

THE WAY, 1961–1986

John Coventry

Origins

THE WAY, VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1, appeared as a new quarterly in January 1961, with Fr James Walsh as principal editor and Frs William Yeomans and Philip Caraman as co-editors.

James Walsh and Bill Yeomans had talked about the need for a review of spirituality in English in 1956, when *Christus* had just begun in France and while James was doing his doctorate at the Gregorian¹ in spirituality and Bill his theology at Fourvière. With doctorate completed James Walsh went to Farm Street in 1957 as assistant to Philip Caraman, editor of *The Month* and Month Publications. Very soon after his arrival he was made Vice-Postulator of the cause of beatification of Mother Cornelia Connolly. This took him away from London for long periods—to Africa, Rome and the United States all within his first ten months. In the autumn of 1960 he agreed to Philip Caraman's request to assist him as co-Vice-Postulator of the cause of the English and Welsh Martyrs. Slightly earlier the same year Bill Yeomans completed his own biennium in spirituality at Chantilly and joined the team at Farm Street.

Meanwhile at the end of December 1959 Fr Caraman had gone to Rome and had discussed the projected quarterly and other subjects with the Assistant, Fr John L. Swain. As a reply to and memo of the discussion he received a letter, signed by Fr Janssens and dated 1

¹ This article first appeared in *Letters and Notices*, a Jesuit in-house journal, where it could be assumed that readers would be familiar with references to the houses and communities mentioned. It might help others to know that the Gregorian is the Jesuit-run university in Rome; Farm Street the British Province headquarters in London; Southwell House a community in Hampstead, since closed; Heythrop the Jesuit college of philosophy and theology which moved from Oxfordshire to become part of the University of London in 1970; and *The Month* a 'review of Christian thought and world affairs' published between 1864 and 2001. Fr Janssens was Jesuit Superior General at the time.

January 1960, which contained the following (author's translation from the Latin):

The review of spirituality soon to be launched should certainly treat sometimes of Christian spirituality as such and of other non-Ignatian schools: but a Jesuit review ought principally even if not exclusively to promote the spirituality of the Society. The lack of such studies in the English language is truly very sad: everything at present available on the Exercises of St Ignatius is in translation from other languages, and I fear that many of Ours have no deep understanding and appreciation of the Exercises. It is highly desirable that the new review should foster such knowledge and appreciation of the spirituality of the Society among both Ours and others.

Fr Swain, however, had also stressed the need of a 'team of writers' to back the project, particularly, perhaps, in view of the other commitments of the *Month* personnel. With Bill Yeomans soon expected, efforts were made to provide a wider support group. Fr Neil McKenty came on what proved to be a short loan from Canada, but was followed by Fr Elmer O'Brien and then by Fr George Ganss from the USA; and through the contacts of Frs Caraman and Walsh a number of consultants were enlisted in other provinces, both to promote the review and to help with ideas and contributors. Fr Swain then gave the project his blessing.

Philip Caraman recalls the exact moment when the name of the new review came to him:

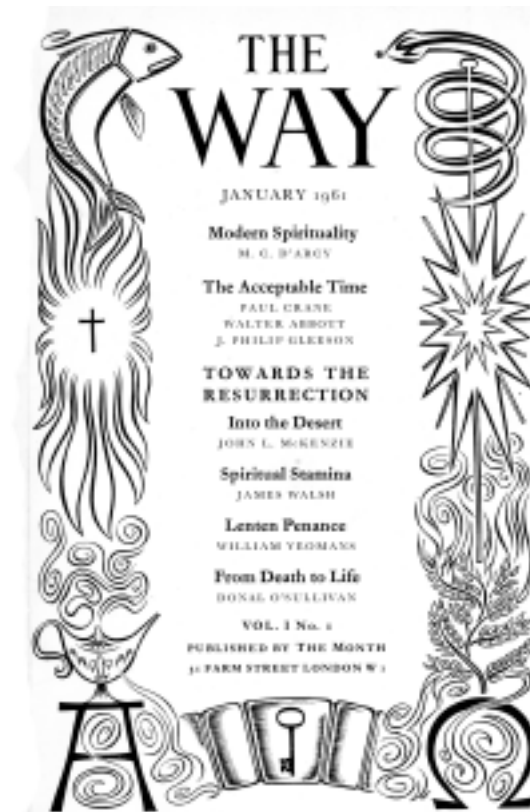
I was riding on the top deck of a No. 30 bus, passing the spot in Park Lane now filled by the Hilton Hotel, when the gospel phrase 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' hit me. There was the title. *Truth* was a radical left-wing weekly, *Life* the now revamped colour magazine of the Luce empire. *The Way* was there for the taking.

