

Addenda for Grove booklet 'EDITH CAVELL - A FORGOTTEN HEROINE'

This material relates to the 2015 booklet on Edith Cavell and her faith
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Feedback on the Grove booklet or any of this material will be welcome. Please email it to:

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I hope to have time to add more information in due course - keep looking at this section of the
www.edithcavell.org.uk website!

Objectives in writing the Grove booklet and this supplementary material

The biographies of Edith Cavell available to date have, in my view, failed to grasp the true importance of her faith in Edith Cavell's living and dying. Hence I wrote this brief piece, adding in some material reflecting on this faith and how it challenges us (Christians and those of other faiths and none) in our living today. Yan Martel in the introduction to his *Life of Pi* (2002) puts it far better than I can:

***If we do not work at modelling our lives on examples of other well-lived lives,
then we sacrifice our fleeting years on the altar of crude 'reality'.
We end up believing in nothing, and having worthless dreams. (adapted)***

Edith Cavell committed her life to imitate Jesus of Nazareth. She was brought up in a Christian home and received her formation in church attendance and private prayer. This she kept up throughout her nearly fifty years. She raised money to build a Sunday schoolroom in Swardeston so that children from the village might learn of Christ. She would share on all sorts of topics with her nurses in Brussels after dinner and no doubt her faith shaped her inputs there (see chapter 3 of the booklet). In Brussels she worshipped regularly at the Church of the Resurrection till the outbreak of war and then at Holy Trinity Church. When back in England with her mother on holidays from 1908-1914 they were regular members of the congregation at Holy Trinity Church in Norwich. Her final discussion on October 11th 1915 was with the chaplain, Revd Stirling Gahan, from Holy Trinity, Brussels (which incorporated the Church of the Resurrection when the occupation of Brussels began).

We know she had a copy of her prayer book and of Thomas a Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* in her cell in August - October 1915 and that she and Revd Gahan recited verses from the hymn *Abide with Me* the evening before she died (see page 14 below). In her confirmation Bible of 1884 her mother wrote out in full the text of the hymn *O Jesus I have promised to serve Thee to the end* (see page 13 below). We will never know what other hymns she would have carried in her head and on her heart. On page 15 I have listed a number of *hymns* which are likely to have been very familiar to her from her years of churchgoing though we cannot be sure precisely in each case that she would have known them. The text for all these can readily be found on the web. We may find some of the sentiments expressed in some of these older hymns 'unusual', even 'cloying', in our modern world, but there is a lively and committed Christian faith behind them all. Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur, a 19th century missionary in India, taught her Christian flock 'Now learn to *live* your songs'... I think Edith Cavell would have modelled this and echoed it for us....

Some sections contain additional relevant *Biblical quotations* and *quotations from others* which have struck me as relevant to the Cavell story and understanding its significance.

In the Grove booklet I prefaced each chapter with a quotation from Thomas a Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*. We know she received a copy in 1890 at the age of 24 from a family where she was governess. She annotated this copy in her cell in St Gilles prison where she was alone over nearly ten weeks. I have interspersed here **further quotations** from this powerful work, often as marked by her in her copy but certainly as read by her, for reflection on her model of life and on our own. For me Thomas, the 15th century monk, summarises how she lived: "*The purpose of just men depends not upon their own wisdom, but upon God's grace; on whom they always rely for whatsoever they take in hand.*" (*Imitation of Christ*, First Book, Chapter 19, section 2).

Additional material

Chapter 1 Introduction: Beginning at the end

The Belgian man addressed the soldiers: *'Bonjour messieurs. Devant la mort nous sommes tous des camarades. Vive la Belgique'*¹. The woman said to her chaplain: *'Ma conscience est tranquille. Je meurs pour Dieu et ma patrie'*².

Chapter 2 Some day I am going to do something useful - for people

When training as a nurse in 1896 Edith Cavell copied out from W H Longfellow *A Psalm of Life*
Lives of great ones all remind us / We can make our lives sublime
And departing leave behind us / Footprints on the sands of time..

