NEW COLLEGE CHAPEL

Readings and Music
for Lent

14th March 2021
5.45pm
Readings from *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), by John Donne (1572-1631), adapted from the edition by Anthony Raspa (OUP, 1987)

Variable, and therefore miserable condition of Man;
this minute I was well, and am ill, this minute. (Meditation 1)

*Read by* Professor Peter McCullough, Sohmer Fellow, Lincoln College
The choir and the clergy enter in procession.

The choir sings the Lent Prose:

Hear us, O Lord, have mercy upon us:  
for we have sinned against thee.

To thee, redeemer, on thy throne of glory:  
lift we our weeping eyes in holy pleadings:  
listen, O Jesu, to our supplications.

Sins oft committed now we lay before thee  
with true contrition, now no more we veil them:  
grant us, redeemer, loving absolution.

10th century Mozarabic hymn

The Dean of Divinity introduces the service.

I. The first Alteration, the first Grudging, of the Sickness.

If I were but mere dust and ashes, I might speak unto the Lord, for the Lord's hand made me of this dust, and the Lord's hand shall recollect these ashes; the Lord's hand was the wheel, upon which this vessel of clay was framed, and the Lord's hand is the Urn, in which these ashes shall be preserved. I am the dust, and the ashes of the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and what marble is so precious? But I am more than dust and ashes: I am my best part, I am my soul.

II. The King sends his own physician.

Still when we return to that Meditation, that Man is a World, we find new discoveries. Let him be a world, and himself will be the land, and misery the sea. His misery (for misery is his, his own; of the happiness even of this world, he is but tenant, but of misery the freeholder; of happiness he is but the farmer, ... but of misery the Lord, the proprietary), his misery, as the sea, swells above all the hills, and reaches to the remotest parts of this earth, Man; who of himself is but dust, and coagulated and kneaded into earth, by tears; his matter is earth, his form, misery.
The choir sings a motet by Cristóbal de Morales (c.1500-1553):

Emendemus in melius quae ignoranter peccavimus; ne subito praeoccupati die mortis, quae ramus spatium poenitentiae, et invenire non possimus. 
Attende, Domine, et miserere; quia peccavimus tibi.

Memento homo quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverti.

Let us make amends for the sins we have committed in ignorance, lest we should suddenly, at the day of our death, seek a place of repentance and may not be able to find one. Hear us, O Lord, and have mercy, for we have sinned against you.

Remember, mortal, that you are dust, and to dust will you return.

Responsory on Ash Wednesday

The Dean of Divinity introduces the third reading.

III. The physicians use cordials, to keep the venom and malignity of the disease from the heart.

My God, my God, all that thou askest of me is my Heart, My Son, give me thy heart. Am I thy son, as long as I have but my heart? ... Hast thou considered my Heart, that there is not so perverse a Heart upon earth; and wouldst thou have that, and shall I be thy son, thy eternal Son’s Coheir, for giving that? The Heart is deceitful, above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? He that asks that question makes the answer, I the Lord search the Heart. When didst thou search mine? Dost thou think to find it, as thou madest it, in Adam? ... O God of all light, I know thou knowest all, and it is Thou that declarest unto man what is his Heart. Without thee, O sovereign Goodness, I could not know how ill my heart were. ... And I can gather out of thy Word, so good testimony of the hearts of men as to find ... Hearts that can, Hearts that have learned; ... straight hearts, no perverseness without; and clean hearts, no foulness within: such hearts I can find in thy Word; and if my heart were such a heart, I would give thee my Heart. But I find stony hearts too, and I have made mine such: I have found Hearts, that are snares; and I have conversed with such; hearts that burn like Ovens; and the fuel of Lust, and Envy, and Ambition, hath inflamed mine; ... What shall I do? Without that present I cannot be thy Son, and I have it not. ... There is then a middle kind of Hearts, not so perfect as to be given but that the very giving mends them; not so desperate as not to be accepted but that the very accepting dignifies them. This is a melting heart, and a troubled heart, and a wounded heart, and a broken heart, and a contrite heart; and by the powerful working of thy piercing Spirit such a Heart I have. Thy Samuel spoke unto all the house of thy Israel, and said, If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, prepare your hearts unto the Lord. If my heart be prepared, it is a returning heart. And if thou see it upon the way, thou wilt carry it home.
The choir sings a motet by Richard Dering (1580-1630):

O bone Jesu, O dulcis Jesu,
O Jesu fili Mariae Virginis,
plene misericordia et pietate.
O bone Jesu, O dulcis Jesu,
secundum magnum misericordiam tuam,
miserere mei.

O good Jesus, O sweet Jesus,
O Jesus, Son of the Virgin Mary,
full of loving kindness and compassion.
O good Jesus, O sweet Jesus,
according to your great loving kindness,
have mercy upon me.

The Dean of Divinity introduces the fourth reading.

