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Advent (almost) 2006.

Dear friends,

Here is some recent news of me. Please forgive me if you have read some of this before.

I will be in Portland, Oregon from 30th November until early morning of 12th December. I will be preaching and leading a conference at the Anglican cathedral in Portland, speaking at various parishes, speaking in Salem -which is said to be the methyamphetamine capital of the USA west-, meeting with Mark Yaconelli whose book *Contemplative Youth Ministry* (SPCK 2006) I have just reviewed, and celebrating the 3rd anniversary of Rahab's Sisters, a project with prostitutes founded by the Revd Sara Fischer and very much influenced by her time with the Maze Marigold Project in the East End of London. Can I ask (1) that you pray for me, or think of me, and the people with whom I will work in this time; and (2) that you will avoid sending me e-mails or phoning me until I get back? Thanks.

From 18th to 21st September I was at the centenary gathering for the death of Josephine Butler, the 19th Century campaigner for the dignity of women in prostitution, whose work led to the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act. We hope that the papers will be published next year. I gave a paper on Christian responses to prostitution 1906-2006. Immediately after this, I led a parish conference for St James, Moss Side, and St Edmund, Whalley Range, two adjoining inner city parishes in Manchester. You will know that 15 year old Jessie James was shot dead in Moss Side just before the conference, so please remember him and his family and friends.

I gave the Samuel Ferguson Lecture in the University of Manchester on 19th October on urban ministry and theology 1956-2006, using Gibson Winter's *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches* (1961 USA) and Stanley Evans's *The Church in the Back Streets* (1962 UK) as base historical texts. It should soon be available on the website of the Manchester Centre for Public Theology, and is already available at www.anglocatholicism.org Look under the Heritage section. My new book *Doing Theology in Altab Ali Park* has now been published by Darton, Longman and Todd.

Steve Cohen, a long-term campaigner against immigration laws, has written a new book which was launched in Manchester on 28th September. It is called *Standing on the Shoulders of Fascism* and is published by Trentham Books of Stoke on Trent tb@trentham-books.co.uk It develops much of Steve's thinking and is a successor to his *No One Is Illegal: asylum and immigration control past and present*, also published by Trentham Books in 2003. I strongly recommend these books. The latter has given its name to a movement called No One Is Illegal.

This year is the 70th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War. *Searchlight* magazine (PO Box 1576, Ilford IG5 ONG) phone 0207 681 8660 editor@searchlightmagazine.com has produced a supplement on *Cable Street and the Spanish Civil War -70 Years On*. We should all read *Searchlight* to keep in touch with developments in fascism and resistance to fascism locally and internationally.

Many of you will know that my dear friend and mentor of many years, Fr Gresham Kirkby, died on 10th August, a few hours before his 90th birthday. If you do an internet search under his name, you should find the obituaries which I, Alan Edwards, and others wrote, in *The Guardian*, *The Times*, and the *Church Times*. Gresham was an extraordinary person, a

Catholic anarchist, the first English Anglican priest to go to prison for anti-nuclear activity (1961), who spent much of his life writing and revising the same article. It first appeared as 'The earth shall rise on new foundations' in the *Socialist Christian* of January 1956. He then revised it for a Jubilee Group conference in Bethnal Green in 1977, and I can still see Archbishop Michael Ramsey sitting there, saying 'Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes' after almost every sentence. He did a further revision for *Essays Catholic and Radical*, which Rowan Williams and I edited in 1983, and it appears on the website www.anglocatholicism.org. He was always dissatisfied with his own thinking and would have revised it again if he had been able.

I have been helping out at various churches in the Manchester area. I recently celebrated Mass and preached at St Stephen's, Oldham, which has not had a resident priest for some years. They worship in a primary school hall, but hope to return to the church soon. I was very impressed with their courage and determination to survive. I also celebrated and preached at All Saints, Micklehurst, six minutes from here but in the adjoining Diocese of Chester –the River Tame is the boundary. This parish is in the midst of a rebuilding programme, and three of us (two humans and a dog) did a 12-mile sponsored walk on the North Devon coast road from Barnstaple to Bideford in support of this. If you can support us retrospectively, you could send a cheque payable to All Saints PCC.

