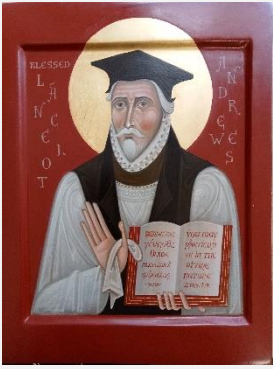


Issue 8:  
October 2023



For information about this icon – see Charles Miller's article on page 20 of Issue 7

This issue was shaped by:

Rob Rutherford  
Eluned Hallas  
Louise Heffernan

Ideas for future content to:  
Candle@  
abingdonparish.org.uk

Parish Office:  
St Helen's  
Court,  
Abingdon.  
OX14 5BS

Tel:  
01235 520144  
07395943957

E-mail:  
administrator  
@sthelens-  
abingdon.org.uk

A candle in...

THE

# WINDOW

*News and Views from the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames*

## Welcome

¡Bienvenidos! Soyez la bienvenue! स्वागतछ! Nnoṛ!

Ласкаво просимо! Benvenuti! Karibu! Barka da zuwa!

Kaabo! स्वागत! Willkommen! مرحباً Добро пожаловать!

Welkom! Croeso! いらっしやいませ! 欢迎! Powitanie!

These words of welcome greet visitors to St Helen's Church. In case you need a hint, the languages are:

Spanish, French, Nepali, Igbo,  
Ukrainian, Italian, Swahili, Hausa,  
Your, Hindi, German, Arabic, Russian,  
Dutch, Welsh, Japanese, Mandarin and Polish.

Our East European correspondent sends us Greetings in Czech and Hungarian

Czech – Dobrý den (formal) or Ahoj and Čau (informal)  
Hungarian – Jó napot (formal) or Szia (informal)

### In this issue:

...thoughts about harvest, about borders, about South Africa and India, a book review and a puzzle to test your geography etc.

In compiling this edition, we pay tribute to Peter Penfold who died on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October and who wrote of his love for Africa in past issues of this magazine

## Harvest and Healing

*Ruth Pyke*

*An edited version of a sermon preached at the Service of Healing and Health on September 24<sup>th</sup> 2023*

Our strange September heatwave has given way to more usual autumnal weather, chilly mornings and bright afternoons, trees are changing colour and the leaves are beginning to turn. We have sung of harvest, of seed time to harvest. Those who garden may have harvested vegetables and fruits. As we celebrate the harvest, we try to acknowledge our reliance on God's gifts and the fruits of the creation, and give thanks for all that God gives us.

But increasingly there is another strand to harvest time, and that is to be reminded that not everyone shares equally in these gifts, and that all is not well with creation. Just this summer we have seen record heatwaves, wildfires in Europe; the devastating fire on the Hawaiian island of Maui, and torrential rain and flooding across the world. The Biblical explanation for the creation of the world reminds us that, in creating men and women, God has and does share responsibility for his creation. Responsibility to all that grows, responsibility to animals and a responsibility to the men and women with whom we share this beautiful world. And as we see the effects that global warming has had we have the responsibility to lament, and to pray for healing for God's world.

In the book of Revelation, there is a beautiful vision of a new heaven and a new earth. The picture we are given is that of a healed and renewed Garden of Eden - of the possibility of trees which constantly bear fruit, food for all in every season, with leaves to provide healing and with a river sparkling with crystal clear water, a place where no one will feel cursed but where all will know God and know that they are known and loved by him. A place of healing, a place of hope.

These words, along with some very strange visions were written by a Christian called John who was in exile on the island of Patmos. The theme of Revelation is that of a warning that there will be increasing conflict between faithful Christian living and its refusal to compromise with idolatry in any area of life. We might ask ourselves what are the idols of our present day? And perhaps in recent years it has been an attitude that we can have what we want at a knockdown price at the expense of others who are often far away and unseen. We are not alone in this, even St Augustine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century wrote, "humanity, preoccupied with its own... agenda has lost the capacity to contemplate the works of God." \*

Revelation's vision of a new creation, the reminder of St Augustine to contemplate the works of God, and even scientists today all encourage us to find some healing in nature. Taking time out in our parks, on our riverbanks and gardens and seeing the beauty of nature is good for our mental health. Quality of life has improved when the places where people live and work are re-greened! Plants have been used in medicine - aspirin, cancer drugs and others have all developed from the leaves of trees and plants. God blesses us physically and mentally through his creation.

But because we are a part of God's creation, dependent upon it and given responsibility for it, I suggest we should pray for the healing of the world. The world which God has given us and which we, the human race, have so badly damaged.

If we can be those who work for the new vision of God's kingdom - where rivers and waterways are clean and lifegiving, where trees and plants give food for all to share equally, where the world brings healing for all, we can bring hope and healing for the world. If we can be the people St Augustine has in mind - who are not so preoccupied with our own agenda that we forget to contemplate God's beauty, then we can be part of healing for the world.

Therein lies our hope for the future. Creation brings healing for ourselves, those we love and for the world. All through the Bible we are reminded that God made the world and he loves it - surely he will not abandon us even as we face this climate crisis. Each of us can do something - however small -

each of us can lament the damage that has been done, each of us can pray for the healing of creation - each of us can hold out the hope to others that one day the waters will again flow clear and clean, that even the bleakest places will be transformed by greenery and nature, that the world will cool and that men and women throughout the world will be able to share equally in all that God has given us.

\* *Augustine, Commentary on St John's Gospel 8.1.* It is referenced in "A Time for Creation" Liturgical Resources for Creation and the Environment published by Church House Publishing

## The Art of Prayer and Painting: the Harvest of a Sabbatical

*October 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 Report by Louise Heffernan; Photo courtesy of Laurie King*



A combined audience from the three churches was privileged to listen to Fr Paul talk about his sabbatical and how it had led to the development of his love for painting and his growing skills with watercolour. He brought along ten of his paintings which showed his flair for painting animals and landscapes. The talk was lively and engaging as he shared that he had enjoyed a rich time of sabbath when he was able to reflect on his life and ministry.

He explained how the time brought him the unexpected opportunity to give thanks for events and experiences, and not least people, even as far back as childhood. This led him to describe some of the challenges of living with a physical disability within the context of some people's assumptions within the wider church. The unexpected joy, spiritual impact and relaxation that art has brought him was clearly evident from all he said.

The talk was followed by tea and cake. Donations were made in aid of PACE, a charity which supports children with neurological conditions such as cerebral palsy, changing their lives and enabling them to take their place in the world.

Huge thanks to all who came and to those who helped set up and baked cakes.

## Borders

Lines scribbled across the globe,  
marking territories, preserving  
national identities, marking this land  
as our land, separating nations and  
communities.

Borders, sometimes easily crossed,  
other times, hostile barriers  
keeping outsiders out or residents in,  
generating suspicion and distrust.

And yet,  
swallows, alert to falling temperatures,  
observe no boundaries as they fly  
south in winter;  
Arctic terns enjoy total freedom  
as they fly from pole to pole;  
and sea creatures plunge deep  
in the oceans,  
unaware of territorial lines.

Despite our borders, fought over,  
changing and shifting,  
we are one world,  
the same sky, full of whirling stars  
and planets, lies over us all,  
the same life-giving sun brings light  
and warmth to all,  
and around the world the winds blow  
where they will.

We are all of the earth,  
our common humanity links each of us,  
friendships extend across borders,  
and love and compassion know no limits.

Susan Gee  
30 September 2023

## One World: Love makes the world go round

*Helen Owen*

"God is Love." 1 John 4 vs 16.

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Genesis 1 vs 27.

We come from Love, we are made by Love.

The Divine Love is behind the life that flows through the life of the variety of all nature.

We are absorbed in a world of variety; we see this when we observe the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms and none more so than in the human kingdom.

As human beings we share the commonality of all being made of the same "stuff" - body, mind and spirit. Yet despite the similarities we share, there are also countless differences - each one of us is completely unique. Each one of us made by God and loved deeply by Him and created for His purpose.

We are often in the habit of only seeing the external differences and distinctions of others and we fail to see the thread that binds us together. When we remember our true origin and that we are all members of God's humanity with God's spirit manifesting in us, the whole of life becomes communicative. We see everyone has a burden to carry through life and we cannot help but sympathise. We then reach out to our fellow man.

Jesus is clear in his teaching that Love is life's motivator and should be at the root of our relationships when he says, "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another." John 13 vs 34.

A difficult commandment to live up to but at moments when we do, then we discover that Loving is living!

Heavenly Father, we thank You that through love You created us. Increase our love for You and for others. Raise us above the distinctions and differences that divide us, and unite us all in Thy Perfect Being. Amen

## South Africa

*Margaret Horton*

How do you sum up a country five times the size of the UK with a population of 60 million in 700 words? In September this year I was lucky enough to spend three weeks in the South Africa - just scratching the surface. I saw what the tourists see - game drives in Kruger National Park, a glimpse of the Drakensberg mountains and the battlefields of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift, two days in Eswatini (former Swaziland) and ten days travelling from Cape Town eastwards along the coast through the winelands and old Boer settlements, around Cape Agulhas (the southernmost point on the continent), whale watching and admiring the acres of fynbos, the colourful shrubby heathland unique to this part of the world.

So, 'what was it like?' people have been asking me. Beautiful, empty, friendly and sad are some of the words that come to mind. We drove for miles in the NE without meeting other traffic, through vast open landscapes, edged with mountain ranges. Here, it was brown and hot, full of scrubland but few houses. Along the coast the landscape changed to green, purple and yellow, while the weather changed to cold and wet! It was springtime in the Cape area so we saw it at its most vibrant. The sea changed too, from a Mediterranean turquoise to grey to white as we encountered a storm surge and high spring tides which created meters high waves and left many areas flooded. (We were lucky not to be evacuated from one seaside hotel, but the restaurant got destroyed!)

