**WHEN THE SAINTS …**

2nd of NOVEMBER THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

3rd of NOVEMBER RICHARD HOOKER

--------------------- MARTIN de PORRES

6th of NOVEMBER WILLIAM TEMPLE

7th of NOVEMBER WILLIBRORD

8th of NOVEMBER THE SAINTS AND MARTYRS OF ENGLAND

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**THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED**

Partly to illustrate the difference in language usage between the celebrated writers and preachers of the early C of E and our own, here is Hugh Latymer, whose martyrdom, together with that of Nicholas Ridley, we celebrated recently: the writings of these luminaries are always worth taking the trouble to read as long as we don’t find them utterly inaccessible:

‘The faithful departed have charity in such surety that they cannot lose it, so that they cannot murmur nor grudge against God; cannot be displeased with God; cannot be dissevered from God; cannot die, nor be in peril of death; cannot be damned, nor be in peril of damnation; cannot be but in surety of salvation.

They be members of the mystical body Christ as we be, and in more surety than we be. They love us charitably. Charity is not idle, if it be, it worketh and sheweth itself: and therefore I say they wish us well and pray for us. They need not cry loud to God: they be in Christ, and Christ in them. They be in Christ, and Christ with them. They joy in their Lord Christ always, taking thankfully whatsoever God doth with them; ever giving thanks to their Lord God; ever lauding and praising him in all things that he doth; discontent with nothing that he doth.

And forasmuch as they be always in charity, and when they pray for us they pray always in charity, and be always God’s friends, God’s children, brethren and sisters to our saviour Christ, even in God’s favour, even have Christ with them to offer their prayer to the father of Heaven to whom they pray in the name of the Son.

We many time for lack of charity, having malice and envy, rancour, hatred, one towards another, be the children of the devil, inheritors of hell, adversaries to Christ, hated of God, his angels and all his saints; they in their state may do us more good with their prayers, than we in this state. But they do us alway good, unless the lack and impediment be in us: for prayer said in charity is more faithful to them that is said for, and more acceptable to God, than that which is said out of charity. God looketh not the work of praying, but to the heart of the prayer.

Thus we may well pray for the departed, and they much better for us: which they will do of their charity, though we desire them not.

‘Hated of God …’ is not how we would think of him today: it’s not just the language that moves on!

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RICHARD HOOKER [1554-1600] represents one of the pillars of Anglicanism, along with Thomas Cranmer, Christopher Wren and Orlando Gibbons.

He was born into a poor family near Exeter, but a rich uncle, John Hooker, who had taken refuge abroad during the Marian persecutions, recognised the boy’s gifts from an early age, and paid for Richard’s education, first through the local grammar school, and then, probably in 1569, at Corpus Christi College Oxford, by the agency of uncle John’s friend and former fellow exile, John Jewel, who had become Bishop of Salisbury. Jewel interviewed the young Richard and was so impressed with his talents that he undertook to secure him a place at his old college of Corpus Christi, to pay for his studies, and keep an eye on his subsequent career. Richard excelled at Oxford, becoming a fellow of Corpus Christi in 1579.

He also made life-long friends at Oxford, of influential members of the Elizabethan church, such as his pupil Edwin Sandys, son of the Archbishop of York, who became a leading MP, George Cranmer, a relation of the late Archbishop, and Hooker’s older mentor, John Reynolds, a spokesman for the moderate wing of the Puritan Movement.

In these early years Hooker was a little more sympathetic to the concerns of these moderate puritans than perhaps he became later. He was ordained deacon in 1579, and priest in 1581, and his mentors were encouraging him to take a more proactive part in church affairs, and was given a preaching slot at St Paul’s Cross, very near the cathedral, where aspiring preachers of note were heard in public, and in the presence of influential movers and shakers including the Queen, on occasion. He made an impression with his sermon on predestination, and in 1585, at the age of just 31, he was appointed Master of the Temple Church, founded by the Knights Templar in C12, and modelled as a small-scale replica of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which served as the parish church for the lawyers and students of the Inner and Middle Temple. This was a position of substantial influence and political importance.

Unfortunately his assistant at the Temple, Walter Travers, had been in post previously, and was a far more extreme Puritan than Hooker, and refused to accept his authority, because he had not been called to his post by the congregation. Travers did not hesitate to pick fights with his superior, particularly in a series of sermons on justification, which Hooker opposed with a clear and good-natured account of the Protestant position on justification that was eventually published. In time Travers was sacked, but Hooker felt uncomfortable enough afterwards to accept a less prestigious living in 1591.