I read recently part of a talk attributed to the US evangelical Tony Campolo: "I have three things I'd like to say today. First, while you were sleeping last night, 30,000 kids died of starvation or diseases related to malnutrition. Second, most of you don't give a shit. What's worse is that you're more upset with the fact that I said shit than the fact that 30,000 kids died last night."

I have just finished helping to lead a course at the Nazarene Theological College in Manchester on 'Holiness and Social Transformation.' At the end of November I led a study day at Elsie Briggs House near Bristol on 'Discerning the signs of the times'.

Love and prayers
Ken

ADVENT MATERIAL

Hymns of Bernard of Cluny

The world is very evil,
The times are waxing late.
Be sober and keep vigil.
The Judge is at the gate:
The Judge that comes in mercy,
The Judge that comes in might
To terminate the evil,
To diadem the right.

Arise, arise, good Christian,
Let right to wrong succeed.
Let penitential sorrow
To heavenly gladness lead.
Then glory yet unheard of
Shall shed abroad its ray,
Resolving all enigmas,
An endless Sabbath day.

The home of fadeless splendour,
Of flowers that fear no thorn,

Where they shall dwell as children
Who here in exile mourn,
The peace of all the faithful,
The calm of all the blest,
Inviolable, unvaried,
Divinest, sweetest, best.

The peace that is for heaven,
And shall be too for earth,
The palace that re-echoes
With festal song and mirth,
The garden breathing spices,
The paradise on high,
Grace beautified to glory,
Unceasing minstrelsy.

O happy, holy portion,
Refection for the blest,
True vision of true beauty,
Sweet cure of all distress!
Strive then to win that glory,
Toil then to gain that light.
Send hope before to grasp it
Till hope is lost in sight.

And through the sacred lilies,
And flowers on every side,
The happy dear-bought people
Go wandering far and wide,
Their one and only anthem
The fullness of his love,
Who gives instead of torment
Eternal joys above.

Look also at
Jerusalem the golden [in most hymnbooks] and (though this is not by Bernard but reflects
his thinking)

Jerusalem, my happy home,
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end,
Thy joys when shall I see?

The saints are crowned with glory great,
They see God face to face.
They triumph still, they still rejoice
In that most happy place.

There David stands with harp in hand
As master of the choir.
Ten thousand times would one be blest
Who might this music hear.

Our Lady sings Magnificat
With tune surpassing sweet,
And blessed martyrs' harmony

Doth ring in every street.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
God grant that I may see
Thine endless joy, and of the same
Partaker ever be.

Office Hymn for Evening Prayer in Advent

Creator of the stars of night,
Thy people's everlasting light,
Jesus, redeemer, save us all
And hear thy people when they call.

Thou grieving that the ancient curse
Should doom to death a universe
Hast found the medicine, full of grace,
To save and heal a ruined race.

Thou cam'st, the bridegroom of the bride
As drew the world to evening tide,
Proceeding from a virgin shrine,
The spotless victim all divine.

At whose dread name, majestic now,
All things must bend, all hearts must bow,
And things celestial thee shall own
And things terrestrial, Lord alone.

O thou whose coming is with dread
To judge and doom the quick and dead,
Preserve us while we dwell below
From every insult of the foe.

All laud to God the Father be,
All praise, eternal Son to thee,
All glory as is ever meet
To God the Holy Paraclete. Amen

ADVENT THEMES

Key Advent themes are brought out in the hymns of Bernard of Cluny, the 12th Century Cistercian, of which 'Jerusalem the Golden' is the best known.

The hymns speak of evil and judgment, of the need for sobriety and vigilance. They move towards a vision of unspeakable glory, the endless Sabbath, the social life of God's Kingdom, and the communion of saints in the City of God.