But what about the people? Out of the many countries I have visited I think the people we met in South Africa were some of the most friendly, warm and smiling. But this is also where the word 'sad' comes in; the excitement and hope of the Mandela days have gone. Corruption in government has stymied growth and opportunity. Unemployment is running at 33%, the highest rate in the world, whilst youth unemployment is at a massive 61%. Energy shortages lead to daily power cuts. The first enquiry when we checked into a hotel was "What time is the load shedding (the electricity cuts)?" There is no obvious animosity between black and white but I began to realise that you very rarely see mixed families; the vast difference in wealth leads to lives lead very separately. We stayed in fine hotels, usually in the historic parts of towns but we didn't walk in the "real" life areas. I never felt unsafe but we were approached by people begging for food and riots are frequent. The month before we arrived in Swellendam in the Cape area (an apparently prosperous small town), rioters had burned down the council offices in protest against their mayor, and 60 were arrested. St. Lucia, on the east coast has guards at the gates of all points of entry into the town. Such unrest is hardly surprising when so many are on the breadline. Our leader asked us to give her the freebies of shampoo etc. from our hotel rooms so that she can give them to the men who go through her waste each week, picking out cans and bottles for which they can get a minute payment. If we had a take away box of food from a too generous dinner, this would be given to people begging at traffic junctions. The future for the country looks challenging but I just hope it will get the government it deserves and fairness will prevail.



To finish on a lighter note - some moments I will not forget: hippopotamuses coming into town at night time in St. Lucia to graze on the grass verges; discovering that zebras eat for 18 hours a day. (I assumed that when it got dark they went to sleep!!); learning that elephants sleep standing up; encountering a hyaena among the picnic tables at a restaurant enclosure in Kruger National Park (and also learning that one hyaena cub will become dominant and may well kill its sibling); and finally, watching an ostrich trying to impress his female

friend - impossible to put into words, but do watch David Attenborough's version on YouTube: [david attenborough ostrich mating](#)

And in case you are wondering, an ostrich's brain is smaller than its eye....



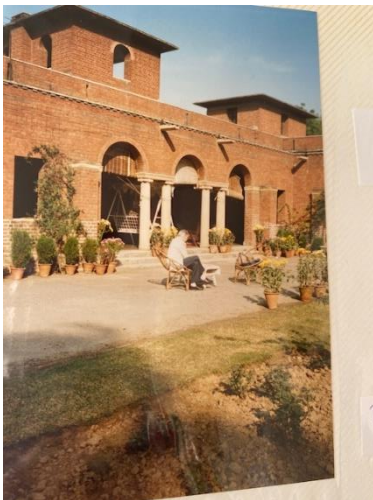
## India

*Marian Ward*

In 2020 the Church of England began its research into its historic links with transatlantic chattel slavery. I was interested to read that The University of Kent's School of History claims that the Church of England 'was deeply implicated in Europe's imperial expansion and colonialism...that it shared the origins and trajectories of Anglican Mission and Anglo colonialism'.

My own experience of the remnants of this colonial and missionary past was when I accompanied Keith on his lecture tour of India in 1989. We spent 3 weeks visiting academic institutions in Calcutta (Kolkata), Bangalore (Bengaluru) and Delhi where he gave the Teape Lectures. These are a prestigious series of lectures established at Cambridge University in 1955 to explore the relationship between Hindu and Christian thought. Keith's subject was 'Theism, European and Indian: Conflict or Convergence'.

Our first stop was at Bishop's College Calcutta (Kolkata) This was founded by the first Anglican Bishop of Calcutta in 1820 as a mission college, educating and training priests. The East India Act of 1813 had opened India to the arrival of missionaries but caution had been advised in proceeding with this not to offend the local population. In 1820 it was therefore still early days in Christian missionary activity in India. USPG, SPCK and the British and Foreign Bible Society provided the funds for the gracious colonial buildings which comprised the spacious grounds of the college still evident in 1989 though decaying from their former glory.

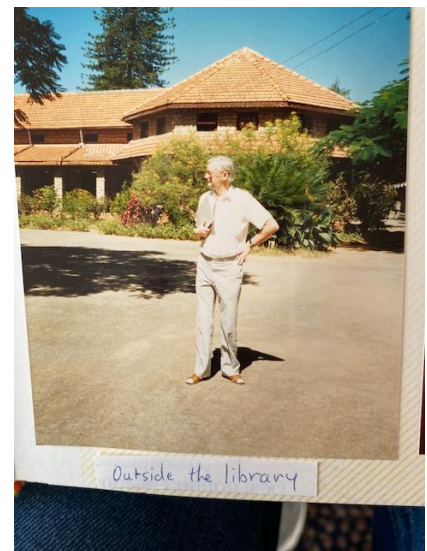


Even more caution was required in 1989. Post Independence, the Indian government was committed to secular nationalism and proselytising was frowned upon. Preaching in the local church, Keith could not begin with the usual benediction but had to say, 'I bring you greeting from your friends in England'. The college was continuing to train locals for priesthood including young men from Nagaland.

The college library housed in their archives the letters from those very first missionary teachers. Far from showing the church triumphant, it was clear they agonised over the consequences of their work. The students had spent 3 years in surroundings, which, even if spartan by European standards, were infinitely more comfortable than what they had grown up with. At the end of their time, it was clear that they were no longer content to go back to their villages to evangelise but expected their conversion and training would bring them greater opportunities. Not only that, but the letters revealed that the missionaries were aware that they would not survive a second 7 year tour of duty in India to return to England alive but dutifully set out after their sabbatical to continue their mission at the college; a far cry from the contemporary picture of the militant evangelist.

Our next stop was the United Theological College, Bangalore over 1,160 miles away (12000kms) and then called the Garden City of India and home of its expanding internet industry.

The college had been founded in 1910 by a combined initiative from the American Ascot Mission and the London Missionary Society with its chief aim to concentrate on Church Union. It is now the oldest graduate level Protestant theological college in India and an Ecumenical Seminary. By the time we arrived in 1989, the American influence dominated and the staff were somewhat bemused by having



to entertain a Cambridge academic for what they regarded as an archaic 'royal progress'.

Our final destination was St. Stephen's College Delhi in North India, a constituent college of the University of Delhi. This had been founded in 1881 by the Cambridge Brotherhood, a monastic establishment set up by the Cambridge Mission to Delhi (alumni of Cambridge University). The Brotherhood is now completely indigenised and continues to support the Leper Colony and work to protect the rights of the Dalit. The Cambridge Mission also founded St. Stephen's Hospital. The college had been named after St. Stephen the patron saint of Delhi after the first Christian martyrs in North India who had been stoned to death in the 1857 uprising.

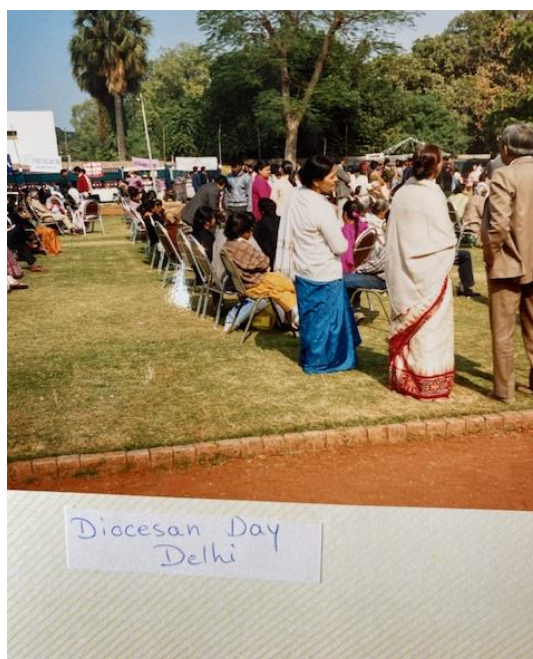
We were accommodated in the guest suite of the college and looked after by a servant who served us 'bed tea'. Indian hospitality is like the country itself, overwhelming. Suffering from the inevitable 'Delhi Belly', I was advised to eat curd (the local yoghurt). This arrived in a soup plate piled high, nicely crusted on top and swimming in a bright yellow liquid!

The old colonial houses were very evocative of the Raj in their cool but decaying splendour. Flush lavatories, pre 1947 still gushed forth generously but bathing was, at first, a little more perplexing, consisting of a series of galvanised buckets ranging in size from a child's seaside bucket to enormous Ali Baba bins. We resorted to throwing the water they held over each other. Even by 1989, the college was becoming distanced from its Christian origin but it's constitution still required its Head to be Christian. After a succession of Oxbridge educated Heads, the college had for the first time its first Dalit (Untouchable) Head; no more invitations to sherry in college engraved sherry glasses.



Travelling around India at the time it was clear that we were moving amongst a group of people who looked back on the Imperial past with some affection and nostalgia but our independent travels outside this community to Madras (Chennai), Mysore and Mamalabalapuram in South India brought us into contact with a much larger group who, though not hostile, showed an indifference and certain enjoyment in the role reversal of the British in India.

So, I think the Church's missionary past, though flawed was rather more complex than might be supposed. After all, great educational, humanitarian and medical institutions were set up by the Raj and many devoted Christians gave their lives to take the faith to India.





## Rebuilding Lives: The International Refugee Trust's Impact in the Middle East & Africa

By Rebecca Jackman

Amidst the turmoil conflict and displacement, of the Middle East and Africa, the International Refugee Trust (IRT), for over four decades, has been dedicated to transforming the lives of refugees and displaced families, leaving a lasting mark of resilience and hope. This article explores the remarkable work and impact of IRT and calls upon all of you to join in making a difference.

