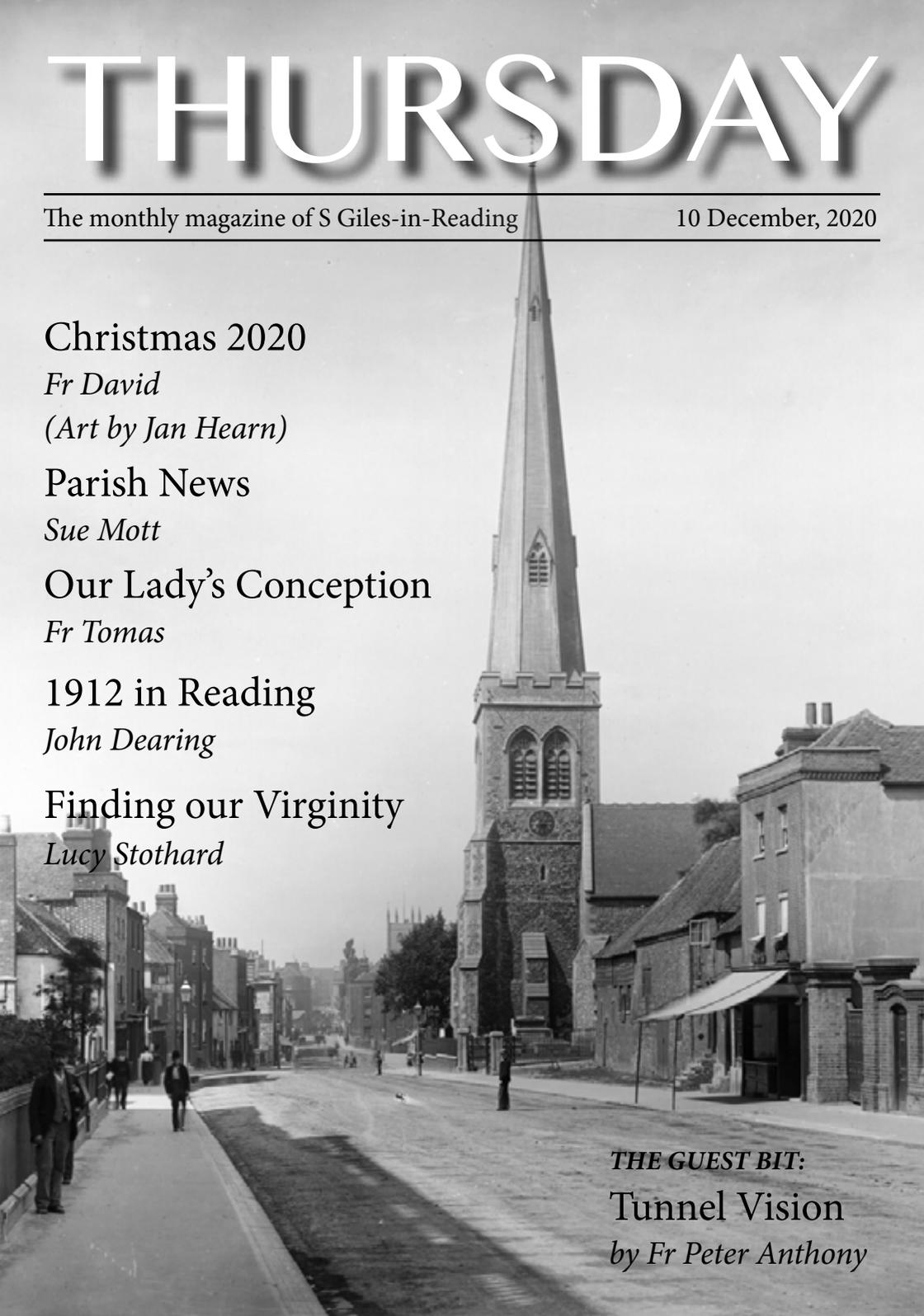


# THURSDAY



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The monthly magazine of S Giles-in-Reading

10 December, 2020

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*(Art by Jan Hearn)*

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# First Things

*Fr David*



## Christmas 2020

**T**hroughout Advent, and in the season of Christmas too, we hear a lot from the writings of the prophet Isaiah. There has been, and there still is, a good deal of debate about the precise meaning of those ancient prophecies. But the New Testament is abundantly clear that they are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

By his words and by his works Jesus makes that claim. Remember the question of John the Baptist, when he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” Remember Jesus’ answer: “Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see.” By words and signs, he shows himself to be the Messiah, “He that should come.”

