

## Address I

Some weeks ago, I attended evensong at St John's College Cambridge. The anthem was *Rejoice in the Lamb*; the words - beautiful, moving, pathetic - are those of that sad, sometimes mad, eighteenth century poet, Christopher Smart. The music is Benjamin Britten's. Two days before my visit, St John's had broadcast the weekly choral evensong. Then the anthem had been *Chichester Psalms*, the words of which are from the Hebrew Psalter and music by Lenard Bernstein. Both anthems were written during the twentieth century, both were by composers of international repute. But beyond that, there is another link between them: both were commissioned by the same Anglican priest, Walter Hussey.

When Hussey commissioned *Rejoice in the Lamb*, Britten was only in his early thirties and less eminent than he was to be later. By the time Hussey commissioned *Chichester Psalms* Bernstein was an international celebrity. In the intervening years Hussey's own status had changed. In 1943 he was the young vicar of a suburban church in Northampton, in 1965 he was the dean of Chichester.

The course of his career is simply told. His title was a curacy at St Mary Abbot's Kensington; then, in 1937, he was invited to succeed his father as the second vicar of St Matthew's Northampton; finally in 1955 he became the dean of Chichester.

Not for his contribution to the administrative and institutional life of the church, do I speak to you about Hussey; he sat on few committees; as a dean he did not frequently attend the Convocation or the Church Assembly, or, in later

years, the Synod; at Chichester he was content to leave much routine administration to another member of the chapter. He was not a profound theologian and I think it fair to say he was a rather shy and, with certain exceptions, a rather reserved, man.

From boyhood, he loved the arts; during his curacy he became a frequenter of the London galleries and, while still at school, he had already begun to amass his private collection. At Northampton he adorned his church with the works and the sounds of the contemporary artist.

The fiftieth anniversary of his church in 1943 provided an opportunity. Hussey wrote to Benjamin Britten speaking about the bee in his bonnet of closer links between the church and the arts; his letter prompted the confession of a similar bee from Britten; *Rejoice in the Lamb* was the outcome. And he commissioned the work of visual artists. First, in 1944, came Henry Moore's chunky, yet strangely dignified and serene, *Madonna and Child*, which sits in the north transept. (Figure 1)



Figure 1 Henry Moore *Madonna and Child*

Then, in 1946, Graham Sutherland's *Crucifixion* was placed in the south transept. (Figure 2) So the two fundamental credal affirmations which we make were proclaimed in the art of the twentieth century: 'and was made man...and suffered for us'.



Figure 2 Graham Sutherland *Crucifixion*

At Chichester the pattern continued. In his early years there Hussey installed behind the high altar the brilliant tapestry by John Piper. (Figure 3) It rivets the gaze of the visitor entering through the west door, and as that visitor draws closer he or she sees that at its centre are symbols of the Trinity: Uncreated Light, a cross, the Pentecostal fire, all set within a triangle.



Figure 3 JohnPiper Tapestry Chichester Cathedral

Before that, Hussey had redesigned entirely the chapel of St Mary Magdalen where, behind the altar, a picture – *Noli me tangere* - by Graham Sutherland similarly draws the visitor's eye down the length of the South aisle. (Figure 4)



Figure 4 *Noli me tangere* Graham Sutherland; Magdalen Chapel Chichester Cathedral

So as at Northampton, so at Chichester, the work of contemporary artists proclaims fundamental truths: the Triune God; the promise and hope of our renewal in the triumph of Christ. And, again, there were musical commissions: evening canticles by Walton, Howells, and Brian Kelly - who contributed a rumbustious rumba. These have proved themselves in the repertoire of the cathedrals. There were vestments by Piper and Ceri Richards, and finally there was a window by that 'great handler of colour, Marc Chagall'.

None of this was uncontroversial. In the mid-twentieth century, I need not remind you, the church liked Victorian music – *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and the *Cathedral Psalter* were the musical staple of many parish churches. Modern idioms were – and are - thought difficult, untuneful, unappealing. And even more did – and does - what is called 'modern art' bewilder. Hussey did not escape criticism. At Northampton, Moore's rotund chunky virgin and Sutherland's attenuated Christ bewildered some and repelled others. The correspondence columns of local newspapers reflected the distaste – 'you should have seen some of [the letters] we didn't print', a reporter told him. Occasionally, the condemnation became national and once emerged from the heart of the artistic establishment. Hussey was in the habit of listening to the broadcast of the speeches at the Royal Academy Banquet. In 1949, having settled down for a pleasurable evening, he cannot have enjoyed hearing himself denounced by the President of the Academy, who said 'People were disgusted and angered with this mother and child in the church in Northampton'. The speaker was the colourful Sir Alfred Munnings; his speech was a tirade: the Academy of which he

was president, the Arts Council, the Tate Gallery, modern art, including 'those foolish daubers' Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso, whose influence, he said, had defiled British tradition, St Matthew's Northampton – all came under his lash. He received popular support; but Hussey would have been comforted by the knowledge that the speech cost Munnings such esteem as he had in the art world.

Hussey's reputation preceded him to Chichester. The old brigade at the Cathedrals Advisory Commission - expert in linen-fold panelling, and devoted to the re-kindling the dead embers of the gothic revival – were nervous and, in due time, critical. After seeing the Magdalen chapel with the former ornaments and furnishings swept away and the new stone altar, and the picture by Graham Sutherland - the chairman of the Council for the Care of Churches thought the effect 'more of a "prison cell" atmosphere... than a devotional chapel'.

Criticism of the tapestry by John Piper behind the high altar surpassed that of all else. Not the most savage, but, inevitably, prominent was that of a member of the chapter, Canon Cheslyn Jones, the principal of the Theological College and also the Chancellor of the cathedral. After the Sutherland picture was installed in the Magdalen Chapel, from the pulpit he likened the figure of Jesus to Mae West saying 'come up and see me some time'. Now at the service when the tapestry was dedicated he wore darkened spectacles. The implied view that the quiet dignity of the cathedral had been violated by the strong, almost primitive, colours was not confined to the eccentric chancellor.

