

When Pope Benedict visited Britain some years ago there was a scene or shot on television of thousands of people passing a London double-decker bus hired by Richard Dawkins and his band of secularists and advertising the naivety of the religious take on reality- I forget the exact words now, and the television reporter asked members of the passing crowd what they thought of this but no one was really interested; they just laughed in their joy at the occasion, in their keenness to get to the celebration. Those on the bus soon realised the hopelessness of the situation and, indeed, its embarrassment, for they were the ones now being made to look ridiculous – or at least that's my memory of it – what it said to me. Reason alone isn't enough to sustain us in this increasingly disturbed and disturbing world, in this cosmos which remains chillingly empty of other life or life without end, despite our best efforts to find it. There is something else going on here which is not of our making: an inspiration which brings joy despite suffering, a hope despite helplessness, faith without reason, though this inspiration may be reason enough. We celebrate All Saints today in the belief that there is life beyond death and people living in it, not because they are necessarily good, but because God is good or in the words of Walter Hilton from the 14th century:

When love acts in the soul it does so wisely and gently, for it has great power to kill anger and envy, and all the passions of wrath and melancholy, and it brings into the soul the virtues of patience, gentleness, peaceableness and friendliness to one's neighbour. People guided only by their reason find it very hard to be patient, peaceful, sweet-tempered, and charitable to their neighbours when they treat them badly and wrong them. But true lovers of Jesus have no great difficulty in enduring all this, because love fights for them...

This is grace at work in the soul – without which we really have missed the bus.

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