One of the hymns, in the English translation, begins 'The world is very evil'. What does this mean? The scriptures use 'world' in two different ways: the material creation, and the fallen world order, the social and political structures, the principalities and powers. So there are the emphatic statements that 'God so loved the world', and also 'the world is in the power of the evil one' as well as commands to 'love not the world nor the things of the world'. The love for, and care of, the material creation (of which we are a part) is central to orthodox Christianity, as it is to Judaism. On the other hand, there is a sense in which 'the world' is to be renounced, repudiated, as it is in the baptismal liturgy. Hauerwas and Willimon put it well in their book *Resident Aliens*:

When Christians say 'world', we are saying more than 'universe' or 'society'

or 'culture'. We are saying something more like 'Pentagon', that place where the principalities and powers are organised against God for the noblest of reasons.

Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 1989, p 78.

The season of Advent began in the 4th Century when the Council of Saragossa (380) prescribed an intense time of preparation for the Feast of the Epiphany, beginning on 17th December. This season was not related to baptism or to Lent but rather to the coming and manifestation of Christ. It was late in developing in Rome, not until the 6th Century when Gregory the Great established four Sundays, and from the 7th Century the stress on the return of Christ was central. In both east and west, but particularly in the east, Advent has been a joyful season, in spite of the stress on judgment and watchfulness.

The Office Hymns for Advent, including the Great O Antiphons used from 17th to 23rd December, date from the 9th Century, though the Great Antiphons may be earlier.

Advent is a time focussed on the future. In the Roman rite prior to the 2nd Vatican Council, the season began with words from Joel 3:18: 'On that day the mountains shall drop down sweetness' a reference to the Day of the Lord. St Charles Borromeo called Advent 'the acceptable time spoken of by the Spirit.

This is a complex time. The Cambridge theologian Janet Martin Soskice has said that the liturgy of Advent is 'full of images of birth and travail, of longing for a new order to begin' (*The Independent*, 28th December 1992).

THE ADVENT ANTIPHONS (The Seven ? or Eight ? Os)

The Advent Antiphons are at least as old as the ninth century, and a passage (3:12) in Boethius (d. 525) suggests that he may have been familiar with them. They are customarily said at Evening Prayer on the seven days preceding Christmas, from 17 December to 24 December. (As you will notice, that is eight days, so you can (a) skip the Feast of Thomas the Apostle on 21 December [if you in a country or rite which keeps it then], or (b) skip the Fourth Sunday of Advent, if your Sunday prayers usually follow a different pattern from your weekday ones, or (c) skip 24 December, if you are going to be at church that evening, or (d) skip 17 December and begin the Antiphons on the 18th, or (e) add the eighth antiphon given me by a Franciscan friend. Of these, I recommend (e) on the grounds that Mary is the human bridge linking old and new.

One way of using them is to sing (or say) the antiphon, an appropriate psalm or canticle, and repeat the antiphon. The most usual canticle for the purpose is the Song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55). A shorter canticle that is also used is the Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32). But they can also be used with other hymns or prayers, or by themselves.

The antiphons address the Saviour under different titles taken from the Hebrew Scriptures, suggesting various promises that had been made to the Jewish people about the One who was to come.

You will recognize the seven stanzas of the well-known Advent hymn, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," (except that the hymn-writer took the last and climactic antiphon for his first stanza). Each antiphon is followed by an explanatory comment in italics.

1st Antiphon O Sapientia 17 December

O Wisdom, you came forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end of the earth to the other, mightily and sweetly ordering all things:
Come and teach us the way of prudence.

Christ is the Word and Wisdom of God (John 1:1, associated by early Christian commentators with Proverbs 8:1, 22-31), existing with the Father and the Spirit from all eternity, through whom all things were made.

