

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES

Introduction

These studies aim to help people find deeper communion with God and one another.

That is a bold statement, yes?

Reminding me of the comment by Donald Nicholls when he set out to write a book about Holiness.

"A certain feeling of absurdity comes over one on being asked to write a book about holiness, and then in turn to expect other people to read it after it has been written". (Donald Nicholls", Holiness DLT, London 1981 p3).



Bishop Philip Huggins

Imagine presuming to tell others about holiness or about how to acquire deeper union with God and one another!

Nicholls goes on to say, and I concur, that what one can do is, perhaps, gather in a fresh and helpful way some of the wisdom in our Christian tradition.

After all, many fine and gifted people have sought deeper communion over the centuries. Their stories and writings give us some hints as we respond to the call to love God and one another with our whole being.

My hope is to therefore make accessible some of the wisdom gathered in what is called "ascetical theology".

Ascetical theology has been described as "a systematic analysis of the life of grace under the Spirit." (A Dictionary of Christian Theology Ed. Alan Richardson SCMPSI. 1969 p16).

The disciplined life of one who seeks to live by the Spirit and be guided by the Spirit (Ephesians 5:25), has been analysed in a three fold way.

"There is first of all the way of purgation, a basic stripping of the self from excessive attachment to personal wants; secondly the way of illumination during which the believer is conformed to the image of Christ by the practice of the virtues; and thirdly, the unitive way in which the believer has a profound awareness of union with God". (Ibid p16).

It is my view that many Christians would be helped by a better knowledge of 'ascetical theology' as related to the journey of our Christian life.

It is one thing to pray "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven".