

I enjoy fiddling things around,
usually playing with numbers,
but also letters and words.

Out of the simple title

Christian Aid

you can get,

Christ and I.

The word and

is often overlooked,

but probably the most important word

in any language.

And makes connections

which binds things together.

Usually obvious things:

love and marriage

go together like

a horse and carriage.

But

and

can actually bind anything together,

even the most unlikely couples:

Prince Charles and turnips,

bishops and tarts,

Boris Johnson and finesse.

Christ and I

should bring us up short,

how dare we link the Word made flesh,

the saving force throughout the universe,

the truly perfect man without sin,

how dare we link that Christ with us.

Yet the Gospel invites us to do just that.

To dare to say the King and I.

The Gospel draw us to be Christ's friend,

for Christ and us to be an item.

It is a stupendous and,

God and I,

God

creator of the big bang and the big crunch

and all stops in between.

It's incredible to link those two together.

Yet link them we do.

And we dare to do that

because of this day,

Whitsunday,

Pentecost,

when we celebrate the coming of God's Holy Spirit.

That spirit

is the agent which enables the impossible to be linked:

Christ and I,

God and us.

An impossible marriage

with the spirit providing the connection,

the and

to make the impossible possible.

The Holy Spirit is a great mystery,

and it is dangerous to picture it or simplify it,

but never mind, I'm always inventing pictures.

The Holy Spirit is the God-microchip in us

which programs us to phone home –

our hearts are restless till they rest in you

sort of stuff.

But more than that,

it is the God microchip in us

which enables us to make all connections,

not just with God,

the ultimate You upper-case,

but also with the people and things around us,

all those yous lower case.

The Spirit provides the and

between us and them,

makes us notice them,

makes us alert to the wonder of them.

No Spirit no and.

No and no life.

Of course,

if you take Christ and I

out of Christian Aid,

you still have two letters left,

ai, a & i.

Ai was the pseudonym

of the Irish poet,

George Russel,

who penned these lines:

‘In ancient shadows and twilights

where childhood has strayed,

the world’s great sorrows are born,

its heroes are made.

In the lost boyhood of Judas,

Christ was betrayed.’

We can't get all cosy
and just extract
Christ and I
from Christian Aid,
with eyes only for each other
like some besotted couple.
The remaining letters,
ai,
and the poem they flag up,
challenge us
to seek Christ
precisely where childhood has strayed,
to seek him in the lost boyhoods and girlhoods
wherever.
So many places in our world
where the potential for life in all its fullness is lost,

where people are denied the rights and conditions
which would enable them to flourish as a child of God.
Those lost opportunities
Christian Aid in our name
and depending on our support,
seeks to revisit
and redeem.
Because of today,
the day of Pentecost,
the day of and,
the day of making connections,
we dare to say
Helmsley and Dafur,
Helmlsey and Zimbabwe,
Helmsley and Burma.

We do it because Christ
is about making connections,
he was the lightning bolt of a charge
which made connections
between God and us.

And Christ isn't fussy,
isn't choosy,
he'll make connections with anybody.

Because of his nature,
his life on earth allied itself
with the downtrodden,
the dispossessed,
the marginalised,
the victims.

His death impaled itself with all those wounded in our world.

And his resurrection
signalled the very triumph of those victims,
a veritable raising up the lowly.

When we say
Christ and I,
it isn't just the guy who threw stars into space
deigning to be friends with puny us.

It's also about puny
but actually quite powerful and marvellous us
daring to be friends with those who are
the sad victims of our world,
who reflect the image of none other
than Christ the ultimate victim.

Christian Aid Week

focuses on our partnership with all those victims,
with whom we are linked

by our prayer,

by our fundraising,

by our voting,

by our proclamation.

This week should give us the nerve

to put our arm

around that poor soul who has lost everything

in the typhoon in Burma

and proudly say Christ and I.

So thank you,

in Christ's name for your work for Christian Aid,

for seeking the lost and strayed and forgotten

in Christ's name and saying Christ and I.

Given a lifetime,

you couldn't find better words to sum up your faith.