scottish Episcopal Church. The aims of the Conference were to review the history of pilgrimage in the northern part of Scotland, to assess its contribution to Scottish heritage and culture, and to look ahead to how it might continue to contribute to the development and maintenance of Christianity in Scotland. To those papers — originally presented by **David Atkinson, Emsley Nimmo, John MacFarlane, Stuart Little, Nick Cooke, Alasdair Coles, Richard Murray and Wendy Lloyd** — this issue adds a paper by **Richard Tiplady** who considers the blessings of mountain pilgrimages.

The *Journal* hopes to continue to publish on the topic of pilgrimage in its Winter 2020 issue and throughout 2021. It also hopes, in addition to its [Summer 2020 issue](#), to continue to be a resource regarding church, ministry and the coronavirus. To that end, this issue concludes with an article by **Rafael Vilaça Epifany Costa**, of the Anglican Church of Brazil, regarding online councils and new ways of church practice in these challenging times.

O Almighty and merciful God, with whom are the issues of life and death: Grant us, we beseech thee, help and deliverance in this time of grievous sickness and mortality, and sanctify to us this affliction, that in our sore distress we may turn our hearts unto thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Scottish Book of Common Prayer)

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AUTISM AND LITURGY

A special request regarding a research project on autism and liturgy

[Dr Léon van Ommen](#) needs your help for a research project on autism and liturgy.

Léon is a lecturer at the University of Aberdeen, a member of [St Ninian's Church](#) (Aberdeen) and a member of the [Liturgy Committee of the Faith and Order Board](#).

Léon is conducting a research project on autism and liturgy. He is looking for participants. If you (self-)identify as autistic/on the autism spectrum and are willing to share your experience of worship and liturgy, please get in touch with him at leon.vanommen@abdn.ac.uk. People anywhere on the autism spectrum, including non-verbal, and of all ages, are welcome to join.

The project is based at the Centre for the Study of Autism and Christian Community, at the University of Aberdeen. Ethical permission has been obtained from the University. Please email Léon for more information, he would love to hear from you.

PROFESSOR DONALD M. MACKINNON

A special request regarding the late Professor Donald M. MacKinnon

Dr André Muller, who is working on an intellectual biography of Professor Donald M. MacKinnon (1913–94), would be very interested to hear from anyone who knew the Scottish philosophical theologian, or heard him lecture or preach, or corresponded with him, or has any information about him.

André may be contacted via email (mulan398@gmail.co.nz) or post (14a Arnot Ave, Clouston Park, Upper Hutt, 5018, New Zealand).

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Revised Friday 18 September 2020

Pilgrimage: A Contemporary Approach to Faith, Heritage and the Issues of Our Time

DAVID ATKINSON

Former Convener, Church and Society Committee
of the Faith and Order Board

Pilgrimage is an ancient activity. It has been practised by many faiths. The first book of the Bible, Genesis, contains the stories of what would now be classed as pilgrim journeys by the patriarchs such as Abram. Successive chapters of the Bible detail more and more such journeys such as that by Ruth and Naomi. The Gospel of Matthew records the pilgrimage of the wise men to find the infant Christ. Our Saviour himself made a series of pilgrim visits to Jerusalem. The book of Acts of the Apostles perhaps contains the largest record of pilgrim journeys of this type.

Examining these journeys causes us to ask the question 'What is pilgrimage?' This leads to subsidiary questions such as:

- Has it always been the same?
- Must it always involve journeys taking several days?
- Does pilgrimage now need to follow the same model as in the past?
- Can pilgrimage be used as a means of involving those in our communities who are not attracted by the current church model?
- How might we distinguish pilgrimage from a pleasant walk?

All of these questions were raised in 2010 at the time of the preparatory work, which led to the establishment of the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum in 2012.

Elements of its history

For many of us mention of pilgrimage causes us to remember time engaging with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. A modern translation¹ of the journey set in the late fourteenth century describes it thus:

They set off on an April morning with the rain dripping from the branches. The sunlight made the leaves shine and they were glad to be on their way – priests, nuns, tradesmen, men from the

¹ Geraldine McCaughrean, *The Canterbury Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

city and up from the country, all pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. To pass the long journey they told each other stories which were written down by a pilgrim called Geoffrey Chaucer who called them the Canterbury Tales.

Canterbury Tales tells us much about pilgrimage at that time. It was to the resting place of the remains of a saint, St Thomas Becket. Pilgrims travelled to visit the site in groups mainly for safety but also for the company and for what could be learned from fellow travellers. It was clear that most did it to put themselves right with God. The conclusion of the Prologue ends with the narrator's words:

I wouldn't like you to think that I was looking forward more to the stories than to visiting the shrine of holy St Thomas but there is more to be said for pilgrimages than just seeing a holy place. You often meet such extraordinary people on the way.

All of these contribute historical context to pilgrimage today. St Thomas Becket continues to draw pilgrims to Canterbury. In 2016 we were present at Canterbury on an occasion marking the time when the bones of St Thomas were moved from where he was murdered to elsewhere in the cathedral. It was also an ecumenical occasion when the Vatican presented the cathedral with a finger bone of Pope Gregory the Great and when interesting discussions about pilgrimage and unity were held with the Papal Nuncio.

A Scottish view

In Scotland we have an alternative model, James IV, to assess. The ascension of James to the throne of Scotland was linked to the murder of his father James III and as a penance he wore an iron chain around his waist and made regular pilgrimages to the shrines of St Ninian at Whithorn and St Duthac at Tain. While these journeys were to sites associated with the saints he nevertheless was accompanied by members of his court and by minstrels and entertainers and the journeys thus allowed him to travel the kingdom dispensing justice. A pilgrimage of this type was good news for the towns and villages which it visited, as the king's party needed accommodation, food and all the necessities of journeying at that time. The king's pilgrimage stimulated economic activity. Pilgrimage was endorsed by royalty, was important to connecting the kingdom and involved both pilgrims and those whose livelihoods depended on the activity.

The association of traditional pilgrimage with visits to sites linked with saints and with a traditional catholic approach to theology resulted in its being severely diminished as a result of the split with Rome in 1560 and

even more when the Church of Scotland, which initially had contained both Episcopalians and Presbyterians, came to be dominated by the latter in the time of James VII. The history of pilgrimage in Scotland is detailed here in papers from Emsley Nimmo and John MacFarlane.

It was as late as 2016 when the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland decided that pilgrimage was no longer heretical but something which could be accepted as part of a different approach to being church.

Recent developments

In 2009 the ACTS Scottish Churches Rural Group (SCRG) ran a conference which looked ahead to how it envisaged rural Scotland being in 2025.² Pilgrimage came up as an element in a presentation on faith tourism. Pilgrimage also came up as important in the work of the SEC's Rural Commission which reported to General Synod in 2010³ and recommended work on pilgrimage as important to both the rural church and rural communities. In 2011 as a consequence of these discussions an event to explore the role of pilgrimage in today's society was held in the Scottish Parliament with the support of Rosanna Cunningham MSP (SNP), Robin Harper MSP (Green) and Mike Rumbles MSP (Lib Dem). This identified the contribution pilgrimage could make to health and the economy.

The 2011 event was followed up by a conference in Edinburgh, which explored the questions of the nature of faith, and again of 'what is pilgrimage'? In a keynote address to the conference Peter Stanford, the former editor of the *Catholic Herald*, said:

Whenever I am in the vicinity of Waterden Church I make a Pilgrimage there. I use the word pilgrimage deliberately. This is not just a ramble into the countryside. Waterden is for me a sacred spot a verdict I reached instinctively long before I tried to analyse what it really meant. When I did, I came up with three factors. First what draws me back, time and time again, is the silence. Then there is the mystery. What clinches it for me is when around this beautiful church I am aware of an unformed presence hovering at the edge of my senses. The complete disconnect of Waterden with the modern world gives me a sense when here of walking in the footsteps of people of faith. Attempting to provide evidence that there is a God can have the opposite effect. Time honoured proofs no longer work. But

² ACTS Rural Futures Conference (2009) accessible on the ACTS web site.

³ SEC Rural Commission, 'Being the rural church in 2025' (2010). Report of the March 2010 Inverurie Conference, SEC, Edinburgh.

people still yearn for there to be something beyond the narrow confines of the here and now, of this life, of the consumerism, of the relative values of this world. The idea of people setting off, not to verify but simply to kneel where prayer was once valid is the starting point for pilgrimage.⁴

Since that conference the SCRG has continued its interest in pilgrimage and has on several occasions featured pilgrimage as the principal focus of its presence at the Royal Highland Show. In 2011 this led to the signing of a joint accord on pilgrimage by the leaders of the major Christian denominations in Scotland and by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs of the Scottish Government. As part of the event, signatories were asked to identify a place in Scotland which was special to them. Cardinal Keith O'Brien selected Whithorn, while Richard Lochhead from the Scottish Government went for Findhorn. A statement accompanying the signing said:

The Scottish Pilgrimage Pathways are ancient routes where people have journeyed for centuries trying to make sense of faith and life. We are all on a journey but all too often our lives are too busy or too stressful for us to draw breath and think about where we are going and what is important to us. So gift yourself some time to be still, to pause and to reflect. Where are you going? Where have you come from? What places are special to you? What people have accompanied you? Where do you feel most fully human, fully alive?

A future vision for pilgrimage

The 2016 Scottish Churches Census revealed a further fall in the numbers in Scotland attending traditional Sunday worship.⁵ However assessing the results of this census the SCRG found that, masked by the fall, there had been real growth in other forms of spiritual and religious practice such as pilgrimage.⁶ Pilgrimage was seen as an approach able to reach out to non-churchgoers, to families and to the younger members of society who were currently missing from our established churches.

The 2011 Edinburgh ACTS conference had a result beyond mere greater understanding. It led, in 2012, to the establishment of the Scottish

⁴ Peter Stanford, *The Extra Mile* (London: Continuum, 2010).

⁵ Peter Brierley, *Growth Amidst Decline* (Tonbridge, Kent: ADBC Publishers, 2017).

⁶ SCRG, *Hope in the Rural Church: Reflections on the Scottish Churches Census* (Stirling: ACTS, 2018).

Pilgrim Routes Forum (SPRF), which has since that date held two meetings on pilgrimage each year and which now has close to 100 organizational and individual members.⁷ The work of the SPRF is detailed in this volume in a paper from Nick Cook who has been its secretary since its formation. The purpose of the SPRF has been to revive Scotland's pilgrimage heritage by the establishment/re-establishment of walking and cycling pilgrimage routes over much of Scotland. At the conference Stuart Little discussed the recently revived St Magnus Way in Orkney, which is providing information as to how new routes can be established and resourced.

A series of walks are thus now being established many of which recreate traditional pilgrimages. A good example is the St Cuthbert's way, which connects Melrose in Scotland with Lindisfarne in Northumberland.⁸ In her Introduction to the volume on the St Cuthbert's Way by Mary Low, Mary Grey emphasizes the importance of the connection between land and faith and the value of pilgrimage both to those of faith and to those beyond faith and the need for searching and yearning. She makes the connection between pilgrimage and ecological sensitivity:

Joy in the Devine revealed through the creatures of earth, sea and sky was common to the early Celtic and Anglo-Saxon saints. At a time of severe crisis in the environment walking can make real the sacredness of water, of trees, of the struggle of monks and poor farmers to sow and harvest their crops and the kindness they display in dealing with birds and animals.

This emphasizes that a current take on pilgrimage can go beyond travelling to sites associated with saints.

Such an approach re-emphasizes the importance of the journey and extends the purpose of pilgrimage to include the development of a closer connection with God's creation. Routes being developed by SPRF thus include routes such as the one based on the Deeside way in Aberdeenshire which has few links to major saints but does have clear links to Celtic spirituality and even more to a real experience of the natural environment and natural features such as forest, geology and waterfalls. During the period 2014–2016 St Ternan's, Banchory, and Christ Church, Kincardine O'Neil, ran a programme exploring the contribution which pilgrimage could make in helping families and congregations discuss issues of science and faith. The programme involved a series of walks for Deeside congregations, led by a

⁷ SPRF, *Reviving Scotland's Pilgrimage Heritage* (2018), information leaflet available at www.sprf.org.uk.

⁸ Mary Low, *St Cuthbert's Way* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1999).

wildlife ranger, which linked local wildlife to spiritual issues. This has been seen as an alternative model for contemporary pilgrimage and a different answer to the question 'What is pilgrimage?' Must pilgrimage be linked to a single route or journey or can it be something wider than that? Ian Bradley who has been involved with pilgrimage issues for most of his long ministry recently addressed this question in a book on Argyll.⁹ He comments:

I find Argyll to have a more marked and distinctively spiritual landscape than anywhere else I have been. It is a landscape of presences and prophesies, of premonitions and imitations of mortality and immortality. Both its natural and its manmade features prompt spiritual stirrings of a kind and intensity that I have not experienced elsewhere. Within its bounds are located seven of my own top ten sacred places in the British Isles.

So, what is pilgrimage? It is more than just a walk in the countryside. Intentionality is important. Openness to change matters. Willingness to reflect is important. Currently it has clear links to government initiatives for a more physically active population. It also links to the potential economic viability of communities. Pilgrimage, as James IV showed, can stimulate the local economy and social enterprises, which allow churches to link with non-church bodies.¹⁰ It can also, as the paper here from Wendy Lloyd shows, link us to other issues of our time such as the plight of refugees.

So, what is pilgrimage? I think it's one of these things which we all have feeling for but which it is unhelpful to try to define exactly. It's an activity but it's also a state of mind and for me its ethos is best captured by the Buddhist philosopher Satish Kumar in the following words:

Walking is a way to attain consciousness. When I walk I touch the earth. When I'm walking I have time. I'm going slowly. I'm looking around. I can sense the sacred life all around me. Life is sacred. Honeybees are sacred. Trees are sacred. Life is sacrificing life to maintain life. That is what makes life sacred. If I am on horseback or even worse in a car or a train I see little. I do not connect.¹¹

⁹ Ian Bradley, *Argyll: The Making of a Spiritual Landscape* (Edinburgh: St Andrews Press, 2015).

¹⁰ Jerry Marshall, *Travels with an Inflatable Elephant* (Watford: Instant Apostle, 2013).

¹¹ Satish Kumar, *Earth Pilgrim* (Totness, Devon: Green Books, 2009).

[A History of Pilgrimage in the North](#)

[EMSLEY NIMMO](#)

Rector, St Margaret of Scotland, Aberdeen

You may be familiar with William Dalrymple, the Scottish travel writer, who in his book *From the Holy Mountain* in many ways challenged the contemporary Scottish mind with the concept of pilgrimage. His work published just over 20 years ago was a landmark. Philip Mansel in a review in *Country Life* wrote:

Neither the panache of William Dalrymple, nor the allure of the places he describes — Mount Athos, Damascus, the Egyptian desert — are what makes *From the Holy Mountain* so compelling. Its secret is the sense of history derived from the author's decision to base his journey on *The Spiritual Meadow*, a guide to the monasteries and holy men of the eastern Roman Empire, written in the sixth century by the monk John Moschos. Following the tracks, often to the same churches, the author travels through the Levant, listening to the prayers and fears of the region's Christians [...] Dalrymple describes his encounters with monks and murderers with a combination of humour and scholarship.¹

For Dalrymple it was to be John Mochos who would lead him on, eastwards to Constantinople and Anatolia, then southwards to the Nile and thence, if it would still be possible, to the Great Kharga Oasis, once the southern frontier of Byzantium.² And so began his adventure and pilgrimage is surely about adventure. Whatever pilgrimage is, William caught it.

A scriptural foundation

Let us first repair to the Old Testament to try and find the origins of pilgrimage. Bruce Chatwin in his book *The Songlines* has claimed that it goes back to Cain and Abel. What do the names mean?

Abel, in whose death the Church Fathers saw the martyrdom of Christ prefigured, was a keeper of sheep. Cain was a settled

¹ W. Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain* (London: Flamingo, 1997), review pages.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4

farmer. Abel was the favourite of God, because Jahweh himself was a 'God of the Way' whose restlessness precluded other Gods. Yet Cain, who would build the first city, was promised dominion over him. A verse of the Midrash, commenting on the quarrel, says that the sons of Adam inherited an equal division of the world; Cain the ownership of all land. Abel of all living creatures-whereupon Cain accused Abel of trespass.

The names of the brothers are matched as a pair of opposites. Abel comes from the Hebrew 'hebel', meaning 'breath' or 'vapour'; anything that lives and moves and is transient, including his own life. The root of 'Cain' appears to be the verb 'kanah': to 'acquire', 'get', own property' and so 'rule' or 'subjugate'. 'Cain' also means 'metal-smith'. And since in several languages-even Chinese- the words for 'violence' and 'subjugation' are linked to the discovery of metal, it is perhaps the destiny of Cain and his descendants to practise the black arts of technology.

A possible synopsis for the murder: Cain is a painstaking fellow, bent double from constant digging. The day is hot and cloudless. Eagles are floating high above in the blue. The last of the snowmelt still cascades down the valley, but the hillsides are already brown and parched. Flies cluster at the corners of his eyes. He wipes the sweat from his forehead and resumes his work. His hoe has a wooden handle, with a stone blade hafted on to it. Somewhere, higher up on the slope, Abel is resting in the cool of a rock. He trills his flute again and again, the same insistent trills. Cain pauses to listen. Stiffly, he straightens his back. Then raising his hand against the glare, he peers at his fields along the stream. The sheep have trampled his morning's work. Without having time to think, he breaks into a run. A less excusable version of the story says that Cain lay in ambush for Abel and heaved a rock on to his head — in which case killing was the fruit of brewed-up bitterness and envy: the envy of the prisoner for the freedom of open spaces.

Jahweh allows Cain to make atonement, only if he pays the price. He denies him the 'fruits of the earth' and forces him to wander 'a fugitive and a vagabond' in the Land of Nod: 'Nod' meaning 'wilderness' or 'desert', where Abel once wandered before him. 'Travel' same word as 'travail' — 'bodily or mental labour', 'toil, especially of a painful oppressive nature', 'exertion', 'hardship', 'suffering'. A 'journey'.

'Alone and amid the nations', masters of the raid, avid for increase yet disgusted by possessions, driven by the fantasy of all travellers to pine for a stable home — no people but the Jews have ever felt more keenly the moral

ambiguities of settlement. Their God is a projection of their perplexity. Their book — the Old Testament — may be read on one level at least, as a monumental dialogue between him and his People in the rights and wrongs of living in the Land.

Was it to be a land for fields and houses? A land of corn and wine? Of cities which they had not built and vineyards which they did not plant? Or was it to be a country of black tent and goat path? A nomad's country of milk and wild honey? A kingdom where the people 'may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more'? (II Samuel 7. 10). Or was it, as Heine surmised, 'a portable kingdom', which could only exist in men's hearts?

Jahweh in origin, is a God of the Way. His sanctuary is the mobile Ark, his house a tent, his altar a cairn of rough stones. And though he may promise his children a well-watered land — as blue and green are a Bedouin's favourite colours — he secretly desires for them the desert.

He leads them out of Egypt, away from the fleshpots and the overseer's lash, a journey of three days into the harsh clean air of Sinai. There he gives them their solemn feast, the Passover; a feast of roasted lamb and bitter herbs, of bread baked not in an oven but on a hot stone. And he commands them to eat it 'in haste', with shodden feet and sticks in hand, to remind them, for ever, that their vitality lies in movement.

He gives them their 'ring dance', the hag: dance that mimes the antics of goats on their spring migration 'as when one goeth with a pipe into the mountains of the Lord'. He appears in a burning bush and in a pillar of fire. He is everything that Egypt is not. Yet he will allow himself the doubtful honour of a temple — and regret it: 'They have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it' (Jeremiah 7. 30).

The ghettos of Eastern Europe were each a little patch of desert 'where no green thing would grow'. Jews were forbidden by their Christian masters to own land or houses; to grow their own vegetables or practice any trade but usury. Although they were allowed to gather sticks for firewood, they might not see a plank, in case this led to building.

The Gentiles, who imposed these restrictions, believed they were punishing the Jews for the crime of killing Christ — as Jahweh had punished Cain. Orthodox Jews believed that, by accepting them, they were re-living the journey through Sinai, when the people had found favour with their Lord.

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Hosea were nomadic revivalists who howled abuse at the decadence of civilization. By sinking roots in the land, by 'laying house and field to field', by turning the Temple into a sculpture gallery, the people had turned from their God.

How long, O Lord, how long? ... 'Until the cities be wasted...' The prophets looked to a Day of Restoration when the Jews would

return to a frugal asceticism of nomadic life. In the Vision of Isaiah they are promised a Saviour, whose name would be Emmanuel, and who would be a herdsman.³

So then, if this is the correct understanding, we can safely assume that in our exegesis of the story of Cain one goes into the desert to make reparation for sin. He makes a journey and has to suffer hardship and travail. This is partly the thinking behind pilgrimage, to make a journey for reparation.

'A wandering Aramean was my father' (Deuteronomy 26. 5). Ancient Israel when Abraham traverses the Fertile Crescent, when they go down into Egypt, comes out of exile in Egypt and crosses Sinai is a people set apart for Yahweh. They are a people 'on the road'. Yahweh in the Ark travels with them. The prophets proclaim against the 'settled' desire of the people. The Ark of course was carried before them in battle. In a similar way the Scots carried their holy objects before them in battle. The Breac Beannach with relics of Columba carried at Bannockburn, the Crystal Cross of St Andrews and a relic of St Fillan may have been used in the same way. The Black Rood of St Margaret was captured at Neville's Cross in 1346.

Yet when the Temple is established people go on pilgrimage to the Temple in Mount Zion. There are psalms of ascent and these (Psalms 120-134) are about going up to Jerusalem e.g. Psalm 122 'I was glad when they said unto me: we will go into the house of the Lord'. This of course is backed up in the New Testament, Acts 2. 5 — 'Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven'. *Tonus Peregrinus*: the chant of the pilgrims is as old as you can get. This is perhaps one of the oldest chants extant.⁴ It is not just about a change in the tones. It signifies something musically that takes us to the heart of our religion.

The word *hag* was reserved for the three great feasts of pilgrimage: the root means 'to dance, to turn around' cf. Psalm 107. 27— 'They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man: and are at their wits end' and the noun alludes to the processions and the dances which, in olden times, were part of the ritual of a pilgrimage. Even today, the Muslims call the pilgrimage to Mecca the Haj. The Jewish feasts (or in keeping with the theme I could describe these as 'pilgrimages') were: Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Tabernacles/Tents.

³ Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (Kindle), pp. 192–93.

⁴ A discussion with Roger Williams of Aberdeen University Music Department affirmed this assertion.

A Christian viewpoint

In the gospels Jesus was often in a lonely place. 'You [addressing the disciples] must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest awhile.' (Mark 6. 31). He was in the wilderness forty days and forty nights — he retreated to a lonely place — 'Jesus who could see that they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, escaped back to the hills by himself' (John 6. 15).

'Walk on!' were the last words of Christ to his disciples at the end of St Matthew's Gospel. John the Baptist and Jesus were well aware of the Essenes at Qumran and that community was expert at the business of the desert experience. I was there years ago. I can still feel the heat in that place: it must be one of the hottest places on God's earth.

In the early Christian Church there were two kinds of pilgrimage; to wander for God (*ambulare pro Deo*) in imitation of Christ or of Father Abraham who quit the city of Ur and went to live in a tent. The second was the 'penitential pilgrimage': in which criminals guilty of enormous crimes (*peccate enormis*) were required, in accordance with a fixed set of tariffs, to assume the role of travelling beggar — with hat, purse, baton and badge — and work out their salvation on the road. The idea that walking dissolved crimes of violence goes back to the wanderings enforced on Cain to atone for the murder of his brother.⁵

St Peter, about thirty years after the Crucifixion, made his way to Rome. His mission to establish the Christian Church in the capital of the Roman Empire. He of course ended up being crucified upside down on the Vatican Hill. Hence the erection of St Peter's by Constantine over the tomb of Peter.

Constantine's mother Helena, who is depicted upon the wooden sanctuary screen in the Holy Name Chapel, was the first Christian pilgrim. She travelled to a holy place in order to associate herself with what had happened there. The Emperor Hadrian had built a temple to Venus over the Crucifixion site. In order to obliterate Christianity, the Romans had marked the spot! Constantine ordered the temple to be destroyed, and it is popularly believed that Helena then found three wooden crosses in a rock cistern near to the hill of Calvary. Hence the origin of the relic of the true cross. St Margaret of Scotland supposedly possessed part of that in the black rood which is depicted by Sir Ninian Comper in the east window of the Holy Name Chapel. St Jerome was an early pilgrim in the Holy Land who for the last 35 years of his life went to live in Bethlehem. There is a stone cell underneath

⁵ Chatwin, *Songlines*, p. 180.

what is now the Church of the Nativity, where he learned Hebrew and translated the Scriptures into Latin, that is the Vulgate. Emphasizing like Helena the importance of place in pilgrimage — the sense of *locus iste*. I remember myself being on the Via Dolorosa and my companions there. Pilgrimage is about places and people!

Rome naturally was another site where Christians gathered and to which they made long and dangerous journeys to be where Peter had been martyred. I have twice descended into the Scavi in Rome, it is a 'game-changer', that again is what pilgrimage ought to be. Anglo-Saxon kings made pilgrimage to Rome as did Macbeth and despite what Shakespeare wrote was one of Scotland's finest kings. He met his end at Macbeth's Stone 300 meters to the south west of the Peel Ring of Lumphanan nae that far fae here.

Developments in Scotland

By the ninth century even Irish monks began to regard Rome as a place of some spiritual importance, in spite of their Celtic traditions. Another popular shrine of the same century was Santiago de Compostela on the northwest coast of Spain. The remains of St James the Apostle (the Greater) were taken to Spain, where he was buried. By the eighth century a French book of martyrs reveals that 'an extraordinary devotion paid by the inhabitants' to the bones of the apostle was evident at Santiago. Hence the beginning of that place as a locus for pilgrimage and devotional fervour.

It has been suggested that relics of St Andrew were brought by Acca the fugitive Bishop of Hexham to a Pictish king in Braemar in the 730s. Certainly the ancient church of Kindrochit (Braemar) was under the patronage of St Andrew. St Andrews itself became the centre of the Cult of St Andrew the design being to emulate St James at Compostela:

The planning of the burgh of St Andrews, founded in the twelfth century, with two major streets converging on the cathedral, resembles that of the Vatican Borgo, created in the ninth century.⁶

It has been proposed by Ian Campbell in his article in the *Innes Review* that:

St Andrews was consciously modelled on the Borgo, and that the major dimensions of the cathedral are taken from Old St Peter's and St John Lateran, as part of an unsuccessful campaign to have St Andrews recognised as an apostolic see like its rival

⁶ John von Lamont, *The Legends of Braemar* (Braemar Civic Amenities Trust, 2004), p. 8.

Compostela, the only other shrine in western Europe beyond Italy to claim the relics of an apostle.⁷

The Celtic period in Scottish Church History is a fascinating one but should not be looked at by modern eyes through rose-tinted spectacles. Professor Donald Meek, the retired Professor of Celtic at Aberdeen University, has written a thought-provoking examination of the Celtic Church in *The Quest for Celtic Christianity* and has succeeded in debunking much of the romantic nonsense that is currently plied as Celtic spirituality. He writes:

Romantic primitivism reveals itself in the present day in the desire of 'Celtic Christians' to make contact with the original locations of the faith in the British Isles, and especially in the Hebrides. As part of the wider tide of modern primitivists, seeking to 'get away from it all', they are aided in their request by the heritage and tourism industries. Such industries derive at least some of their power from the creation and maintenance of centres of pilgrimage and visitation which become very attractive to the popular mind as 'power points' at which Christianity entered the country. These 'power points' are unconsciously 'wired in' to the ideologies of the nineteenth century which imparted a potent image to the Celtic west. This image set it forever apart from the eastern and southern parts Germanic regions of the British Isles, and goes in some way to explaining why the Anglo-Saxon spiritual heritage of England (and Scotland too) has failed to kindle the same glow as 'Celtic Christianity'.⁸

The Irish Penitentials were strict in the extreme about sin, about sexual sin and sins of the heart. Columbanus claimed that humanity was 'unclean by nature'. For example, Meek continues:

A soul friend 'anam charaid' who walks with you in life is commonly reduced in popular writing to little more than a spiritual chum, in historical reality the confessor was regarded as a stringent physician of the soul, with a deep concern to cleanse the flesh, and to prepare it for readmission to the

⁷ Ian Campbell, 'Title of Article', *Innes Review*, 1, 64, pp. 1–22.

⁸ Donald E Meek, *The Quest for Celtic Christianity* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 2000), p. 56.

spiritual community here on earth, or ultimately to lessen the severity of the process of purification in the afterlife.⁹

The Penitentials recommended fasting for gluttony, abstinence and bread and water diets for sexual indulgence, for malicious talk it had to be counteracted by means of the opposite. Dietary restrictions were supplemented by pilgrimages, floggings, and recitations of the psalms in uncomfortable positions. Those guilty of heinous crimes e.g. homicide should be sent to Tiree or Oransay off Colonsay! All this:

Should be unpalatable for those trying to formulate a type of 'Celtic Christianity' which is incompatible with the aspiration of postmodernity. The 'grubby' side of human life conflicts with the desired romantic image of a comfortable 'Celtic' spirituality, designed for people who have lost the concept of sin.¹⁰

Changes in Scotland

By the late mediaeval period the whole panoply of Catholic religious devotion was in full swing in Scotland. Audrey Beth-Fitch in her posthumous work *The Search for Salvation. Lay Faith in Scotland 1480-1560* describes that faith as follows:

There can be no question that religion was of importance to the Scottish laity in the late Middle Ages, the provincial councils of the Scottish church in 1549, 1552 and 1559 testifying to the intensity of religious debate amongst certain segments of society, and the evidence from documentary records, literature and art revealing in which everyday life was imbued religious meaning. The function of saints and images, the nature of purgatory and hell, the Day of Judgement and the Eucharist, all were subject to intense scrutiny, and their nature and function in relation to salvation of great significance to Scots who sought spiritual worthiness which would bring them acceptance into heaven. Scotland was part of a general European upsurge in lay spirituality, which manifested itself in an increasing number of church foundations, as well as endowment of preacherships, enthusiasm for pilgrimages, saints and masses for the dead, and

⁹ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 98.

participation in processions and other expressions of corporate faith.¹¹

With reference to processions, the highlight of the Aberdeen social calendar were processions on St Nicholas day, Candlemas, the Annunciation, Corpus Christi and the Assumption.

Ninian Comper in his insistence on the incorporation of Sacrament Houses in his designs was following of course this veneration of the body and blood of Christ. Sacrament Houses being peculiar to the north east of Scotland except for one in St Andrews. All down to sea connections with Bruges and the Hanseatic League:

Corpus Christi Day, for instance, was marked in Aberdeen from at least 1440 by a dramatic performance: the origins of the cult of Corpus Christi lay in the Low Countries. Churches in Aberdeen were adorned with statues and artistic depictions of saints, such as Mary and Anne, who would have been familiar to foreigners as to locals. By 1436 the cathedral's assemblage of saintly artefacts included a hair of St Edmund of Abingdon, the bones of various saints associated with the middle east Catherine (probably of Alexandria), Helen, Isaac the Patriarch and Margaret (possibly of Antioch- and also Marian, Petrine and Pauline wares.¹²

Developments in Aberdeen

The oriental relics were perhaps collected by a pilgrim or a crusader who had ventured to the most holy of all sites, Palestine. The familiarity of Aberdeen society with the Holy Land is attested by the text *De Passagio ad terram sanctum*, which was stocked in the Cathedral library by 1464. Aberdeen clerics are known to have travelled afar. Bishop Alexander de Kininmund intended to go to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Thomas Becket at Canterbury England. In 1365, John Barbour (The father of the Scots leid) received an English safe conduct to visit St Denis, near Paris where the tombs of many of France's kings were to be found. Others went to Amiens where allegedly John the Baptist's head was kept. In 1445 Alexander Stephenson, who suffered from worms and sores on his feet, travelled to Canterbury. There he was miraculously cured and, after dancing joyously for

¹¹ Audrey Beth-Fitch, *The Search for Salvation. Lay Faith in Scotland 1480–1560* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009), p. 1.

¹² Dennison, Ditchburn and Lynch, *Aberdeen before 1800: A New History* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2002), p. 382.

three days, he expressed his gratitude for divine intervention by planning another pilgrimage — to Wilsnack in Germany, which rose to fame after miracles were reported at the local church in 1383. In Stephenson's actions we can identify two motives to explain the quite voluntary, yet extraordinary lengths to which medieval men and women went in their quest for God's grace, the belief in divine cure and the quest for miracles.¹³ Dare I say these were contacts which could not long survive the Reformation. Religion had become nationalized. It was an earlier form of Brexit!

Pilgrimage in and from Scotland

Within Scotland itself there were many places of pilgrimage. St Ninian's Shrine at Whithorn, St Kentigern at Glasgow, St Duthac at Tain, St Andrew's relics at St Andrews' Cathedral, St Margaret at Dunfermline, St Columba at Iona, St Columba's Relics at Dunkeld, St Fillan at Glendochart, St Adrian at May Island, St Magnus in Orkney. White Kirk and Holy Well of Our Lady, the Loretto Chapel at Musselburgh, St Triduana of Restalrig, to name but a few. The country was covered in Holy Wells and other sites associated with a panoply of saints. Religion and travelling went together. As you enter Aberdeen over the Brig o' Dee you cross a medieval structure built by Bishop Gavin Dunbar. The Latin inscription on the side of the bridge invites us to pray for him. At the city end of the bridge there once was a chapel to Our Lady where you went to do a puja having survived the journey from Stonehaven without being beaten up and robbed on the Causey Mounth! The small chapel contained a statue of the Virgin, Our Lady of Aberdeen, which had been carved in the north east of Scotland. It was hidden at the Reformation by the House of Gordon, left Scotland sixty years later and is now in Saint Maria de la Finistère in New Street, Brussels. It is now called Notre Dame du Bon Succès as opposed to Our Lady of Aberdeen and is the object of great devotion.

King James IV was following and enlarging traditions of royal patronage which reached back to the time of St Margaret of Scotland, and probably earlier. We know of no other Scottish king who invested as much time, expense and effort in pilgrimage as he did. Pilgrimage featured in his upbringing as his mother Anne of Denmark was at Whithorn in 1473 soon after his birth. James III had shown interest in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In 1507 James IV was considering a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He was already specially favoured by Pope Julius II having been given the Sword of State. He even thought of leading a crusade. Robert the Bruce's heart had been in battle against the Turks. James also held private devotion to St James of Compostela. He is depicted in full pilgrim's garb in his Flemish Book of

¹³ Ibid., pp. 364–65.

Hours attended by St James. He is known to have sent a silver ship to the shrine of his patron saint. However, he never made Compostela himself. James V spent money on reliquaries for the bones of St Duthac and St Adrian which he kept in his possession. Rome was a popular pilgrimage destination for clerics, and a St Petr's pilgrim badge has been found at Whithorn and at Finlaggan.

Scots could gain passage on one of the many merchant vessels sailing from east coast ports to Bruges. Middleburg was the Scots port on the Continent. Early spring would have been a popular time, arriving in Rome for Holy Week and Easter. A national hospice was created at Santa Andrea delle Fratte. Pilgrims would have included the wonders of Rome in their sightseeing itinerary. One group visited the San Callisto catacombs on the Via Appia, and left behind graffiti on the walls which read 'some Scots have been here' 1467.¹⁴ Of course, some Scots were in Rome en route to the Holy Land. The Holy Land offered pilgrims the ultimate in spiritual rewards especially with a visit to the Holy Sepulchre. And other sites in Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem. Even St Catherine of Alexandria's Monastery at Mount Sinai attracted the occasional Scot.¹⁵

We know Rognvald of Orkney accompanied by Bishop William set-off on a two-year pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1151. Their departure is recorded in the great Tomb of Maes Howe where some of their party scratched a runic inscription while waiting for fair weather. They travelled to Spain, to the Holy Land, swam in the Jordan, before sailing from Acre to Constantinople and then on to southern Italy following the Scandinavian Pilgrimage route home via Denmark and Norway. They were home for Christmas 1153.¹⁶

All this incredible religious energy and devotion ended almost abruptly at the Reformation. Scotland was the last country in Europe to reform, even after Iceland, and we certainly went for it. Anything of art, of beauty, of music was trashed. As regards pilgrimage and shrines the folk memory and culture took over.

The Reformation did not totally end pilgrimage as we learn from the account below from Lewis. This is important for us as the Teampuil Mòr or St Moluag's, Eòrropaidh Ness is one of the four medieval churches in the care of the SEC. (There are two in the Diocese of the Isles. Ensay is the other.) It is a fabulous place with a leper's squint and the acoustic is phenomenal. I

¹⁴ Peter Yeoman, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland* (Historic Scotland, 1999), p. 117.

¹⁵ Mark Dilworth, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 660.

¹⁶ Yeoman, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 118–19.

know, I have sung in it often! It also possesses a smaller but almost identical chalice to a vessel given by the Nisbet Hamilton Ogilvy family in their gifts to poor Episcopal Churches. You can read about them in an article entitled *Two Ladies of Direlton*.

Martin Martin in his *Description of the Western Isles* published in 1716 wrote:

They were in greater Veneration in those days than now: it was the constant Practice of the Natives to kneel at first sight of the Church, tho at a great distance from 'em, and then they said their Pater-noster. John Morison of Bragir told me that he was a Boy, and going to the Church of St Malvay, he observed the Natives to kneel and repeat the Pater-noster at four miles distant from the Church. The Inhabitants of this Island had an ancient Custom to sacrifice to a Sea-God, called Shony, at Hallowtide, in the manner following: The Inhabitants round the Island came to the Church of St. Mulvay, having each Man his Provision along him; every Family furnish'd a Peck of Malt, and this was pick'd out to wade into the Sea up to the middle, and carrying a Cup of Ale in his hand, standing still in that posture, cry'd out with a loud voice, saying, Shony, I give you this Cup of Ale, hoping that you'll be so kind to send us plenty of Sea-ware, for enriching our Ground the ensuing Year; and so threw the Cup of Ale into the Sea. This was perform'd in the Night time. At his Return to Land, they all went to Church, here there was a candle burning upon the Altar; and then standing silent for a little time, one of them gave a Signal, at which the Candle was put out, and immediately all of them went to the Fields, where they fell a drinking their Ale, and spent the remainder of the Night in Dancing and Singing etcetera. The next Morning they all return'd home, being well satisfy'd that they had punctually observ'd this Solemn Anniversary, which they believ'd to be a powerful means to procure a plentiful Crop. Mr Daniel and Mr Kenneth Morison, Ministers in Lewis, told me they spent several Years, before they could persuade the vulgar Natives to abandon this ridiculous piece of Superstition; which is quite abolish'd for these 32 Years past.¹⁷

Recent developments

So then, we come to the present day. Pilgrimage and the spiritual, physical and mental benefit of pilgrimage is being resuscitated. More and more

¹⁷ Ibid.

people are becoming intrigued with the idea of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is not just history. It has to be about living history becoming part of the land and spirit of its people as you walk.

I have done a few: Hadrian's Wall, the West Highland Way, the Eastern Glens of the Mounth, Aberdeen to Lismore in the steps of Moluag. Raasay, North Skye, Pabbay Harris to Eorropaidh Lewis in the steps of St Moluag, the Butt of Lewis to Vatersay beyond Barra. Shetland, Orkney and Buchan and Formartine partly in the steps of St Magnus. St Andrews to Iona in the steps of various Saints including Adamnon in Glenlyon.

Walking is about clearing the mind becoming at-one with the Saint in whose memory you are walking becoming at-one within yourself. The Greek philosophers Aristotle, Plato and Socrates all walked. According to Professor Edith Hall of Kings College London, 'Aristotle said it was his reflection time and so he called his school of thought Peripatetic from peripateo [...] I go for a walk'. Every mythology has its version of the:

'Hero and his Road of Trials', in which a young man, too, receives a 'call'. He travels to a distant country where some giant or monster threatens to destroy the population. In a superhuman battle, he overcomes the Power of Darkness, proves his manhood, and receives his reward: a wife, treasure, land, fame.

These he enjoys into late middle age when, once again, the clouds darken. Again, restlessness stirs him. Again, he leaves: either like Beowulf to die in combat or, as the blind Tiresias prophesies for Odysseus, to set off for some mysterious destination, and vanish. 'Catharsis': Greek for 'purging' or 'cleansing'. One controversial etymology derives it from the Greek *katheiro* 'to rid the land of monsters'.¹⁸

Perhaps the heart of pilgrimage is about removing monsters from within ourselves!

Neil MacGregor's *Living With the Gods* has a chapter on pilgrimage and the following is an excerpt:

The euphoric climax of the pilgrimage was of course the sight of the shrine itself, and pilgrims would often make the final approach on their knees. What all such places, far or near, offered was the possibility of drawing closer to the divine, of praying more effectively, perhaps with the help of a particular saint, of

¹⁸ Chatwin, *Songlines* (Kindle version) p. 215.

seeking healing and forgiveness. What is always required was leaving your home and your daily routines, and setting off, usually in a group, with a clear spiritual focus in view.

Eamon Duffy describes the importance of travelling:

The journey itself is part of the point. The metaphor of life as a journey is a very old one. The technical term for the Last Rites, the final communion you receive as you are dying, is viaticum, 'journey money'. Both life and death have long been thought about as journeys-into the unknown. The danger and discomfort were also part of the point — pilgrims knew that they would end up footsore and weary; a lot of pilgrimages were penitential. Those who had done bad things were given, as a penance, the instruction to make a journey. So, people go on pilgrimage at life-changing moments, essentially to sort their heads out. Walking or travelling can be a way of separating yourself from the world in which you are usually enmeshed, enabling you to see life with a new kind of radical simplicity, experiencing danger and discomfort.¹⁹

'In other words, the place where things change is not necessarily the shrine or the sanctuary: it is often on the journey itself. There, without the support of familiar structures and daily routines, you are dependent on your companions or on strangers. And when you return to your old patterns, you should be able to see them and God more clearly.'²⁰

¹⁹ ['Living with the Gods', BBC, 10 October 2017.](#)

²⁰ Neil Macgregor, *Living with the Gods* (London: Penguin Books, 2018), pp. 207–08.

[A Gaelic-speaking Highlander's View of Pilgrimage](#)

[JOHN MACFARLANE](#)

St John the Divine Cathedral, Oban

Speaking as a native of the Isle of Mull, a Highlander and a native Gaelic speaker, it might be an unusual choice, but I feel that the Highlanders' view of pilgrimage could well be summed up by a quotation from Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem *God 's Grandeur* which says:

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink Eastward springs
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent world broods
With warm breast and with
Ah!
Bright wings.

The quotation, 'the dearest freshness deep down things', and the activities of the Holy Ghost particularly seems to sum up for me some of the concepts in the Highlanders' view of their landscape and of their pilgrimage through it. As an islander and a Highlander, I must acknowledge the great gift of my native language, Gaelic, and its associated culture which has been passed onto me by my parents from my earliest years. I am particularly indebted to my mother who was a local-tradition bearer or '*seanchaidh*' in the village of Taynuilt. After studying modern languages at University, I spent over 30 years as an officer in the British Army but nevertheless continued to retain my native language and culture to which I gladly returned on discharge from the Forces: a comfortable foot on my native heath of Lorn and in the wider culture of our nation. This article is therefore a personal and idiosyncratic view of pilgrimage which is my own but would, in some respects, be that of any Gaelic native speaker who is immersed in his or her own environment and culture. Some of the concepts which I propose may be slightly alien to readers, but are perfectly normal, historically and culturally, to a native Gaelic speaker both of the past and the present.

I want to deal briefly with three concepts: *dùthchas* (/du:xəs/), *dualchas* (/duəlxəs/) and *eilthreachd* (/elɪr¹əxg/).

Dùthchas

Firstly, let's have a look at the concept of *Dùthchas*. This is a portmanteau word in Gaelic with many layers of meaning, capable of individual

interpretation by each person as he or she experiences it. It has its basis in place of birth, heredity, hereditary rights, native or hereditary temper, spirit or bloodlines but it can also mean an acute sense of place. It can be understood as a 'hefting' to the land and can have almost the feeling of a territorial right. It may almost be innate to those whose ancestors are long in place. Many Highlanders, whose ancestors have been long in the land, possess DNA which goes back to the Neolithic or earlier on the west coast of Scotland. It is a feeling that is almost mystical and is at its most potent in the land of birth, affecting both the local inhabitant and, in many cases, persons returning to the land of their ancestors.

It is to be felt in the beauty of the landscape, in the power of the elements, in the variety and march of the seasons and in the rightness we feel as we take our place in the landscape. It is sensed in the paleness of a winter dawn and in the warm, luminous half-light of a summer night. It lies in the calm depths of a mountain loch and in the far splendour of snow-clad hills. It crashes in the onset of the sea and sings in the unique little songs of hill-streams. It is in the lonely cry of the curlew and in the sweet perfume of a summer moorland.

It is particularly felt in the ancient monuments and in the 'thin' places of the landscape where stones are aligned with the heavenly bodies or where saints have trod.

In this Christian context, the Gael has a sense of the land as a representation of the Divine. This is well summed up in the ancient language of the Benedicite:

O ye Mountains and Hills, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O all ye Green Things upon the Earth, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

O ye Wells, bless ye the Lord : praise him, and magnify him for ever.

In this context, *dùthchas* conveys an almost mediaeval feel for Christ in the landscape. A number of our place names represent the water and wine of the Eucharist as being present in the countryside. For example the eighteenth century nature poet Duncan 'Bàn' Macintyre, in his famous poem *In Praise of Beinn Dobhrain* mentions a stream which flows from an ancient *annat* or Celtic religious settlement as '*fion uillt na h-annaid*', which may be loosely translated as 'the wine-stream of the Eucharist flowing from the settlement of Christ'. There are other examples of this phenomenon to be found in Watson's definitive study *The Celtic Place names of Scotland*, first

published in 1926,¹ which, in my opinion, remains the best and most comprehensive guide to these names.

In my own area of Argyll, there is an ancient religious settlement at the Black Lochs of Connel which is associated with the saint Maol Rubha of Applecross. Near it is a spring which issues from the spur of a re-entrant which is called *Stròn Fìona* (The Spur of the Wine) and associates the well with the blood of Christ. On the opposite side of Loch Etive there is another well called *Tobar an Fhìona*, (The Well of the Wine) connected with St Bàetán, or possibly Báithíne who, according to a study by University of Glasgow, was St Columba or *Columb Cille's* close relative and immediate successor as Abbot of Iona.²

The sense of place is also reinforced by the presence of prostration crosses in the landscape which mark sites for individual and group prayer while on pilgrimage or passing through an area. Crosses of prostration were common throughout the Highlands and Islands. In Gaelic these are called *Crois an t-sleuchdaidh* or *Crois an t-sliachdaidh* (Cross of Prostration or genuflection)

They had a special purpose. The cross usually stood apart from all buildings and was a conspicuous feature in the landscape. When they reached the cross, the pilgrims were usually within sight of a worship site or of a *diseart* or sanctuary. Individuals or groups prostrated themselves at the cross and sang a pilgrim-song or a prayer of protection. Thereafter they went on to visit the worship place within sight and there made their offering or said their prayer or continued on their way.

A perfect example is the Lerags Cross which stands on a minor road off the Oban to Lochgilphead road which overlooks the old ruined church and burial ground at Kilbride. This was erected by Archibald Campbell of Lerags in 1516 which local folklore says was placed as a thanksgiving for a safe return from the Battle of Flodden. It is thought that the cross was originally erected on a smaller mound two hundred metres to the south of its current location known as *Bealach-an-t-sleuchdaidh* (The Pass of Prostration). This placed it quite close to the (now ruined) Kilbride Church, at a point where the road you see today crossed another possible drove, which ran from Gallanach, on the Oban coast opposite Kerrera, south east to the head of Loch Feochan.

Another example is a site of which only the base remains, and is currently under examination, near Cladich Hill at the mouth of Glen Aray. Here, pilgrims prostrated themselves when they came into sight of the holy

¹ W. J. Watson, *The Celtic Place Names of Scotland*.

² <https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk>

island of Inishail in Loch Awe below them, where a chapel dedicated to Saint Findoca and a possible nunnery stood and can still be traced.

An ancient Prostration Prayer is to be found in *Carmina Gadelica* the compendium of prayers, hymns, charms, incantations, and blessings gathered in the Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland between 1860 and 1909 by the folklorist, Alexander Carmichael. It says:

Crois Chrìosd eadar mi 's gach ni,
Gach mì-rùn, gach ceach.
Ainglean flathais dha mo dhion,
Ainglean flathanais a nochd,
Ainglean flathais dha mo dhìon
Eadar anam agus corp.

May the cross of Christ
be between me and all things
From all malice and antipathy
the angels of heaven protect me
Both in body and soul.³

Our local prostration cross in the Parish of Muckairn was broken by iconoclasts but the major portion was found in a wall by the churchyard. It is now in the Royal Museum of Scotland. Prostration or genuflection at our cross occurred when local people or pilgrims came into sight of the ancient pre-Reformation Roman Catholic church of Muckairn, which is now a ruin. It lies beside the present Church of Scotland church and a pre-Christian site called *Cnoc Aingeil* (The Hill of Sacrificial Fires).

The church site itself is known in Gaelic as *Cill Easbaig Harailt* (the Church of Bishop Harald) and it is on a twelfth century religious settlement which once was the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Argyll under the control of Bishop Harald, a Norse and Gaelic speaker and first Bishop of Argyll. This church site was, undoubtedly a resting place for the pilgrim route to Iona, after which the pilgrims and the cortèges of Scottish and other Kings wound their way through Glen Lonan to Loch Feochan and its mediaeval pier *Carraig nam Marbh* (Rock of the Dead) before the galleys took to the open sea and the voyage to Iona.

These above are the brighter more spiritual side of the concept. However, it must be said that *dùthchas*, the acute sense of place, has its darker side as anyone of Scots or Highland blood may have experienced when standing alone on the Moor of Culloden. The darker sense of the land

³ Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*.

as a living organism is reinforced by quotes such as that of Colonel John 'Ruadh' Stuart, the eighteenth-century Jacobite soldier, swordsman and poet, who laments the brutal punitive aftermath of Culloden with the words:

Gura mòr mo chuis mhulaid a bhith caoineadh na ghuin a ta am
thìr

Great are the depths of my sorrow
As I mourn for the wounds of my land.⁴

A Bishop of Argyll and the Isles once said to me that many tragic historical places in the diocese seemed to him to be unhallowed. I, however, feel that they are hallowed by our acknowledgment of their nature and the sense that the tragic places are 'healed' by remembrance and love.

In summary, in all these respects, the feeling of *dùthchas* means that, for the Gael, both over the historical period and now, every walk across the landscape is a pilgrimage across a hallowed land which sometimes bears our wounds. It is, however, a land where protection is sought, the Eucharist is represented, places of power experienced and saints venerated by the presence of place names, particularly so when their names and their history are deliberately articulated and recognized in the landscape.

Dualchas

Let us now turn to the concept of *dualchas* which is intimately connected with our vivid sense of place. Our culture was mainly spread orally through the medium of Gaelic and was a vivid vehicle for our *dualchas*. However, Gaelic literature is recognized as one of the oldest literature traditions of Europe: literature has been written in Gaelic languages from the first centuries AD to the present day. She now expresses herself in a rich written, as well as oral, tradition. She still transmits the great odysseys and events of the Gael, bears our myths and stories, expresses our beliefs and our relationships one with another and tells of our deep sense of place and communion with our enduring landscape.

The richness of our *dualchas* or culture is reflected in many other ways and particularly in our use of our musical instruments, our music, our songs, our poetry, our literature, our genealogies, our proverbs, folk sayings and place names. Even as we speak, the blossoms of the language in music, literature, drama and the spoken word are spreading and growing, bright as flowers on the machair, particularly among the young.

⁴ John Roy Stuart, *The Day of Culloden* (1746).

These all are intimately connected with the land and its seasons, its social organizations. They display our hereditary dispositions.

These dispositions are also intimately connected with our beliefs pre-Christian and Christian. They are to be heard in the heterophony of our Hebridean psalm singing and found in the sonorous Gaelic of our early Roman and Episcopal Gaelic liturgies. They are to be felt in the prayers and incantations which are enshrined in *Carmina Gadelica*. The collection of six volumes richly illustrates the pilgrimage of daily life with its prayers and blessings which hallowed the life of the individual at rites of passage and in the daily round from waking to sleeping.

Our culture and our sense of place are intimately connected whether in sacred pilgrimage or in the secular pilgrimage of daily life. For the Gael both inter-fuse. This might be an opportunity to explain the final concept important to our sense of pilgrimage.

Eilthireachd

Eilthireachd means 'other-country-ing' or pilgrimage. It too displays the acute sense either of actual physical travel or travel through the spiritual landscape. It conveys what the French call *dépaysement* (the strange feeling of not being in one's own familiar country either geographically or spiritually).

Pilgrimage involved travel to ancient possibly pre-Christian sites including votive trees and coffin routes; travel to wells; travel to sanctuaries or *diseartsan*; travel to religious establishments; travel to seek the services of a *deòir*.

Votive trees. These trees, known in Gaelic as *bile* (/bilə/), are votive trees or prayer trees and are still in use for individual pilgrimages. In *Bealach na Gaoithe* (The Pass of the Winds) between Seil Island and Loch Melfort in Argyll, there is a tree on which fluttered rags, pieces of cloth and other materials, which made prayers in the wind. It has also been adorned with a variety of coinage impressed into the bark or deposited in the ground around it. The fact that this tree may be still in use, as are others in Argyll, shows the thirst for spirituality, which exists to be tapped.

Healing or holy wells. As we have already seen in the passage above, water in the Highland mind has powerful connotations with the Eucharist and with the concepts of purity, cleansing and healing, some of which may be linked to the 'old religion'. The site shown on the appropriate OS map, is at Creag Mhòr, near Dalvuie Farm, north of the minor road that leads to North Ledaig and Benderloch. The OS map, in a corrupt rendering, notes the existence of *Craobh Bial (Bile?) nam Buaidh* (The Tree of Gifts and Transcendent Virtues and Endowments) and *Tobar Bial (Bile?) nam Buaidh*

(Well of Gifts and Transcendent Endowments). These sites are undoubtedly linked and, I am told, may still be in use.

To the north east of this site lies Ardchattan Priory, which was founded in 1230 by Sir Duncan MacDougall, of the family of the Lords of Lorn, for monks of the Valliscaulian order, the mother house being in the Val des Choux in Burgundy. In the hills north west of the priory and Loch Etive lies the ruined church of *Baile Bhaoidain* (Township of St Báetán) which stands on a much more ancient site than the priory. Beside it lies *Tobar Bhaoidain* (St Báetán's Well) which is reputed to have healing properties and is still an object of pilgrimage.

The link between wells and coffin routes. One notable well in our area, west of Loch Creran on the borders of Appin, is dedicated to a local holy man *Curalain* (possibly St Cairell or Cyril) and lies on a coffin route which follows an escarpment to an ancient burial ground high on *Beinn Churalain* (a mountain dedicated to *Curalain*). The well stands at a resting place almost halfway up the escarpment and is a beehive structure of stone with a stone-lined shaft up which the well rises. It is clearly of great antiquity and, when I last visited it, had offerings of white quartz on a 'shelf' in the beehive. Local folklore says that in the mid-nineteenth century and earlier, pilgrimages climbed the coffin route on the feast of St Cyril (14 February) where those afflicted bathed their eyes in the waters of the well, which was supposed to have healing properties.

The well and the coffin route are intimately connected with the Episcopalian community that existed in Glen Creran. According to a tale recounted in the diary or daybook of Alexander Carmichael, the coffins of the deceased were carried up the coffin route to the burial ground. Biers were used to carry the deceased and after the burial had taken place the biers were broken on a holy tree *Craobh Churalain* (*Curalain's Tree*) and a fire was lit with the shattered wood. There was a chapel in the burial ground which has now vanished but a note in Carmichael's daybook, probably collected from *Domhnall Bròcair* (Donald The Fox and Badger Hunter — Donald MacColl Glencreeran), records that there were holy statues or images of *Curalain* (St Cyril), *Calum Cille* (St Columba) and St Moluag kept in the chapel on *Beinn Churalain* which were destroyed by young 'scamps' from the local gentry who came to a bad end as a result. The daybook also gives a partial record of an ancient blessing attributed in our culture of *dualchas* to *Curalain* himself.

Travel to sanctuaries. This is more a mediaeval, UK-wide concept, but it occasioned pilgrimages to sanctuaries as well as religious sites. We have our own sanctuary in my area at Dalmally where the ancient 'moot' (mound) church site, and traditional burial place of the MacGregor chiefs, is known in

Gaelic as *Clachan an diseirt* (The Kirktoon of Retreat) or *Dìseart Chonnáin* (The Place of Retreat under the tutelage of St Connán).

Travel to religious establishments. In my case, the obvious one is Iona to which pilgrims have travelled extensively. My most moving experience in that respect has been a candlelit Gaelic Mass in the chapel of *Réilig Ódhraín*, where the sense of place and sense of *dualchas* or culture was incredibly intense in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Travel to seek the services of a deòir. A *deòir* /dʲɔ:rʲ/ in Gaelic terms is (usually) the hereditary keeper of a Christian relic. Sainthood and other relics were looked after by these hereditary keepers who were often given land in return for looking after the relic and providing its services.

It is a mediaeval term which tends to conflate so that the bearer and the relic become one and the same thing. Both the Keeper and the relic were seen as being in some way 'nomadic' and ready to be strangers or pilgrims who moved to places in which the services of the relic were required. This concept is seen in St Fillan's Reliquary and Crozier which is known in Gaelic as the *Coigreach* (The stranger or alien): a fine example of a relic prepared for travel.

The relic, and therefore sometimes (but not always) the *deòir*, could be involved in:

- Representations of ecclesiastical authority
- Cursing and blessing
- Raising tribute
- Enforcing laws and inaugurating kings
- Bringing battle victory or preventing battle altogether
- The swearing of oaths
- Protecting private property
- Healing the sick
- The protection and blessing of the dead and dying.

There are examples of these relics extant in contemporary Scotland. The National Museum of Scotland contains St Fillan's Reliquary called the *Coigreach*. A piece of great artistry later than the crozier, the *Coigreach* is itself a relic to protect the St Fillan's Crozier. Traditionally, these objects were considered to embody the power to heal both humans and livestock and were used for blessings.

In Argyll, we are fortunate to have the presence of the Great *Bachuil* or staff of St Moluag under the care and protection of Niall Livingstone of Bachuil, Baron of the Bachuil, Coarb of St Moluag and Abbot of Lismore. As Co-arb, he is the heir or spiritual successor to St Moluag, who from his base in Lismore founded many religious institutions and is acknowledged as the early Christian founder of what now are the Dioceses of Aberdeen and Moray and many churches over a great swathe of Scotland. The *Bachuil* is currently

an object of veneration by pilgrims and is used for healing and blessing and for display or manifestation of the Bachuil at sites connected with St Moluag. Current pilgrimages could benefit by visiting the relics themselves or the sites associated with them. We are blessed in Argyll with a plethora of opportunities to do so.

So, to sum up: the concepts of acute sense of place, culture and sense of pilgrimage in the Gael may, of course, be universal traits and not peculiarly limited to our race. I would, however, suggest that they are intensively magnified and distilled into the psyche of Gaelic-speaking Highlanders and form a major part of our world view. They have been and still are a palpable aspect of our pilgrimages as a race. This is true of our daily pilgrimage through life and our wanderings in pursuit of effective worship in holy places and in the search for the presence of holy elements or objects, and have their principal and ultimate goal in the Body and Blood of our Lord!

Pilgrimage on Orkney

STUART LITTLE

Orkney Pilgrimage Trustee

The Orkney Islands are 150 miles north of Aberdeen. They have a heritage which is distinctive, and it is important to understanding both our pilgrimage heritage and how it can be developed for current pilgrims. Why name the trail after St Magnus? St Magnus is Orkney's adopted saint. Magnus Erlandson was born in the year 1080 into a Viking family in Orkney and he became one of the two Viking earls ruling Orkney on behalf of the Norwegian King as at that time Orkney and Shetland were not part of Scotland but part of Norway. Magnus ruled alongside his cousin, Hakon. It kept the earls of Orkney weaker if there were two of them. Divide and rule.

Magnus was not your stereotypical Viking. The Orkneyingasaga, one of the great Viking sagas, tells of Magnus being part of a Viking raid on Anglesey where he refused to fight but he sang psalms while the fighting was going on around him. He was a very religious and well-loved earl, peace loving and devout, while his cousin Hakan was more of your typical Viking, hungry for power. To cut the story very short, after a great deal of conflict, a peace meeting was arranged between these two feuding cousins on the island of Egilsay. The agreement was that each earl would be accompanied by two ships of men. Magnus brought two but Hakon brought eight, so Magnus knew that his number was up. Hakon had his cook Lifolf bury an axe in Magnus's head, Magnus having forgiven the reluctant cook before he did the deed. Magnus was buried in Egilsay but his mother requested that he be buried in Birsay, where he grew up, and that request was granted. Soon there appeared mysterious lights around his burial site, healing miracles then followed and so the cult of Magnus and his beatification process began.

Hakon, years later repenting of his terrible act, went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and on his return to Orkney commissioned the building of a church in the Orkney village of Orphir. This round church is said to be based on the design of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

The next Viking to enter the story is Rognvald, Magnus's nephew. He too went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He decided that he wanted to build a cathedral in Kirkwall in honour of his saintly uncle and so in 1137 St Magnus Cathedral was founded. Magnus's bones were exhumed and carried to Kirkwall and eventually interred in the cathedral. In 1925, during restoration work being done in the cathedral, a cavity was found in one of the pillars in which bones and a skull were found. A hole, corresponding to the blow dealt to Magnus, was evident on the skull.

There are very few historical records relating to pilgrimage in Orkney. St Triduana made pilgrimage to Orkney ending it at the Treadwell shrine on Papa Westray. There is a record of the Viking king Hakon (a different Hakon) visiting the shrine of St Magnus when he was here in 1263 (after the battle of Largs) but not much more. There are records of a few bequests/donations to the shrine of St Magnus. We do know that locals visited holy sites in various locations, usually for healing or fertility purposes. The idea of a St Magnus Way Pilgrimage can be said to have originated in a meeting of, mostly, Church of Scotland ministers in November 2015, though there had been previous informal discussions. At this meeting it was agreed it would be good to try and encourage pilgrimage and that the obvious place to start was with St Magnus. At the next meeting discussions focused on the upcoming 900th anniversary of the martyrdom of Magnus and whether it might be possible to have a pilgrimage as part of the commemorations in 2017 on St Magnus's Day (16 April). The Revd David McNeish was appointed as Chairman of the Working Group which had representatives from Orkney Islands Council and the University of the Highlands and Islands; in particular Dr Sara-Jane Gibbon. David has been the driving force behind the whole project and without his enthusiasm and countless hours on the computer, phone and tramping the highways and byways the St Magnus Way would not have happened.

Egilsay?

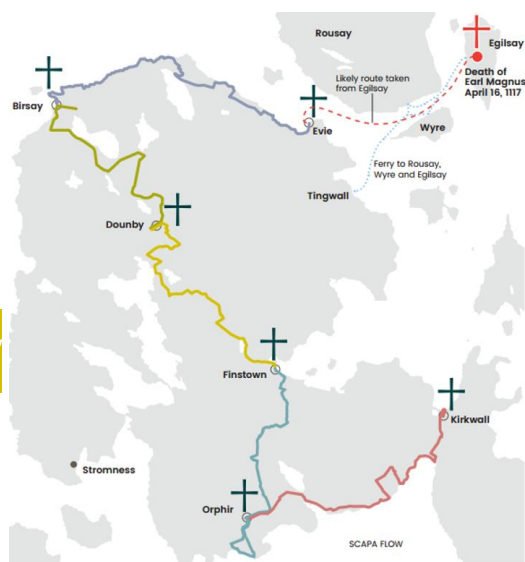
Evie to Birsay

Birsay to Dounby

Finstown to Dounby

Finstown to Orphir

Orphir to Kirkwall

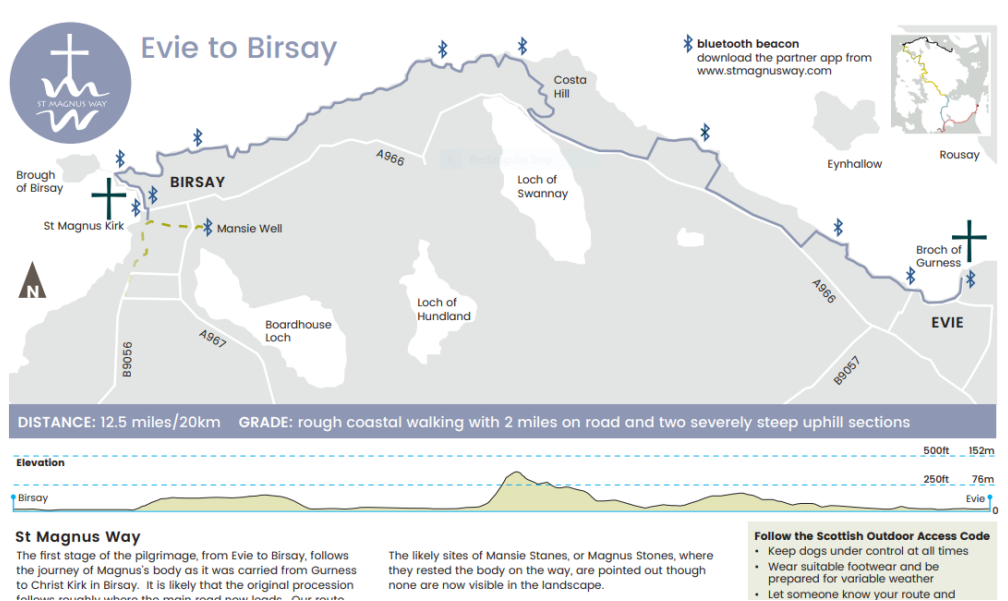


Consideration was given as to what the route might be — some decisions made themselves — Evie to Birsay and on through Dounby to Finstown followed the tradition of the routes taken with Magnus's body and then his bones but at Finstown all the traditions cease. There are no stories,

landmarks or stones between Finstown and Kirkwall that can be attributed to Magnus. The likelihood is that they travelled by boat from the Bay of Firth around to Kirkwall.

Various folk spent the summer walking in small groups and scoping out the potential route. The aim was to get the walk off roads or use minor roads where necessary. There were lots of issues to sort out including finding out who owned the 370 fields needing consent for access and then getting written consent. Though there is a right to roam in Scotland consent is needed for waymarkers, styles etc. Ninety-five percent of landowners gave consent. Hundreds of hours were put in just to get the consents sorted.

The journey is covered by a website and with Bluetooth beacons giving information for potential pilgrims:



The route is fifty-five miles long and so is divided into five sections, of ten to twelve miles, each walkable in a day. Each section has different terrain. It is important to emphasize that the walk is open to anyone for any reason. It may be that the walkers just want to exercise the dog, or it may be that walkers are looking for a deeper experience and everything in between. All are welcome. For those wanting a more reflective or spiritual component to the walk each section has been given a theme:

Peace: reflecting on the need for peace in a world of violence. Need for peace in our own lives?

Growth: reflecting on the growth of the cult of Magnus in the years following his death and on the shifting base of power from west to east in Orkney, as well as on our own stories of growth.

Change: reflecting on the changing landscape and ways of life over the centuries as well as our own often conflicting attitudes to change as something both welcomed and feared.

Forgiveness: reflecting on whether Hakon was sorry for the murder of Magnus, and our own need to both receive and extend forgiveness.

Hospitality: reflecting on the place of feasting in the medieval world and our own mealtime traditions as well as the place of welcome afforded Magnus in Kirkwall, and the reception we ourselves anticipate.

Finally, there is pilgrimage: walking as a way of encounter with whatever we are open to. An encounter with landscape, flora and fauna, stories, history, people, ourselves and with God.

A note of interest

The [Bluetooth symbol](#) is a combination of ancient runes for the initials of Harald 'Bluetooth' Gormsson. Harald ruled as King of Denmark from c. 958. Harald introduced Christianity to Denmark and consolidated his rule over most of what is now Scandinavia. He connected these countries, so Bluetooth's name is used for the technology for connecting IT devices. It is amazing to have a Viking based walk using technology named after a Viking!

Reviving Scotland's Pilgrim Ways

NICK COOKE

Secretary, Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum

The past is our heritage and as such important to who we are but it is unchangeable. The future allows us to benefit from reflection and if we wish to move the focus and to shifting that focus from the past to the present and future. The future will revolve around both redeveloping the pilgrim routes of the past but also developing new routes and developing routes whose purpose will be very different to the priorities of the past. The Fife Pilgrim Walk (FPW) is an example of such an approach. This walk has been developed for people of faith and those of no self-identifiable faith by a group involving the local authority, churches, private sector bodies. It is designed to aid spiritual reflection but also to enable a walk in beautiful countryside and the development of tourism.

Who are today's pilgrims? For all of those involved in pilgrimage this is a key question in relation to where routes are developed, and the facilities needed along the route. The simple answer is that they are as varied as were Chaucer's pilgrims on that route to Canterbury. They include social visitors, intellectuals, those seeking a spiritual encounter, those wishing to connect with the environment, families on a journey of exploration and walkers with a variety of experience. For those involved with our churches there is a particular interest in those who are making the journey as part of their faith journey. This leads to a series of questions such as what do Scotland's new pilgrim ways mean to churches like the SEC? Are they merely a series of artefacts linked to a lost religious heritage or are they a new or a continuing resource for today's Christian and other faith communities?

So how did we get to where we now find ourselves? That pilgrimage is a major element in faith tourism is demonstrated by the success of the Camino. The walk to Santiago de Compostela attracts around 300,000 pilgrim walkers annually. The success of this route is part of a thirty-year period of growth across Europe. Journeying along one of these routes attracts the interest of the media and of celebrities. This asks questions about what can be done in Scotland. However, it also asks the question: how do we distinguish tourists from pilgrims and does it matter that we do so?

So, setting new goals must begin with key questions. It's important to ask potential users just what would help them and ask how they view the new pilgrim routes that are now being developed across Scotland. Are these routes simply going to be historical artefacts of our religious heritage 'interpreted' for a secular society? Or are they a living spiritual resource for

local Christian faith communities here in Scotland and for visitors from overseas?

Do we have Things which are Unique in Scotland? Our unique religious and cultural heritage has led to public interest in the monastic tradition, in our pilgrimage tradition and as a result in pilgrimages to the shrines of Scotland's saints such as Coldingham Priory Kirk and to the sites of relics such as the eighth-century pictish Christian cross slab at Old Nigg Church.

Will Developments have a Wider Impact? The development of pilgrimage has the potential to help with the social and economic regeneration of local communities across rural Scotland. Walking and cycling have been shown to lead to the development of appropriate local infrastructure. Walkers using the St Cuthbert's way are known to spend around fifty pounds per night in the local area. Pilgrimage supports jobs and local businesses and leads to inward investment. The Fife Pilgrim Way has resulted in capital investment of £760,000 over the last three years. In mid-Fife and Ayrshire pilgrimage has resulted in action to address transport poverty and to address rural depopulation. In Argyll and the Highlands new uses have been found for historic churches.

In Scotland, the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum (SPRF) is focussed on the development of pilgrim walking routes. It's a unique organization in the UK, quite different to the British Pilgrimage Trust in London, and it operates collectively as a network of member organizations and individuals. SPRF has come a long way in the six years since it was established — so what lies behind this?

The key drivers which have led to the emergence and development of SPRF seem to have been:

- The strong appeal of the 'Camino' experience across Europe.
- Scotland's unique religious and cultural heritage
- The 'right to responsible countryside access' — Scottish Land Reform Act and the Scottish Outdoor Code 2003. These give Scotland a legal framework similar to Scandinavia
- A series of Scottish Government initiatives such as the 2013 Scottish National Planning Framework, the 2015 National Walking and Cycling Network Action Plan, the SNH Scotland's Great Trails Network
- Experience derived from the SPRF Pilgrim Way short walks programme in 2018.

The SPRF was established in February 2012 following a meeting of interested persons and organizations held at Culross Abbey. This follows a period over two to three years of seminars and meetings where ecumenical

church groups and individuals, Scottish Parliamentarians, SNH, Visit Scotland and walking enthusiasts, to mention but some, have been looking at the potential for growth and development in ‘Faith Tourism’ and Pilgrimage routes. Since its establishment, its membership and influence have expanded and by 2014 SPRF became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). This SCIO aims to be a focal point for discussion and development of Pilgrim Routes within Scotland.

SPRF now has an elected board of trustees who serve the collective interests of its forty-five organizational and thirty-five associate members. It does not have paid employees, but two members work as consultants and its secretariat is, and has been since its inception, provided by Clear Services Ltd. Steering groups recruited from member organizations develop priority pilgrim walking routes. National Forum meetings are held in both spring and autumn and take place at venues around the country. SPRF’s strategic plan 2016–2021 details aspirations for a national accreditation scheme and for capacity building. The map below details current progress in route development:

SPRF - Current Pilgrim Routes Activity

- St Cuthbert’s Way (fully established)
- Fife Pilgrim Way (official launch March 2019)
- Iona to St Andrews, incorporating
St Conan’s Way (Dalmally to Iona)
Three Saints Way (Killin to Abernethy)
- Whithorn Way
- Forth to Farnie Way (launched 2017)
- St Magnus Way, Orkney (launched 2017)
- Deeside Way (existing LDR)
- Argyll Pilgrim Ways (Cowal, Kintyre, Oban)
- St Kentigern Way (Annan to Glasgow)



Strategic objectives for the organization include:

- the reinstatement of some of our great medieval shrines such as St Andrews, Iona, Whithorn, Dunfermline and Tain as pilgrim destinations

- celebrating some of our historic churches such as Glasgow Cathedral, Whithorn Priory Kirk and Paisley Abbey as pilgrim route gateways
- Re-emphasizing the importance of the journey rather than the destination as a way of aiding people to find physical and mental wellbeing and a distinctive approach to meeting God in Scotland's 'thin' places
- Increasing the opportunity for encounter while traveling outside an immediate comfort zone with strangers and in unknown places.

The whole concept of a forum has from the start of the organization intentionally represented a different way of going ahead to a committee, an initiative, a project group or a board. A forum allows those with related interests to come together and to share experiences and learn from each other. It helps local projects to develop but without applying centralizing control. This has helped and empowered local groups to develop local routes. The local emphasis has always been important. Local steering groups are best placed to work with local landowners and local authorities in gaining necessary consents, in scoping waymarking and interpreting routes, and in aiding the development of local services. This approach also helps local churches to get involved principally by just being involved in welcoming and interacting but also by considering how their buildings and facilities might be used.

The forum holds meetings on two occasions during the year. These allow members to exchange experiences though shared knowledge of route development and to learn more about pilgrimage and its many aspects. The sharing of stories and good practice has been at the heart of the forum since its inception. Networking is increasingly seen as a valuable approach to all forms of community engagement.

In 2017 the Church of Scotland General Assembly agreed to change over 450 years of opposition and hostility to pilgrimage and to recognize it as an important expression of faith and part of the work of all parishes. It encourages congregations to provide practical and spiritual support for pilgrims passing through their parish. It asks the question; how can individual churches respond to pilgrims passing their doors? As a result, its Mission and Discipleship Council was able to support the St Magnus Way Project on Orkney. This recognized pilgrimage as a legitimate response to the crisis of faith in the western world and the existence of a real crisis of faith in the institutions, which represent religion. The Guild introduced its 'One Road — Many Journeys' programme. This in turn recognized the number of people who now embark on sacred journeys in the western world and the numbers who encounter Christ at loose in the world while on such

journeys through having the time to listen and talk and being open to the unexpected.

The Scottish Episcopal Church also organized pilgrim events with journeys taking place in Banchory in 2016, a diocesan pilgrimage in St Andrew's Diocese in 2018 and Benarty and Lochgelly Churches Together organizing a walk in 2018. All of these were supported by significant numbers of participants and helped bring local churches together. I began by asking a question. I hope I have provided you with some of the answer. Local churches are a key and distinctive audience for our new pilgrim routes. We want churches to champion routes in their local area as a resource that can tell the story of our own Christian heritage. If your church wants to be part of the SPRF network, we will be delighted to welcome you!

Proclaiming the Gospel of Holy Week and Easter under Lockdown

ALASDAIR COLES

Rector, All Saints' Church, St Andrews

Some have been surprised by the modern resurgence in pilgrimage since the advent of mass media and the worldwide web enable us to be anywhere, even everywhere. Why, then, would traveling to a site held by some to be sacred generate such interest? Can it be explained away by the romantic imagination? These are questions that those of us who live or work at holy sites ponder quite often, welcoming the more positive climate among Christians of different traditions in recent years, while still feeling that the more critical questions need to be addressed.

Recent theological explorations of the phenomenon of pilgrimage typically reassert the fundamental Christian vocation to a lifelong journey as a pilgrim in at least a spiritual or metaphorical sense. However, many argue that the majority of Christians would also benefit from physical or literal pilgrimage. Perhaps unhelpfully, many contemporary accounts still commence with a focused treatment of Jerusalem, seen by many as pre-eminently a 'way into the presence of the living God'¹.

By contrast, some writers note that modern pilgrimage can be to 'dark' places as well as 'light' or 'thin' places — Anne Frank's House or even Auschwitz are noted as destinations. There are some ironies too: N. T. Wright is the son of an archdeacon of Lindisfarne, who dismissed pilgrimage when young due to his own religious background, but reached a mature view that 'pilgrimage to holy places, though neither necessary nor sufficient for Christian living' provides the stimulus for many to deepen faith and discipleship. Importantly, he also articulates a modifying 'blur' to the dual patristic descriptors of spiritual and physical (spiritual pilgrimage being superior to physical) noting that physical pilgrimage can itself be experienced as a metaphor for inner pilgrimage, even with a sacramental quality. This is an experience shared by many pilgrims, has been explored in some recent research papers, and was found by many on the diocesan pilgrimage in St Andrews, Dunkeld & Dunblane in 2018.

Not every community possesses historical resonances of the qualities noted above, and these should find at least some encouragement from the experiences of those who find the notion of the sacred *topos* suspect. For those with reservations over the viability of sacred places, contemporary

¹ N. T. Wright, *The Way of the Lord: Christian Pilgrimage Today*.

writers also give treatment of pilgrimage *without* a specific destination rather like peregrinations of old in the Celtic world: a radical freeing from the cloy of possessions and places. Our current cultural context, with its lack of rootedness and obsession with mobility and churn may tend to generate pilgrims of that kind, disillusioned with the superficiality of rivalistic materialism and the dehumanizing interplay of managerialism and commodification. While travel with no regard for destination may signify a courageous rejection of all that is harmful in our own culture, even an abandonment of the self to the divine will, some note it could also signal an abandonment of adult responsibilities and a mature Christian calling.

One of the great witnesses of the pre-reformation Cathedral Priory of St Andrew is that the Canons Regular were committed not to an overseas order, but to the local community, for life: to serve it by leading it into holiness by word and deed. While few of us find such commitment viable now, discerning patterns that encourage spiritual stability in a period of marked uncertainty remains hugely important. If we appreciate that our psycho-somatic existence is deep, and that our spiritual well-being is dependent in many different ways on our physical health, we might also infer that that place and community are to be both encouraged and prized in order to avoid a dualistic spirituality tending to reject both human nature and the created order, neither of which are inherently evil.

Central tenets of Christian theology undergird such a search for stability. For example, the doctrine of the Incarnation reminds us that we are more than our thoughts, spiritual and otherwise. We receive the spiritual graces of salvation *through* material things: the sacraments, our interaction with each other and our use of our bodies and other material things in everyday life. Martin Warner illustrates this truth when he comments that:

the mind has to descend not simply to the heart, but to the feet. Pilgrimage is experience of the journey. Disclosure at our destination follows upon the fact that our hearts — and feet — burn as Jesus walks with us on the road.²

The 'burn' can be experienced in various ways, perhaps no more so than at Jerusalem. Different experiences of the travel and the destination — the going and getting there — are dealt with in many classic accounts of Christian pilgrimage from Egeria onwards. Jerusalem was notorious for its corruption and immorality in the patristic age, repeatedly bathed in blood in the Crusades, and remains a painful symbol of human injustice and bitterness in our time. Gerard Hughes is among those profoundly

² Martin Warner, 'Book Reviews', *Church Times*, 2 November 2006.

disappointed on arrival there: 'Jerusalem bus station did *not* fill my soul with the psalmist's delight, "And now our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem ...".³ So, sometimes grace and sanctity will not be found at the end of the journey, or at least, not in the way we expect.

Implications

In July, the overwhelming majority did find positive things at the end of our diocesan pilgrimage, for which we all gave thanks. Gladly, even the journey remained positive despite some heavy rain and losing a couple of people briefly in the town. Many conversations across boundaries of church tradition and ecclesiology took place; our hearts were not cooled by dripping clothes nor were our feet drowned by squelching socks!

Positive feedback is gratifying but its generosity — effusiveness even — was surprising. There may be reasons for this beyond the group of people simply being kind, something more sacramental. If we have become as Grace Davey puts it, a people who *believe without belonging*, pilgrimage offers a temporary opportunity to belong, as well as believe, for those who find organized religion suspect, providing a safe place in which to risk belonging. And for those of us with less suspicion, pilgrimage offers the opportunity to reconnect with that greater communion that lies beyond our own local churches, and beyond our own era. Both are aspects of the Spirit's work that offer us disproportionate encouragement.

We should not therefore be inherently suspicious of pilgrimage but, mindful of Gregory of Nyssa's famous letter on the topic, should also be watchful for its hijacking for non-spiritual projects. The Shrine and Cathedral of St Andrew undoubtedly made the town wealthy and its bishops powerful. But, for those of us who — as it were — 'possess the geography and the history', our motivation must be to resource and welcome pilgrims, guarding against temptations to think in terms of income generation, career advantage or even congregational growth. Some of us are in a great place to serve and resource pilgrims, but that's very different from manipulating them for our own objectives.

Perhaps especially in our cultural context, pilgrimage should be viewed as a complement, not a threat, to our instinct for rootedness and connection, since both serve our final completion and destiny in God. Both pilgrimage and rootedness can nurture our faith as long as they retain an iconic character — a transparency towards the deeper reality that we seek in God. Opaque icons merely distract, which suggests that the ambiguity remains inherent to the human condition itself, and not to pilgrimage.

³ Gerard W. Hughes, *God in all Things*.

Pilgrimage as a Means of Exploring Faith, Science and Nature

RICHARD MURRAY

Lay Reader, All Saints' Church, Whiterashes

At a basic level, pilgrimage is about following a path. It provides a break from the routine, an opportunity to expand horizons — and a chance to reassess priorities. Pilgrimage is about noticing things, taking in the language of a place, its history, its dynamics, its culture; tuning in to the essence of things, a way of connecting.

The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, probably most famous for his short poem *God's Grandeur*, used two terms in his writing, 'inscape' and 'instress'. By inscape he means a complex of characteristics that gives a thing its uniqueness and that differentiates it from other things, and instress, the force of being which holds the inscape and carries it whole into the mind of the beholder.

Wordsworth experienced a similar inscape which had spiritual or mystical significance for him. These poets from the Romantic era saw nature in its individuality, as opposed to the scientific approach of the eighteenth century, which had been to classify and generalize.

In his book *I and Thou*, the philosopher Martin Buber says that when considering a tree, one cannot avoid degrading it to the status of a mere object, by naming its species and counting its number, but then he says:

It can, however, also come about, if I have both will and grace,
that in considering the tree I become bound up in relation to it.
The tree is no longer It.¹

The whole of nature is a 'thou', a mirror of the human existence, silently reflecting our experience of being alive, forcing us to rethink our ideas about the physical world. By walking through a meadow, or beside a river, or through a woodland we can not only appreciate the science of the landscape, but also its poetics.

How might it impact on us

Attentiveness deepens our sense of the order, balance, harmony and grace of creation. In turn this develops our human capacities for intimacy, trust

¹ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (1923; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1937), pp. 7–8.

and relationship. Just as a great painting may hold us in conversation, or a piece of music touch our soul, so a journey of any kind in the outdoors can give us a glimpse, an insight, into the silent and invisible life that points to something more significant.

Annie Dillard's spiritual autobiography, *Pilgrim at Tinker's Creek*, is a theological and natural science study of a year in a Virginia valley. She is riveted by profligate, extravagant nature, and the law of kill or be killed, that we tend to ignore when we are walking in the countryside. But at the same time nature invites her to make connections in personal ways and she concludes her book by saying:

The giant water bug ate the world. And like Billy Bray I go on my way, and my left foot says 'Glory,' and my right foot says 'Amen': in and out of Shadow Creek, upstream and down, exultant, in a daze, dancing, to the twin silver trumpets of praise.²

Our relationship with science and nature

Science comes from the Latin *scientia*, which refers to any systematic body of organized knowledge. But science, as we know it today, is generally taken to mean just the natural sciences. Theology, another systematic body of organized knowledge was once termed 'the queen of sciences'. It contributed to the emergence of modern science. *Scientia* is a pilgrimage of discovery and scientists are pilgrims in much the same way that people of faith are. The realms that some scientists are operating in today is getting closer to metaphysics than physics.

The father of quantum mechanics, Niels Bohr, became something of a guru with his quasi-mystical understanding of his field. The science writer Philip Ball has called his recent book *Beyond Weird: Why everything you thought you knew about quantum physics is different*. It's recommended for lay readers. I'm thinking of getting a copy. Scientists are beginning to take seriously what philosophers have been debating for centuries. What is real? What is a living being? What is beauty?

Professor Suzanne Simard at the University of British Columbia has discovered that beneath the soil of the forest, a world of infinite fungal networks grows in association with the roots of a plant in a symbiotic or mildly pathogenic relationship. These networks connect trees and allow them to communicate. So, the forest behaves as though it's a single organism. A single species will look after their kith and kin and send messages of wisdom and support to the next generation.³ By their roots, trees speak in a

² Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (London: Pan Books, 1976), p. 237.

³ [Suzanne Simard, TED talk, June 2016.](#)

language of electrons with crystalline bonds of affection. Trees through their leaves can taste, smell and in a sense see, warning others of harmful invaders. We can learn from the wisdom of trees.

The earth behaving as one organism is an idea put forward by the inventor James Lovelock. To his annoyance, his ideas about Gaia have been taken up by eco-theologians and earth-diviners. But secular or not, the point we should remember about Gaia is that she is not a benevolent Mother Earth, who calls for a cult of worshippers to gather round her. To pay attention to nature is not to pray to Gaia, to worship her, to ask her what she wants from us and to do it. Rather, it is to be provoked toward new modes of thinking and acting.

In his book *The Biology of Wonder*, the biologist and philosopher Andreas Weber questions the pure scientific viewpoint of a mechanistic universe, of an abstract genetic code controlling the bodies of all created organisms, like pre-programmed machines, with algorithms shaping lives.⁴ He says it does not explain freedom of choice, the sense of what is good or bad shared by all organisms; the human feelings of doubt, love, guilt or compassion.

As a birdwatcher, I have heard, all too rarely, the nightingale's song. What becomes apparent, and scientists have confirmed this, is that its song is not just about genetic inheritance, or indeed mapping territories by warning off the opposition. Deep in the hedgerow its song is an expression of the sheer joy of its existence, and it orients me into its world.

Acting locally

In recent years, I have been taking part in developing links between faith, science and nature in the context of pilgrimage.

St Ternan's Banchory had a science and faith project, which involved woodland walks led by an Aberdeenshire countryside ranger along parts of the Deeside way. The ranger expertly drew our attention to what was happening in nature. But to give the walks a spiritual dimension, we invited the walkers to share a poem, piece of scripture or spiritual writing. Science and faith fell into conversation following the same path. And it had an extraordinary effect on the participants. Many started to notice the detail of nature, a small flower, birdsong, a caterpillar crossing our path. Contemplative silence fell on the group; even the young people ceased their 'Game of Thrones' battles and joined the 'oldies' in the walk.

I led an eight-mile reflective walk through the Fetternear Estate in Kemnay for the Epiphany group. We tried to maintain a vow of silence and

⁴ Andreas Weber, *The Biology of Wonder* (Canada: New Society Publishers, 2016), pp. 97–100.

participants were aided by extracts from various writings and questions for reflection. It was clear by the time of our lunchtime picnic that the vow of silence had to be lifted as everyone seemed bursting to say something about what they had experienced.

Eco-Congregation Scotland

In the run-up to the Paris Climate Change Conference, Eco-Congregation Scotland (ECS) commissioned a baton made from a recycled pew from a church in Edinburgh. It was carried from church to church across the length and breadth of Scotland before arriving at the conference floor. A spiritual symbol present at a secular conference.

ECS has set up a pilot with registered congregations and the RSPB. The aim is to provide opportunities for churches to import the scientific expertise of RSPB staff into their wildlife projects, such as, how to develop wildlife sanctuaries in their churchyards and communities. The reciprocal is the opportunity to enjoy the biodiversity of the paths through the RSPB reserves, providing places of prayerful contemplation and worship.

God is an active creator, an artist and a musician. By an outpouring of divine love, a great order, a grand symphony, God arranges the staff, notes, pitch and accidentals, dots and ties of creation; and surreptitiously, unfolds a work of harmony and beauty, while the beat and rhythm drives the pace of life.⁵

As pilgrims exploring nature, we can experience this musicianship if we apply our intelligence and are receptive to wisdom. Intelligence comes from the Latin meaning 'choose between'. But it's not about choosing between science and faith. We need to use more than our brains; we need to experience nature with our whole bodies; we need to be mindful, inwardly appreciative, moment by moment. Making the connection between science, faith and nature provides an experience of belonging that makes our lives profoundly meaningful. Pilgrimage makes every place holy ground.

⁵ Richard Murray, '[Preaching Eco-Theology](#)', *Journal of the College of Preachers*, 166 (July 2017).

Walking Towards Another Possible World — Pilgrimage as Solidarity and Prophetic Witness

WENDY LLOYD

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On 4 July 2014, I hoisted a rucksack on my back and set out from Oviedo in Northern Spain to follow the Camino Primitivo to Santiago. From there, I would continue on to Finisterre. Recently, I dusted down my journal from that journey. On the first page, after a few practical logistics I had written myself this question to ponder on the way: ‘What does “to walk humbly” mean?’ The words will no doubt be familiar to the reader: ‘He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to **walk humbly** with your God? (Micah 6.8).

I do not know if you remember but the summer of 2014 was a particularly brutal one in Israel. There was conflict in Israel/Palestine with the seven-week bombardment of Gaza. I was journeying for three of those weeks and would see news clips on the TV screens in the various bars and cafés along the way and my heart was burdened by the sight of conflict and carnage.

I had been six years with Christian Aid by 2014. Christian Aid, as most of you may know is the relief and development agency set up by the churches in Britain and Ireland after World War II to address the then refugee crisis in Europe. It seeks to challenge not just the symptoms of poverty across the world now, but to tackle the injustice at its root. My job for the past few years has been to prepare and gather prayers and worship material to motivate and inspire supporters. This means engaging closely with the stories of communities across the world, with partners who are working in the most challenging of circumstances and by the time I hoisted my pack onto my back my heart was heavy with the world’s woes. Perhaps it was for that reason that I packed as lightly as I could.

And from that pilgrimage I found three fabulous companions, two profound sources of hope and one insatiable appetite for the rhythm and ritual of walking that continues unabated in my life today. It is the two sources of hope — the hope of living a simple solidarity and the hope of pilgrimage as prophetic witness — that I want to reflect on. I trust they illustrate how pilgrimage can sustain us on the journey to another possible world.

The hope of living a simple solidarity

On the first evening in the Alberque I met the first of my three companions, a tall Irish fella called Kevin. As well as sharing experiences of growing up in a divided Ireland as we walked, he also taught me about the simplicity of pilgrimage. On that first night he described the rhythm and ritual of every day. 'Your life becomes very simple', he said. 'You, walk, eat, wash clothes and sleep. That's it. The simple way.' And as I reflect on those words from Micah, I think there is something about living simply that correlates with walking humbly.

There is a wisdom to be found in packing as lightly as we can, treading as softly on the earth as possible, and living a simpler life in the face of a changing climate. We need, in radical repentance, to turn away from our current, insouciant, lifestyle. We need to truly acknowledge that it would take the equivalent of four planets to sustain us if everyone was to live as we do in western materialistic societies.

How often do we find, when going on pilgrimage or for a long walk, that most of what we do not bring with us is superfluous to our lives? I came to discover that pilgrimage is a profoundly anti-consumer and even anti-capitalist pursuit. Kathy Galloway, my friend and then boss, gave me the following reflection:

Pilgrimage is [...] a sign of contradiction, and of resistance to our prevailing value system, that of the market. Pilgrimage, after all, has no function other than itself; its means is as important as its end, its process as its product. Its utility value is small, and its benefits cannot be quantified or costed. Its value is intrinsic. It is something that is good to do because it is good to do. It states clearly that the extravagant gesture (because it is extravagant in terms of time and commitment) is an irrepressible part of what it means to be human and to walk on the earth. And whether the context for pilgrimage is solitude or community, we will be drawn deeper into the mystery of God and the care of creation.

I discovered that the simplicity of life as a pilgrim is an act of solidarity with those who have no choice but to live simply in the world. And they have much to teach those of us who are bound by the advertising claims that our value and worth is in our stuff or our appearance.

When I first came to Christian Aid ten years ago the Cut the Carbon March had just happened. Twenty walkers completed the 1,000 miles in eleven weeks from Bangor NI to London, England. The walkers carried messages, from across the world about the impact of global warming and encouraged members of the public to join the national campaign and make

personal commitments to reduce their carbon footprint. It was the start of the Christian Aid Climate Change Campaign.

This long walk was a forerunner to what became the pilgrimage to Paris in 2015. Inspired by their faith, pilgrims from across the UK walked from London to Paris over two weeks, calling on world leaders to agree a fair, ambitious and binding climate change deal just ahead of the climate talks.

What I found particularly powerful and prophetic about that pilgrimage was that there were many others making their own foot pilgrimage to Paris from all across Europe.

Yeb Sano, the former Philippines negotiator to the climate change talks led a People's Pilgrimage from Rome to Paris to call for the climate justice needed for those who are suffering most from climate change but have done the least to cause the problem. As a Filipino, Sano has experienced the violent impact of environmental changes. His father's hometown of Tacloban was devastated by typhoon Haiyan, which killed more than 6,000 people in the Philippines when it struck in 2013. At the time, Sano was his country's top climate change negotiator and received a standing ovation when he broke down in tears while speaking at UN talks in Warsaw that year. He was joined on the People's Pilgrimage by about a dozen others from the Philippines, Hong Kong, the UK and the US. They took fifty-seven days to reach Paris passing through Italy, Switzerland and Germany before arriving in France; they were met by local environmental groups on the way.

In September 2018, just days before they were due to be harvested, the food crops of hundreds of thousands of people living in rural communities in the Philippines were devastated by Typhoon Mangkhut. Christian Aid partners took supplies to the most remote and devastated parts of the country and launched yet another climate-related emergency appeal. But, the impact of climate change is not just felt in large-scale natural weather events. My colleague in Manila recently told me that even when there isn't a typhoon, the rain is severe. The city, her car and home have all been flooded.

The People's Pilgrimage, the pilgrimage to Paris, the Cut the Carbon March are just a few examples of how pilgrimage is about walking in solidarity with those who are living at the sharp edge of climate change. They are a prophetic witness, a demonstration of the opportunity and liberation afforded to all when we live simply. Pilgrimage embodies what it is to live simply and hopefully for the sake of the planet.

The hope of pilgrimage as prophetic witness

In August 2016, I organized a fundraising walk over the most northerly Munro in Scotland, Ben Hope. And I decided I would walk to Ben Hope from

Glasgow to meet the group there. Three hundred miles in three weeks: the Hike to Hope. It was a deeply challenging journey, which, if I'm honest, I am still processing. I've only just finished writing up my account of it, which you can read on a blog.¹

I think my current working definition of pilgrimage is to ask the question 'Am I walking towards or away from God?' Micah 6 reminds me that it is neither, I walk *with* God or rather God walks *with* me.

The Hike to Hope, which took me along the West Highland Way and the Cape Wrath Trail, was a journey of great extremes. Belden Lane, in his book, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, talks about the indifference of nature for our wellbeing.² It was an indifference I experienced many times on that journey north to Ben Hope. But regardless of how hard it got, no matter how stretched and pummelled I felt, I knew that I could stop at any time. I could retreat and return to the warmth of my home, my bath, my duvet and my hot chocolate — and I dreamt of doing just that more than a few times. But I was also aware that there were many, many people making more perilous journeys than I was all across the world. Today, sixty-five million people have been forced, or at the very least have been left with very little choice in the matter, to leave their homes. 'No one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land', poet Warsan Shire reminds us.

So, as I walked, I walked to raise funds for the so-called 'refugee crisis'. And when I returned from my walk I reflected on differences and similarities between forced migration and pilgrimage. Some of those reflections were reproduced in 2018 in a paper, *Becoming Human Together*, which focuses on a theological response to migration, written by Christian Aid Scotland and Scottish Faith Action for Refugees.³

In *Becoming Human Together*, I suggest that our rediscovery of pilgrimage offers an opportunity to enter into a deeper solidarity with those walking long distances in the hope of finding a safe place to call home:

The word pilgrim, from *peregrinus* in the Latin, was the foreigner who abandoned the comfort of his or her home to literally wander through the fields. Pilgrims were not simply foreigners because they often move through unfamiliar territories, but because they separated themselves from the ordinary. And by extension, pilgrimage is an inherent part of understanding the Church as part of the movement of people

¹ wendywantering.wordpress.com.

² Belden Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality*

³ christianaid.org.uk/resources/about-us/becoming-human-together.

who are exiles on earth, strangers in the world and sojourners en route to another place.

We are on our way to God, moving forward with hope between ‘the borders of Christ’s first and second coming, between the present life and the life to come, between the earthly Jerusalem and the new Jerusalem.’ We are journeying towards another possible world — while at the same time keeping our feet firmly planted, our hands dirty and our voices raised in this one. On pilgrimage we enter into a deeper solidarity and go beyond charity to justice in both action and attitude. And as a pilgrim church, we are called to be a prophetic church, explicitly naming and addressing the sinful realities that are causing the forced migration and displacement of millions of people within and beyond borders and working to eradicate them.⁴

It is this vision of prophetic pilgrimage that underpins the World Council of Churches’ invitation to member churches ‘to work together in a common quest, renewing the true vocation of the church through collaborative engagement with the most important issues of justice and peace, healing a world filled with conflict, injustice and pain’.

And in rediscovering pilgrimage as solidarity and prophetic witness, is to do justice, act kindly and walk humbly with our God.

Those who have walked such journeys will know the Camino never really ends. As I sat on the beach at the end of the Camino Primitivo, I reflected that to walk humbly meant I didn’t have to carry the weight of the world on my shoulders, in fact to do so was a bit arrogant. Rather I was reminded by the love and grace of God, that the other world I seek and journey towards is the *Missio Dei*: God’s vision and mission for heaven on earth. My role is to take part in rather than carry full responsibility for that work. As Oscar Romero says, ‘We cannot do everything, and there’s a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.’

But I am still working that out. I feel another long walk coming soon.

⁴ Ibid.

The Blessings of Mountain Pilgrimage

RICHARD TIPLADY

Director of Mixed Mode Training, Scottish Episcopal Institute

'I'd rather be in the mountains thinking of God, than in church thinking about the mountains.'¹

A Blessing for the Journey

This is a new dawn,
Pregnant with opportunity;
A rich offering,
There for the taking;
A gift without repeat.

Feel your body unclench
As your soul rises.
This land knows not
The things you leave behind.
It does not judge,
So be healed with a Holy kiss.

Know that Heaven is here,
Glimpsed in fleeting encounters
That cannot be bidden;
Come and gone in a moment.

Let the mountain speak,
Let the river tell its tale.
See with the eyes of
One who looks beyond the view.
Listen to the voice of
One who calls in the silence.

Find rhythm in the circle of the day
And rest in the blanket of night.
Know that all is good.

¹ John Muir, *Journeys in the Wilderness: A John Muir Reader* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2009).

Though storms may rage,
The sun will shine again
To warm the hearth grown cold.

Go worship in the mountain steeps,
Join the song of creation,
Play as instinct leads,
Uncover the story of this land,
Hear the symphony of wind and water,
Smell the mist as it parts,
See the big in the small.

And be ...
Part of what you see,
Known and knowing,
Made whole, set free.²

Wandering over the Munros and glens of Scotland in recent years, I have reflected more and more on the emotional and spiritual benefits of my chosen pastime (that is, is there more to this than the physical benefits?). And I began to ask myself, somewhat inadequately, whether there is such a thing as a 'spirituality of the mountains'?

The buzz that you get from summiting a big hill, whether in fair weather or foul, is palpable. I drive home from my days out on an adrenaline high, annoying my wife immensely with my enthusiasm when I get home. So, I do need to ask whether I am overly-spiritualizing what is simply a natural human reaction, the combination of a sense of achievement with a flood of endorphins and adrenaline. Maybe nothing is going on except a blend of well-earned psychological and physiological rewards for what is simply a jolly good day out.

But what if there is more to it than that?

Writings on mountain spirituality are not uncommon. Many of the works of the famous Scottish-American naturalist John Muir are infused with a kind of nature mysticism, reflecting on a spiritual encounter with nature itself. Nan Shepherd's classic *The Living Mountain*³ betrays an underlying form of Western Buddhism, of an awareness of the essential oneness of all things as she meanders and traverses the Cairngorms. Robert Macfarlane's *Mountains of the Mind* can best be described as a secular spirituality of the

² John Fleetwood, selected unpublished papers (2018).

³ Nan Shepherd, *The Living Mountain* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2014).

mountains. Christian spiritualities of the mountain do exist,⁴ and it is this that I seek to explore here, particularly in the form of pilgrimage.

So, let's begin our journey with the prayer at the start of this paper. We should remind ourselves that pilgrimage, whether in the mountains or elsewhere, is a journey, not a race. Albert Palmer recounts a story of his encounter with the legendary John Muir during an early outing with the Sierra Club:

One day as I was resting in the shade Mr Muir overtook me on the trail and began to chat in that friendly way in which he delights to talk with everyone he meets. I said to him: 'Mr Muir, someone told me you did not approve of the word 'hike.' Is that so?' His blue eyes flashed, and with his Scotch accent he replied: 'I don't like either the word or the thing. People ought to saunter in the mountains — not hike!'

'Do you know the origin of that word 'saunter'? It's a beautiful word. Away back in the Middle Ages people used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when people in the villages through which they passed asked where they were going, they would reply, "A la sainte terre," "To the Holy Land". And so they became known as sainte-terre-ers or saunterers. Now these mountains are our Holy Land, and we ought to saunter through them reverently, not 'hike' through them.'

Now, whether the derivation of saunter Muir gave me is scientific or fanciful, is there not in it another parable? There are people who 'hike' through life. They measure life in terms of money and amusement; they rush along the trail of life feverishly seeking to make a dollar or gratify an appetite. How much better to 'saunter' along this trail of life, to measure it in terms of beauty and love and friendship! How much finer to take time to know and understand the men and women along the way, to stop a while and let the beauty of the sunset possess the soul, to listen to what the trees are saying and the songs of the birds, and to gather the

⁴ Martin Haworth, *A Clearing of the Mists: In Pursuit of Wisdom upon the Scottish Hills* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2016); Belden Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

fragrant little flowers that bloom all along the trail of life for those who have eyes to see!⁵

Palmer's reflection introduces us to one of the key concepts in mountain pilgrimage, that it is a form of spiritual discipline. I have certainly heard God speak, and heard myself speak, during the loneliness and quietness of my mountain walks.⁶ There is a certain profundity of aloneness and of space when you get out onto a hill by yourself (especially on the quieter, more remote and less popular ones). With our modern, safe and well-regulated lives, there is something about the mountains that makes you aware of your limits, your fragility, and your vulnerability (it doesn't take much to get yourself into a whole heap of trouble while out on a remote hill, especially if you are careless, or even if you're just plain unlucky). Travelling light, exercising patience, and encountering silence — all of these are good disciplines to bring back to the hurly-burly of our busy 'normal' lives.

Attentiveness and indifference are mountain virtues. One is attentive to exterior landmarks, the weather, the landscape, and one's location. One is also attentive to the interior condition, of fatigue, of hunger, of thirst, and of injury. And yet one is also indifferent, to sparseness, to emptiness, to the ego, and to the self. One's attention is drawn elsewhere.

Revd Paul Watson, Rector of St James The Less, Bishopbriggs, reflects this in his consideration of life under COVID-19 lockdown, drawn from his July 2020 ascent of the relentless slopes of Bla Bheinn on Skye:

The slope was very steep over a long time with only a faint path sometimes and loose scree in places. I had to really pay attention to where I was putting my feet and also watch my pace on such a sustained slope so I would have energy left at the end. ...Most Scottish mountains vary in their slope gradient so you get a break now and again...not on Bla Bheinn... relentlessly steep!

I mention all this because the evening before I had been listening to a talk about one of my favourite authors, an elderly American farmer who is also one of the US's most respected authors, Wendell Berry. One of his themes, learnt from his years working

⁵ Albert Palmer, *The Mountain Trail and Its Message* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1911). Extract from '[A Parable of Sauntering](#)' [accessed 14 August 2020].

⁶ Perhaps the Holy Spirit inhabits the top of mountains in the same way that he seems to inhabit the UK motorway network and the bath/shower. Or is it simply that these are all places where we stop talking long enough to listen and hear him speak?

a small farm in a traditional way, is to respect the local conditions, or what he calls the given-ness of things. He is very cautious about our modern tendency to impose our will on nature, to not respect the peculiarities and local particular details of what is there and to try to apply principles and methods that may work elsewhere but are not suitable here.

There is a certain humility in being willing to accept things as they are, to learn to work with them, adapt ourselves to them. We can still make a difference and be part of a creative process, but it is much more in dialogue and in keeping with the grain and situated-ness of where we are. This can apply to all sorts of things in life, relationships, workplace, where we live, our church, even our COVID-19 experience of lockdown.

I was mulling all this over as I was slogging away step by step. I really had to respect the mountain, pay attention to the precise details of what was in front of me ... there was no wishing it away and finding an easier route, except to give up and head back down the hill. If I wanted to get to the top, I had to accept my limitations of fitness and skill as well as the risks and challenges of the slope.

It has been like that, hasn't it, this long period since the middle of March? That need to take each week as it comes, each stage of the lockdown and how we are finding things, our concerns and our limitations. And even now we don't know what the future holds, in some ways the slope continues upwards, but thankfully it is not so steep or hard as it was earlier.⁷

Pilgrimage is a journey with purpose. It is a time to explore the invisible through the visible, a time to reflect, a time to heal, and a time to connect with God and with ourselves. 'It is almost as if we think better on the move, praying with our feet.'⁸ Mountaineering, and so mountain pilgrimage, is about discovering something new about oneself: This is what climbing was about, the exploration of the soul, the trust and learning gained from attempting something difficult and improbable.⁹

⁷ Paul Watson, '[The Given-ness of things](#)' [accessed 14 August 2020].

⁸ Fleetwood, unpublished papers.

⁹ Conrad Anker, quoted in Joe Simpson, *The Beckoning Silence* (London: Vintage Books, 2003), p. 57.

The Place That Calls

I am the holy place.
I am the place where calloused feet crack and backs
ache.

I am the treacherous place that taunts you and rings
with laughter.

And I am the place that calls you back....

I am the scree that unsettles your foothold
And I am the place where plans are hatched
Ideas are matched
And dreams despatched

I am the place and I call you back....

I am the place where you will challenge yourself
and be challenged by others
I am the place to meet new sisters and brothers

I am the throne of petitions and laughter
Of thanksgiving and disaster
I am the house of prayer

I am the horizon
Never seen in towns
I am the end where sky is found

I am the edge-land
That cannot be owned

I am the headwall and the spur
That deride you as you ascend and then

I am the place where god is present
I am the heaven where god is treasured and
unfiltered
And unrelenting

And I am the place that calls you back....

I am the cathedral where hope meets doubt
where the sky is reached and earth is found

I am the mountain

And I am your home

Together we are the pilgrims.¹⁰

Mountains are holy places, and mountains are treacherous places. They are places that unsettle. They are places of thanksgiving and places of disaster.

This combination of beauty and terror is best expressed using the Romantic concept of the 'sublime'.¹¹ An idea with gothic undertones, the experience of the 'sublime' combines the simultaneous feelings of fear and excitement caused by a dangerous landscape, and it moves the imagination to awe because it is simply beyond words. I have struggled to describe to myself (never mind to anyone else) the emotions that are stirred up by the 'mountain top experience' of being on a mountain top. Even in high winds (when I do my best to find a corner to leeward) I cannot help but sit and stare at the view when I reach a summit. I have seen fellow walkers get to the summit, touch the cairn or trig point, and immediately carry on to the next summit or head back downhill. Honestly, I do not understand this behaviour (unless it's *blawin' a hoolie*). To sit and stare, to drink in the view, the scale and the very wilderness, is one of the reasons I do this. And even as I write this, feelings and memories well up that are beyond words and beyond description. The only way into this experience is to do it for yourself.