IV. From the bells of the church adjoining, I am daily remembered of my burial in the funerals of others.

Here the Bells can scarce solemnize the funeral of any person, but that I knew him, or knew that he was my Neighbour; we dwelt in houses near to one another before, but now he is gone into that house, into which I must follow him. ... And when these Bells tell me, that now one, and now another is buried, must not I acknowledge, that they have the correction due to me, and paid the debt that I owe? ... We scarce hear of any man preferred, but we think of ourselves that we might very well have been that Man; Why might not I have been that Man, that is carried to his grave now? Could I fit my self, to stand, or sit in any Man’s place, and not to lie in any man’s grave? I may lack much of the good parts of the meanest, but I lack nothing of the mortality of the weakest; they may have acquired better abilities than I, but I was born to as many infirmities as they.

The choir sings an anthem by Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625):

O Lord, in thy wrath rebuke me not: neither chasten me in thy displeasure.
Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak: O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed.
My soul is also sore troubled: but Lord, how long wilt thou punish me?
O save me for thy mercy’s sake.

Psalm 6: 1-4

The Dean of Divinity introduces the fifth reading.
V. Now, this bell tolling softly far another, says to me: Thou must die.

Perchance he for whom this Bell tolls, may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me, and see my state, may have caused it to toll for me, and I know not that. ... When the church baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that Head which is my Head too, and ingrained into that body whereof I am a member. And when she buries a Man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one Author, and is one volume; when one Man dies, one Chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every Chapter must be so translated; ... some pieces are translated by Age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again, for that Library where every book shall lie open to one another. The Bell doth toll for him that thinks it doth; and though it intermit again, yet from that minute, that that occasion wrought upon him, he is united to God. ... Who bends not his ear to any bell, which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell, which is passing a piece of himself out of this world? No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a Clod be washed away by the Sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a Promontory were, as well as if a Manor of thy friend's or of thine own were; Any Man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. ... Another man may be sick too, and sick to death, and this affliction may lie in his bowels, as gold in a Mine, and be of no use to him; but this bell, that tells me of his affliction, digs out, and applies that gold to me: if by this consideration of another's danger, I take mine own into Contemplation, and so secure myself, by making my recourse to my God, who is our only security.

The choir sings a motet by Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585):

In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.
Redemisti me Domine, Deus veritatis.

Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.
You have redeemed me Lord, God of truth.

Psalm 31: 5
The Dean of Divinity introduces the sixth reading.

VI

My God, my God, is this one of thy ways, of drawing light out of darkness, to make him for whom this bell tolls, now in this dimness of his sight, to become a superintendent, an overseer, a Bishop, to as many as hear his voice, in this bell, and to give us a confirmation in this action? Is this one of thy ways to raise strength out of weakness, to make him who cannot rise from his bed, nor stir in his bed, come home to me, and in this sound, give me the strength of healthy and vigorous instructions? ... I hear that which makes all sounds music, and all music perfect; I hear thy Son himself saying, Let not your hearts be troubled; only I hear this change, that whereas thy Son says there, I go to prepare a place for you, this man in this sound says, I send to prepare you for a place, for a grave. But, O my God, my God, since heaven is glory and joy, why do not glorious and joyful things lead us, induce us to heaven? ... Is the glory of heaven no perfecter in itself, but that it needs a foil of depression and ingloriousness in this world, to set it off? Is the joy of heaven no perfecter in itself, but that it needs the sourness of this life to give it a taste?

The Dean of Divinity introduces the seventh reading.

VII

I am bold, O Lord, to bend my prayers to thee for his assistance, the voice of whose bell hath called me to this devotion. Lay hold upon his soul, O God, till that soul have thoroughly considered his account; and how few minutes soever it have to remain in that body, let the power of thy Spirit recompense the shortness of time, and perfect his account, before he pass away: present his sins so to him, as that he may know what thou forgivest, and not doubt of thy forgiveness, let him stop upon the infiniteness of those sins, but dwell upon the infiniteness of thy Mercy; ... Breathe inward comforts to his heart, and afford him the power of giving such outward testimonies thereof, as all that are about him may derive comforts from thence, and have this edification, even in this dissolution, that though the body be going the way of all flesh, yet that soul is going the way of all Saints. ... O most blessed God, ... in his behalf, and in his name, hear thy Son crying to thee, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? and forsake him not; but with thy left hand lay his body in the grave..., and with thy right hand receive his soul into thy Kingdom, and unite him and us in one Communion of Saints. Amen.
The choir sings the hymn, to a melody by Johann Crüger (1598-1662):

Ah, holy Jesu, how hast thou offended,
That man to judge thee hath in hate pretended?
By foes derided, by thine own rejected,
O most afflicted.

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee?
Alas, my treason, Jesu, hath undone thee.
'Twas I, Lord Jesu, I it was denied thee:
I crucified thee.

For me, kind Jesu, was thy incarnation,
Thy mortal sorrow, and thy life’s oblation;
Thy death of anguish and thy bitter passion,
For my salvation.

Therefore, kind Jesu, since I cannot pay thee,
I do adore thee, and will ever pray thee,
Think on thy pity and thy love unswerving,
Not my deserving.

Johann Heermann (1585-1647), after an 11th-century Latin meditation; translated by Robert Bridges (1844-1930)

The Dean of Divinity introduces the eighth reading.

