





The inside of the restored St Ethelburga's.

Unless religion is willing to acknowledge that it is part of the problem [when it comes to violence] it cannot also become part of the solution." (*Speaker from Corrymeela community*)

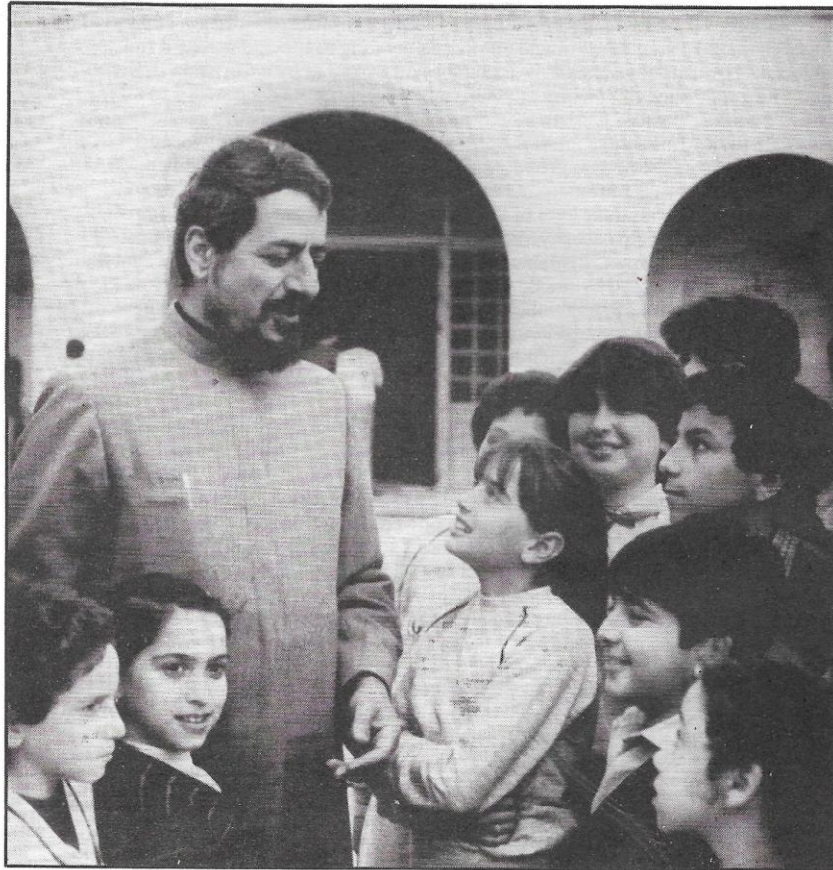
We should address the question of religion and violence, but from a particular angle. We should not do so from a defensive perspective and above all not lift our banners or slogans with the ideals of our religions. It is true that Islam is literally the religion of peace. It is true that *Om Shanti, shantihi* is the emphatic Vedic blessing. It is true that Jesus greeted people with the gift of peace, 'Peace be upon you'. It is true that there is an absolute emphasis on compassion and *ahimsa* in Buddhism. It is true that Judaism has given the world the word and concept *shalom*. It is true that in many cases, based on their ideals, religions seek to contribute to building peace. However, we know that they are also involved in situations of violent confrontation. There is, in the religious field, a surprising coexistence of love and violence, of affirmation of inclusiveness and practices of regrettable exclusion. Religions are more than often related to the powers that be, which seem to provide the legitimisation for violence. There are groups within our religious families who seem to need violence to affirm their own beliefs. We cannot run away from the effect of religious language such as 'Onward Christian soldiers', and acts such as the Crusades, the Holocaust or apartheid. We cannot run away from the role of religion in the caste system. We cannot run away from the blasphemy law in Pakistan or Baruch Goldstein in Israel. We have to ask the penetrating question about the role of religion in violence. Religions are no innocent bystanders between Scylla and Charybdis." (*Hans Ucko*)



“We need to reflect on the ambivalent function of religions in our world, to make an effort to clarify the different roles of religions in relation to violence.”
(Hans Ucko)



Who are these Lebanese Christians?



by the Rev Alan Amos



“You can’t be a real Christian because if you were a real Christian you would have known that God had given this land to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and you would have got up and left the country.” (*Western tourist confronting Najwa c. 1977*)