Chapter 3 At a time like this I am needed (in Brussels) more than ever

For reflection

Did Edith Cavell 'need to be needed'? Was offering to care for Grace Jemmett and Pauline Randall and her mother in her clinique in Brussels amid all the pressures of management and nursing explained by this trait of character? Or was her caring as a nurse and friend and daughter drawn from her obedience to Jesus's command 'Love one another as I have loved you'?

Does my love for others spring from duty, from guilt, from needing to be beholden to them or from knowing I am loved by God and that He wants me to love those whom He loves as much as me?

Current nursing values in the UK

The 6 'Cs' of modern nursing

Part of A Vision & Strategy for Nurses, Midwives and Care Staff. Source: www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/.../6c-a5-leaflet.pdf. For implementation information visit: www.commissioningboard.nhs.uk/nursingvision.

These characteristics of the modern nurse were set out in 2012 and now shape discourse on the value base of the profession. It is interesting to reflect on how closely they square with the character of Edith Cavell... and indeed of any follower of Jesus Christ.

1. Care

Care is our core business and that of our organisations and the care we deliver helps the individual person and improves the health of the whole community. Caring defines us and our work. People receiving care expect it to be right for them consistently throughout every stage of their life.

2. Compassion

Compassion is how care is given through relationships based on empathy, respect and dignity. It can also be described as intelligent kindness and is central to how people perceive their care.

3. Competence

Competence means all those in caring roles must have the ability to understand an individual's health and social needs. It is also about having the expertise, clinical and technical knowledge to deliver effective care and treatments based on research and evidence.

4. Communication

Communication is central to successful caring relationships and to effective team working. Listening is as important as what we say and do. It is essential for "no decision about me without me". Communication is the key to a good workplace with benefits for those in our care and staff alike.

¹ *Good day gentlemen. In the face of death we are all comrades. Long live Belgium.*

² *My conscience is clear. I die for God and for my country*

5. Courage

Courage enables us to do the right thing for the people we care for, to speak up when we have concerns. It means we have the personal strength and vision to innovate and to embrace new ways of working.

6. Commitment

A commitment to our patients and populations is a cornerstone of what we do. We need to build on our commitment to improve the care and experience of our patients. We need to take action to make this vision and strategy a reality for all and meet the health and social care challenges ahead

Code of ethics for nurses and midwives

The current Code has similar elements in it:

- Make the care of people your first concern, treating them as individuals and respecting their dignity
- Work with others to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of those in your care, their families and carers, and the wider community
- Provide a high standard of practice and care at all times
- Be open and honest, act with integrity and uphold the reputation of your profession

see : <http://www.nmc-uk.org/Publications/Standards/The-code/Introduction/>

Chapter 4 We were divided between pity and hatred (for the occupying German troops)

Experience of occupation

Edith Cavell's reflections in the *Nursing Mirror*, April 1915

'The once busy and bustling streets are very quiet and silent. So are the people who were so gay and communicative in the summer (of 1914). No-one speaks to his neighbour in the tram, for he may be a spy. Anyway.. who would care to tell of their all absorbing anxiety as to how to make both ends meet and spin out the last of the savings....

I am but a looker-on after all for it is not my country whose soil is desecrated ...I can only feel the deep and tender pity of the friend within the gates, and observe with sympathy and admiration the high courage and self-control of a people enduring a long and terrible agony.... '

The link of professions to faith and to trustworthiness.

Any professional must declare him/herself to be committed to professional ethics and will only be recognised by professional colleagues and accrediting bodies on this basis. Discipline may follow where someone fails to abide by their profession's ethics. The criminal law may overlap in holding professionals to account - see numerous examples in the UK of recent times from the worlds of the media, accountants, bakers, healthcare professionals etc. Edith Cavell struggled with tensions here - she specifically did not wear her nurse's uniform at her trial lest her profession as a nurse be sullied by what actions she had taken as a private individual. She must have grappled with ethical difficulties in her compromising for the values and ethics of the Red Cross by sheltering allied soldiers within a Red Cross clinique.

Where do my own values and ethics conflict with those of my profession? To which do I owe a higher loyalty?