Hussey rarely directly answered his critics, but he did not give ground. In the only place that mattered he did not need to: at Northampton he said that 'I do not feel that I could fight with the Parochial Church Council...or with the people who actually use the church, I want them to accept the gift willingly even if it is not exactly their idea.' His sensitivity was rewarded: 'when the storm of protest broke, not one of them 'ratted'.'

That he should persist in the face of personal abuse, widespread criticism, misunderstanding, reveals the depth of his conviction.

Hussey was not a theologian, and his utterances concerning the wells whence his conviction sprang are few and, to speak truthfully, rather simplistic. So he could write - the words sound rather limp - that by the time of his return to Northampton as vicar he had a sense of sadness that 'the arts had become divorced from the church', that he had 'a dream of the possibility of doing something about it'. In a more extended utterance he said 'artists think and meditate a lot, and are in the broadest sense of the word religious. They create fine expressions of the human spirit which can symbolise and express worship, as well as conveying the truths of God to man.'

The context in which Hussey's protest, his braving of criticism, his quiet determination, are to be set, is succinctly stated by Henry Moore when he wrote to James Callaghan urging an honour for Hussey as he approached retirement. 'Since late renaissance times' Moore said, 'religious art in Europe has slowly deteriorated until at the beginning of this century it was at a very low level of sentimental prettiness'.

Hussey's achievement was more theological than he apprehended. In repudiating the artistic isolation taken for granted as right in church, in refusing to see the church and its worship as best served by a specifically 'religious' kind of art, Hussey was affirming a theology. That the church should embrace the work of the contemporary musician and artist was a truly incarnational affirmation.

I will illustrate this from one of Hussey's commissions, Graham Sutherland's *Crucifixion* at St Matthew's Northampton. (Figure 2) There is a tradition of depicting the Jesus of the passion as serene, even triumphant, with loin cloth neat and tidy and unshakeably in place, a serenely handsome, and, as my children would say, 'fit' young man to the end. The tradition is not unbroken – you have only to think of the terribly agonized figure in the Grunewald altar piece at Isenheim to know that. But it is dominant, and of course, the symbol is justified: its authority is the Passion according to St John. But commonsense tells us that, in historical reality, the passion cannot have progressed like that and that representational art cannot faithfully depict the passion like that.

Return then to Sutherland's picture. Note the sombre palette he used, the wasted figure, the bowed legs, the head, not reverentially bowed as he gives up the ghost, but lolling helplessly as life drains away. If, in a different way, Sutherland's picture is as stylized as those serene depiction of the passion are, it is as well a picture of real agony, of a man at breaking point.

And then recall the context of Sutherland's work. He was painting immediately after the Second World War. And the Jesus of his *Crucifixion* bears a marked resemblance to the photographs he saw in the newspapers, pictures

which deeply moved him, of skeletons walking, of men staggering, emaciated and broken, out of the concentration camps.

If I go down to hell, thou art there also.

Truly, this art is theology, truly this art is incarnational; this art locates the passion of the Word made Flesh dwelling in some of the darkest places experienced by humanity in our times.

Let that feed our devotion.

## Address II

Inapposite place names can be wryly amusing.

There is a place in North Staffordshire called Goldenhill. Charmingly, the origin of the name is said to lie in fields made golden by buttercups; that was in the Middle Ages. In the age of the Industrial Revolution those flowery fields were lost in the exploitation of coal beneath and the expansion of the Potteries above and, it is tempting to say, thereafter only the bank-balances of the mine owners were golden.

Then there is Floweryfield through which I sometimes travel by train into Manchester. When I do, I always think of a curate newly arrived there one hundred and twenty years ago. 'Floweryfield', he recalled, 'was anything but country lanes and paths of flowers. It was partly waste ground strewn with tin cans and dead cats and partly an industrialised area which suggested menacing possibilities.'

While he was there he urged a pliant vicar on to improve the ceremonial. Together they introduced a Sung Eucharist and 'abolished the elevation of the alms dish'. These, though, were conventional high-church ambitions and this curate was unconventional, and, more daring than a sung Eucharist, he gave lectures in the church on Sunday afternoons; lectures the subject matter of which ensured that they were boycotted by the regular congregation but thronged by people who had never entered the church, agnostics, atheists, Nonconformists. Reports of these lectures, complaints indeed from a churchwarden, so annoyed the bishop of Chester that the curate was refused ordination to the priesthood and his licence of officiate was withdrawn.

The subject of the lectures was *Christian Socialism* and the curate who gave them was called Conrad Noel.

At various stages of his life Conrad Noel was controversial; a little later the bishop of Exeter refused him the priesthood on the grounds that he was both 'a pantheist and Romanist'. His diaconate went on for four years. Later again, by then a priest, and curate at St Mary Primrose Hill, he became friendly with young ballet dancers; his friendship with them and with other young women, he

afterwards said, 'may seem to many people frivolous and unseemly and I am not sure that they are wrong in their judgement'. But the friendship was, he also said, 'a protest against Puritanism on the one hand and libertinism on the other'. He condemned the typical public school – he had been at two - and approved the more humane atmosphere at the then daringly innovative Bedales. He had a gift for arresting, sometimes provocative, phrases; he often spoke of 'the Commonwealth of God'. Jesus was the 'Divine Outlaw', and the church a 'Red Army'. The title of one of his most popular books was *Jesus the Heretic*. In 1911 he became vicar of the idyllic parish of Thaxted, in Essex. There, toward the end of the First World War, an Irish parishioner, aware of his sympathy for the Irish nationalist cause, presented him with the Sinn Fein flag. The church already possessed the English national flag of St George; it seemed to him natural to display these two in the church so as to affirm that 'none is greater or less than another'. But the symbol they formed was still inadequate; nationalism was not enough. He wanted also to affirm internationalism – 'the variety in unity and the unity in variety' was a favourite phrase. To this end he added the Red Flag – this was at the time of the Russian Revolution - together with the words 'He hath made of one blood all nations'.

Trouble was inevitable. A resident of the parish complained to the War Office and to a Member of Parliament – to no avail, nether had power to act; Noel's action was not illegal. More effectually the resident fomented protest among a group of Cambridge undergraduates who visited the church and tore down Noel's Irish and International flags. Such troubles, and other ugly scenes, continued for some time.

