St Mary's

***St Mary's Anglican Church, North Melbourne***

# *AVE*

# *Easter - 2025*

***Christ Appearing to His Mother***
***woodcut from "The Small Passion"***

***Albrecht Dürer ca. 1510***

# EASTER edition of AVE April 2025
# St Mary's North Melbourne

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

**We meet on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the great Kulin nation. We acknowledge their leaders past present and emerging and we offer them our respects.**

*Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the parish of St Mary's, the Anglican Church, or its members.*

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**https://www.stmarys.org.au/**

*Rev Emeritus Professor Robert Gribben takes us on another historical journey, this time through the dating of the celebration of Easter.*

## On the date of Easter
***Robert Gribben***

MATHEMATICS AND MYSTERY

The world's churches have a problem. Perhaps it's because I'm a genealogist that I believe that everyone has a birth date and a death date, if you can only find it. For Christians, however, we have neither for our Lord Jesus Christ. Even the saints do better.

In my Advent article, I wrote about the date of Christmas, being one of the items on the agenda of the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 325, along with a creed. The Fathers had a problem with Christmas, because the scriptures gave no date of Jesus' birth, so the theologians had to invent one.

But with the other pivotal date of the Christian year, they knew the events of Easter occurred at Passover.[1] I mentioned the curious ancient belief that great souls are conceived and die on the same day, hence Anunciation (March 25) when Mary conceived and Christmas (nine months later). The conclusion is that Jesus must have died on March 25 so that must also be Good Friday. So they argued.

Nicaea's concern for a common date for Easter has emerged as an ecumenical concern today. They had the problem that, a mere three centuries out from Jesus's Easter, some took the lead from that occurring on the first day of the week and so set it on the Sunday near the same March equinox that Passover was calculated from; but some kept the Jewish calendar, and so moved it up and down the lunar calendar with Passover. Nicaea fixed on Sunday as the mark of the Gospel of the

[1] One contention is this English title for the season. The Orthodox world uses the term "Pascha", which covers the whole significant of Easter and has a parallel in *Pesach*, the Jewish word of Passover. The word "Easter" was derived from the Anglo-Saxon spring goddess Eostre The Venerable Bede knew of its feast in April, but says it had died out in his time, being replaced by Pascha, but it clearly didn't.

resurrection. The fact that our Orthodox co-religionists mark it on a different date each year has quite different causes, but in 2025, our Easters come together on 20 April. This has prompted the call for Christian unity once more – and surely such a basic disunity does not help us proclaim the Gospel.

There were (and are) several ancient calendars, and the Roman empire inherited one of them. By 46 BCE it was obvious to the scientists of the time that the seasons and the dates were out of kilter. It was Julius Caesar who took action. He enacted his reform, the "Julian calendar", on 1 January of that year, providing for a year of 365 days and a leap year one in every four. Unfortunately, *his* calculations were also out, so his calendar gained one day every 129 years.

The next reform fell to the Pope, Gregory I in 1582 (there is still an operating observatory in the Vatican). Those mathematical discrepancies may not seem much, you might think, but by the 16th century, we were a fortnight ahead of ourselves.

The "Gregorian calendar" reduced the discrepancies to a minimum and we now correct them by atomic clock. The result was that the Pope's Roman Catholic world suddenly became more up to date than anyone's. Protestants suspected an evil papal plot and took some time to accept that the Pope was right. The British Empire and its church got around to it in 1752 (but not Scotland). The change had a personal impact on everyone. To take one example, John Wesley was born in 1703 under the Julian calendar and died in 1791 under the Gregorian. Since he had a strong interest in experimental science, he had no problem with subtracting the then required 11 days. His birthday changed from 17th June to June 28th.

The Orthodox, of course, ignored the whole thing, so until 1923, most followed the Julian calendar, and only some have moved to the Gregorian.

However, there is another player in all these calculations; the original one, the parent faith, Judaism. The Hebrew scriptures, our Old Testament, set an exact date for the annual commemoration of the Passover (*pesach)* when the story of the Exodus is retold*:* "from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening." (Exodus 12:18).

The Jewish calendar is calculated from the creation which it commemorates and has a lunar year of 12 months with 29 or 30 days.[2] The first month is called Nisan; and on 15 Nisan, Passover begins on the full moon. The moving Passover *seder*, the commemorative meal, is eaten on the evening before, which corresponds to Good Friday for the Synoptic Gospels.

Here comes the central difficulty. The Jewish day begins at sunset, not at midnight. Matthew, Mark and Luke record the Last Supper on the Day of Preparation, 14 Nisan (Thursday sunrise to Friday sunset). Passover and the Sabbath began on Friday evening, 15 Nisan, by which time, according to their account, Jesus had died and was entombed. This all makes sense; except that John, who thinks primarily in theological rather than historical terms, dates Jesus death on the day on which the Passover lambs were slain (Jn 1:29), an image also taken up by Paul (1 Cor. 5:7).

So in 325, the Church's practice was divided between the Jewish origins and the new cry "Christ is risen, Alleluia!". Nicaea ruled on the subject; it fixed Easter on the Sunday following the Full Moon after the vernal equinox (by which the Jews count their date).[3] On most years, Passover and Easter don't coincide; and when they do, the Orthodox move Easter later.

So, here we are, a divided Church with a messy calendar to boot. Some have suggested that we cut to the (commercial and logical) chase and fix Easter on, say, the second Sunday in April; near enough for everyone, and we could keep the holidays. I cannot think of a proposal less likely to unite the churches, and the Jews will fight on in a secular society. But there is a serious theological, historical and scientifically based proposal from the World Council of Churches, one which is supported by the Pope and by the Ecumenical Patriarch. It's been on the books since 1997. And I'll tell you about that later in the year.

[2] This year, 5785, Pesach begins on the evening of 3 May (14 Nisan). Our Palm Sunday falls on 15 Nisan, 13th April. Good Friday in 2025 CE will fall on 18 April (20 Nisan).

[3] The vernal equinox is when the day in the northern and southern hemispheres are of the same length, generally called the March equinox.

## A COMMON DATE FOR EASTER

The advantage of a Pope doing all this is that the Roman Catholic Church adopted the change immediately and universally; the Orthodox, of course, ignored it, and so only on an unusual year, like 2025, does the whole Church celebrate Easter together.

The Gospels are not helpful in settling this question since the Synoptics (Mark, Matthew, Luke) differ from John on the relation of the Passover meal to Jesus' death. (That must await another article, probably not by me.) Rather, let me stay with the divided Christian Church and calendar.

In 1994, I was part of a ground-breaking ecumenical consultation in England on "Towards *koinonia* in Worship" which concluded:

*Besides the work already done on baptism, eucharist and ministry, the churches need to address the renewal of preaching, the recovery of the meaning of Sunday and the search for a common celebration of Pascha as ecumenical theological concerns. This last is especially urgent, since an agreement on a common date for Easter - even an interim agreement - awaits further ecumenical developments. Such an agreement, which cannot depend on the idea of a "fixed date of Easter", should respect the deepest meaning of the Christian Pascha, and the feelings of Christians throughout the world. We welcome all initiatives which offer the hope of progress in this important area."* [4]

"*Pascha*" (a Greek word for the feast of Easter, following *Pesach*, Passover") was the ecumenical word of the year. Three years later, there was a serious step forward in Aleppo, Syria, sponsored by the World- and the Middle Eastern– Councils of Churches. Now the modern world faced the ancient issues. The discrepancies involving the equinox arose from astronomical knowledge of the times. The best science in the 4th century was to be found in Coptic Alexandria in Egypt, a centre for all kinds of knowledge. Pope Gregory made only minor adjustments, staying close to Nicaea.

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[4] T.F. Best/D. Heller, eds., *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship,* Faith and Order Paper No. 171, WCC Publications, Geneva 1995, pp. 9-10)

Is there an Alexandria in our time which allows the unity of decision achieved at Nicaea? No, knowledge for us is not the monopoly of one university. The consultation hit upon a place of equal significance to Jews and Christians: Jerusalem. Why not base fresh calculations of the March equinox and the full moon from there, the city of Christ's passion and resurrection and its promise of the renewal of all creation? (And the calculations were available!)

