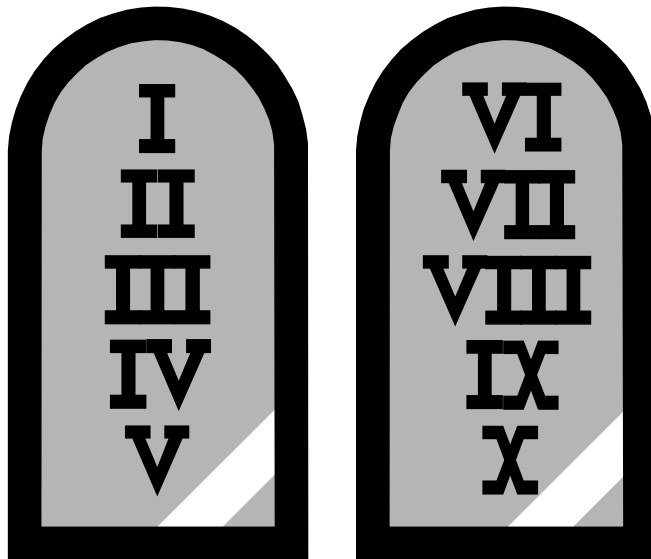


# ***Parish Magazine of St Giles' & St Margaret's, Oxford***



*December 2006*

*Free*

**The United Benefice of** **St Giles and**  
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The parish magazine aims to provide an opportunity for us to exchange ideas and to share our experience of the Christian life. Publication date is noted below. Please send the editor articles, drawings, book reviews, or parish news. The editor is especially grateful for material which has no particular sell-by date and for copy sent by email attachment.

*Recommended length of articles:* invited articles max 1,100 words (3 pages); all other contributions max 700 words (2 pages).

***Deadline for submissions for next issue:  
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## **Dear Friends,**

**December 2006**

When I was about six or so, the beginning of December was a somewhat magical time of the year. The end of the long autumn term was in sight, the prospect of Christmas was on the horizon, the thought of special festive foods and seeing distant members of the family all contributed to an air of joyful expectation. Now, almost half a century later, I have a very different outlook. As December begins, my heart begins to sink.... there seems so much to do and so little time to get it all done. Yes, the joy of Christmas will be there on the day... but all the preparations have given this festival something of a bitter-sweet flavour.

So is it that with the passing of the years, my outlook has become a little jaded? I think this could well be the case, but I don't think that this is the whole story. As I get older, I suspect that I may actually be getting more in tune with the true spirit of Christmas that was around at that first celebration. As we read the Christmas story in churches with twinkling lights in the back-ground, we can easily become disconnected from the real experience of the birth of Jesus. Looking back on it, it may be full of joy..... But was it like that for Mary and Joseph as they prepared for the big day?

Saying yes to the angel was in one way the easy part for Mary. The idea of giving birth to someone special must have seemed so attractive, that the practicalities didn't even enter into consideration. Yet, as soon as the baby started to grow, life became difficult. Would Mary have shared her secret with her mother? In her situation....would you? Unless they were a very exceptional family, the likelihood must have been that Mary kept the secret to herself and anxiety began to fill her mind. For what were her prospects?! Carrying an illegitimate child could result in her being thrown out of society, even killed.

I think that we have a lot to give thanks for Elizabeth and her words of encouragement to Mary. That meeting was the first turning point in the Christmas story for me. On her return, Mary had resolved to face the consequences of her actions and share her situation with her parents and

her betrothed. The difficulties ahead had not been solved, but now Mary was resolute that they had to be faced with others.

Fortunately, love won through and Joseph and Mary's parents went with Mary's decision, but the situation had to get much worse before it got better. The hunt for accommodation in Bethlehem was probably the worst nightmare of the whole situation and made Mary and Joseph totally aware of how dependent they were on others. It wasn't a very pleasant experience to go through and it took Mary and Joseph to the point of despair. What enabled the story to have another significant turning point was the compassion of the inn-keeper for their plight.

Years ago, I heard a true story of a doctor at the South Pole who realised that she had a critical condition that needed an operation but there was no one to operate on her. So she trained up the carpenter to perform the deed as he had the manual dexterity to perform the operation. Thus it would not surprise me if Joseph's hands performed the mid-wife's job on that special night. Fortunately, out of that risky situation, all was well. Yet, tired and exhausted, were Joseph and Mary able to share that moment of rejoicing?