Biblical material

Jesus challenged the 'ethics' of some religious leaders of the Jews of his time when he helped the Canaanite woman Matthew 15: 21-28. His apparent 'racism' and 'bigotry' may shock today's reader when he initially refuses to help her as a non-Jew. May it not be that this was a means of teaching his disciples and other Jewish

listeners that the contemporary Jewish treatment of 'heathen' people as 'dogs' was not the way of his Father whose will was for his 'chosen people' Israel to be a 'light to the Gentiles' (Luke 2:32, drawing on Isaiah 9 1-7 42.6 and 49:6)

Jesus's dealing with Judas as his betrayer is also no mean challenge for us as to how we treat those standing against us (John 13) as are his words from the cross: 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.' (Luke 23:34).

Chapter 5 Show the two men in

The straitened conditions of life in Brussels autumn / winter 1914 and onwards

Edith Cavell wrote to her sister Lilian on November 9 1914: 'We have quickly accommodated ourselves to very altered circumstances and have learned to live in a modern "middle ages"; no trains, no motors, no bicycles, no post, no telephone, no telegraph, very few street lights, sometimes a scarcity of bread, and a general limit to ease and comfort; English and Dutch papers are forbidden'. Rowland Ryder *Edith Cavell* 1975, 122

She wrote to her mother on November 22 'The nurses are spending all their spare time making warm clothes and little odds and ends for our poor children. It is terrible to think of all the misery and suffering and the cold has begun so unfortunately early.' (Ryder *op cit* p 123)

Obedying the German order to register

Early in 1915 the German authorities required all foreign nationals to register their presence in Belgium and to report to them every fortnight. Edith Cavell refused to register at the police HQ as required on the grounds that she was working in a Belgian nursing school and was working for the Belgian Red Cross. Diana Souhami p 207. This is in line with her decision to give assistance to allied soldiers - she deemed herself to be in the right not to comply with orders from an occupying power.

Confirmation of Edith Cavell's decision to admit soldiers coming to her clinique.

At the end of March 1915 Edith Cavell sheltered an Irish soldier, Michael Carey. He and eleven fellow soldiers had been sheltered by a Belgian mill-owner hidden in his mill for months. Carey returned from a trip to find the mill-owner and all the other soldiers had been shot and the owner's wife and children taken away to internment camp. Diana Souhami *Edith Cavell* 2010 p 195 and Ryder 1975 *Edith Cavell* Appendix E.

It may be more obvious why Edith Cavell decided to break the law and risk her own life when one considers this evidence of the context in which she and the soldiers seeking help were set.

Biblical material

Jesus is recorded in Matthew's gospel as having taught (Matt 6: 5-11):

Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' ⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. ⁹ "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

In the light of this challenge from Jesus, could Edith Cavell have refused entry to her 'safe house' to Boger and Meachin on November 1 1914 (and to the 200 men who followed them over a period of nine months)? Could she have allowed it with the proviso that she would hand the soldiers over to the Germans when they were fit - like giving them 'a scorpion' rather than the asked-for 'bread' (i.e. shelter and help with a safe passage home)?

Chapter 6 Don't send any more men – but we must save them – if one were caught and shot it would be our fault

Biblical material

Jesus challenges vacillation: 'Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."' Luke 9:62.

Linked excerpts from Thomas a Kempis

Christ had adversaries – dost thou wish to have all men thy friends? Whence shall thy patience attain the crown if no adversity befall thee? Suffer with Christ and for Christ if thou desire to reign with Christ. à Kempis: Edith Cavell's copy - Pt II, Ch 1 p 51 (underlined phrase marked in margin)

Disciple: O Jesus, brightness of eternal glory, and comfort of the pilgrim soul, hear my cry and look on my total desolation. Words fail me in Your presence; may my silence speak for me.

How long will my Lord delay his coming? Lord, come to me, the poor and small thing that I am, and bring me joy. Stretch out your hand and save me from all misery and pain. Come, Lord, come, for no day or hour is happy without You. Without You my table has no guest, for You alone are my joy.

Sadness is my due and I am like someone imprisoned and loaded with chains until You revive me with the light of Your presence and, as my friend, show Your face. ...

You alone are my God and my eternal salvation. I will not keep silent nor cease from urgent prayer until Your grace returns and my heart leaps at the sound of Your voice.

Christ replies: See I am here. I have come at your call. Your tears and your soul's desire, your humiliation and penitence of heart have moved Me to come to you.

Thomas a Kempis *The Imitation of Christ* c 1420 Translated Robert Jeffrey (Penguin, 2013) Part III ch 21 p 158

Chapter 7 I thank God for these ten weeks of quiet

Additional reflection

In Edith Cavell's time Sunday was a 'day off' each week - no shops were open, no sport played - in fact very dull to some! Today in the UK Sunday may be the busiest day in the week in some shopping centres. Sport, both professional and amateur, is scheduled for Sunday. Businesses and care services are increasingly working 24/7. Did Edith Cavell as a nurse and manager have Sundays 'off' work? Without a break like this life gets pressured and the spirit wilts.

Am I making 'space' for quiet and reflection? - daily space 'offline', days off, taking a retreat... Does this allow me to re-focus on God and the 'big picture'?

A story about 'managing' the rigours of solitary confinement

There is a story of a doctor in early Christian times who was unjustly imprisoned by the emperor. His clothes were rags, his nourishment a cup of water and a slice of bread each day. His family wondered: 'Why is it you look so well? You have the air of someone who just came from a wedding!' The doctor smiled. 'I have found a remedy for all troubles', he said, 'a tea which is good against all suffering and sorrow. It contains seven herbs:

- The first herb is contentedness. I may shiver in rags and gnaw at my crust but how much worse off should I be if the emperor had put me in a cell with no food or drink...
- The second is common sense. Whether I rejoice or worry I shall still be in prison.. so why repine?

- The third is remembrance of past sins. Count them - if every sin one had committed merited a day in jail, how many lives would one spend behind bars? - I have been let off lightly!
- The fourth is the thought of the sorrows which Christ gladly bore for us
- The fifth is the knowledge that suffering has been given us by God as from a father, not to harm us but to cleanse us and sanctify us. We are being prepared for heaven
- The sixth is the knowledge that no suffering can harm a Christian life. If the core of life is truth then that will be changed by no prison cell. Prison cannot stop me from loving; iron bars cannot exclude faith.
- The last herb in the recipe is hope.

I have drunk barrels of this tea and I can recommend it to you - it has proved good.'

From: *In God's Underground* Richard Wurmbrand, WH Allen, London 1968, p 186

Chapter 8 I may have been strict, but I have loved you more than you can know

Edith Cavell was a leader from an early age - and especially of nurses from the early 1900s. She worked hard at developing a relatively new profession, both in England and then in Belgium. She looked to the future through training new leaders. Her own 'trainer', Jesus Christ, had qualities which she sought to follow as a model. He called his group of followers his friends:

'You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.' (John 15:14-17)

From Thomas a Kempis

Nothing is sweeter than love; nothing is stronger, nothing higher, nothing broader, nothing more pleasing, nothing larger or better in heaven or on earth. For love is born of God and is above all created things

Love is a mighty power, a total and immense good. Love alone lifts every burden and makes the rough places smooth. It carries every hardship as if it were nothing and makes all bitterness sweet and acceptable.

The love of Jesus is wonderful and inspires us to noble actions.

Love flies, runs and jumps for joy. It is free and unlimited. Love gives all for all, abiding in One from whom all goodness flows. Love knows no bounds and strongly transcends all barriers.

Love is pure, tender, joyful and satisfying. It is strong, patient, faithful, wise, tolerant, energetic and never self-serving. It is submissive and obedient: when someone is self serving they give up love. It is sensible, honest,

O Lord, deepen Your love in me so I may learn, in my own heart, how good it is to love.

Let me sing the song of love – may my soul be drained in Your praise. Let me love all those who truly love you and the law of love, which shines out from Your commands.

From Thomas a Kempis *Of the Imitation of Christ* Part III chapter 5 : *Of divine love*

Chapter 9 I have seen death so often that it not strange or fearful to me

Edith Cavell's last communion with Revd Stirling Gahan

The post-communion prayer also includes the commitment: 'we offer ..ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto thee'. This is especially poignant in the context of the communion being celebrated in the cell that night. For Edith Cavell it encapsulates her life from her confirmation onwards - one of sacrifice, duty and obedience to her calling - see the hymn inscribed by her mother in her confirmation bible ('*O Jesus I have promised to serve Thee to the end*').

Biblical passages

¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you....

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. Romans 8: 10-11; 18-21

Other material for reflection

***And that will be heaven* - Evangeline Patterson** (from 100 contemporary Christian poets, Lion, 1983)

and that will be heaven

*and that will be heaven
at last the first unclouded
seeing*

*to stand like the sunflower
turned full face to the sun drenched
with light in the still centre
held while the circling planets
hum with an utter joy*

*seeing and knowing
at last in every particle
seen and known and not turning away*

*never turning away
again*

Holy Sonnet: *Death be not proud* John Donne: (written around 1610)

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

Chapter 10 Patriotism is not enough

Looking forward from the cell in St Gilles prison on October 11th 1915, had Edith Cavell's statement been taken to heart more in the post-war process of fashioning the Treaty of Versailles it is possible that the Second World War might not have come about. The reparations imposed on an exhausted and humiliated Germany suggested there was no forgiveness and no real concern about rehabilitation and reconstruction. We live today

with the outcomes of some of the decisions made and enforced by the various 'patriots' round the negotiating table in summer 1919.

Patriotism and bigotry may have featured in Edith Cavell's thinking about how Jesus might have responded to them:

Jesus taught: 'Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.' (Matthew 7:1-5)

Further biblical passage

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus. They... said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. (John 8:3-9)

Other material

'For the Fallen' Robert Laurence Binyon published in The Times newspaper 21st September 1914.

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

Chapter 11 I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone

On the face of it, this whole statement might suggest that, in her prison cell, Edith Cavell had concluded that the only tenable position as regards the war was one of the pacifist / conscientious objector. Neither side had a monopoly of being 'right' and as a Christian she had to love even her enemy and those who were to take her life. How could she have enacted this 'neutrality' had she been a serving soldier in combat. Might she have been remembered for having been court-martialled and shot?

Chapter 12's heading '*I die for God and my country*' comes from her final words at the place of execution and might, to some, seem to contradict her view on patriotism. We cannot reach a firm conclusion on the disjunction - for me her putting God first underscores where her ultimate loyalty lay - a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, not primarily of the United Kingdom. Maybe she added 'and my country' in recognition that the German action against her was in many ways a means of punishing an enemy through this execution. The fact she had Phillipe Baucq, a Belgian, tied to the adjacent post was also evidence of an intentional punishing both of a nation which was fighting for survival as well as an individual who represented that nation.

It is interesting to note how little notice was taken of her last statement in the press following her death - the emphasis was on the noble death of a defenceless nurse who had helped ally and enemy alike. There was almost no examination of any justice on the German side that she had paid with her life for something that they had explicitly banned, namely acting to assist enemy soldiers to return to fighting. She herself said that the sentence was just (in terms of the German position).

Thus Edith Cavell's calm and hugely important reflection was lost amid the ensuing media and political furore which followed her execution. There are parallels in our times the message which challenges the status quo is often 'edited out'. This causes me, as a Christian disciple, to reflect on how to respond. There is no doubt that the tendency to exclude the uncomfortable message leads to a world dominated by a discourse centred on 'crude reality'. As Yan Martel warns (see page 4) '***We end up believing in nothing, and having worthless dreams***'.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and theologian who was executed for his part in a plot to assassinate Hitler, wrote from prison:

'True forgiveness is never cheap. It's an act of generosity rooted in the hope of renewal. In any relationship forgiveness is rarely the whole issue - reconciliation is a greater goal.'³

'The Christian is not a 'religious' person but simply a human being profoundly this-worldly, characterised by discipline and the constant knowledge of death and resurrection.'⁴

'Bonhoeffer confided to me that he was actively involved in the German resistance against Hitler. 'The structure of responsible action includes both readiness to accept guilt and freedom. ... If anyone tries to escape guilt in responsibility he detaches himself from the ultimate reality of human existence and cuts himself off from the redeeming mystery of Christ's bearing guilt without sin - he has no share in the divine justification which lies upon this event'.

'Bonhoeffer talked about how the German penchant for self-sacrifice and submission to authority had been used to evil ends by the Nazis. Only a deep understanding of, and commitment to, the God of the Bible could stand up to such wickedness.'

'It is we ourselves, and not outward circumstances, who make death what it can be - a death freely and voluntarily accepted.'⁵

³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* pp 209-210.

⁴ op cit p 209-210

⁵ op cit pp 446-7

Chapter 12 I die for God and for my country

For reflection

At the last Edith Cavell showed immense calm at the stake ...she went 'like a lamb to the slaughter' (Isaiah 53.7). What she had grasped of God's gift of eternal life (see Chapter 9) will have affected her behaviour and her mental attitude.

How might I face such a death?

The story of Edith Cavell highlights the inescapable truth that life consists of choices : one choice inevitably excludes another. You cannot have it all. It is a no-brainer to reject a way which leads nowhere and whose effects will ultimately be destructive. (Yet there are many people who end up going down that road.) Nor does it make sense to try to have a foot in both camps. No, far better to make your choice and then go after it with all of your heart. One needs wisdom, courage, discernment, calling, self-knowledge.

Am I confident I am making the right choices?

As Christians at our baptism, confirmation or marriage we make promises before God, whether regarding ourselves, our spouse or our children... these should never be taken lightly.

The gifts God gives us are meant for service ... living our lives for God's glory and others' good.

One day we will have to account for how we kept our promises and for the use to which we put our God-given talents.

Accountability is out of fashion - to whom am I accountable? Where does accountability to God feature for me?

Thomas à Kempis has the troubled disciple crying out: 'O Jesus, brightness of eternal glory, and comfort of the pilgrim soul, hear my cry. Stretch out your hand and save me from all misery and pain.' Jesus replies: 'See, I am here. Your tears and your soul's desire... have moved me to come to you.'⁶

The apostle Paul wrote to Christians already facing persecution and having himself experienced suffering for the gospel he preached:

'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.'⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.'

(2 Corinthians 6: 5-10)

Chapter 13 Concluding thoughts: Think of me as a nurse who tried to do her duty

For reflection

When she presented Jesus as a baby before God in the Temple his mother Mary was told by the priest Simeon: "A sword shall pierce your own soul" (Luke 2:35).

Jesus warned "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble." However He reassures us "But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Reflect on the cost of duty.

'To remember helps us to re-member, to put ourselves together again, placing our selves in some proper proportion, re-learning what makes humanity human.... The human self is most itself when not being selfish.'
Canon Mark Oakley St Pauls Cathedral 10th anniversary service for victims of 9/11.

Prayer for reconciliation between Allied and Japanese combatants, Coventry Cathedral 1990s

⁶ Jeffrey 2013 p 158 Part III ch 21. The chapter is titled 'How we must rest in God above all his gifts'

*'Father of all in this broken world may we pray not for Muslim, Christian or Jew, Palestinian or Israeli,
rich or poor, gay or straight, abuser or abused, victim or torturer, saint or sinner,
that we may not divide them but hold them together in our hearts
as your children for whom Jesus died and in whom He lives'*

'The shield of memory may be turned into a sword'... said of German post-WWI attitudes

'War springs from the love and loyalty which should be offered to God being applied to some God-substitute. One of the most dangerous of these is nationalism'. (Robert Runcie)

'When I despair, I remember that all through history, the way of truth and love has always won.' Mahatma Gandhi

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the WW" German pastor executed for his part in a plot against Hitler wrote: "Praise to the Lord, the almighty, the king of creation... shelters thee under his wings, yea and gently sustaineth ". That is true and it is what we must always rely on.' p 44 *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, martyr, prophet, spy.* Eric Metaxas 2011, Thomas Nelson US

'Bonhoeffer had theologically redefined the Christian life as something active, not reactive. It had nothing to do with avoiding sin or merely talking or believing or teaching theological notions or principles or rules or tenets. It had everything to do with living one's whole life in obedience to God's call through action.... It was not a cramped, compromised, circumspect life, but one lived in a kind of wild, joyful, full-throated freedom - that was what it was to obey God.' ibid p446

Cardinal Mercier wrote a letter to the faithful in Belgium Christmas 1914 which was read in churches and the text printed and circulated secretly. Cardinal Mercier was kept under house arrest for a month.