These became the recommendations which Aleppo placed before the world's churches. They respected the traditions and decisions at Nicaea; they kept Easter on a Sunday; they respected the authority of contemporary science; the meridian at Jerusalem would be the basis of reckoning. (The report contains more of the reasoning.)[5]

The churches are supposed to have been meditating on all this since 1997. The Anglican Communion had a representative at Aleppo, as did the Lutherans and the Seventh Day Adventists(!). Both the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Pope have called for 2025 to be a decisive year and international ecumenical consultations are happening. The rest of us have somewhat more diverse centre of decision-making. Watch this space. Pray for the unity of the Churches.

The Orthodox must live with the fact that when change was been implemented, it was caused splits: e.g. the "Old Calendrists" in Russia. Both Rome (Vatican II) and Orthodoxy have encouraged the search.

[5] Towards a Common Date for Easter | World Council of Churches

*Rev Dorothy Lee has a long association with St Mary's parish, but in particular she has served us splendidly as our interim priest during the past seasons whilst we have been between incumbents.*

*For this we thank her, for her efficient enthusiasm, but also for her thoughtful refreshing theology.*

*She is a respected biblical scholar, particularly of New Testament, and is now Emeritus Professor at Trinity College in the University of Melbourne. In this article she leads us through some perspectives on our current reading in church.*

## Lectionary Year C and the Gospel of Luke

***Dorothy A. Lee***

I. The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), which is what we use at St Mary's, follows a three-year cycle for the Gospel readings each Sunday. It represented a much-needed revision and update of the Common Lectionary (CL: still used by the Roman Catholic church). Thus the RCL gives more weight to the other readings (Old Testament and Epistle), so that they too follow their own cycle and are not just a prop for the Gospel reading.

For example, in Ordinary Time (Sundays after Pentecost), there is a series of readings from Jeremiah and also one from Hebrews, as well as sequential readings from the minor prophets and from the later Pauline epistles. The RCL is much more ecumenical and gives greater emphasis, for example, to women in the Bible, who are otherwise often overlooked in the CL.

This year the Gospel reading for Sundays is mostly taken from the Gospel of Luke, with a few exceptions when the Gospel is taken from John (e.g. during Easter). We have already begun and will continue to hear a significant number of passages from Luke, taking us through to the end of the liturgical year (Christ the King on 25 November).

II. Luke's Gospel is the third of the canonical Gospels and is, in fact, the first volume of Luke's two-volume work, the second being the Acts of the Apostles (unfortunately separated in the canon). That order may even reflect the historical time-line, as Luke was written after Mark on whom it largely depends, probably some time during the 80's, either later or perhaps at around the same time as the Gospel of Matthew. It is often instructive to compare a Lukan story with its Markan original and to see the changes which Luke has made in his composition.

**Saint Luke**

*Illustration from The Lindisfarne Gospels, a famous manuscript which was probably created around the years 715–720 in the monastery at Lindisfarne, off the coast of Northumberland in the North East of England and which is now in the British Library in London*

Like the other two Gospels (called 'Synoptics' because they can easily be read side-by-side) Luke sees Jesus' ministry beginning in and around Galilee (14-9:50), before Jesus turns and begins a single, long journey to Jerusalem. It goes from about Luke 9:51 to 19:27, which is longer than the equivalent journey in either Mark or Matthew: Luke adds a number of additional pieces of material to the journey, including conflict stories, teaching and parables.

As in the other two Synoptic Gospels, Jesus enters Jerusalem in triumph and immediately cleanses the temple (19:28-48); then follows a period of intense conflict with the Jerusalem authorities (20:1-47), followed by further teaching and warnings to disciples about the End time (Lk 21:5-38).

Though it follows the same pattern, Luke's Passion narrative (22:1-23:56) is different from that of the Gospel of Mark in a number of ways. The story of the penitent thief, the last utterances of Jesus which are words of forgiveness for the executioners and confident trust in the Father, and the weeping women of Jerusalem, are not found elsewhere and represent Luke's unique perspective on the redemptive and atoning death of Jesus.

The Resurrection narrative is likewise different from Mark and Matthew. Although the Galilean women disciples see and believe the resurrection, on the basis of the empty tomb, their message is not believed (24:1-11). Unique to Luke is also the story of the Supper at Emmaus and Jesus' appearance to all the disciples in Jerusalem with the promise of the Holy Spirit (24:13-48). Luke's Gospel concludes with the ascension of Jesus into heaven and the return of his disciples, women as well as men, to Jerusalem in great joy to await the promise from the Father (Lk 24:50-52). Just as the Gospel began in Jerusalem in the temple (Lk 1:5-23), so too that is where it ends.

III. What should we expect to find in Luke's Gospel in its major themes (which we will also find in Acts)?

In the first place, Luke's is a Gospel focussed on the theme of joy. There is suffering present, especially in Jesus' death, but its ultimate goal and purpose is the gift of heaven's own joy to God's people on earth. It is apparent in the theme of table-fellowship which, to the outrage of his opponents, Jesus shares with sinners. This joy is partly because of the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout Jesus' ministry (and therefore also the life of the Church in Acts). It arises also from Luke's strong emphasis on the resurrection and the ultimate triumph of goodness over evil and life over death.

Luke's is also a Gospel concerned with social justice. The good news of Jesus overturns the structures of the world, raising up the poor and bringing down the mighty as the Magnificat and the Beatitudes so powerfully express (1:46-55; 6:20-26). The Gospel has a particular concern for women as disciples, apparent in the picture of Mary of

Nazareth (1:26-45) and the other Galilean women (8:1-3; 23:49, 59; 24:10), prominent among whom is Mary the Magdalene (probably a nickname meaning ‘Mary the Tower’). Often Luke pairs a story about a man with a story about a woman.

Luke’s Gospel also contains a deep sense of spirituality, particularly in Jesus who is often found at prayer in this Gospel. Prayer lies at the centre not only of Jesus’ life and ministry but also that of his disciples, who are taught to pray (11:2-4) and encouraged to go on praying, no matter what the circumstances. Prayer for Luke represents communion with God and trust in God, as well as intercession for the needs of others, especially the poor and powerless. Disciples are to be prepared to give up everything, including their possessions, in their following of Jesus.

Jesus in this Gospel is the divine and human Son of God, the one who embodies the generous hospitality and welcome of God towards sinners and outsiders. His death and resurrection bring to birth the kingdom of God and the forgiveness of sins. Ultimately Luke turns our gaze to Jesus’ future Coming, when all things will be restored and fulfilled in him. The mission of the church is precisely to proclaim and live out that divine welcome, that restoration and hope: to all people and to the ends of the earth.

IV. It is important, in receiving this Gospel in the course of Year C, to hear Luke’s unique voice: to note, for example, where he differs from the other Gospels, especially Mark, his main source. In grasping the differences, we are able to hear and value which the distinctive perspective that Luke, as evangelist, storyteller and theologian, brings to the New Testament. He is not saying the same thing as the other Gospels. On the contrary: each has its own contribution to make, enriching and deepening our understanding of who God is of and what it means for us to follow Jesus, engaging with him in mission.

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*John and Marion Poynter are, and have long been, stalwart members of St Mary's parish, and constant contributors to its activities.*

*John has lately not been well, and in encouragement for him in his recovery, we have here a few small extracts from his book The Tarnished Swan. The book was published in 2009 some time after his retiring from his day job as variously, a Professor of History, a Dean and a very senior University administrator.*

*The extracts, reprinted with his permission, give a taste of some of his considerable skill as a biographer (auto-biographer in this case) and as an imaginative poet.*

[And thanks to Michael G for an initial suggestion about using John's book]

*Following that, he also offers us a separate poem, very much for our times, which is entitled After Copenhagen, After All*

## Extracts from the book The Tarnished Swan
### *John Poynter*

### *Innocence and Experience*

Despite having lived in a city for 60 years – and the same city at that – I still do not regard myself as a citizen, in the original sense of the word. Only those who grow up in the country can see the city as it is: a human construct, an artifact which in turn manipulates humanity to its own purposes. Growing up in a country town, as I did, is not growing up in the true country, but it is emphatically not growing up in the city. Of course, the town, and to a degree, the landscape around it, were also artifacts, though the shapes of what was there before were much more discernible than they can be in a city. They were moreover recent creations, because we were, though few chose to remember it, still-early settlers in a conquered land. The first European born in Coleraine was still alive when I was born.