The arrival of the shepherds, the lowest of the low in the society of the day, produced the third and final turning point for me. As they shared the moment, and as Joseph was able to tell his story...the joy came to full flowering.

Considerations such as these make me realise that we are not engaging with the real spirit of Christmas until we recognise the pain and disquiet behind the tinsel and gush. It is true that we would be left with a very sorry tale but for the turning points along the way. I have been able to detect three of them, but there were probably many more. But what strikes me is the significant role that subsidiary characters have to play in the way it all works out. So please don't underestimate the significance of those moments when you encourage someone, act out of compassion or simply hear their story. You may well be playing your part in transforming the trials of life into something wonderful.

With love,

*Andrew.*

This month edition of the Church Magazine focuses on the **Old Testament**. The January issue will be looking at the New Testament; and the February issue at the formation of the Bible as a whole.

Invited articles in this issue:

***The Old Testament - History or Theology?***

*by Margaret Hollis*

***The Old Testament, Advent and the Infancy Narratives***

*by Michael Screech*

***Unlikely Heroes***

*by Andrew Bunch*

***What are the Psalms?***

*by John Day*

***The Old Testament - History or Theology?***

*by Margaret Hollis*

Historians nowadays make enormous efforts to be objective, that is, they try to ensure that they are free from prejudices about their material, they endeavour to deal with all the actors and events in a completely even-handed manner. This is, of course, not humanly possible. We are all of us influenced in many ways when we look at the past, particularly by our own culture and its assumptions. We need only consider the current attitude towards Empire and colonialism to see how far attitudes have changed in 50 years. Given the impossibility of being unbiased, we should come to our reading of the Old Testament aware that we might react in certain ways because of our own prejudices and those of the writers.

The writers of the Old Testament were not trying to write history as we may now understand it. They were considering the story of God's dealings with his people Israel, so they were not just chronicling events, they were drawing out lessons from them.

We usually divide the books of the Old Testament into: the Pentateuch (the first five books of Moses), the historical books (Joshua to Nehemiah), Wisdom literature (Job to Song of Solomon), the Prophets (3 major, 12 minor), and in some editions of the Bible, the Apocrypha. The Hebrew Bible is divided rather differently. The Pentateuch comes first, but most of the other books are classed as "The Prophets". These divide into the Former Prophets (historical books from Joshua to Kings) and the Later or Writing Prophets. Various other books, such as Esther, Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, are known as "The Writings"; they are kept in separate scrolls from the main body or Torah; some of them are read at special festivals. The word "prophet" is not understood as someone who foretells the future, but as one who in the literal sense of the word "speaks out", proclaiming God's message to his people for the here and now.

Scholars think that the Scriptures were collected and edited some time before the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were destroyed by the Babylonians in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Many writings must have existed, such as chronicles recording the acts of the kings or the prophets. Under the threat of attack from the super-powers of the day, some thoughtful people began to look at the history of the nation, trying to discern from the past how God might be leading them into the future. It is clear throughout the Historical Books that the authors regarded adherence to God's law as the most necessary feature for the life of the nation. Trouble comes when Israel abandons the covenant and "goes a'whoring after other gods".

During the reign of King Josiah, we read of how "an ancient book" was discovered during refurbishment of the Temple. This was probably the book of Deuteronomy. Whether it really was rediscovered in a dusty corner or whether some devout persons "planted" it, the discovery set in motion a reform of the life of the nation. King Josiah goes down in history as a good king because he rooted out all worship of pagan gods and restored pure worship of the true God. Like the authors of "1066 and All That", the writers have a rather simplistic way of dividing monarchs into Good Kings and Bad Kings. Many kings of Israel are written off with the phrase "he walked in the ways of Jeroboam son of

Nebat who led Israel into sin." Some of these "Bad Kings" enjoyed long and prosperous reigns, building up the country economically and politically, but they are slated by the prophets for their wicked ways. Elijah attacks the house of Omri in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and in the next century Amos inveighs against the material prosperity and the injustices which it brings with it under Jeroboam II.

After the peoples were led into exile by the Assyrians, the editing of the books continued. When we read the book of Joshua, for example, or parts of Samuel, we may feel that the editors have not done their job very well, because we find many inconsistencies in the narratives. Sometimes we have two different versions of the same story, sometimes two opposing attitudes. Despite the adulation of King David, we can note a distinct hostility to the monarchy in some passages; clearly the writers considered that Israel had made a bad choice in opting for a king, just to be like the other nations - God is their true king and they should have stuck with him.

It may be that the editing and revision of Scripture was never completed. Some scholars think that a great history of Israel was planned: Deuteronomy begins with the Law, Joshua recounts the entry into the Promised Land, Judges shows how the tribes fell into lawlessness and confusion, Samuel describes the rise of the monarchy and its high point under David, Kings shows how, under lesser kings, Israel once again fell away from their loyalty to God. Clearly this scheme, if it ever existed, was not put into operation, since Deuteronomy has been grouped in the Pentateuch with the other books concerning Moses and the earliest history of Israel.

After the Exile another writer took up the tale - the author of Chronicles, who possibly also wrote or edited the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and he has a clear agenda. He presents a glowing account of David, the ideal monarch, and shows the later kings of Judah as failures who did not maintain the true worship of God. He skates over the Exile and depicts the rebuilding of the Temple and the nation. His emphasis on the Temple and on the priestly castes marks the beginnings and development of Judaism as a religion. This had probably started during

the Exile, as the Jews tried to hold on to their identity as a people, particularly as the People of God. On their return to their own land they wanted to establish the worship of God as the defining feature of the nation, something which made them different from all other nations.

No doubt this insistence on being a "peculiar people" has ensured that the Jews have survived through all the centuries despite the many dreadful things which have happened to them. The Jews saw God at work in history, which means that the telling of history can never be impartial or unbiased. Can we as Christians look at our personal story, or the history of our nation, continent and world, and not also ask: *what does God want to teach us?*

### ***The Old Testament, Advent and the Infancy Narratives***

*by Michael Screech*

Advent and Christmas are for me glorious times, recalling my happy childhood and the happy childhoods of my sons. But I can seldom forget that the Christmas story, taught as literal historical truth to boys and girls growing out of childhood, is one of the main reasons for the rejecting of Christianity in adolescence. The stories are too much like Faeries-at-the-Bottom-of-the-Garden. Older Christians are wise to prepare themselves at leisure to explain to the young, when their doubts or scoffings arrive, how to read the Infancy Narratives. They tell us a lot.

One way is to begin with Saint John's Gospel: *Others said, 'This is the Christ.' But some said, 'What! Doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?'* So there arose a division in the multitude because of him. (John 7: 41-44).

That is the only reference to Bethlehem in Saint John. His Gospel begins with the Logos (the Word) and leads at once to John the Baptist and an adult Jesus. Saint Paul knows nothing about the Nativity. Nor

does Mark, who also begins with John the Baptist and an adult Jesus. The Nativity is anchored in Matthew and Luke. Saint Paul does however warn Timothy *'not to give heed to fables and endless genealogies'* (I Timothy 1:4. See also Titus 3:9). He was doubtless thinking of genealogies such as those in Matthew and Luke.

There is remarkable agreement amongst scholars nowadays. Vatican Two 'served as Magna Carta, allowing Catholics to use literary and historical criticism that had long been suspect. Catholics and Protestants are ex aequo in the quality of their biblical scholarship.' (Preface to the R.C. Jerome Biblical Commentary). Rome has caught up. Far from our always risking a nasty squabble with a Roman Catholic rearguard, Roman Scholars are now allies in the vanguard.

Perhaps the very best study for a wider readership is Father Raymond S. Brown's *The Birth of the Messiah. A commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*. It first appeared in 1973. There are later, up-dated editions. Scholars nowadays ask much less often *What happened?* but *What do these narratives aim to do? What is Advent?*

Messiah unforgettably supplies the main answer: it anchors Jesus of Nazareth, as the Christ, firmly within the tradition and promises of the Old Testament. Old Testament Jews were children of the Covenant: Christians are their successors in the New Covenant. Almost everything in the Infancy Narratives is linked to the Old Testament, taken literally, metaphorically or even artistically as a model.

From the outset Matthew sees Jesus as the Son of David. A study of the reference-notes in any good Bible shows from the outset a plethora of Old Testament references in Matthew's Infancy Narrative. The same applies to Luke, though there are in Luke, naturally, many links with The Acts of the Apostles, a work which is probably his. Much in Matthew and Luke seem to be a kind of Christian midrash, with Jewish Christians turning over and over again the Scriptures, since all the religious truth they needed must be overt or hidden in what for us is the Old Testament.

The gulf separating the Infancy Narratives from the beginnings of Mark and John is great, but is not unbridgeable. Mark starts off with Isaiah's 'voice crying in the wilderness', and greets Jesus with an echo of Psalm 2:7. John begins with an echo of Genesis 1:1. And Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, sees Jesus as 'of the seed of David' (Romans 1:3). We can then grasp why Advent is so 'Jewish'.

The great titles of the Messiah are evoked in the hymn *O come, O come, Emmanuel*. We pass in review the O-antiphons, what a character in Rabelais calls 'the O O Saints of Noel': Wisdom from on High (O Sapientia), Adonai (used in Hebrew to 'point' the ineffable Name of God), Root of Jesse, David's Key, and so on.

Our Prayer Book readings go back to those of the tomes of Jerome; our Collects go back to the early Sacramentaries. Except for the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent, newly composed in 1549 to incite Christians to 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest' the Scriptures, of which the Old Testament forms a major and indispensable part.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice! Rejoice!*  
*Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

## *Unlikely Heroes*

*by Andrew Bunch*

When it comes to the celebration of Christmas, we are very selective about the parts of the Bible we read. Yes, we all know well the story of the annunciation to Mary, her visit to Elizabeth and Jesus being born in the stable – all of which come from St Luke's Gospel. We have probably heard and grown to love the first chapter of St John's Gospel... "In the beginning was the word..." and you may easily think that these are the only passages from the New Testament that are relevant to Jesus' birth. But there are whole chunks of St Matthew's Gospel which we never hear at Christmas time and perhaps this December you might like to cast your eyes over them.

Start at chapter 1, verse 1 of Matthew and you are in for a rare treat! - The genealogy of Jesus. Now, tracing your ancestors has become all the rage these days, apparently it is the third most popular use of the internet. But instead of just reading through the list of Jesus' ancestors, take some time to consider who these characters were. You might think that you were in for a role call of all the wise and famous throughout the history of Israel, well you are in one way..... But there is a lot more below the surface. The clue to what lies behind the list emerges when you notice the women who have been mentioned.

They are not the ladies of the virtuous set, with unsullied records – quite the opposite! Read the story of Tamar (2 Samuel 13) or Rahab (Joshua 2 & 6) or Uriah's wife (2 Samuel 11 & 12) or even Ruth and you will find that in each case things were happening which were not quite right and proper in polite society! (All related to the most popular use of the internet!) Matthew is making a point which we would be wise to recognise, that in God's plans for the salvation of mankind he often enlists people that society might reject. Perhaps Matthew is making this point so that we are more sympathetic to Mary and her role in the birth of Jesus. But once you have stumbled on this train of thought, go back and read through the list of the men in Jesus' genealogy.

There are two men that probably stand out in the list as people that you have heard of before – Jacob and David. Good men, key men in the

evolution of the history of Israel as a nation. Yet were they men that you would like to have in your family and be proud of them? There is no doubt in my mind that Jacob was a nasty piece of work. He deceived his brother of his birthright and tricked his father-in-law out of his flocks and herds. Perhaps he mellowed in old-age? Hardly – look at the way he had favourites amongst his sons, remember the story of Joseph? Not someone that many of us would be proud of having in their family. But David is different...or is he? It is true that there are many good stories that have been attributed to him, such as the killing of Goliath. But there are many people who believe that this story actually should be attributed to another. David's prowess on the battle-field is unquestionable but this can't be said of his sexual morals. Perhaps we might be forgiving of his relationship with Uriah's wife, but the way he despatched Uriah is hardly acceptable.

So where does this leave us? For me the genealogy of Jesus as set out by Matthew is a curtain raiser for the story of the whole Gospel. It shows us what is to happen time and again in the Gospel, but familiarity has blunted our sensitivity. It seems to me that the story of the Gospel is about taking people in the reality of their lives, with all their brokenness, and making something wonderful from this seemingly unpromising raw material. Once we recognise this, it should give us a tremendous boost of confidence...why? Because it means that there is hope for us! No longer do we need to pretend that we are more virtuous than we actually are...we can admit the truth. Just like Jesus' ancestors we have a chequered past.

But before we give ourselves permission to be totally awful in our behaviour, it is perhaps worth noting another quality of living that also seems to be common in Jesus' ancestors – Faith!

Yes, David was pretty scruffy in his behaviour and so was Jacob. But both men had a faith which meant that they realised they lived by virtue of God's graciousness. They were aware of God's presence and they submitted their lives to his care. Remember Jacob's prayer and actions as he re-entered the Promised Land (Genesis 32) and David's prayer and actions at the death of his illegitimate son (2 Samuel 12), just two passages which illustrate their awareness of God's presence. This is the

key as to whether God can redeem us, despite our waywardness or sinfulness. If we have a real and living faith, then our lives can also be special in God's plan.

### *What are the Psalms?*

*by John Day*

We regularly sing the Psalms in Church, but because they do not feature in the normal cycle of readings from the Bible they are only extremely rarely expounded in sermons. In fact the only sermons on the Psalms which I can ever recall hearing were delivered by myself! It is therefore appropriate that something be said about them here.

Just as the Psalms are regularly sung in public worship today in the Church, so in ancient Israel they were recited to music in the worship of the Jerusalem Temple. This cultic setting is clear from the many references to the Temple and things associated with worship like sacrifice found within them (e.g. Pss. 4:5; 20:3; 23:6; 26:8; 63:2; 68:24-27; 122:1).

However, the precise settings that particular Psalms had in worship in ancient Israel have to be reconstructed on the basis of careful study, and are not always clear. The Psalter as we have it is a bit like a Christian hymn book lacking all those useful headings at the top of the page explaining with which festivals or occasions the hymns are particularly associated (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Whitsun). As a result, there has been a lot of heated discussion over which Psalms should be associated with particular times and festivals, as for example the feast of Tabernacles, which unlike for later Jews, appears to have been the most important festival in pre-exilic Israel.

Although a considerable number of Psalms were traditionally ascribed to David (73 in the headings in the Hebrew text, and this rises to 85 in the Greek!), it is clear that they constitute an anthology which grew up over many centuries. Even if not Davidic, there are quite a number of

*royal Psalms* in which the Israelite king is the central character: these include Psalms sung at the coronation of the king like Pss. 2 and 110, and the royal marriage Psalm in Ps. 45. After the Israelite monarchy came to an end in 586 B.C., these Psalms came to be reinterpreted as applying to the future Messiah, and hence the New Testament is able to relate them to Jesus Christ.

The Psalms reflect a wide range of moods. Whatever one's feelings of hope or despair, faith or doubt, one can always find something in them to speak to one's condition. Just as butterflies are analysed by entomologists into different types, so modern Biblical scholars have done with the Psalms. Whenever we sing or read the Psalms it's worth working out what type we're dealing with. I've already referred to royal Psalms in which the king holds the central place. The most common type of Psalm, however, are the *Individual Lament Psalms*, where an individual petitions God to relieve him from his distress. These are particularly frequent in the first half of the Psalter (e.g. Pss. 3-7, 9-10, 13, 17, 22, 25-28, 31, 51). It is not surprising that they're the most common, since petition tends to be the most common type of prayer everywhere, and people most regularly turn to God when in need. Sometimes the psalmist admits guilt (e.g. Ps. 51); at other times he claims to be suffering innocently (e.g. Ps. 26). It's not always clear what exactly a Psalm is complaining about – probably the language is sometimes deliberately left vague, so that it can be used by people in various kinds of distress.

A smaller number of Psalms are called *Communal Lament Psalms*, because in these the nation as a whole is lamenting some major disaster that has come upon it. These are often the easiest to date, since they tend to relate to a well-known event such as the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., e.g. Pss. 74 and 79.

In contrast to the Psalms of Lament we find their mirror image, the *Psalms of Thanksgiving*, in which the Psalmist thanks God for hearing his prayer for deliverance from distress. These too can be of either Individual or Communal character, though the latter are extremely rare (e.g. Ps. 124). Individual Thanksgiving Psalms include Pss. 30, 34, 116,

138. Incongruously it is a Psalm of Thanksgiving that Jonah is represented as singing while stuck in the belly of the great fish (see Jonah 2), a situation in which most of us would feel more inclined to utter a Psalm of Lament!

Another small group are the so-called *Psalms of Confidence*. In these the psalmist neither requests God to deliver him from enemies or other evils, nor thanks him for having done so, but rather expresses confidence that God does do so. The most famous example of these is that most beloved of Psalms, Ps. 23, often sung today at funeral services due to the mistranslation "valley of the shadow of death" in v. 4 ("death-dark valley" would be a more accurate rendering).

Then there are *Psalms of Praise* or Hymns, often beginning with the words "Praise the Lord" (Hebrew "Hallelujah"), which extol God for such things as his goodness and power in creation (e.g. Ps. 104) or acts in history (e.g. Ps. 136). For the Psalm of Praise at its simplest see Ps. 117—a mere two verses! Psalms of praise tend to dominate the second half of the Psalter (for example, Pss. 95-100, 103-104, 106, 113-14, 117, 122, 134-36, 145-50) just as Lament Psalms predominate in the first half. The Psalter as a whole has thus been edited so as to reflect a general movement from lament to praise.

Christian worshippers have doubtless often been struck by the inordinate length of Ps. 119 (176 verses!), in which the psalmist finds many ways to express his intense devotion to God's Law or Torah. The Church of England conveniently breaks it up into many smaller sections for worship, but given the greater tolerance of orientals for longer forms of service one wonders whether in ancient Israel it might have been recited as a whole! This Psalm is understandably commonly denoted a *Torah Psalm*. Related to Torah Psalms are the *Wisdom Psalms*, which include the very first Psalm, Ps. 1, which holds before the worshipper the two ways of life that humans may choose to follow.

The Psalms have continued to influence the Church not only directly but also through the large number of hymns which they have inspired. Some well-known examples include "*O Worship the King all glorious above*",

based on Ps. 104, "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun", modelled on Ps. 72, "The King of Love my Shepherd is", which closely follows Ps. 23, "Let us with a gladsome mind", which is inspired by Ps. 136, and "All people that on earth do dwell", based on Ps. 150, originally found in the 1561 Psalter of John Day (no relation, so far as I am aware!). It is noteworthy how rarely it is that Christian hymns have been inspired by Lament Psalms, even though these are so common in the Psalter. Somehow Christians, unlike the ancient Jews, feel they should not be lamenting in their public worship!

*John Day, a member of St. Giles' Church, is Professor of Old Testament Studies in the University of Oxford and Fellow & Tutor in Theology at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. Among his many books, available through Blackwells or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), is Psalms (London: T. & T. Clark International [Continuum], 6th reprint 2003. Originally published in 1990 by Sheffield Academic Press.)*

### ***The Reverend Dr François Rabelais: 1483(?) - 1552***

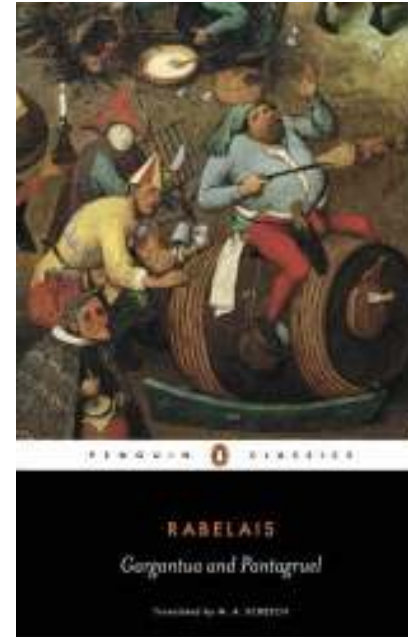
*By Michael Screech*

‘Even to those who have never read his works, the name of Rabelais is cordial for the spirits, and the mention of it cannot consist with gravity and spleen.’ So said William Hazlitt. Rabelais is classed with Homer, Aristophanes, Dante, and Shakespeare. Trollope’s Archdeacon Grantly loved Rabelais, keeping his works locked away in his book-room, fondly believing that his wife didn’t know! Rabelais can of course be bawdy: C.S. Lewis, who admired him, held that it is Christian theology itself which best explains all bawdiness.

After a life working on Rabelais I have at last translated him for Penguin Classics: *Rabelais: Gargantua and Pantagruel*. I hope that some members of our two congregations will enjoy reading him as much as I enjoyed living with him and working with him. Rabelais, like Erasmus whom he venerated, is one of the world’s great laughers. Both were Christian priests, both ex-Religious, both were put on the Roman Index of Forbidden Books. Rabelais figures there as ‘a heretic of the

first class’. Had he not mocked gasping, unbelieving Vatican bureaucrats who claimed the pope to be ‘as though God on earth quasi Deus in terris reserving the term Good Christians for gullible idiots easily diddled out of their money.’ Rabelais offended Calvin Too, but not Theodore Beza, Calvin’s successor who was astonished by the depths of the erudition underlying his laughter.

As Sir Ernst Gombrich noted: ‘the past is going away from us at an frightening pace.’ So Rabelais is not always an easy read nowadays, but with an editor’s help, he is a profoundly rewarding one. He is also a profoundly Christian one: two of the greatest protectors of Rabelais were Cardinal Jean Du Bellay (a man of Lutheran sympathies who supported the Henrican annulment) and Cardinal Odet de Châtillon who favoured the English reformation and eventually became an Anglican. He lies buried in Canterbury Cathedral, his connexion with Rabelais duly noted.



The laughter of Rabelais can be that of Carnival and Twelfth-night, fully Dionysiac. (Rabelais rejoiced in Noah who first planted the vine.) It is also that of a man who sought guidance from Socrates, Plato and Saint Paul.

*Gargantua and Pantagruel (Penguin Classics); by François Rabelais, M.A. Screech (Translator). Penguin Books Ltd (26 Oct 2006). ISBN: 0140445501*

### **Ceramics for Christmas at St Giles**



A selling exhibition to include work by  
**Jane & Dylan Bowen and Jane Hanson**  
Saturday, 11 November to Saturday, 2  
December  
Weekends 2-5, Mon-Fri 12-2

### **Leaving money to charity: making a hard question easy**

*By Bernard Silverman*

It has often surprised me how few people make a will. A lot of people feel superstitious or nervous about doing so, or just don't get round to it. But (for both spiritual and practical reasons) it's really important to take responsibility for one's material goods and their disposal after one's death.

Charities in general, and churches in particular, have hardly tapped the great potential of fundraising through legacies. Of course, many or most of us, quite rightly, regard provision for our dependants and families as the most important claim on our estates. But I think that making provision for some charitable giving in our wills is incumbent on all of us.

If you leave more than £285,000 at today's values, then the excess over that figure will be liable to inheritance tax at 40%. Bearing in mind current house prices, you don't have to be rich to reach that level. Bequests to spouses and civil partners are free of inheritance tax, and so are legacies to charities. So, that means that if you were to leave a charity, say, £20,000 the amount left for your other legatees is only lowered by £12,000. The Chancellor of the Exchequer will essentially pay the other £8,000. So leaving £20,000 to charity is a (legal) way of avoiding leaving £8,000 to the Exchequer.

People are sometimes nervous about charitable legacies because they are afraid they will change their mind about a particular charity, and then it will be expensive to draw up a new Will. A Charity Aid Foundation Legacy Account eliminates this concern. In your Will, you leave a single amount to CAF (using words that they can provide) and then you write CAF a separate letter how you would wish your legacy to be disbursed. You can split it between any charities (including St Giles or St Margaret's!) in whatever proportions or amounts you wish. If at any time you change your mind about which charities you want to support, all you have to do is write again to CAF; there is no need to change your will, and it costs nothing. The only charge that CAF makes is 1% when it actually distributes your legacy. There's a good explanatory leaflet at:

<http://www.cafonline.org/pdf/CAFLegacy.pdf>

Legacies will not, we hope, make any difference to our churches' financial situation in the short term, so please think about your regular giving before you think about your will. However, if we each wrote a will leaving 5% of our property to charity, and if half of that went to our churches, over decades we could build up a fund of literally millions of pounds, which would both yield income for the ministry and other purposes of the church, and provide capital for projects like roofs and organs.

### **St Giles Roof Appeal:**



### **Tour of St John's College**

**including the Library and Laudian Vestments**

*Coffee and mince pies £7.50*  
*Saturday 6th January 2007*  
*Meet at the Porters Lodge 10 am.*  
*Bookings: Catherine Hilliard 439319*  
*catherine.hilliard@sjc.ox.ac.uk*