VIII. The bell rings out, and tells me in him, that I am dead.

The Bell rings out, the pulse thereof is changed; the tolling was a faint and intermitting pulse, upon one side; this stronger, and argues more and better life. His soul is gone out, and as a Man who had a lease of one thousand years after the expiration of a short one, or an inheritance after the life of a Man in a Consumption, he is now entered into the possession of his better estate. His soul is gone, whither? Who saw it come in, or who saw it go out? Nobody; yet everybody is sure he had one, and hath none. ... This soul, this Bell tells me is gone out; Whither? Who shall tell me that? I know not who it is, much less what he was; the condition of the Man, and the course of his life, which should tell me whither he is gone, I know not. I was not there, in his sickness, nor at his death; I saw not his way, nor his end, nor can ask them, who did, thereby to conclude, or argue, whither he is gone. But yet I have one nearer me than all these, mine own Charity; I ask that, and that tells me, He is gone to everlasting rest, and joy, and glory. I owe him a good opinion; it is but thankful charity in me, because I received benefit and instruction from him when his Bell tolled: and I, being made the fitter to pray, by that disposition, wherein I was assisted by his occasion, did pray for him; and I pray not without faith; so I do charitably, so I do faithfully believe, that
that soul is gone to everlasting rest, and joy, and glory. But for the body, how poor a wretched thing is that? we cannot express it so fast, as it grows worse and worse. That body, which scarce three minutes since was such a house, as that that soul, which made but one step from thence to Heaven, was scarce thoroughly content, to leave that for Heaven; that body hath lost the name of a dwelling-house, because none dwells in it, and is making haste to lose the name of a body, and dissolve to putrefaction. Who would not be affected, to see a clear and sweet River in the Morning, grow a kennel of muddy land water by noon, and condemned to the saltness of the Sea by night? And how lame a Picture, how faint a representation is that, of the precipitation of man's body to dissolution? Now all the parts built up, and knit by a lovely soul, now but a statue of clay, and now, these limbs melted off, as if that clay were but snow; and now, the whole house is but a handful of sand, so much dust, and but a peck of Rubbish, so much bone. If he, who, as this Bell tells me, is gone now, were some excellent Artificer, who comes to him for a clock, or for a garment now? or for counsel, if he were a Lawyer? if a Magistrate, for justice? ... In the womb of the earth, we diminish, and when she is delivered of us, our grave opened for another; we are not transplanted, but transported, our dust blown away with profane dust, with every wind.

The choir sings an anthem by Maurice Greene (1696-1755):

Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days,
that I may be certified how long I have to live.
Behold, thou hast made my days as it were a span long, and mine age is even as nothing in respect of thee; And verily every man living is altogether vanity.
For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain;
he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.
And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in thee.
Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with thine ears consider my calling;
hold not thy peace at my tears.
O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength,
before I go hence, and be no more seen.

Psalm 39: 5-8, 13, 15

The Dean of Divinity introduces the ninth reading.

IX

Eternal and most gracious God, I have a new occasion of thanks, and a new occasion of prayer to thee, from the ringing of this bell. Thou toldst me in the other voice, that I was mortal and approaching to death[,] ... Thou presentest me death as the cure of my disease, not as the exaltation of it; if I mistake thy voice herein, if I overrun thy pace, and prevent thy hand, and imagine death more instant upon me than thou hast bid him be, yet the voice belongs to me; I am dead, I was
born dead, and from the first laying of these mud walls in my conception, they have mouldered away, and the whole course of life is but an active death. Whether this voice instruct me that I am a dead man now, or remember me that I have been a dead man all this while, I humbly thank thee for speaking in this voice to my soul, and I humbly beseech thee also to accept my prayers in his behalf, by whose occasion this voice, this sound, is come to me. ... That therefore this soul now newly departed to thy Kingdom, may quickly return to a joyful reunion to that body which it hath left, and that we with it may soon enjoy the full consummation of all, in body and soul, I humbly beg at thy hand, O our most merciful God, for thy Son Christ Jesus' sake. ... That time may be swallowed up in Eternity, and hope swallowed in possession, and ends swallowed in infiniteness, and all men ordained to salvation in body and soul, be one entire and everlasting sacrifice to thee, where thou mayst receive delight from them, and they glory from thee, for evermore. Amen.

The choir sings one of the Songs of Farewell by C. H. H. Parry (1848-1918):

My soul, there is a country,
   Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a wingèd sentry,
   All skillful in the wars.
There, above noise and danger,
   Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles,
And One born in a manger
   Commands the beauteous files.
He is thy gracious Friend
   And (O my soul, awake!)
Did in pure love descend,
   To die here for thy sake.
If thou canst get but thither,
   There grows the flower of peace,
The rose that cannot wither,
   Thy fortress, and thy ease.
Leave, then, thy foolish ranges;
   For none can thee secure
But One, who never changes,
   Thy God, thy Life, thy Cure.

Peace

Henry Vaughan (1621-1695)

The Dean of Divinity says the closing prayer and blessing.

The choir and clergy depart in silence.