Or so he thought. After the first number of *The Way* had appeared, a strongly worded demand for an immediate change of title came from the founder of Opus Dei, whose manual for his disciples bears that name. However, as there is no copyright in titles, the protest went unheeded.

James Walsh was from the beginning the editor of *The Way* and remained so for most of its first 25 years. But it would never have got

off the ground without Philip Caraman’s resources, staff and expertise. The financial resources of Month Publications were behind the new review, and they had been considerably strengthened both by the substantial payments made to Fr Martin D’Arcy for his lectures in the USA and by royalties on the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins recently contested and acquired for the Province. The one *Month* office staff handled the business side of both publications and was very soon to be involved in copious work to promote the cause of the Martyrs. To avoid the then frequent domestic strikes, it was decided to have the review printed in Holland. Philip Caraman had got Mr Stanley Morrison, the old man of *The Times* and leading typographer of his day, to redesign *The Month* in 1948, and turned to him again for the design of *The Way*, which has remained with minor modifications made later to reduce costs. Copy for the first number was almost due for the press when the editors found they were an article short: Fr Martin D’Arcy was called on for help and at once came to the rescue.

In November 1961 Miss Denise Critchley-Salmonson joined the team as personal and editorial assistant to James Walsh, and was to remain his chief support for the next 22 years, through many vicissitudes, until he laid down the editorship. In view of James’s many other commitments, and the periods when he was left without co-editors or assistant editors, and in view of his visionary and not entirely down-to-earth nature, it is not too



The cover of the first issue of The Way, January 1961

much to say that it was Denise Critchley who kept the show on the road: without her some numbers would simply not have appeared.

Wanderings

It is difficult not to see something prophetic in the name chosen for *The Way* in view of the somewhat complex wanderings of its editorial office that were to ensue. All, however, went ahead peacefully for some time, if anything could be called peaceful while vast and noisy building operations went on around and eventually under the Farm Street offices. In 1963 Fr Ronald Moffat succeeded Fr Caraman as editor of *The Month*, the latter moving the research part of the Martyr offices to Great Peter Street and relinquishing his co-editorship of *The Way*, which he had done so much to launch.

In 1965 Heythrop became a Pontifical Athenaeum, with hopes of becoming something of a national centre of theology for religious. Hence it was decided in 1966 to move the editorial office of *The Way* to Heythrop to cohabit, as it were, with the *Heythrop Journal*, while the circulation department moved across from Farm Street to the new Mount Street building. James Walsh and William Yeomans joined the staff at Heythrop, to edit *The Way*, to lecture and to provide the foundation of an Institute of Spirituality—an idea that was to advance and recede in stages over the succeeding years. However, Fr Yeomans returned to London after a year, to Southwell House. Denise Critchley, who had a good friend in the area, moved house and came to work at Heythrop. It was difficult to edit the journal from Heythrop with the business management in London, but much to-ing and fro-ing saw the operation through. Further help arrived when Fr Michael Ivens came in from Campion Hall, particularly to help with the item 'Recommended Reading' but also to join discussion of themes and contributors for future issues.

In 1969 Fr Yeomans went to the United States to negotiate with Fr Whelan, Director of Corpus Instrumentorum in Washington, for the transfer of American subscriptions and distribution to his staff and office. This was carried out in 1970 but the arrangement was short-lived: Corpus Instrumentorum went into liquidation and the subscriptions had to be transferred back again within a matter of months, with resulting strain on the London office. Bill Yeomans remained to work in the States.

Meanwhile the decision had been made to transfer Heythrop to London, and it was decided to move the editorial office to Ouseley Lodge, Beaumont, which had been given to the Society some years before by its owner Captain Peters. However, Ouseley Lodge was inhabited by boys from St John's and could not be got ready till September. Heythrop moved out on 1 June 1970, and for the next three months the only editorial office for *The Way* was Denise Critchley's cottage in the Heythrop grounds. To add to the upheaval it had been decided in Rome in May 1970 that the canonisation of the Forty Martyrs was to take place in October that year. It is difficult to imagine how James Walsh and Denise Critchley managed the extra work, journeys and moving house.

By September 1970 *The Way's* editorial office was established at Ouseley Lodge, where James Walsh was joined by Michael Ivens and Brother George Wilde. The latter ran the house and took over the accounting for *The Way* and the Martyrs. He separated out the finances of *The Way*, which had hitherto been handled under the umbrella of Month Publications, though it had its own staff at Mount Street for subscriptions and circulation. Denise Critchley was helped to find accommodation by the IBVM nuns at Ascot, and later secured a cottage at Datchet. It was hoped that, with the ample premises at Ouseley Lodge, where people could come for renewal courses, an 'Institute of Spiritual Studies' could be established. But late in 1971 Captain Peters died, and the Province decided as part of a general reshuffle of London houses to sell the property.

So, in May 1972, Frs Walsh and Ivens moved themselves and the editorial office to Southwell House and planned anew to set up the Institute of Spirituality there. Later the same year the circulation department also moved to Southwell House, thus reuniting the editors with their business office. Denise, who had in any case worked for long periods at home in James's absences, established an editorial sub-office in her Datchet cottage, and was kindly housed and fed by the Daughters of the Cross at Tite Street whenever she needed to go to London. Michael Ivens was increasingly involved in other work, and in July 1973 Fr Jack Diamond came to lend a large and willing hand to the work of administration. But within a few weeks he became desperately ill and was admitted to hospital: he died in September. Denise Critchley had to make clear to the Provincial that she could



Southwell House

not carry on alone during James's long absences in America and elsewhere, and it was a great relief when Fr George Earle was appointed co-editor in 1974. He had been Superior of Southwell House since August 1972 and so was already on the scene.

The associated Institute of Spirituality took solid form with the establishment of the 'Way Community' at Southwell House in 1975, though this welcome development squeezed out editorial offices which became the bedrooms of the co-editors. Michael Ivens became tertian master at St Beuno's in 1976 and so ended his years as assistant editor.

However, a new crisis developed with the dispersal of the Way Community in 1978. Work for the Martyrs, and perhaps especially the summer of 1970, had taken a toll on James Walsh, who had in 1978 been in and out of hospital with heart trouble. Now he was once more alone. Denise Critchley (who, it must be plainly stated, could not afford to live in London) went to see 'the authorities' to beg for immediate assistance as well as the designation and training of a successor to James, and to suggest a move of the editorial office to Osterley, where she could work with James from her home in Datchet. James was reluctant to move again and to separate editorial and business offices once more, but there was no alternative and so he moved in September 1978 to Osterley where he and Denise shared an editorial office.

Instead of bringing editorial relief, the next year, 1979, brought a new crisis. On becoming revisor of the province Bro Wilde had to withdraw from managing the two accounts, for *The Way* and the Martyrs, a complex operation of handling large numbers of small cheques in diverse currencies. The resources were too low for payment of a professional accountant, and so Denise and Sister Elizabeth Byrne RSHM, who was in charge of the circulation department at Southwell House, had to take the strain: this led to the illness and withdrawal of the latter at the end of 1979. But after interim help from Sister Anne Healy, the department was taken over and reorganised under Denise's supervision by Miss Eileen Gore, with much help from Sister Thelma Haines SSCJ, the Province bursar of her congregation, and the full-time services of Maurice Ryan, with the eventual result that the very shaky financial position of 1979 became in two or three years a very healthy one. Meanwhile in 1980 there came the proposal that *The Tablet* should take over the business administration of both *The Month* and *The Way*. James Walsh saw this as a serious threat, as he knew from past experience the difficulty of allocating liabilities and expenses to different publications and foresaw loss of editorial freedom about format, length and even content. The proposal was, however, withdrawn by *The Tablet* before the end of that year.

For three years from August 1978 James Walsh was without an assistant editor, though Jock Earle gave what help he could from his busy post in Glasgow. Then, in August 1981, Fr Philip Sheldrake arrived at Osterley as assistant editor, having completed his tertianship in India. In December of that year James went to the States for a much needed holiday and to make further contacts for *The Way*, but at the end of the month suffered a severe coronary. Though he remained principal editor till September 1982, he never in fact returned to the *Way* office at Osterley except to collect his papers. Philip and Denise got through the remaining months until Fr David Lonsdale arrived in September 1982, first to be assistant editor and then joint editor with Philip from 1983; he too had just completed his tertianship in India. James returned to England in March 1982 to recuperate further at Colwyn Bay, and moved in July to St Beuno's. Thus a transition intended to be gradual, and which might have been more painful, was speeded up by force of circumstances.