## *Dates for your diary ... December 2006*

<b>Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec</b>	<b>ADVENT SUNDAY</b>
3.00 pm	SANDS Service <i>at St Giles'</i>
6.00 pm	Advent Carol Service <i>at St Margaret's</i>
<b>Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup></b>	
3.30 pm	Marriage <i>at St Giles'</i>
<b>Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>
10.30 am	Family Service <i>at St Margaret's</i>
<b>Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>St Lucy, Martyr at Syracuse, 304</b>
8.00 pm	Standing Committee meeting <i>at St Margaret's</i>
<b>Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>St John of the Cross, Poet, Teacher, 1591</b>
6.00 pm	Standing Committee meeting <i>at St Giles'</i>
<b>Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (O Sapientia)</b>
6.30 pm	Carol Service <i>at St Giles'</i>
<b>Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup></b>	
7.15 pm	Healing Service <i>at St Margaret's</i>
<b>Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>
8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>at St Margaret's</i>
8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>at St Giles'</i>
10.30 am	Parish Eucharist <i>at St Margaret's</i>
10.30 am	Mattins & Holy Communion <i>at St Giles'</i>
5.00 pm	Crib Service <i>at St Margaret's</i>

6.30 pm	Evening Prayer <i>at St Giles'</i>
	<b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b>
11.30 pm	Holy Communion <i>at St Giles'</i>
11.30 pm	Midnight Mass <i>at St Margaret's</i>
<b>Monday, 25<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>CHRISTMAS DAY</b>
8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>at St Margaret's</i>
8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>at St Giles'</i>
10.30 am	Parish Eucharist <i>at St Margaret's</i>
10.30 am	Mattins and Holy Communion <i>at St Giles'</i>
<b>Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>St Stephen, First Martyr</b>
7.15 pm	Eucharist <i>at St Margaret's</i>
<b>Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>St John, Apostle and Evangelist</b>
12.30 pm	Eucharist <i>at St Giles'</i>
<b>Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Holy Innocents</b>
10.00 am	Holy Communion <i>at St Margaret's</i>
<b>Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS</b>
<b>Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	<b>The Epiphany</b>
	Tour of <b>St John's College</b> in aid of the St Giles' Roof Appeal
<b>Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	<b>THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST</b>
6.00 pm	Epiphany carol service <i>at St Margaret'</i>

## Advertisement

*Who was St. Margaret's only lady organist?*

*What was her taste in millinery?*

*How many pipes are there in the Nicholson re-built organ?*

*Which renowned counter-tenor sang at St. Margaret's in the 1960s?*

*Which Vicar decided to disband the choir, and why?*

*How were the boy choristers rewarded in the 1920s?*

*When did ladies first sing in St. Margaret's choir?*

*How much did the Hill organ cost in 1892?*

*What anthems and settings did the choir sing in June 1968?*

*Have any recordings ever been made by the St. Margaret's choir?*

*What is the date of the second-hand pipes used in the re-built organ?*

*What did the congregation think of Latin settings of the Mass in the 1960s?*

**Find the answers  
and learn much more about the musical life of St Margaret's  
from 1884 to 2006 in:**

### ***Music at St. Margaret's Church, Oxford***

***An outline history of the organs and choirs***

**by**

**Brian Davey**

**Published by Positif Press, Oxford.**

**On Sale from 29 September: Price £6 (or two copies for £11)**

**ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO DIRECTLY TO THE MUSIC FUND  
OF ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH.**

**(The author is most grateful to a number of very generous sponsors who have helped defray the printing costs, thus allowing the Music Fund to benefit from the entire sales proceeds)**

## **Weekly Services at St Giles' & St Margaret's**

### **Sunday**

8:00am	Holy Communion	St Margaret
8:00am	Holy Communion	St Giles
10:30am	Parish Eucharist <i>with Sunday School &amp; Crèche</i>	St Margaret
10:30am	Mattins & Holy Communion	St Giles
6:00pm	Evening Prayer	St Margaret
6:30pm	Evensong	St Giles

### **Monday**

5:30pm	Evening Prayer	St Giles
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### **Tuesday**

7:00am	Morning Prayer	St Margaret
5:30pm	Evening Prayer	St Giles
7:15pm	Eucharist	St Margaret

### **Wednesday**

7:00am	Morning Prayer	St Margaret
12:30pm	Eucharist	St Giles
5:30pm	Evening Prayer	St Giles

### **Thursday**

7:00am	Morning Prayer	St Margaret
8:00am	Iona Liturgy	St Giles
10:00am	Holy Communion	St Margaret
5:30pm	Evening Prayer	St Giles

### **Friday**

7:00am	Morning Prayer	St Margaret
1:15pm	Taizé Service	St Giles
5:30pm	Evening Prayer	St Giles

### **Saturday**

9:00am	Morning Prayer	St Giles
5:30pm	Evening Prayer	St Margaret