### Child Protection: Nurturing Hope Amidst Adversity

One of IRT's most critical missions in the Middle East and Africa is the protection and support of vulnerable children. In the midst of displacement and uncertainty, children are often the most affected. Through the Moyo Babies Home in northern Uganda, close to the border with South Sudan, IRT supports safe spaces, tailored to the unique needs of refugee babies abandoned in camps. Through these initiatives, the organisation provides the babies with a sense of normalcy, a chance to heal from trauma, and hope to a brighter future.

### Family Reunification: Restoring Bonds and Dignity

Torn apart from their loved ones due to conflict and displacement, countless children suffer the anguish of separation. Through our Redeemer Children's Home, also in Uganda, IRT's commitment to family reunification brings hope for many. Through painstaking efforts, IRT works to locate missing family members, facilitate communication, and ultimately reunite families separated by circumstances beyond their control. These reunifications are not just about reuniting individuals; they are about restoring dignity, love, and the feeling of home to many children, their families and communities.



*The babies in our children's home*

### Fostering Economic Independence:

Beyond immediate relief, IRT places a strong emphasis on helping refugees regain their economic independence. In collaboration with local partners within South Sudan, including the Comboni Primary School and the Rainbow HIV/AIDS project, IRT promotes vocational training programmes and livelihood support initiatives for youth. By equipping refugee youth with skills and resources, IRT not only helps to provide a way out of poverty, but also fosters a sense of self-reliance and dignity.



*Moyo Rose, a South Sudanese refugee, graduated from our vocational training programme in agrobusiness, entrepreneurship and communications and is currently in Belgium completing an internship.*

Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship:

In recognition of the interconnectedness of humanitarian work and environmental preservation, IRT through its Step-Up project working with farmers in Uganda, embraces sustainable practices. The organisation strives to minimize its environmental footprint while delivering aid and supporting communities. By adopting eco-friendly agricultural solutions, ensuring a brighter, more sustainable future for both refugees and their host environments.



*A farmer in our Step Up Programme participating in climate-smart farming practices*

In a world rife with challenges, the International Refugee Trust's work in the Middle East, such as their support for the Amman Hospital run by the Dominican sisters, and also its work in Africa stands, as a testament to the enduring power of compassion and resilience. Let us join hands in this noble endeavour, and together, we can help rebuild lives, restore dignity, and create a brighter future for those who have been forced to flee their homes.

The International Refugee Trust is one of the charities supported by St Helen's Church

---

RSCM Festival 2023 at St Helen's Church

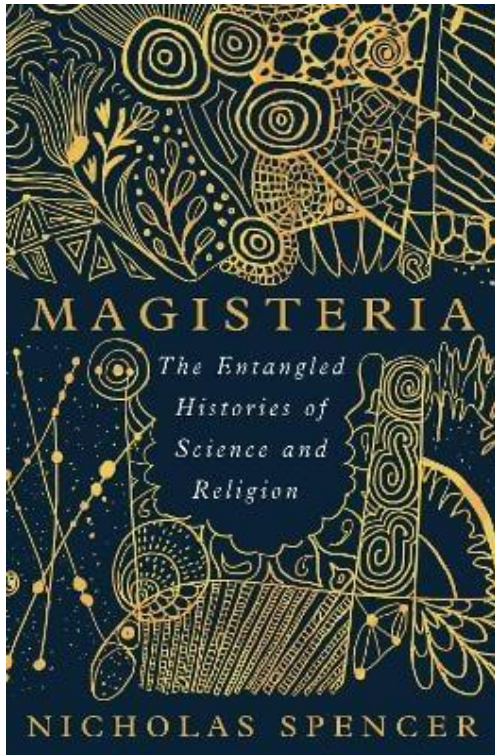


Photo courtesy of Norman Dawson



## Magisteria : The Entangled Histories of Science and Religion, Nicholas Spencer, Oneworld Publications, London, 2023.

Reviewed by John Maxwell Kerr. The review first appeared in the bulletin of the Society of Ordained Scientists



Some caricatures are so deeply embedded, so taken for granted, therefore unexamined, that, despite the past forty or so years of academic and popular writing on the diverse historical relationships between the sciences and religions, the conflict model's mythology still clouds the minds of churches and the wider public. Anachronistic views of how 'science' and 'religion' conflict are endemic in every classroom. (Q.v. Billingsley, B., Abedin, M., and Chappell, K. , edits, *A Teacher's Guide to Science and Religion in the Classroom*. (2018))

There is no shortage of excellent scholarly books and articles accurately guiding readers to a better-informed understanding so why might this reviewer so very emphatically recommend reading Nicholas Spencer's "Magisteria"?

The title, "Magisteria", at once brings to mind Stephen J. Gould's proposal that science and religion occupy "non-overlapping magisteria". Spencer focuses on the historical inadequacy of discrete competing claims for authority, each isolated within its own private magisterium and disputing the authority of the other. These wide fields of human endeavour are, and always have been, entangled, for good or ill.

Spencer begins by setting out "Three tense exchanges. Three quick-witted responses": the trial of Galileo on June 22, 1633, the Wilberforce-Huxley debate on June 30, 1860, and the Scopes trial in Dayton Tennessee on July 20, 1925. Later, he devotes chapters expanding in detail how each of these "exchanges" has led to the distortions of the popular conflict thesis. In his chapter on the seventeenth century controversies about heliocentrism, Spencer's scholarship is demonstrably current: he refers to the crucial discovery in 2018, of Galileo's original, unredacted, long-vanished letter to Castelli. An Italian graduate student, Salvatore Ricciano, rooting through the archives of the Royal Society in London, came across Galileo's original MS letter, complete with edits. It had somehow found its way to London but had been misdated when archived.

Spencer stands with John Hedley Brooke (to whom "Magisteria" is dedicated), Peter Harrison and others, who question the historical viability of the very categories 'science' and 'religion'.

Beyond the chapters on Christianity, I was singularly impressed by "A Fragile Brilliance: Science and Islam" and "Ambiguous and Argumentative: Science and Judaism." And this is the time to note something distinctive about "Magisteria". Spencer writes witty, lively, and engaging prose, with no diminishing of academic acumen. This is a book which is a pleasure to read. "Magisteria" is THE book to catch the imagination of students new to our discipline and to awaken, and engage the interest of, even those somewhat jaded readers who may believe they have heard it all before.

Spencer illuminates his well-argued, clever argument by setting out novel historical examples I, for one, had not considered.

In his brief foray into the study of medicine in Edinburgh in the late 1820s, Charles Darwin was convinced by a new scientific theory, soon set out in one of the two scientific bestsellers of the nineteenth century (Darwin himself wrote the other one): "The Constitution of Man and its Relation to

External Objects.” (George Combe, 1828).

This new science, was “determinedly empirical. It firmly rejected metaphysical speculation in favour of careful observation, measurement and, where possible, anatomical investigation”. Ideas of ‘mind’, let alone ‘soul’, it insisted, were “vague, unscientific, and ultimately untenable.” This description fits the premises of twentieth century scientism and determinism. “The Constitution” remained in print until the end of the nineteenth century, not just shaping Charles Darwin’s understanding of what science paradigmatically was, but more: one prestigious review exclaimed “No book published within the memory of man, in the English or any other language, has effected so great a revolution in the previously received opinions of society”. This new science played a large role in determining nineteenth century public understanding (in Europe and America particularly) of just what defines and constitutes a science. The century ended with A.D. White and J.W. Draper and the ‘conflict thesis’.

No, this wasn’t a book on geology but on phrenology, the study of the relationship between skull surface features thought to reveal the size of underlying cortical gygi, and thus mental facilities. Phrenology is dismissed now as utterly bogus pseudo-science and yet it surely fulfilled the criteria of what counts as science.

I set out this example at length because it shows that the physico-theology of earlier centuries still held the power to convince believers. Phrenology asserted that there were organs of veneration and wonder in the brain proving God’s wisdom and benevolence. The Phrenological Society’s collection of skulls included one of an African, Eustache, which displayed “a degree of shrewdness and disinterested benevolence very rare, even in Europe.” Moral conclusions were drawn from phrenology: the slave trade was wicked, education was good, as was exercise, temperance, vegetarianism, better working conditions, and prison reform. If concern for climate change were included, phrenology could catch on today. But it was materialist and deterministic, reducing the mind to brain, and many Christian theologians abhorred it.

Phrenology exemplified science in the nineteenth century and was widely accepted. One cannot but wonder why one substantial and reputable work does not so much as refer to phrenology but devotes a whole section to astrology, another pseudo-science. Later chapters take us into the twentieth century and beyond covering most of our present concerns.

The final chapter deals with AI, a pressing point for science and religion dialogue. “What marks this moment out as especially interesting is that AI demands we go beyond the familiar territory of ‘how should we use this new kit?’ and enter the realm of ‘what even is this new kit?’, ‘how similar is it to ourselves?’ and, by implication, ‘who then, are we?’” It would appear that the entangled histories of the sciences and religions still have a long way to run.

I am confident that “Magisteria” will give any reader a scholarly, thought-provoking and eminently readable foundation to address the challenges of the new.



## Ride and Stride

*Robin Day*

On Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September, myself and my young family (Andrew and Helena) went on the Ride and Stride to raise funds for our church and Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. I took Helena on the back of a piggy back bike and I had Andrew in front of me on his bike. It was an extremely hot day and we took plenty of water and a picnic with us.

We started from our house in South Abingdon and cycled to Sutton Courtney (where George Orwell is buried) and then back over the river Thames at Culham along the main road and bridge into Abingdon.

We then went to 8 other churches in Abingdon and received a warm welcome at them. Andrew and Helena feasted on many biscuits and squash we were given. At Trinity church Helena gate-crashed a girl's birthday party and ended up with a goody bag, while Andrew did some archaeology in the church flower beds finding a clay pipe stem! The children had a wonderful day and we raised in excess of £200 - all given on last Sunday after church.



Half of this money goes to St Helens church and half to OHCT to restore other churches in Oxfordshire. If anyone still owes any money, please give to myself at the church or to Alexandra.

A very big thank you for all you good people from us!

## Agnostics Anonymous

*Keith Ward*

Alcoholics Anonymous exists to help alcoholics, through open and honest discussion, to cope with their alcoholism. In a similar way, Agnostics Anonymous exists to help agnostics about religion to deal with their indecisions and come to more informed decisions, whether for or against religion. The group is led by a Biblical scholar, John Barton, a scientist, John Kerr, and a philosopher, Keith Ward, all of whom have taught for Oxford University. One of them will open each session with a very short talk on some topic of interest, and then discussion, in which all viewpoints are welcomed, will proceed for not more than an hour.

The first meeting will be on Thursday 26 October in the Parish Rooms of St. Helen's Church, from 6pm to 7.30pm. The intention is not to convert anyone to a particular view. It is to provide reliable information about and understanding of various religious (and anti-religious) views, and promote reasonable discussion in a friendly and informal atmosphere.

Keith Ward will start the first meeting with a short talk, 'Is Jesus the Son of God?', to unravel what this means and why people disagree so much about it. We will then discuss the best way to proceed if there are to be future meetings.

## Events October and November

Compiled by Louise Heffernan

### Frideswide Pilgrimage: 14<sup>th</sup> October

There will be a guided walk from Abingdon to Oxford to the Shrine of St Frideswide in Christ Church Cathedral (9 miles). Meet on the Thames Path beneath Abingdon Bridge OX14 3HX at 10am. The walk culminates in tea in the Great Hall and a pilgrim service to follow. All welcome.

### Choral Evensong

This will be offered at St Helen's Church with Responses by Clucas and Canticles, Murrill in E on **14 October 2023, 5.30 pm**. The collection will support the Royal School of Church Music's 'Centenary Fund'. All welcome at this 50-minute evening Book of Common Prayer service.

**CiA Annual Bereavement Service:** The Footprints Group at Christ Church has agreed to anchor this with their annual remembrance service around All Souls Day on Sunday 5 November 2023, 3 pm. All welcome.



**A Celebration of Black History Month In Abingdon**

Poetry Reading by Dr Dianne Regisford

Ghananian gospel choir from Abingdon Pearly Gates

Showcase of Nigerian Fashion by Taiwil

Sat 21st Oct @7:30PM

The Barns Christ Church Northcourt Road OX14 1PL

Authentic African Cooking accompanied by a cultural night of music, poetry and fashion

Catering by Nunu Samata

Tickets £15 Available from: The Bookstore Abingdon and [abingdonpassionplay.co.uk](http://abingdonpassionplay.co.uk)

Proceeds go towards the staging of 2024 Abingdon Passion Play

### Lunchtime music hour at Abingdon Baptist Church

Back by popular demand, we invite you to come and listen to live music over lunch from 12.30 to 1.30 pm on the first Monday of the month: ❖ Monday 2 October 2023: we kick off with the Eynsham Trio playing light classical music. ❖ Monday 6 November 2023: piano duets with Linda King and Gill Carpin. Bring your own lunch or buy from Cafe@35. Donations invited for the ABC Development Project.



**AUDITIONS ABINGDON PASSION PLAY 2024**

**WHEN**  
SAT 11TH NOV 2023  
10:00AM

**WHERE**  
ST NICHOLAS' CHURCH  
6 MARKET PLACE, ABINGDON OX14 3HG

**ALL POTENTIAL ACTORS AND SOLO SINGERS WELCOME!**

Go to [www.abingdonpassionplay.co.uk](http://www.abingdonpassionplay.co.uk) to register your interest

**PLAY TO BE STAGED ON SATURDAY 22ND JUNE 2024**



**St Michael's Church Christmas Fair**

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023  
10 am – 2 pm

Gift Stalls Games  
Tomboola Books  
Cakes Plants Paintings  
Prize Raffle Refreshments

Proceeds in aid of church funds and the Archway Foundation  
Enquiries to [info@stmic.co.uk](mailto:info@stmic.co.uk)

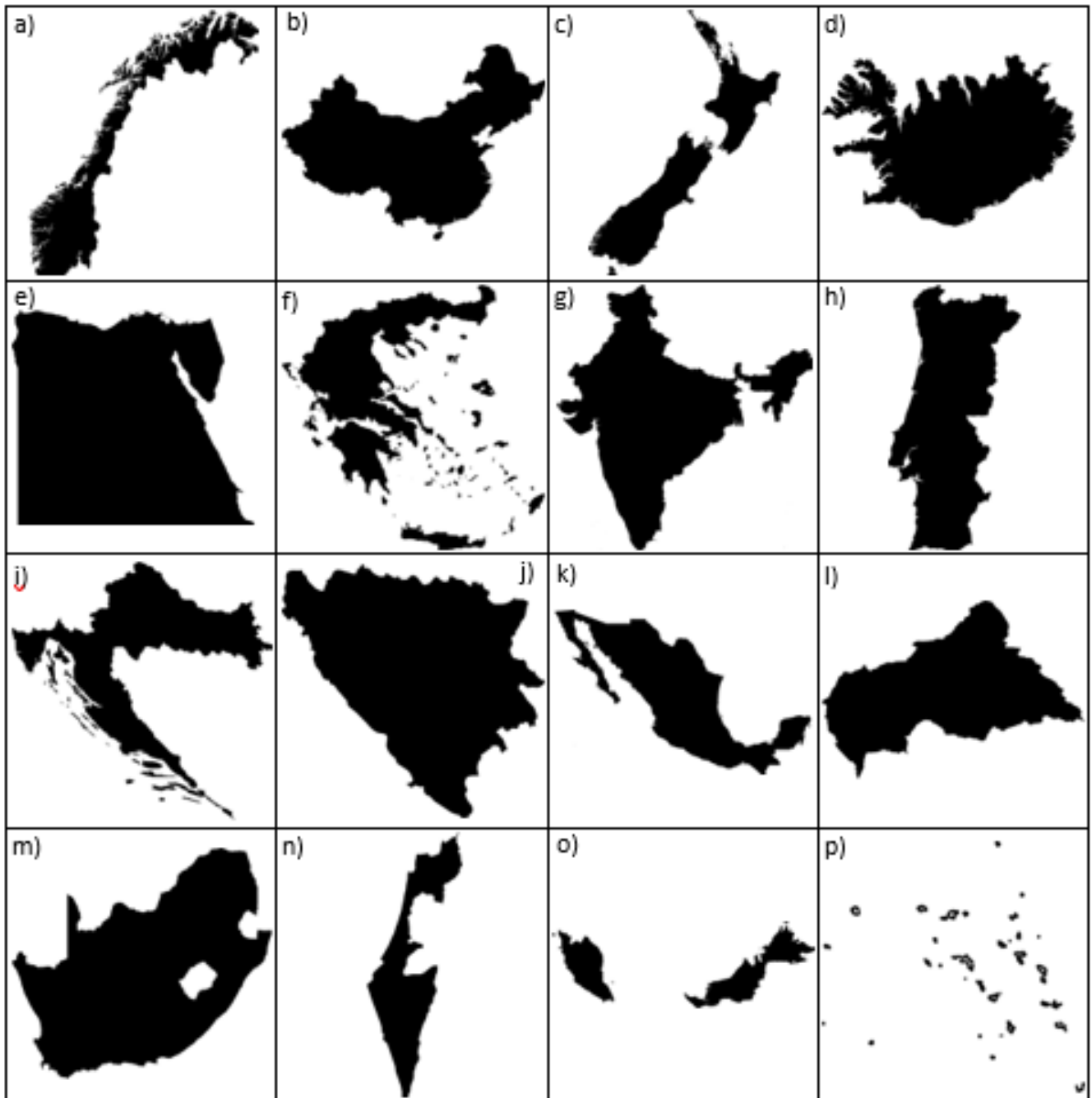
St Michael & All Angels' Church, Park Road, Abingdon

# Country Conundrum

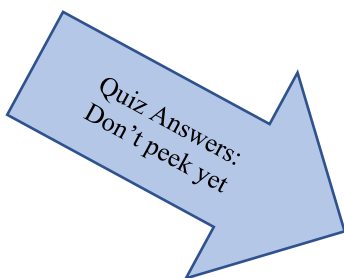
The Hallas family

Identify the following countries from their shapes.

*Warning: not to the same scale.*



*Answers can be found on page 16:*



a) Norway	b) China	c) New Zealand	d) Iceland
e) Egypt	f) Greece	g) India	h) Portugal
i) Croatia	j) Bosnia & Herzegovina	k) Mexico	l) Central African Republic
m) South Africa	n) Israel	o) Malaysia	p) Marshall Islands

## Useful Weblinks:

Services: for the latest news see the Parish Website:

[abingdonparish.org.uk](http://abingdonparish.org.uk)

Page for Church of England links: services, daily readings etc

<https://www.churchofengland.org/>

**FOOD BANK.** The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support. Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm. The foodbank also operates from Preston Road Community Centre. Donations are welcome there too between 12.00 and 2.30pm on Wednesdays. You can also donate money by sending a cheque made out to *North Abingdon PCC Christ Church*, clearly marked 'for Food Bank' or via the Foodbank website

<https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/> or the Parish office has details if you want to donate via online banking.

Finally, a picture to colour from Dave Walker



CartoonChurch.com

**Thanks** to all contributors and to you, the readers.

The next issue will be published on November 5<sup>th</sup> - ideas and contributions to

[Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk](mailto:Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk)