

We've been fortunate, on the monks' side, to have had our architect, Roger Forrester, living immediately next door and our builder, Richard Jackson, just across the road in Jack's Lane. Roger, sadly, is no longer with us but it's been an eye-opener watching them both at work. Watching Roger, that is, drawing up intricate and detailed plans of how the alteration or 'new build' should look and watching Richard putting these plans into effect, often with some very creative touches of his own. But Roger once remarked to me of his dread of visiting the work in action at some sites, knowing how difficult it was for builders to interpret his plans correctly. It worked for Roger and Richard because they had a mutual respect for each other's plans – they could trust that the final result would almost certainly involve compromises of one sort or another and even possible errors but it would serve its function and stand the test of time.

I wonder if this isn't rather a good blueprint for how God deals with us. God has a plan but has given it over to us to implement and to do so in a creative fashion, based on mutual respect and understanding, that is, based on love. Something not immediately obvious, perhaps, but which has to be worked at, formed over time – incremental. And this is us: a work in process, with adjustments still to be made to that architrave over there or the guttering over here which a sudden storm has once again displaced: that harsh word that calls for forgiveness and the intolerant attitude in need, once again, of adjustment. The ideal solution is, of course, to have architect and builder as one and this is Christ, as both our sure foundation, and the keystone to cap a job well done. If we hew close to Christ, all will be well and we will have a church safe to dwell in, both here and hereafter.

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