

Elaine Holman

What drew me to Truro Cathedral's Writing Workshop? A deep interest in writing and religion/spirituality, and how both interests help shape me. Having written for some years now and being in a stage of life where I am reassessing my beliefs, the thought of a writing workshop set in a Cathedral context really appealed. To explore, through poetry and prose, ideas and issues thrown up by the combination of place and people presented to me in the workshop was fascinating.

FALLING OUT OF LOVE WITH JESUS

Stood silent in one of your houses,
surrounded by solid centuries of stone
vaunting your name, an epiphany:
I no longer love you.

Sacked by years of token promises,
bled dry in service,
I see the men fronting your mystery:
vow not to believe their type again.

Succoured in my own sacred space,
freed from fear and obligation,
I enter that greatest of negotiations:
the right to learn to love again.

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CONSIDER THE QUESTIONS

Learn to love the questions.
Learn to live the questions.

Prize the questions
and the journeys they take you on
above any absolute answer.

Absolute answers
I've found
can turn to dust
in open-hearted hands.

I'm learning to carry
the questions -
lightly, lovingly,
respectfully, reverently -
and carrying the questions
allows me to live.

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THAT BISHOP BENSON

Ooooooh! 'Ee wuz an 'ansom chap, that Bishop Benson! Why! I remembers the day 'e furst rode into town ... talk about a commanding presence! Presence by the shoveful 'e 'ad an' no mistake! An' those eyes! 'Ee 'ad this way when 'e wuz preachin' (or drummin' up custom as sum did say!) o' fixin' you, jus' fer a second or two, with those luminous blue eyes o'his, like you wuz the ony person in the pews, and Lord!, if u'n decided at start o' service, mind, that there wuz no way 'e t'was gettin' 'is 'ands on yorn purse then, once them eyes o' is 'ad landed on 'ee your old purse, no matter t'was full or a'most empty!, that there purse wud be open to 'un fer evermore!

Swoonin' there wuz! Downright swoonin' in the aisles! Ladies practic'ly 'ad to be carried out mid-service. I wuz ony a childe at the time, mind, but I cans remember 'un! 'An the effect 'e 'ad on my poor Mother! Stirred a fearful fuss at home, it did! Pops wud say: "Mother! I declare you care more fer tha' Bishop Benson an' 'is grand, high-fluting schemes than 'e do fer th' 'ole pack o' us nay more!."

'An Mother, I swear she'd nearly cuss in her protestations that she wuz jus' trying t' support th' Man-O-God in 'is spiritual endeavours, an' ony wanted to be able to look back with pride one day and say: "Mind - we 'ad a 'and in that! We helped build tha' fine house o' God!." Course wuz all a grand distraction frum 'ow 'ordin'ry, not t'say downright depressin' th' times were otherwise. 'An it provided much needed jobs fer our local boys, I'll give 'un that.

Bugged off up to Canterbury furst chance 'e got tho', didn' 'un?

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