Continuing to live in the country after growing up is much more difficult, and like most young adults, I quit it for the city. I lived in

Coleraine full-time until I was thirteen, when I entered a city boarding school, and left it permanently after my father died, when I was eighteen. In my childhood, the urban unemployed tramped the countryside in search of a job, or at least a meal; nowadays the urban rich invade the country, to play the role of farmer, or to sit in retirement admiring the view, or to live out some quasi-religious impulse. I have never been so tempted, but retain nevertheless a loyalty to 'the country'.

*and John's first travels abroad*

## *North-East Passage*

### *Banffshire*

The day after I first arrived in Banffshire, in September 1951, 'Uncle' Willie Riddoch – mother's cousin, but I call him uncle – took me to a small stone cottage on Tarryblake estate to visit 'the Auld Shepherd' and his wife. He introduced me to the extremely elderly couple as 'Joseph's grandson'. Is Joseph here? asked the old man, who had last seen my grandfather sixty-five years before, in 1886. I could understand little of the amiable conversation which followed, Willie falling into the couple's broad Banff dialect, a language, I was to discover, rich in Norse terms of abuse. The old woman served us excellent scones (the Scots are good at baking), the butter spread with her thumb, which was wiped clean before and after. After we left, Willie remarked what a pity it was that the couple had not been on speaking terms since 1913, when they had fallen out over whether or not to emigrate to Canada to join their only son. Thirty-eight years of silent resentment confined in a two-roomed cottage: emigration, it seems, divides families in more ways than one.

*The first of the poems from John's book presented here is apposite to the ecclesiastical season which is now reaching its conclusion as Easter approaches.*

***Lent***

Your message, if I hear it right,
transmitted over two millennia
(not without interference)
is simple, therefore difficult:

Be honest, if you can.
It's hard; you'll do it best
by looking out, not in;
there wild beasts be.

Distrust the clever, smart
In law, or advertising,
or making images
which bend your mind;

and those who say
truths are constructions.
So what? Untruths remain
discernable as lies.

Distrust success.
Embrace the loser, let
winners look after
themselves; they will.

Hardest of all:  no barracking,
even for team, race, or nation,
or some creed.  Forswear them all,
Pilgrim, and be free.

*...and from the Tarnished Swan book a few more poems*
*which capture the modern world,*
*including the title poem*

***Be grateful, Ben Jonson,***
***Thou art not living in this hour***

Text to me only with thy thumbs
And I will pledge with mine
Or post a blog upon my space
And I will paste on thine.
The urge which in my thumbs doth rise
Doth seek a text divine
But if you cannot twitter more
I LUV U will be fine.

***Meme mia***

Please don't manipulate my memes, Mr Murdoch
Please let me do the job myself.
I know that my mind yesterday
was quite unlike today's,
but I'd like to choose tomorrow's for myself.

To know you're being got at
doesn't stop you being got at,
when even the have-nots are being had;
while there's ink upon the roller
or a pixel on the screen
there's danger to that open mind of yours;
some nasty little notions will make themselves at home
and the last one in will firmly shut the door.
Please don't manipulate my memes, Mr Anyone
I'd much prefer to do the job myself.

***The tarnished swan***

The tarnished swan, who living had no note
But petulantly hissed, alike at dogs and men.
When death approached, unlocked its sullen throat
Squawked once at God, and never hissed again.

*Finally a more recent poem which John has kindly offered to us*

## – After Copenhagen, After All –
***John Poynter***

I ***The Last Scene of Hamlet***

The last Hamlet, as he fled the stage,
cast and audience gone before; even Laertes
Hastening away, leaving him unkilled;
Hamlet, the theatre tumbling around him,
found his question answered: not to be.

In London, after the last tsunami,
A single book (The Tempest?) floats
On waves lapping over the British Library;
Beyond St Paul's, cathédrale engloutie,
The French coast gleams, and is gone.

Lightning has struck the last rock band,
turning its fans on once too often.
Elsewhere, broken and desolate
The palaces where Mozart played.
In distant Kakadu, songlines are silent.

Mankind has lost its mastery. What matter
If somewhere a Lear still rails against the storm?
This is no apocalypse; merely the end of the world.
A planet, evolved to incapacity,
Reduced to earth, and fire, and rain.

II ***And God said:***

*Sorry!*
*It seems that evolution was not such a good idea,*
*Though labour-saving. Do it myself re-creation*
*Will take at least a week, rest-day included.*

*Hot off the press, John Blanch sends us an account of a special event which he and Fiona attended during their present trip to the UK.*

## John Buchan Society Weekend, Scotland
***John Blanch***

*John Buchan Society Weekend*
*Perth, Scotland 21-23 March 2025*

Back in the 1960s, in the Baillieu Library of the University of Melbourne to study for my end of year law examinations, I was on the floor that held English Literature. I became distracted by the works of John Buchan, Scottish born novelist, or perhaps I should say polymath as he had many achievements – historian, politician, statesman.

Born in Perth Scotland 26 August 1875, educated in Glasgow and Oxford, he spent much time walking in the Scottish Borders talking to shepherds and many others gaining a thorough understanding of Scottish culture. His first written works were published before the19th century ended. He is best known for his Richard Hannay novels The Thirty Nine Steps, Greenmantle, Mr Standfast, The Three Hostages and The Island of Sheep, as well as many other works fiction and non-fiction over a range of subjects.

In World War I he was Director of Information and wrote a multi-volume history of that war; he spent some time as a member of the House of Commons, and in 1935 was appointed Governor-General of Canada and was elevated to the peerage as Lord Tweedsmuir. He died in office in February 1940.

My distraction in the library led to collecting his books, and in the 1980s I joined the John Buchan Society, an active literary society based in the UK and with a membership including many Buchan family members dedicated to preserving and enhancing his reputation. It publishes a regular Journal of interesting academic articles and issues regular newsletters to members. The Society operates the John Buchan Story, a museum in Peebles Scotland and runs a weekend event twice a year.

I attended a weekend event in Oxford in 1990, and this year, I was excited to discover that Fiona and I could attend the Society's AGM

Weekend in Perth, Scotland on the weekend of 21-23 March 2025, as part of our month-long visit to the UK to catch up with our daughter Emily and her two children.

We duly booked in and for preparation I read two Buchan works from my shelf. The first was Greenmantle, the second Richard Hannay thriller, set in WW1 where Hannay is sent behind German lines in 1916 with others to make their way to Istanbul and Turkey to investigate rumours of a charismatic figure on the German/Turkish side to unite Islam. The writing is compelling and engaging to the end with close scrapes and thrilling descriptions of close action.

The second work was Huntingtower written in 1922, a story of Dickson McCunn, retired Glasgow grocer who sets out on a walking tour in Carrick and Galloway and gets involved in the rescue of a Russian princess who has escaped the Bolshevik Revolution, but who is held in Huntingtower, a castle like mansion by folk in league with the Soviets. He engages many locals in the rescue including the Gorbals Die Hards, a group of urchins with much street smart knowledge. The writing in this book has a great deal of Scots vernacular, but wonderful humour and observation on society that holds true today, a century later.

The central building in this story ought not be confused with Huntingtower Castle, the former seat of the Ruthven family and located outside Perth, and which is to be visited as part of the AGM Weekend – about which more later.