Its true that Jesus fulfills the prophets, that what Advent was about. But today we see something different. In fulfilling the prophets, he also transforms them, and gives them a deeper spiritual sense.

He comes to restore the kingdom, but the kingdom he restores is a kingdom of the spirit.

He comes to break oppression, but the oppression which he breaks is not the oppression of Babylon or Rome.

It is not the oppression of flesh and blood; it is the deeper, and altogether more hateful and devastating oppression of deceitful lusts and vain ambitions.

The captivity from which he frees us is the captivity of the confused and perverse human soul, the captivity of sin and hopelessness.

**N**o doubt, all this sounds pretty obvious, and even platitudinous. And yet, it seems to me that these things must be said again, and thought about again. Multitudes of our contemporaries, even multitudes of Christians, live entirely in terms of worldly hopes. Some of them are, no doubt, noble and altruistic hopes: hopes for a better world, hopes for peace and prosperity for all, hopes for comfort and security. They are in some sense Messianic hopes, but their limit is the kingdoms of this world, and therefore their end is destruction and hopelessness. “Here we have no continuing city.”

This is the season of Saturnalia, the ancient pagan festival of the winter solstice: the Kalends of January, according to the Roman Calendar. On that festival the pagans celebrated the return of the sun, and the growing of the light. Our holy season of Christ’s Nativity coincides with that pagan festival, and the coincidence of the symbolism is a wonderful thing. But what we celebrate is the rising of a better sun, and the growing of a light which shines unto life eternal.

The true Messiah comes to free us from all worldly limitation, to open to us an eternal Kingdom of the Spirit, which moth and rust cannot corrupt, and which no thief, except our own folly, can ever steal.

The Venerable Bede, an eighth-century English monk, in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, tells the story of the conversion to Christianity of Edwin, King of Northumbria. The story includes a debate in Witan, the King's palace, and one of the King's nobles makes this speech:

*Such seemeth to me, my Lord, the present life of men here on earth (for the comparison of our uncertain time to live), as if a sparrow should come to the house and very swiftly flit through; which entereth in at one window and straightway passeth out through another, while you sit at dinner with your captains and servants in winter-time; the parlour being then made warm with the fire kindled in the midst thereof, but all places abroad being troubled with raging tempests of winter rain and snow. Right for the time it be within the house, it feeleth no smart of the winter storm, but after a very short space of fair weather that lasteth but for a moment, it soon passeth again from winter to winter and escapeth your sight. So the life of man here appeareth for a little season, but what followeth or what hath gone before, that surely know we not. Wherefore if this new learning hath brought us any better surety, methink it is worthy to be followed.*

The true Messiah comes, and he brings us a “new learning” and “better surety” of a kingdom not made with hands, but which is eternal in the heavens. “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”



# <sup>The</sup> Churchwarden's Chest

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News & Up-dates

*Sue Mott*



**W**elcome to the December issue of the Parish Magazine. It was truly wonderful to see so many members of our parish family back in Church on Sunday (Advent 2). It has been quite a month ensuring that the Parish Mass went ahead, on-line, while observing the rites and ceremonies of this time of the year with due solemnity. We shall be relying on services being relayed via the internet for some time to come and our offerings during the holy season of Christmas are listed below. We are doing our best! Do try to participate in the Parish Mass on Sundays at 10.30am, you can join on-line if you have computer or

smart phone access or by ringing in on a landline or mobile phone. We very much hope that further restrictions will not be re-introduced before the new year, but of course things can change very quickly.