This episode marks Noel out as more than an eccentric, a gadfly, an exhibitionist. This bold move, and his resolution not to capitulate, his refusal seek refuge when the vicarage was surrounded by an angry mob - these place Conrad Noel in the category of the deeply committed, ready to take risks, even with their own safety, for their convictions.

His phrase, which I have already quoted, 'the variety in unity and the unity in variety', and the variant 'the one in the many and the many in the one' expressed

his understanding of the inner life of the Trinity, they affirmed his belief that that inner nature was the ideal, the model, for earthly societies. It was this conviction - that human variety and interdependence were a response to the inner nature of God - that steeled his resolve to proclaim the unity of humanity in the battle of the flags. And of course it informed the social, political, and economic convictions the proclamation of which - from the pulpit, from platforms, in his writings - was his life his life-long commitment.

And this belief was the ground of his conviction that it was not enough that worship should be beautiful, that ceremonial should be precise. It was necessary that beneath the appearance should be an integrity. Among the curacies that Noel held, that at St Mary Primrose Hill made him the assistant to Percy Dearmer, who was his lifelong friend.

Dearmer was committed to a social and economic philosophy that embraced beauty. In 1899 he published the first edition of his book *The Parson's Handbook*. Some of you may have possessed it; rather few, I suspect, will have read it. The preface of that first edition began with words which protested against slovenly standards in worship, and became, seamlessly, a protest against unjust means of production:

'Vulgarity', he wrote, 'in the long run always means cheapness, and cheapness means the tyranny of the sweater. It has been pointed out that the modern preacher often stands in a sweated pulpit wearing a sweated surplice, over a suit of clothes that were not produced under fair conditions, and, holding a sweated book in one hand, with the other he points to the man-made cross at the jerry built altar and appeals to the sacred principles of mutual sacrifice and love.'

Dearmer's words and ideals demand integrity, unity, consistency, between what lay beneath the surface of the tools of worship and the profession made in that worship. Even if the objects used in worship were beautiful – and Dearmer thought those used in most churches were not: you will have noticed the word *vulgar* in the quotation above – such superficial beauty was not enough; between

the conditions of the labour and the result of that labour there should be a moral integrity. If the manufacture of the objects used in worship involved 'sweating' – a word then often used to describe exploitative conditions of employment - then morality was violated.

This was meat and drink to Noel. He too demanded high standards of production, and the word with which he dismissed the cheap and tawdry was *trashy*.

Underlying this demand, for both Dearmer and Noel, was the Arts and Crafts Movement – the ideals of William Morris and John Ruskin and others which refused to separate the worker and the aesthete, the craftsman and the artist.

'Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful'. William Morris's dictum expresses Noel's quest in worship: the furnishings of a church should be beautiful, enhancing and assisting the worship. At Thaxted the flowing surplices of the English use, the gracefulness of the processions, the orderliness of the rite – these made the church famous so that, after the troublesome young men who came from Cambridge had forgotten Thaxted, others, senior and junior, came from the university, drawn by the power of Noel's preaching, by the intensity of his moral convictions, by the sense that the worship conveyed that here was the beauty of holiness.

Part of that beauty was good congregational music. During the First World War Gustav Holst resided in the parish and he, too, succumbed to the Vicar's charm. 'Anyone' Noel wrote, 'who knows the throaty voices of the Essex people would be astonished by the results that Holst obtained from such unpromising material'. Holst also composed for Thaxted – he dedicated his setting of *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day* to Noel, and you will recall that the melody of the Jupiter movement of his suite *The Planets*, has been an immensely popular hymn tune – known as *Thaxted*.

Noel looked back to the past for the springs of his convictions – to the Middle Ages for the roots of liturgy, to the folk traditions of the people for activities that brought church and people together so that his socialism was

rooted in a society that went back to an past innocent of the ugliness, the brutality, the divisions, the exploitation, of industrial society. There is idealism here, of course, some of it unreal. But the revival of the tradition of Morris dancing in the village was a genuinely communal activity. It is easy for us to smile. In an Essex village, however, in the early decades of the twentieth century, the binding together of people in the Morris ring was a genuinely corporate activity; it was a symbol of the integration of the church, so frequently separate, exclusive, even aloof, and the community

He looked also to the contemporary world. Not only the music was fresh. Processions at Thaxted were not purely clerical, a robed party of choir and servers attendant upon Father; no: they were the congregation - the people's processions with the whole body of worshippers moving round the church. Further, long before most of us believed ourselves to be acting boldly when we recruited girls to our servers' rotas, Conrad Noel had young women – perhaps damsels is the *mot juste* - in those processions, not simply as members of the congregation, but as part of the sanctuary party.

At Thaxted, the English use, the whitewashed walls, the Morris Dancing - these seemed to offer a glimpse of an England and a church where beauty reigned, where social hierarchies were dissolved, where there was unity and integrity, and the many were indeed the one and the one the many. Noel had a following; he founded a movement, the Catholic Crusade, and a series of curates and other disciples carried his message into places very different from that pastoral idyll. Of his disciples the best known was Alan Ecclestone, for almost four decades vicar of Holy Trinity Darnall, in industrial Sheffield. Alan was a man of great intellectual attainment and range and of unshakeable moral conviction. And there, in Darnall, he demonstrated that, just as in rural Essex, so in working class Sheffield, could the ideals of Conrad Noel – his demand for beauty, his quest for the making real of community (Alan's weekly parish meeting became famous), his commitment to justice - be proclaimed. And some of you will have read, and been inspired by, the books he produced in the last years of his life.

At his memorial service in Sheffield Cathedral Alan Webster began by saying that Alan's thirty-seven years in the city and diocese were not marked by so much as an honorary canonry. But, for that memorial service, he continued, the cathedral was crowded. Both observations speak volumes about the Church of England.

Noel's vision was of a unity – of humanity, of community, of the sacred and the secular. It was rooted in sacramental worship – sacramental worship that did not merely lift up the worshippers into the heavenly places, but drove them out into the harsh realities of the world. In everything it was a proclamation of the Word made flesh, of the Incarnation of the son of God. Few of you will have followed Noel in the political journey which he made; but few of us cannot reflect profitably on the challenge he places before us; the challenge to us to proclaim the outworking of the incarnation, spiritually and socially, in the communities where we are set.