Our weekend adventure started on Thursday 20 March when we made our way to London Kings Cross Station to catch the Highland Chieftain train departing at 12 noon. It left from Platform 5 (note the absence of a fraction in the platform number meant that there were no walls to go through!). A good service with a regular food and drink and we arrived at Perth a little before 6.00 p.m.

We had got talking with Dave in the seat next to us and it turned out he is an SNP MP at Westminster. He very kindly helped with our luggage and gave us a lift to the Royal George Hotel, our base for the weekend.

After checking in, we ate dinner in the hotel also catching up with two John Buchan Society identities, Mike Edwards the weekend organiser,

and Clare Dodds, the Society Secretary. Our meal included, in the best Scottish way, haggis with tatties and neeps.

Friday was a day to have a look around Perth and get our bearings before the first Society function, a buffet dinner in the evening. The hotel is well located near the city centre on the street next to the River Tay with a fine view from our room of the river and the Old Bridge. We spent some time walking the nearby streets, checking the shops, the coffee and food, observing the people and getting a feel for the town.

The evening saw all those attending the weekend gather for a buffet dinner. Probably sixty or so in attendance, and a largely older demographic, but very friendly and all united in their interest in John Buchan and his writings. Most of those attending live in England and Scotland with a few from Canada and us from Australia. I found myself sitting next to a couple of retired lawyers and one of the foremost dealers in Buchan books. Fascinating conversation. There was also an 80th birthday with a cake iced with a replica of the dust jacket for the Thirty Nine Steps.

The evening included a talk illustrated with slides from Chris Reed, a Canadian lawyer, about his journey as a collector of Buchan writings in particular. A journey that started in his school days with a fine English Literature teacher with The Thirty Nine Steps, and continued with much time in bookstores looking for collectible treasures, with tips to encourage the proprietor to reveal his hidden works. Chris has been a collector for some decades, and his collection includes the original of the contract signed by Buchan for the American rights to his novel Prester John. The contract included hand-written amendments to restrict changes to the book other than the title. It was published in the US with another title. Chris ended his talk by donating that Contract to the John Buchan Society. It will probably be exhibited in the Museum in Peebles.

On Saturday morning we boarded a bus for a tour, first to John Buchan's birthplace at 18-20 York Place Perth on 26 August 1875, now marked by a commemorative plaque. His father was the Rev John Buchan, a Free Church of Scotland minister, and his mother Helen, nee Masterton. The family were not there for long as the Rev Buchan was called to a

church  near Kirkcaldy in Fife a place where the young JB had time to spend outdoors and made good use of it..

Next stop was Perth Railway Station where there is a bust of JB on one of the platforms with some commemorative words and a display of his books.  Not a very good likeness but at least it is there. There is also talk of adding a new poster to highlight this sesquicentenary year of JB's birth that is currently bogged down in ScotRail bureaucracy.

Then on to Huntingtower Castle, built originally as two towers 2.7 metres apart by the powerful Ruthven Family (later the Earls of Gowrie) and known as the Place of Ruthven. Mary Queen of Scots was a visitor in 1565 shortly after she married Lord Darnley.  When the Ruthven family were disinherited and lost all their lands and titles in 1600 following the Gowrie conspiracy to assassinate the King, the Castle was renamed and passed to the Murray Family (the Dukes of Atholl), and the Murrays filled in the gap between the towers.

Incidentally, and as a neat parallel to John Buchan's elevation to Lord Tweedsmuir on his appointment as Governor-General of Canada in 1935, the Gowrie title was restored to Alexander Hore-Ruthven in 1935 on his appointment as Governor-General of Australia as Lord Gowrie, an appointment that ran until 1944.

The bus then took us to our last stop, the Perth Museum to see the display of the Stone of Destiny.  Visitors are admitted 15 at a time to the display housed in two rooms. The first room tells something of the story of the stone and its removal to Westminster Abbey by Edward I and its theft from there by students and the second exhibits the Stone with graphics illustrating its use in coronations over the centuries.

The AGM of the John Buchan Society was held at 3.00pm and went without incident.

The main dinner for the event was on Saturday evening and Fiona and I were honoured to be seated at the top table with the Chairman, the Editor of the John Buchan Journal and Chris and Valerie from Canada.

The guest speaker was Sir Niall Ferguson, the international conservative historian and thinker who spoke about Greenmantle, his advisory business established in 2011, and about the novel of that name by JB after which the business was named. Unfortunately, he was unable to be

present at the dinner and we received the video version- a 40 minute plus lecture full of stimulation and interest. He established the business after the Global Financial Crisis for two primary reasons – to provide an institution that could give frank and fearless advice away from the increasing political correctness or wokeism that was invading the academic institutions where he worked, and also to provide advice that understood and interpreted history. He spoke at some length about the Greenmantle novel and its role in interpreting history in 1916, and the need to rehabilitate the community understanding of three great Scottish novelists in Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson and John Buchan.

For those interested the whole speech is likely to be uploaded to the website of the John Buchan Society.

The final event of the weekend was the Morning Service at St Matthews Church of Scotland. The church is located on Tay Street overlooking the river and has a strikingly tall spire. Inside there is a pipe organ and a piano that were both used selectively to accompany the hymns. All the pews have been replaced by tables and chairs, and with cups and saucers on the tables. There are screens to supply the hymn words, readings and prayers and the order of service generally.

The congregation was swelled by 20 or 30 delegates from the JBS and the Minister, Fiona, included us specifically in her welcome and call to worship. The service proceeded on what seemed to me to be normal presbyterian lines. Ursula Buchan, a granddaughter of JB and a Vice President of the Society, gave a short summary of JB and his influence on society and the church including JB's lifelong admiration of John Bunyan and his work The Pilgrim's Progress. The Minister then read a John Buchan poem, and we sang the great John Bunyan hymn, 'He who would true valour see'.

And so the service, and the JBS weekend came to a close. We thoroughly enjoyed the weekend, with the warm and friendly atmosphere of the Society and having made new friends.

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*Asked about John Buchan's poetry, our John (Blanch) suggested this example for us. Thank you to both JBs.*

**– Wood Magic** ***poem by John Buchan***
*ca 1912*

*I will walk warily in the wise woods on the fringes of eventide,*
*For the covert is full of noises and the stir of nameless things.*
*I have seen in the dusk of the beeches the shapes of the lords that ride,*
*And down in the marish hollow I have heard the lady who sings.*
*And once in an April gleaming I met a maid on the sward,*
*All marble-white and gleaming and tender and wild of eye;--*
*I, Jehan the hunter, who speak am a grown man, middling hard,*
*But I dreamt a month of the maid, and wept I knew not why.*

*Down by the edge of the firs, in a coppice of heath and vine,*
*Is an old moss-grown altar, shaded by briar and bloom,*
*Denys, the priest, hath told me 'twas the lord Apollo's shrine*
*In the days ere Christ came down from God to the Virgin's womb.*
*I never go past but I doff my cap and avert my eyes-*

*(Were Denys to catch me I trow I'd do penance for half a year)--*
*For once I saw a flame there and the smoke of a sacrifice,*
*And a voice spake out of the thicket that froze my soul with fear.*

*Wherefore to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,*
*Mary the Blessed Mother, and the kindly Saints as well,*
*I will give glory and praise, and them I cherish the most,*
*For they have the keys of Heaven, and save the soul from Hell.*
*But likewise I will spare for the Lord Apollo a grace,*
*And a bow for the lady Venus-as a friend but not as a thrall.*
*'Tis true they are out of Heaven, but some day they may win the place;*
*For gods are kittle cattle, and a wise man honours them all.*

*Margaret tells of the designs on our set of kneelers, and in particular about two which she designed and stitched herself.*

## Tales from the Kneelers
***Margaret Noble***

Our kneelers have now been in place for a few years. I have seen them used as a child's seat; a place to put a bag; something on which to lean an elbow; and on odd occasions, for kneeling.

There are now three extras as another of Hilda Farquar-Smith's ones depicting stained-glass tapestries was discovered and the two older Mary Queen of Heaven kneelers were cleaned and reupholstered to match the more recent creations.