2nd Antiphon O Adonai 18 December

O Adonai, and Leader of the house of Israel,
you revealed yourself in the bush to Moses in a flame of fire,
and gave him the law on Sinai:
Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

"Adonai" is the Hebrew word for "Lord," and is traditionally used in place of the Great Name of God, revealed to Moses out of the burning bush. Christ is the Lord who delivered the Israelites out of bondage (Exodus 3) and made them a people for himself.

3rd Antiphon O Radix Jesse 19 December

O Root of Jesse, you stand as a sign to the peoples;
before you kings will shut their mouths
and nations bow in worship:
Come and deliver us, and tarry not.

Jesse is the father of David the King. God took David from his father's house, and made him King of Israel, and made the kingship of David an earthly symbol of the Kingdom of Christ. The antiphon refers to Isaiah 11:1,12 and 52:13-53:12.

4th Antiphon O Clavis David 20 December

O Key of David and Sceptre of the house of Israel,
you open and none can shut,
you shut and none can open:
Come and bring the captives out of the prison house:
those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

The reference is to Isaiah 22:22 and Revelation 3:7. Though the earthly fortunes of the dynasty of David and of the Jewish people may rise or fall, God is the Lord of history, and nothing can prevent the fulfilment of his purposes.

5th Antiphon O Oriens 21 December

O Dayspring, Brightness of the Light Eternal
and Sun of Righteousness:
Come and enlighten those who sit in darkness
and the shadow of death.

In the last chapter of the Hebrew Scriptures is the prophecy of the Day when the Lord shall be revealed, a consuming fire to those who reject him, but to his own people a Sun whose rays bring light and healing and wholeness. Echoing it are the words of the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:78-79), the last Messianic prophecy, the last inspired utterance before the birth of Christ.

6th Antiphon O Rex gentium 22 December

O King of the nations, and their Desire,
the cornerstone making us both one:
Come and save the creature whom you have formed from
clay.

God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19 and Colossians 1:20), and breaking down the ancient hostility between Jew and Gentile, between one nation and another, between one person and another, making of us one building with himself as the cornerstone, one body with himself as the head.

7th Antiphon O Emmanuel 23 December

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver,
the Hope of all peoples and their Salvation:
Come and save us, O Lord our God.

'Emm-anu-el" is Hebrew for "with-us-God," and can be translated, "God is with us," or simply, "God with us." Matthew (1:23), quoting Isaiah (7:14), proclaims Jesus as the promised Deliverer, and as God with us, God in our midst, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us. Thanks be to God.

8th Antiphon 24 December O Virgine

O Virgin of Virgins, how shall this be?
For before you was none like you, nor shall there be after:
Daughters of Jerusalem, why do you marvel at me?
That which you behold is a divine mystery.

This eighth antiphon was provided by a Franciscan friend who says her house use it happily. It seems to me appropriate to remember the Theotokos in this way.

Prepared for Magdalen House of the Rivendell Community
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From Vida Scudder, *Social Teachings of the Christian Year*:

"The Catholic faith regards judgment as not merely continuous, but catastrophic; and not merely individual but collective. . . Now we all fight shy of recognizing the religious necessity of catastrophe, but these last years should have taught us better courage. Judgment on whole epochs. on whole civilizations, is a fact. . . Life, national, social, personal, is not serene progress onward and upward; turmoil and upheaval, war and revolution, distress of nations with

perplexity, are an essential part⁵ of the Divine Order; and in all these the devout soul is called to see the signs of the Coming of the Son of Man.

"The Advent scriptures rightly read are full of exultant paradoxical joy. Horror heaped upon horror, men's hearts failing them for fear -- the description is cogent today. And then, what? Cower? Wait in submission the coming doom? Try to avert it by clinging tight to the accredited order? Not all all: Look up. lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. He spake a parable to them about the trees; when they leaf out, we know that summer is coming, Did it seem strange to the disciples, this likening of distress, perplexity and fear to the push of tender leaves in spring? The Lord knew whereof he spoke. The times of judgment are the springtime of the world."

--- Reprinted from *Anglican Theological Review*, 1913.