Partly as a result of this bad experience, Hooker decided to write a short book forensically dealing with the issues that were facing the Elizabethan Church, largely in support of the conformists against the extremist Puritan and Presbyterian movements, realising that these groups had been talking very largely past one another. He wished to cover the areas of law, political authority, biblical authority, and church authority, which, in those days, was still a separate legal province. He hoped to deal with issues arising from episcopacy, liturgy and discipline.

During the previous 5 years things had been getting worse between the competing factions: Puritans had started setting up their own synods around the country, which was completely illegal: they had despaired of getting their way through Parliament, and they blamed bishops, although opposition to their form of church came, in fact, from the Queen herself.

Worse still was the slander and fake news distributed in pamphlets printed under the pseudonym of Martin Marprelate, which were so extreme in tone and language that even the egregious Travers and other extremists sought to distance themselves from them.

Propagandists and court preachers had to work hard to turn the tide of public opinion, and after the defeat of the armada in 1588, the government could focus on dealing with the Puritans as public enemy number 1. By 1593, partly as the result of the government’s rather heavy-handed legislation, things were beginning to fizzle out, but by then Hooker had published the first volume of his series of doorsteps entitled ‘Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,’ for which he is principally known by Anglicans sufficiently interested and hardy to tackle his superbly rich and dense prose. By 1595 he had published volume 5, which he revised and published again in 1598. By the time of his early death in 1600 he was still tinkering around the edges of vols 6-8.

By all accounts Richard Hooker was a thoroughly good and faithful parish priest; patient and humble, having had a taste of life in the ecclesiastical fast lane. At his death his friend John Spencer wrote:

‘What admirable height of learning, and depth of judgement dwelt in the lowly mind of this truly humble man, great in all wise men’s eyes except his own. With what gravity and majesty of speech his tongue and pen uttered heavenly mysteries, whose eyes, in the humility of his heart, were always cast down to the ground. How all things that proceeded from him were breathed from the spirit of love, as if he, like the bird of the Holy Ghost, the dove, had wanted gall. Let those who knew him not judge him by his writings.’

As a product of this exceptionally rich period of our literary heritage, you might expect Hooker’s prose to be beautiful and balanced, but even by these highest of standards, it is so dense and convoluted that most modern readers , like many of their predecessors, have found ‘The Laws’ impossible to stay with. This is a shame indeed, because church propagandists of various stripes have taken advantage by [we trust] staggering through everything and claiming that this most important advocate for the Church of England was, in fact, an Evangelical and that therefore, by implication, the very tendency in the church that Hooker opposed so graciously should be its true guiding spirit.

The good news is that there is a conscientious effort afoot to bring ‘The laws’ into modern English. From a literary point of view, of course, this is a loss: which of our modern Bibles rings as true as the [sometimes poorly translated] King James, but the original remains for those who wish to break their teeth on it in process of acquiring a hard-won D lit, but for those of us with heart-felt concerns for the direction our church is being shoe-horned into, it is good news indeed.

The preface, which is a book in itself, touches on issues that are still red-hot today, and with well-judged and largely irrefutable logic and justice so that hopefully, in the relatively short time it will take to complete, every church should have one.

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MARTIN de PORRES was canonised in 1962 by Pope John 23rd and is celebrated as Patron Saint of Race Relations among other causes.

He was born in Lima in 1579 Juan Martin de Porres Velasquez, the illegitimate son of a Spanish knight and a black Panamanian freedwoman, Anna Velasquez. At the birth of a sister the father left the family, and Anna, being unable to support Martin, sent him for 2 years to school, and then apprenticed him to a barber surgeon.

At age 15 he joined the 3rd order of the Dominicans, as a servant boy, because neither black people nor native Indians were permitted to join religious orders as such. Nevertheless, Martin was appointed the friary Almoner, and at age 24 his superior waived the rules and received him into the 3rd order as a Lay Brother, having taken his vows. He was never ordained but gained such a reputation for patient care of the poor and needy, that he was placed in charge of the infirmary, in addition to his duties as barber and kitchen worker. Not every one of the 300 brothers accepted the decision to admit him and one called him a mulato dog, and a priest taunted him for his illegitimacy.

Martin abstained from meat and prayed with such fervour that he was seen to levitate, and the room in which he was praying sometimes lit up.

He once found an aged beggar in the street and brought him back to the convent and put him into his own bed, and when someone reproved him, he replied that charity is greater than hygiene. The plague arrived in Lima and Martin brought so many sufferers back that the Prior forbade him to bring any more because of the risk of infection. When Martin found an Indian with a dagger wound in town he brought the man home, and incurred the displeasure of the Prior, to whom he responded: ‘Forgive me, Father, and tell me, because I had no idea that charity was less important than obedience, so the Prior released him to do as he felt inspired to do in charity.

Such was his reputation for charity that people sought him out for spiritual counsel, unusual at the time for a lay brother; but even his own brothers appointed him their spiritual leader.

He died of a violent fever in 1639, and so many pieces were cut from his habit while his body was being exhibited that it is said that he went through three habits.

Martin is Patron Saint of Peru and Mexico, and of mixed- race people, barbers, health workers and many more constituencies. He was a friend of Rose of Lima.

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WILLIAM TEMPLE 1881-1944] WAS BORN INTO THE PURPOLE at Lambeth Palace, his father being Frederick Temple, serving as Archbishop of Canterbury at the time.

He was educated at Rugby, and exhibitioner at Baliol College, Oxford in 1901; fellow of Queens College in 1904; ordained in 1908; headmaster of Repton School in 1910; Rector of St James Piccadilly in 1914; Canon of Westminster Abbey in 1919; Bishop of Manchester in 1921, Archbishop of York in 1929, and finally in 1942 a mere 2 years, in rather poor health, as Archbishop of Canterbury.

Writing in an old edition of the SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality, Alec Vidler, a famous liberal Christian of the succeeding generation states: ‘By general acclaim, he was both a great and a good man… endowed with a rich variety of talents and natural advantages … he was without any trace of pride or pomp … the attractiveness of his personality won him a host of friends wherever he went .. . he would have risen to the top of whichever field of endeavour he had chosen to enter.’

He had actually been a Philosophy Don at Oxford, and made a life-long friend of R H Tawney, another founding spirit of the welfare state. While still a layman he had interested himself in educational and social work, through the Workers Education Association, of which he was chair from 1908, and the Student Christian Movement. He was also among the leaders of the ‘Life and Liberty’ Movement, calling for a degree of autonomy for the C of E which was granted in the Enabling Act of 1919. In 1923 he became a member Chair in 1925] of the Archbishop’s Commission, which brought out the report ‘Doctrine in the Church of England in 1938.

It was as Bishop of Manchester that his pastoral skills and concerns came to national attention, but as Archbishop of York he became a prominent national and international figure, particularly attracting the young, as lecturer, preacher, missioner and author, besides regular radio broadcasting. He never affiliated himself with any religious or political parties, although in 1926 he attempted, without success, to mediate in the general strike.

In 1941 he presided over the Malvern Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship, described as a seminal discussion on all contemporary social needs. He also gave support to the Faith & Order, and Life and Work Movements.

He is best remembered, perhaps, as one of the principal drivers of the Ecumenical Movement, with conferences in Birmingham [1924], Jerusalem [1928] and Edinburgh & Oxford in 1939. He was assisted by Cardinal Hindsley and the Moderator of the Free Church council in the issue of a statement of principles that should guide a post-war settlement, and negotiated for the setting up of the World Council of Churches.

His other major and, hopefully, his most lasting achievement was as one of the founding spirits behind the Beveridge Report and the post-war Welfare state.

Vidler continues: ‘He was in constant demand as chair of conferences and commissions, because of his ability to sympathise with any number of different points of view, and his ability to harmonise and synthesise conflicting claims. He was always in pursuit of truth, and his interests were so wide that it was impossible to label him in any pigeon-hole, but that to the end of his life he was trying to come to terms with new ideas and disconcerting developments. His prophetic gifts were most notably to the fore in his leadership of the Christian social conscience.’

Author of several important books, very often based on lecture series, were influential, but his spirituality is best discerned in his ‘Readings in St John’s Gospel’, [1939] which is still in print and worth reading.

Writing of his limitations, Vidler suggests that ‘He himself was so integrated a personality and so unshaken a believer that he could not really sympathise with the scepticisms that perplex and bewilder many minds, including Christian minds; and that his innate goodness and kindness caused him to judge other people much too benevolently, and that he found it hard, and perhaps did not much try, to cultivate the stringency and severity that are also required in Christian leaders.’