There is a final move to record. In October 1983 the editorial office moved to Heythrop College to become part of the new Institute of Spirituality now established there. And in November Denise retired from her 22 years of devoted and indispensable service. She was succeeded as editorial assistant and general secretary by Miss Julia Bellord, who herself moved to another post early in 1986 and has been replaced as we go to press by Miss Mary Critchley (no relation of Denise). In the year 1984–85 Sister Lavinia Byrne IBVM was working part-time with the Institute and the editors, and in the summer of 1985 she joined the Institute staff full-time and became assistant editor of *The Way*.

This section would not be complete without a mention of at least some of the associate editors in other countries who variously helped with draft schemes, suggestions for writers and local promotion. Of a number who fulfilled this role over the years the most constant have been Frs Thomas J. Clarke and Ladislav Örsy in America, and Fr Denis McCarthy in Rome until his death in 1984.

The Way

From the beginning the quarterly journal was thematic in approach and was in this respect unique in the English-speaking world. At first an issue printed six articles on the chosen theme, but these were reduced to five longer articles in 1975. The method involved more editorial work, as each issue had to be planned about a year in advance and suitable writers sought and secured. Unsolicited articles were only rarely used. The writers have usually been well established in their chosen fields of scripture, systematic and pastoral theology, or spirituality. Originally they tended to be male, Catholic and clerical; latterly the choice has broadened to include far more women, lay people and members of other Churches.

Choice of themes has changed somewhat over the years. In the beginning the tendency was to attempt to follow the liturgical year. Subsequently more generally biblical or classically spiritual themes were introduced. Latterly an attempt has been made to ground writing more firmly in experience: that is, the approach to spirituality has shifted from a deductive to an inductive one. Instead of presenting classical themes in their purity, or only secondarily applied to experience, the question is posed: 'What are the serious and burning

contemporary issues in Church and world?’ Writers are then sought who can, first of all, reflect on these experiences and lay them bare, and then speak to them from the tradition, whether scripture, theology, spirituality or pastoral practice. A comparison of the titles of articles from the January 1961 and January 1986 issues illustrates the point: ‘Into the Desert’ and ‘Not Peace but the Sword’; ‘Spiritual Stamina’ and ‘Jesus and Conflict’; ‘Lenten Penance’ and ‘Conflict, Non-violence and Discipleship’; ‘From Death to Life’ and ‘Conflict within the Church’.

The choice of themes has, obviously, reflected changing readership patterns. If at the beginning most readers were Roman Catholic, and clerical or religious, the journal now tries to speak to the concerns of an increasingly diverse readership, both lay and frequently non-Catholic. In addition to the main articles, *The Way* has always carried three or four features, of which two, ‘Recommended Reading’ and ‘Theological Trends’, have run from the beginning. ‘Recommended Reading’ has been a continuous review article, though sub-divided into different sections, for long written entirely by the editor and/or his assistants. The feature has recently been renamed ‘Recent Books’ and others are called on for individual sections, thus easing the editorial load, allowing reviewers to be responsible for the views they set forth, and of course having the opportunity not to recommend certain books. ‘Theological Trends’ has aimed to help readers keep up with current thinking and writing in particular areas of theological or biblical studies. Specialist writers have the opportunity to write solid and reliable but not overly academic articles in their chosen field. From 1961 to 1966 ‘Spiritual Vocabulary’, a fourth feature, provided a glossary of common terms and words in spirituality. The third main feature has changed its name and purpose over the years: ‘Lectio Divina’ (1961–70) provided readers with help in reading and reflecting on scripture, the Fathers and classical spiritual texts; ‘The Liturgy of the Word’ (1970–1973) gave basic exegesis of passages from the Lectionary; ‘When You Pray’ (1973–1978) provided a number of useful studies of theories and practice of prayer in the Christian tradition through the ages; ‘Divine Call and Human Response’ (1980–1984) consisted of studies of different spiritual traditions, both Christian and non-Christian; and the current ‘Traditions of Spiritual Guidance’ aims to

***The concerns
of an
increasingly
diverse
readership***

provide historical and theological background to the contemporary interest in spiritual direction.

Way Supplements

From an occasional series in 1966, the *Supplements* moved to twice-yearly and thrice-yearly. They have concentrated on more specialist topics at greater depth and length. If *The Way* is a general journal of spirituality, increasingly for a broadly based readership, the *Supplements* are of more interest to specialists.

Initially the *Supplements* concentrated on offering updated thinking on the Spiritual Exercises and on various issues of concern to religious communities in process of renewal. In the early years James Walsh relied mostly on conference papers, with only the occasional pre-planned issue with specially commissioned articles. Nowadays the three-times-a-year pattern has shaken down into a concentration on: (1) good writing on the Exercises and Ignatian spirituality in general; (2) material of interest to religious communities or seminaries or clergy; (3) specialist material on other topics, e.g. communications, media and spirituality.

The *Supplements* have often sold beyond the range of normal subscribers. *Perfectae caritatis* (1966) obviously met a special need and printed 15,000 eventually; the two parts of *Renovationis causam* (1969) met a similar need and printed 10,000. More recently the Mary Ward *Supplement* sold 1,000 extra copies before it was printed. The average was perhaps 4,200 including single copy sales.

Subscriptions

The Way got off to a fairly explosive start, catching the tide of enthusiasm for renewal after the Vatican Council, especially among religious communities. Numbers appear to have peaked somewhere in the late 1960s at just under 7,000, but have declined fairly consistently since then. Already in the early 1970s editorial records reflect a concern about declining numbers: thus it is recorded that in 1973–1974 some 800 subscribers failed to renew. The decline seemed to slow down in the early 1980s and bottomed out perhaps around 1982. Since then there has been a period of much greater stability and even a modest recovery, largely the result of a shift in readership from a contracting world of religious communities to a significant increase in readers who

are lay and those not Catholic (especially clergy in the UK and USA). Currently some 3,700 copies are sent out, with a printing of 4,000 to cover single copy sales.

The decline in subscribers to both journals seems to have three main causes. First, there has been the decline in the number of religious and religious houses, especially in the USA, which country has consistently provided about 40 per cent of the readers. This has been coupled with the fact that in the initial enthusiasm many communities took out multiple subscriptions. There is now a greater sense of money-saving and so most multiple subscriptions have ended. Secondly, James Walsh's serious health problems and his lack of assistants over certain periods meant that he was not able to give much time to the very necessary work of promotion. *The Way* suffered from this more than the *Supplements*. Thirdly, but not insignificantly, is the increase in 'pirating' by means of photocopying and other forms of illegal duplication of articles.

It has always been said that the readership of both journals is far greater than the subscription figures. In the past, most subscriptions were religious houses, libraries and seminaries, with relatively few individual subscribers. There are still a substantial number of religious communities which take either or both journals and the number of libraries has, if anything, increased. Today, for example, some 450–500 libraries take the *Supplements*.

Library

The library began from a division of the Writers' Library at Farm Street and grew over the years by books received for review and a large collection of exchange copies of journals of theology, spirituality and pastoral studies. At the time of the move to Heythrop in 1983 it had more than 4,000 books stored at Osterley. Happily, Julia Bellord was also a qualified and experienced librarian, and in her time she catalogued and set in order the collection of books and journals which now forms the library of the Institute of Spirituality at Heythrop.

Conclusion

One cannot simply end this account there, without some concluding remarks, even if the account may already speak for itself. Nothing has been said about the printers (N.V. Drukkerij Trio, The Hague, for the

first eighteen years, and the Catholic Records Press, Exeter, till 1985 when the work went to Hobbs of Southampton), and perhaps too little about the engine room at Southwell House, now equipped with an electronic scriptomatic machine and, of course, a computer designed specifically for record-keeping and addressing, though with word-processing facility. But, without any suggestion of comparison with other distinguished and older Province periodicals whose history has remained unsung, 25 years of somewhat chequered history seemed to provide an appropriate moment to wish *The Way* a smoother future and no less inspiration in meeting a worldwide need.

John Coventry SJ (1915–1998) was Provincial of the Jesuit English Province at the time when *The Way* was founded. He subsequently spent some years as Secretary of the Ecumenical Commission of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and nearly a decade as Master of St Edmund's House in Cambridge. He was the author of a number of books including *Morals and Independence* (1949), *Faith Seeks Understanding* (1951) and *Our God Reigns* (1995).