### Address III

The communal life lived, in the early seventeenth century, by Nicholas Ferrar and his family at Little Gidding in Huntingdonshire, is one to which many Anglicans whose devotion is fed by an awareness of their heritage look back with singular attraction. It was a life 'leaving', in the elegant phrases of Dom David Knowles, 'a fragrant memory for contemporaries that clings still to the pages of Isaac Walton...and (so visitors claim) to the church of Little Gidding today.' Certainly, whenever I have been there, TS Eliot's phrase has returned to me: this is a place 'to kneel where prayer has been valid'.

In the later years of the nineteenth century, and the early years of the twentieth, communal living had a vogue especially in artistic and intellectual circles. Among the intellectuals, Edward Carpenter settled in the Peak District, not far from Sheffield; among the artists and craftsmen C. R. Ashbee led a mass migration from the East End to Chipping Campden.

One, rather nomadic, exercise in communal living brought together the religious and the artistic. Their day started with Mass, its course was marked by the saying of the Office and the ringing of the Angelus, its meals were eaten communally. The master of the house, his family, his apprentices, the chaplain, all shared in this routine.

Like Conrad Noel, this man lived in protest against a world which he believed to be chronically disordered by industrialization and mechanised production. His life was a witness against the mass-society which both produced and needed the shoddy products of industrial and mechanical processes. Like Noel, he looked back to an earlier world which his self-sufficient household sought to replicate. It was, he said, an endeavour 'to make a cell of good living in the chaos of our world.'

Eric Gill was the greatest English stone-carver of his generation. The confidence and sureness, the grace and elegance, of his line - these leave us lost in admiration. Figure 1, for instance, seems to me to be an image of great grace and beauty.



Figure 1 *Eve*  
Wood carving

Frequently, there was moral judgement in his work. He was a prolific writer and those writings protested against the cheap, tawdry, products of industrialism and the unjust society that made them. His carvings made the same protest, both by the quality of his craftsmanship and by their subjects. He brought moral outrage into work when, not the request of his patrons, but his own convictions, impelled it, sometimes to the discomfiture of those patrons. Thus the subject of a war memorial for the University of Leeds was *Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple*. (Figure 2)

Christ, with whip raised, drives before him, not money changers in first century garb, but a pawn-broker, a politician, and frock-coated financiers. Gill's purpose, he said, was 'ethical rather than historical or archaeological', so he replaced the money changers of first century Palestine by the money makers of early twentieth century England. The only occasion, he noted, when Jesus is recorded as using physical violence was 'in this most just of all wars – the war of justice against cupidity,...there are 'money changers', he continued, 'in all civilized countries and modern war, in spite of the patriotism of millions of conscripts and their officers, is mainly about money'.



Figure 2

*Christ and the Money Changers*

Leeds University War Memorial Now in the Michael Sadler Building

[From left to right: pawn-broker's wife; pawn-broker (carrying bags); pawn-broker's clerk (carrying ledgers); politician (replacing speech in his pocket); two financiers; Jesus with whip with seven strand – each representing a deadly sin; nestling in the Lord's skirts a woman and child; the hound of St Dominic]

The subject - not an obvious one for a war memorial - was chosen by Gill; it presented the University of Leeds with an elegant and savage denunciation of those 'hard faced men' who had done well out of the First World War. But it also taxed severely the diplomatic skills of the Vice-Chancellor, Sir Michael Sadler who was both Gill's patron and the donor of the memorial. When protests arose, Sadler was required to placate the university's local benefactors, some of whom felt, not perhaps entirely without reason, that Gill's lash fell on them.

Here and elsewhere, Gill's ethical stance was grounded in religion. His father was successively a Congregational minister, a minister of the Countess of Huntington's Connexion, and, finally, an Anglican priest. None of this seems to have impressed the young Gill; and a period of atheism was ended in 1913 when he joined the Roman Catholic Church. It was an event that shaped the rest of his life; its outworking suffused much of his art. We have seen how he could turn a secular commission into a moral judgement; his Prospero and Ariel on the BBC building gave a secular subject an undeclared devotional meaning also. (Figure 3)



Figure 3  
Prospero and Ariel  
above the main entrance to Broadcasting House

His design echoed a tradition of iconography going back to the Middle Ages. Gill carved the figures within that tradition so that, not only were they Prospero and Ariel, but also God the Father and the child Christ – that the latter was both Ariel and our Lord is confirmed by the stigmata engraved on his hands in anticipation of the passion. So here Gill insinuated Christian imagery into a most public secular commission. And much of his overtly religious art has an intensity and a subtlety of which even the casual observer cannot be unaware. The Stations of the Cross Westminster Cathedral illustrate this powerfully. A single panel set over the door to the offices of Manchester Cathedral likewise reveals not only Gill's attention to detail but, as well, the suggestion of a moral judgement in his work. (Figure 4)

The cathedral is dedicated to Our Lady, St Denys and St George. You can see how carefully the detail is rendered, the figures stylized, hieratic – Gill's decision, apparently the chapter expressed no opinion. The dragon slain by George is laid at Mary's feet, and its tongue, hanging out, reaches the foot of Denys whose episcopal status is emphasised by the mitre he wears.



Figure 4  
Stone carving Our Lady, St Denys and St George set above the office door of Manchester Cathedral

Gill thought the Roman episcopate of his day weak in the face of economic injustice; both their lives and in their teaching fell short of the high social demands of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. So, at Manchester, the dragon's tongue reaches the bishop's toe. More emphatically, when Gill wrote a pamphlet about *Social Justice and the Stations of the Cross* the cover depicted Christ carrying a cross imposed on him by businessmen and, most conspicuously, by a mitred bishop. (Figure 5)

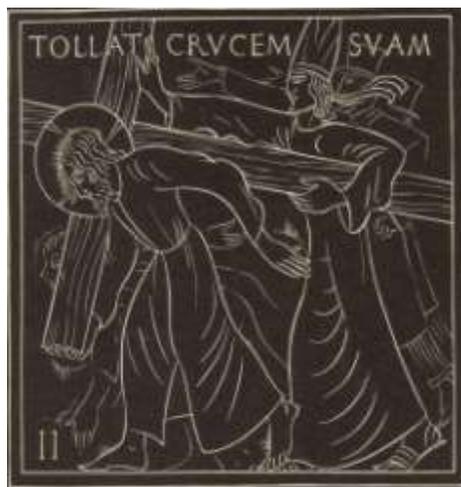


Figure 5  
Wood carving on the cover of Gill's small book *Social Justice and the Stations of the Cross*

Gill's Roman Catholicism was not comfortable for a hierarchy he felt had compromised with the standards of the world. Nor should his moral stance be comfortable for us, Anglican priests, today.

