

Pusey House Recollection Lectures Hilary 2018

3.30pm Tea and Coffee, Hood Room

4pm Lecture, Ursell Room

24th Jan

Bonaventure as an interpreter of the Bible, the sources of his approach, and its significance.

Douglas Dales, Parish priest in the diocese of Oxford who was for many years Chaplain of Marlborough College. The title of his most recent book is Divine Remaking: St Bonaventure and the Gospel of Luke

St Bonaventure lived at the same time as St Thomas Aquinas and they both taught in Paris. In 1257 he became Minister General of the Franciscans, whose ministry of preaching was spread far and wide across Europe. Bonaventure had to unite this disparate movement and provide for the education in theology of young Franciscans emerging from the new universities of Paris, Bologna, Oxford and elsewhere. His outstanding commentary on St Luke's gospel was designed to assist the preaching ministry of the Franciscans and to establish the ethos of their movement in faithfulness to the vision of St Francis. It distils the rich tradition of monastic 'lectio divina' with a strong pastoral and spiritual application to the work of evangelism and Christian discipleship. It reveals Bonaventure's extensive knowledge of the Bible and his ability to convey the message of the Gospel with great clarity and insight. Bonaventure died while at the second Council of Lyons in 1274. Bonaventure is less well known than Aquinas, whose theology came to dominate Catholicism for many centuries; but like Aquinas, he is also a doctor of the Church and a towering spiritual teacher.

Revd Douglas Dales's most recent book is *Divine Remaking: St Bonaventure and the Gospel of Luke*. The provisional title of his next book will be *Journey back to God: the spiritual theology of St Bonaventure*. He has also written other books in theology and early medieval history.

7th February

The Fall and Original Sin: An Orthodox View

Andrew Louth, Professor Emeritus of Patristic and Byzantine Studies in the Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University, and Rector of the Orthodox Parish of St Cuthbert and St Bede, Durham.

Belief in the Fall is something shared by all Christians. Original sin is a Western coinage; the nearest Orthodox equivalent is 'ancestral sin' (τὸ προπατερικὸν ἁμάρτημα). What is the difference? Original sin is thought of, since Augustine, as some kind of inherited taint; ancestral sin is rather a recognition that the damaged state of the world and society cannot be simply put down to our personal sins—we live in a world already damaged by the accumulated sin of the past. Behind this difference lies a different estimate of the Fall: for the West the Fall is manifest in an overwhelming tendency to sin; for the Orthodox, the Fall has resulted in a damaged cosmos, subject to death and corruption, which in turn damages our resistance to sin. It is this that explains the approaches of Catholic and Orthodox to Mary's sinlessness. For Catholics her sinlessness is explained by her immaculate conception, free from original sin; the Orthodox also

affirm Mary's sinlessness, but see this as a result of her constant struggle against sin, including ancestral sin, in which she was permanently open to God's grace.

21st Feb

Longing for Health: Richard Rolle and the Medieval Medicine of Words.

Dr Daniel McCann, Simon and June Li Fellow in English Literature, Lincoln College

Richard Rolle (c.1300–49), an extremely influential English hermit and religious writer, was certainly not a medical doctor. Yet, this fact often results in a form of critical misapprehension which views Rolle's use of medical language as simply rhetorical ornament or flourish. As this talk will demonstrate, when Rolle asserts that his Psalter commentary is a 'medicynne of words', he is not being arch or superficially clever. Rather, he is drawing upon widespread cultural understandings regarding the very definition of health, and the medicinal potential of the act of reading itself. Therapy comes in many forms, and is here figured by Rolle as a textually mediated treatment of emotional extremes: to read the Psalter will cause the reader to oscillate between emotional states of great intensity. It is, of course, an understanding of reading common to the entire historical period and to Medieval England in particular. This talk will explore the therapeutic understanding of religious writing with specific reference to Rolle's *Meditation on the Passion A*. It will first look at a range of religious texts to see how they articulate the medicinal function of emotion. It will then explore medieval theories of grammar to clarify the relationship between reading and emotional response, before returning to close reading of *Meditation A* – a text which aims to purge the soul of its poisonous affects by evoking pity, fear, sorrow, and longing for the crucified Christ.

7th March

Is Christ's beatific vision defensible today?

Fr Simon Gaine OP, Regent of Blackfriars, Oxford, and a member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford. He is the author of Did the Saviour See the Father? Christ, Salvation and the Vision of God, and of Will There Be Free Will in Heaven? Freedom, Impeccability and Beatitude.

Did Jesus enjoy the beatific vision of God on earth that Christians hope to enjoy only in heaven? The answer commonly given by Catholic theologians to this question underwent a dramatic shift in the middle of the 20th century. Previously there had been a general unanimity based on the teaching of Thomas Aquinas that the answer was 'Yes': the earthly Christ did indeed possess heavenly knowledge. The theological situation was then radically altered to one where the answer 'No' became predominant. Theologians preferred to treat Christ's knowledge in terms of self-consciousness, ordinary human knowing, faith, prophecy and mysticism, not the beatific vision. This talk will consider the reasons why theologians abandoned Aquinas's thesis, arguing it has been too easily dismissed. Considering the evidence of Scripture and Tradition, and then moving from Christ's extraordinary knowledge through his ordinary knowledge, to his will, emotions and bodily life, the book sketches an outline of the extraordinary Saviour God has in fact given us and who is indeed the Saviour humanity truly needs, a Saviour with beatific knowledge, and who in this respect is very unlike us indeed.