It is generally agreed that his early death prevented him from fulfilling everything that had been expected of him in the office of Archbishop of Canterbury.

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WILLIBRORD represents the first of three generations who travelled from England to evangelise those parts of the present Netherlands and Germany whose rulers were still pagans during the 8th century.

It is important to emphasize the part England played during the early middle ages in educating and evangelising Europe. In these articles reference is often made to the Venerable Bede, and Aldhelm and Alcuin have been featured in their own right. Because Anglo-Saxon England is hardly ever dealt with in detail on school curricula, not to mention the early middle ages generally, it is all too easy to overlook a period when English men and women were being sent out as missionaries with no ulterior motive other than to actually spread the Gospel. Whilst the liberal Christians today are likely to have justifiable reservations about the nature of our missions outside Europe in recent centuries, it is encouraging to realise that, particularly in the 8th century, men and women underwent hardship and often put themselves in harm’s way purely to pass on the good news. This endeavour was assisted by the sense that Anglo-Saxons shared much in common with those parts of Europe – mainly speakers of Teutonic languages, from which their ancestors had originated.

Frequent mention has been made of the Venerable Bede, largely because most of what we know about English church history comes from his book; but he wrote many other Christian treatises which found their way all over Europe, as far afield as what is now Russia. Even before the arrival of Alcuin of York at the court of Charlemagne English Christianity and learning had spread and made its mark.

The fact that most of western Europe remained affiliated with the Roman church, until the reformation is, for better or worse, down to English missionaries. Bede and Alcuin hailed from Northumbria; Willibrord from Mercia, and Boniface from Wessex, but, particularly thanks to Augustine and Theodore in the 6th 7th century, and Wilfrid in the 8th, England’s connections with Rome were consolidated in face of Celtic and Byzantine influence, and English missionaries in parts of northern Europe played a significant part in consolidating Catholic Christendom.

So WILLIBROARD of NORTHUMBIRA is honoured as the apostle to the Netherlands. He was born into a devoutly Christian family of the minor nobility and sent to Ripon to be educated, and from there, Wilfred organised him a place in an Irish monastery where he spent 12 years; and it was from Ireland that he sailed in 690, after the recent failure of Wilfred’s ministry to the Netherlands, that he and 11 companions landed on the coast of Frisia. He headed for an old Roman fort at Utrecht: in 620 the Merovingian ruler had given the Bishop of Cologne a chapel there for use as a missionary base, but nothing had come of it

On his arrival at court Willibrord encountered a thoroughly disordered church and state: the aristocracy were out of control, and Pepin, the chief minister, was out for himself and had the king under his thumb. The church, such as it was, had become more or less autonomous, so it suited Pepin to ally himself with Willibrord’s Roman-orientated mission in order to assert Frankish hegemony over pagan neighbours, and to affect a P R coup with the Pope as a lever against the established church and its political allies. Pepin had recently subdued the pagan Prince Radbot, who was left simply waiting for his chance to get his territory back. Bede treats Pepin with some reverence because of the assistance he gave Willibrord’s mission, without realising his rather less creditable motives. Meanwhile the Frisians were not over-enthusiastic about Christianity, which they saw as a symbol of Radbot’s subjection to the Franks which he, in turn, bitterly resented.

With Pepin having given the mission a fair wind, Willibrord’s next job, in 696 was to travel to Rome in order to be consecrated Archbishop. In the long term Pepin had played his cards brilliantly, because, having positioned himself and his dynasty as allies of Rome, within 60 years it was one of his descendant, Pepin III whose son was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800. Meanwhile Willibrord had returned with relics for the new churches to be erected.

During his time Willibrord saw to the foundation of many churches and monasteries, and the cathedral at Utrecht. On his return, however, another member of the party had been created bishop, so, rather than falling out, the new bishop was sent elsewhere to extend the mission.

Willibrord now moved to Antwerp, still under the aegis of Pepin, but with potential danger from neighbouring Franks, it was time for Frisia to be made a province of the church in its own right, so that Willibrord travelled once more to Rome, this time to be made Archbishop and to be named Clement, which gave him additional prestige. On his return Pepin gave him the fortress of Utrecht as his archepiscopal palace and an old church within the ancient Roman walls became his cathedral. His reputation in England grew, with Wilfred considering Willibrord’s mission as a fulfilment of his own work.