Risk is key to the mountaineering experience. Things can and do go wrong, as I know only too well. Mountains can be ferocious teachers, stripping away the inexperienced, the careless, the unlucky. It is easy to make a mistake. 'This is the terrifying — and enthralling — possibility that mountains offer.'¹² Those who are attracted to mountaineering tend to be self-confident and assertive, no-nonsense people of action. And yet mystical and self-transcendent experiences are reported at high altitude by those not normally so inclined. Spiritual experiences are not unusual on mountains. Moses first met with God on a mountain (Exodus 3. 1–6); Jesus delivered his famous sermon on a mountain (Matthew 5–7), and the disciples experienced his Transfiguration on one (Mark 9. 2–8). Whether you have an encounter

¹⁰ Tim Watson [@BeatLiturgist and Richard Passmore](#).

¹¹ A phrase that we too often retain these days to refer merely to a fine wine or a posh dessert.

¹² Lane, *Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, p. 117.

with 'The Big Grey Man of Ben Macdui' or the rather spooky experience of a brocken spectre (as I have on one occasion), mountains open your mind to something else, to 'the other'. As Lane comments, 'the geography helps in forcing a breakthrough to something beyond all previously-conceived limits of being.'¹³ Perhaps this is because mountains are what Macfarlane calls 'a world apart'.¹⁴ The rules of nature apply differently up there. You get snow lasting into midsummer; it was 0°C on the summit of Ben Nevis in September 2019, on a clear sunny day when it was 22°C down on the valley floor (I know because I was there that day). No wonder, Macfarlane says, that mountains have been seen as the abode of gods and monsters.

It's not a big leap from experiencing the mountains as 'sublime' to seeing the mountains as creation, displaying the handiwork of the Creator. For Christians, this is an easy step to make and one that I hear people expressing all the time (usually while observing a beautiful view rather than a sticky peat bog, although the principle presumably applies to both). The pilgrim song of Psalm 121, sung by those making their way up to Jerusalem, is an obvious starting point for this move from creation to the Creator: 'I lift up my eyes to the mountains — where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth' (vs 1–2). Psalm 65 explores the theme of gladness at the bounty of the harvest, provided by the One who made the very mountains themselves (Psalm 65, especially vs 6 and 12). This dual theme (of prosperity and fullness of life, and of the creative power of God which far exceeds the immensity of the mountains) is repeated elsewhere in the Psalms (Psalm 72. 3, 16; 147. 8 for the former, Psalm 114. 3–6; 148. 9 for the latter). So, this is not a distant Creator; he is greater than the mountains, but he is close, and he looks after and provides for his people. Jesus makes the same connection between creation, the Creator and his loving provision, in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 6. 25–34.

But mountains are not merely places where one might encounter God. They are also places to encounter absence. Austere and unaccommodating mountain landscapes point us to the smallness of ourselves. The renunciation or denial of the centrality of oneself points you to something beyond and to something absent. In the traditions of the Desert Fathers, God is met in emptiness and revealed in what others may disregard as a barren nothingness. The Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant was a vacant space. Christ's victory over sin and death is proclaimed most eloquently by an empty tomb. An indifferent landscape reflects an unfathomable God, one

¹³ Lane, *Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, p. 39.

¹⁴ Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (London: Granta Books, 2003).

who is far above and indifferent to the petty needs and rivalries that consume us. 'One of the scourges of our age is that all our deities are housebroken and eminently companionable.'¹⁵ Our cultural theologies are devoted to self-realization and the fulfilment of our self-potential, and the gods ask only how they can enhance the lives of those they serve. But what mountain wilderness teaches best is abandonment. Its capacity to ignore is immense. Its central spiritual lesson is that 'it doesn't give a shit'.¹⁶ And yet, in that indifference, one discovers an enormous freedom:

I come to the mountains not to conquer them but to immerse myself in their incomprehensible immensity — so much bigger than we are — to better comprehend humility and patience, balanced in harmony with the desire to push hard.¹⁷

This discussion of risk and danger cannot conclude without some reflection on my own mountaineering accident in the Lake District in March 2020, one where I fell over 200m down frozen snow and ice and incurred multiple injuries. Mountains do not deliberately kill. They are the product of geology. Setting aside the contemporary fascination with panpsychism, mountains are cold hard lumps of rock, full of 'indifferent forces that punish inattention or arrogance'.¹⁸ They refuse to conform to our needs or to our imagination; 'the mountains of the earth have often turned out to be more resistant, more fatally real, than the mountains of the mind.'¹⁹

Men fall off mountains because
They have no business being there.
That's why they go, that's why they die.²⁰

I had to read a lot of mountaineering books before I realized that they weren't really about climbing; they were about falling. That's what hit me (in more ways than one) after I fell down a mountain. What's odd about falling is that you don't expect it. I know that sounds like 'a statement of the bleeding obvious'. No-one would go up a hill if they thought they were going to fall. But when it does happen, there's no notice period. One second, you're

¹⁵ Lane, *Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, p. 53.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁷ Alex Lowe, quoted in Simpson, *Beckoning Silence*, p. 58.

¹⁸ Laurence Gonzales, *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why* (New York, NY: WW Norton, 2017), p. 261.

¹⁹ Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind*, p. 19.

²⁰ Sid Marty, *Abbot*, quoted in Simpson, *Beckoning Silence*, p. 58.

ok; the next, you're not. It's that quick, as past mountaineers recall in their accounts of the first ascents of the Matterhorn and Annapurna:

So far well, but in attempting to pass the corner (to the present moment I cannot tell how it happened), I slipped and fell [...] The knapsack brought my head down first, and I pitched into some rocks about a dozen feet below; they caught something and tumbled me off the edge, head over heels, into the gully.²¹

The sun was at its height, the weather brilliant and the colours magnificent. Never had the mountains appeared to me so majestic as in this moment of extreme danger.

All at once a crack appeared in the snow under the feet of the Sherpas and grew longer and wider. A mad notion flashed into my mind — to climb up the slope at speed and reach solid ground. Then I was lifted up by a superhuman force, and as the Sherpas disappeared before my eyes, I went head over heels.²²

Conversations with a friend who was avalanched on Tower Gully on Ben Nevis confirmed my own experience. What is so surprising about a fall like this is the intense clarity while it is happening, and the complete lack of fear. Joe Simpson describes the experience with his usual insight and panache:

Fear seems to exist only in our imagination. Without imagination, without the ability to see our place in the future, to work out the consequence of a particular event in all its gruesome detail, we would be quite fearless. I suppose that is why serious violent accidents, such as car crashes, avalanches, and long bouncing falls are frequently described as not frightening while actually taking place. It's as if so much is happening to you, so much information is rushing into your mind that you have no time to imagine what the outcome might be. Things seem to happen in slow motion, as if the speed at which your mind is operating is affecting your perception of time.

²¹ Edward Whymper, *Scrambles Among the Alps in the Years 1860–1869* (Washington DC: National Geographic Society, 2002), pp. 106–107.

²² Maurice Herzog, *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8000–Metre Peak* (London: Vintage Books, 2011), p. 179.

The future is simply a matter of fact, an emotionless reality — you will be dead — and that is that. Only the present, what is happening to you at this very instant, concerns you. Because of this, you are unable to extrapolate what the future will be like as a result of what is happening to you now. All you can do is experience the present, nothing more. Deprived of the ability to imagine the future, you are fearless; suddenly there is nothing to be scared about. You have no time to ponder on death's significance or fear what it may feel like. In the cataclysmic violence of the accident you lose not only the future but the past as well. You lose all possible reasons for fear, unable as you are to understand the loss of what you once were or what you could become. Time is frozen for you in the present events and sensations, the knocks and bumps from which you can draw no emotional conclusions. *I'm crashing. I'm falling fast. I'm about to die. This is it.* In truth you have far too much on your mind for such frivolous luxuries as fear.²³

Is a violent and unexpected death the only way to meet with God in the mountains? Thankfully not. I have met more than my fair share of Christians whose search for God began because of a sunset or a landscape. Their encounter with nature as creation led to a search for and encounter with the Creator himself. But what does it mean to say that one can encounter God in nature, rather than just seeing nature as his handiwork? The Old Testament seems to major on the difference between God and creation. In the context of the polytheistic and primal religions of Israel's neighbours, this was a vital theological point. But it has been turned into one of the charges against Christianity in the contemporary environmental crisis. By emphasizing human uniqueness as those made in the image of God, the natural world simply becomes a resource to be exploited and used by humanity for its own benefit.²⁴ A tree has no sacred quality and no intrinsic relationship to its Creator; it is useful only insofar as it is used by humanity to build a house or to heat a meal. A mountain becomes the basis for a mine or a quarry, as a source of metal ore, coal or aggregates for road building. It becomes valuable only when a human uses it.

²³ Joe Simpson, *This Game of Ghosts* (London: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 264–265.

²⁴ Arnold Toynbee, 'The Religious Background to the Present Environmental Crisis', in *Ecology and Religion in History*, ed. by David and Eileen Spring (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

Moltmann uses the concept of the *vestigial Dei* to address this question.²⁵ Creation, even under its current conditions of sin and corruption, contains ‘traces’ of God, hidden tokens of his presence. The natural world is neither the revelation nor the image of God, but traces of these lie within it, the interpretation of which is found within the final revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Moltmann’s famous eschatological focus also comes into play. Just as Jesus’s parables are eschatological, demonstrating the hidden presence of the future, so also creation is a parable of its own future, the Kingdom of God. At present, it strains with anticipation (Romans 8. 19–21). Thus, for Moltmann, our present experience of nature is an anticipation of the future. It represents the promise of future glory, though not the future glory itself. Ultimately:

All created things will participate directly and without any mediation in God’s eternal life. The Creator’s distance from that [which] he has created will be ended through his own indwelling in his creation; though the difference between Creator and Creation will not disappear.²⁶

We should remind ourselves that the grace of God begins with creation, not redemption (Matthew 5. 45). This connection between creation and salvation can be seen in the prayers of Israel (Psalms 65 & 148). The prayers of the primitive Church began with an acknowledgement of the power and sovereignty of God in creation, before moving on to his redeeming work in Jesus Christ and the mission of the Church (Acts 4. 23–31). Both creation and redemption are the work of the same Word of God who became incarnate in Jesus Christ.

The renewal of creation has been wrought by the self-same Word who made it in the beginning.²⁷

A Blessing of Commissioning

Pilgrim — this journey is done!

Stiffening sinews tell of the labour of steps.
Glowing faces of windswept hill tops.
Steaming feet are liberated from the tyranny of
enclosure.

²⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, (London: SCM Press, 1985).

²⁶ Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 64.

²⁷ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 1.1.

Rest now as the circle of the day closes.
Your line has been drawn on the map;

A line across this land that you've made your own;
An encounter with stone and water,
Things visible and invisible;

Your line to the Holy of holies,
The promised land of ben and glen,
Fell and dale, lochan and rill.

For you have seen the mountain,
No, you have *been* the mountain,
Become part of what you see,
Come home to where you belong.

You have been touched by something
That cannot be taken away like a cheap souvenir.
Your gift is eternal;
A treasured memory.

Keep it close to your heart.
Let it fill your soul.
Let it permeate your
Mondays to your Fridays.
Let it direct all your tomorrows.

For you have known truth.
You have heard the whisper,
The call of the wild,
The ruach
Of the great I AM.

Be blessed.
Go forth!
And multiply —
The beauty,
Love,
Shalom.²⁸

²⁸ Fleetwood, unpublished papers (amended).

Our responses to mountains are for the most part culturally conditioned. 'When we look at a landscape, we do not see what is there, but largely what we think is there.'²⁹ The earlier view of mountains as repugnant deserts was re-engineered in the post-Romantic imagination as wilderness and adventure. Fleetwood asks us therefore to consider what we have seen:

A pleasing view, a line to be climbed, a river to be paddled, a skyline to run, a top to be bagged, or something more? Something that throbs with the imprint of the divine; something that tells of a bigger story; something that connects with your soul; something that cuts through everything that you've been taught or learned; something that is just known.³⁰

Macfarlane also reminds us that 'mountains return to us the priceless capacity for wonder'.³¹ And wonder helps us to see the presence of God in all things. 'If you lose your sense of wonder, you lose the sacramental majesty of the world. Nature is no longer a presence, it is a thing. Your life becomes a dead cage of fact.'³² As you wander, it would seem, you can find wonder.

All things must end, including the journey. The descent from the mountain is bittersweet, for it signifies a return to 'normality'. But the point is to return not the same, but different. To return commissioned. A pilgrimage is a great opportunity to reflect, but contemplation has little value if it doesn't lead to action. The goal is change.

Plants and animals change as one goes up the mountain, and so, apparently, do people.³³

²⁹ Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind*, p. 18.

³⁰ Fleetwood, *Wonder*, in unpublished papers.

³¹ Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind*.

³² John O'Donohue, *Eternal Echoes: Exploring our Hunger to Belong* (London: Bantam Books, 1998), p. 283.

³³ Diana Kappel-Smith, quoted in Lane, *Solace of Fierce Landscapes*, p. 87.

The Online Council of the Diocese of Recife in 2020: New Ways of Church in Time of Crisis

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This paper aims to contribute to studies on Anglicanism in Brazil, showing how the Nineteenth Province of the Anglican Communion, the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil (*Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil – IEAB*), prepared itself for the COVID-19 pandemic and which activities were developed during the early period of the pandemic. In this research, we are going to present a case study about the 34th Council of the Anglican Diocese of Recife (*Diocese Anglicana do Recife*). This ecclesiastical district was founded in 1976 by the division of the Anglican Diocese of Rio de Janeiro and covers the states of the Brazilian Northeast region (Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará, Piauí, Maranhão, Alagoas, Sergipe and Bahia). The headquarters are located in the Cathedral Church of the Good Samaritan in Recife.

In this paper, I am going to show part of the diocesan history, from the arrival of Anglicanism in this region, the difficulties of expansion, periods of conflict and crises, to schisms that reverberated even in the sphere of the worldwide Anglican Communion. However, nowadays, the diocese is experiencing reconstruction and renovation and the year 2020 was a great challenge to the life of this church. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the diocese decided to hold its council in a virtual way. Scheduled to take place from 17 to 19 July 2020, the ‘face-to-face event’ was transferred to the Zoom Platform, with the city of Recife as its administrative and technological headquarters. Given this atypical situation, which changed all the agendas of the churches at the local and global level, we want to register in this paper that this diocesan council was the first to happen virtually among the provinces of the Anglican Communion.

I am going to present how this event was planned, organized and executed, making it not only an experience for the council’s deputies, but also an ecclesiological laboratory that was accompanied and studied by other dioceses in the Brazilian Province. At the same time, I will bring the debates, the questions raised during the sessions, the projects put forward and the liturgical services which, in a special way, marked this unique moment in the history of this diocese. Due to this, the reconstruction period in the history of the Anglican Diocese of Recife led to an update of the church in the face of the contemporary world, following the principle of the *ecclesia*

reformata semper reformanda ('Reformed Church, always under reform') especially in these difficult times of COVID-19.

Anglicanism in the Northeast of Brazil and the Northern Diocese (Diocese Setentrional)

The arrival of Anglicanism in Brazil happened at two different times. First, in the early nineteenth century, was the establishment of chaplaincies of the Church of England simply to serve English citizens who came to Brazil. The second wave began in 1890 when two missionaries, Lucien Lee Kinsolving and James Watson Morris, came from the Episcopal Church in the United States and established the first Anglican community for Brazilians in the city of Porto Alegre, on the South Region. With growth and expansion throughout the country, in 1965, the Brazilian Church ceased to be part of the jurisdiction of the Episcopal Church of the United States, obtaining its financial and managerial independence, and integrating in the Anglican Communion as its nineteenth province.

The history of Anglicanism in northeast Brazil can be divided similarly. First, was the establishment of English chaplaincies at the beginning of the nineteenth century and second, the actual foundation of the Anglican Diocese of Recife. In his doctoral studies, the author divided the history of the latter into three periods which were named: Construction Period — 1976 to 1997, Crisis Period — 1997 to 2017, Reconstruction Period — starting from 2017 until the present.

In 1814 the British Cemetery was opened to bury foreign travelers and every person of the city who was not Roman Catholic (the law did not allow the funeral of Protestants or Freemasons in Catholic cemeteries). In 1822 an Anglican chaplaincy was established in Recife and the Church of the Holy Trinity was built and consecrated on 31 May 1838. The services, provided only for British citizens, were held for a long time at the *Igrejinha dos Ingleses* (British Chapel), located on Rua da Aurora. In 1946, with the city's urbanization process, the temple (Protestant churches, as in France, are spoken of as 'temples' in Brazil) was demolished to make way for *Conde da Boa Vista Avenue*. The *Sao Luiz Cinema* building took the new place and the Anglican community was transferred to *Rua Carneiro Vilela*, in the *Aflitos* neighborhood. The new Holy Trinity Church was erected, now with a tower. All the furniture in wood, the stained glass and the pipe organ, were transferred to this temple on the north side of Recife.

In the 1960s, as said before, the Brazilian Episcopal Church underwent a process of missionary expansion, which resulted in financial and administrative independence from the United States Episcopal Church. As a consequence, the Anglican Diocese of Rio de Janeiro (at that time called the Diocese of Central Brazil) was divided into three new diocesan units which

would later be known as the Anglican Diocese of Sao Paulo (*Diocese Anglicana de São Paulo*), the Anglican Diocese of Brasília (*Diocese Anglicana de Brasília*) and the Anglican Diocese of Recife (*Diocese Anglicana do Recife*). With the foundation of this so-called Northern Diocese (*Diocese Setentrional*), Recife became the see city of Anglicanism in the northeast in its second phase, marked by an intense missionary agenda and problems that would define the situation of this religious tradition in Brazil.

Ten years before, the Church of England had signed an agreement with the Episcopal Church of the United States, whereby British chaplaincies would be managed and shepherded by the Brazilian Episcopal Church, at the time still a missionary district of the North American Church. And thus in 1968 the Reverend Alfredo Rocha Fonseca was appointed to be the rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity. Having been one of those responsible for signing the agreement for the transition of Church of England chaplaincies in Brazil, as well as planning the division of the Central Diocese, the Right Reverend Edmund Knox Sherrill — son of the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the United States, Henry Sherrill — was chosen to be bishop of the Northern Diocese, being replaced in Rio de Janeiro by Bishop Agostinho Guillon Sória.

Although he was the new diocesan bishop, Bishop Sherrill preferred to spend more time in Rio de Janeiro than Recife, a situation that lasted for around seven years, when he took up residence in the capital of Pernambuco. Another problem was the geographical size of the diocese which covered all the northeast and north region of Brazil. The travels of the bishop were very expensive and exhausting considering he had to visit far distant cities, like Belém, capital of Pará, and Salvador, capital of Bahia. With few members of the clergy, developing mission projects was a great challenge in these first years; the ability for this would come from the rectors of the churches.

In the next decades, the man who took the direction and lead of the services was his dean, the Reverend Paulo Ruiz Garcia. Garcia arrived in Recife in 1975 to begin his work in the then Parish of the Holy Trinity, under the episcopate of Bishop Sherrill. With a charismatic personality, he soon developed the work that expanded the church in the city, through events such as *Life in the Spirit* seminars, *Marriage Encounter* and *Cursillos*. Most of this movement gravitated around the cathedral. Garcia abolished the use of the Book of Common Prayer to make liturgy more dynamic.

Bishop Sherrill retired in 1984, and the man elected as his successor was the Reverend Clóvis Erly Rodrigues, Dean of the Mediator's Cathedral in the South Western Diocese. This election went against the wishes of Bishop Sherrill and of the clergy and laity who wanted Garcia as the next diocesan bishop. One of the highlights of Rodrigues's episcopate was the creation of the Anglican Seminary for Theological Studies (SAET), located at the Church

of the Good Samaritan. In the following years, the institution was elevated to the category of Provincial Seminary for the North-Northeast Region. The work done at SAET quickly reverberated throughout the province. However, the emphasis of this seminary was focused on the academic education of clergy not of the laity, and this accentuated the problems the church had experienced since the beginning.

The Reverend Edward Robinson de Barros Cavalcanti was elected bishop in 1997 at the diocesan council in Bahia. This was the first time a northeastern bishop had been elected in the Brazilian Church. If, on the one hand, this election had once more frustrated the expectations of the cathedral community to see Garcia as bishop, on the other hand, Cavalcanti's episcopate had a special work around the seminary, with an expansion of the church in other parts of the region. This, however, accentuated the problems with Holy Trinity Cathedral. In September 2002, Dean Paulo Garcia broke with the IEAB, founding the 'Charismatic Episcopal Church of Brazil', part of the Convergence Movement of the United States. With this act, the Dean of Recife took with him almost all the members of the cathedral, considered the largest Anglican parish in Latin America, and also took the historic church building:

The religious debate over recognition and acceptance of homosexual persons in the Christian churches was accentuated in October 2002, when the Dean and the 3,500-member congregation of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Recife, in the northeast of Brazil, decided to withdraw themselves from the Episcopal Church of Brazil. Holy Trinity is the largest Anglican Church in Latin America. At first, the Dean and the congregation claimed the reason for the schism was the bishop's support for development of alternative rites to bless divorcées (at the end of a divorce process), and alternative rites to bless couples who are already living together or do not want to marry according to the civil law because of the economic implications. But these are issues Brazilian society has long ago debated and accepted. Holy Trinity Cathedral is a conservative evangelical church, within the most evangelical and conservative diocese of Brazil. Later comments by the Dean indicated that the real issue for the schism was the 'exaggerated liberty homosexual people have in the Church', even though the Recife diocesan canons clearly state that no one from a homosexual orientation, or even those who

accept this orientation as normal, could be ordained within that diocese.¹

The real reasons for Garcia's breakup were the invitation for him into the Charismatic Episcopal Church; his retirement (and as a consequence not becoming a bishop, according to his intentions); the difficulties he had in following the rules of the church and the diocesan bishop's authority. Despite the cathedral's exit, many parishes continued to adhere to Anglican doctrine, at least until September 2004, when Bishop Robinson Cavalcanti, disagreeing with the position adopted by IEAB and SAET, which began to accept the ordination of priests who are LGBT and who are open about their sexuality, broke away from the Brazilian province, creating an autonomous diocese. This group, loyal to the conservative views of Cavalcanti, called itself the 'Anglican Church — Diocese of Recife'.