It is necessary only to turn the pages of almost any book illustrating his work to sense that as strong a force as the religious in Gill was the erotic. Figure 1, as well as graceful, is intensely sensual.

His erotic art was uninhibited, and his delight in the nude unabashed – frequently it seems less the work of a Christian stone-carver than that of one executing the voluptuous scenes depicted on some Hindu temples in India.

Gill did not keep these two applications of his genius apart. The scriptural allusion in *Eve* (Figure 1) needs little emphasis.

A favourite phrase of his was 'it all goes together' and he believed with a passionate intensity that we are indeed both flesh and spirit and that these two, in art and life, are not to be separated, sanitised, compartmentalised; they go together, they are a unity.

In the epistle to the Ephesians Paul writes of Christ as the head of the church, which is his body: 'husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church...*husbands should love their wives as their own bodies*'.

The passage is, of course, echoed in our marriage services:

marriage is given that as man and woman grow together in love and trust,

they shall be united with one another in heart, body and mind, as *Christ is united with his bride, the Church*.

Gill illustrated this; Figure 6 is, at a quick glance, simply an erotic picture, the embrace of a man and a woman. But only at a very quick glance; he called it *The Nuptials of Christ*; it is in fact the mutual self-surrender of Christ and the church:

as man and woman grow together in love and trust, as they shall be united with one another in heart, body and mind, so Christ is united with his bride, the Church.

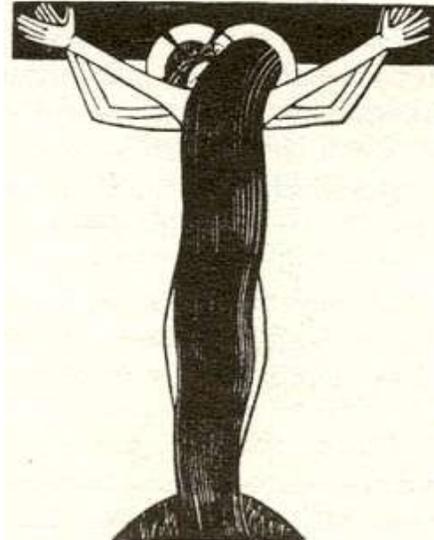


Figure 6  
The Nuptials of God  
Ordination card for Fr Gerald Vann OP  
Wood carving

Surprisingly, perhaps, this wood engraving was made to be an ordination card for a Dominican, Fr Gerald Vann. Less surprisingly, perhaps, it was not used. It is one of the most vivid illustrations of the intensity with which Gill brought together art, eroticism, and religion.

That vividness in his art may shock you. But he recalls us to the reality that we are indeed both flesh and spirit; he invites us to consider whether our assumptions truly affirm both: do we do accept them equally and see them as a unity, or do we treat them as opposites? Are we are not all too frequently inheritors of a long tradition in which the church has lived dualistically? His religious art dins into us the reality that the Word took flesh, that in art, drama, devotion, we should affirm that Christ is united with his bride, the Church, and we should embrace the flesh and the spirit as inseparable ingredients of the humanity we offer, severally and corporately, to Christ. There is a saying of Gregory of Nazianzus of which I am fond: 'that which has not been assumed cannot be redeemed'. I am not aware that Gill ever used that aphorism; but it expresses perfectly the truth with which his work confronts us: that what St Paul, in the language of the Authorized version, calls our less comely parts are as much a part of the humanity which Christ assumed and redeemed as are our

more comely parts. If parts of the human person and personality are inherently unclean, are incapable of, and unfit for, redemption, Jesus is no use to us: 'that which has not been assumed cannot be redeemed'.

This is profoundly important. Gill rightly presses us to shake off the dualism in which many of us unthinkingly and comfortably take refuge.

But for all of us there can a dark side to this, and Gill did not escape that dark side. In 1989, with the publication of Fiona MacCarthy's life of Gill, the truth broke that his sensuality was far from confined to his art and his writings, or to his marriage, that it was far from simply an *image* he used to illustrate the fullness of the Incarnation. Drawing on his diaries, Fiona MacCarthy revealed an unbridled hedonism, one that violated boundaries proscribed by civil and church law, by genetics, by ancient taboo. This we must unreservedly condemn. And for some it negates all the grace and beauty, and the moral fervour, of the man and his work.

What, then, are we to say about Gill? We have seen the intensity of his religious art, his aspiration to live in a cell of good living - a community, built round chapel, and for Gill, regular sacramental confession. Was it all no more than a sham, an enjoyment of ritual and an ordered routine, and of companionship? Was it in truth at bottom constructed round the indulgence of his own erotic compulsions?

Looking at his intensity religious art, reading in his writings the righteous indignation with which he excoriated the greed of the world, recalling that when his work was celebrated, and he could have commanded high prices for it, he continued to live simply and hold to the ideal of not making huge profits, I cannot believe that Eric Gill's life was a mere sham. It was a life with dark, dark, places certainly, a life which knew, knew very well,

.....the level of the former years,  
The mire of sin, the weight of guilty fears,  
The mist of doubt, the blight of love's decay...

...the swamps of subterfuge and shame,  
The deeds, the thoughts, that honour may not name,  
The halting tongue that dares not tell the whole...

