

A piece dictated by Leslie, to his grandson on 30/06/2013

When I last wrote for Chelsfield magazine, it was when I was popping up out of my mole hole and striding out into adventure in the world. Now I am launched into the journey. It is a journey of life, a journey of *the* life, of *one* life, of the *only* life I have to share, which is my life, and that life is too private to share, so it feels like trying to break open an egg; that breathtaking moment when you wonder whether you allowed the required 3 minutes, or you have gone on too long. Will I have it soft and runny, or hard and boiled. And I cut the top of my egg off now. It is both hard and runny, it is both hard and soft, boiled and runny.

The first sigh of relief is to discover it is a good life. If it is bad, it is like the Curate's egg, only bad in parts, my lord. There are parts of me that are very hard boiled and another me, that is soft and gooey. I am thankful for the shell that has been the boundary holding me together. I invite you, to unpeel my egg with me, so that we may find a discovery amongst ourselves of the various parts of the self that I am, knowing that it will be a constant mixture of hard and soft, good and bad. Full of flavour and full of interest, I shall enjoy it, because it is my life, and on the whole, I have and am, thoroughly enjoying my life, and as it draws to its natural conclusion, I intend to enjoy to the full, the substance of life itself.

What has made my life, what is making my life, is there here and now, of this moment, when Zachary and I are together and attempt to peel back the outer shell knowing that I will want to value the hard outer shell, as much as the soft underbelly, knowing also that there is much too much to bring out and share.

I have always valued the fact that I have got 22 volumes of St Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica which volumes I have always proudly paraded on my shelves wherever I am, in my current burden. So that anybody who wants to make a judgement about me can do so by looking round my room and realising what a clever clogs I am. In fact, were I to attempt to unravel the 86 years of my being then my volumes would be at least 44, which is typical of the one-up-manship I have tended to attempt to express, which partly comes of being born in to a family, where I have a sister three years older than myself so that I have always needed to prove myself better than, knowing nothing, yet doing more. At this point, I must stop, I am getting tired, and yet, to get anywhere I will need to go on forever it feels. My problem is that I have not defined my boundary.

Zachary began this afternoon for me, by describing his creation, an island, by describing a meandering stream in a wood. This, above all, expresses how I am in myself and how I feel my life has unravelled itself,

a meander that I have tried time and time to form in to an ordered moment, pools to jump in, pools to swim in, pools of living water where I can be with the fishes and the birds and the plants, pools of family where I can be with and be at one with them. And that's what I might do now, if I can find somebody to spend more time with me, would be to select boundaries for one after another of discreet pools, where streams can be contained, but that must come at another time. For the moment I want to end by a beginning.

My life, will never be complete and therefore the story will never end, but all of you who read this, are sharing in the provision of some boundary and shape for that life. So may I invite you, to continue to do that, by writing out your continuation of the life that I've had, where it has touched you and your life. We will see where it goes from there. And as I end this particular volume, I am asked, 'Who would I send it to?' and I answer, "To no one."

Should anyone care and want to read it, they may, should anyone care to contribute and add to it, that would be delightful. Zachary today described one of the things geology meant to him, the peeling back of a corner of the world, if what I write, can stimulate you to peel back a corner of your world, then maybe we can continue to explore together, the meanderings of life, the beauty of holiness.

Canon Leslie Virgo.

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