The crisis created an institutional problem in affairs with the Anglican Communion and the Archbishop of Canterbury — at that time, the Right Reverend Rowan Williams. This newgroup was alleged to be under the authority not of Brazil, but of the Anglican Church of South America further south, and soon after became linked to GAFCON, during the Jerusalem Conference in 2008. In the same way, the denominational situation was confused further by the use of the name 'Anglican Diocese of Recife', the use of the diocesan seal by Bishop Cavalcanti's group, and the constant (disputed) affirmation that this new denomination was affiliated to the Anglican Communion. Some of these issues would only be solved in the courts in the next few years.

In two years, Recife had now three groups: one Episcopal Charismatic and two Anglican dioceses, which started a fratricidal struggle about which was the 'true church'. These two processes of division the author has denominated, respectively, the 'Small Schism of Recife', for the break-away of Garcia; and the 'Great Schism of Recife', for the break-away of Robinson, taking account of the numerical proportions and their consequences. This latest episode took away 90% of the clerics, members and buildings of the diocese founded in 1976. According to Carlos Calvani and Vera Oliveira, only after the schisms:

it was possible to perceive that what divided the Church were personalist projects and not the emphases typically 'evangelical' (in the low church sense) or typically 'catholic' (in the high

¹ See *The Continuum Complete International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, ed. by Robert T. Francoeur & Raymond J. Noonan (London; New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 98–113.

church or 'Anglo-Catholic' sense). It was undoubtedly a time when the Church revealed its ecclesiological maturity.²

In contrast to what happened in the first schism, this time, many parishes and their members left the communion of the IEAB, creating an institutional, financial and demographic crisis. Because of the power centered around the dean and bishop — contrary to the notion of dispersed authority and a synodal church — the development project of the Anglican Recife Diocese was blended with their personal projects. Since the schism of 2002, Archbishop Paulo Ruiz Garcia has remained the chairman of the 'Charismatic Episcopal Church of Brazil'. After the death of Robinson Cavalcanti in 2012, the leadership of the 'Anglican Church — Diocese of Recife' was passed to Bishop Miguel Uchôa. In 2018, this church became a province of GAFCON — renamed the 'Anglican Church in Brazil' — in a ceremony presided over by Uchôa, now Archbishop of the new denomination.

Faced with this situation, in 2007, Bishop Sebastião Gameleira, then diocesan bishop of Pelotas, was elected to be the fourth Bishop of Recife. During his episcopate, the Anglican Diocese of Recife started a long process of theological realignment with the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil, developing a sober ecclesiology, starting from the rescue of a model of a socially engaged church, based on Liberation Theology and the ecumenical movement. After the retirement of Bishop Gameleira, the Right Reverend João Cândia Peixoto was elected in 2013, to be the new diocesan bishop. His episcopate was marked by the reconstruction the church, with a focus on the unity of the communities, and a new hope emerged with the ending of a long judicial battle, and the restitution of IEAB's temples stolen during the 'Great Schism of Recife' in 2004. In 2017 the Good Samaritan Church was elevated to be the Cathedral of the Anglican Diocese of Recife, and the new dean, the Reverend Gustavo Oliveira, was installed.

After the 2004 episode, there was a greater growth of IEAB in itself as a church, through greater transparency in its positions, seen mainly by the regular campaigns about Human Rights, and the positions against sexism and misogyny, racism, homophobia and religious intolerance in Brazil. In June 2018, the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil held its 34th General Synod, in the city of Brasilia. And on 1 June 2018, on the anniversary of the church's foundation, the synod deputies voted to change the marriage canon to include same-sex couples. This was the conclusion of two decades of

² See, Carlos Eduardo Brandão Calvani & Vera Lúcia Simões de Oliveira, *Nossa Identidade — História e Teologia Anglicanas* (São Paulo: Fonte Editorial, 2012), pp. 218–19.

debate, since the 1997 *Pastoral Letter* of the bishops of the IEAB, which discussed for the first time the issue of Human Sexuality from the point of view of inclusiveness, and which opened the way for further meetings about the subject.

In July that year the Anglican Diocese of Recife held its council, in which the diocesan canons were also changed, so that they were in conformity with the general canons of the province, being the first diocese to confirm the decision of the synod. On 22 July 2018, the first same-sex marriage rite was celebrated in the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil after the canonical change. The ceremony, presided over by the Reverend Eduardo Henrique, sealed the marriage of Roberto Oliveira and Ivanildo dos Anjos. This first rite paved the way for others in the province in the following months. After years, the issue that had brought a lot of suffering to this diocese was over. But now, new issues were to be faced that would define the future of the diocesan communities with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Planning the 34th Council of the Diocese of Recife

The 33rd Council decided that the next one would be organized in Salvador — capital of the state of Bahia. It was felt important to choose a new city to decentralize previous meetings had been held in Recife. After a meeting that took place on 21 November 2019, the diocesan council approved that the 34th Council of the Anglican Diocese of Recife be held between 2 and 5 July 2020. But within a few months, everything had changed.

The news about the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Brazil with the first cases, followed by a lot of deaths, an economic crisis and the political instability of the Federal Government, that brought fear, panic, and confusion for the country in the first weeks of quarantine. And with this uncertainty some questions emerged: What should the church do? Should the diocese cancel the council and wait for a proper time to organize it again? Or should it be organized through the digital platforms, with the Holy Eucharist and liturgical services being celebrated online? During the pandemic, the communities had begun to hold their celebrations online, using digital platforms, with live streams on Facebook and Instagram. This experience of online liturgies and meetings during the early months was essential to develop the training of diocesan staff to organize the council. Through *Circular Letter 01/2020*, of 3 March 2020, all communities were called to assemble online before 31 March in order to choose the names of their representatives. On 4 April 2020, Bishop Peixoto sent to all leaders of the clergy and laity the message convoking the 34th Council.

As provided for in Chapter I, Canon 2, Art. 7 of our Diocesan canons — It is the responsibility of the Diocesan Bishop, or his

canonical substitute, to call the council or meeting in writing, at least 90 (Ninety) days in advance. Therefore, through this document, I come to convene the meeting of the XXXIV Council of the Anglican Diocese of Recife, which will take place from July 17 to 19, 2020, in a virtual way, through the Zoom Platform, having the city of Recife-PE as its administrative and technological headquarters. According to Chapter 1, Canon 3 Art. 24, all clerics must participate in the council. According to Chapter 1, Canon 4, Art. 25, each Parish may send up to 3 lay deputies and the Missions up to 2 lay deputies, where they will have a voice and vote. NOTE: All communities must send by e-mail to the diocesan secretary, a list of the names of their lay deputies by June 17, 2020. The subscription by all clerical delegates and lay people, will happen virtually until June 20, 2020. Recife-PE, April 4, 2020 Anno Domini.

The suggestion to hold an online council came from the Reverend Cláudio Linhares, immediately after the success of IEAB's seminar about the pandemic, in May. It would only be necessary to adjust the use of software to carry out the voting process. The bishop created an organization team to plan the council and a virtual survey was held to confirm the leadership's acceptance of the proposal, with all the members of the diocesan pastoral team WhatsApp group. After a positive result, the Anglican Diocese of Recife made a final decision to organize an online council. Until then, the council was being postponed, without a new date fixed, due to the natural impossibility at that moment. When it was decided to hold the council, the diocese still had the necessary canonical time to hold assemblies and appoint deputies.



Figure 1: The Council's logo.

The Co-ordination Team was created to organize the entire structure of the council, through the schedule to the virtual rooms of Zoom that would host the activities and the elections to renew the commissions with new members, and to plan the activities of the diocese for the next two years. The motto chosen was 'Spirituality and Courage to Be Witnesses to a New Time', the biblical text extracted from II Timothy 1. 7: 'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind' (NKJV), and the logo was released on all social networks.

A celebration of life in times of death

The council was organized in two parts: A pre-council — for the preparation of the members — and the council meeting itself. In this first part, participants were divided into three groups that would work on the following strategic axes: 1) Mission, Pastoral Work and Diakonia; 2) Theological Formation; 3) Management, Communication and Sustainability. The mission of these groups was to create action plans for the diocese to be applied soon. On 4 July 2020 (Saturday) the first of three pre-council

meetings was held. During this period a series of thirteen videos on spirituality was launched for the participants to meditate on.



Figure 2: Bishop João Peixoto during the opening Holy Eucharist of the 34th Council, webcast at Jesus of Nazareth parish church, city of Olinda, Pernambuco.

On the Friday night, 17 July, an opening Holy Eucharist³ was presided over by the Right Reverend João Peixoto, assisted by the Reverend Rosemary Cunha and the Lay Minister Rafael Vilaça. The order of the service and music were chosen to emphasize the local culture of the region. Thus, one of the high moments of the celebration was the chant of the Apostles Creed in

³ For the opening service Rite II, Eucharistic Prayer F, from the Brazilian Book of Common Prayer (2015) was chosen.

Cordel Literature.⁴ This text was extracted from the Diocesan Book of Occasional Services. The *Eucharistic Rite of Caaporã* is an Anglican liturgy in *Cordel Literature*, written by the Reverend Israel Cardoso. The music was especially composed for this council using the harmonic phrases of *Baião*,⁵ a traditional style from the northeast of Brazil. The same style was used again in the *Tersanctus*.

In his sermon, Bishop Peixoto emphasized that:

During these seven years, God gave me a very clear answer. And He has said to me daily: 'To countervail your difficulties, I will give you a clergy and a special leadership, so that you can walk together with them, in the growing of this diocese.' And this night, with emotion and happiness, I want to thank each one, who has collaborated in a special way, as our God has said to my heart. Thank you very much. And may God bless us, now and forever. Amen.

At 8 a.m. on Saturday the South Archdeaconry led Morning Prayer, opening the day's session. Following the accreditation of deputies was approved the council's statute and schedule, with the bishop presenting his report showing the diocesan data. In 2020, the diocese has nine parishes, fourteen missions, three archdeaconries, one chaplain to the Mission to Seafarers, two religious orders (Benedictines and Franciscans) seventeen lay ministers, and twenty-four members of the clergy, including deacons, priests and the bishop.

Next, the group for Management, Communication and Sustainability did its presentation, with the challenges for years to follow. The group explained the strategies to develop conflict-management mechanisms that

⁴ From the Portuguese term, *Literatura de Cordel*, literally 'string literature'. They are popular and inexpensively printed booklets or pamphlets containing folk novels, poems and songs. They are produced and sold in street markets in Brazil, mainly in the northeast. They are so named because they are hung from strings to display them to potential customers, and rope in Portuguese is *corda*.

⁵ *Baião* is a northeastern Brazilian music genre and dance style based around the pulse of the zabumba, accompanied by an accordion and a triangle pattern. In its origin it mostly borrows harmonically from the European musical tradition and alternates the chords between the minor and the major scales, being frequently associated with the state of Pernambuco. The major Brazilian musician of this style is Luiz Gonzaga, known as the 'King of Baião'.

make it possible to strengthen the unity of the church. After lunch time, the group for Theological Formation presented the plan to increase studies on the liturgy, organize moments of study and prayer for clerical and lay ministries, to form future leadership and to develop a continued formation for the diocese. There was also the release of a book about the Anglican Church by the Reverend Gecionny Pinto. The group for Mission, Pastoral Work and Diakonia presented the strategies to be a safe church that lives and proclaims the Gospel by welcoming, nurturing, forming and serving all people. After dinner, the presenters launched nominations for the elections for the diocesan commissions which would be held on the next day.

On Sunday morning, the opening prayer was led by the North Archdeaconry. At 8.30 a.m., the elections to the diocesan commissions took place, and next the reading and homologation of reports of the work done by each commission during the last year. After lunch there was the presentation of the *Strategic Diocesan Plan*. The main project is the renovation of the building next to the cathedral and the construction of a hostel to create funds for the diocese. This project is being sponsored by Trinity Church, Wall Street. Also was presented the report of the Anglican Church's Service of Development and Diakonia (SADD) which had the duty of distributing donations of food and supplies to needy families during the pandemic. With the final greetings of the bishop, the council's last session was finished.



Figure 3: Session of the 34th Council, via Zoom.

The Holy Eucharist started at 6 p.m., following the same structure as the first liturgy, but this one was more traditional, with old hymns that marked the history of the Church. The readings and prayers were immersed

in an atmosphere of thanksgiving for the council and gladness for the resilience of the diocese. The homily was given by the bishop of the diocese of Paraná, the Primate of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil, Naudal Alves Gomes. The bishop spoke a little about the difficult path of the diocese, and the challenges it had faced, and congratulated all for the courage to celebrate in the midst of pandemic. After presiding at the Eucharist⁶ and the distribution of the Holy Communion, Bishop João Peixoto announced the ending of the council, striking the crosier three times on the ground.

The final hymn, the *Irish Blessing*, was chosen because of its meaning, which translates all feelings about the future of the diocese and the post-pandemic life. The final part of the lyric has some sentences of the Brazilian BCP Dismissal:

Let us go in peace until a new day allows us to hug each other.
Even though we are far away, in joy, God the Father, we want to
praise. God keep you, God guide you, hold you by your hand. Go
with confidence. Go with joy. Because your angels will
accompany you.

After finishing the transmission, those present hugged each other, a mixed expression of gladness, thankfulness and a sense of accomplishment. At the end of the night, our humanity spoke louder than the pandemic safety rules, as a sign of life sent by the Spirit during these difficult times.

New ways of Church in times of crisis

The Anglican Communion News Service noted that, on 25 July, the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia had a virtual synod meeting on Zoom, to renew the three-fold primacy of the church, according to canon law. So, we can say, in fact, that the 34th Council of the Anglican Diocese of Recife was the first online council in the history of the Anglican Communion to happen during the pandemic.

The challenge accepted by the Diocese of Recife attracted the attention of other parts of the province. During the sessions, some bishops from other dioceses were present to see how the online council worked, carrying to their local churches the possibility of organizing a similar event. In the *Report of the Council* the secretary recorded the presence of Bishop and Primate Naudal Gomes (Diocese of Paraná), Bishop Meriglei Simin (Diocese of Pelotas), Bishop Francisco de Assis da Silva (Diocese of the South-West) and of the General Secretary of IEAB, the Reverend Magda Guedes.

⁶ For the ending service Rite II, Eucharistic Prayer G, from the Brazilian Book of Common Prayer (2015) was chosen.

The church decided that in 2022, the 35th Diocesan Council would be in the city of Salvador, Bahia, after many years of being held in Recife. This also shows a maturity about the diocesan identity, seeking to consolidate the diversity of communities, their contributions in the history of the diocese and to reaffirm that, although it has headquarters in the city of Recife, the church is present throughout the northeast of Brazil.

In 2017, when the Good Samaritan was consecrated as the new cathedral, the people sang an old Brazilian hymn as a sign of the church's rebirth, which says: 'In struggles and trials, the Church continues to walk.' In 2020, this same hymn was once more sung, during the ending of the 34th Council of the Diocese of Recife, to remember that it is possible to be church in a time of crisis, and that the main mission of the Church is to continue to proclaim Jesus Christ, the Word of Life, even in times of death.

Book Reviews

STEVE TAYLOR, [*First Expressions: Innovation and the Mission of God*](#) (London: SCM Press, 2019). xi, 256 pp. ISBN 978-0-334-05847-2. £25.

Steve Taylor is the Principal of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership in New Zealand. He pioneered and planted Graceway Baptist Church, New Zealand, in 1994 before there was wide support for structures like *Fresh Expressions*. He then took his understanding of missiology and wrote a PhD thesis on new forms of church, finishing in 2003. Part of Taylor's research was to interview alt. worship communities in the UK but had to omit the UK data from his final PhD thesis.

This book, written fifteen years later, returns to the initial gathering of the UK data and looks at the sustainability and durability of ten communities that were innovative and in formation before the report on *Mission Shaped Church* was published in 2004. The book has four parts: a theology of birthing of first expressions; revisiting those expressions eleven years later; *Fresh Expressions* as an institutional experiment; an ecclesiology of innovation.

Taylor begins by providing a definition for first expressions. In that, first expressions are initial experiments in ecclesial innovation where written guidance does not already exist. He elucidates on this definition, explaining the difference between first expressions and the joint Anglican and Methodist initiative of *Fresh Expressions*.

Several questions are asked concerning the way in which the Church might be able to reach out by taking context, culture, and religious separatism into account. He sifts through all this, to one statement that I think is pertinent to our current situation: 'Every time a culture shifts, there are first expressions.'

The ten communities that Taylor researched and followed up on sought to respond to cultural changes in the UK. He submits them to close theological and historical investigation, looking for hermeneutical innovations that will provide guidance for the Church as it seeks to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

Throughout the book, Taylor uses Julian of Norwich's contemplation of a hazelnut as his first expression methodology and research focus. She identified God as maker, keeper and lover of a hazelnut. Taylor therefore approaches each community in the same way but takes the value of each group further by using empirical, longitudinal, interactional and theological explorations. The book does not foray into 'what might be' but the realities of 'what is'.

In Part One, four themes are drawn out as the workings of God's activity in the communities within which the first expressions are birthed. These occur in no particular order and vary in strength. The themes are: having a relational community; loving the local; having a faith authentic to contemporary disciples; creating as a gifted body. Taylor then draws on the eschatological anthropology of Janet Martin Soskice in relation to the birthing accounts of first expressions. There is a formation or becoming of the 'body of Christ' in the pioneering of new ways of gathering and the evolution of new liturgies. Taylor then seeks to form a theology of first expressions and concentrates on the following four questions, which are used in relation to the ten communities:

- Does it grow and mature?
- Does it compost and renewable cycles of birth, life and death?
- Does it spiral through story in carrying forward ancestor wisdom?
- Does it contribute to mending, whether patch, stitch or remake?

Part Two contains two chapters: 'Tried' and 'Tried and Died'. The first chapter looks at the five communities which have survived by concentrating on their spirituality and how that has developed over the years. All five had hospitality and community at their centre. Further themes that emerged from the interviews are mystical experiences of God, a cyclical pattern of growth for both the individuals and the community and a flexible understanding of mission. In the second chapter, Taylor argues that our approach to ecclesiology is reduced when we only concentrate on the gathered and growing church. He brings in statistics from the Church Army and the mortality rates of first expressions. However, Taylor also identifies that the death of such communities does not revolve around one or two themes, but that they dissolved for different reasons. The argument that closes this chapter is that trying and risking produces a distinctive richness in ecclesiology regardless of the foci of the gathered community.

Part Three focuses on *Fresh Expressions*. The development of the initiative, as analysed by Taylor revealed that innovation was at an organizational level. Using a model of leadership strengths to analyse the development of the initiative shows that all the strengths of the model were present, except for optimism. Taylor then explores four structures of mission in relation to *Fresh Expressions*. These are monastic and pilgrim, bands and connections, voluntary societies and NGO networks. In all cases the shape of mission is driven by apostolicity. He identifies that the structures of both first expressions and *Fresh Expressions* can be described by the innovations of the past. In that, first expressions can be likened to

voluntary societies and *Fresh Expressions* through its networked structure is like an NGO.

The last part of the book explores the genuineness of faith and culture, how communities become apostolic, holy and catholic, and finally ends with a proposed theology of first expressions. Taylor asserts that there may be a gap between authenticity and the continuity of mission. First expressions become apostolic as a result of members talking naturally about their spiritual communities. Holiness is a natural step from communicating one's faith but comes before a cultivation of that faith.

In the penultimate chapter, Taylor interviews Rowan Williams. Taylor's journey has taken him from contextual mission that seeks to be apostolic, holy and catholic whereas Williams's theology illustrates that fresh expressions can materialize from a theology of the sacraments. Baptism brings one closer to Jesus but also to those who aren't in the body of Christ. The sacrament of the Eucharist has apostolicity in the sending out by Christ — the *Missio Dei*. There is, however, one point that Williams makes that is inherently important and that is sacramental communities don't occur naturally. There is an intentionality about breaking bread together. However, the way in which this is done can make or break a first expression.

The last chapter, titled '*Coda: A theology of first expressions*' draws on the knowledge, data and experiences illustrated throughout the book. Taylor provides a framework that he thinks will enable grassroots innovation within the Church, having grounded each point in Scripture. He then discusses various findings before listing nine personal considerations about ecclesial ingenuity.

Taylor's book reveals the myriad of complex dynamics that weave through communities as they seek to establish themselves in differing urban contexts. He has systematically researched various aspects of the communities, through interviews and extensive reading. Taylor provides an in-depth theological hermeneutic, firmly grounded in Scripture and ecclesiology. This book certainly isn't light reading as it is written in academic language and presented in a manner that will be familiar to academics.

By taking time to read and understand the information contained within these book covers, the reader will have a better and more informed understanding of the nature of pioneering. This in turn may help the entrepreneurs in ministry articulate vision and direction with their gathered communities as they seek to establish new first expressions.

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MICHAEL LEYDEN, *Faithful Living: Discipleship, Creed and Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 2019). 198 pp. ISBN 978-0-334-05819-9. £19.99.

Once I got into this book, I found it to be a provocative and stimulating read. The initial difficulty which I had lay in the claims about the book, made by Leyden, in the first few pages. He begins with a definition of dogmatic theology as ‘the ancient discipline of explaining the fullness of the Christian gospel by considering its rational, practical and spiritual components’. He goes on to say that ‘considering Christian ethics as part of the dogmatic task is, surprisingly, uncommon’. He exempts Barth, Bonhoeffer and Thielicke from this charge, but he has asserted a point that is not really sustained in the body of the text where he cites, with approval, many writers who have made significant links between the activity of theology and that of ethics, and have sought to draw out the implications of the former for the latter. However, if we put aside that opening claim, about attempting something that is ‘uncommon’, and go on to the text itself we find some very interesting sections.

Leyden articulates the question on which his discussion focuses as being, ‘What kinds of lifestyle choices, decisions and actions might be implied for contemporary disciples by the theological substance of the Christian faith?’ He describes this as ‘attending to the ethical meaning of doctrinal statements’. He contrasts his approach with that of approaches to the study of ethics in a theological context, which often begins by inviting a reader to consider a ‘hard case’. (For example, what to do with an unwanted pregnancy). He writes:

While the ethics of hard cases is common, it is not easily marshalled to answer our question here, where the presenting problem is not a specific quandary but the more general puzzle of how to live with Christian theological beliefs.

He puts the task briefly as follows: ‘What imperatives may be derived or inferred from theological indicatives.’

It is certainly true that tackling this general puzzle is what animates the discussion throughout the book, but it cannot be denied that Leyden does, in the course of that discussion, consider several ‘hard cases’, and discusses them very well indeed. I found his discussion of the doctrine of Creation, and its implications for our habits concerning the consumption of non-human animals as food, to be of particular interest. In the final chapter he considers some implications for Christian ministry.

There is much in this book which many types of reader will absorb with profit. It will appeal to ordinands and clergy and could be a useful

resource for a study group in a congregation. It is structured such that each chapter focuses on one clause of the Nicene Creed, and so invites consideration as a programme for a series of study groups. A good supply of footnotes provides references. Each chapter is followed by questions that may be used by the individual reader, or in such a study group. A brief suggestion of further reading is also made after each chapter.

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HELEN GITTOS AND SARAH HAMILTON, eds, [Understanding Medieval Liturgy: Essays in Interpretation](#) (London: Routledge, 2018) ISBN 978-0-367-13579-9. xvi, 332 pp. Paperback £38.99.

Traditionally most liturgical scholars have been clergy who study the history of liturgy from inside the tradition. Many of them have been actively engaged in liturgical revision, producing rites for use in public worship within churches. This book marks a change from this understanding of the 'liturgist'. *Understanding Medieval Liturgy* brings together scholars from different disciplines — history, literature, architecture, music and philology — to produce a somewhat different sense of the great medieval tradition of Christian worship in Europe that is, to an extent, detached from the living tradition of the Church.

It is a salutary and fascinating exercise, offering us a great deal to think about. First there is the shift from a paradigm of a fundamental liturgical 'text' from which there may be variations in manuscript copying and other derivations. Rather medieval liturgical 'texts' were 'living' and endlessly malleable, and how they were used or *read* is not necessarily according to modern assumptions and paradigms of how texts work. Thus we need to go even further than the familiar words of the Preface of the Book of Common Prayer which state of the time before 1549 that 'heretofore there hath been great diversity in saying and singing in all Churches', giving the examples of the Uses of Salisbury (Sarum), York, Hereford, Bangor and so on. But the very idea that we can recover an 'official' text of the Sarum Rite, as was basically assumed in the great editions of the nineteenth century from William Maskell (1843) onwards, is now replaced by an infinite diversity of manuscripts and, later, publications. Matthew Cheung Salisbury in his chapter 'Rethinking the Uses of Sarum and York' holds in question the fundamental assumption that underlies most of the great Anglican editions of medieval liturgy in the nineteenth century up to and beyond the time of Walter Howard Frere and J Wickham Legg. They were convinced of the argument for an ancient tradition of the English Church that long predates the Reformation and stands apart, in apostolic and catholic splendour, from

the tradition of the Roman Rite. This, Salisbury maintains, is simply not tenable. (Salisbury has written at more length of this in his very readable book *Worship in Medieval England*, 2018).

Other essays unpick the authority of such foundational texts as Vogel and Elze's *Pontifical romano-germanique* (1963–72) as a modern construction founded upon wholly unreasonable assumptions. Others remind us that our disciplinary distinctions that set liturgical texts in a category entirely of their own, reserved for the use of church or perhaps private worship, did not pertain in the high Middle Ages in Europe. Sarah Hamilton's fascinating essay on Excommunication Rites in the tenth and eleventh centuries reminds us that these formularies were as much legal documents as they were religious, addressing perceived misdemeanours and meting out the appropriate punishment. Florence Chave-Mahir then indicates that forms of exorcism, derived from both liturgical and hagiographical sources, verged upon medical practice in the healing of certain conditions that were regarded as cases of demon possession. These essays remind that this was a world in which the Church and its liturgy were at the very heart of culture and society, not on their periphery, and that some of the assumptions of liturgists today need to be properly tested when dealing with pre-Reformation liturgical practice. Thus, for example, the standard assumptions about gradual emergence of 'secular' drama from 'religious' practice until their strict separation after the Reformation needs to be revisited and the ancient ecclesial suspicion of the Mass as 'performance' (as explored by Amalarius and others) requires questioning. The usual thesis, pursued by O. B. Hardison Jr — In his standard work, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965) — and many others, that the *Quem Quaeritis* trope was a kind of invention of Bishop Aethelwold of Winchester in his *Regularis Concordia* in the tenth century is replaced by the proposal that the *Regularis* was, in fact an attempt to regulate and subdue an uncontrolled performative tradition of Eucharistic liturgy that was far less stuffy and reserved than medieval liturgical practice is assumed to be.

There are many other riches in this book relating to music, architecture, the dedication of sacred places and churches and a great deal more. It is an extremely readable collection of essays that more 'churchy' liturgists and would-be liturgical reformers would do very well to read, mark and, in places at least, inwardly digest.

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RAFIQ KHOURY AND RAINER ZIMMER-WINKEL, eds, *Christian Theology in the Palestinian Context* (Berlin: Aporisma, 2019). 512 pp. ISBN 978-3-86575-049-5. £30.

This collection brings together a substantial volume of material, written either by Palestinian Christian theologians or by expatriates who have lived and worked in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories for many years. Some diversity of traditions is reflected, though perhaps a majority of the contributors are Latin (Roman Catholic).

The Preface is written by Michel Sabbah, the first and thus far the only Palestinian to become Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. During his tenure, and subsequently, he has been known both as a forthright prophetic voice for justice and as an untiring peacebuilder. Excerpts from some of the Pastoral Letters he issued, included in this volume, attest this.

Some of the contributors have either published in English, lectured in Europe and North America, or had their work translated into English, and become quite well known in circles attuned to Christianity in the Middle East. These include Archbishop Elias Chacour (Greek Melkite Catholic Church), Na'im Ateek (Anglican), founder of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre, Bishop Munib Younan (former President of the Lutheran World Federation), Mitri Raheb and Munther Isaac (also Lutheran), Yohanna Katanacho (Baptist), and David Neuhaus (Jewish convert and former Vicar of the St James Vicariate for Hebrew-speaking Catholics). Others have written in Arabic, and accordingly enjoyed less exposure outside the Middle East. Several participated in drafting the Palestinian Kairos Document in 2009 (reprinted here) or have otherwise been associated with the work of Sabeel. Several have taught at Bethlehem University (Latin) or Bethlehem Bible College (evangelical) and participated in the biennial Christ at the Checkpoint Conference.

The material collected in this volume reflects the theological and practical struggles of the Christians of Palestine over many years. The incremental dispossession of land and resources, and accompanying political and economic disenfranchisement, homelessness, and, for many, exile, are equally shared by the Muslim majority. The theological challenges of reconciling their experience with Scripture and their Christian heritage are distinctive. Not only the manipulation of selected Old Testament prophecies in the cause of the, predominantly atheistic, Zionism of the Israelis, but the equally cynical misappropriation of these passages and of the book of Revelation by Christian Zionism in North America and elsewhere, makes reading Scripture in the Palestinian context both painful but potentially alienating. Christian visitors who frequent the holy places, to which local Christians are frequently unable to gain access, and who are

indifferent to the plight of their fellow-Christians whose families have lived, worked, and worshipped in the land for centuries, leave Palestinian Christians feeling isolated within global Christianity, still dominated as it is by the churches of Europe and North America.

The authors are not unaware of the history of Jewish communities in many parts of Europe over centuries, culminating in the Nazi genocide. Nor are they insensitive to the circumstances which brought many European Jews to Palestine, or to the fears in which many remain gripped. But they quite rightly point out that it is neither just nor reasonable that they are expected to pay the price. All contributors are committed to living in peace with their Jewish and Muslim neighbours, and many have suffered grievously not only through having been driven from their homes, but also for their courageous and conscientiously non-violent witness.

This collection provides a valuable insight into a much-overlooked part of the Christian family, and into the ways in which a venerable heritage encounters, with faith, honesty, and courage, the existential perils of their present circumstances, and maintains hope in the face of a bleak future.

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JOSEPH CASSIDY, [Living the Story: The Ignatian Way of Prayer](#), ed., ANN LOADES (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2020). xv, 99 pp. ISBN 978-1786222473. Paperback, £10.99.

I feel a special affinity with this book as Joe Cassidy and I share a common history in our connections with St Chad's College, Durham. The fact that it is edited by Professor Ann Loades is more than an extra bonus.

I hope that *Living the Story* will find its way onto many bookshelves, not least those of serving clergy and those in training for Christian ministry. This collection of essays and papers is an extraordinary example of fine theology expressed with simple profundity in the context of wise spiritual teaching that is accessible to all but yet provokes deep reflection. Although he later became an Anglican priest, Dr Cassidy began his Christian ministry within the Society of Jesus, and his life and work are deeply embedded in the 'Spiritual Exercises' of St Ignatius Loyola as he gently leads his reader here in the rich and imaginative Ignatian way of prayer. His guidance is gentle indeed, rooted in the practicalities of life and ethics, and ever mindful of the fragility of human nature. Theologically intelligent it is also profoundly imaginative. All true theology demands an exercise of the imagination.

Cassidy is unapologetic and clear that the Ignatian world view is theological (p. 27). But such theology is not abstruse or arcane, available only to those who are trained in its language and complex history. What it means is that 'the universe is held in being by God, and it is held in being very personally'. Although Cassidy has some very helpful remarks on spirituality, the Holy Spirit and the Trinity, at its heart this theology is deeply Christological, with a firm grasp of the necessary and full humanity of Jesus Christ. More than once we are reminded that the Jesus of history is with us today, and we learn of him through a careful, prayerful and imaginative engagement with the Gospels: the Ignatian way.

Cassidy's writings on Jesus and the Gospels take me back to the theology of Charles Gore and other essays in that celebrated volume *Lux Mundi* (1890). Gore is sadly little read these days, and the loss is ours. Because for me the link with the Christology of Bishop Gore represents a deep theological and spiritual tradition in Anglicanism that I rejoice to see here re-articulated today. In my own early days at St Chad's we were privileged to have as neighbours, in their retirement, Bishop Michael and Joan Ramsey, and Michael once described himself to me (with his inimitable chuckle) as 'a bit of a Gore man'. Gore, Ramsey, Cassidy, the Ignatian way of prayer, have in common a sense of Jesus as profoundly *human*, sharing in our doubts and fears, our hopes, and, yes, our limitations.

And so, with this Jesus in mind and at the heart of the present book, Cassidy leads us in a prayerful reading of St Luke's Gospel, recognizing that all of us, if we are honest, struggle as best we can with our prayers. One expression that comes with rather a jolt, is that prayer in the tradition of the Ignatian Exercises might be like daydreaming (and all of us are quite good at that!). What this means is a way of reading the Gospel where we stop looking *at* Jesus, drawing morals or precepts from his teaching and example, and begin to experience something of the person of the man Jesus himself, his joys and aspirations, his fears and disappointments. And yet we never fall into the errors of Nestorianism. But in 'praying' the Gospel text in this way, we come upon startling and refreshing new beginnings in our own religious and theological lives. For example, when reading the account of the Last Supper in Luke 22. 14–38, Cassidy cuts to the quick. 'It would be anachronistic, i.e. playing havoc with time, to suggest that Jesus intended to set up a sacrament, per se. The original meaning of the Eucharist is to be found in Jesus' heart, in Jesus' eyes, in Jesus' intentions' (p. 80). Or again, in helping us to 'pray' the resurrection (Luke 24), Cassidy begins with an extraordinary thought. 'Jesus must have enjoyed being raised. In praying on the appearance accounts, it would be important to attend to Jesus' own joy, his own gratitude to God' (p. 87).

It takes some genius to write in such a way that anyone can ‘understand’ and yet to explore deep theological mysteries and spiritual depths at the same time. (The idea of Jesus *enjoying* the resurrection!) This reading of St Luke’s Gospel, which is the heart of the book, is never banal, never pushy or rude. But it is a reading to be prayed with and to be studied with care and much profit. We should be grateful to Ann Loades for bringing us the gift of these papers as they carry to us the wisdom of Joe Cassidy, a true Ignatian, a good Anglican, and a faithful Christian.

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EDWARD LUSCOMBE AND STUART DONALD, [Bishop Thomas Rattray: Scholar and Liturgist](#) (Brechin: City Press Printers, 2020). 30 pp. plus maps and illustrations. £3. Available as an e-book from: Stuart Donald: sd5bp@hotmail.com.

Over recent years Bishop Ted Luscombe and Stuart Donald (honorary archivist of Aberdeen diocese) have been producing a series of booklets on the history of the churches of Brechin. Now they are turning their attention to some notable figures in the history of the Scottish Episcopal Church. The first in this new series was *A Bishop in Exile: The Life and Times of James Drummond Bishop of Brechin, 1684 to 1695* (July 2019). The third is *The Life and Times of Robert Lyon: Priest, Rebel and Martyr, 1710–1746* (March 2020).

The second in the series, which we are considering here, is an introduction to the life and work of Bishop Thomas Rattray (1684 to 1743) who, as the outstanding theologian and liturgist of his time, was a major contributor to the unique identity of Scottish Episcopalianism.

When, at the stroke of a pen, in the summer of 1689 the Scottish Parliament abolished episcopacy, the bishops, with the parish clergy of Scotland, who refused to acknowledge William and Mary as monarchs, or to assent to the Westminster Confession, were evicted from their sees and parishes, and fell on hard times. From that time the national Church of Scotland became Presbyterian: this meant not only no bishops, but also church services without set prayers or liturgy. However, episcopacy, particularly in the North East, lingered on over the next decades. Support came from the Jacobite court overseas. But as the old ‘pre-revolution’ bishops died out, this remnant fell into a chaotic state of squabbling. In the years when Thomas Rattray was growing up the two chief bones of contention were, as the authors of this booklet clearly describe, firstly to do

with the understanding of episcopacy (should bishops be diocesan, or non-diocesan — the so-called ‘college’ bishops?), and secondly over the question of liturgical practices (should the churches practise the ‘Usages’, or not?). At the same period, since the reign of Queen Anne, ‘qualified chapels’ were permitted in Scotland which used the liturgy of the English *Book of Common Prayer* but came under no episcopal authority.

As a young man Thomas Rattray had been in London where he became closely associated with the English Non-Jurors. This group of gifted scholars was deliberating passionately about the destiny of the remnant of the Church of England since the Williamite Revolution. How could they exist as a church? Rejecting both the Reformation and Roman Catholicism, their questioning led them back to the earliest sources of the one original Church before the Great Schism between East and West. This line of thinking led them in 1716 to approach Metropolitan Arsenios of the Thebaid to explore the possibility of union between the Anglican ‘remnant’ and the Orthodox. Thomas Rattray, known as the outstanding Greek scholar among them, wrote the historic letter, together with Nathaniel Spinckes, to open these negotiations.

But Rattray’s destiny lay not with the ultimately lost cause of the English Non-Jurors, but back in Scotland where he returned to settle at Craighall, married and devoted himself to scholarship and to his people. In 1713 he had requested baptism by immersion and confirmation with the oil of chrism from Bishop John Falconer, possibly as a preliminary to ordination. We don’t know the date of his ordination, but he was certainly a priest by 1724. Three years later he was elected bishop of Brechin by popular choice, then bishop of Dunkeld from 1732 to 1743, and Primus from 1738 until his untimely death in 1743. In 1731 an important stage in putting an end to the disputes between the two types of bishops was reached in a concordat which affirmed that: 1. bishops should be elected by the diocese where they are to serve, and 2. that an elected primus should have authority to convene and preside. In this way the dubious rights of the Jacobite court were annulled, and the Episcopal Church of Scotland shed the Erastian principles which continued to shackle the Church of England. Rattray’s *Essay on the Nature of the Church* which was published in Edinburgh in 1728 gave theological backing to these ideas. Among the freedoms now offered to the Scottish Episcopalians was the freedom to develop the liturgy, something which the Church of England was not able to do for another 250 years.

The crowning achievement of Rattray’s studies in the ancient Christian liturgies was *The Ancient Liturgy of the Church in Jerusalem* (the liturgy of St James) which was published in London the year after his death. His dedicated scholarship in this field convinced him that the Usages were essential practices which dated back to ancient, even apostolic, times. In the

Scotland of his time this set him firmly on the side of the 'Usagers'. For him the Liturgy of the Eucharist ('the people's work of thanksgiving') was the central act of any true Christian church because it brought together believers in worship and praise of the Triune God, creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, Lord of the living and the departed. From his studies he believed that the *epiclesis* (invocation of the Holy Spirit on people and elements) was an intrinsic element in the service, as were the Prayer of Oblation, the mixture of water with the wine, and the commemoration of the departed.

Though the liturgy of St James was not often used in Rattray's lifetime, his ideas fed into the Scottish Liturgy of 1764 which contains all these features. From Scotland this liturgy travelled with the newly consecrated American bishop, Samuel Seabury, to the United States and beyond. Rattray's ideas lived on posthumously: in the Code of Canons of 1743, and in many of his works which were only published after his death.

In a final brief chapter ('The Freedom Fighter') the authors turn to Bishop John Skinner of Aberdeen (1764 to 1816) who, as the authors say, 'in a sense completed the process of stabilising the Church that Rattray had begun'. Under Skinner's time as Primus the union of the Scottish Episcopalians with the qualified chapels was brought about at the Laurencekirk Convention in 1804. Though the Scottish Episcopal Church had to accept the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles, the Scottish liturgy was enshrined as the preferred form of worship.

The authors have done a service to remind us succinctly and clearly how the Scottish Episcopal Church of today was reborn from the most unlikely beginnings in the early eighteenth century, and how Thomas Rattray, caught up in the dreams of the English Non-Jurors, was able to bring them to fruition in Scotland. Rattray achieved this in an age when, as one scholar has pointed out, Deism was rife, David Hume was writing his *Treatise on Human Nature*, and, of all unlikely places, this happened at 'the western end of the old Christian world, at the heart of Calvinist Scotland'.

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MARTIN ROBINSON, [The Place of the Parish: Imagining Mission in Our Neighbourhood](#) (London, SCM Press, 2020). 160 pp. ISBN: 978-0-334-05825-0. Paperback, £19.99.

Martin Robinson's *The Place of Parish* is a combination of history, theory, case studies and theology considering the importance of place for mission. The book considers why parish as a definition of place has been useful in the

past institutionally and how it can be deployed in mission as the Church seeks (in Robinson's view) to re-imagine its identity.

The book starts with a comment on pilgrimage and ends with a point on the universal value of local, weekly liturgy. These topics (and all those in between) illustrate the breadth of material used in Robinson's work. In combining theory and practice Robinson aims to illustrate why the Church should reject modernity's disregard for the notion of place and that for effective mission faith communities need to value, investigate and know deeply the geographical place they are based.

Martin Robinson is Principal and CEO of ForMission College, where he also leads the MA in Missional Leadership. ForMission College aims to equip Christian leaders to transform their communities through training, thought leadership and missional support. Examples in the book are drawn from over forty years of Robinson's ministry including time growing up (as the son of a church planter in a Scottish New Town) and early ministry with his wife in Inner City Birmingham. The author has spent time in North America and working for the Bible Society. These experiences provide, but not exclusively, case studies for the book.

The first chapters of the book explore why place is important, the history of parish in the English context and markers of a healthy parish. The middle chapters look at church in the inner city, place in fresh expressions, rural church challenges through case studies. The final chapters look at how the local may be rediscovered in the context of individualism, the history of community diminishment and how the Church may combat this and finishes with how re-discovering the parish involves focus on gathering and Eucharist. The latter chapters include ideas of rediscovering spiritual disciplines, importance of Eucharistic communities as a place of gathering and resource and rediscovering theological thought as a resource in itself.

This book draws together a broad variety of elements related to mission and place. It touches on the theoretical debates of recent spatial geographical exploration of 'parish', gives a good summary of the history of the English parish and is strong on leadership material. The case studies are varied in length and situated in narrative. Theology is threaded throughout the chapters, integrating the practical, theory from outside theology and doctrine together deftly. The book is succinct and a good primer, covering a large temporal scale both in the history of the English parish and in over forty years of case studies. The material and ideas are accessible and relevant to those in the Scottish Episcopal Church with case studies from the Anglican Communion, but also in the material on the importance and value of Eucharistic Communities. The breadth of examples, authors and traditions drawn is a strength of the book as it allows for readers from a wide

range of denominations and traditions to identify connections to their experiences and context.

There is a large breadth of material covered in *The Place of the Parish*, however, the book could have benefitted from integrating the material across the chapters. The author admirably opens up many strands of enquiry but does not explicitly bring them together to assist the reader in synthesizing the expanse of material and disciplines. For instance, the case studies stand alone in their chapters but are not brought together to illustrate key themes. The last chapter provides some useful springboard points but does not always seem connected to the book's previous material. The thread of the importance of particular place for mission goes through the book but seems unfinished, not tied off.

Martin Robinson's *The Place of Parish* covers an admirable breadth of material in providing ways and ideas of how the Church today should think about place as part of mission. It is useful to those considering what their mission is or may be in a particular place, not just those involved in church planting. The book is not designed to be a 'how to guide' but provides ideas of areas anyone looking at mission in the Church for areas observation and investigation. *The Place of Parish* is a good resource in prompts for mission planning and evaluation for those leading mission, both lay and ordained.

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