

Prayer of the Month • October 2011

Let the healing grace of your love, O Lord, so transform me that I may play my part in the transfiguration of the world from a place of suffering, death and corruption to a realm of infinite light, joy and love. Make me so obedient to your Spirit that my life may become a living prayer, and a witness to your unfailing presence.

The Pain that Heals / Martin Israel. 2002



This is a prayer that builds up to its conclusion. It has grand ideas but it is not simply aspirational. The writer asks to be involved in the change or transformation he longs for. How can everything change for the better unless we ourselves change? The writer has thought about what things are like now, in a world of suffering, and then imagines how the negative aspects can be turned into positives, into infinite good. His part in the transformation of all things is to be obedient to the Holy Spirit of God. It is a little thing but also a great thing.

Martin Israel was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 30 April 1927, into a liberal Jewish family. He was attracted by the Christian faith of the family's black servants, and especially the image of Jesus on the cross. He felt that his life's work would be about reconciliation. He was an outstanding student and studied medicine at Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg. He travelled to England in 1951 to do some post-doctoral research, and became a doctor in Hammersmith Hospital, London, and then a pathologist in Wolverhampton. After National Service in the Royal Army Medical Corps, he became Lecturer in Pathology at the Royal College of Surgeons, London.

In personal life he was shy and suffered from depression for many years, receiving help through psychotherapy. He was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1974. He was involved in the Church's ministry of healing, wrote many books on prayer and the spiritual life, organised retreats, and became a parish priest at Holy Trinity, Kensington. He was president of the Guild of Health (1983-1990) and of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies (1983-1998). In later life he suffered from Parkinson's Disease. He died on 23 October 2007.

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