How many of us, as we sing 'Lift up your hearts', swept along by Walter Groatorex's strong tune, ponder Henry Montagu Butler's words? Those words invite us all to look inwards: into ourselves and our past. How many of us do not have dark places – not necessarily those which were Gill's - which, we hope, are not visible to others? How many of us, if we look into ourselves, if we recall our pasts, if we examine our minds, our attitudes, our actions, do not find there swamps of subterfuge and shame; deeds and thoughts that honour may not name? How many of us face self-examination steadily and whole? How many of us, if we kept diaries as frank as Gill's and merited the attentions of biographers would escape a severe judgement from posterity? Gill was not the first, nor will he be the last, to live with a personality which harboured deep, unreconciled, contradictions.

His last 'cell of good living' was at Speen, on the hills above High Wycombe. His body is buried there; a little improbably the mortal remains of this zealous Roman Catholic lie in a Baptist churchyard. My wife and I searched long, and had almost abandoned the search, when we found it, apparently isolated, in a remote corner. His gravestone bears the words prescribed by him and carved by his apprentice, Laurie Cribb. It simply says

Pray for me  
Eric Gill  
stone carver

How many of us could ask for more than 'pray for me, a priest'?

#### Address IV

Upon no cathedral of the Church of England has the twentieth century had an impact greater than upon Coventry. In 1918, St Michael's church became the mother church of a new diocese. A bombing raid during the night of 14 November 1940 left it a shell.

The tensions of fraught times showed immediately. After the bombing, the bishop, Mervyn Haigh, spoke of forgiveness. He was, however, a highly-strung man, and a month later, after the popular press had demanded reprisals, he spoke of retaliation.

The Provost, Richard Thomas Howard, came of a family which, in his generation, was markedly able, at Cambridge both he and his brother distinguished themselves in the tripos, and evangelical.

Unlike Haigh's, his response to the bombing was unwavering. On the morning after the raid, the 'deep certainty' came to him that, 'as the cathedral had been crucified with Christ, so it would rise again with him'. The next day he made his profession in public: 'We shall build it again' he told a reporter. In the ruins that day he was spiritually confident: 'we became aware as never before that God is Love, and that His Love is indestructible. He can make Good triumph over Evil.' Six weeks later, the Empire Broadcast on Christmas Day began in the ruins. 'What we want to tell the world', he said, 'is this: that with Christ born again in our hearts today, we are trying, hard as it may be, to banish all thoughts of revenge'. Over the years, Howard later reflected, destruction was to make the cathedral, 'the instrument of untold good to numberless people.'

In January 1941, he caused their stonemason 'to build an altar of stones from the rubble on the site of the high altar and to set up behind it a cross made from charred beams found among the ruins....The effects of this...cannot possibly be estimated', he said, 'the "Word of the Cross" was preached from now on in rubble and blackened wood.'

On the day after the destruction the vicar of a Coventry parish had picked up three nails from the debris and bound them into a cross which he showed to the bishop. It was the prototype of the 'Cross of Nails', distributed widely and, so

long as the supply lasted, made of nails from the ruins: 'I found the gift of such a cross was appreciated beyond words, and forged a vital link between the Cathedral the recipient', Howard said. In 1948, he caused the words 'Father, forgive' to be incised in large letters on the wall behind the altar: they 'preached the gospel of divine forgiveness as eloquently as any human words could do', he said. He left the scriptural phrase incomplete, not 'Father, forgive *them*', simply 'Father, forgive', because, he believed, no one is innocent.

But even before this inscription, reconciliation was already embraced, an aftermath of the destruction; it was to be the leitmotif of the Cathedral throughout the decades ahead.

Howard was Provost until 1958. During those years the lines of this work were laid down. His memoir records the first visitors to his house on November 15, 1940: the bishop, then Inqli James, the Minister of the Queen's Road Baptist Church. In the 1930s relations between the churches in Coventry were already good: there had then been 'much co-operation in social service', united services in the cathedral, 'important joint pronouncements on the practical application of the Christian faith', close friendships between 'leading clergy and ministers'. James was Howard's friend; he had been the first Free Church minister to preach in Coventry Cathedral; now, in the words of the historian of his chapel, he was 'the first of Richard Howard's friends to call...Nobody else at that moment could have brought the quality of compassion which the cathedral's provost most needed.' Further, James and a sizeable element of his congregation was pacifist, and able...[to] advocate not non-resistance... but to be able to advocate in public a policy of positive reconciliation toward those who are deliberately persecuting you...'. Between Howard and James the affinity was deep. How far the latter influenced Howard's thought as the future ministry of the cathedral took shape cannot be known; but ecclesial reconciliation – ecumenism – was to be prominent in the reconstruction of the life of the cathedral.

In 1943 Mervyn Haigh was translated to Winchester; his successor was Neville Gorton, headmaster of Blundell's School Tiverton. If the episcopate came unexpectedly to Gorton, he proved to have a touch a genius in its exercise. He

was a liberal catholic who, at Blundell's, had reshaped the chapel. His governors prevented the re-ordering that would have brought congregation and celebrant together without the intervening choir stalls, but he did clear the altar of clutter and – shades of Conrad Noel - painted the walls white, so that the altar was stark and clear - and standing away from the east wall so that the celebrant could face the congregation. The stone altar was designed by Eric Gill and – shades also of the integrity of labour – the great stone-carver and the boys worked together on its execution.

Howard records his own gratitude that such a man as Gorton was now his bishop, one 'who shared my conviction that the cathedral should be closely related to the civic community, and that it should give visible expression to Christian unity by incorporating a chapel for all Christians denominations.' His influence and support were important: from the bishop's 'brilliant creative imagination' came the desire for a cathedral that related architecturally and artistically to the contemporary world.

From Gorton came also the idea of a Christian Service Centre and a Chapel of Unity. The scheme was published in 1944. The 'Christian Centre of service to the community' was 'an essential part of the Cathedral scheme'; the Free Churches were invited into 'full partnership' in the Centre which would be 'jointly staffed'; a Chapel of Unity was to be attached to the cathedral, and was to belong to 'the Free Churches and the Anglicans together.' (Roman Catholic collaboration at that time was, of course, impossible.) The bishop stressed that the times were 'the church's great chance'. He emphasised the theme of reconciliation. Outsiders, he said, sensed incongruity in Christian division: 'the Christian Church exists to break down barriers'. The Christian Centre would 'provide leadership and the linking up of workers, and would create a Christian public opinion and action beyond the bounds of the parishes. The centre was to be concerned with the home, education, industry, music, the arts, healing.'