Most of the kneelers pictured piled up in this group are reproductions of symbols or features found around the church. Some of these are the Jerusalem Cross, the Mary Queen of Heaven symbol, the rose window at the rear of the church, a panel of stained-glass and the tree logo.

*[photo of a kneeler on the floor in front of a pew during a service, in an appropriate place to be knelt on]*

But two others of our kneelers are the result of my need of something to do during the long weeks of lockdown. Each has a story attached.

### The Organ motif Kneeler

I thought that the wonderful music that Beverley and the choir provide should be celebrated, and so I set about trying to reproduce the organ. This involved first taking photos. I decided that

the whole organ was too complicated and therefore concentrated on photographing the pipes.

The next task was trying to get the proportions as correct as possible while fitting the design onto the available space. After a lot of fiddling with what was possible, the design was graphed out and then the easy part – the stitching – was completed.

Next came the question of what to do for the sides – musical symbols, an abstract design or perhaps a keyboard? Inspiration suggested that I could do some musical notation; and then my deciding that there was actually a hymn that I liked which would fit neatly with only a bit of jigging.

If you have ever sat next to the organ kneeler, you may have discovered that the sides have the music for the melody of "All Creatures of Our God and King" complete with clef, accidentals, bar lines and phrase marks.

As an afterthought, I decided to add lovely dog Kirrip who faithfully sat by Beverley at the organ each week; he used to amaze me by seeming to know when the service was close to the end and by standing up for the postlude. He isn't in the illustration, but he is on the real thing.

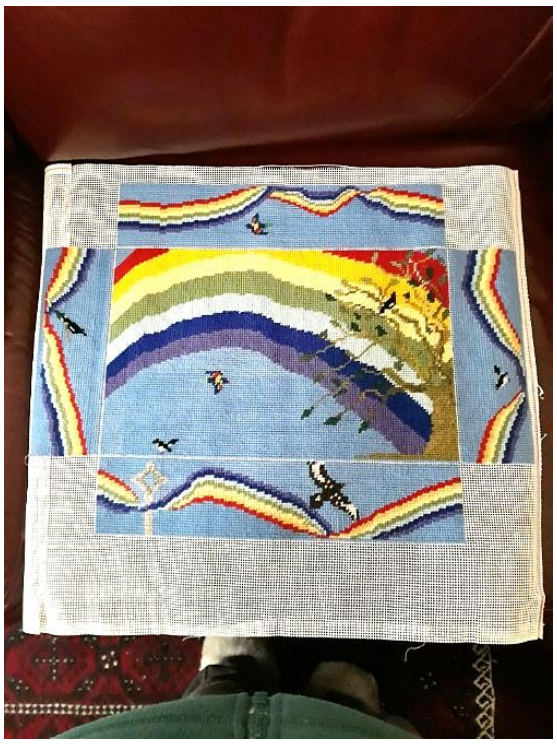
## The Rainbow motif Kneeler

Once the organ kneeler was finished and lockdown in its various forms still went on, my next mission was to use as much of the spare wool as I could. As many craft-minded people will know, we all have a stash of unused materials hiding in our cupboards.

I had a few skeins of tapestry wool in various colours from an old project and one of the op shops near me had the odd skein or two that I grabbed as soon as the shop was allowed to open. All the time that we

have attended St Mary's, it has always had a welcoming, inclusive attitude. A rainbow was the obvious use for my brightly coloured threads even if they weren't quite the right colours.

As some of you may know, Michael and I are a pair of music-loving birdwatchers and I help keep the church gardens looking well kept and watered. All of these pastimes got a look in too.



And the old fig tree could symbolise the garden and its value to the local residents. For some of the neighbours, the grounds of the church are a park where they let their children and dogs run around, have picnics or just enjoy a bit of open space to sit and read. Whilst working in the garden, we often get compliments or comments about how the sight of the garden brings joy to passers-by.

The three native birds on the front have all been sighted in the garden; a Willie Wagtail looking for insects, a Rainbow Lorikeet speeding past, and in the tree a Pied Currawong carolling away. It is wonderful to see native birds using the garden for shelter and food. Others that we see in or over the garden are red and little Wattlebirds, white-plumed Honeyeaters, australian white Ibises, and Peewees – with a once off appearance by a rufous fantail.

The curled rainbow ribbon on the sides of this kneeler was a bit of a challenge to graph and there were many unpicked stitches so it's a bit wonky. The three birds made another appearance. For the fourth side and fourth bird, I thought that featuring Bunjil, the wedge-tailed eagle, would be a good way to pay respects to the indigenous peoples of this area (even though it would be highly unlikely for one of these to appear in or above our garden). The final addition was one of the stone crosses that sits on the roof of St Mary's.

*Michael Noble, with Margaret, is a keen bird observer*
*Here he focuses his attention close to home*

## Birds at St Mary's

***Michael Noble***

I wonder what we might say if we were to reflect on the things that we value about St Mary's. I suspect it would be a long list! I imagine that faith and worship would be key themes, the way they intersect with music and architecture might also feature, and the social fabric of fellowship and hospitality would be prominent.

We might also reflect on St Mary's location and history. The physical impact of the building in its location and the spiritual meaning of its presence. Its Western European character embodied in natively Australian materials and the arc of its history, which grounds us in a particular way as we gather each week.

One feature that has been growing on me in recent years is the nature of its immediate surroundings. The marvellous fig tree, the memorial garden and lawn, and the formal Marygarden. The indigenously-themed labyrinth area, with eucalypt, banksia, lillypilly and saltbush; and the fringing beds of rosemary, irises, Strelitzia, et al, which soften the harder edges of the church and hall.

Taken together these wrap the buildings with life. A living community that is both ephemeral and everlasting, as individual plants live and die, are replaced or replanted, and as all are tended and cared for over time. Passers-by frequently comment appreciatively about this aspect the church's surroundings - a small but valued patch of green and living stuff in the fabric of the North Melbourne landscape. This too is part of the witness of St Mary's.

But there is another aspect to mention.

Walking to St Mary's on a recent February morning I was greeted by a kind of commotion around the fig tree. A first look revealed two magpie-larks perched close together, high up on the church, calling

loudly in turn, somewhat disturbed and likely asserting ownership of "their" patch of ground.

Further investigation showed a blackbird and a wattlebird in the tree, skirmishing among the ripening figs, perhaps seeking the one that was just right. A third magpie-lark then appeared and was promptly chased off by one of the original pair, but not with deep conviction – certainly assertively but not homicidally.

Walking on, down to the Vicarage garden, some low-key warbles alerted me to three Rainbow Lorikeets feeding close together on quinces – a quieter, more intimate picture of a family group, with two adults and a young bird sharing a meal but also engaged in teaching, and learning. Going back to the memorial garden a little later to move a sprinkler, I was amused to see the third magpie-lark, a young bird, readily acknowledge my action on its behalf (!) by strutting confidently past my feet into the garden to seek out whatever treats might have been encouraged to appear.

I have not kept a detailed record of these encounters but a mental list is slowly growing. It contains both native and introduced birds, birds of differing sizes and tastes, common urban birds and a couple that are quite rare. Each one has its own motivations and history, which in some way, for some reason, bring them to visit. You might say that they too are commenting appreciatively on what they find at St Mary's.

Offered with thanks to the current cohort of gardeners – principally Margaret and Helen; and to David, to Lindy and Michael G, and to others who help when needed, and to all those who have come before.

*A south-east corner of the garden. You will have to hunt to see the bird (a magpie lark, incidentally); but that after all is what bird observers themselves do.*

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*Andrew has read a theology book first published some eighty years ago, and which is still influential in theological and ecumenical circles. Andrew's attention was brought to it by Rowan Williams among others. The author Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944) was a Russian Orthodox theologian, priest, philosopher, and economist. His breadth of knowledge and discussion, together with his growing prominence in the church after the revolution, led in 1922 to his arrest on charges of 'political unreliability'. He and others were deported not long later, on orders of Lenin, and he spent the rest of his life abroad writing copiously. He died of a cancer in Paris, and is buried there. Andrew takes us fellow-parishioners through Bulgakov's last book*

## Review: 'The Bride of the Lamb', Sergei Bulgakov

***Andrew Gador- Whyte***

I recently read a theological book, *The Bride of the Lamb*, (published 1945 posthumously) by Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944), an early 20th century Russian Orthodox writer working in Paris from the 1920s onwards.

The book is something of a sweep of creation, salvation history and the end times (eschatology), but with a focus on the Church and eschatology in particular. I thought I would write a short précis of the book which represents some surprising perspectives for western Christian readers as well as, I think, a persuasive theology of universal salvation that takes seriously the biblical language of judgment.

Bulgakov begins by speaking about creation – his understanding of creation then sets up his account of the Fall, redemption in Christ, the calling of the Church and the ultimate restoration of all things. When he thinks about creation, he holds together two things: (1) creation is not God, but is a true reflection of the wisdom of God, and (2) there is nothing 'outside' of God – the whole created cosmos proceeds from the eternal exchange of love between Father and Son in the power of the Spirit.

What does it mean to say that creation flows out of the active, creative love that is eternally shared by the persons of the Trinity? As Bulgakov puts it, creation is an outpouring of God's wisdom (creaturely *Sophia*), where uncreated forces and energies receive a creaturely, relative, multiple and limited being in creation. Creation is God's self-revelation.

Bulgakov considers how this view of the universe is distinctive from the alternative atheistic and religious visions of it.

Firstly, the universe is not God. And God (or, as the atheists might put it, 'what people have called God') is not the universe. There is more to the story than the visible totality of the universe. There is the will and the wisdom that precedes the universe which we can be enabled to see, within and behind all things. If the universe is not 'all there is', a zero-sum game, then there is a new possibility: the possibility that the universe is *loved,* and the work of another's love. For Bulgakov, atheism is not so different from pantheism in the sense that both conceive a world where 'this is all there is' (whether one reaches that point by saying that 'what we have been calling "God" is only natural forces at play', or by saying 'what we have been calling the universe, and everything within it, is God).

And secondly, there is nothing 'outside' God. There is no moral sphere or level of reality in the universe that is not created by God, that does not matter to God, that will not be restored finally to its true nature despite its corruption. So Bulgakov presents the Christian vision as one that opposes dualism. Dualism has taken many forms, such as the ancient belief in a good god and an evil god (Manichaeanism) or the belief that our bodies and the world they inhabit are a passing shadow of their true forms (Platonism).

(But note, dualism also frequently has a hold on Christian theological language, especially where there is a misunderstanding of salvation and resurrection as diminishing the moral weight of our present shared existence, our responsibility to the world, the eternal *significance* of our fragile bodies).

Both of these things lead us back to the heart of the matter: creation is the free outworking of the love that is the life of God. And Bulgakov insists that to say God loves the world is to deny that God could have

opted (1) not to create the world, or (2) to have made any number of alternative creations. We believe that God has revealed his commitment to *this* world, *this* universe (which we affirm in the Incarnation), and not to one among an infinite number of 'options'. There is no sense in which creation adds anything to God or that God needs it, and yet because of God's commitment to this creation, it is not possible to think of God as other than the creator God.

But there is something behind that recognition: for Bulgakov, God has not arbitrarily chosen to make *this* cosmos, but rather within the eternity of God's life there is an eternal wisdom that is the *form* (or *idea)* of the cosmos. Here Bulgakov is borrowing from Platonic vocabulary but doing something different with it. Platonism would say that the 'real' world is the invisible *form* or *idea* behind the world, and the world we inhabit and can touch is an unreal shadow of that. But Bulgakov's point is that the world we know both is real and morally weighty – finite, but having an eternal *significance* – and that it draws its reality and its eternal significance from the exchange of love within God, where its *form* has been from all eternity. We might think of Ephesians 1, 'chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world', to get a sense of where he is going with this.

So if the world we know and inhabit, and our bodies, are both *real* and *good*, *and* are the reflection of a *form* or an outpouring of wisdom within God's life, then all manner of things flow from that. It means (1) nothing and no one is made by accident, but God knew us in Christ from before creation. It means (2) the world, despite being fallen, and the site of enormous pain and evil, remains what it has always been, the true self-revealing of God's wisdom in what is *other than* God.

The kind of world God creates is one in which human freedom is real, in which God in fact enables creatures to work with him through their own freedom – he refers to this as synergism. He juxtaposes powerful images: synergism between God's action and human action is like the struggle between Jacob and God, like the life of prayer Jesus entrusts to his disciples ('ask and it shall be given you'), and like Jesus' agony in the garden ('not my will but your will be done').

God's commitment to creaturely freedom is an act of kenosis (self-emptying, self-giving). In strenuously denying determinism, but maintaining a proper understanding of God's omniscience (God's understanding is of course not limited by the linearity of our time), Bulgakov even startlingly posits that God 'veils his face' to the temporal consequences of the choices we make within our linear human time, in order that our freedom may be maximised. But human freedom is not absolute, but is part of what it means to be a created, given, being.

What that synergism points towards is a final restoration, glorification, divinisation and (in Bulgakov's bold language) deification of the world. The Church is itself a sign and a fulfilment of God's eternal purpose for the deification of the world, and Bulgakov locates at its centre the Mother of God, as God-bearer (*theotókos)* and Spirit-bearer.

One of the implications of the path Bulgakov charts between pantheism and dualism is his account of evil. The response of Christian theology to evil (whether 'natural evil' or human evil) is not to carve out a part of the cosmos that is really not made by God, nor to consider the world or some within it as having lost completely the image of God in which they were created ('utter depravity'), both of which are dualistic formulations. Rather Christian theology affirms that the cosmos remains God's self-revelation, but as subject to a *privation* of the good which we call evil (evil is not ultimately a 'real' and 'solid' force in itself, but a 'subtraction' from the good which is the true reality). Bulgakov follows the traditional logic that the privation of evil springs from the misuse of creaturely freedom, first among the angels at the time the cosmos was created, and subsequently through human rebellion.

Bulgakov's interpretation of the final judgement is distinctive although he claims precedent in Eastern Orthodox theology, particularly in Isaac the Syrian. His reading is universalist in the sense that he believes all creation will ultimately be made perfect together and all humanity will share in a glorified resurrection life. But he sees this universalism as compatible with a condemnation and purgation of evil on the path to restoration, and compatible with an individual judgement which is however not *infinite*. We will all be held responsible for the way we have lived, but this is not for our ultimate condemnation.

For instance, when Bulgakov interprets Jesus' parable, he understands the division of the sheep and the goats is a division that runs through each of us. All of us will come to judgement and be confronted with the gap between the way we have lived our lives and the way God has created us to be. Bulgakov does see the language of judgement in the New Testament as pointing to a *suffering through* that dissonance as it is fully revealed to us. But his reading of the word 'eternal' in Jesus' words is not as a description of created *time*, as we have often read it.

There is no place in Bulgakov's thought for an *infinite duration* of judgement – rather, for Bulgakov eternity is a *relational term*, referring to a level of *significance* (a qualitative term)*:* where we have seen our lives only in terms of the linear passing of time, now our whole lives are revealed *in relation* to God, to God's eternal wisdom and to the *forms* of our being within God.

For Bulgakov, all of us will be made perfect for the eternal purpose for which we were made, and part of being made perfect will be the restorative judgement in which ways we have been complicit in evil are made visible to us and (perhaps painfully) buried and set aside, as we will be divinised, deified, made perfect together.

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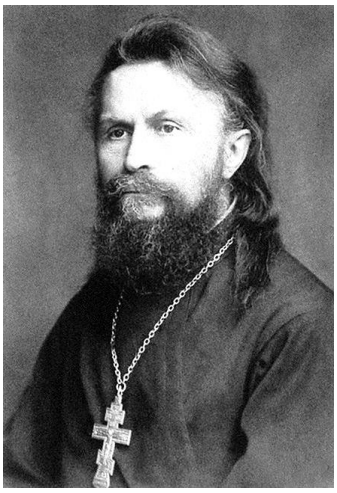

Bulgakov's *The Bride of the Lamb* was first published in 1945

English edition referred to here:
translator Boris Jakim; publisher Eerdmans, 2001

*Having just returned from a trip to the UK, Michael writes for us of particular memories from his childhood near Newcastle upon Tyne.*

## A Memoir of an Unusual Baptismal Tradition

***Michael Golding***

Easter is a time for baptisms, or "christenings" as they were more often called in my youth, so perhaps the Easter edition of Ave is a suitable place to record a rather unusual christening tradition which excited me a great deal in my childhood. As this tradition is associated with my first church, St Mary's, Willington, and as "churches called St Mary's" is a recurring theme in Ave, perhaps that's a further reason to justify its inclusion. Reminiscences of childhood churches are also a popular topic in Ave so perhaps that's a third justification. In any event, I would be most interested to hear if anyone has ever experienced or heard tell of anything even remotely similar, because despite much searching and enquiry I have found little evidence for the existence of this tradition apart from my own vivid memory.

By way of background I'd like to say a little about the town in which I was born and raised, Wallsend (of which Willington forms part). Located in the North East of England to the east of Newcastle-upon-Tyne it gets its name from being at end of the Roman Wall on the site of the Roman fort, Segedunum. Some ruins of the wall are still visible today and there is a reconstruction of the fort and a visitor centre. Purely for reasons of whimsy the local railway station has a number of

signs in both English and Latin, thus “No Smoking” is translated as “Noli Fumare”.

Those tempted to observe that tobacco smoking did not reach English shores until long after the Romans had left may be in danger of missing the joke.


After many long agrarian centuries in the Industrial Age Wallsend became famous for its collieries and its shipbuilding. Charles Dickens was a fan of its coal. In Our Mutual Friend the barrister Eugene Wrayburn speaks approvingly of a twilight “enlivened with a glow of Wallsend” but that glow came at a terrible cost. Some 102 men and boys lost their lives in the Wallsend Colliery Disaster of 1835 to add to the toll of the 52 who died in the 1821 disaster. Similarly shipyards that proudly launched Blue Riband winning ships had their share of fatalities. My own grandfather was killed in an accident involving the transportation of coal from colliery to port.

The collieries have closed now and the shipbuilding is drastically reduced but one pit survived and the shipyards still thrived well into my childhood in the 1960s when Wallsend was a predominantly working class town enjoying near full employment. Church attendance was rather higher then than it is today and in my own family (my father was church warden) it was close to compulsory, as was attending Sunday School in the Church Hall on Sunday afternoon.

Let me take you now to one hot Sunday afternoon in Wallsend in the mid 1960s. In those less regulated days I was allowed to travel to and from Sunday School unaccompanied and my route home took me perhaps a mile or so from Church Hall to home via St Mary's. As I approached the church I was hailed by an elderly gentleman dressed in a dark three piece suit, white shirt, dark tie and contrasting flat cap: the "Sunday Best" clothes of a working man of the time. Intrigued and not at all dismayed (indeed, there was nothing to fear) I stopped and gave him my attention. He told me that there was a baby about to be christened in the church and for that reason I was to be presented with a gift. He then handed me a white paper bag containing cake, biscuits, sweets (lollies would be the Australian word, I suppose) and two half crowns, five shillings, a fabulous sum of money for a boy of my age.

I was astounded at the time and I'm still puzzled today. I thanked the gentleman, I'm sure, but I also asked for an explanation. The only one offered was that it was because of the christening and I should take the package home to my father who would explain it to me. He himself had a christening to attend. My father, as best I recall, simply told me that I had been lucky and this was indeed a local tradition associated with christenings. He added that the child being christened would have been a girl because the gift was given to a child of the opposite sex. If he told me any more either then or later then I'm afraid I have forgotten it.

These days baptisms usually take place in the course of a regular morning eucharist but in my youth in my area this was not how it was done. There was usually a separate christening service and I soon learned that Sunday afternoons shortly after I had finished Sunday School was a prime time for such events. Henceforward I did not neglect to pause at the church on the off chance that I might be lucky again and I was on a couple of occasions. There were also occasional disappointments where it transpired that the baby was male and so the gift was not for me.

Over the years I have tried to find out more about the origins of this tradition but with no success. Perhaps I should try a little harder. I have just returned from a visit to the UK and I tried again asking my

Wallsend school friends and relatives but I have drawn a blank. A few years ago I studied baptism as part of my University of Divinity MDiv and I raised the topic with one of my lecturers, Andrew McGowan, a renowned expert on the history of the sacraments, but, alas, Antiquity is his period rather than 1960s North East England and I came away none the wiser.

It seemed to me to be a rather charming tradition and one from which I had greatly benefitted in my childhood so when my own daughter, Eleanor, came to be baptised in St Albans England in 2002 I decided to conform to it. Needless to say it was hardly possible in those later days for an adult male to approach a boy at random and offer him sweets and money without falling under some suspicion so instead I identified a boy from among the congregation and explained the situation to his parents, who were happy to oblige. I can't remember how much I gave him but it was rather more than 5 shillings as the modern equivalent, 25 pence, seemed rather mean. He seemed happy enough. It was all found money to him and I fancy that his reaction was somewhat similar to mine all those years ago: puzzled but grateful.

*Most aspects of the North East of England, including the areas invoked by Michael in this reflection above, are specially dear to his heart; none more so than the Newcastle United Football Club.*

*During his recent trip he was blessed enough to be at the Wembley Stadium in London when the Magpies (Newcastle) beat Liverpool in the final of the English Football League Cup (their first triumph in a domestic cup competition for seventy years).*

*Getting his priorities right, he then immediately made the journey to the North East. There he could fit in attending several services at Newcastle Cathedral, and could join with fans in the town who were celebrating the victory of their team.*

*He also visited family and friends.*

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## Bob the Scarecrow
***Rosie Moloney***

*Over the past few weeks the Sunday School kids have been making a scarecrow to sell at the upcoming Harvest Fete.*

*Rosie Moloney interviewed four of the artists – Isaiah, Sebby, Jimmy and Billy – about their creation.*

*So, who is this?*

Billy: This is Bob.

*Tell me about Bob.*

Jimmy: He's a scarecrow with a spinny hat and a chef shirt, and he's really cool and he's up for auction. He might not work to scare away crows; they'll pick his eyes out. But he's good to have anyway.

*What's your favourite thing about Bob?*

Sebby: His spinny hat.

*Who else helped make Bob?*

Isaiah: Me, and Nathaniel, and Arthur, and Hector, and Ambrose, and Edith, and Teddy.

*His jacket is so colourful!*

Isaiah: That's because we were representing someone's rainbow coat. Larry or someone.

*Joseph?*

Isaiah: Yeah, Joseph!

Jimmy: His rainbow coat that everyone hated.

Isaiah: They didn't hate it, they were jealous of it.

*I can see lots of shiny things on the back of his coat.*

Jimmy: They are reflecting light from God, like in the story Jesus was reflecting God.

*Can you remember anything else about the story we did that week?*

Jimmy: Jesus became shiny at the top of Mount Something, because he was talking to God and he went shiny.

*And what are we making the scarecrow for?*

Isaiah: Umm… Easter?

*What was the story we talked about last week…first fruits?*

Jimmy: Harvest!

*Why are we having a harvest fair?*

Isaiah: To raise money for the church?

*But traditionally, why did people in the olden days celebrate harvest?*

Jimmy: To give the first of their best stuff to God, because God gave them everything.

*What have you enjoyed most about making the scarecrow?*

Sebby: Putting the shiny stuff on the back.

Isiaiah: I liked stuffing him.

Billy: I liked that we got to be creative.
Jimmy: I liked thinking about stuff that you wouldn't ordinarily think about. Like, the back of his coat said "Chefworks" and we had the idea to change it to "Bobworks".

