



Book Reviews

David G.R. Keller (ed.), *Boundless Grandeur: The Christian Vision of A.M. Donald Allchin* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), pp. xxxvi + 203. ISBN 978-1-4982-0319-7 (pbk). £17.50.
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Donald Allchin was a quite remarkable Anglican priest. It is not difficult to mark out the stages of his career: his early research on the nineteenth-century Anglican monastic revival, his years as a priest at St Mary Abbots in Kensington, then as librarian at Pusey House, then as a canon of Canterbury, then back in Oxford at St Theosevia's House, then retiring to Bangor in Wales, before returning to be near Oxford at Woodstock, but dying in the John Radcliffe Hospital before he had a chance to settle in 2010. Put like that, however, it misses almost all that was important about, and for, Donald: his deep commitment to ecumenism; his remarkable capacity for friendship, which was not really separate from his ecumenism – one thinks of his friendships with Vladimir Lossky and his son Nicholas, with Thomas Merton, with Fr Dumitru Stăniloae, an even longer friendship, from their schooldays, with Metropolitan Kallistos, and many others, less well known, perhaps, but no less close friends; his passion for poetry, and an equal passion for the periphery: Wales and its poets and saints; Denmark and Grundtvig. In his sermon at the Requiem High Mass that began Donald's funeral, Rowan Williams, then Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke of Donald's enthusiasm, his fondness for the word 'wonderful' that encapsulated his openness to encounter with others, with the world.

In this volume, David Keller, one of Donald's long-standing friends, has sought to celebrate the many sides of the man and priest who was Donald. It seems to me a mixed achievement, for although much of it is absorbing, many contributors seem at a loss to know quite what to say, and fall back on some kind of anthology of Donald's own publications; this applies particularly to the section on Donald's interpretation of the Anglican tradition. The book is divided into five sections, pre-faced by the editor's note, a foreword by Rowan Williams, an introduction, largely biographical, by Metropolitan Kallistos, and a poem *in memoriam* by David Scott. The editor's note is very off-putting to anyone with a concern for accuracy: we are told that in the 1960s Donald became friends with Vladimir Lossky (who died in 1958), and came to know Thomas Merton in the period when he was warden to the Sisters of Love of God from 1968 to 1973; Thomas Merton died in 1968, and Donald was warden of the sisters at Fairacres from 1968 until 1994 (as we are told a few pages later). It is a pity to make so many mistakes on the first page of the book.

The first section is entitled 'Donald Allchin's Life', but for that you would be better advised to read Metropolitan Kallistos's introduction. Nevertheless, this section

introduces some sense of who Donald was, or how others found him. Canon Coutts's contribution is entitled, 'In His Face Was Prayer': I was moved by these words, which seemed to me borne out by the photographs found throughout the book – as Donald grew older, his face seemed to fill with a kind of reticent radiance. That was my memory of the man I knew: not well, but over many years. Section 2 discusses Donald and his relationship with the Orthodox Church, or perhaps better, with many Orthodox. Donald's ecumenism was founded on friendship, and although he took part in the Anglican-Orthodox Conversations, it was engagement through friendship with Vladimir Lossky, Fr Dumitru Stăniloae, as well as Demetrios Koutroubis and Christos Yannaras, that, I think, mattered most. Donald's correspondence with Fr Stăniloae (or at least Fr Stăniloae's side of it) is explored by Fr Ciprian Burca with sensitivity and discernment. The third section addresses his ecumenical engagement more directly, with an illuminating discussion by Geoffrey Rowell, which passes over what often passes for ecumenism, revolving rather round the way in which Thomas Traherne's conviction that 'Love has a marvellous property of feeling in another' expresses what was central to Donald's ecumenism. The other chapter in this section is concerned with Donald's friendship with Thomas Merton, something that meant a great deal to Donald. Section 4 is concerned with Donald as an interpreter of the Anglican tradition, in which I felt a tendency to reach for a selection of passages from Donald rather than reflect on the nature of his Anglicanism. The final section is, however, the best, and forms an uplifting conclusion to the book: Donald and the Welsh spiritual tradition. It is as if reflecting on the importance for Donald of Welsh poetry and the Welsh saints takes one into the heart of Donald himself. For the essays here are not just about things Welsh, but about what this drew out of Donald himself: particularly in Ruth Bidgood's piece about his 'prayerful approach to poetry', and not just the poetry of the Welsh (though Donald liked to extend the empire of the Welsh, easily drawing into its reach John Donne and Traherne, for instance).

The book closes with a transcript of three hours of conversation between Donald and the editor. It would have benefited from some editing. There is a tendency to repetition that transfers badly to the page, and it would not have hurt to correct slips and supplement Donald's memory. Herbert did not write *The Diary of a Country Priest*, that was Bernanos; Herbert's work was entitled *A Priest to the Temple, or the Country Parson*: a treatise, not a diary. The transcription has Donald referring to F.D. Morris! The Andrewes (and Donne) scholar Donald referred to is Peter McCullough (not McCurrach). At another point, Donald can't remember the title of a book of Rowan Williams' he wants to refer to; the editor could have found out. It is a pity: with a little care this could have been a much better book than it is. Nevertheless it is a fine tribute to a remarkable man and priest.

Andrew Louth
University of Durham

Andrew Chandler, *George Bell, Bishop of Chichester* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2016), pp. xii + 212, ISBN 978-0-8028-7227-2 (pbk). RRP \$35. doi:10.1017/S174035531600022X

'Chichester' has long been associated in my mind with a hero of mine, Bishop George Bell, who was its diocesan from 1929 until only a year before his death in 1958.