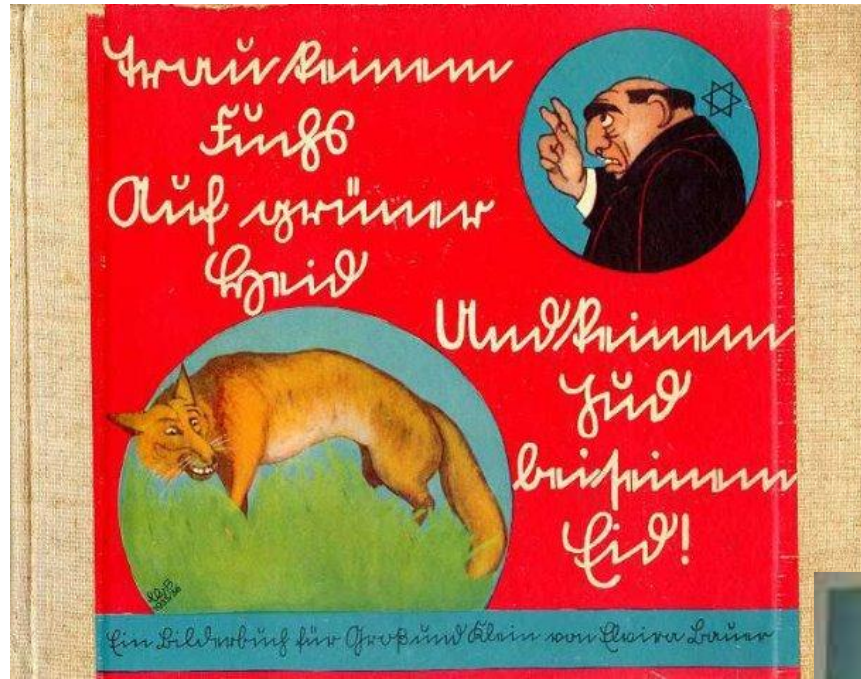
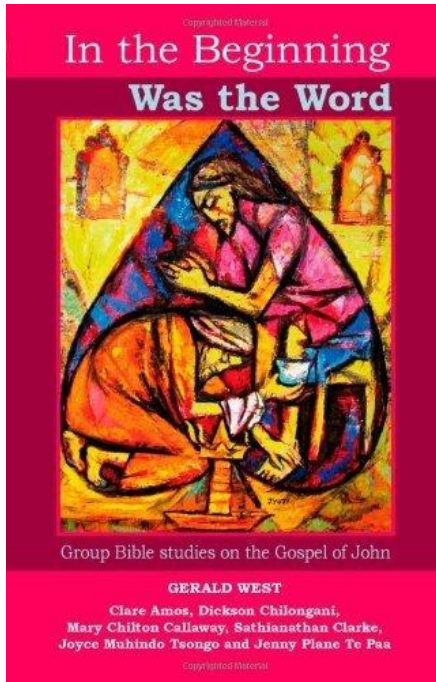
Najwa Farah



Bishop Hassan Dehqani-Tafti and family

•O God, we remember not only Bahram but also his murderers;
... because through their crime we now follow thy foot- steps
more closely in the way of sacrifice...
It makes obvious as never before our need to trust in God's love
as shown in the cross of Jesus and his resurrection;
Love which makes us free from hate towards our persecutors; ...
Love which more than ever deepens our trust in God's final victory and his eternal designs for the Church and for the world....
Love which teaches us how to prepare ourselves to face our own day of death.
O God, Bahram's blood has multiplied the fruit of the Spirit in the soil of our souls;
so when his murderers stand before thee on the Day of Judgment,
remember the fruit of the Spirit by which they have enriched our lives.

And Forgive... (Hassan Dehqani-Tafti, A Father's Prayer Upon the Murder of his Son)



Cover and extract from children's book titled, 'The father of the Jews is the devil' published in Germany c. 1935

Lambeth Conference Bible Studies

Jesus said, 'You are from your Father the devil' (*John 8.44*)





Asia Bibi



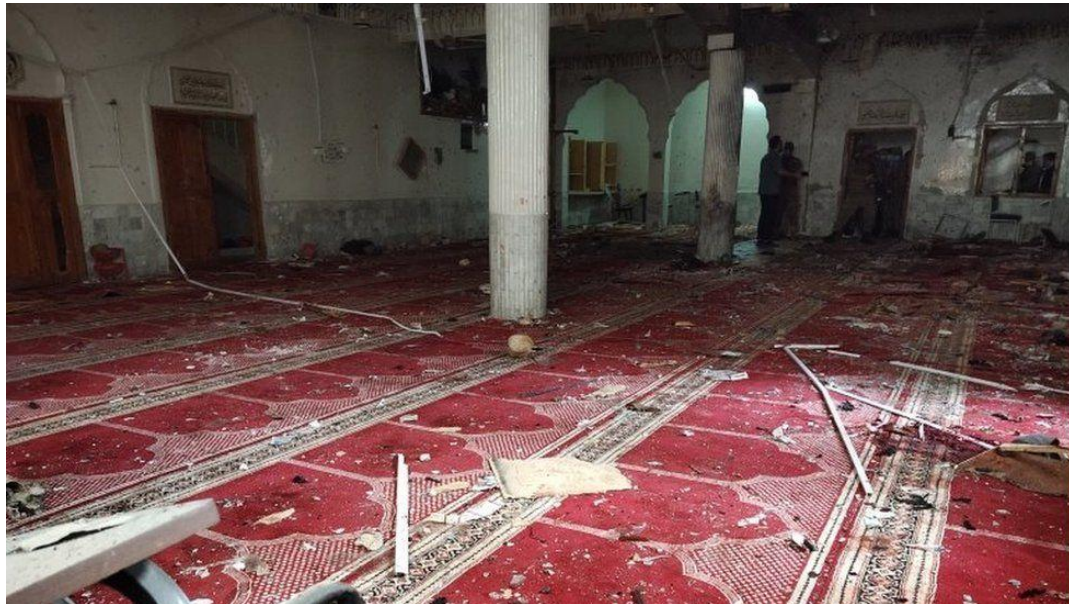
Saleem Taseer

Shahbaz Bhatti





Attack on the Church (above left)
and the Mosque (below left) –
both linked to religiously
motivated violence.



All Saints Church, Peshawar)

two, it continued with four 17-year olds, on the bare bottom
use it leaves less evidence) but was voluntarily accepted as
asturbation. Beatings varied from a dozen to 40 strokes.
ures I quote what they have told me, in every case taking th
e were technically all criminal offences under the Offences
of 1861, Sec.47.

BLEEDING FOR JESUS

re always seen as good by operators and participants - the
young Christian men, and the blessings of fatherly discipl
but cannot really understand it. Prayer, praise and loving
ern in Christ's name were evident at every point. There was
evidence of overt sexual excitement or interference. But th
describes it as suppressed masochistic sexual activity (or sa
e operator).

John Smyth and the cult of Iwerne camps

severity of the practice was horrific. Five of the 13 I hav
y for a short time. Between them they had 12 beatings and
The other 8 received about 14,000 strokes; 2 of them having
over the three years. The others were involved for one
spoke of bleeding on most occasions ('I could feel



ANDREW GRAYSTONE

There was
making a
pressure, and
ed that the list should be shared. Then there would be men
to be had through this system and a fair amount of pressure
e the best, don't you? Let me be a helper to you ...") and
visit. At this stage the beating was often thought of as

The scale and severity of the practice was horrific. Five of the 13 I have seen were in it only for a short time. Between them they had 12 beatings and about 650 strokes. The other 8 received about 14,000 strokes: 2 of them having some 8,000 strokes over the three years. The others were involved for one year or 18 months. 8 spoke of bleeding on most occasions ('I could feel the blood splattering on my legs' - 'I was bleeding for 3½ weeks' 'I fainted sometime after a severe beating'). I have seen bruised and scored buttocks, some two-and-a-half months after the beating. Beatings of 100 strokes for masturbation, 400 for pride, and one of 800 strokes for some undisclosed 'fall' are recorded. The beatings were with garden canes with some sort of a handle. S [Simon Daggart, Smyth's young accomplice], wanting 'to be the best for God' beat as hard as he could [with a garden cane].



A year or so ago 'training' beatings of some 75 strokes every 3 weeks were instituted, as being better than only going down after a 'fall', though these persisted. One told me he was receiving beatings at least every 4/5 days one vacation. The custom of semi nakedness gave way to complete nakedness 'to increase humility'. For training beatings a man undressed himself, for 'falls' he submitted to being undressed by the operator [all classic characteristics of sexual sadism].

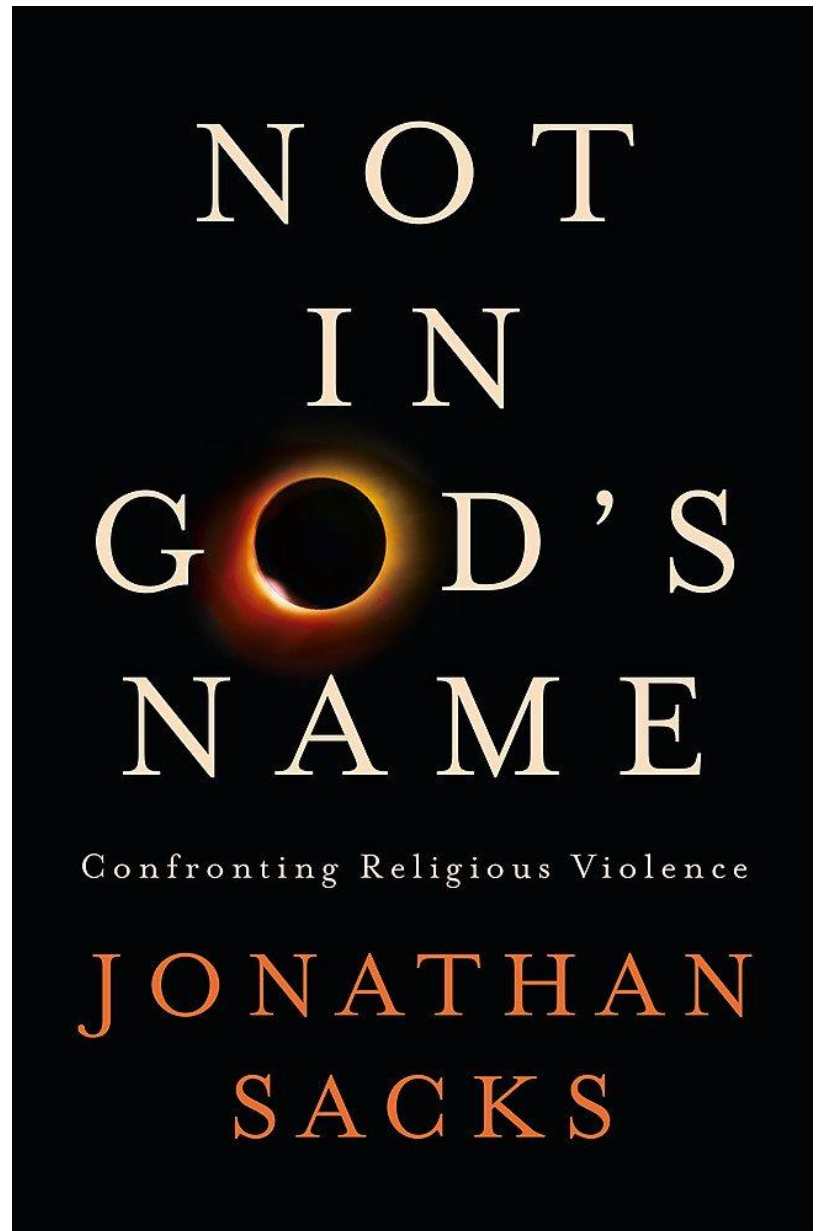
Scriptures used commonly were: Hebrews xii.5-11, 2 Samuel vii.13, St Luke xii.47 and many 'spare the rod' and 'fathers and sons' verses in Proverbs.

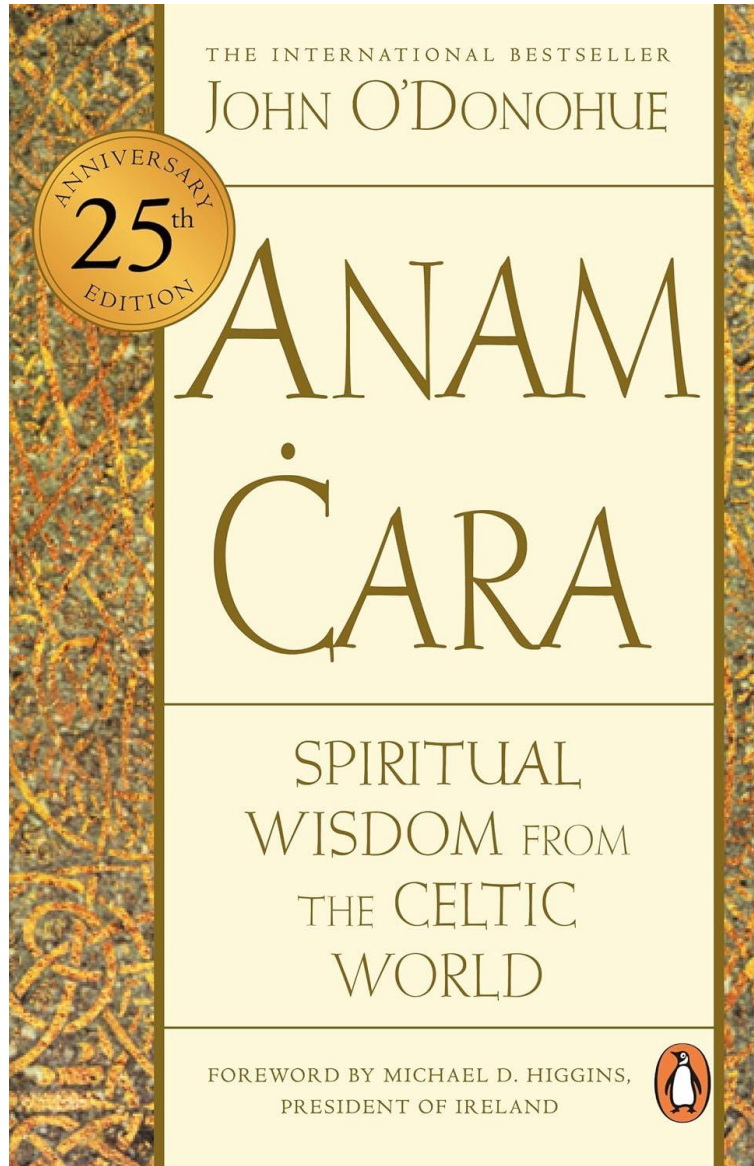
- The role that scriptural texts and their interpretation can play in such violence.
- The fact that religiously motivated violence can be intra-religious, for example between Sunni and Shia Muslims, or Protestants and Roman Catholics, as well as interreligious, for example between Muslims and Christians
- The way that verbal violence, as well as physical, can be dangerous, indeed one can easily lead to the other.
- The way that the targets of religiously motivated violence can include the members of one's own religious community, or even family.
- The reality that Christians have been guilty of religiously motivated violence, indeed still are in some parts of the world, as well as being victims of it.
- The way that our theology can be a factor in justifying the use of violence. I am thinking particularly of the Christian history of antisemitism, or the story of John Smyth and his victims.
- The fact that religiously motivated violence can be entwined with nationalism or economic concerns.

“Unless religion is willing to acknowledge that it is part of the problem [when it comes to violence] it cannot also become part of the solution.”



Never say, I hate, I kill, because my religion says so. Every text needs interpretation... Religions, especially religions of the Book, have hard texts: verses, commands, episodes, narratives, that if understood literally and applied directly would not merely offend our moral sense. They would also go against our best understanding of the religion. There are many examples in the Hebrew Bible.
(Jonathan Sacks).

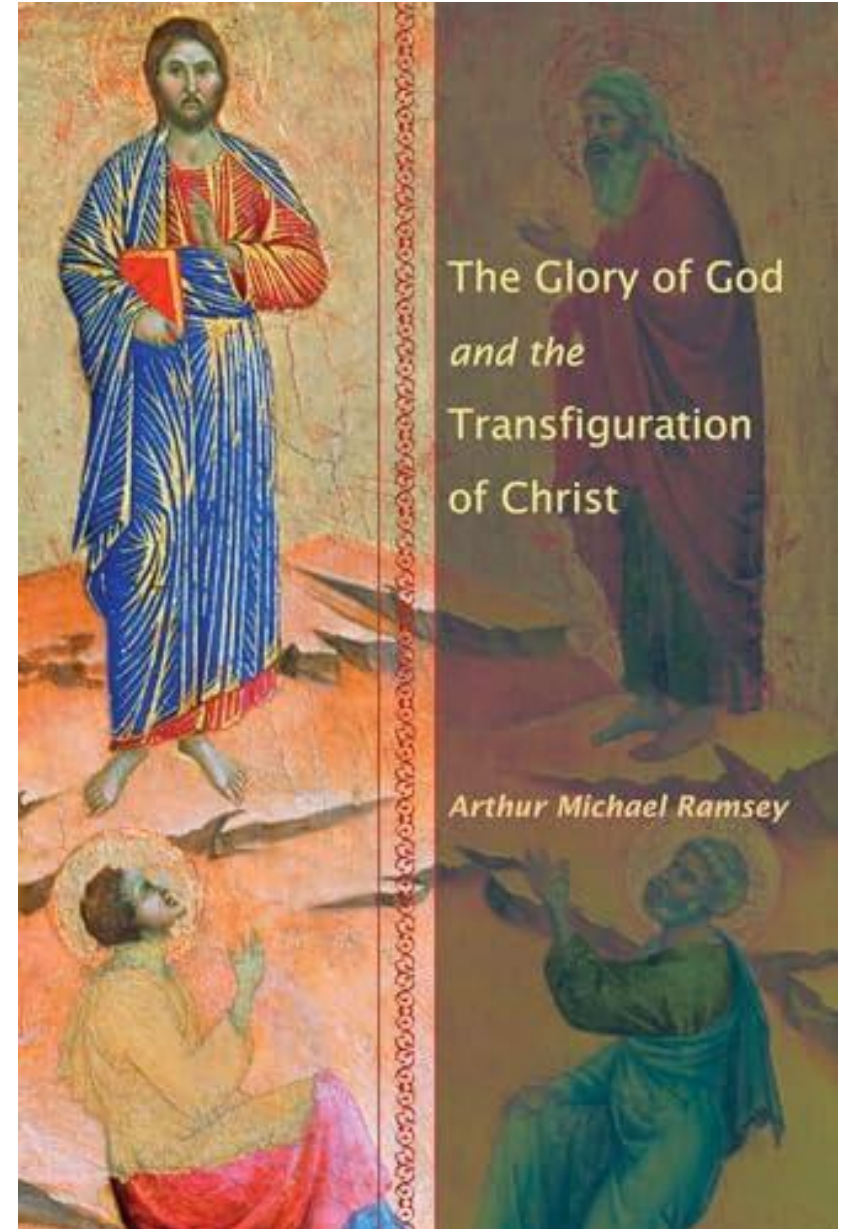




Spirituality is 'the art of transfiguration'

(John O Donahue)

‘The transfiguration ‘stands as a gateway to the saving events of the gospel, and is a mirror in which the Christian mystery is seen in its unity. Here we perceive that the living and the dead are one in Christ, that the old covenant and the new are inseparable, that the Cross and the glory are of one, that the age to come is already here, that our human nature has a destiny of glory, that in Christ the final word is uttered and in him alone the Father is well pleased. Here the diverse elements in the theology of the New Testament meet.’ *(Michael Ramsey)*