We are only too aware that it remains a very different experience to normal to come to a service in church at present. The protocols we have in place are there to protect everyone who enters and I am aware that people do not like these. I don't much like having to put them in place, but it is for the safety **of us all**, so please do follow the guidelines. We continue to have professional cleaners coming in each week to ensure that all communally used areas are sanitised on a regular basis. We are not able to take up the kind offers of help from individuals at this time as the safety measures in place do not allow for this. It is very kind of people to offer but it is our responsibility to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Do please remember Graham Ireland in your prayers. Graham is known to so many of us through his playing of the organ and having been a good friend to us at S Giles. He is very ill and now in a care home, do please think of him at this terrible time.

## **Christmas Services at S Giles**

It has been quite a puzzle to ensure we celebrate Christmas yet keep to our written protocols, so after much discussion this is the solution:

**Sunday Advent 3** and **Sunday Advent 4** our usual Parish Mass at 10.30 am open for public worship and streamed online. Please book to attend via Eventbrite or contact Father

David or myself to book you a place.

We will **NOT** be able to have midnight mass this year.

**Christmas Day** (Friday 25th December) – **Parish Mass at 10.30 am.** The church will be open for public worship and the service will be streamed on-line. Please book on -line once booking opens on Eventbrite or ask for a seat, as above. This will be our only celebration of Mass on this important day.

**Sunday 27th December** – The Holy Family, Mass will be streamed **on-line only.** The church **will not be open for public worship** on this day. This is because it is fewer than 72 hours since Christmas Day and the main body of the church cannot be used again so soon.

**Friday 1st January 2021** – **Mary Mother of God,** Low Mass, at the High Altar will be celebrated at 12 noon. You must book to attend this service as places will be limited, but we can be creative in placing people in side chapels, but we cannot use the main body of the church for the congregation because:

**Sunday 3rd January** (a rare celebration for us of the Second Sunday after the Nativity) we will be open for public worship for the Parish Mass at 10.30 am as usual, please book a place or join in on-line

**Wednesday 6th January** – **The Epiphany of the Lord** will be celebrated with public worship at 10.30am and we shall be able to use the main body of the church so do book a place for this important Solemnity.

The Church Car Park should be open for use for each of the services listed above; and do **please leave Church Street**

**available for those who need to park there**, that is for those less able to walk or who have any other physical impairment. Think of others please.

If there is any change to the schedule, for whatever reason, we will make every effort to let people know.

## Churchwarden's Archives

**C**hristmas will be so very different this year and I was stuck for something to share from the archives, and then I remembered that someone had sent me a card with the recipe for a drink which might just help us all along in these troubled times. It is on a card from the Oxfordshire Museum Services dated 1980. The title of the drink is **The Oxford Bishop**, a nineteenth century spiced mulled port wine. Those keen on the writings of Charles Dickens will see the similarity to the Smoking Bishop mentioned in A Christmas Carol. The drink appears to have been very popular, do *google* it if you can.

**Ingredients:** 3oz sugar, a Seville orange, 2 lemons, 12 cloves, Salt spoon of cloves, , Salt spoon of allspice, Salt spoon of cinnamon, Salt spoon of ginger, Salt spoon of mace, ½ pint of water, oh and yes, a whole bottle of port.

(I think the recipe shows its age, how many of us use a salt spoon these days?)

**Method:** Put sugar and peel of one lemon into a jug and strain over half the juice of one lemon. Score the rind of the orange

shrub, 1 bottle.  
OXFORD RECEIPT FOR BISHOP.



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and the second lemon and stick 6 cloves into each and place in the oven to roast slowly.

Put ½ pint of water into a saucepan and add the spices, (*careful with that salt spoon now, it might be a family heirloom!*) Simmer over a low heat for half an hour. Pour the liquid over the roasted orange and lemon and add the sugar and a bottle of port from which part of the spirit as been burnt out. (*Oh and just when it was seeming a good thing to try!*) Stir over a gentle heat and serve hot. It makes about 1½ pints of punch.