It was a noble aspiration; sadly never fulfilled.

Howard took the first steps towards the most urgent and fundamental reconciliation, that with the people of Germany. He traced this to two events which happened soon after the end of the war.

The Empire Broadcast on Christmas Day 1946 again began from Coventry Cathedral; where Howard and a group of children were gathered in the temporary Chapel of Unity. They exchanged 'Christian greetings' with a group of German children gathered with Pastor Mecklenburg, a Roman Catholic priest, in Hamburg. 'It was the first time since the war that there had been such mutual fellowship in public between Britain and Germany.' 'I stretch out my hand', Howard said, 'and put it into yours my brother...two words spring to my lips...the first word is "Forgiveness"... The second word is this: "New birth".' He went on to speak of a new spirit to be born including 'new pity for each other's suffering'. 'Your message of forgiveness and new birth', Mecklenburg replied, 'awakens an echo in my heart....If only we could [all] cast out bitterness and hatred and begin again, then I believe that our children...may live together in peace and brotherhood.'

Then, in 1947 the Oberburgomaster of Kiel – which had been the base of German submarine warfare – invited a 'mission of friendship' from Coventry: the Mayor, a Trades Unionist, and Howard. The latter addressed a 'large meeting' of Roman Catholics and Protestants, and 'assured them of our wish for Christ's sake to forgive and be forgiven all mutual injuries.' In token of this, he gave the Provost of Kiel's 'wholly destroyed' cathedral a Cross of Nails; in exchange the Provost of Kiel gave him a piece of stone from the rubble of their cathedral. It was placed in the Chapel of Unity: 'The Kiel Stone of Forgiveness'.

The numbers of visitors from Germany increased. Howard would welcome them, showing the Coventry symbols – the words *Father Forgive*, the Cross of Nails, the Kiel Stone – and 'a spiritual miracle would happen. Germans still bound in the fetters of war guilt would be suddenly set free'. In the 1950s local Lutherans began to use the Chapel of Unity as their place of worship, and their pastor's initiative led to the German Churches raising the money for the stained-glass for the Chapel of Unity. The German President himself presented the

money to Howard's successor. In 1958 Chancellor Adenauer presented to Howard a cheque from the German Government for the then appreciable sum of £4,250; it was he said 'an expression of the wish of the German people to help make good what a ruthless regime destroyed.'

When the new building was consecrated, a representative of the German Evangelical Church processed among the Free Church ministers and took part in the service: 'thus sealing our mutual forgiveness and fellowship in the one Body of Christ.'

The war years generated civic consciousness and political collaboration: there was a national government; there was a solidarity bred of shared suffering; and the Beveridge Report and the Butler Education Act enunciated new and lofty social ideals. Dick Howard's impulses fitted this *milieu*. By any standards, he was a remarkable man. He had begun to move away from the narrower evangelicalism of his earlier years while in India, where his service as a missionary led him to what he called the 'the spiritual resources of Hindu poetry'. At Coventry his desire for the engagement of his cathedral with other Coventry churches, and for their joint witness and civic engagement; his compulsion to witness to international reconciliation - these are profoundly Christian ideals, and, especially the last one, demanding ideals in those years, when the suffering many had experienced was still raw. Only the deep conviction that he was witnessing to the truth in Christ, and inexhaustible moral courage, fuelled by his Christianity, could have sustained him. His love of service, his quest for reconciliation within and beyond the ecclesiastical world, his reiterated insistence that none is wholly innocent – these are outworking from our belief that the Word was made Flesh. A saying of another Christian father which I hold dear is Irenaeus's 'the glory of God is a living man'. Dick Howard bound himself to the realisation of that glory in the living men and women and children of war torn Coventry, *and* in the living men and women and children of a Germany, where first many were deluded by Hitler, then all of them vanquished and broken.

In another troubled age, when economic insecurity, and religious and racial differences, divide us nationally; when internationalism is mistrusted; when a broken world order threatens us; to affirm the universality of that glory in every human being is an imperative laid upon us.

## Address V

In 1889 a volume of essays was published, the demand for reprints of which would make it the envy of any of any modern publisher of theological literature: a search in the Cambridge University Library catalogue tells me that in 1904 it had reached its fifteenth edition. The title of the book was *Lux Mundi*. Two of the essays bore titles which included the word incarnation - *The Incarnation in Relation to Development*; *The Incarnation as the Basis of Dogma* – but it is often remarked upon that a volume of which the sub-title was *A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation* strangely lacked an essay expressly devoted to the Incarnation. *Lux Mundi* was the beginning of a trend in Anglican theology and life and devotion which lasted for almost a century; it was a trend which was marked by an emphasis in theology on the Incarnation and on *kenosis*: the self-emptying of him who was in the form of God, yet humbled himself and assumed human our form. The last flowering of this strand of Anglican theology was, perhaps, the writing of Archbishop Michael Ramsey whose book, which some of you will possess, *From Gore to Temple*, explores this line of thought. Ramsey's book was published in American under the less arresting title *An Era in Anglican Theology*; this was because it was suspected that American university librarians might assume that a progression from gore and temple should be catalogued, not under Anglican doctrine, but under primitive religious anthropology.

I must move briefly from the recollection of the limpid prose of Michael Ramsey to the less digestible writing of liberal German theology in the same period as *Lux Mundi*. In 1912, Ernst Troeltsch a thinker, and what we would now call religious sociologist, within that liberal protestant school, published a formidable book that did not go through innumerable editions, though it did emerge in English twenty years later, in two solid volumes, with the title *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. In his book Troeltsch drew a distinction between two kinds of Christianity, which he called the Church-type and the Sect-type.

The Sect-type he characterized as enclosed, exclusive, profoundly concerned with the spiritual welfare of the group and of the individuals within that group. It was, or is, to employ a phrase often used, a 'world denying' type of Christianity. It guarded its adherents against the world. If the world was to be changed that was to be, not through Christian social concern, not through debate or dialogue, but through direct evangelism; Holy Scripture, *simpliciter*, was, in all things, its defining authority. The world's culture or cultures were suspect - distractions, seductions even, from the austerities and simplicities of devotion; its worship spaces were simple, unadorned, certainly devoid of 'graven images'. Its numbers were likely to be small: the internal discipline of its groups was rigorous. And individual conversion, individual salvation, were, and are, its emphases. Its theology was likely to focus single-mindedly on the atonement.