‘Transfiguration into the future surely must have some semblance of having had a tradition. Transfiguration does not do away with what is, it changes one’s perception of it, heightens it, enables it to be something revered, not in a magical sense, but with true awe.’ *(Martin Eggleton)*

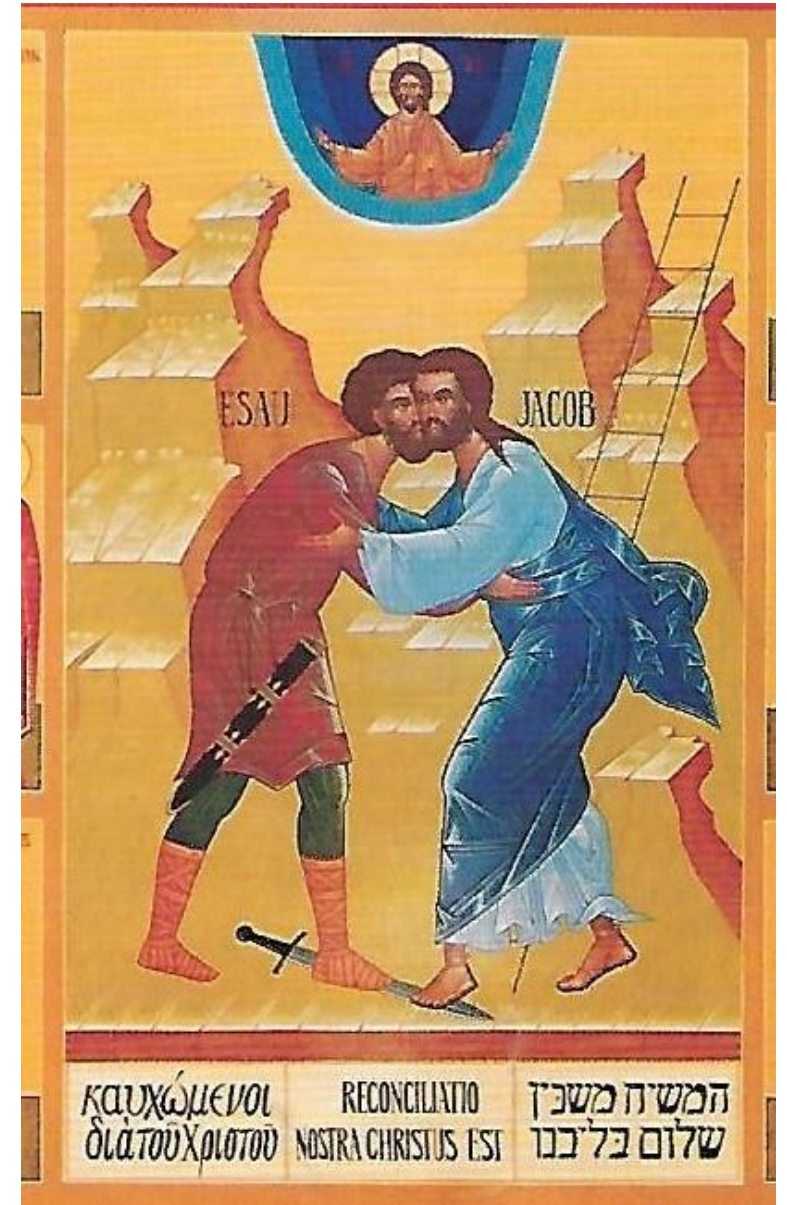
‘We all with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transfigured into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit *(2 Corinthians 3.18)*

The transfiguration ‘is the meeting-place between human beings and God, between the temporal and the eternal, between past, present and future, between everyday human life – with all its hopes and fears – and the mystery of God.
(Dorothy Lee)

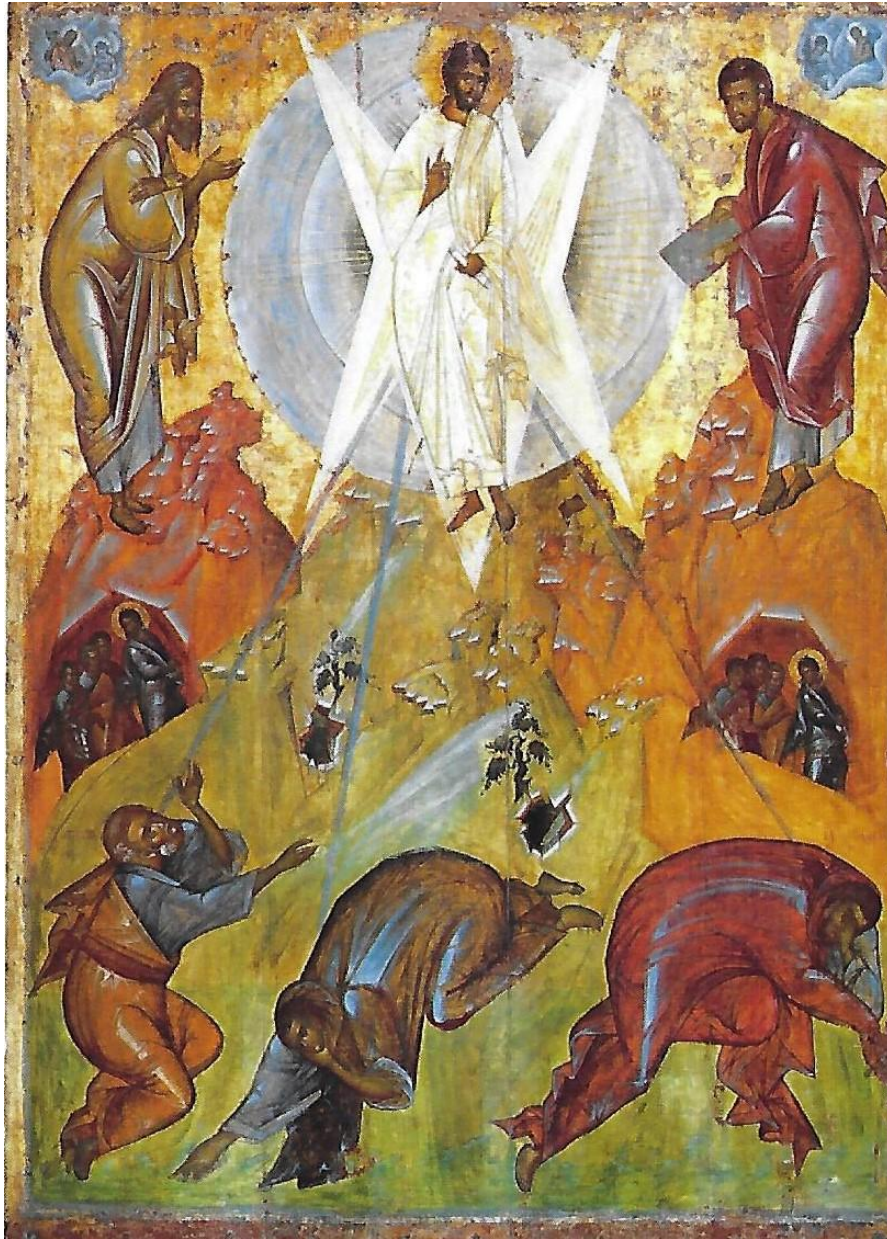


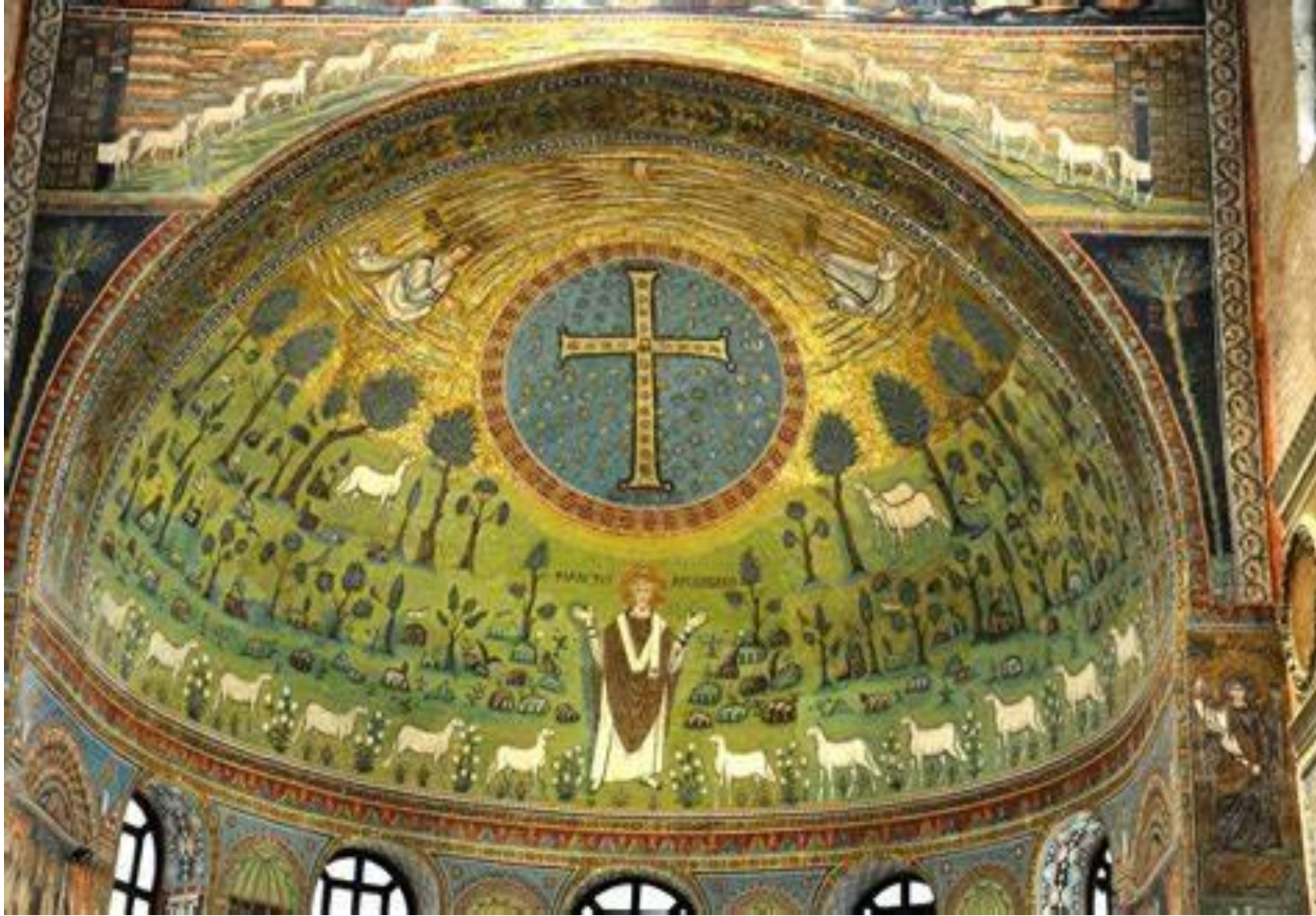
'Your face is like the
 face of God to me,
 with such
 graciousness you
 have received me'
(Genesis 33.10)