*Cheers all, but maybe don't use a whole bottle of port if you are having to self isolate!*

I think that it only remains for me to wish everyone a very Happy and Holy Christmas. To those of you who are alone at this time you are ever in our thoughts and prayers and we hope that we shall all be able to meet in person sometime soon. Do please stay safe and think of the safety of others at this time when it is so natural to want to meet up, but we just cannot put people in any kind of risk however well intentioned the sentiment might be. God willing the new vaccines becoming available will arrest the spread of the virus.

With my best wishes for a Happy Christmas.

Sue



## Scripture and Tradition

*Preached on the occasion of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, (transferred to 9 December, 2020)*

**T**oday, we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It celebrates her unique role, her cooperation with God in the mystery of our salvation. It always is good to be reminded that by the Immaculate Conception we do not mean the conception of her Son by the Holy Spirit, but her own conception by her parents, St. Joachim and St. Anne. We believe that from the moment of her conception, Mary was full of grace and free of any sin.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was declared by Pope Pius IX in 1854, and four years later, when the Blessed Virgin

# Expositio Lectionis Dominicae

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*Fr Tomas*



appeared to a 14-year-old girl Bernadette in the small French market town of Lourdes, she introduced herself by these very words: *“I am the Immaculate Conception”*.

However, the belief is ancient, for Mary’s holiness was widely accepted in the early church. After the proclamation of Mary as the Mother of God by the council of Ephesus in 431, many theologians found it hard to believe that someone so close to God could have sinned. In the middle ages, the Franciscan theologians argued that Mary’s privilege was indeed the result of God’s grace and not a merit on her part.

This brings us to an important issue: where can we find biblical evidence for this belief? The simple answer is that we cannot – although there are some passages cited in its support, such as the angelic greeting in Lk 1:28, *“Hail Mary, full of grace”*, the teaching has its main source not in the Bible, but in the Tradition of the Church. The Assumption of Our Lady, the Lenten fast, the Purgatory, the baptism of children – these are likewise elements of our faith and practices which do not have an explicit biblical foundation.

Let us never forget that in the earliest years of the Church, there were neither the letters by the apostles nor other written accounts about what Our Lord has done. It was not until the 5th century that all the different Christian churches came to the agreement on the canon of the Bible. The Church did not receive her life

from the Bible. On the opposite, the Bible received its life from the Church.

Yet, the Church was always fully herself. In these early communities, relying on the experience of the eyewitnesses, the story of Jesus Christ – the Gospel – was preached, and the faith was received “from hearing”, as attested in Romans 10. Ever since, it has been a faith lived, a faith resulting from a perpetual encounter with the living God in the sacrifice of the Eucharist. In the words of the French theologian Yves Congar:

*“The Church used the Scriptures, not following them word by word, as a pupil copies an exercise imposed on him from outside, but treating them as a mirror and yardstick to recognize and restore her image, in each new generation.”*

Jesus established his Church, his missionary body in the world, without entrusting to her anything in writing. As the highest Teacher, he taught in a way that has been always far superior to any book: by reaching the hearts of those around him, by experience of his presence.

The Holy Spirit animates the Church from within, empowering her to carry out the works entrusted to her. The same Spirit, through the apostolic succession of her bishops, continues to ensure the unity and fellowship throughout the time.

In the words of the Holy Father, we must not view the Tradition as the guardian of the ashes of the past, but as the roots of a tree which gives us nutrition to grow. We are called to become fruits of the Tradition, to become ourselves seeds for the generations to come after us.

The feast today thus celebrates not only our heavenly Mother, but also the gift of the Tradition in the earthly body of her

divine Son: the Tradition which represents our roots. If we try to separate ourselves from these roots, both we and our faith will wither.

**M**ary always leads us to Christ by her example of a life in perfect holiness. She is the one who was given to us by Christ himself when she was standing at the feet of the Cross: *“Behold your mother”*, we are told together with St John the Evangelist. As he took Mary into his home, so too we are called to take her to the home of our hearts. We are surely unable to live without sin like her, yet we are called to be, like her, receptive, open and obedient to God and the faith of his Church.

It is no coincidence that this great Feast is celebrated during the Advent season in which we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ. If Advent prepares us for the mystery of the incarnation, we realise that the Mother of Our Lord was a unique, divinely chosen instrument in this great mystery of our salvation. A humble Jewish girl opened the way to our redemption by her simple fiat: *“Be it unto me according to thy word.”*

In the words of Pope Benedict:

*“In Mary Immaculate we contemplate the reflection of the Beauty that saves the world: the beauty of God resplendent on the Face of Christ. In Mary this beauty is totally pure, humble, free from all pride and presumption.”*

May her faith, humbleness and immaculate purity be with you all throughout this wonderful season.

*Rufus Isaacs, 1st Marquess of Reading*



*John Dearing*



## 1912 in Reading

What an extraordinary year 1912 was. We remember it most perhaps for the loss of the RMS Titanic which has inspired so many films, books, conspiracy theories and also led to the first internationally recognised regulations on safety of life at sea (SOLAS for short). It also inspired one of Thomas Hardy's finest poems, *The Convergence of the Twain*, as well as the joke about the two Irishmen stranded on top of an iceberg...

Nearly 100 years later Britain was engulfed in a political furore about MPs' expenses, duck islands, moat-cleaning and other trivialities, and this may have brought to mind a previous financial scandal that beset the Liberal government of Herbert Asquith, also in 1912. Reading was involved because of the central part played by the Attorney-General, Sir Rufus Isaacs

(1860-1935), who was the town's MP from 1904-13. Wireless communications were just then becoming a reality and Rufus' brother, Godfrey (1866-1925), was appointed Managing Director of Marconi's UK company, the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co., which won a contract from the GPO to erect wireless stations in various parts of the British Empire. Sir Rufus first had to defend himself against charges of having influenced the award of this contract but the real furore began when it came out that he himself had purchased shares in the American Marconi company, as did a number of other leading members of the government including Lloyd George, put up to it by the Isaacs brothers. Accusations of corruption partly stemmed from anti-semitic feelings against the brothers, regrettably typical of those times, and because the American company had no direct interest in the Post Office contract no wrong-doing on their part could be proved.

**A**lthough it was acknowledged that Sir Rufus had made a serious error of judgement in the timing of his share dealings and it is clear that other members of the government were certainly 'economical with the truth', the loser was their principal accuser, Cecil Chesterton, brother of the writer, G. K., who was found guilty of criminal libel and fined £100. The criticisms, justified or not, did not prevent Isaacs from being made Lord Chief Justice in 1913 and later Viceroy of India and First Marquess of Reading. He was also briefly Foreign Secretary in 1931 and closed his public career as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. His now effigy graces Eldon Square in Reading, having been found surplus to the requirements of the newly independent government of India.



*Photo: Russell and Sons*

Cecil Chesterton later fought with distinction in the Great War and died in hospital in France shortly after the armistice in 1918.

Apart from the attacks from the Chestertons, the scandal also inspired a powerful piece of invective from Rudyard Kipling, in which the prophet Elisha's dishonest servant, Gehazi, is a thinly disguised portrait of the newly ennobled Rufus Isaacs:

Whence comest thou, Gehazi,  
So reverend to behold,  
In scarlet and in ermines  
And chain of England's gold?  
"From following after Naaman  
To tell him all is well,  
Whereby my zeal hath made me  
A Judge in Israel."

Well done, well done, Gehazi!  
Stretch forth thy ready hand,  
Thou barely 'scaped from judgment,  
Take oath to judge the land  
Unswayed by gift of money  
Or privy bribe, more base,  
Of knowledge which is profit  
In any market-place...

Stand up, stand up, Gehazi,  
Draw close thy robe and go,  
Gehazi, judge in Israel,  
A leper white as snow!

As for GKC, he made an oblique reference to the affair in his play, *Magic*, first performed in 1913. A character known as the Duke states 'firmly': 'Never had any Marconis myself. Wouldn't touch 'em.'

Marconi's wonderful invention played its part in the drama of the Titanic. Marconi himself was also one of those who held a ticket for the liner's maiden voyage but did not sail. Perhaps rather ironically he later became an ardent member of the Italian Fascist Party which promulgated far worse anti-semitism than any of which the Chesterton brothers or Kipling may have been guilty.

*S Lucia of Syracuse, by Lucy Stothard*



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# THE HOLY ONES

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*Some reflections on a  
Saint of the month.*

*Lucy Stothard*



## Finding our Virginity

### S Lucia of Syracuse

**T**he internet subculture colloquially known as the ‘mansphere’, far from being an obscure, fringe movement, now boasts members and users in the hundreds of thousands. A recent undercover investigation by Cambridge alumna Laura Bates revealed the targeting of disillusioned men and boys for a process of radicalisation through which extreme, sexualised violence against women comes to be viewed as a desirable, necessary solution to a world which has fallen prey to a feminist conspiracy.

The details of what these young men are taught to believe and encouraged to do, I find I am not able to write down. It makes for disturbing and sometimes outright frightening reading, particularly when considered in the light of the astonishing statistics surrounding violence against women across the globe. We tell our daughters not to walk around alone at night. How can they avoid it when the whole world appears to be in darkness?

Winter, with its short, gloomy days, can be a depressing time for many. For our friends and neighbours in Sweden, however, it might be decidedly more so – Stockholm in December averages around six hours of daylight, while more northern regions of the country are plunged into total darkness at winter’s deepest point. Little surprise,

Christ, during His time on earth, identified with the poorest, most vulnerable members of our society, even going so far as to say that good or evil done unto them is good or evil done unto Him.

then, that a Sicilian saint should have gained such a following in this Nordic country.

Lucia of Syracuse, or Saint Lucy, was born on the eve of the reign of Diocletian in around the year 283 AD, to a noble Roman family, although her father died when she was five years old. Her mother, Eutychia, was chronically ill and thus keen for Lucy to marry in order to secure her future. Lucy,

however, Lucy resisted her mother’s attempts to marry her off; she desired to live a life devoted to Christ and had already consecrated her virginity to God. In spite of this, Eutychia went ahead and arranged her betrothal to a pagan noble.

At that time it was common for pilgrims to visit the shrine of St. Agatha, who had been martyred fifty-two years earlier under the Decian persecution. Lucy persuaded her mother to make the trip with her, whereupon St. Agatha appeared and told her that her mother would be cured because of her daughter’s faith.

Eutychia's experience of miraculous healing led to her conversion, after which Lucy persuaded her to give all of her wealth away to the poor. Unfortunately, this included Lucy's dowry; when word reached the ears of her betrothed he was furious and outed her as a Christian to the Roman governor, Paschasius. Paschasius ordered Lucy to burn a sacrifice to a pagan god; when she refused, he sentenced her to be defiled in a brothel.

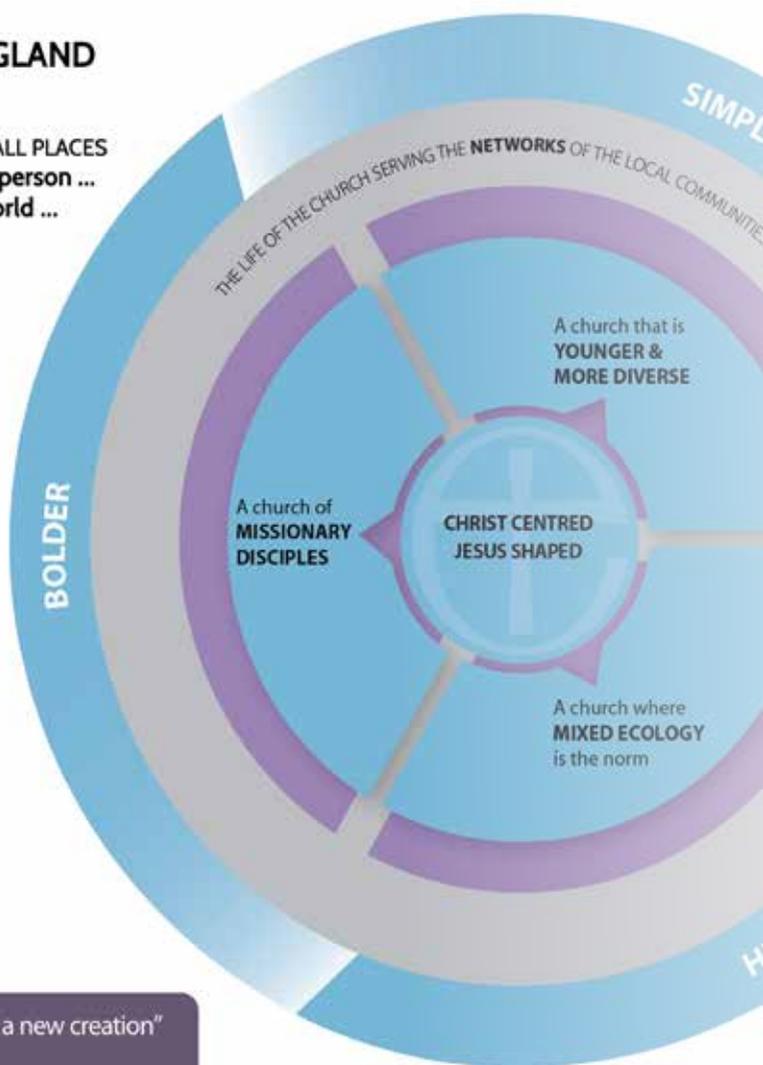
Legend has it that the Lord miraculously intervened to protect Lucy from her would-be attackers, and that even a team of oxen were unable to move her from the spot. Her aggressors then attempted to burn her alive, but the bundles of wood they used failed to do her any harm. In the end, Lucy was martyred; her eyes were cut out and she was stabbed in the throat.

Lucy's story clearly illustrates that sexualised violence against women is nothing new. Yet her name – which means 'light' – is far from insignificant. Christ, during His time on earth, identified with the poorest, most vulnerable members of our society, even going so far as to say that good or evil done unto them is good or evil done unto Him. It is in such people that the Light of the World can truly be said to dwell.

In Lucy's day, a life of virginity was a legitimate way for a woman to assert her agency and right to exist as a complete human being and daughter of God. The holy virgin or celibate woman is a visual reminder that women exist primarily not as objects of desire or pleasure but to become living temples of the Holy Spirit. And this is true for all women, regardless of their individual vocation or state in life. Perhaps it is time for women, collectively, to "find our virginity" – thereby to say, along with the apostle John, that the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

## A VISION FOR THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN THE 2020s

A CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE IN ALL PLACES  
... a Christian vision for every person ...  
... a Christian vision for the world ...



"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation"  
*(2 Corinthians 5:17)*

# The Guest bit

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*Fr Peter Antony*

## Tunnel Vision

Finally, we have found something that everyone in the Church of England agrees on.

It is fascinating that every opinion I have heard expressed on the diagram that accompanies the House of Bishops' recent report, 'Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s' (See note 1) is one of united confusion and perplexity.

The diagram itself is supposed to reveal, through its interlocking dials, whirling arrows, and spinning vortices a strategic vision for how the Church can grow over the next ten years. The problem is that it has produced a veritable cottage industry of satire, parody, and ridicule on social media. It has been referred to in different places as the 'Nestorian Twirler of Doom', 'The Plughole of Progress', 'The Cartwheel of Chaos', and 'The Jiggling Gyrator of Mission'.

Dozens of spoofs have arisen, comparing it with a kitchen sink (cue jokes about the C of E disappearing down the plughole), a washing machine drum (cue jokes about being wet and going round in circles), and the ancient mythical creature the Ouroboros (cue jokes about the Church disappearing up its own backside).

The idiom of church culture is liturgical and scriptural, local and incarnational, narrative and historical, allusive and prayerful. It doesn't connect well with the disembodied theory expressed in flow charts and diagrams.

Others have compared it to depictions of Dante's circles of hell, the dome of a mausoleum, the Millennium Falcon from *Star Wars*, the console of the 70s children's game *Simon*, the spooky red eye of Hal from *Space Odyssey*, and even the transfixing gaze of the Demon Headmaster from the 1990s cult children's classic.