'The power of the occupier does not derive from any legitimate authority. Consequently, in your heart of hearts, you owe it neither esteem, nor commitment, nor obedience. The only legitimate power in Belgium is that which belongs to our King, to his government and to the representatives of the people. He alone has the right to the affection of our hearts and to our submission.'

'She (Edith Cavell) is alive to God, awaiting "the splendour of the morning dawn upon the hills".'
Bishop Pollock on the evening of May 15 1919 at her graveside at Norwich Cathedral.

A Blessing with which Edith Cavell will have been familiar:

Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good;
render to no man evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted ; support the weak;
help the afflicted; honour all men; love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.
And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
be upon you, and remain with you for ever. *Amen*

'O Jesus I have promised to serve Thee to the end': John E Bode 1868

Inscribed in Edith Cavell's confirmation Bible by her mother. She was confirmed in 1884 aged 18 at St Andrew's Parish church, Clevedon, Somerset by the Bishop of Bath and Wells

1. O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou forever near me, my Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle if Thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be my Guide.
2. O let me feel Thee near me: the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me, around me and within;
But Jesus, draw Thou nearer and shield my soul from sin.
3. O, let me hear Thee speaking in accents clear and still,
I dare not trust my judgment: Thy way shall be my will;
O, speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;
O, speak, and help me listen, Thou Guardian of my soul.
4. O Jesus, Thou hast promised to all who follow Thee
That where Thou art in glory there shall Thy servant be;
And Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end—
Oh, give me grace to follow, my Master and my Friend.
5. O, let me see Thy footprints, and in them plant mine own;
My hope to follow duly is in Thy strength alone;
O, guide me, call me, draw me, uphold me to the end;
And then in Heav'n receive me, my Saviour and my Friend.

***'Abide With Me; fast falls the eventide'* Henry F. Lyte, 1847**

Said by Edith Cavell and the Revd Stirling Gahan, chaplain at the Anglican church in Brussels, in her cell in St Gilles prison late on the evening of 11th October 1915, a few hours before Edith Cavell was shot.

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word;
But as Thou dwell'st with Thy disciples, Lord,
Familiar, condescending, patient, free.
Come not to sojourn, but abide with me.

Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings,
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea—
Come, Friend of sinners, and thus abide with me.

Thou on my head in early youth didst smile;
And, though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,
Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee,
On to the close, O Lord, abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Other hymns which are likely to have been familiar to Edith Cavell

À toi la gloire, O Ressuscité! Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
All my hope on God is founded
As pants the hart for cooling streams
At the name of Jesus
Be Thou my vision
Blest are the pure in heart
Breathe on me breath of God
Breathe on me breath of God
Canticle of the Sun 'All creatures of our God and King lift up your voice and with us sing'
Christ, whose glory fills the skies
Come down O love divine
Crown Him with many crowns
Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Ein Feste Burg - A safe stronghold our God is still
Fight the good fight with all thy might
Forth in thy name O Lord I go
Glorious things of thee are spoken
God be in my head and in my understanding
Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost
Hail to the Lord's anointed
How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
I heard the voice of Jesus say
I heard the voice of Jesus say
Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea
Jesus lover of my soul
Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run
Just as I am without one plea
O for a heart to praise my God
O thou who camest from above
Our blest redeemer, ere He breathed His tender last farewell
Praise to the Lord, the almighty, the king of creation
Rejoice the Lord is King
Souls of men
Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee
Take up thy cross
The head that once was crowned with thorns
We rest on Thee our shield and our defender
When morning gilds the skies
Ye servants of the Lord