Pax Christi Icon of
 reconciliation



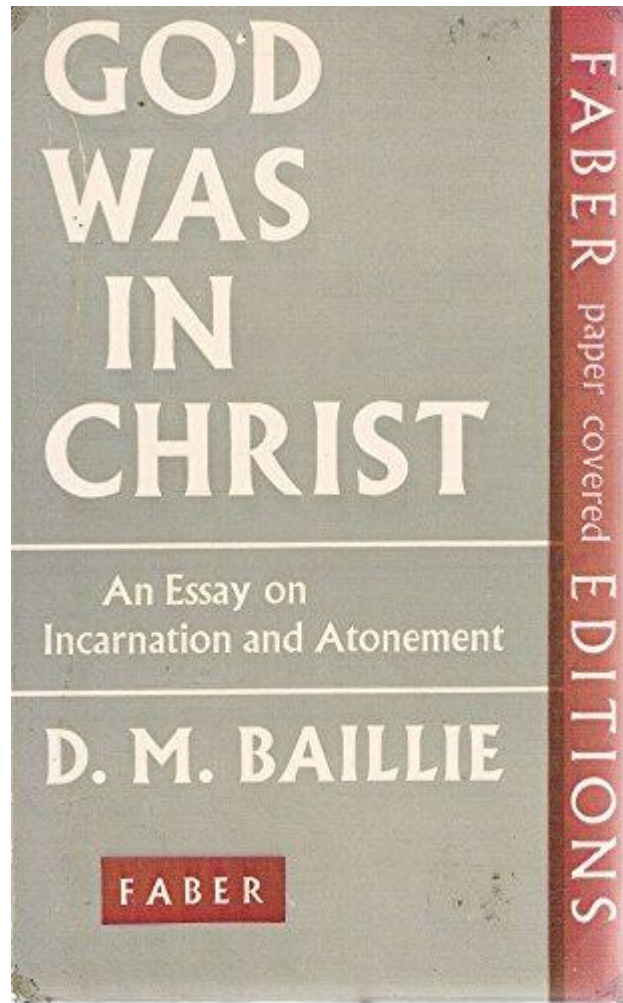
Classic icon of the
transfiguration by
Theophanes the
Greek





Mosaic of
transfiguration,
Ravenna





The Scottish theologian Donald Baillie reflected that the incarnation is 'the supreme paradox'. He also suggested that for a religious tradition not to allow for paradox is problematic and 'that most of the great [Christian]heresies arose from an undue desire for simplification, an undue impatience with mystery and paradox, and an endeavour after a common-sense theology.

‘The Cross is a tree set on fire with invisible flame which illumineth all the world. The flame is love.’ (*Centuries of Meditations*, Thomas Traherne) ...

The way that the figure on the tree which represents the cross almost disappears into the background, gives us a sense that what the Crucifixion is about is almost the ‘dissolution of God’. It is as though the concept of God is dissolved and remade. It is as if the Cross itself – and its occupant – are being dissolved for the sake of the beauty of the whole of creation, for its radiant life. In order to give radiance to the creation the creator accepts being at this ‘crux’ as vulnerable yet life-giving victim.

Window in Hereford Cathedral in honour of Traherne. Created by Tom Denny



*Come, holy fire of love
find in us your dwelling;
purge, refine
and then combine
all that is good to share
in loving care
for one another;
And may the fruit
of this holy tree
abide in us, for all eternity.*