I have yet to come across a single

comment of approbation or defence for the bishops' diagram. Some see it as confusing and opaque. Others see it as the expression of an alleged stranglehold that management consultants and advertising agencies have over the House of Bishops' thinking. Others simply see it as funny, and have

exploited its comedy value in the face of what they perceive to be the humourless corporate culture of ‘C of E Plc.’

**T**he great psychotherapist and rabbi Edwin Friedman worked in Washington DC in the second half of the Twentieth Century applying Murray Bowen’s ‘family systems theory’ to church and synagogue congregations. (See note 2) I find Friedman’s thinking extremely interesting and endlessly useful. A key insight I come back to time and time again is his idea that organisations experiencing anxiety tend to lose the capacity for humour and irony very swiftly. One of the characteristics of emotionally functional leadership in Friedman’s model is one which actually rejoices in humour and paradox as a way of disrupting dysfunctional relationships and responses. The House of Bishops at the moment would appear to be a classic example, in Friedman’s terms, of an “anxious system” that has lost the capacity for humour and paradox, where nobody foresaw the way in which this diagram would be lampooned and parodied.

So why has this little diagram prompted such a visceral response of criticism and dismay? Perhaps some perspectives from Antiquity and the Medieval period might help us.

Over the years, I have found the work of Mary Caruthers (See note 3) on Medieval notions of memory to be hugely fascinating and able to unlock all sorts of conundrums. One of the most important ideas she propagates is that memory in the ancient and Medieval world was understood to be a hugely creative, dynamic, and fundamentally visual process. Our modern world perceives memory to be simply about the soulless recalling of ideas from the brain, like files from a computer. Our Medieval brothers and sisters, by contrast,

thought about memory as a much more emotional process, orientated towards growth in virtue, fruitful imagination, and speculative, expansive reflection.

When the ancients remembered something, they imagined sense data was turned into *phantasmata*, a thumb nail image or aide-memoire, which then lodged the idea or experience in the brain. Recalling an idea, therefore, was about the retrieval of something which had been visualised. The *phantasma*, however, didn't have to look like the thing remembered, it simply had to prompt the necessary emotional connections, referred to in medieval discourse as *intentio*, to allow the brain to recall the information.

If we use that language to examine this House of Bishops' diagram, it is clear nothing about it allows the ideas it represents to be remembered. A number of people have commented to me how the diagram simply doesn't do the job it is intended to – it doesn't help them remember or visualise anything at all about the ideas being proposed in the report it accompanies. It is precisely incapable of triggering the *intentio* – the emotional context – needed to help the mind recall and imagine the ideas behind it.

You don't have to be an expert semiotician to know that all symbols are presented and work within a cultural context. They only have power because the context they are presented in gives them that. Certain colours express key emotions in one culture and different ones in another, for example. Certain shapes and styles are perceived to be harsh or ugly in one age, and attractive in another. Certain fonts can be easy for some people to read in one place, and difficult for others in another.

It is clear from the response to this diagram that it emerges from a context completely divorced from that in which it is designed to operate. The culture of the Church is so distanced from that of corporate management, that the diagram is unable to communicate or say anything to the audience it is intended for. The idiom of church culture is liturgical and scriptural, local and incarnational, narrative and historical, allusive and prayerful. It doesn't connect well with the disembodied theory expressed in flow charts and diagrams. It's a little like writing the report in Klingon and expecting members of the Church of England to be able to read it.

**M**any people, myself included, welcome an opportunity to think sensitively and courageously about the future of the Church's mission and ministry. I would like to suggest, however, that any more diagrams issued in the future to help that process might need to be constructed with the people in mind whom they are intended to address, and the culture within which they will be expected to operate.

*The Rev'd Dr Peter Anthony is Rector of St Benet's, Kentish Town, and editor of the blog All Things Lawful and Honest.*

1. <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/emerging-church-england/vision-church-england-2020s>
2. His thinking lies behind all the splendid leadership and reconciliation work done by the excellent organisation Bridge Builders, which many may have heard of.
3. E.g., Carruthers, Mary, *The Book of Memory* (CUP: 1990); *The Craft of Thought* (CUP: 1998).