*Why should anyone buy Bob?*

Sebby: Because he's beautiful.
Jimmy: In his own special way.

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*All parents of kids in the photo have consented to the photo appearing in Ave*

**Harvest Festival Celebration – Sunday 4 May 2025**

And after the 10am service on Sunday 4 May 2025 we will have stalls, fun, games and morning tea for **Harvest Festival**. You can help prepare by using produce to make preserves, chutneys, jams and gifts *(perfect for Mother's Day, which is the following week, Sunday 11 May).*

There will be working bees before the festival, to prepare; you might like to join them. Contact Marion Poynter.

**AND … Bob the Scarecrow will be auctioned!**
**Prepare your bids**

## …STOP PRESS Talmud Identifies Failure of USA Politics

***Geoff Jenkins***

***A last minute communiqué received just before publication.***

*A powerful contemporary conclusion is contained*
*in the last paragraphs;*
*however in order best to understand that conclusion, it is important to first read the preceding analysis of the two different historical Destructions of the First and Second Jerusalem Temples*

## The Damage of Hatred-without-rightful-cause.

***Geoffrey Jenkins***

Hidden away in the Babylonian Talmud (Yoma 9b) is a brief but especially intriguing theological reflection on two destructions of Jerusalem, the first by the Babylonians beginning in 597 BCE, and the second by the Romans in 70 CE. Actually the passage never mentions Jerusalem by name, but only the First and Second Temples, whose existence and preservation were representative of the city itself.

Why did God twice remove his favour from his people and allow the Temples and the city to be destroyed, and its people deported or sold into slavery?

*[We read it in this passage]*

> 4. Why was the First Temple destroyed? Because of three evils in it: idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed. But why was the Second Temple destroyed, seeing that during the time it stood people occupied themselves with Torah, with observance of precepts, and with the practice of charity? Because during the time it stood, hatred without rightful cause prevailed. This is to teach you that hatred without rightful cause is deemed as grave as all three sins of idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed, together.

These two destructions were both of them cataclysmic events. In both cases the city was subject to a lengthy siege, during which the people were subjected to very severe deprivations. So one might imagine that a military or strategic explanation would have existed beside the theological one, and perhaps here there is, wrapped into the phrase *hatred-without-rightful-cause.*

Josephus tells the story of the war against the Romans in seven books, providing us with remarkable detail about the events ranging over four years. But such a wealth of detail need not by itself provide an explanation for the Temple's destruction. In fact Josephus, writing as a historian, provides us with many reasons for the destruction, though he emphasises *sectarian violence* as a sort of root cause.

Some historians think that by this framing of the argument Josephus wanted to deflect blame away from the Romans. I don't think this is right, myself, but in any case it is very clear that the compiler of our Talmud lection does not either, as we shall see. So we might think of the Talmud here as a crystallisation or distillation into a kernel of truth which it shares with Josephus, who though not using the same language (Greek or Hebrew) nor the same level of historical detail lands at the same place.

Let's dive into the detail. Three evils explain the destruction of the *First Temple,* namely *idolatry, immorality and bloodshed*. This is not so much a list as a set of categories, three types of sin if you like. Idolatry mistakes God, immorality is careless of God's expectations for how to live, bloodshed characterises a dysfunctional community of God's people. It is not the Babylonians who are to blame, but the community of God's people.

Incidentally, there is value for us to these as a set. Right belief leads to right living leads to a just society. Our inclination to stop at belief, as though how we live is not crucial, is not especially biblical! Nor for that matter is the bloodshed in society of no interest to God.

It is possible to map these three categories readily onto the prophetic literature of the period, especially the books of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Both of these prophets weave these three thematic theological ills together, constantly viewing the threat of destruction as arising from *misbelief* reflecting itself in ethical failures leading to an unjust society.

These prophets are not predicting the fall of Jerusalem, living as they were through the time when the city fell. Rather their prophetic task was to explain the events of their own day in theological terms. A task which they perform with inspired insight.

But now we encounter the dramatic twist when it comes to the *Second Temple's demise*. Our three categories do not explain what happened, because in the time of the Second Temple the opposites were the case. Not mistaking God, but reading of Scripture. That is a striking antithesis! Nor immorality, but the keeping of God's law. That too is a striking antithesis, and one that as Christians we might read with attention to our benefit. Nor too bloodshed, but charity. Quite the opposite!

Of course there is here a high degree of generalisation, but there might be a sense in which we can glimpse here the background to our gospels, and that perhaps not surprisingly so if we date the gospels as late as 70 CE. (I don't do so, by the way, preferring to think that Luke is the latest and belongs to the 60s).

*[The Hebrew text of the passage we are examining ]*

אֲבָל מִקְדָּשׁ שִׁנִי שֶׁהָיוּ עוֹסְקִין בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוֹת וּגְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים, מִפְּנֵי
מָה חָרַב? מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָיְתָה בּוֹ שִׂנְאַת חִנָּם. לְלַמֶּדְךָ שֶׁשִּׂקּוּלָה שִׂנְאַת חִנָּם
כְּנֶגֶד שְׁלֹשׁ עֲבֵירוֹת: עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה, גִּלּוּי עֲרָיוֹת, וּשְׁפִיכוּת דָּמִים.

Why then was the Second Temple destroyed? Well, simply because of **hatred-without-rightful-cause!** However we might choose to understand this expression, it is **not** a fourth category to set beside our initial three, idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed.

Our writer states this quite clearly. Hatred-without-rightful-cause is more deadly serious than the other three put together.

Here perhaps we might think of Josephus again. *His* explanation for the war and the destruction of Jerusalem was that factions led by men of super-egos completely undermined the society of the time, and deprived it of the ability to act sensibly and strategically. These factions hated each other, and the less reason they had for their hatred the more fiercely they fought.

All of which might seem overblown had we not observed, *in our own day*, what we might call the Rupert effect. Americans left and right – the terms have become meaningless – despise each other with no good reason. And supposed people of faith are the worst offenders.

Partisanship is destroying that society from within, post-truth obtains everywhere, and Christian Nationalism in its profound ignorance of the gospel is sowing the seeds of the nation's demise. Who could have imagined, in the blink of an eye, fascism bursting into flower and innocent people being arrested for writing a pamphlet, as happened just last week.

Do not imagine that God does not care about politics, says our Rabbinic author. This is to teach you that hatred-without-rightful-cause is deemed just as grave as all the three sins of idolatory, immorality and bloodshed together, because it destroys nations.

# AVE EASTER 2025

## Cover picture details

## *Albrecht Dürer* Christ Appearing to His Mother

*Housed in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA provided by The Met as a public domain image.*

The catalogue details:
Title: Christ Appearing to His Mother
*from "The Small Passion"* Portfolio: The Small Passion
Artist: Albrecht Dürer (German, Nuremberg 1471–1528)
Date: ca. 1510 Medium: Woodcut
Dimensions: sheet: 5 x 3 3/4 in. (12.7 x 9.5 cm)

*Christ appearing to his mother Mary in the days after the Resurrection*
*Although there is no scriptural reference to this meeting, it seems to have been a generally held view across the ages that such an appearance would be entirely possible, if not even likely.*
*Dürer's imagination was sufficiently moved for him to depict this touching encounter.*

## – AVE –

**AVE, the name of our little publication, is of course an allusion to the Ave Maria, the angelical salutation to our Patron Saint Mary. It is an occasional collection of articles written by parishioners and others who are associated with St Mary's. There are usually three or so issues in a year each usually around a major church festival.**

**On show is some of the variety of our interests and activities. There is no set theme, although we have followed certain threads such as Churches around the world dedicated to Mary; Church and Biblical History; Reminiscences of Childhood; Travel stories; Social Involvement issues – anything that moves the author and might be of interest to our gentle company.**

**Contributions for future editions are always welcome and can be sent via Laura Tanata in the office, who coordinates things. office@stmarys.org.au or to me.** **David Keuneman.**

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