The church-type was, broadly speaking 'world affirming'. Its theology was freer, susceptible to adjustment – development is a more theological word - absorbing insights from the world, in the twentieth century, for instance, from psychiatry and psychology, from changing philosophical movements, in the study of the bible from literary and linguistic criticism. And it embraced the world: the world of culture and beauty: art, literature, architecture, music, dance – these, for the church-type, can illuminate and enrich, express and enhance, their convictions; they can cast light on the gospel (and the gospels), and they should be hailed as the work of the Creator-Spirit. The church-type's concern for the world is expressed in a *social* theology and in *social* action as readily as in direct evangelistic proclamation. Such an attitude is likely to be less exclusively atonement centred in devotion and theology than the sect type. The individual and his or her salvation matter, of course, but that salvation is not only individual it is corporate, part of the experience and the witness of the group. There is likely to be a greater emphasis on the Eucharist, and – you have seen this developing within your own lifetime in the Church of England – on centre of the Eucharist not simply as '*my* communion', but on the Eucharist as the corporate action and offering of the church.

Of course, I sketch my pictures with broad brush strokes. But I hope you may recognise the types I sketch.

In the twentieth century, the main stream of the life of Church of England was markedly of Troeltsch's church-type. And you at King's and Warminster and I at my theological college are likely to have swum within that steam.

Further, this kind of formation, and the kind of church life into which we entered and in which we have worked, is rooted in the theology I began by describing, one that is profoundly incarnational.

In what I have said to you, I have given you brief sketches of four individuals whose Christianity was of this incarnational character. None of them is honoured by a commemoration in the calendar of our church and one of them, certainly, is unlikely ever to be so honoured in the calendar of any church. But my quartet bore witness to the conviction that the reality of the incarnation in any age is expressed in art and culture, in the acceptance rather than the suppression of our personalities, body and soul, and in work that is social and even political. And all of them present us with challenges.

Walter Hussey pointed us to the living artist as an interpreter of the incarnation. This can be uncomfortable. Not all his artists were deeply committed to the Christian religion – and two, Chagall and Bernstein were Jews, not Christians at all. Others included, let us say, fellow travellers – Benjamin Britten although he wrote for Hussey and elsewhere for the church, was no more than that. But whether Christians or not, these men could illuminate our understanding of the God whom we worship and proclaim, their work was a working out of the incarnation. We learn from Hussey that, just as in the reign of Queen Victoria artists and architects worked in art forms that were part of a whole mind set or world view – for the gothic revival was far more than purely a movement in ecclesiastical art - so in his day the church should see the creator-spirit at work in

changed art forms, responses, as in the case of Sutherland's tortured Christ, which fitted the conditions of a changed world.

We should symbolize the incarnation of our God in the art and materials of the age. So the building of new churches should not necessarily be in stone but perhaps in concrete, as is one of the most arresting buildings of the post war years, the Roman Catholic cathedral at Liverpool. Or in humble brick: St Paul Bow Common, a classic of the same period, is of purple brick and simple metal ornamentation; and in that simplicity Fr Gresham Kirkby and his architects saw a true identification, a symbol of the Word made Flesh and dwelling among the humble houses of Bow Common.

So, let Hussey stand for others who direct us to look for the God who was incarnate in first century Palestine and expressed himself in its linguistic ideas and thought forms, in the forms of our day.

Then look for the Incarnation inside yourself. We have seen the glory and noted the perils of the flesh as we reflected on Eric Gill. There is much more that could be said about Gill, not least about his social thought, which is not very far removed from Conrad Noel's, But we cannot escape the dichotomy, so developed in Gill, that we, all of us, are a union of flesh and spirit – that is incarnational, and that these things wrestle within us – that is inescapable. Gill challenges us to look at ourselves, to ask ourselves, before we ask or judge others, how far we embrace that union and the tension of flesh and spirit redeemed in the Incarnation; or how far we deny that union and defy that tension and thereby seek to limit the power and range of the Incarnation.

Conrad Noel was accused of pantheism. His own love of beauty, of art, his conviction that in these things is God, his belief that in community there is God, his conviction that where there is goodness there should the church be, his unshakeable belief that where there is the quest for social justice there is the activity of the Spirit – if these things are pantheistic, then incarnational theology is pantheistic. I do not think they are. He challenges us to look beneath the surface of things, perhaps, for instance, to peer beneath the surface of the lines of supply of the goods we handle and rely on, and to ask ourselves how far these lines are

consistent with our belief in a God whose glory is in every living man and woman and child – including those who are sweated – to use that word – in the tiger economies of Asia.

And there is Dick Howard, in my view a possible candidate for a commemoration in our calendar. I have spoken only in passing of his desire to ensure that the new cathedral was in an artistic and architectural idiom that matched the new post-war age and was at one with the civic rebuilding that was proceeding around it, but in him also there was the desire to embrace the contemporary culture of the world, to learn from it, and to give to it.

Dick Howard's belief in the need to reconcile, in his time above all to reach out to the German people, his determination disturbingly to interpret *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*, by shortening it - Dick Howard's belief takes us out into a world and a society in which divisions based on race and colour and religion are virulent. He takes us there with in our hearts the yearning for human reconciliation: at-one-ment, for that is the secular origin of the word when it entered our language four hundred years ago.

In our meeting with the world, as I have described it in the work and witness of these four men, fifty or a hundred years ago, a theology grounded in the Incarnation gave us a secure base from which to greet and affirm that world, to learn from it, to claim it as Christ's. That theology is, I think, less prominent now in Anglican thinking; there has been some retrenchment into the securities of a gathered church. And this, I fear, weakens our witness and our outreach.

In retirement our opportunities to proclaim a world-affirming theology are limited. But these four men, their work, their worship, their achievements, can still make us think, challenge our assumptions, enrich our reflection and devotion, and keep us faithful to the world affirming fullness of the implications of the statement that the Word was made Flesh.