Pepin gave Willibrord some land at Echternach in present-day Luxemburg where he founded a monastery in 700: he is buried there in the church that bears his name. There is a story that at one visitation Willibrord found that the cellar was almost empty, so he dipped his staff into the barrel before he left, and the steward discovered it full on his return. There is a C17 picture of the saint with his wand, standing among the barrels.

Next Willibrord extended his mission to Heligoland and even into Denmark, [but evidently not far enough in view of later developments from there!]

Such was his standing in the Frankish kingdom that Willibrord was chosen to baptise the son of Pepin’s illegitimate and ambitious son, Charles Martel, who became known as Pepin the Short, father of Charlemagne himself.

When Pepin eventually died in 714, civil war broke out and Radbot, the displaced pagan prince, took his revenge and drove Willibrord and the Christians out of his territory. Willibrord retired to Echternach, but in 719 Charles Martel wrested power for himself and with the death of Radbot in the same year, new opportunities for Christian mission opened up, and at age 60, Willibrord returned. It was at this point that Winfrith Boniface of Crediton, arrived on the scene to assist. Boniface, of course, went on to the German lands to extend Willibrord’s work even further.

What is fascinating here is how God writes straight with crooked lines. Pepin’s motives were about as devious and self-serving as possible, and yet, not only was he able to bring about all this good, but to indirectly put Charlemagne on the Imperial throne, with all the spread of learning and the important reforms in the church that his reign brought about.

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**THE SAINTS AND MARTYRS OF ENGLAND**

COMMENT

WHY?

Robert Atwell is perfectly right to point out that since the coming of Christianity to England, probably in the 4th century, people have ‘shone like beacons’ in witness to the Lord, in lives of holiness and occasional self-sacrifice: quite so: we might think of Alban, who is probably the earliest example we know, but the calendar we’ve been following includes saints from everywhere, though principally Europe. Atwell rightly points out that Anglicans have, in fact, included many peoples all over the world other than the English.

One issue that never seems to occur anywhere in our consciousness at any time is the immense damage the institutional church and its representatives and followers have often perpetrated, in taking it for granted that our example of piety and sound doctrine is such that we can feel entitled to weaponise it against other peoples of faith and no faith: we might think of poor Sundar Singh expected to evangelise Indians of all religions armed with Moody and Sanky hymns, Cranmer’s Common Prayerbook and the King James Bible! Thank God for monks such as the late John Maine who went out to India and humbly learned from age-old traditions that they have brought back into our church. Thank God, also, that, largely since World War II, our best theologians have come to realise how much we can learn from the Jews in particular, and other faiths in general.

There is a story told by a preacher who lived in Ethiopia, where a church has been established rather longer than the C of E: members of another denomination were seeking to establish their own version of church in the country, and, inevitably, some ‘gave up’ their lives and the responsibility for obsequies for one of these fell to an Orthodox priest, who needed to check with his bishop whether it was permitted for him to bury this poor fellow’s remains: ‘You can bury as many of them as you like[!]’ was the reply.

There is a wonderfully thought-provoking novel by the Japanese writer Shusako Endo, entitled ‘Silence,’ translated by the Jesuit William Johnston, who has spent most of his life in Japan. It deals with the dilemma of one priest caught up in the Japanese persecution of Catholics in C17, and discusses in depth, though very succinctly, many of the issues we take for granted when asked to ‘celebrate’ saints and martyrs.

What is the church for? At H I most Sundays we hear thoughtful and inclusive intercessions that don’t confine their intentions to England, and if we read, or, better still, follow the suggestions for prayer in the daily biddings in Common Worship it seems more likely that we would be pleasing God and walking in step with our Lord, who, after all, had, himself, to expand his ministry when he encountered the Syrophoenician woman in Mark’s Gospel, and the Samaritan woman in John.

We’ve done All Saints: months ago we did the Saints & Martyrs of England during the reformation, and on the 2nd of November we celebrated the Faithful Departed, presumably having overlooked those few words in the formal intercessions that asks us to pray for ‘those whose faith is known to you alone.’

Perhaps in years to come we’ll be instructed to pray for ‘The English who gave their lives during the Covid pandemic!!!’ Thank God our faithful intercessors know better!

As an exercise in thoughtful intercessions, we might choose to search and pray for saints and martyrs we can think of elsewhere than in the tradition we Anglicans share very largely with the adherents of other European versions of Christian faith.