

THE Global Anglican

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The Global Anglican is published by Church Society, Ground Floor, Centre Block, Hille Business Estate, 132 St Albans Road, Watford, WD24 4AE, UK. Tel: +44 1923 255410. Email: admin@churchsociety.org
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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 200 (Danker-Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich)
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BGU	<i>Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden</i> . 15 vols. Berlin: Weidmann, 1895–1937
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. With revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
NIBCOT	New International Bible Commentary on the Old Testament
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> . Edited by Colin Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–1978
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NPNF	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PG	Patrologia Graeca [=Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca]. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886.
PNTC	Pelican New Testament Commentaries
ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
SBLStBL	Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
WBC	World Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WW	<i>Word and World</i>
ZECOT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament

THE Global Anglican

EDITORIAL

A Change of Subject

In the midst of a huge crisis for the Church of England and for the rest of the Anglican Communion, it may be thought that an editorial in *The Global Anglican* would address itself to the topic. But so much is being spoken and written about these matters, that I considered that a totally different subject may be refreshing, one that addresses the ordinary business of ministry wherever in the world it is conducted.

Thus, it will be an oddly personal editorial and I hope that readers will forgive me for it. I have been reflecting on my ordained ministry experience of fifty-five years and thought that it may interest some at least if I make some observations about what the Lord has taught me in that time. I make no claim to uniqueness or comprehensiveness or profundity, but for all that my thoughts may be helpful to some, whether in ministry or contemplating ministry, or gazing at ministry from the outside.

I offer ten aphorisms in no particular order, with an explanation for each one as I proceed.

I am not God ... sleep trustingly but don't be lazy

We sometimes speak of 'my church' as though we own it. For some this is accompanied by an intense work ethic, which can be driven by the gospel, but can also become a desire for personal success. Or, at least, the avoidance of failure.

Certainly, being driven by the gospel is no bad thing. And, certainly, fulfilling the responsibilities that the Lord has given you in the task to which he has called you is desirable. I remember my father who ran his own one-man business and always worked fifty to sixty hours a week, because no one else was going to do it for him and he was responsible for keeping his family. Is our commitment less than this when we serve Christ? (I am not speaking about the actual hours, but the willingness to serve.)

And yet, we are not God. The church belongs to the Lord Jesus, not to us. It is by his providence and power that people become Christians or grow as Christians, and we see the answers to our prayers. We are merely humans, with limited strength and capacity. God never sleeps, but he has so designed us that we must. It is like a signal to us that we do not have his powers. The same applies of course to the weekly sabbath (whatever

day we have it on) and the holidays which many of us, in God's mercy may enjoy. Our nightly sleep and our weekly sabbaths are reminders to us that God will do his work with us or without us and that we may and should trust him.

In my experience, most ministers are prone to overwork rather than underwork. But because it is a role which has little by way of accountability, it is also possible to be lazy and to do only what is demanded of us. We can spend so much time pretending to do productive things on our screens and yet doing nothing at all. Ministerial laziness is a reality which I have occasionally encountered, and it is a sad testimony to a profound spiritual malaise.

My wife is my first parishioner ... but don't be uxorious

I always think that the most honourable and significant title I have is 'husband'. Not all of us are married, but to those who are, the marriage vows are just as solemn – or even more so – as our ordination promises. It is precisely because of our wonderful enthusiasm for Christ, however, that we can give less than adequate attention to spouse and family and fail our obligations. The ministerial task has few boundaries as such. There will always be things you can and should do. Our response can become obsessive.

In particular, when there is a crisis in the church and people are speaking ill of you, it is easy to become completely absorbed with this, especially in a smaller church. But you can at least attempt to do something about it. Your spouse, who hears about the nasty things said, is relatively without power, but must turn up to church and parish events and even be polite to people who are traducing his or her marriage-partner. That is the more difficult position to be in, and if you are the pastor, you must especially care for your spouse.

On the other hand, there has been a tendency in some circles so to guard the family and the family home that time for others and hospitality is threatened with extinction. Uxoriousness is not a Christian virtue.

Stand up close, not back too far

Instinctively we turn away from pain in others. Friends of mine who lost two children, the second in an accident, and who were very keen members of their church, were devastated when people avoided them in the shopping centre. It is bad enough that our brothers and sisters may do this; but the pastor, of all people, needs to come forward. Our failure to offer care at such a time can be more devastating than we imagine. It is no good to say to yourself, 'Oh, they would rather be alone'. That may be true in a few cases, but almost invariably a person to whom you are having ministry will hope to see you, to hear the word and be prayed with.

Nor can this be just once. For most people the funeral of a close person is only the beginning of their grief. It is the days and years that

succeed it when grief truly takes its toll. The church as a whole needs to care. But it does good when the pastor remembers important dates and loves the sheep by watching, listening and opening the word.

True self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, not the outcome of education

Of course, we may see self-control in people who are not believers. But the self-control which the Spirit gives is not learned in the school or in the sporting arena. It is a self-control which does battle with the sins of the flesh and yields the disciplined Christian life. In particular, even as believers as we still live in the fallen world, we are beset with the inward sins which can show themselves in evil. Even if they do not break forth, we can foster them and secretly allow them to inhabit the mind, corrupting us and turning us into mere hypocrites. We need the healing power of the grace of God to touch our wounds. Humility is not hypocrisy.

There is nothing surprising about these ministerial sins: greed, lust and the desire for power seek to destroy us, and we must put on the whole armour of God to stand against the wiles of the evil one. But one sin which I have seen with frequency surprised me, and that was ungodly ambition. The pain of not being asked to accept a post which we think we are destined for is palpable. It destroys contentment and makes us dissatisfied with the calling to love others. Furthermore, the more seniority we have, the harder it is for us to trust in the completeness of the Lord's work for us and in us, since we begin to accept the respect and even flattery of those around us as our due. It is so easy to slip into believing that you are important when your whole aim should be to exalt the Lord.

I must persevere in the truth despite the criticism of others ... your critics do not know the worst about you

It would be a rare pastor who never felt the lash of criticism. Just as we must be careful to accept encouragement but not flattery, so we must be careful not to be overwhelmed by criticism. Usually, what people say about us and to us has at least an element of truth in it. Sometimes the criticism is completely just, and repentance or improvement is in order. But in any case it is only natural to defend yourself and to point out what has been neglected or perverted in the critique. What we must not do, however, is become so obsessed with the criticisms as to allow ourselves to be shaped by them. After all, there is no pastor in the world whose service of the Lord is perfect, indeed popularity may be a sign of serious imperfection. And, more importantly, there is no pastor in the world who is not a sinner in need of grace; and there is no critic in the world, believer or unbeliever, who is not also a sinner in need of grace. Learning to love your critics is part of our calling.

Nonetheless, no matter how fierce and even true the criticism may be, we must never allow ourselves to be diverted from speaking and living the truth of the crucified Lord. That is the pastoral calling. After all, as the

critics speak, no matter how unjustly and loudly, we must remember that they do not know the worst about you. That means you always speak as a forgiven sinner, and not as an expert or a great leader. That is all we are. Live by the cross.

Pray without ceasing

We are so constantly busy that we are diverted from prayer. And yet it is only the Lord who produces fruit in the ministry of the Lord and for that we rely entirely upon him. There are many wise and wonderful books on prayer and we may turn to them for real instruction in this area. I will mention two things in my life that helped me.

The first was the example of a senior minister by the name of Dr Alan Cole. When you were with Alan, he prayed. He did not merely promise to pray; he prayed on the spot. My memory is that he even prayed for me in an elevator to the startled bemusement of other passengers! He taught me to turn the day into prayer. Walking down the street and seeing a sad person whom you lift to the Lord; sitting on a park bench and praying for the right person to sit beside you; travelling in a bus and silently interceding for another passenger; extending grace at mealtimes to cover the sick and needy; praying for churches as you pass them in the traffic. All these things are our walk in prayer and trust, and extensions of our daily prayers.

The other experience was when I was a young and inexperienced minister. I once visited an elderly man in hospital, a man who had recently become a Christian. As I turned to go, he said 'Aren't you going to read the Bible?' Having done that as I once more prepared to leave he said, 'Aren't you going to pray?'

I admit it was obvious and I should be ashamed even to tell the story. But I needed the rebuke from Jack to get me over my inhibitions and on to the path of the word and prayer – the ministry of the pastor.

Forgetfulness is a good gift

We generally laud memory and are immensely impressed when people remember us and our life stories having met us once many years ago. Rightly so. But as someone who has never been blessed with anything at all like such a memory, I want to say that forgetfulness is no bad thing either.

It may actually be helpful to forget people's confidences, not least the sins they may share with you. When you do, you do not let the confession dominate your thinking about them and you have less chance of breaching their privacy. More important, though, we need to 'forget' the antagonisms that people express, or their evident dislike of us. Despite my poor memory, I find this hard indeed, especially when the attacks have not been made on me but on close friends. I notice that memories going back thirty years flood my mind and I can scarcely speak to them,

brothers in Christ though they are. And yet, I am a man who has been forgiven far greater sins than these.

It is a reminder that sin is a powerful master and how easily we become its slave. It is a reminder of our own need of humility before the cross of Christ.

The hardest thing in ministry is to hold the truth in the face of great pain

In pastoral ministry, you will encounter pain. It may be a terrible diagnosis; it may be the breakdown of an intimate relationship; it may be the loss of a newborn; it could be the horror of a suicide. I have already indicated that for many of us, our preference will be to stand back, to disappear. Pain is like fire – it hurts. We need to be present, if only to listen. We speak by the love we show.

Another temptation, however, is not to speak words when the moment comes. Our Christian people want to hear the word of God. We can fail by saying nothing about Christ. But we can also fail by offering spurious consolation. In the latter case, for example where an unbeliever has died and we have no assurance, we may and do cast the whole situation on the mercy of God. We do not know what the Lord may have achieved in a person's life even at the last moment. I have known of cases of extraordinary last-minute conversions. It is not for us to pass judgement. But we must be careful not to avoid the truth or twist the truth by offering hope beyond those in Scripture. Better to concentrate on the mercy of God and the promises of God to the person before you. Better to offer the opportunity that they now have to turn to him and come to the one who gives peace to the broken-hearted.

You must preach the hard subjects clearly and often

We are warned in Holy Scripture against worldliness. One of the forms that this sin takes is the desire to be well-thought of by the world, to adopt the false philosophies of the world and to somehow find them endorsed in the Scripture which actually condemns them. This is a significant risk in the post-modern world, but it is not by any means a new one. The ancient church had to chart its course through the ideologies of that world, attractive and powerful as they were. From time to time, it even required that the church explicitly distance itself from heresies arising from within its own ranks.

Pastors in the modern world have a tendency to talk amongst themselves and offer each other guidance and warnings. But the college of pastors is not the Christian fellowship as a whole. Our Christian brothers and sisters who make up the churches which it is our duty to teach and shepherd are themselves in a world where every voice is speaking error, often with immense skill. We have only to think of the methods used to make euthanasia popular. How many of our Christian people have

accepted the world's view of euthanasia and never been confronted with a view informed by Scripture?

If in the pulpit but also in the homes of our people we do not teach clearly what the truth is (always in the context of the gospel of grace since we are not mere moralists), there will be no reason for the church to be anything but an extension of the world. This will require expository preaching. It will require exposition which explicitly turns to the passages which confront and makes their meaning clear. But more, it requires doctrinal preaching and a branch of doctrine, ethics.

The temptation to avoid such subjects is understandable. They can cause division and unpleasant debate. We want love and mutual care. But 'speak the truth in love' we must, if we are not to see the truth perish from within the very body which should be upholding it and living by it. The test of faithfulness comes if a stand needs to be taken, a stand which is unpopular and even painful. If the pastor then makes his stand but he has not taught the congregation in such a way that they love the truth, they will not stand with him.

And so, in this roundabout way we have reached the subject which I eschewed at the beginning. For even though the vast majority of the Christians of thirty years ago would automatically have rejected some of the proposals being mooted today in some churches, the contemporary believers, schooled by the world to an extent unimaginable until recently, will definitely need to know the biblical truth, be able to explain it, and be prepared to live and suffer for it. However, this will not happen if we constantly eschew the opportunity to teach about these things for fear of division or other unpleasantness.

Overall ... it's been worth it!

A friend made an observation once that had I gone into a profession I would have earned four times as much and lived very well. All I could do was smile.

Being allowed to serve God's people in the ministry of the word is such a privilege. Of course, there are costs and pains to be borne. But it is rare for such costs to be remotely like the trials of the apostles, especially Paul. Instead, we see the hand of God at work and the blessing of God on ourselves and our fellow believers. In particular we see people coming to new birth and growing as sons and daughters of God.

Of course, it is a heavy responsibility, and we are accountable for mistakes and missteps. We are reminded of the warning of James, 'Let not many of you become teachers ...' (3:1). Furthermore, we can sometimes see the immense harm done by those have pastoral office and use it to exploit the people, and we and our hearts break as we care for the sheep who have been wounded. And yet the Lord does not need us; he graciously uses us.

I can testify to the good hand of God at work, and I continue to rejoice in his goodness. In particular I am so grateful for the friends who have entered my life and supported me at crucial moments. I thank the Lord for these and all his mercies. I give all praise to him and to his glorious grace!

PETER JENSEN

THE Global Anglican

EDITORIAL

First Things First

What is the biggest spiritual problem facing your nation? Without neglecting other significant things, what do we need to do above all?

Lambeth 1998 is now remembered for one thing: the overwhelming vote for Resolution 1.10, Human Sexuality. By this means the Bishops resolved not to proceed ‘limping between two different opinions’, but to go forward, united in the truth of God’s word. It is somewhat tragic that they were forced to speak on such a subject, and that this is what is remembered. But it is good that they did for, without a doubt, doctrinal truth remains a basic need.

But why? What is its connection with the biggest spiritual problem facing your nation?

A decade earlier, at the 1988 Conference, there was a challenge issued to Anglicans everywhere to engage in a ‘Decade of Evangelism’. This appears to have been taken seriously by the Church of England as well as other Provinces, admittedly with mixed results. The 1998 Conference could have been dominated by a discussion of these results, not least with a good time spent in hearing the stories from Provinces such as Nigeria. But if this was the case, the business of evangelism is not what the Conference is remembered for. And it has not dominated the conversations of the Anglican Communion since then.

Does evangelism matter?

During World War 2, Britain was in deadly peril from its enemies. What was the spiritual need of the hour? The Church of England, prompted by Archbishop William Temple, set up a commission to study and advise on the subject of evangelism in England. In Temple’s view, ‘If we have to choose between making men Christian and making the social order more Christian, we must choose the former. But there is no such antithesis.’¹

¹ The quotation and the others given in this editorial (unless otherwise indicated) are from Archbishop’s Commission on Evangelism, *Towards the Conversion of England* (London: Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1945). The citation of Temple is from xiii.

Towards the conversion of England

June next year, 2025, sees the eightieth anniversary of the report that was issued with the provocative title, *Towards the Conversion of England* (1945). My treasured, though battered copy was published in January 1946, and is the eighth re-printing to that point. And yet, as a new Archbishop came on the scene after the war, the report appears to have been sidelined and never properly acted upon.

But even if the report has been largely forgotten or regarded as a curiosity, there is something about the title which remains confronting and challenging. Perhaps it is the word ‘conversion’ or the implication that England needed conversion; perhaps, indeed, this is the reason why it was relegated into obscurity. How can a Christian country need to be converted?

It is well worth reading the report’s opening sections on the state of England and the state of the Church of England. Bearing in mind that we always think that the period in which we live is bad and that there was some golden age in the past, it is still striking that this 1945 report does not hesitate to say that the country and a large proportion of the church members are unconverted:

We cannot expect to get far with evangelism until three facts are faced. First, the vast majority of English people need to be converted to Christianity. Secondly, a large number of Church people also require to be converted, in the sense of their possessing that personal knowledge of Christ which can be ours only by the dedication of the whole self, whatever the cost. Thirdly, such personal knowledge of Christ is the only satisfactory basis for testimony to others (37).

The basic evidence for this according to the report, is the decline in church-going and the growth in moral depravity:

It is indisputable that only a small percentage of the nation today joins regularly in public worship of any kind (3).

Depravity is a sure symptom of spiritual disease. The war has revealed, and also accelerated, a sharp decline in truthfulness and personal honesty, and an alarming spread of sexual laxity, and of the gambling fever (4).

The causes which underlay this situation are explained as humanism (defined as ‘that view of life which sees in man the source of all meaning and value, instead of in God’ (6)); and its modern reinforcements in urbanisation, secular education and mechanized thinking. Of course, the illustrations of this in the pre-television age are different from what may be employed now, but the report is still discernibly describing the making of the world as many of us experience it in the twenty-first century. Would contemporary Western Anglicans still say, however, that the vast majority

of the people in their country and even in their churches are unconverted? Is that the language we would use? If not, our view of evangelism and the gospel must seriously differ from what a (surprisingly) united group of fifty Anglican leaders gave us eighty years ago.¹ And it is worth interrogating ourselves about it.

To help in such a self-examination, we need to concentrate on three major theological assertions from the report. Do we accept them still?

The first is the definition of evangelism:

To evangelise is so to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church (1).²

As a definition of evangelism, the one thus offered has a number of strengths.

First, it is Christ-centric. It does not confuse evangelism with social change or healing and money. Instead, it focuses on the heart of the New Testament message, that 'we proclaim Christ'. The success of this definition depends, of course, in what is meant by 'Christ Jesus'. Just as it was possible in Paul's day to preach a different Jesus and a different gospel (2 Cor 11:4), so it remains possible today to so fill the words with contemporary meaning that we have distorted the gospel beyond recognition. The portrait of Christ must be biblical.

We see different presentations of the gospel in the New Testament, but that they proclaim Christ remains central. This is true even of the Lord's own proclamation of 'the kingdom of God'. For, in the end, Christ is revealed to be the king in God's kingdom and so to announce the kingdom is identical with proclaiming his rule.

Second, there is an immediate reminder of the work of the Holy Spirit. The evangelist needs to be filled with the Spirit, in the sense of being enabled by the Spirit; and the work of the evangelist, when people turn to Christ, is a work of the Spirit. For the Spirit must enlighten the eyes, destroy the power of the evil one, and bring the dead to life. Human beings can 'evangelise' successfully if it means selling a product or manipulating an audience. Mere rhetoric will achieve this. But this is not evangelism. It is the evangelist's only hope that God's Spirit will take

¹ The Preface refers to the fact that Temple was not expecting a unanimous report and was even prepared for there to be several reports, given the diverse membership of the group.

² The definition was adopted with acknowledgement from an earlier commission on evangelism which reported in 1918.

and use the words of the gospel to bring salvation. It may also mean that the words of the gospel will bring condemnation if they are rejected by sinful human hearts which the Spirit does not open. The gospel may judge as well as save.

Third, the definition incorporates the end to which evangelism points, namely repentance and faith. In this, what it means to preach Christ becomes clearer, for the Christ we preach is one who is mediator, saviour and Lord. Thus, the way to fellowship with God is by trust in Christ, and the necessity is to crown him as saviour and king in a person's life. The absolute obligation to preach for repentance is met here, and it is likewise clear that the gospel presentation which fails to do so is preaching another Christ than that of the New Testament.

The hesitation I would have, and it is one which applies elsewhere in the Report, is the mention of 'the fellowship of His Church' precisely at this point. To which church are these words pointing? Why, amongst all the consequences of believing the word is this mentioned in particular? Does this reflect the emphasis of the Apostolic preaching?

The second is the statement of the eternal gospel:

The Gospel is the good news of the final triumph of the good and that Jesus Christ has opened the way of escape from the power of sin, from the fear of judgement and from everlasting death (24).

Once again, William Temple is quoted, on this occasion saying, 'The Gospel is true always and everywhere, or it is not a Gospel at all, or true at all' (17).

Thus the report refers to the Christian message as 'The Eternal Gospel'. Clearly this is an enormously significant point as far as the ongoing relevance of the report is concerned, for it claims to rest on this eternal gospel.

This definition concludes an explanatory section which puts forward a series of propositions about the gospel, stating each time that 'The Gospel is the good news that:

- God is, and that God is love;
- God has intervened and done for man that which man could not do for himself;
- God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself;
- (There will be the) "restoration of all things" in Christ;
- God in Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers;
- (There is) new life to be enjoyed in the fellowship of God's Church;

- (There is) the power of the Holy Spirit available to all members of Christ;
- (There is) redemption to Eternal Life.

In this exposition of the gospel, we see a number of the same features. In this case, it is only natural that the way of expressing the truth should be in the context of the times. Despite the de-Christianisation of England there obviously still remained some things that the unbelievers would accept, such as monotheism. We see in Acts that the gospel is expounded in ways suitable to the audience. But, that said, it must still contain the essence of the matter.

When we read the text and not merely the headings given above, we see an emphasis on the sinfulness of human beings, the coming judgement, the salvation of believers alone and that not by good works, eternal life and the resurrection of the dead, and, centrally, the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. The future of unbelievers is not clear, and I suspect that a form of annihilationism is in play. Once again considerable, but to me a surprising emphasis is placed on the Church. We are told that, 'The Church is thus integral to the Gospel, and true evangelism must always be a calling into its fellowship', quoting 1 John 1:3 (21).

The third assertion defines the meaning of conversion:

Conversion is the re-orientation of the life from self to God through Jesus Christ ... The act of conversion is the personal acceptance of Christ Jesus as Saviour and King.

Such an experience may be gradual or sudden.

But whether sudden or gradual, it is the birthright of every child of God to be converted (36).

'Conversion' itself is simply a word for repentance and faith, or as the Report says, 'the personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour and King'. The danger of the word is that it will be reduced to an experience without the inner heart of repentance and faith. To this end the description of the experience as possibly either gradual or sudden needs to be accompanied by clarity that, even when approached gradually it is a particular moment of passing from death to life. It may also have helped to set it in the context of the work of the Spirit and regeneration.

But the power of the description and the power of the report as a whole stems strongly from the dramatic word ‘conversion’ and its argument that the vast majority of the population are unconverted. This is confronting, and rightly so. For the gospel of Jesus Christ from its very beginning has demanded repentance and faith in the light of the coming kingdom (Mark 1:14-15) and we cannot lessen this demand or assume that people are basically at peace with God without it. That is the way to spiritual lethargy and final disaster. Even if the Report embraced annihilationism, it did not settle on universalism and nor can we. The call to repentance and faith, the summons to accept Jesus as Saviour and King, remains essential to the gospel and thus to the salvation of sinners. Lose that, and you may even make your nation more religious, but it won’t be more Christian.

Do we accept these three definitions today? As I indicate above, I have some hesitations. I think that they can be improved at some points. But they remain powerful and challenging and anything less than this is not going to do the work of spreading the gospel.

What is the biggest spiritual problem facing your nation? What must we do above all?

Whatever your nation, the biggest problem facing the citizens is sin and its consequences, both in the life and in the world to come. Whatever else we do, the love of neighbour demands that we preach the gospel of Christ crucified, the one and only saviour through his death on the cross. Furthermore, we must do so in such a way as will make clear that we are being summoned back to our authentic humanity, namely submission to the Lord God. Only here may we have true forgiveness, true renewal, true hope and true freedom.

This requires, of course, the declaration of the eternal gospel and not a counterfeit. That is where discussions such as dominated the Lambeth 1998 meeting become significant. In the end, it was a debate about the nature of the gospel and the call to repentance. Do all those who practice sexual activity outside the marriage of a man and woman need to be called to repentance, or can an exception be made? Indeed, is marriage only possible between a man and a woman?

As we have seen in the years that followed 1998, these matters were of fundamental importance, mainly because the integrity of Scripture and the gospel are at stake. The contest for the soul of the church needs to be entered into for that reason. But in so doing, it is possible to become so engrossed, so busy, so active, that we then forget the underlying reason why the subject matters so much. The spiritual fate of nations is at stake. It is, of course, not a matter of choice, but a matter of doing both so that people hear the authentic gospel – but so that they do actually hear it.

What now?

Each nation will have its own challenges, and different approaches are in order. It is interesting to look back at the 1945 report and think of the variety of suggestions made then. In particular, however, it focussed on the need for every Christian to be a witness to Jesus, and upon the central role of the ministers of the gospel.

Upon the latter point, the report speaks of the ‘spiritual apathy’ and tiredness of so many clergy when working in the old parish system and faced with the human impossibility of working in such circumstances (41). But it also has hard words to say about the education of clergy, with so few trained for evangelism or in prayer, and the ‘really horrifying’ ignorance of the Bible amongst younger clergy and the ‘deplorably low standard of preaching throughout the Church’ (46). Such matters certainly need attending to, no matter where we are.

One last point. If we are to give evangelism such a priority, we need to accompany it with prayer. It is all too easy to become highly active in organising and even doing evangelism, that we forget that it is God who gives the increase. Without this all our efforts to guard the authentic gospel, to produce well-trained clergy, to inspire and equip the laity, will come to naught.

The first priority? Evangelism through the true word and fervent prayer.

PETER JENSEN

THE Global Anglican

EDITORIAL

The Assurance Deficit

‘This book’ writes Callum G. Brown, ‘is about the death of Christian Britain – the demise of the nation’s core religious and moral identity. As historical changes go, this has been no lingering and drawn-out affair. It took several centuries (in what historians used to call the Dark Ages) to convert Britain to Christianity, but it took less than forty years to forsake it ... quite suddenly in 1963, something very profound ruptured the character of the nation and its people, sending organised Christianity on a downward spiral to the margins of social significance.’¹

Although Brown is talking about Britain, and recognises the difference from the United States, by now it has become clear that the demise of which he speaks is virtually universal in the Western world. It is no accident that a famous front cover of *Time Magazine* from 1966 asked ‘Is God dead?’. Its survey of the struggles of liberal theologians to justify belief in God and to re-define God, is a foreshadowing of what was to come. The collapse of church-going can be measured from those days.

Interestingly the *Time* article observes that, ‘Particularly among the young, there is an acute feeling that the churches on Sunday are preaching the existence of a God who is nowhere visible in their daily lives’.² This suggests an explanation for the widespread impact of charismatic Christianity in the mainstream churches from the 1960s onwards. Faith was taking an enormous battering and even the leadership of the churches was wavering (think of Bishop J. A. T. Robinson’s *Honest to God*, for example). If God’s hand could be seen in miracles, or the very presence of God experienced in personal encounters, this encouraged faith to continue and the retrieval of a degree of assurance, or re-assurance.

Assurance

Earlier generations struggled with the question of God’s acceptance of us, guilty as we are. This was their assurance deficit, and it was often met by the ‘second blessing’ teaching of the holiness movement. But in the 1960s the more pressing problem became the existence of God and the truth of the gospel, and this assurance deficit was met with God-experiences,

¹ Callum G. Brown. *The Death of Christian Britain*, Routledge, 2nd edition, 2009, chapter 1.

² *Time Magazine*, April 8th, 1966, 83.

personal guidance, glossolalia, healings and worship services dominated by music. Connected, as these events usually are said to be, with the work of the Holy Spirit, they can give a dynamic sense of the reality of the Lord and his gifting of the Spirit. Furthermore, it makes it easier to suggest that there are many Christians who are saved and yet not as yet filled with the Spirit, and that there needs to be a second encounter with the Spirit to see us become the spiritual Christians we are meant to be.

There is no doubt that our experience of God is reassuring. When we see prayer answered, when we are blessed by a providential ordering of our lives, when we receive the love of Christian people in the fellowship of the church, all this and much more offers a renewed confidence in the presence and love of God.

And yet, what if such moments are rare? What if our experience is of pain, suffering, disunity and sadness? If the good things of life are the evidence of God's presence, are the bad things not an evidence of his absence? Perhaps God has turned his face away from us; perhaps God is indeed dead; perhaps our faith is not strong enough to overcome the troubles of life and to turn the handle on access to blessings abundant. After all, we are told by Jesus himself that faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains. Surely this means that faith is an instrument, to be used to overcome the world and live in peace and prosperity.

But is experience the place where true assurance is to be sustained? Not if you follow the trajectory of the gospel.

Take Romans 5:1–11, and consider what we see here:

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:1–11, ESV)

First, there is the hopeless condition of humanity. We are called ‘weak’, ‘the ungodly’, ‘sinners’, and the final horror, ‘the enemies of God’, in danger of the just wrath of God. Here and elsewhere the Bible makes it clear that we are slaves to sin, the willing collaborators of the world and Satan and followers of our own evil desires, desires which are evil in themselves. We are literally hope-less.

Second, there is the wonder of God’s verdict, namely ‘justified’, declared righteous despite our sin. God’s verdict arises from grace alone and leads to peace with God, reconciliation with the one we have offended. In one of the most remarkable phrases in the Bible, we are told that the God of justice ‘justifies the ungodly’ (Rom 4:5; cf. Exod 23:7). Consequently, we stand in grace, our whole lives determined by the supreme kindness of the God to whom we have been reconciled, the kindness we do not deserve.

Third, although we still experience the sufferings endemic to humanity, we are now able to read them differently. Far from producing despair, guilt or unbelief, we have such confidence in God that we see them as within his power and sent for his good purpose of changing us into the likeness of Christ himself. Suffering, properly understood, leads to endurance, character and finally the hope in which we rejoice. Thus, we are not robbed of faith by the negative experience of pain, but we can read it aright as those who stand in the grace of God.

Fourth, the great work of the Holy Spirit is that the love of God is poured into our hearts. This does not mean that we become loving, but rather that the Spirit assures us of the love of God, the grace of God, our peace with God. And the method used by the Spirit is typical of what we read of him elsewhere – he leads us to the greatest possible demonstration of the love of God, namely, ‘at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly ... God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us’. For the Spirit is Christ-centred and opens our minds to the truth of the word of God, at the heart of which is the cross. Our justification is won by blood; if we do not see this, we have lost the gospel itself.

Fifth, we are justified by faith. Here we arrive at the mystery of the grace of God, a mystery which outsiders find inexplicable. For them, Christianity is a system of morals. For those who believe, it is an experience of the astonishing, transformative grace of God in forgiveness and reconciliation; the personal knowledge of God not based on an unattainable human goodness, but on mercy.

Faith

But why faith? and what is it?

Famously, Mark Twain pronounced, ‘Having faith is believing in something you just know ain’t true’. The ‘New’ Atheists who suggest that

belief in the God of the Bible is much the same as belief in fairies are making the same point. But it is an odd approach to faith.

After all, the exercise of faith is universal and constant. It is part of the human psyche, without which we cannot be human. Persistent all-encompassing scepticism is impossible. At every moment we are trusting others and also the objects around us. We trust the chair we sit in; we trust the food we eat; we trust the air we breathe; we trust our family; we trust our teachers. Life is trust. Indeed, any suggestion that science can exist without faith is ridiculous. Scientists can only do their work by trusting the scientific community, for each piece of work is built upon earlier research. There are also presuppositions which we bring to the study of the universe, presuppositions in which we trust. If renowned scientists proclaims that it is now impossible to believe in God, he or she expects to be trusted. Faith seems to matter after all.

Faith in itself is exceptionally ordinary. Of course, our faith is usually linked with knowledge gained through experience or reason. Either we consult our mind in order to have faith, or our faith may be shaken and abandoned or confirmed and increased for rational reasons including experience. Faith is not mere optimism. If it 'works' it must be based on reality, on the truth. For that reason, faith is a sort of worship, a recognition of the faithfulness on the object of our faith, a vote of confidence in it. Thus, when we sit in a chair, we are praising the chair, attaching ourselves to it by faith.

Faith is only as powerful as the object of our confidence. Faith is not powerful in itself; it draws its power from that in which it trusts. If we think of a wedding, we see two people making some of the most powerful promises to each other, promises that last a lifetime, promises which exclude all others from the relationship, promises which accept profound responsibility for one another. It is no accident that marriage is based on promises, for we give up so much to give ourselves to one other person. We need to proceed from the wedding-day to the marriage by faith in the promises. But this is precisely what makes it so important that the promises are public, and also that the person you choose to be married to gives a word which may be trusted for up to seventy years into the future. Such faith as we express on the wedding-day, and live out every day that follows, is indispensable; to live cynically in a marriage is hellish. But the trust we thus freely and indispensably give is only as good as the person we have our trust in. Choose for your spouse someone who keeps promises.

The disciples of Jesus pleaded with him to 'Increase our faith'. In words which seem at first appearance to be astonishing, Jesus in effect declines, saying 'If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you"' (Luke 17:5-6). In so doing he reveals what faith is,

namely trust in the other. It is not the amount of faith which makes it powerful, it is the person in whom you have your faith. Only God can uproot the tree. If your faith is in him and it is in accordance with his will, he will cast the tree into the sea, or indeed move a mountain, for 'nothing will be impossible for you' (Matt 17:20–21; cf Mark 9:24).

The faith that justifies, therefore, that moves the mountain of sin, is chosen precisely because we cannot pride ourselves on having faith. It is not a good work. It is the abandonment of good works and the recognition that we cannot justify ourselves because of the way in which sin has invaded us and left us without hope and without God. Faith always boasts in the one in whom we have put our faith and glorifies the other, not ourselves. Thus, we are not justified by faith working through love, but by faith alone. Here is peace with God; here is our greatest act of worship. In short, it is not faith as such which justifies but faith in Jesus Christ, faith in the word of God which brings us the gospel.

Hence Calvin defines faith as 'a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.'¹ He later adds, 'He alone is a true believer who, convinced by a firm conviction that God is a kindly and well-disposed Father towards him, promises himself all things on the basis of his generosity; who, relying upon the promises of divine benevolence towards him, lays hold on and undoubted expectation of salvation.'² In other words, the faith of the gospel is itself shaped by the gospel, the object of its faith and not by mere wishful thinking or empty optimism.

Of course, gospel-shaped faith is the mother of real good works. It crowns Christ as Lord and then seeks to please him. Even when he seeks the sacrifice of ourselves, which he does every day as we take up the cross and follow him, we do so because we trust him and his promises. This goes directly against the self-interested instincts of humanity. Thus the generosity of the followers of Jesus confounds the unbelieving world by giving sacrificially out of our resources and doing so secretly. Our aim is not to impress the world but to please him. Only faith in the promise of his word enables us to do this.

If Mark Twain's followers and the atheists with their talk of fairies wish to assail the Christian faith, they must address the foundation of that faith, namely Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is delivered to us in the Bible and confirmed in our experience by the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The sacraments are the visible words of God, and as long as we understand them as speaking to us of the grace and mercy of God and not rites by which we please God, they will serve

¹ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III. 11, 7.

² Calvin, *Institutes*, III. 11, 16.

to strengthen faith and sustain us, to ‘assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us’, in the words of the Book of Common Prayer. The sacraments, as a visible enactment of the gospel appointed by God to assure us, do so by preaching the cross.

True assurance

And so, what of assurance?

It is perfectly reasonable within its own tenets that the Council of Trent denied the possibility of assurance in this life, except to a few.

For even as no pious person ought to doubt the mercy of God, of the merit of Christ, and of the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments, even so each one, when he regards himself and his own weakness and indisposition may have fear and apprehension touching his own grace, seeing that no one can know with a certainty of faith which cannot be subjected to error, that he has obtained the grace of God.¹

This is reasonable in any system of theology in which merit plays an indispensable role in the process of justification, for we can never be certain that we have done enough to achieve salvation.

John Calvin speaks for the Reformed faith when he says in contrast, ‘When the least drop of faith is instilled in our minds, we begin to contemplate God’s face, peaceful and calm and gracious towards us. We see him afar off, but so clearly that we know that we are not at all deceived.’² For Calvin, we never completely shake off unbelief and doubt, but it assails us from outside. We have the shield of faith which we must employ and we will grow in faith, in our confidence in the mercy of God.

Thus, assurance of the grace of God is an integral aspect of faith, even at its beginning, but it grows as we go on in the Christian life. We should draw deeper assurance from experiencing the work of God’s Spirit within us; Christian experience is not to be despised, as John says, ‘We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death’ (1 John 3:14). But he goes on to say, ‘By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our hearts before him; for whenever our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything’ (3:19–20).

It is understandable that the triumph of secularism and the assaults on the Christian faith should lead Christian people to seek reassurance in experience, preferably supernatural experience. But as Scripture makes clear, the mere presence of such signs and wonders is not proof irrefutable of the presence of God (e.g. Matt 7:21–23; 2 Thess 2:9). And in many cases, pray as we do, we see no such signs in our midst, but rather

¹ Council of Trent, Session 6, ‘Canons Concerning Justification, 13 January, 1547’, chapter 9.

² Calvin, *Institutes*, III. 11, 19.

experience suffering. Thus the list of Paul's qualifications for ministry, like that of his Lord, consists mainly of discouragements and persecution (eg 2 Cor 11:16–33). Of course this thoroughly befits the one who also says, 'For the Jews demand signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles, but to those who are being called, the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Cor 1:22–24).

We live in strange times. In the West at least, ignorance of the gospel is endemic, in a way unpredictable sixty years ago.³ It is natural that both those who hold the faith and those who are seeking should desire to see the power of God and the wisdom of God in personal, overwhelming experiences of the divine. In the prescient words of *Time Magazine*, 'there is an acute feeling that the churches on Sunday are preaching the existence of a God who is nowhere visible in their daily lives.' But the greatest miracle of all is the cross, and when our conscience fills us with dismay at our sins and failures and when the world seems godless and when the pain and suffering of life confronts us with what seems to be prayers unanswered, this, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is where we are assured of the love of God and filled with hope in a future which is sure.

The cross is the irreplaceable answer to our assurance deficit.

PETER JENSEN

³ Although there are signs that the tide is possibly turning. See Bishop Robert Barren, 'Is Christianity Making a Comeback?', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gBKtqU9D8s>.

THE Global Anglican

EDITORIAL

Exposition and Doctrine

One of the best developments of the last decades, at least in the English-speaking world, has been the emphasis on expository preaching. Instead of taking a verse from Scripture and using that as the essence of the sermon – or, at its worst, the peg on which to hang stray thoughts – we have been instructed in the art of exposition. In this, we preachers take a whole passage, anywhere between a paragraph and a chapter, and devote ourselves to explaining its teaching with the implications drawn out by way of ‘application’.

This method fits much more nicely with what we hope is occurring in the homes of the congregation, namely consecutive Bible reading with an attempt to understand chapters and books. However, considerable learning is required – though does not guarantee – good expository preaching. There must of course be skill in exegesis, preferably with the original languages. But there is also need for an understanding of context. The passage needs to be placed within the context of the unfolding of the book as a whole, and as well, we should be aware of its place in the canon as revealed by biblical theology and its significance in the whole revelation of God.

A fundamental hermeneutical principle is that Scripture interprets Scripture. Biblical theology, understood as a description of the way in which Scripture tells the story of God’s kingdom from Genesis to Revelation, concentrating especially on the promises of God made in successive though connected covenants, enables the interpreter to unveil the christological significance of the whole Bible. Vital though this is, it needs also to be accompanied by an understanding of the teaching of Scripture – the whole revelation of God – on the great subjects of Scripture, a discipline to which we may give the name ‘Doctrine.’

I have attached the need for this contextualisation to expository preaching. But, of course, an understanding of the whole as the context of the parts is required for effective personal reading, family reading, and the teaching of both children and adults in church. Doctrine is essential for all. But it is frequently taken for granted rather than taught explicitly.

The nature of doctrine

The fundamental idea of doctrine is ‘teaching’. The doctor is essentially a teacher, even though the word has been colonised by the medical profession. My own definition of Christian doctrine is as follows:

The teaching of the Bible on key subjects in the light of exegesis and biblical theology, with the aid of history and philosophy and in an integrated way.

I will touch on each of these thoughts in turn.

The key subjects

Acknowledging readily that the teaching of the Bible comes to us in many ways, through many genres, nonetheless if you accept the unity of the canon and the inspiration of the Spirit, it is possible to enquire what the Bible as a whole communicates about such subjects as God, creation, revelation, anthropology, the person and work of Christ, pneumatology, the application of salvation, ecclesiology, and eschatology. Obviously, each of these large topics is capable of division into its own parts. Hence the study of matters such as the sacraments and the ministry, or prayer, or justification, are best taken up within a broader subject.

The necessity for exegesis

The danger of a large scope of subjects is that it will ignore the particulars. Hence, we need to include exegesis in the understanding of doctrine. Whereas exegesis of passages cannot take place other than in the context of the whole, teaching the whole cannot take place without careful exegesis. The two are not alien disciplines but reciprocal; they play tennis together. Over-specialisation is a danger of all our theological disciplines and their academic masters. The famous scholar of systematic theology may neglect exegesis and depend over much on deductive reasoning; the equally prestigious professor of New Testament may have little interest in the results of a doctrinal study of the whole Bible. In a better world, the teachers of each subject should be asked to tutor in the other, to sharpen the thinking of one and to broaden the thinking of the other.

The role of philosophy and history

It must not be imagined that, in defining doctrine as I have, one can then ignore everything outside the Bible, as though ‘the Bible alone’ leaves us standing with one book only. Philosophical theology remains a useful ally to the systematic study of Scripture, helping to explain conundrums and sharpening our appreciation of what we have before us. There are moments, too, when developments in other disciplines (eg science and creation, or literary debates about the nature of genre), help us to look again at what we have taken for granted in the reading of Scripture and

enable us to see things which we have perhaps overlooked. Far from demolishing Scripture, such challenges often help us to see what we are actually looking at.

But the greatest aid to the whole theological enterprise is historical theology. It is a matter of insufferable pride, not to mention ignorance, to believe that ‘the Bible alone’ implies that we are the first generation to read the Bible. On the contrary, it is highly desirable that the preacher of God’s word be well acquainted with the history of theology, at the very least the patristic period, the Reformation and the modern era. Such is the evangelical emphasis on a true personal experience of God beginning with conversion, that it is possible that those of us who are called evangelicals may value experience more than the truth on which it should be based. When we detach experience from truth, we become experiential liberals. Historical theology helps us avoid that result.

It is not good when evangelical churches neglect the creed of the ancient church. As Article VIII of the 39 Articles asserts,

The Three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius’s Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles’ Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture.

The creeds capture the teaching of the early church on absolutely fundamental matters, remind us of all the work that went into asserting biblical truth, help unify us with Christians through the ages, and most important of all summarise the truth of the gospel for us. We do not have to fight these battles from scratch in every generation. They transmit the doctrine of Scripture in a memorable fashion, and we neglect them at our peril.

The need for integration

Finally, it is the nature and task of true doctrine to be integrated. One of the weaknesses with the way doctrine is often presented in textbooks is that this task is neglected, with each subject being treated discretely. We fail to demonstrate that our teaching in one area has profound effect on our teaching in another.

The Reformation provides a case study for this point. If we compare the positions taken by the Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1545–1563) with those apparent in the Anglican formularies, the point is all too clear. As is often the case, for example, we are dealing with two different doctrines of sin, with the 39 Articles assuring us that concupiscence has of its very self the nature of sin, and Trent denying this. Of course, the Reformed position is required by the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and the Tridentine position required by the doctrine that justification is a process and that we must exercise our own free-will in

doing good works as well as receiving the benefits of the work of Christ. This then has consequences for such things as the attitude of the parties to the demands of the law of God (think of the teaching on works of supererogation, for example), the doctrine of election and the possibility of assurance. The Reformed position is intended to safeguard the grace of God in salvation in all these points, the Tridentine one with the need for humans to take some independent responsibility for their response to God. Different anthropological visions are at work here.

We could illustrate the point with regard to the necessary integration of Christology and pneumatology and the danger of dividing them from each other; or word and sacrament as being irrevocably united; or the need for ecclesiology to begin with human sin and the person and work of Christ. But the one to which we owe the greatest debt to modern theology is the necessity for eschatology not to appear as a mere afterthought at the end of a textbook, but to suffuse the whole presentation of the gospel. In a sense, we could begin our study of theology with eschatology with some profit.

In short, the integrative approach safeguards the truth by making sure that the revelation of God is seen as a whole, with the knowledge that when we distort one element it is very likely to distort others as well.

The function of doctrine

Exposition has so captured the hearts of many pastors that they do not really regard doctrine as a study that matters, or worse, that it gets in the way. They would not dream of preaching a doctrinal sermon or meeting the need for doctrinal instruction in the church. To challenge such a view, I turn to my concept of the function of doctrine, which is:

to deliver the teaching of the whole Bible, enabling the Bible to interpret the Bible, shaping the gospel presentation, empowering comparison and contrast, and creating identity.

The teaching of the whole Bible

Doctrine seeks to describe the teaching of the whole Bible on the great subjects which Scripture addresses. In doing so, there is a presupposition that the whole of Scripture is the word of God, and that this will result in a coherent view of the topics being explained. When the exposition of Scripture occurs in preaching there is an unspoken assumption that a word such as ‘God’ means the God of the whole Bible, thus that God is triune, for example, even when passages in the Old Testament are being expounded. Exposition is ineradicably founded on doctrine.

The possibility of exposition requires that the Bible is understood in its parts and shown to be coherent, despite different emphases and even apparent contradictions. Thus, we have in Exodus the word from God ‘I

will not acquit the guilty' (23:7); but in Romans 4:5, we are told the exact opposite, that we may trust him, 'who justifies the ungodly'. To know the true God we must understand that both propositions are absolutely true, and it is the task of doctrine, with the aid of philosophical theology and historical theology to show us how and why that is the case. How do we speak of both the love and justice of God in a way which compromises neither but demonstrates that both come from the same God? This was a problem that we see Jonah struggling with after Nineveh is spared (Jonah 3:10-4:4). But you need the whole Bible to see how the one unchanging God is both completely just and also full of grace.

Enabling the Bible to interpret the Bible

As I have noted already, a fundamental principle of hermeneutics is that the Bible is the first interpreter of the Bible. This is the principle we see at work in Article VII:

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral. (See also Article XX).

Any exposition of the Bible must take this into account if it is to be accurate to the text, for in this way the whole context shapes the understanding of any part. This is obviously true of the Law; but it is true of the whole revelation of God. Thus, the Jesus who is our Saviour and Lord is not merely the Jesus of one of the four Gospels, but of all of them, and of the epistles and other New Testament writings as well. His portrait is made up of many parts. As we preach the Christ of the Bible, we cannot so preach one passage in a way which contradicts the message of the whole. When he was asleep on the boat, it illustrates his humanity, but it does not contradict the deity of the one who shortly after quietened the raging sea with a word. Both are true, as we know from the teaching of the Bible as a whole; the passage helps us to see what is involved in their both being true.

Shaping the gospel presentation

It is perfectly proper to preach the gospel in and through specific passages of the Bible. We must also consider what the audience is likely to know and agree with already. Fundamentally, however, the whole gospel is a

doctrinal statement – That the creator God made all things good, that his image bearers betrayed him and revolted against his kingly rule, with consequences for all their descendants in sin and judgement, that his Son entered the world as true man to declare the coming of the kingdom and to save the world, that we need to turn to God in repentance and faith if we are to be saved, that Christ will return to judge the world and renew the kingdom in fullness.

Of course, each of these assertions need to be expanded at some length. The whole presentation depends draws upon the teaching of the whole Bible. It is doctrinal. It summarises and presents the teaching of Scripture. Even if the preacher stresses one element (eg the need for repentance and faith) it is done because of his confidence that the rest of the message is known. Good teaching proceeds from the known to the unknown. Since the gospel presentation is fundamentally doctrinal, it indicates the significance of doctrine for the whole presentation of Christian truth.

Empowering comparison and contrast

All great ideologies are fundamentally doctrinal. We can (and should) ask, ‘What is the teaching of Das Kapital?’ ‘What are the tenets of feminism?’ ‘What do liberals believe?’ ‘What is Roman Catholic dogma?’ Marx’s great work has three volumes, but to understand it and to interact with it, we need an accurate summary of its argument, calling upon the whole to understand the parts and using the parts to build a picture of the whole.

It is always useful to ask ourselves about the fundamental anthropology at play in the different belief systems. Is there a commitment to individualism or corporatism? Is the individual precious? Are human beings regarded merely as superior animals? Is there life and judgement beyond death? Are human beings basically good, or evil? This and a dozen other questions about humanity need to be asked and answered. If we are to equip Christians to resist error and to speak persuasively, they need to be schooled in Christian doctrine.

From a Reformed and evangelical point of view, therefore, we cannot separate doctrine from ethics and apologetics. It is unfortunate that the exigencies of seminary curricula frequently have special subjects called by these names, if there is a temptation to teach them independent of the biblical doctrine which fundamental to their development. Likewise, the philosophy of Christian education needs to be shaped by the teaching of God’s word first and foremost. Too often in Christian schools it seems that the job of Christianising the syllabus is accomplished if there are quotes from Scripture let loose in the classroom. What is really needed, however is that deep thought be given to each subject on the curriculum, seeking to establish what its philosophical and theological basis is. Thus, to use the illustration given above, what is the anthropological basis on

which the study of science, literature, history and art proceed? But this work can only be done by those well-versed in doctrine.

In particular both biblical theology and doctrine are essential in preaching to enable the preacher to drive home the glory of the gospel and its application. How can we confront our hearers with the implications of being Christian if we do not demonstrate how different the biblical faith is from the world's teaching? How can we guard the deposit of Scripture if the hearers do not know the riches of Scripture revealed by the study of the whole teaching of the Bible?

And creating identity

There is Reformed doctrine and Roman Catholic doctrine, to mention but two possibilities. Each is coherent, each strives for the truth. But each makes choices about such key issues as the sufficiency of Scripture, the doctrine of salvation and the depth of sin. So significant are these differences that it is impossible for them to unite. But, because both parties thoroughly endorse the ancient and biblical teaching on the Trinity and the humanity and deity of Christ, they may still be regarded as Christian and indeed, Catholic Christians.

The same cannot be said of Jehovah's Witnesses, for example. J. G. Machen says the same about theological liberalism in his key book entitled tellingly *Christianity and Liberalism*. Doctrine is essential in creating identity and helping us to relate to other Christians in different ways. Christians can co-operate in gospel ministry, for example, but only if they teach the same gospel. It is essential for guarding the truth of the gospel that every believer knows the basics at least and can see what is lost if we compromise on key issues. More than that, it is important to understand the broader doctrinal implications when we accept what may be regarded as a relatively insignificant change. The alterations to sexual ethics, for example, immediately impact on the authority of Scripture as well as the essence of Christian anthropology. Such a change is no trivial issue.

A last word

Expository preaching is a godsend. But it depends upon doctrine. How is doctrine taught in our churches?

In earlier times there were catechisms, and the day may be right for a resurrection of the catechism. As well as that, however, we need to look at the curriculum we use in children's programs. Does it simply consist of Bible stories? How then are the stories brought together into the big story of which they are part? How do children know about this God of whom we speak?

My hope is that at every level of education in our churches – in homes, in children and youth ministry, in pulpit instruction of adults,

in small groups, attention is specifically given to the explicit teaching of doctrine. By this method we will see the churches grow to maturity.

PETER JENSEN

In Communion with the See of Canterbury?

Andrew Atherstone

The place of Canterbury in the Anglican Communion is increasingly contested. The current Archbishop of Canterbury's leadership as 'primus inter pares' (first among equals) is no longer recognized by provinces within the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches. Yet being 'in communion with the See of Canterbury' is often viewed as an essential part of Anglican identity. This article interrogates the origins and ambiguities of that famous phrase.

Describing the Anglican Communion: Lambeth 1930

The evolving identity of the Anglican Communion has been a subject of wide discussion at each of the fifteen Lambeth Conferences, held between 1867 and 2022. The conference of 1930 – almost a century ago – was particularly significant in shaping the conversation for decades afterwards, with repercussions which are still deeply felt today.

Resolution 49 of the 1930 conference embedded the phrase 'in communion with the See of Canterbury' within all subsequent Anglican ecclesiology. Yet the wider context for that Resolution is often forgotten. It emerged from an episcopal workstream which argued that, in light of rapid global changes taking place since the 1880s, the identity of the Anglican Communion was now 'a subject of quite paramount importance, and raises far-reaching questions of principle which demand consideration'. These dilemmas were partly generated by global expansion:

Our Communion has come to occupy a large place in the thought of the Christian world, and provokes questionings as a world-wide institution. But the development has not only been in numbers. Flourishing young Churches are now in existence, conscious of themselves, and conscious of the world outside them, where half a century ago there were but struggling Missions or possibly no Christian work at all.¹

This expansion raised questions about the very purpose of Anglicanism, and its place in twentieth-century global Christianity, on which the bishops commented further:

¹ 'The Lambeth Conference, 1930: Reports of Committees, The Anglican Communion', in *The Lambeth Conferences, 1867–1930* (London: SPCK, 1948), 245.

Our ideal is nothing less than the Catholic Church in its entirety. Viewed in its widest relations, the Anglican Communion is seen as in some sense an incident in the history of the Church Universal. It has arisen out of the situation caused by the divisions of Christendom. It has indeed been clearly blessed of God, as we thankfully acknowledge; but in its present character we believe that it is transitional, and we forecast the day when the racial and historical connections which at present characterize it will be transcended, and the life of our Communion will be merged in a larger fellowship in the Catholic Church.²

Organizationally, the bishops contrasted ‘centralized government’ (as typified by the Church of Rome) and ‘regional autonomy within one fellowship’ (as typified by the Orthodox Churches of the East). They viewed the second model as older, and closer to early Christianity: ‘The Provinces and Patriarchates of the first four centuries were bound together by no administrative bond: the real nexus was a common life resting upon a common faith, common Sacraments, and a common allegiance to an Unseen Head.’ This was the constituent principle of the Anglican Communion, the bishops argued:

It is a fellowship of Churches historically associated with the British Isles. While these Churches preserve apostolic doctrine and order they are independent in their self-government, and are growing up freely on their own soil and in their own environment as integral parts of the Church Universal.³

But they affirmed that ‘Anglican’ no longer meant English, because ‘the Anglican Communion includes not merely those who are racially connected with England, but many others whose faith has been grounded in the doctrines and ideals for which the Church of England has always stood.’⁴ They went on to encourage the formation of new Anglican provinces in regions across the globe, and noted that

the racial bond has begun to disappear. The Churches growing up in China, Japan, India and other parts of the world, are joined to us solely by the tie of common beliefs and common life; and the historical connection whereby they owe their existence in the first

² ‘The Lambeth Conference, 1930’, 245–6.

³ ‘The Lambeth Conference, 1930’, 246.

⁴ ‘The Lambeth Conference, 1930’, 246.

instance to Anglican missionaries is receding into the past. The future is big with further possibilities.⁵

After considering this report by the Anglican Communion episcopal workstream, the 1930 conference, meeting in plenary, agreed several related resolutions of which Resolution 49 has been particularly significant in subsequent discussions of Anglican identity. It reads, in full:

49: The Conference approves the following statement of the nature and status of the Anglican Communion, as that term is used in its Resolutions:

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces or Regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, which have the following characteristics in common:

- (a) they uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorized in their several Churches;
- (b) they are particular or national Churches, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a national expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and
- (c) they are bound together not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the Bishops in conference.

The Conference makes this statement praying for and eagerly awaiting the time when the Churches of the present Anglican Communion will enter into communion with other parts of the Catholic Church not definable as Anglican in the above sense, as a step towards the ultimate reunion of all Christendom in one visibly united fellowship.⁶

This statement about the Anglican Communion (minus the wider ecumenical framing of Resolution 49, and minus the important contextual setting of the workstream report) has cascaded down the generations in numerous popular textbooks narrating Anglican identity, giving it an unexpected life beyond its original setting. In those textbooks, the explicit provisionality of Resolution 49 is usually overlooked completely. It should best be understood as a contemporary *description* of the Anglican

⁵ 'The Lambeth Conference, 1930', 247.

⁶ 'The Lambeth Conference, 1930: Resolutions', in *The Lambeth Conferences, 1867-1930* (London: SPCK, 1948), 173-4.

Communion as perceived by the gathered bishops in 1930, rather than as a fixed *definition* of the Anglican Communion in perpetuity.

The phrase ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’ deserves particular scrutiny. Sometimes the identity of the Anglican Communion has been reduced to this single strand. For example, the official report of the 1954 Anglican Congress (held in Minneapolis) stated:

A special position of honor is accorded to the Archbishop of Canterbury as head of the primatial See of the mother Church of England, and the test of membership in the Anglican Communion has traditionally been whether or not a diocese is in communion with the See of Canterbury.⁷

This understanding is frequently rehearsed by Anglican commentators in the twenty-first century. As one columnist in the *Church Times* puts it: ‘Communion with the see of Canterbury has always been the defining feature of what it means to be an Anglican.’⁸ The idea has become commonplace. Paul Avis asserts in *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (2008): ‘The litmus-test of membership of the Anglican Communion is to be in communion with the See of Canterbury.’ He goes so far as to call it ‘the ultimate criterion’.⁹ Yet this concept is now highly contested, and its meaning is more obscure than it first appears.

Victorian theological origins

The phrase ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’ goes back a century earlier than the 1930 Lambeth Conference. It was popularized in the Victorian period, especially in polemical writing contrasting the Church of Rome with the Church of England, by writers within the Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic traditions. Just as Roman Catholicism was conceived as a global communion united around the See of Rome, so Anglicanism was conceived as a global communion united around the See of Canterbury. This idea was often referenced in an un-ecumenical contest for ecclesiastical one-upmanship.

A few examples from nineteenth-century theological literature illustrate this trend. Joseph Woolfrey, a Roman Catholic pub landlord at Newport, on the Isle of Wight, died in 1838, but when his widow erected

⁷ Walter H. Gray, ‘Introduction’, in *Report of the Anglican Congress, 1954*, edited by Powel Mills Dawley (London: SPCK, 1955), 1–2.

⁸ Giles Fraser, ‘Dispose of the Messy Anglican Covenant’, *Church Times* (17 February 2012), 11.

⁹ Paul Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 62.

a gravestone in the local churchyard encouraging prayer for his soul, it caused a scandal and she was prosecuted in the Church of England's Court of Arches. Among her defenders was Roman Catholic priest Joseph Rathborne, who wrote under the pseudonym *Alethphilos* ('Lover of Truth') to the Anglican ecclesiastical lawyer Sir John Dodson:

You are in communion with the See of Canterbury, we are in communion with the Mother of all Christian sees – the See of Rome; and as the former circumstance does not make you Canterburians, or prevent your Church from being the Protestant Established Church of England; so neither does a kindred reason deprive our Church of the right and prerogative of being always styled the Catholic Church, or the Universal Church of Christendom.¹⁰

William Dodsworth was a Tractarian convert to Rome around the time of the Gorham Judgment, and in his apologia, *Anglicanism Considered in Its Results* (1851), he compared the Church of England unfavourably with his new spiritual home. He observed: 'The Catholic theory is at least consistent. It admits of but one church, comprehending all in communion with the See of Rome, and no others.' Anglicans, by contrast, in practice admitted that the 'one church' was divided into separate communions, which Dodsworth thought was 'absurd'. He did, however, acknowledge that Anglicans might choose to mirror Rome's exclusive ecclesiology, and that the Anglican theory of the oneness of the church 'would be vindicated by maintaining that the one Church is that in communion with the See of Canterbury'.¹¹

Members of the Church of England also began to emphasize the concept of being 'in communion with the See of Canterbury' in order to defend the historic origins and claims of their own church. This was typical of polemics defending the Church of England's right to be known as the true representative of Catholic Christianity in England, against the rival claims of Roman Catholicism. Welsh clergyman Leicester Darwall's *The Church of England a True Branch of the Holy Catholic Church* (1853) discussed whether the See of Rome took precedence over the See of Constantinople. He commented: 'Nor is the reformed Catholic Church [i.e. Anglicanism] so insignificant as the Romanists represent it, there being more than a hundred bishops (including our own) in communion with

¹⁰ *Letters of Alethphilos; Occasioned by the Late Prosecution of the Widow Woolfrey* (Newport: Samuel Lelli, 1839), 19.

¹¹ William Dodsworth, *Anglicanism Considered In Its Results* (London: Pickering, 1851), 22.

the See of Canterbury.¹² Likewise, Devon clergyman James Patterson's *The Church of England versus the Roman Church in England* (1872) included a chapter on apostolic succession in Anglicanism, tracing the episcopal lineage back to Augustine of Canterbury, and then, via the early Bishops of Rome, back to St Paul and St Peter, and to Jesus Christ himself. Patterson asserted:

Thus we come down at last to the great founder of the whole Catholic Church, whether in communion with the See of Canterbury, or with the older See of Rome, or with the still older Sees of Antioch and Jerusalem. Every priest in each of these branches of the Church Catholic, receives through the medium of the Apostolic Succession, a commission from Christ Himself, the great head of the Church, and the only primal source of all its power.¹³

Communion with the See of Canterbury was also harnessed in *Union and Unity* (1860), an address by Colin Lindsay, president of the English Church Union, an Anglo-Catholic pressure group. Some were concerned that by calling itself the *English* Church Union, it was excluding churches outside England, but Lindsay explained that they in fact had a global purview:

When we speak of the 'English nation', the 'English people', the 'English language', we simply mean the British empire, and even more than this, all other states, independent of the British Crown, the inhabitants of which are of our race and speak our language. In fact, the word 'English' is as universal in its application as the Roman or Greek was in ancient history. When we allude to the Roman or Greek Church, we usually understand all the churches throughout the world, which are in communion either with Rome or Constantinople. As therefore the churches which own either of these two sees as their centre of unity, have ever been, by reason of the celebrity of those great cities, recognised as the Roman or Greek communion, so it has come to pass, through the overwhelming influence of England and her Church, that all churches which are

¹² Leicester Darwall, *The Church of England a True Branch of the Holy Catholic Church* (London: Rivington, 1853), 83.

¹³ James W. Patterson, *The Church of England versus the Roman Church in England* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1872), 231.

in communion with the see of Canterbury should be known by all the world, and commonly styled, as the Church of England.¹⁴

Constituting this ‘great English Church’, Lindsay numbered the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the ‘colonial churches’, and the Episcopal Church of the United States, noting that all except Ireland had derived their orders and mission from England. ‘When therefore we speak of the Church of England in general terms, we include *all* the churches which are in communion with her.’¹⁵

The phrase ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’ gained increasing currency during the later Victorian period, especially in reference to bishops and dioceses. One Anglican clergyman in 1867, for example, referred to the inaugural Lambeth Conference as ‘The Holy Synod of Bishops of Christ’s Holy Catholic Church, Most Reverend and Right Reverend Fathers in God in Communion with the See of Canterbury’. He described himself as ‘A Priest of the Catholic Church in Communion with the See of Canterbury’.¹⁶ When Roman Catholic priest Count Enrico di Campello (1831-1903) broke with Rome and founded the Italian Catholic Church in 1882, he looked to the Church of England, and to the Archbishop of Canterbury, for assistance – or as Di Campello’s American Episcopalian supporter Robert Nevin (founding rector of St Paul’s within the Walls, the first non-Catholic church in Rome) put it, he had turned ‘to the Catholic Episcopate in communion with the see of Canterbury for Episcopal help and protection’.¹⁷ This soon became a familiar designation for the Anglican Communion. *The Spectator*, for example, in its analysis in 1888 of the third Lambeth Conference and the development of global Anglican identity, remarked that:

The Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury have increased and multiplied with remarkable rapidity. As yet, therefore, the younger among them have hardly realised their independent existence. There is little question, however, that this realisation will come, and will exercise, when it does come, a very strong separating force.

¹⁴ Colin Lindsay, *Union and Unity: An Address to the Members of the English Church Union, and Others, on the Constitution, Organization, and Objects of the Union* (London: Joseph Masters, 1860), 4.

¹⁵ Lindsay, *Union and Unity*, 4.

¹⁶ S. G. F. Perry, *An Ancient Syriac Document, Purporting To Be the Record, in its Chief Features, of the Second Synod of Ephesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1867), iii.

¹⁷ C. R. Conybeare, *The Church Reform Movement at Rome and Conte Enrico di Campello* (Winchester: Jacob and Johnson, 1883), 20.

The Spectator had in mind the growing strength of Anglicans in Canada and Australasia, who would soon want to ‘try their wings’, and it argued that the decennial Lambeth Conference was a helpful restraint upon this separatist tendency by strengthening Anglican unity. It concluded:

In an Episcopal as opposed to a Papal communion, the submission of distant Sees to a central authority must be founded wholly on consent. The chair of Augustine is not a divine institution, and any authority it possesses must be exercised over willing subjects. From anything more than this there would be a constant temptation to revolt; but where this temptation is wanting, the advantages of a dignified and historic arbitrator whose decisions may secure the due combination of continuity with development, will be obvious to all.¹⁸

As this brief survey illustrates, the concept of being ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’ was in circulation for a century before it appeared in Resolution 49 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference. Its origins were in a polemical theological context of rival churches competing for global dominance. It represented a desire by Catholic-minded members of the Church of England to defend the historicity, validity, and catholicity of their church. It was rooted especially in a ‘branch theory’ of apostolic succession, which focused on lineal descent from famous episcopal sees such as Rome and Constantinople. These theological and ecclesiological assumptions were popular in the nineteenth century, and still held sway in 1930, but the old ‘branch theory’ of Roman / Greek / Anglican communions has long since fallen out of favour. Therefore, the meaning and relevance of ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’ deserves fresh interrogation. In popular commentary it has shifted significantly from an external focus in the Victorian period on defending the Church of England against the universalizing claims of the Church of Rome, to a new internal focus since the 1930s on relations between Anglicans.

Complexities of interpretation

In our contemporary twenty-first-century context, there are additional complexities in interpreting the phrase ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’.

¹⁸ ‘The Lambeth Conference and Anglican Unity’, *The Spectator* (7 July 1888), 928.

i) What is the difference between ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’ and ‘in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury’?

The former phrase emphasizes historic roots in the sixth century (e.g. Augustine), the latter phrase emphasizes contemporary relationships in the twenty-first century (e.g. Justin Welby). These ideas overlap, but they are not synonymous. Nevertheless, in ecclesiological discussions they are often unhelpfully elided or used interchangeably. For example, the formal constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council defines member provinces as ‘churches in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury’.¹⁹ *Towards a Symphony of Instruments* (2012) explicitly combines the two ideas, asserting that ‘it is not possible for a Church to be a member of the Communion without being in communion with the archbishop as bishop of the See of Canterbury’.²⁰ This combination of ideas was picked up by the former Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, Bishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon, who insists: ‘For Anglicans, communion with the See of Canterbury – and with its Archbishop – is the visible expression of our communion with one another.’²¹

In what ways might it be possible to be in communion with the See, but not in communion with the current (or any particular) occupant of the See? As has been shown, for the Victorian originators of the concept, their primary focus was on the Church of England’s historic origins, and the derivation of its episcopal and presbyteral orders from Augustine’s mission – rather than on relationships with Victorian archbishops like Howley, Sumner, Longley, or Tait. Therefore, how might this core concept be retained and re-expressed more appropriately for modern Anglican identities in the twenty-first century? For example, ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’, in Resolution 49 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference, could be creatively revised to ‘cherishing their roots in the early Christian missions to England in the sixth century’. Augustine of Canterbury continues to hold a position of honour in the shared Anglican story, drawing global Anglicans together, whereas the more recent occupants of Augustine’s seat often drive global Anglicans apart.

¹⁹ Anglican Consultative Council articles of association.

²⁰ *Towards a Symphony of Instruments: A Historical and Theological Consideration of the Instruments of Communion of the Anglican Communion. A Working Paper prepared by the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order* (2012), §3.4.3.

²¹ Josiah Idowu-Fearon, ‘The Ties that Bind our Anglican Communion Family’ (14 December 2017), Anglican Communion News Service, www.anglicannews.org.

ii) How does a diocese, province or regional church enter ‘communion with the See of Canterbury’?

If it is not possible to enter communion with the See of Canterbury, what practical purpose does the concept hold for ecclesial relations? At present, there is no mechanism for entering communion with the See of Canterbury, and therefore no mechanism for joining the Anglican Communion. The Anglican Communion has expanded over the last century by the multiplication of Anglican provinces via sub-division – Mozambique and Angola from the Province of Southern Africa (2021), Alexandria from the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East (2020), Chile from the Province of South America (2018), and so on – not by the addition of new dioceses or provinces from outside the Communion. In other words, a new province is assumed to be in communion with the See of Canterbury, because its constituent dioceses were *already* in communion with the See of Canterbury.

In modern ecumenical relations, communion (whether expressed as ‘full communion’, or ‘intercommunion’, or some other similar relationship) is usually between churches not between sees. At the time of the 1930 Lambeth Conference, the Church of England was in communion with other Anglican churches worldwide, but not with any other church – therefore ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’ and ‘in communion with the Church of England’ were, in effect, interchangeable. But over the last century, the ecumenical picture has changed considerably, beginning with the inauguration of full communion between the Church of England and the Old Catholics in the 1931 Bonn Agreement. There are therefore now many churches which are ‘in communion’ with Anglicans globally, but which are not part of the Anglican Communion because they do not derive their episcopal and presbyteral orders, or their family history, from Augustine’s mission. *Towards a Symphony of Instruments* expresses this tangled web of modern ecumenical relationships: ‘Through communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Anglican Churches are held in communion with the Church of England and with each other, while those Churches that are in communion with the Anglican Communion are also in communion with the See of Canterbury.’²² But if being in communion with the See of Canterbury is truly considered the ultimate criterion of membership of the Anglican Communion, why are these Churches not invited to join the Communion? The complexities and illogicalities are rife. It is better to reimagine the Anglican Communion not as a denomination but as an evolving network of ecumenical partnerships, and to remove Canterbury as guardian of the entrance door to the Communion.

²² *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, §3.4.3.

Provincial constitutions

Many Anglican provinces have adopted the idea of being ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’ as part of their self-definition and identity. A study of provincial constitutions is instructive.²³

For example, in the United States, the Episcopal Church added the phrase to its constitution for the first time in 1967, in a new preamble. The preamble signalled a name change for TEC, away from its earlier ‘Protestant’ self-identity, and also positioned the province explicitly as part of the global Anglican Communion, deliberately echoing some of the phraseology of Resolution 49 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference:

The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as The Episcopal Church (which name is hereby recognized as also designating the Church), is a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces, and regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.²⁴

Newer provinces, created in the twentieth century, adopted similar language in their constitutions. However, in a postcolonial context, some Global South provinces have been moving in the opposite direction. In the twenty-first century, they have begun to reconsider the place of Canterbury as part of their self-identity as reflected in their constitutions.

In 2005, the Church of Nigeria deleted all reference to ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’ from its constitution. Instead, it substituted a new paragraph, explaining that the Church of Nigeria

shall be in communion with all Anglican Churches, Dioceses and Provinces that hold and maintain the historic faith, Doctrine, Sacrament and Discipline of the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church as the Lord has commanded in His holy word and as the same are received as taught in the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal of 1662 and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.²⁵

²³ See also, ‘The Archbishop of Canterbury in Provincial Constitutions’, in Alexander Ross, *A Still More Excellent Way: Authority and Polity in the Anglican Communion* (London: SCM Press, 2020), 96–100.

²⁴ *Constitution and Canons for the Government of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as The Episcopal Church, adopted in General Conventions 1789–1967* (1967).

²⁵ ‘Nigerians Distance Themselves From Canterbury’, *Church Times* (23 September 2005), 7. See further, Evan F. Kuehn, ‘Instruments of Faith and Unity in Canon

Arguably, therefore, Nigeria replaced an English archiepiscopal see (established in the sixth century) with three English theological texts (published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). Its emphasis is no longer on relationship with Canterbury, but on doctrinal and liturgical continuity with the three ‘historic formularies’ of the Reformation, the Book of Common Prayer, the Ordinal, and Thirty-Nine Articles.

This trend away from Canterbury has been replicated in other contexts. For example, *Iglesia Anglicana de Chile* (IACH) was inaugurated in 2018 as the 40th province of the Anglican Communion. Its constitution lays out its relationship with other Anglican provinces worldwide – both with Anglicans who share the historic faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and specifically with the Archbishop of Canterbury – as part of Article V on Ecclesial Relations:

2. *Con otras Provincias.*

i. *La IACH busca estar y permanecer en comunión con todas las Iglesias Anglicanas que afirman y mantienen la Fe Histórica, Doctrina, Sacramentos y Disciplina de la Iglesia que es Una, Santa, Universal y Apostólica tal como esta Constitución y los Cánones que la acompañan lo establecen.*

ii. *La IACH estará en comunión con el Arzobispo de Canterbury.*²⁶

It is striking that the Chile constitution speaks of being ‘in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury’, rather than the more traditional phrase, ‘in communion with the See of Canterbury’, further evidence of the eliding of terms. However, in light of recent developments in the Church of England, *Iglesia Anglicana de Chile* has now begun the formal synodical process of revising its constitution to delete section V.2.ii. Other Anglican provinces in the Global South are re-examining their constitutions in a similar way. The Province of Alexandria, for instance, was launched in 2020 with a constitution supplied for them by the Anglican Communion Office in London, but that constitution is now being re-written in Cairo to take better account of current Anglican realities.

Law: The Church of Nigeria Constitutional Revision of 2005’, *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* vol. 10 (May 2008), 161–73.

²⁶ *Constitución Provincia Anglicana de Chile* (May 2018), Artículo V: Relaciones Eclesiales.

Conclusion

Resolution 49 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference has long since served its purpose. Its portrait of Anglican Communion identity has been asked to bear weight far beyond what was intended by the gathered bishops almost a century ago. It has mutated from a contemporary description of global Anglican relationships in the 1930s into an essentialist definition of Anglican relationships for all time. A flood of Anglican textbooks have parroted Resolution 49 without properly interrogating it. The moment is ripe for a better description to emerge for today's generation which takes seriously global Anglican dynamics in the 2020s. In particular, the phrase 'in communion with the See of Canterbury' should be dropped or revised. The See of Canterbury, planted by Augustine's mission, is still held in high esteem across the Anglican Communion as part of the family story of origins. But the Victorian concept of being 'in communion' with that See, promoted by an older generation of Anglo-Catholic ecclesiologists in the nineteenth century, is now defunct. By reimagining the global Anglican Communion for today's postcolonial context, a better description can be found which no longer fixes 'communion' with the ancient See of Canterbury, or with the current Archbishop of Canterbury, as an essential criterion of membership.

ANDREW ATHERSTONE is Latimer Research Fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, and a member of the Anglican Consultative Council.

Paul, Philemon and the Pursuit of Koinonia

Ed Veale

Paul's letter to Philemon is a picture postcard, a pastoral masterclass, in seeing how the grace of Jesus works itself out in practise when there's relational breakdown in a Christian community. This essay shows us the Apostle's skills of warm persuasion, wise nuance, and Spirit-sanctified emotional intelligence as gospel doctrine is applied to shape gospel culture in the messiness of inter-personal conflict. We see modelled here a call for church pastors to play a proactive, prayerful, gentle and tender role in being agents of reconciliation within the family of God. Resolving difficulties in relationships in a local church family should not be seen first and foremost as a problem or a distraction from ministry – but in fact an opportunity for the ministry of 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ' (v. 25) to be seen and felt and acted out. This is the gospel in miniature, grace for the every-day, a window to see God at work.

Introduction

This Epistle gives us a masterly and tender illustration of Christian love; we see how St. Paul takes the part of poor Onesimus and advocates his cause with his master all that he can.¹

So begins Luther's commentary on Paul's letter to Philemon, as he paints a picture of Paul's approach to pastoral ministry which, as we will see, sings as an affirmation of deep relational commitment within God's people even when conflict appears.

Such relational commitment is not simply tactful rhetoric but is given as *the* theological reason for reconciliation within one fractured Christian relationship. Rhetorical skill and nuanced persuasion are the means used to urge Philemon, the offended and aggrieved slave-master, to warmly welcome back the penitent run-away slave Onesimus.² What we see in this

¹This article is adapted and updated from an essay submitted by the author as part of studies at Oak Hill College, Autumn 2021.

Martin Luther 'Preface to the Epistle of Saint Paul to Philemon, 1546 (1522)', in *Luther's Works*, ed. E. T. Bachmann, vol. 35 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 390.

² There are different views on the specific circumstances: did Onesimus commit an offence at Philemon's home and run away in fear? Or was he a run-away slave, seeking refuge in Paul? Or did he come to Paul wanting him to act as a mediator?

gem of a letter – which, as N.T. Wright has argued, is typical of *the* central Pauline theme – is that its heartbeat is an expression of, and exhortation to, *koinonia* in Christ.³ This brotherly fellowship in the Messiah is *both* the *already-existing*, invisible, spiritual basis for Paul's appeal to Philemon, and simultaneously, it's the *very goal* for which he seeks a tangible, visible expression amidst the messiness of human relationships'.⁴ As we explore Paul's ministry in pursuing *koinonia* in this Colossian house-church, we shall see that this is not simply an attempt to resolve a private dispute between two individuals, but a deliberately publicised opportunity to 'instruct an entire community in the principle of practical Christian love'.⁵ This is a case study of gospel culture being formed amidst – but also precisely because of – broken relationships in the church family.

There are many inter-woven themes in this letter one could explore – such as the exercise of apostolic authority,⁶ the potential subversion of first-century Greco-Roman social hierarchies, the way in which Paul employs rhetorical skills customary of the day,⁷ or the pastoral role of mediator which Paul adopts.⁸ But in this paper we will focus on the view that, for Paul, fundamental to pastoral ministry is a practical commitment to felt, tangible, experienced *koinonia*. We will see that, even in conflict, Paul envisages gospel doctrine to be embodied by gospel culture in church relationships. Whilst the word *koinonia* (like *ekklesia*) was used contemporaneously in ancient political theory to describe 'the community of the city-state ... participat[ing] in the common Good of the society', in Pauline theology it is used to define the new deep spiritual bond

³ N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God: parts I and II*, COQG (London: SPCK, 2013), 10. Similarly, Scot McKnight suggests, 'it is not a stretch to see the term *koinonos* as forming the core of Pauline theology and ethics'. See Scot McKnight, *The Letter to Philemon*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2017), 101.

⁴ As Bonhoeffer put it, such close-knit Christian community 'is not an ideal we have to realize, but rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate'. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (London: SCM Press, 1954), 97.

⁵ F. Forrester Church, 'Rhetorical Structure and Design in Paul's Letter to Philemon', *Harvard Theological Review* 71 (1978): 32.

⁶ See for instance, D. Francois Tolmie, 'Paul's Exercise of Authority in the Letter to Philemon: A Perspective from the 4th and 5th Centuries CE', *In die Skriflig* (50) 2016: 1–7.

⁷ We must not allow 1 Corinthians 1-2, for instance, lead us to think that Paul deliberately avoided rhetorical skill. See Church, 'Rhetorical Structure', 29.

⁸ For 'mediator' rather than authoritative 'arbitrator', see Amanda Hecht and Shaun O'Brien, 'Paul Pleads with Philemon: Paul as Master Mediator', in *Conflict Management and the Apostle Paul*, ed. Scot McKnight and Greg Manula (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 32.

between Christian believers.⁹ Paul here tethers together an individual's reconciliation with God through Christ, with the reconciliation which has been achieved – and is to be worked out – between believers. Paul elsewhere wrote that God 'gave us the ministry of reconciliation' and in this epistle we see the pleading apostle providing a worked example as to what this kind of ministry looks like.¹⁰ Given the three-fold structure of the letter, typical of ancient rhetoric, we will examine the letter in its three sections, drawing out principles of Paul's approach to ministry amidst conflict.¹¹

i. The importance of building rapport (the exordium in vv. 1–7)

Paul begins by gaining the ear of the listener, generating sympathy by describing himself as a 'prisoner of Christ', (a title which he unashamedly repeats, and combines with describing himself as an old man in verse 9, at the beginning of his argument).¹² James Dunn points out that this beginning is unique in Paul's letters, in that he leaves out his apostolic credentials and any other epithet.¹³ Chrysostom argued that this emphasis on his imprisonment would have calmed Philemon, giving him a larger perspective on his own parochial issue, highlighting how Paul is worthy of respect and instilling awe at what he was prepared to sacrifice for Christ.¹⁴ This, combined with his affection for 'beloved' Philemon, the affirmation of him as a 'fellow-worker', and the acknowledgement that the church is 'in your house', would have built rapport with Philemon.¹⁵ Further, given

⁹ Jonathan T. Pennington, *Jesus the Great Philosopher: Rediscovering the Wisdom Needed for the Good Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2020), 169.

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:17–20: '... if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation ... that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God' (NIV).

¹¹ For this three-fold structure, see Hecht and O'Brien, 'Paul Pleads with Philemon', 32.

¹² Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2007), 53.

¹³ J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 310.

¹⁴ Tolmie, 'Paul's Exercise of Authority', 4.

¹⁵ It has been argued the oral reader of the letter would have read it with 'modulation in voice, dramatic gestures, and eye contact', in order to add persuasive body

the rest of the church may have been listening as the letter was read, Philemon's '[social] honour rating is currently high' in this first part of the letter.¹⁶ This honour is enriched further by verses 4–7, in which Philemon's godly character, positive influence and example are celebrated.

Yet what we must not miss is Paul's starting position in how he relates to Philemon – right from the start, in verse 1, he calls him his 'dear friend'. For the apostle, God's gift of friendship was a precious means of mutual blessing. As we'll see, Paul was not simply a self-sufficient Alpha-male who dispensed theoretical truth to his juniors. No, he was deeply relational, heart as well as head, where he needed to receive refreshing friendship from others as much as the next person. In John Wyatt's recent book *Transforming Friendship: Lessons from John Stott and Others*, he draws lessons that we can still learn today, from how Paul models 'gospel-crafted friendships', which are inter-generational, non-hierarchical, bounded, open-ended, vulnerable and affectionate, with a shared vision and heart.¹⁷

In verse 6 we have the theological 'driving force' of the letter;¹⁸ this concept of *koinonia* is the thread which begins explicitly in verse 6 and is woven throughout the letter, an 'umbilical link' to its repetition in the climatic request in verse 17, 'So if you consider me your partner [*koin nos*], receive him'.¹⁹ By including the first explicit reference to *koinonia* within the form of a prayer (which Philemon would have been touched by and keen to echo himself), and by sharing this prayer just before the beginning of his argument, Paul effectively goes on to show how this prayer can be answered by the very way Philemon chooses to respond to Onesimus.

The depth of this fellowship is not a mere professional affiliation – it is of Paul's 'very heart [*splanchnon*]'. This affection, and the way it is later picked up in the letter, is very effective in deepening the rapport between Paul and Philemon.²⁰ As F. F. Church has shown, this powerful, intimate rhetoric is employed at key points in the letter's argument: 'If Philemon refreshes the very hearts of the saints (v. 6); if Onesimus is St.

language. See David Seal, 'Philemon: Signed, Sealed, and Delivered', *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 3 (2018): 297.

¹⁶ Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon*, 55.

¹⁷ John Wyatt, *Transforming Friendship: Lessons from John Stott and Others* (London: IVP, 2023).

¹⁸ N.T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon – an Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1986), 3.

¹⁹ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 11.

²⁰ Indeed, G.K. Beale thinks that Paul's personal heart refreshment is a big aim of the epistle. He argues that the 'refreshment of Paul's heart is the main logical point of the epistle...[t]he main focus of the logical development of the body is that of (1) common fellowship in Christ leading (2) to reconciliation and unity which results in (3) Paul's spiritual refreshment'. See G.K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 374.

Paul's very heart (v. 12); then to refresh Paul's very heart, he must refresh Onesimus'.²¹ This is effective, but we must not dismiss it as simply tactical or manipulative – it is in fact, rather, an embodiment of the theology of *koinonia*.²² This is a consistently Pauline approach to ministry (Philippians 1:7 'almost parallels' this heartiness);²³ there is no British stiff upper lip in sight, as there is vulnerability, emotional warmth, and indeed a sharing of one's whole life.²⁴ If Paul's human, imperfect, compassion and concern springs deep from his heart, then this is but a window to the yet deeper riches of Christ's own perfect, divine compassion.²⁵

We note, here, too that Paul is making this a very *public* issue. By including Timothy as a co-sender, having multiple addressees in verse 1, and listing several individuals who pass on their greetings in verse 23,²⁶ there is a 'wide range of external participants' interested in the outcome of the letter'.²⁷ Paul is conscious that this will prove a decisive moment to teach the house-churches at Colossae what Christ-centred reconciliation looks like. We see elsewhere how Paul is not afraid of intervening in conflicts, as a way to flesh out what fellowship means: in Philippians 4, for instance, he implores two women to agree with one another 'in the Lord'; and in Ephesians 4 he emphasises the need to live out their unity in Christ. As N.T Wright has argued persuasively, at 'the heart of his renewed worldview was the unity of the Messiah's people', not just in theory but in practise, and ministry requires action to embody this.²⁸

²¹ Church, 'Rhetorical Structure', 23.

²² Though some, in the light of Foucault's power studies, argue this rhetorical skill is deployed 'to serve to establish the base for the power claims Paul will make later in the text'. See Sandra Hack Polaski, *Paul and the Discourse of Power* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 60.

²³ George Panikulam, *Koinonia in the New Testament: A Dynamic Expression of Christian Life* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 89.

²⁴ See, for instance: Philippians 1:7 'It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart', or 1 Thessalonians 2:8, 'We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us'.

²⁵ See, for instance, the famous essay by B.B Warfield, 'The Emotional Life of our Lord'.

²⁶ Archippus is drawn attention to, in Colossians 4:17, suggesting Paul involves him as a third party in person. See Douglas Campbell, 'Philippians and Philemon', in *The New Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, CCR, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 132.

²⁷ Peter Head, 'Onesimus the Letter Carrier and the Initial Reception of Paul's Letter to Philemon', *Journal of Theological Studies* 71.2 (2020): 628–656. I am grateful for Dr Head providing me with a draft copy of this paper via personal correspondence prior to its publication [October 2020].

²⁸ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness*, 30.

ii) Grace-shaped relationships trump society's status quo (Paul's proof in vv. 8–16)

Having built this rapport, Paul proceeds with the thrust of his argument, climaxing in verse 16, where he asks that Philemon should have Onesimus back as a 'beloved brother'. It is striking to see how Paul throughout this section *alludes* to his authority but he explicitly states that he does not want his apostolic authority to be the basis or the reason for which Philemon should comply. We note at this stage in the letter, that Paul delays stating what it is that he is wanting; his ministry approach does not 'go in with guns blazing', but instead is gentle, tactical and nuanced. Whilst verse 8 stresses the seriousness of the situation,²⁹ his implied waiving of his apostolic authority, in favour of his preference on relying upon Philemon's free compliance ('for the sake of love'), serves to reinforce everything that follows, in a *fortiori* argument.³⁰ As Jerome pointed out, Paul is trying to encourage and rely upon Philemon's virtuous behaviour.³¹ This is now the fourth reference in the letter to Philemon's *agape* love, and he 'appeals' twice. Throughout the letter, here in verses 9–10 and in verse 14 ('... that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord'), he seeks to appeal to Philemon's character, as if (in an honour and shame culture), it allows Philemon to appear as if he has taken the initiative in welcoming back Onesimus.³²

Yet theologians vary in their interpretations of Paul's use of authority in the letter. Is he *relinquishing* it, stressing equality in Christ, demonstrating that Galatians 3:28 applies to him as much as anyone, and in church dynamics as much as in salvation?³³ Or is he temporarily *waiving* his legitimate apostolic authority, just as he chooses to do also in 1 Thessalonians 2:6? Or does Paul's paternal rhetoric (v. 10), arising from the fact of both their conversions under his ministry (and which is a metaphor which he often uses elsewhere)³⁴ serve as *implicitly* authoritative,

²⁹ Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon*, 66.

³⁰ Church, 'Rhetorical Structure', 25.

³¹ Tolmie, 'Paul's Exercise', 2. Compare how in Philippians Paul uses the 'same strategy', namely 'a set of appeals to Christ-like virtues, intertwined with personal visits modelling them directly'. See Campbell, 'Philippians and Philemon', 131–132.

³² Hecht and O'Brien, 'Paul Pleads with Philemon', 35.

³³ Nikki Holland, 'Philemon in light of Galatians 3:28', *Priscilla Papers* (32) 2018: 12–16.

³⁴ Such as 1 Thessalonians 2:9–12, Philippians 2:22, 1 Corinthians 4:17, and Galatians 4:19. Though of course this family imagery is more than 'powerful metaphor' as stated in Raymond F. Collins, *The Power of Images in Paul* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2008), 70. Rather, it is spiritual reality.

‘a transparent mask for his apostolic role?’³⁵ Perhaps, though, we need not be searching for ‘power-games’ in this text, and simply learn from Paul’s genuine affection and brotherly love as he himself navigates the dynamics of working out *koinonia* when facing controversy.³⁶

Certainly, though Paul is seeking to make a profound theological point – that (quite independent of him) the gospel of Christ calls for reconciliation between Christ’s people – we must not miss the complexity of the social hierarchical dynamics at work. As Norman Peterson has shown in his extensive sociological study of the letter, there is ‘the paradox that the egalitarian social structure of Paul’s churches is complemented by a hierarchical axis’, with Paul’s apostolic authority present but quiet and certainly not bullish.³⁷

In terms of dynamics between slave and owner, in the ‘domain of the world’, it is clearly the *paterfamilias* Philemon who, as a master and debtee, is ‘doubly superior’ to Onesimus, the slave and debtor (and indeed Paul’s social standing is inferior to Philemon).³⁸ According to Roman society’s legal and institutional requirements, Onesimus was obliged to return to Philemon (just as Paul was prohibited from harbouring a

³⁵ Norman R. Peterson, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul’s Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 131. Indeed, Peterson argues (at 134) that, outside of the Letter of Philemon, ‘Paul nowhere else so explicitly links his own authority to command to the obedience of those whom he commands’. Also, Polaski states that it is ‘Paul’s knowledge of the truth – that is, the real relationships in the family and the economy of God – places him in the position of authority’. See Polaski, *Paul and Discourse of Power*, 71.

³⁶ We are reminded of the eighteenth century pastor John Newton, a model of gracious engagement with those with whom disagreed. See for instance his letter ‘On Controversy’, available here: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/on-controversy>. Newton writes, ‘If you account him a believer, though greatly mistaken in the subject of debate between you, the words of David to Joab concerning Absalom, are very applicable: ‘Deal gently with him for my sake’. The Lord loves him and bears with him; therefore you must not despise him, or treat him harshly. The Lord bears with you likewise, and expects that you should show tenderness to others, from a sense of the much forgiveness you need yourself. In a little while you will meet in heaven; he will then be dearer to you than the nearest friend you have upon earth is to you now. Anticipate that period in your thoughts; and though you may find it necessary to oppose his errors, view him personally as a kindred soul, with whom you are to be happy in Christ forever’. For more on Newton as a reconciler, highly recommended is Michael Morgan, *John Newton: Catalyst for Compassion* (Littleton, CO: Acoma Press 2019)

³⁷ Peterson, *Rediscovering Paul*, 133.

³⁸ Peterson, *Rediscovering Paul*, 93.

fugitatus) and pay any outstanding debts (perhaps from any theft he has made, hinted at in v. 18).³⁹

And yet in the ‘domain of the church’, this new *politia*, Paul’s theology of equality in Christ (expressed most succinctly in ‘his Magna Carta’ of Galatians 3:28),⁴⁰ meant there was a collision of two worldviews and social structures. As Wright has put it, ‘the question of their social status is radically outflanked’, by the fact that, as the argument crescendos in verses 16–17, Onesimus is now Philemon’s brother. Here lies the revolutionary ‘theological weight of this letter’.⁴¹ He is to be welcomed back, forgiven, restored, yet more than that – ‘no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother’.⁴² This is language of hierarchy transformed into equality, in which a slave formerly on the margins of a family is now welcomed, in Christ, to God’s family table.⁴³ For Paul, a ministry of reconciliation meant teaching how Christians must now relate to one another as family. ‘Love ... is the foundation of a different set of power relations, to which Philemon is invited’.⁴⁴

This colliding of two worldviews brings us, then, to the theological – and unavoidably practical – question at the heart of the letter: from Paul’s ministry perspective, how should Philemon the slave-owner now relate to his slave Onesimus? Will he be the one who capitulates to the present, old, evil age and insist on treating Onesimus with disdain?⁴⁵ Or will be one who embraces ‘Paul’s socio-ecclesial revolutionary kingdom reality’, and do so not just in theory, but in his very home?⁴⁶ Christianity’s ‘radical egalitarianism of worth’ stood in stark contrast to its surrounding ancient world philosophies.⁴⁷ The outworking of such a theological conviction would undoubtedly have changed the dynamics at the home (as required in Colossians 4, too), including the subtle relativisation of the ‘supreme

³⁹ Legally, Philemon was entitled to punish, beat a runaway, or even hand him over for execution.

⁴⁰ McKnight, *Letter to Philemon*, 45.

⁴¹ McKnight, *Letter to Philemon*, 95.

⁴² Pauline theology is full of eschatological shifts expressed in his ‘no longer’ statements, such as: Romans 6:9: ‘death no longer has mastery over him’, or more poignantly for us, 2 Corinthians 5:15, ‘So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer’. See McKnight, *Letter to Philemon*, 96.

⁴³ McKnight, *Letter to Philemon*, 95.

⁴⁴ Polaski, *Paul and Discourse of Power*, 69.

⁴⁵ See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory: A Pauline Theology*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2020), 481.

⁴⁶ McKnight, *Letter to Philemon*, 45.

⁴⁷ Pennington, *Jesus The Great Philosopher*, 171.

power of the *paterfamilias* in the household',⁴⁸ given that now both Philemon and Onesimus, along with Paul, all come under their shared one *kurios*, not only Caesar but supremely Christ himself.⁴⁹

iii) A big ask is (Paul's proration in vv. 17–22)

That question of what Philemon will do is left to dangle, as in the final section Paul combines reason and emotion: he restates the appeal (v. 17), amplifies on the argument (vv. 18–19), appeals to emotions (v. 20), and so securing Philemon's favour (vv. 21–22).⁵⁰

Paul's one and ultimate request in the letter, then, is that Philemon 'welcome[s]' Onesimus. Paul tethers Philemon's decision with Philemon's deepest relational convictions with the Apostle himself: 'So if you consider *me* a partner, welcome *him* ...' The assumption is that Philemon's connectedness to Paul (as reinforced by the spiritual 'debt' Philemon owes Paul in verse 19 for his own conversion), and their common bond in all they share in Christ, will express itself in him embracing Onesimus. Paul focusses on 'mutually reciprocating life under the cruciform Lord Jesus, life established by reconciliation'.⁵¹

The quality and depth of welcome which Paul expects is deepened further by Paul's own identifying with Onesimus: 'welcome *him* as you would welcome *me*'. Thus Paul himself puts his own relationship with Philemon on the line: to welcome Onesimus is to receive Paul, and conversely, to spurn Onesimus is to spurn Paul himself.⁵² The theme of 'Welcome' has profound theological significance for Paul, for it lies at the heart of what God in Christ has done for the believer; he commands the Romans to 'Welcome one another *as Christ has welcomed you*, for the glory of God'.⁵³ Commenting on this verse, Ray Ortlund and Sam Allberry write,

⁴⁸ Bernardo Cho, 'Subverting Slavery: Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul's Gospel of Reconciliation', *Evangelical Quarterly* (86), 2014: 99–115. 107

⁴⁹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York, Doubleday, 2000), 91, stresses that the four-fold use of *kurios* in the letter is particularly significant, both in contrast to *doulos* but also a reminder that Philemon himself now has a (divine) master too. For more on Empirical Criticism, see Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, eds. *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013). As Andy Crouch puts it in his Foreword, '... to say 'Jesus is Lord' does not seem actually to entail *saying* Caesar is not [Lord]'. Rather, it entails not *saying* 'Caesar is Lord'.'

⁵⁰ Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon*, 82.

⁵¹ McKnight, *Letter to Philemon*, 101.

⁵² McKnight, *Letter to Philemon*, 102.

⁵³ Romans 15:7.

‘Welcome’ is one of the most consequential words in our gospel vocabulary. Paul concludes two lengthy and profound chapters in his letter to the Romans that address church tensions by urging, of all things, welcome ... Welcome really does matter. The glory of God is bound up in it. We’re called to welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us. There’s the gospel in four words: ‘Christ has welcomed us’ ... When gospel doctrine starts to create gospel culture in a church, our mutual welcome comes alive!⁵⁴

We see here, then, Paul’s ministry involves not emotional blackmail but deep emotional connectedness, for the greater sake of living out the gospel. He is providing Philemon a practical, down-to-earth application of how gospel doctrine must inform gospel culture.

Some interpret this command to ‘Welcome’ as a request for manumission (and supported by a possible implication in v. 21) – which would dovetail with his suggestion in 1 Corinthians 7 that slaves seek their freedom if possible. Peter Head has recently argued that Paul’s request is deliberately vague and ambiguous, typical of letters of recommendation, precisely so that Onesimus (as, almost certainly, the letter-carrier) would have the opportunity to offer his own, decisive voice in requesting his freedom.⁵⁵ Yet the letter’s total absence of any direct request for manumission, combined with the accompanying letter to Colossians which advocates for godliness within – not the abolition of – master-slave relationships, suggests that this is not Paul’s primary objective.⁵⁶

So it is striking that Paul sees his role not primarily as an abolitionist but as a pastor, and the pastoral need of the hour is to bring about reconciliation. Paul does not see the issue between Philemon and Onesimus as a problem to get out of the way, or a distraction *from* ministry, but in fact as the very ministry of the gospel playing out.⁵⁷ Paul sees his ministry role in this context as that of being ‘Christ’s ambassador ... [and]

⁵⁴ Ray Ortlund and Sam Allberry, *You’re Not Crazy: Gospel Sanity for Weary Churches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), 24-25.

⁵⁵ Head, ‘Onesimus the Letter Carrier’, 5.

⁵⁶ The manumission question is much contested. A summary of positions (From McKnight, *Letter to Philemon*, 27, n.101) on manumission provides these options:

- Paul pleads for manumission (Witherington and Petersen)
- Paul does not bother with the slavery issue (because status is irrelevant in Christ and/ or the eschaton is imminent) (Soards).
- Paul is unsure or deliberately ambiguous (Dunn and Barclay)
- Paul’s focus is an ecclesial revolution (McKnight and Wolter)

⁵⁷ I remember first hearing ministry described like this very helpfully by Revd Nicky Gumbel when he spoke at the annual staff retreat of Holy Trinity Clapham, April 2023. The sentiment was along the lines of, ‘Problems are not problems *to* the ministry, they *are* the ministry’.

agent of reconciliation ... by identifying himself with Philemon ... and Onesimus'.⁵⁸ There is a 'triangularity' between the three main actors, with Paul himself playing Christ's part at the apex of the triangle.⁵⁹ Indeed Wright evocatively puts it so:

Paul's apostolic ministry reaches one of its high points as he stands there with arms outstretched, embracing Philemon with one and Onesimus with the other. That is what the ministry of reconciliation looks like. The cross itself ... emerges here [embodied in Paul] as the theological substructure of the pastoral appeal.⁶⁰

Conclusion

We have seen that the pastor Paul is skilled and persuasively, gently, gradually showing Philemon how his relationship with Onesimus in the church at Colossae is not a mere private problem to be managed, but actually is an opportunity to display the gospel of welcome in practise. We are reminded that hospitality is the heart of the Christian invitation – the very welcome of God in Christ himself to all who will come to Him. This is eminently practical; it is no wonder that the apostle lists that a key qualifications for church leadership is to be hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2). It is clear that Paul wants the gospel of reconciliation to be a felt experience, a dramatized reality, by teaching how Christians should relate to one another even amidst deep relationship breakdown.

Yet, as we have seen Paul's ministry at work, and as we watch these actors on their first-century stage in Colossae, and as we imagine Onesimus standing on the threshold of Philemon's door, we are left asking whether Paul's ministry of reconciliation bore fruit; we wonder, did Philemon open wide the door of his home – and of his heart? But as we watch and imagine the story unfolding, we are also seeing a real-life enactment, an embodiment, of the gospel of reconciliation itself. Paul's pastoral ministry flows from and is modelled on Christ the Great Reconciler himself. And as our gaze lingers longer still, the Christian believer realises that he is no mere spectator to this story, but, is himself, by grace, among the participants on the stage, too. As Luther put it,

⁵⁸ Marianne Meye Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon*, THNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 223.

⁵⁹ John G. Nordling, 'The Gospel in Philemon', *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (71) 2007: 80.

⁶⁰ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 20.

What Christ has done for us with God the Father, that St. Paul does for Onesimus with Philemon. For Christ laid aside His rights and overcame His Father with love and humility, so that He had to put away His wrath and His rights and receive us into favor, for Christ's sake, who so earnestly advocates our cause and takes our part so tenderly. For we are all his Onesimi, if we believe.⁶¹

This, as ever, is the fuel for the engine of our hearts in ministry. It is to see ourselves again and again as the Lord's Onesimi – with our debts cleared, his welcome bestowed, and grace outpoured. It is inhabiting that story of the gospel that, when conflict and fractures happen, will empower church members and leaders alike to be able to live out day by day the *koinonia* to which we have been called. Pursuing reconciliation in the local church is, then, an opportunity for us all to feel the gospel in miniature, receive grace for the messiness of the every-day, to sit at a window through which to see God at work as He makes *koinonia* to be not just a safe theory textbook on the shelf but a messy yet glorious reality in our lives.

ED VEALE is the curate at Holy Trinity Clapham, and is a practising solicitor and mediator.

⁶¹ Luther, 'Preface to the Epistle of Saint Paul to Philemon', 390.

The Theological 'Wit', Pastoral Wisdom and Gospel Witness of Nicholas Ridley 1500–1555

Graeme Howells

The works of Anglican Reformer Bishop Nicholas Ridley are an often untapped source of theological erudition, pastoral wisdom and evangelical witness. Ridley's doctrines of Scripture and sacramental theology remain examples of careful evangelical scholarship, and model an understanding of how key doctrines overlap and inform each other. His writings provide thought-provoking examples of theological reflection placed in the service of pastoral need, overflowing from an episcopal pastoral heart. His convictions regarding the spiritual dangers of compromise and necessity of the gospel shaping the actions, interactions and commitments of Christian people offer salutary encouragement. Transferrable insights from Ridley's works will be suggested.

Nicholas Ridley's status among the reformers has sometimes been dwarfed by the fame of his fellow Oxford Marian martyrs Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer. However, his own contemporaries regarded him as the 'outstanding theologian' among the English Reformed leaders.¹ The assessment of James Brooks, Bishop of Gloucester, during the 1555 Oxford Examination makes this abundantly clear: 'Latimer leaneth to Cranmer, Cranmer to Ridley, and Ridley to the singularity of his own wit; so that if you overthrow the singularity of Ridley's wit, then must needs the religion of Cranmer and Latimer fall also.'² Though Ridley strenuously denied his importance, later commentators have taken Ridley's opponents' opinion as evidence of Ridley's significant influence on Edwardian Anglican Articles and Liturgy.³ Others note that the efforts directed against Ridley in the Oxford Disputations and trials demonstrates the presumption that if Ridley could be caused to recant his theological positions, others including Cranmer would easily follow.⁴

Yet despite Ridley's importance to the evangelical cause during the sixteenth century, there remains a paucity of studies of Ridley's theological contributions, pastoral insights and evangelical witness. Bishop Ryle's chapter on Ridley essentially just reprints key passages from Foxe. The

¹ G. W. Bromiley, *Nicholas Ridley 1500–1555. Scholar, Bishop, Theologian, Martyr* (London: Church Book Room Press Ltd, 1953), 28.

² Henry Christmas (ed.), *The Works of Nicholas Ridley, D.D.* (Cambridge: CUP, 1844), 283. Herein: *Ridley, Works*.

³ Ridley, *Works*, 284, J. C. Ryle, *Five English Reformers* (Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1960), 202.

⁴ Bromiley, *Nicholas Ridley*, 28.

most substantial work on Ridley, a twentieth-century biography authored by his relative J. G. Ridley, is self-described as written from an historical rather than theological perspective.⁵ Whilst Bromiley and Williams intentionally focus on Ridley's distinctive theological contributions, and show convincingly his importance, the brevity of their respective works means there is still much of Ridley's theological, pastoral and evangelical legacy to showcase.⁶ This article seeks to modestly contribute to the appreciation of this significant Anglican reformer.

Part 1: Theological wit

Brooks' attribution of a 'singular wit' was intended as an accusation that Ridley had departed from conservative orthodoxy due to his own novel and vainglorious thinking. Brooks warned Ridley: 'You remember well, Master Ridley, that the prophet speaketh most truly, saying: "Woe be to them which are singular and wise in their conceits."'”⁷ However a careful reading of Ridley's writings makes clear that Ridley was at pains to demonstrate that his theological wit was far from singular. The pattern of Ridley's writing was to intentionally and consciously present his theology as consistently scriptural, insisting on Scripture as the only legitimate final authority, with his articulation of that theology as consciously in harmony with the ancient and recognised church fathers who preceded him.

Sixteenth-century conservative Catholics shared with Protestant Reformers a disdain for and distrust of 'singular wit'. Both saw it as a path to heresy, the former fearing critique of catholic traditional 'orthodoxy', the latter fearing religious radicalism of the Anabaptists and the radical reform movement.⁸ The then Oxford professor Richard Smith taunted Protestants as fostering heretics by encouraging reasoning on the Scriptures:

What folly and madness is it then to dispute and reason so much as Englishmen do, upon the articles of our faith. What brought Joan of Kent to abominable heresy? Was it not over much reasoning upon God's Word and measuring of it, and of God's power, by her wit and natural reason? What hath brought many other men and women into divers heresies in England which are not yet known

⁵ Jasper Godwin Ridley, *Nicholas Ridley: A Biography* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), Dustjacket.

⁶ Garry Williams, 'Feasting with the Lord: Nicholas Ridley (c.1500–55)' in *Silent Witnesses: Lessons on Theology, Life, and the Church from Christians of the Past* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2013).

⁷ Ridley, *Works*, 283.

⁸ Catherine Davies, *A Religion of the Word: the Defence of the Reformation in the Reign of Edward VI* (Manchester, Manchester University Press: 2002), 72.

commonly? Was it not mistaking of the Scriptures and arrogant reasoning upon them.⁹

In this context it was important for Ridley to demonstrate that his theological understandings and writings were thoroughly scripturally derived, hermeneutically consistent, and in continuity with other earlier, recognised, orthodox theologians.

The use and importance of Scripture in Ridley's theological method

Ridley consciously grounds his theological wit on Scripture, and articulates his doctrine most clearly in the introduction to his *Brief Declaration*. The Christian believer ought to take Scripture as authoritative because of the initiative of God expressed in the relationship between Christ and the written word: 'Christ is the truth of God revealed unto man from heaven by God himself, and therefore in his word the truth is to be found, which is to be embraced of all that be his.'¹⁰ The indissoluble link between Christ's inscripturated word and his authority in doctrine cannot be overstated for apprehending Ridley's theological understanding: 'the very words of Christ enforce us to confess ...' when it comes to particular doctrinal truth.¹¹ Ridley explicitly articulates that scriptural exposition is primary in his theological method.¹²

Having established the essential place of Scripture for addressing the doctrinal issues at stake, Ridley moves to distil the essence of the theological controversy, before returning to Scripture to demonstrate and justify his doctrinal answer. This allows him then to ask questions of his opponents' theology and practice, with Scriptural exegesis used to show the inconsistency and incongruity of their alternative position.¹³ Ridley expresses the necessity of a theologian being able to demonstrate that one's use and understanding of Scripture is not novel: One ought not 'set by mine own conceit more than is meet', or have less regard for the doctrine of older ecclesiastical writers.¹⁴ To this end, and only secondarily, Ridley marshals the Patristics, both Greek and Latin, to show the clarity and consistency of both his scriptural exegesis and his theological conclusions with those writers considered ancient and catholic. Their conclusions strengthened his position rather than providing *the primary* foundation for his doctrine.¹⁵ Bromiley is accurate that for Ridley the Fathers had no inherent authority of their own; however, Bromiley's assertion that they

⁹ As cited in Davies, *A Religion of the Word*, 72.

¹⁰ 'Brief Declaration', Ridley, *Works*, 5.

¹¹ Ridley, *Works*, 16.

¹² Ridley, *Works*, 6

¹³ Ridley, *Works*, 23–24.

¹⁴ Ridley, *Works*, 27.

¹⁵ Ridley, *Works*, 28–44.

were to be studied primarily for arriving at clear biblical interpretation appears only partially correct. Ridley was at pains to invoke ancient writers to establish the consistency of Reformation biblical interpretation with the earliest forms of Christianity.¹⁶ Bromiley's later observation is more apt: that the Reformers were consciously positioning their theology as representing a return rather than a new development.¹⁷ Ridley exemplifies this model.

Further, Ridley advocated a gospel-centric hermeneutic for understanding and interpreting Scripture, with the Gospels and the New Testament being the clarifying and interpretative key to the Old Testament:

Christ himself has left unto the church not only Moses and the prophets, whom he willethe his church in all doubts to go unto and ask counsel at, but also the Gospels and the rest of the body of the New Testament, in the which, whatsoever is hard in Moses and the prophets, whatsoever is necessary to be known unto salvation, revealed and opened up.¹⁸

Ridley's doctrine of Scripture also equipped him to respond to his opponents' objection that passages he quoted might only occur once in Scripture and therefore not be as significant for doctrinal formation. Ridley's response was that since Scripture was God's authoritative word inspired by the Holy Spirit, if something was said once therein it was as good as if it was said repeatedly throughout:

... for that any of the Evangelists spake inspired by the Holy Ghost, was as true as that which was spoken of all of them ... For it is not in Scripture as in witness of men, where the number is credited more than one because it is uncertain whose spirit he doth speak.¹⁹

Christology, salvation and the sacrament

Much of our evidence for Ridley's theology arises in the context of writings and disputations regarding the Lord's Supper. Ridley perceived that Christology, salvation and justification were inextricably joined in these eucharistic controversies; questions about the nature of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist were actually questions of Christology and the integrity of Christ's person.²⁰

¹⁶ Bromiley, *Nicholas Ridley*, 17.

¹⁷ Bromiley, *Nicholas Ridley*, 23.

¹⁸ Ridley, *Works*, 131.

¹⁹ Ridley, *Works*, 156–157.

²⁰ Ridley, *Works*, 344.

For Ridley the Catholic doctrines of the ‘substantial’ presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Mass, and assertion that the Mass itself was an act of atoning sacrifice, were denials of the biblical teachings on justification by grace through faith in Christ’s unique and sufficient sacrifice; a derogation of the merits and sufficiency of Christ’s passions.²¹ Transubstantiation negated the integrity of Christ’s genuine human nature in his ascension and heavenly session. Ridley’s Christology can be reconstructed from questions about the ‘natural substance’ of Christ’s body. Christ’s hypostatically united divine/human nature, the ‘natural substance of Christ’s nature, which he took of the Virgin Mary’, is the same natural substance in which he is in heaven reigning now in glory.²² Further, because that same natural substance of the very body and blood of Christ is united in the divine nature in Christ, who is the second person of the Trinity, the natural substance of Christ’s body has life in itself, and therefore can give life to all partakers.²³ It is that undivided body of Christ that ascended physically, and remains in heaven.²⁴ Ridley’s analogy is that of the sun’s relationship to earth: though we experience the sun’s presence through its light, beams, warmth, such that we have a real experience of the sun here on earth, nonetheless the celestial body we call the sun never leaves its place in the heavens.²⁵ Likewise the heavenly Son of God; to say that Christ was ‘carnally’ or corporeally present in the sacrament was to take away the truth about Christ’s human nature.²⁶

Ridley’s insistence that the ascended body of Christ has life in itself and the ability to give life to all who partake in that body, a teaching he attributed to John 6, and a truth which Ridley took as guaranteed by Christ’s institution of the sacrament, is the point at which Christology, justification and sacrament meet.²⁷ Ridley’s insight was that life was received by those who partook worthily of the body and blood of Christ, and this was done by faith in the ascended Christ, not by physical consumption.²⁸ In language cleverly contrasting the ‘spectacle of the Mass’, Ridley affirms: ‘We behold with the eyes of faith him present after grace ... the worship is of him that sitteth above.’²⁹

Ridley’s understanding of the nature of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper has been euphemistically described as ‘a position which admits of

²¹ Ridley, *Works*, 275.

²² Ridley, *Works*, 12.

²³ Ridley, *Works*, 13.

²⁴ Ridley, *Works*, 13.

²⁵ Ridley, *Works*, 13.

²⁶ Ridley, *Works*, 176.

²⁷ Ridley, *Works*, 13; Mark Newcombe, *The Ark, the Covenant, and the Poor Men’s Chest*, 21.

²⁸ Ridley, *Works*, 240–241, 250.

²⁹ Ridley, *Works*, 251.

no easy characterisation.³⁰ Utilising Gerrish's categories, Ridley objects to the Zwinglian-esque 'symbolic memorialism', and whereas Cranmer's position in his *Answer to Gardiner* closely aligns with Bullinger's 'symbolic parallelism', Ridley lands more closely to Calvin's 'symbolic instrumentalism'.³¹ Indeed Ridley employs the term 'instrument' in his description: 'This sacrament hath a promise of grace, made to those who receive it worthily, because grace is given by it, as by an instrument.'³² Yet Ridley remains distinct from Calvin, for whereas Calvin linked a real spiritual presence to the work of the Spirit in connecting the sacramental elements with the ascended Christ, Ridley, rather than invoking the Spirit, places the emphasis on the direct power and spiritual presence of Christ in the sacrament.³³ Ridley's position was that because Christ's body has life in itself, it can also give life, and does so by grace, being present with us in a life-giving way in the sacrament.³⁴ A further distinctive of Ridley's expression of the presence of Christ in the Lord's supper is his unabashed use of 'mystery'. Whereas critics of the 1549 Prayer Book suggest that 'mystery' vocabulary in the Communion prayers either permits or affirms a transubstantiationist understanding, in Ridley's understanding 'mystery' was a way of describing the real-yet-absent-presence of Christ in the supper:

I grant that Christ ... both took up his flesh with him ascending up, and also did leave the same behind him with us, *but after a diverse manner and respect*. He took his true and corporeal flesh with him, and he left the same *in mystery* to the faithful in the supper, *to be received after a spiritual communication, and by grace*.³⁵

Given Ridley's influence on Cranmer in the compilation and preparation of the Prayer Book, it may be constructive to consider Ridley's understanding of 'mystery' and its clear relation to 'spiritual communication, and by grace' when trying to establish an evangelical background for interpreting 'these holy mysteries' in the BCP prayers.

Ecclesiology

³⁰ Mark A. Newcomb, *The Ark, the Covenant and the Poor Men's Chest*, 10.

³¹ Gerrish as quoted in Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 614–615.

³² Ridley, *Works*, 241.

³³ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., LCC 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), Book IV.xvii.9, 1369–1370.

³⁴ Ridley, *Works*, 13.

³⁵ Ridley, *Works*, 222. My emphasis.

Ridley's opponents sought to position him as despising 'the church' by his opposition to traditional teachings about the Mass, a serious charge in sixteenth-century ecclesiastical debates, as to 'forsake the church' was to put oneself outside of the 'ark of salvation'.³⁶ Conservatives asserted the Mass was the sacrament of unity and that the unity of the church was to be retained by all means.³⁷ Ridley reframed the matter as a defence of the church of God, insisting that the universal or truly catholic church could be identified by a clear test: 'the rule of this church is the word of God, according to which rule we go forward unto life.'³⁸ Ridley saw the four marks of the truly catholic church as the sincere preaching of God's word, due administration of the sacraments, charity and faithful ecclesiastical discipline 'according to the word of God'.³⁹ Scripture's authority preceded that of the church's authority; Christ, having provided his church with the Father's counsel written faithfully in the Old and New Testaments, had not burdened the members of his church with the need to go to 'the universal church' to find the truth of religion.⁴⁰

Ridley looked towards a church which was obedient by keeping itself within the bounds of Christ's commands and not seeking to confirm anything as necessary to salvation which Christ in his word did not expressly teach.⁴¹ In response to a traditionalist ecclesiology that privileged the decrees of previous church councils, Ridley argues that councils are only as good and reliable as the people who govern them; if the bishops who call and lead said councils are 'lively members of Christ' walking by the rule of Christ's word and guiding the Christian flock to follow the same, then such councils would represent the universal church, and ought to expect to be led by the Spirit into all truth. However when councils allow errors and superstitions, they thus prove that they cannot have been gathered in the name of Christ, since there can be no agreement between Christ and Belial (2 Cor 6:15), and 'superstition' and the sincere worship of Christ can never agree together.⁴²

Newcombe makes the case that Ridley's ecclesiology was inextricably bound up with his sacramental theology, for to deny the oblatory nature of the Eucharist necessarily entailed refuting the notion of priests in the church of England as being sacerdotal priests, thus shifting the role of clergy from priests to preachers and ministers of God's word.⁴³ Ridley's non-sacerdotal ecclesiology played out in his 1550 visitation of the

³⁶ Ridley, *Works*, 122.

³⁷ Ridley, *Works*, 120–123.

³⁸ Ridley, *Works*, 123.

³⁹ Ridley, *Works*, 123.

⁴⁰ Ridley, *Works*, 132.

⁴¹ Ridley, *Works*, 131.

⁴² Ridley, *Works*, 130.

⁴³ Mark Newcombe, *The Ark, the Covenant, and the Poor Men's Chest*, 15–16.

London parishes where he laid out his ‘doctrine-in-practice’ through his ‘Reasons why the Lord’s Board should rather be after the form of a table than an altar.’⁴⁴ Ridley understood it as a duty of his office as bishop of the church that he exhort churches to be consistent with the ‘sincere setting forward of God’s holy word.’⁴⁵ An ‘altar’ in a church encouraged the simple in ‘superstitious opinions of the popish mass’ as it implied a sacrifice was being made, whereas a table is for feeding at, and the right use of the Lord’s Supper was to spiritually feed on ‘him that was once only crucified and offered up.’⁴⁶

Part 2: Pastoral wisdom

Whilst there is a certain utility in examining Ridley’s contribution under the distinguishing headings of ‘theology’ and ‘pastoral wisdom’, this is an artificial division, as Ridley himself never saw the two as discrete or separate enterprises. His theological contributions were pastorally intended. In his *Brief Declaration* he states that in outlining the truth of the doctrines tied up in the Lord’s Supper his real burden is for the ‘seely ones’ who want to know God’s will, but who are blinded by the world, the flesh and the devil.⁴⁷ Theology and pastoral wisdom were also apiece in his ecclesiastical practice; the removal and replacement of altars with ‘an honest table’ was intended to move the simple from old superstitious opinions, and instead towards an evangelical appreciation of Christ.⁴⁸

The vestment controversy

In 1550 Ridley found himself engaged in controversy when John Hooper requested to be consecrated bishop without wearing clerical vestments. Davies suggests that after Cranmer’s eucharistic theology, this vestment controversy was the second most distinctive issue in the theological history of Edward’s reign.⁴⁹

The controversy reflected a difference of opinion over Article 33 of the 42 Articles (Article 34 of later 39 Articles) on the traditions of the church. For Hooper nothing less than the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* was at stake, his logic expressed in his 1550 Lenten sermons before the royal court where he opined that since vestments were not ordained in Scripture, nor the earliest churches, wearing them ‘seemeth to

⁴⁴ Ridley, *Works*, 321.

⁴⁵ Ridley, *Works*, 321.

⁴⁶ Ridley, *Works*, 322.

⁴⁷ Ridley, *Works*, 6.

⁴⁸ Ridley, *Works*, 320–323.

⁴⁹ Catherine Davies, *A Religion of the Word*, 4.

repugn plainly' with God's word.⁵⁰ In response, Ridley limited the terms of reference regarding the matter, making clear that he was not arguing that vestments were necessary to salvation nor ministry, but identifying the heart of the controversy as whether vestments, because they were appointed by the authority of the leadership of the Church of England to be used without breach of God's law, could be condemned as sin in the way that Hooper was seeking to portray them.⁵¹ Ridley noted that nowhere within Scripture were vestments forbidden as sin. His critique then of Hooper became that by condemning something as sin which God's word nowhere forbade meant Hooper was in danger of 'ungodly adding his own fantasy unto God's word.'⁵²

Ridley offered an exegetical exploration of the profitability of 'things of themselves indifferent', along with edification and contentiousness from Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 11 and 14. He then argues that just because something is not found proved in Scripture that does not make it contrary to the persuasion of faith, and that Hooper's wrangling embodied ungodly contentiousness (1 Corinthians 11:16).⁵³ Whereas Hooper wished to position the matter as an issue of Christian liberty, Ridley countered that Christian liberty was never intended as a licence to 'do what thou list' and that to teach Christian liberty as freedom to not use ordinances made by lawful authority was 'a seditious doctrine and liable to confound good order ...'⁵⁴ Ridley's pastoral concern for the restraining of serious heterodoxy is apparent here. Ridley notes that Hooper's arguments, when extrapolated, were similar to those that had been used by Anabaptists, from which 'had stirred up many heiness errors', making necessary to salvation things which the apostles did but which they had left to the freedom of others to follow or not, and 'making sin' that which God never forbade, thus bringing bondage rather than Christian liberty and harmfully adding to God's word.⁵⁵

Concurrent with the vestments controversy was Ridley's pastoral responsibility as Bishop of London to oversee the relationship with the Stranger Churches: two congregations made up of French refugees, and exiles and merchants from the Low-countries. The pastor of the latter,

⁵⁰ As cited in Stephen Tong, 'Bishop John Hooper: Maverick or Magisterial Reformer?', in *Reformation Anglicanism: Essays on Edwardian Evangelicalism*, ed. Mark Earney & Stephen Tong (London: Latimer Trust, 2023), 91.

⁵¹ Reply of Bishop Ridley to Bishop Hooper on Vestment Controversy, 1550 in Aubrey Townsend, ed., *The Writings of John Bradford, M.A., Fellow of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge and Prebendary of St Paul's, Martyr 1555*. Edited for the Parker Society (Cambridge: The University Press, 1853), 375.

⁵² Townsend, *The Writings of John Bradford*, 375.

⁵³ Townsend, *The Writings of John Bradford*, 377.

⁵⁴ Townsend, *The Writings of John Bradford*, 377–379.

⁵⁵ Townsend, *The Writings of John Bradford*, 382.

John a Lasko, like Hooper, favoured a more aggressive pace and form of evangelical change. Ridley however required more regulation of these congregations' activities and exceptions. For Ridley the spectre of Anabaptism was never far away from unregulated activity, and given the disquiet in some parts of the realm after the mandated introduction of the 1549 Prayer Book, Ridley's wisdom was that the question of legitimate authority for mandating change had to hold precedence.⁵⁶ Though his restrictions on the Stranger Churches in his diocese were seen by some as a failure to pursue ideological purity, Ridley's commitment to the principle of order was resolute; he took the long view that paradise postponed was better than popular unrest, as the latter could lead to an undermining of long term acceptance of Reformed worship.⁵⁷

Pettigrew acknowledges Ridley's pastoral insight regarding what pace and volume of change would be helpful for persuading a conservative populace rather than provoking backlash.⁵⁸ Principled pastoral wisdom appears to be the best lens through which to understand Ridley's position in the Vestment Controversy. Davies notes that all major English and continental Reformers held it as a key value that true religion depended on right order if it was to flourish, and that godly princes were responsible to uphold such order.⁵⁹ In the 1547 *The Book of Homilies*, promulgated as an official statement of the church's teaching, Homily 10 'Obedience to Authorities' begins with 'a paean to godly order', both in creation and as reflected in human and societal structures.⁶⁰ Hearers are exhorted to 'do our bounden duties ... obey, even from the bottom of our hearts, all godly proceedings, laws, statutes, proclamations and injunctions with all godly order.'⁶¹ However the Homily also taught the principle of disobedience as an act of duty under particular circumstances, such as when human leadership directed or required an action contrary to the word of God. It is this tension upon which Ridley and Hooper found themselves on opposite sides in 1550.

The Vestment Controversy remains instructive, illustrating that finding natural unifying agreement even among committed evangelicals

⁵⁶ Wabuda, *Nicholas Ridley*. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 274.

⁵⁷ MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 483.

⁵⁸ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547–1603*, 2nd ed. (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2001), 16; Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986), 27.

⁵⁹ Davies, *Religion of the Word*, 127.

⁶⁰ Lee Gatiss, ed., *The First Book of Homilies* (London: Church Society, 2021), 145–147.

⁶¹ Gatiss, *The First Book of Homilies*, 146.

was not a given.⁶² Two leading public evangelicals could profoundly disagree about the correct principle to prioritise for advancing the gospel cause in England. This was not an absolute theological difference: for both Ridley and Hooper faithfulness to God's word was essential.⁶³ For Hooper, if something wasn't commanded explicitly then adopting it was a pathway to idolatry, whereas for Ridley to condemn something which wasn't expressly forbidden was to add to God's word, thus hubristically making oneself a higher authority and undermining the good order which God's word did commend.⁶⁴ It is also instructive to see the personal affection and respect in which Ridley continued to hold Hooper despite their public disagreement. As both later languished in captivity under Marian persecution, at a time when wisdom regarding the pace of reform was no longer a luxury to be considered, Ridley could warmly affirm their absolute agreement in the fundamentals of their evangelical faith, and refer to the Vestment Controversy as a variation in wisdom.⁶⁵ Despite the disagreement, Ridley could affirm that he loved Hooper 'with the bowels of Christ' and rejoiced to hear of Hooper's fortitude in the Lord's quarrel.⁶⁶

Concern for Christ's 'silly flock' – a piteous lamentation

With the return of Roman Catholic practice under Mary Tudor, Ridley wrote with pastoral concern. In a context where 'Christ's true doctrine' was now labelled as heresy, the two possible pathways for Reformed Christians remaining in the realm appeared to be either the extreme violence of death or the denial of their master, Christ.⁶⁷ Given this outlook, Ridley's best pastoral counsel was that faithful Christians ought 'fly from the plague'; given Satan's desire to tempt and the flesh's weakness under temptation, better to flee the realm than deny Christ.⁶⁸ Ridley cites scriptural examples, noting that Christ often actively avoided the fury of the Jews, Paul escaped Damascus and Elijah fled from Jezebel. Ridley could even see a contemporary application of Christ's words to the disciples about moving on in the face of persecution during their mission to Israel, as well as Christ's apocalyptic warnings.⁶⁹

⁶² Martyr and Bucer advised Hooper to yield for the sake of good order, Laski encouraged Hooper to stay resolute, Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2018), 341.

⁶³ Davies, *Religion of the Word*, 231.

⁶⁴ Townsend, *The Writings of John Bradford*, 382–384; Tong, 'Bishop John Hooper', 93.

⁶⁵ Ridley, *Works*, 355.

⁶⁶ Ridley, *Works*, 355–356.

⁶⁷ Ridley, *Works*, 61.

⁶⁸ Ridley, *Works*, 62.

⁶⁹ Ridley, *Works*, 62–63.

Ridley understood that his pastoral counsel to flee would not be received positively by all. He recognised that some might mistake it for cowardice, and that not all circumstances were the same.⁷⁰ Indeed, he acknowledges that if God's glory would be best served through a martyr's death and confession, that God's 'fatherly universal Providence' could find the means of orchestrating such!⁷¹ However his pastoral burden was for those who would tell themselves that they could take their religion 'inward' so as to avoid either persecution or flight. Ridley saw this as a sure route to apostasy. Since the returning Roman Catholic worship involved the veneration of the sacrament, Ridley drew out the choice people would be forced to make: 'if you are a man of God you must either break the rites or offend your conscience in observing them, since in doing so you would be breaking God's law'.⁷² Ridley's pastoral awareness of the spiritual battle was acute; he names it 'a subtlety of Satan' to think one can keep the outward rituals and at the same time keep one's heart unto God.⁷³

Ridley anticipated that some would say they couldn't afford, either in financial terms or familial responsibilities, to flee. Ridley counters this with Christ's teaching from the Gospels that his followers were to both take up their cross and count the cost; in Ridley's view such a plain statement from Christ needed no further answer.⁷⁴ And yet he could further foresee some not having the physical strength to depart, being themselves too old or infirm. In this case, Ridley counselled such believers to remain with their confession of true faith and trust God for the outcome, be that miraculous deliverance or through persecution or martyrdom.⁷⁵

A Piteous Lamentation remains instructive as an example of sophisticated, reasoned and carefully nuanced pastoral wisdom, which both commends and upholds God's sovereign trustworthiness whilst concurrently calling for clear-eyed recognition of human frailty and temptation, and responding accordingly. Ridley loved his readers' souls and Christ's honour enough to wrestle with the complexity of the lived experience without shrinking back, providing scripturally-informed and spiritually-aware counsel which, though costly in human terms, was unmistakably aimed at the spiritual well-being and faithfulness of Christ's flock.

Ridley and Latimer's godly conferences

⁷⁰ Ridley, *Works*, 65.

⁷¹ Ridley, *Works*, 65.

⁷² Ridley, *Works*, 66.

⁷³ Ridley, *Works*, 67.

⁷⁴ Ridley, *Works*, 71.

⁷⁵ Ridley, *Works*, 72–75.

Prior to their trials for heresy, Ridley and Latimer engaged in a series of ‘Conferences’ or written correspondences constructed as alternating conversations, in which the two rehearsed the questions and contentions on which they would be examined. These conferences provide an excellent exposition of Ridley’s objections to the Mass, as he responds to the anticipated Objections of Bishop Gardiner, styled in these conferences as ‘Antonian’ or ‘Diotrophes’.⁷⁶ The editor’s introduction to the reader commends these conferences as a place where one may appreciate Ridley and Latimer’s ‘zeal towards setting forth the tried truth, and the ready good will to comfort and confirm weak consciences.’⁷⁷ It is this latter ministry of comforting and confirming that is of note in appreciating Ridley’s pastoral wisdom. Ridley begins the first conference by asking for Latimer’s advice, confirmation and counsel, invoking the wisdom of Proverbs 28 regarding the brother who helps another.⁷⁸ In the eleventh stanza of the first conference Ridley reiterates his need of hearing the counsel of Latimer and their other friends: ‘Spare not my paper, for I look ‘ere it be long that our common enemy will first assault me, and I wish, from the bottom of my heart, to be holpen not only by your prayers, but also by your wholesome counsels.’⁷⁹ By the start of the second conference, Ridley characterises himself as a potential ‘white-livered knight’ unless the Lord assists him, and he seeks another draught of Latimer’s comforting words, since Latimer is ‘an old soldier and an expert warrior’ and Ridley would have him ‘to buckle my harness.’⁸⁰ Ridley then proceeds to outline how he would answer Antonian from Scripture. In reply Latimer indicates that he has realised what Ridley is doing, that whilst asking for confirmation and strengthening, Ridley is actually also providing it to Latimer:

Sir you make answer yourself so well, that I cannot better it. Sir I begin now to smell what you mean; by trauailing thus with me, you use me, as Bilney did once, when he converted me. Pretending as though he would be taught of me, he sought ways and means to teach me; and so do you. I thank you therefore most heartily. For indeed you minister armour unto me.⁸¹

There is no reason to conclude that either man is anything less than genuine in their protestations regarding the need of counsel and strengthening from the other. Rather, the editor’s conclusion is apt: both knew full

⁷⁶ Ridley, *Works*, 117.

⁷⁷ Ridley, *Works*, 99.

⁷⁸ Ridley, *Works*, 103.

⁷⁹ Ridley, *Works*, 110.

⁸⁰ Ridley, *Works*, 117.

⁸¹ Ridley, *Works*, 118

well the pressures they were to face, and that ‘the tender trembling of cowardly flesh’ needed combatting and that it was a spiritual battle to do so.⁸² Whilst their combined confidence was in the ‘power, the sufficiency and sincerity of God’s written word,’ their method of rehearsing to each other the words of Scripture in these conferences in preparation to give answer, prefigures the pastoral wisdom of a future fellow Christian martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

...the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God’s Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged, for by himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth ... The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother’s is sure.⁸³

This is the dynamic at play in the *Godly Conferences*; Ridley’s headlining proverb applied equally to both men, and it is a mark of their mutual pastoral wisdom that they engaged in such a process.

Part 3 Gospel and godly witness

Peter Martyr described Ridley to Bullinger as ‘a most learned man *and a valiant defender of the Gospel*.’⁸⁴ Ridley determined to ensure that all of those for whom he had responsibility might have access to the Scriptures, bestowing on the literate of his household personal copies of the New Testament, and incentivising the unlettered to learn by heart Acts chapter 13 so that they would have embedded in their recollection an apostolic presentation of the gospel.⁸⁵

Whereas proponents of radical Reformation may have despaired of the seeming tameness, lack of fervour, or compromised commitment of establishment Reformers, it is fairer to understand mainstream Reformers as having a vision for discipling whole realms through establishing and enshrining the place of God’s word in the churches and using their position to influence godly magistrates and princes to respond to the gospel with gospel-consistent policies that would support the people’s

⁸² Ridley, *Works*, 149.

⁸³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, trans. John W Doberstein (New York: Harper Collins, 1954), 22–23.

⁸⁴ Marcus Loane, *Masters of the English Reformation* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 206.

⁸⁵ Ridley, *Works*, vii.

experience of Reformed theology in practice.⁸⁶ Thus for Ridley, his gospel witness and commitment to ‘mission’ may be seen in his attempts to use his positional influence to persuade secular government to respond with biblical faithfulness by enacting gospel-consistent policies across social structures.

Telling truth to power

On 23 July 1551 Ridley wrote to Cheke and the Privy council objecting to the discovery that livings for gospel preachers were being appropriated for the purpose of maintaining the King’s stables.⁸⁷ Ridley pointed out the contradiction between the stated evangelical desires of King and council and their worldly appropriations; whereas King and council had charged the bishops to cause preachers and ministers to cry out ‘against the insatiable serpent of covetousness’, yet this command was made impossible if ungodly men and ‘unreasonable beasts’ devoured the livings of good and godly preachers.⁸⁸ Even whilst pleading with Cheke to redress this situation Ridley was reminding Cheke of the ultimate benefit of the gospel and attempting to motivate Cheke thereby: ‘face and help Christ’s cause, as you would have help of him at your most need.’⁸⁹

Davies argues that for Reformed bishops a significant feature of their self-understanding of the office was that they were bound to speak out on matters of justice and obedience to the word of God and that for the reformed bishop, the duty of giving ‘counsel’ often became a responsibility to admonish.⁹⁰ That Ridley subscribed to this conviction is demonstrated in his *Canones de modo concionandi*:

The Magistrate and the minister of the Word of God are two orders established by God in the Church, without which the Church cannot proceed rightly on the path of God’s commandments towards eternal life. Therefore it is of the utmost importance to beware that the essential order of the Church ... is not compromised by the flattery of those who hold power and authority.⁹¹

Ever the grace-filled pastor, Ridley was quick to add that the Reformed evangelical preacher must always make it clear that the persons whose

⁸⁶ Peter Adam, *Thomas Cranmer: Using the Bible to Evangelise the Nation* (London: The Latimer Trust, 2020).

⁸⁷ Ridley, *Works*, 331.

⁸⁸ Ridley, *Works*, 333.

⁸⁹ Ridley, *Works*, 334.

⁹⁰ Davies, *Religion of the Word*, 104–105, 157

⁹¹ Cecil Papers, CP 144/51, Hatfield House Collection. Transcription and translation of manuscript by Dr Mark Earngey.

faults were being reproved were not held in disdain, only their vices.⁹² Ridley made bold to affirm to Somerset in May 1549 that whilst he was ready to serve the King and the Protector to his uttermost with his small power, wit or learning, he was not prepared to render any such service by which he could judge himself to offend almighty God nor anything against his clear conscience.⁹³

However attempting to both share truth with power and fulfil his felt duty of caring for the souls of all led Ridley into some negative interactions. Mary Tudor responded to Ridley's visitation with 'many bitter words against the form of religion then established' of which Ridley had been a key proponent. The incident elicited a statement of Ridley's understanding of the relationship between God's word and the changing fortunes of the church; in response to Mary's jibe 'I cannot tell what ye call God's word – that is not God's word now that was God's word in my father's days', Ridley replied 'God's word is one at all times, but hath been better understood and practiced in some ages then other.'⁹⁴ It also allowed others to see the grief and disappointment Ridley experienced when God's word was refused; Ridley's deep feeling being seen in his rebuking himself for not shaking the dust off his feet, in the likeness of the apostolic ministry to Israel in Matthew 10.

Uncompromising gospel witness, faithfulness of life and genuine pastoral concern

Ridley's letter to West exemplifies Ridley's profound understanding of how Christ's gospel necessarily led one to faithfully testify to the truth, and to embody its implications. Ridley begins by acknowledging that it is only by the work of almighty God in granting knowledge of his grace and love of the truth which makes it 'possible to stand by the truth in Christ in time of trouble'; indeed without this it would be no more possible 'than it is for wax to abide the heat of fire.'⁹⁵ Ridley makes clear that his own convictions are due specifically to the persuasion that comes from holy Scripture, and his tone throughout is gracious towards West's wishes for him, whilst remaining steadfastly committed to 'the furtherance of God's word and his truth.' Ridley acknowledges West's warnings to be wary of vain-glory, and despite West's intention that it might spur Ridley to return to a Catholic position, Ridley hears in it an unintended encouragement for him to stay his gospel course. Further Ridley is moved by his dual confidence in God's gospel mercy ('the hope of his mercy is my sheet-anchor of eternal salvation') and his 'conscience that he cannot have peace with God nor a lively faith in his mercy' if he did not take the chance to

⁹² Cecil Papers, CP144/51

⁹³ Townsend, *The Writings of John Bradford*, 370.

⁹⁴ Ridley, *Works*, x.

⁹⁵ Ridley, *Works*, 337–338.

commend West to return to the 'pure setting forth and preaching of God's word and his truth.'⁹⁶ For Ridley, fidelity to the truth found in God's word was the test case for gospel faithfulness: 'For what is it, I pray you, else to confess or deny Christ in this world, but to maintain the truth taught in God's word, or for any worldly respect to shrink from the same?'⁹⁷

Having exercised gospel-shaped graciousness throughout the letter, Ridley is constrained by both gospel-motivated love for West and gospel fidelity to conclude with the clearest of warnings:

... because (I dare say) you wrote of friendship unto me ... therefore bearing you in my heart no less love in God than you do me in the world, I say unto you in the word of the Lord ... that if you do not confess and maintain, to your power and knowledge, that which is grounded upon God's word, but will either for fear or gain of the world, shrink and play the Apostata, indeed you shall die the death you know what I mean.⁹⁸

Ridley believed that there was a clear line of consistency from evangelical conviction to faithful action. In his letter to Master D, Ridley affirmed that evangelicals imprisoned under papist censure were there because they could not stand to see God's word corrupted and because 'love of God was so grafted into their hearts that they would prefer to lose all they have in this world than see God's name blasphemed.'⁹⁹ This then placed a responsibility on others who claimed Christian faith to support and provide for those who had been so deprived and detained for their gospel convictions; Christians who love the word of God couldn't 'put more store in the pelf [wealth] of the world than the religion of Jesus and his precious gospel.'¹⁰⁰ The practical outworking of this was his strong requirement that readers like Master D should consider the needs of those in the prisons of London who were 'prisoners of God' and make such collections from among their neighbours as to provide relief for those who had been faithful to the gospel, discharging in part one's right conscience to the gospel of Jesus.¹⁰¹ Gospel conviction ought to lead to gospel-honouring care and generosity, and in doing so, would thereby provide a gospel witness.

Finally, even in discussing seemingly functional matters, such as receiving the provision of new clothing whilst awaiting his time of

⁹⁶ Ridley, *Works*, 339–340.

⁹⁷ Ridley, *Works*, 341.

⁹⁸ Ridley, *Works*, 341.

⁹⁹ Townsend, *The Writings of John Bradford*, 399.

¹⁰⁰ Townsend, *The Writings of John Bradford*, 400.

¹⁰¹ Townsend, *The Writings of John Bradford*, 399.

execution, Ridley could turn an expression of thankfulness for such provision into a gospel witness:

Sir, know you that although this seemeth to us in our case much thanks-worthy, yet have we not that apparel that we look for: for this in time will wear; and that which we look for, rightly done on, will endure, and is called *stola immortalitatis* [the robe of immortality].¹⁰²

Ridley's ongoing legacies and influence

Nicholas Ridley has been described as the 'outstanding native theologian' of the Edwardian period due to his eucharistic convictions arising from his independent study rather than the influence of Continental Reformers.¹⁰³ His vigorous and scholarly defence of his 'spiritual real presence' position and his persuasion of the influential Thomas Cranmer to this position effectively kept the English church from heading in a Lutheran direction in its eucharistic theology.¹⁰⁴ Loane reiterates Bromiley's conclusions about Ridley; that compared to Cranmer, Ridley was the more resolute and original of thought, and compared to Hooper, Ridley was the more sagacious and more intelligent regarding the needs of the time. 'Ridley, more than any other man ... marked out the type of sacramental theology which the Church of England was at last to adopt.'¹⁰⁵ MacCulloch concludes that Ridley's intransigence in relation to the Vestment Controversy and the struggle with the Stranger Churches was not wasted energy, as it established a significant precedent for ongoing and later Reformation in England; namely that it would not be radical Reformers nor Continental influence who would determine the pace and source of authority for Reform of the church in England, but rather English evangelical establishment leaders, and that it would be achieved with decent order and the minimum of public unrest.¹⁰⁶

The influence of Ridley's writings among the Continental English refugees during the period of Marian exile would prove significant, as upon their return to England these men would become the foot-soldiers of the continued work of returning Reformation theology. *A Brief Declaration*, which Ridley had intentionally written in English so as to ensure its broad accessibility, was taken by Grindal after Ridley's death in 1555, and republished in Latin for the benefit of that wider scholarly readership. The preface to the Strasbourg text of *A Brief Declaration*

¹⁰² Townsend, *The Writings of John Bradford*, 372.

¹⁰³ Bromiley, *Nicholas Ridley*, 25.

¹⁰⁴ Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer*, 218.

¹⁰⁵ Loane, *Masters*, 206.

¹⁰⁶ MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 483.

provides a contemporary assessment of Ridley's importance in advancing the academic undergirding of the Protestant cause: 'Ridley became a faithfull labourer terrible to the enemies for his excellent learning, and therefore a meete man to riddle owte of the lordes vineyard the sophisticall thornes of the wrangling adversaries.'¹⁰⁷

The translation into Latin of *A Brief Declaration* also precipitated a change in how the work was perceived. Whittingham's 1556 Latin translation presented the work as a positive statement of the true doctrine of the Eucharist rather than negative critique of transubstantiation.¹⁰⁸ Panofre has suggested that the process of translation turned Ridley's work into a 'Calvinist Manifesto' compared to the didactic original.¹⁰⁹

John Whitgift offers a further example of Ridley's influence on the next generation of Protestant thinkers when he acknowledges his dependence on Ridley's reasoning against Hooper, and utilises it in his own controversy with Thomas Cartwright.¹¹⁰ Thus Ridley's understanding of what the church may determine regarding order and comeliness in so-called 'matters of indifference' when circumstances were not commanded in Scripture continued to shape the polity of the Elizabethan church and the wisdom of its leaders. MacCulloch acknowledges the different contexts; in 1550 England's Reformation was a 'revolution on the march' with the contest being over wisdom regarding the pace of change and protection of good order along with good theology, whereas in the 1570's the Settlement had occurred.¹¹¹ Nonetheless this just demonstrates that Ridley's principles in theological and pastoral reasoning have a transferrable utility as evangelical thinkers attempt to navigate the ecclesiological and pastoral challenges of their own day.

Ridley's literary legacies contain enduring wit, wisdom and witness which may continue to benefit and bless evangelical Anglicans. These include, but are not limited to, the following transferrable insights:

- Careful biblical exegesis ought to be the ground for all doctrinal convictions, and when previous Christian authors have read the

¹⁰⁷ As cited in Charlotte Anne Panofre, 'From Latimer's Fellow-martyr to the 'English Calvin': Nicholas Ridley's Reputation and the Circulation of A brief declaration of the Lords Supper, 1555–1570,' *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 10.2 (2008): 175–193, 181.

¹⁰⁸ Panofre, *From Latimer's Fellow-Martyr to 'English Calvin'*, 182.

¹⁰⁹ Panofre, *From Latimer's Fellow-Martyr to 'English Calvin'*, 183.

¹¹⁰ John Whitgift, 'A brief Examination of the Reasons used in the book called an Admonition to the Parliament', in John Ayre, ed. *The Works of John Whitgift* (Cambridge University Press, 1851), 64.

¹¹¹ MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), 196.

Scriptures to the same conclusion, that is a positive encouragement that one's theological insights are neither singular nor aberrant.

- Sacramental theology and Christology are actually ultimately questions of justification and assurance, and not mere ceremonies nor dry academic musings.
- Despite Scripture's high valuing of Christian unity, if unity of the church is being based in an unbiblical falsehood then that is a greater danger and evil than diversity.
- 'Things indifferent' are never merely and simply that, because they all always occur in a wider context, and when so-called 'matters of indifference' intersect with other theological values (in the Ridley-Hooper case, submission to rightful authority and good order in the church) then the matter is no longer one of indifference. Evangelicals can and may disagree over matters which each see as being important gospel-prospering decisions. However, ideological convictions in the church will always be being lived out in the context of pastoral realities which must not be ignored, lest seemingly 'indifferent matters' lead to unintended consequences which ultimately inhibit the evangelical cause.
- Taking your faith inward for fear of persecution, or unwillingness to count the cost of fleeing, is a real temptation which ought to be named and its potential consequences (denying Christ) spelled out to remind the church in any age that spiritual faithfulness is costly but ultimately what is called for by Christ of his church.
- Mutual encouragement and mutual spiritual strengthening between Christian brothers and sisters is God's provision for maintaining faithfulness under extreme oppression. Ridley and Latimer's faithfulness under pressure may be attributed at a human level to mutual reinforcing encouragement; something Cranmer was deprived of. The modern evangelical may learn the benefit of rehearsing the gospel truth and its applications among friends for mutual reinforcement and encouragement under pressure.
- Institutionalised greed undermines and tarnishes gospel proclamation. Ridley's embodied testimony, faithful words and dogged pursuit of charity and generosity towards others as a consistent outworking of the gospel and a reinforcement of grace, is a corrective for the tendencies of human greed in the contemporary church.

The wit, wisdom and witness of Nicholas Ridley ought to continue to be a rich reservoir of study and encouragement for evangelical Anglicans.

GRAEME HOWELLS is the Rector of Rouse Hill Anglican Church, Diocese of Sydney.

The Wesleyan Recovery: A Review of *The Faith Once Delivered*

David A. Doherty

A recovery of Wesleyan theology is underway in the United States, and the document called *The Faith Once Delivered* articulates this recovery's major theological commitments. The general approach of this document brings together the evangelical and catholic sides of historic Wesleyanism in a way that seems promising. The sacramental theology of the document is of particular interest for evangelical Anglicans. The teaching on baptism raises questions about the understanding of regeneration in the Wesleyan recovery, and the eucharistic theology is notably high. Two other areas of doctrine, sanctification and church order, deserve more attention than is given in the document. Nevertheless, Anglicans ought to take seriously this Wesleyan recovery, since it may emerge as a popular centrist kind of evangelicalism and may overlap with Anglicanism as the original Wesleyanism did.

In the United States there is a group of people who are determined that Wesleyanism should not die.¹ In the face of church decline, theological liberalism, and a host of other challenges, they are reclaiming the Wesleyan heritage and trying to determine how it can be carried into the future. The Next Methodism Summit, held in Virginia in 2022, was a gathering for such people. Fifty Wesleyan scholars—some of them from Anglican and Pentecostal churches rather than Methodist ones (paragraph 2)—gathered together and helped produce what was later published as *The*

¹ In this article 'Wesleyanism' refers broadly to the theological and ecclesial tradition that traces its roots back to the ministry and legacy of John Wesley. 'Methodism' refers primarily to the historical (American) Methodist Episcopal Church and its organizational successors, including the United Methodist Church and the Global Methodist Church, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Although Methodism was the main kind of Wesleyanism generations ago, many people known as Methodists today are not Wesleyan. For example, some are 'progressive' Protestants who reject many of the basic convictions that lie behind Wesleyan teaching, such as the authority of the Bible. The Wesleyan tradition includes a number of denominations that are not typically called Methodist, such as the Church of the Nazarene. This article also accepts the application of the term 'Wesleyan' to individuals who belong to churches that are not specifically Wesleyan. For example, one can be a Wesleyan Anglican.

Faith Once Delivered: A Wesleyan Witness.² A few of the people listed on the document are rather major figures, such as the Old Testament scholars Bill Arnold and John Oswalt and the New Testament scholar Ben Witherington III. One of the document editors, Kevin Watson, has begun making a name for himself by introducing the twenty-first-century church to the core elements of historic Methodism, such as entire sanctification and class meetings.³

The document, sixty-two pages in total, is reminiscent of Protestant confessions and of the interdenominational statements produced by committees throughout the twentieth century. A major theme running through it is the restoration of the image of God in human beings. Although the Wesleyan recovery, as it might be called, has continued to develop since the 2022 conference, the document may prove to be a landmark and therefore invites friendly review from Anglicans, who are close relatives in the family of the church and who may prove to be critical ecumenical partners in the coming years. What I will offer in this article is comment, from an orthodox Anglican perspective, on a few points of interest.

Wesleyanism evangelical and catholic

Wesleyanism has always been inclined to split in two. On the one side of the divide is an extreme evangelical kind of Wesleyanism that insists upon entire sanctification and a strict separation from the world. Activities that are neither hard work nor specifically religious are often viewed with suspicion. Art, philosophy, and anything smacking of sophistication and pomp are avoided. Members of this evangelical stream often adopt a deliberately simple life and wear plain clothes. In many cases the mentality breeds a sectarian spirit and therefore spawns new ecclesial bodies. Early Methodist leaders such as Wesley and John Fletcher had

² Ryan N. Danker, Jonathan Powers, and Kevin M. Watson, eds., *The Faith Once Delivered: A Wesleyan Witness*, available at the John Wesley Institute, <https://nextmethodism.org/summit-document/#:~:text=The%20John%20Wesley%20Institute%20hosted,Once%20Delivered%3A%20A%20Wesleyan%20Witness>. At the time of writing, a second conference, called the Next Methodism Summit II and focusing on holiness, was held in January 2024. A theological document from this conference is forthcoming. See Ryan Nicholas Danker, 'Rekindling the Wesleyan Fire: The Next Methodism Summit II', *Firebrand*, January 30, 2024, <https://firebrandmag.com/articles/rekindling-the-wesleyan-fire-the-next-methodism-summit>.

³ Kevin M. Watson, *Perfect Love: Recovering Entire Sanctification – The Lost Power of the Methodist Movement* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed, 2021); Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience* (Wilmore, KY: Seedbed, 2014).

extreme evangelical tendencies, especially with respect to asceticism, and such tendencies were bequeathed to their spiritual successors on both sides of the Atlantic. Extreme evangelical ideas were later reasserted by the proponents of the Holiness movement, who stood in contrast to an increasingly respectable American Methodism. However, the extreme evangelical approach seems to have declined over the years as American Christians have become wary of rules and strictness in religion.

On the other side of the divide is what might be termed catholic Wesleyanism. It contrasts with extreme evangelical Wesleyanism on the points related above. Its theology takes an approach that is similar to the approach often taken by Anglicans of a centrist churchmanship; it seeks an integration between the authoritative truths of the Bible and other aspects of the world, from architecture to politics to visual art to philosophy. It tends to be ecumenical and to de-emphasize the distinctives of Wesleyanism, including entire sanctification. This kind of Wesleyanism became highly developed among Methodists in North America and Britain through the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century, at roughly the same time as the Holiness movement in North America was upholding the extreme evangelical side. One notable exemplar of the catholic mindset is Scott Lidgett, a leading British Methodist who rubbed shoulders with Archbishop of Canterbury Randall Davidson.⁴ The rise of catholic Wesleyanism seems to be correlated to some extent with the rise of theological liberalism in Methodism, which in America is now, many years later, finding strong opposition from the Wesleyan recovery.

How does the document itself relate to these two contrasting traditions? It seems to steer a middle way between them. It articulates a strong doctrine of entire sanctification, and on points such as justification and the authority of Scripture it is firmly evangelical. The extreme evangelical ideas of separation, however, are not present whatsoever. The document also has a noticeable catholic spirit. It cites the early church fathers, has a notably high sacramental theology, and makes a point of underlining the goodness of creation (paragraph 59), a point that is crucial to the positive catholic approach to culture. A case can be made that in taking this middle road the authors are following the example of John Wesley fairly closely and are developing more fully than he did the evangelical-catholic possibilities implicit in his thinking. A more important matter is the question of whether this middle road can be maintained or whether a 'next Methodism' will polarise like the previous Methodisms of the Western world. Logically, there seems to be no reason why the middle road *must* fail, so the next Methodism stands a chance, at least, of

⁴ John D. Beasley, 'Lidgett, John Scott, CH', in *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, <https://dmbi.online/index.php?do=app.entry&id=1702>.

succeeding. The authors would do well to consider what specific actions they can take to prevent polarisation.

Regeneration, baptism, and conversion

One issue that deserves attention is the way that the document handles regeneration (paragraphs 125–126). It describes regeneration as ‘initial sanctifying grace’ and as a counterpart to justification. In regeneration God gives a new creation, transforms the person’s nature, begins the restoration of the divine image in the person, and makes the person holy. This act of God is said to be received by faith, and especially given the statement about ‘conversion to new life’ in paragraph 183, this appears to be a personal faith. No allowance is given for the vicarious faith of parents and godparents in infant baptism. It seems fair to say, then, that these paragraphs present regeneration as the bestowal of spiritual life that takes place upon a person’s initial responsible commitment of faith, usually called conversion.

This understanding of regeneration is muddled by a number of statements made about baptism through the document. Baptism is said to be ‘*conversion* into the death and resurrected life of Jesus Christ’ (paragraph 167, emphasis added). Those who receive it are made part of the church and ‘members of Christ’ (paragraph 142), ‘participate in the death and resurrection of Christ’, receive a new identity, ‘are incorporated into the family of God’ (paragraph 168), and ‘become participants in the new creation by being united to Christ as members of his risen body and given new life in the Holy Spirit’ (paragraph 209). Paragraph 168 says that the baptized are those who have been ‘born of water and the Spirit’. These statements, especially the one about being given new life through union with Jesus, appear to give baptism a regenerative quality that, in light of paragraphs 125–126, is due to personal conversion. The lack of clarity may arise from a desire to restore the seemingly high baptismal theology of John Wesley. Nevertheless, the theologians of the Wesleyan recovery should strive for greater clarity on this point.

If the authors of the document look to the tradition of Wesleyan systematic theology, they will find figures who would encourage them to resolve the issue by dropping their high baptismal theology. Eminent nineteenth-century writers such as William Burt Pope, Thomas Ralston, and Thomas Summers take up the popular Protestant position that says baptism is a sign and seal of the blessings of salvation but does not itself convey these blessings.⁵ On the other hand, a different solution is

⁵ William Burt Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology: Being Analytical Outlines of a Course of Theological Study, Biblical, Dogmatic, Historical*, 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged, 3 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office,

suggested by Richard Watson, who systematized the teaching of early Wesleyanism in much the same way that John Calvin systematized the teaching of the Reformers. Watson articulates a high baptismal theology that has resemblances with the baptismal theology of *The Faith Once Delivered*, and he harmonises it with conversion: ‘When [baptism] is an act of true faith, it becomes an instrument of salvation, like that act of faith in Noah, by which, when moved with fear, he ‘prepared an ark to the saving of his house’ [quoting Heb 11:7 and referring to 1 Pet 3:21] and survived the destruction of an unbelieving world’.⁶ For adults, baptism is necessarily part of conversion and can therefore be said to have conversion’s salvific character. The same, of course, is not true for infant baptism, since the infant cannot have a conversion experience until later. On this subject Watson says that the sacrament imparts the ‘gift of the Holy Spirit’ and leaves the child with a ‘seed of life’, though he mentions regeneration only as a benefit of baptized children who die during infancy.⁷ Perhaps the theologians of the Wesleyan recovery will want to develop either of these lines of thinking.

The presence of Christ in the Eucharist

The Faith Once Delivered does not offer a fully fledged eucharist theology, but it does give at least some major contours of such a theology. One of the statements is that, in the sacrament, both the participants and the elements ‘are infused with the living presence of Christ’ (paragraph 173). This language, as it relates to the elements, seems to be taken from a hymn of the Wesleys’, which is quoted in a United Methodist document on the Eucharist.⁸ The exact nature of Christ’s presence and the effect upon the

1879), 3:324, <https://archive.org/details/compendiumofchri03pope/page/n6/mode/1up?view=theater>; Thomas N. Ralston, *Elements of Divinity: A Concise and Comprehensive View of Bible Theology; Comprising the Doctrines, Evidences, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity*, ed. T. O. Summers, rev. ed. (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury, 1924), 938–39, 951–52; Thomas O. Summers, *Baptism: A Treatise on the Nature, Perpetuity, Subjects, Administrator, Mode, and Use of the Initiating Ordinance of the Christian Church*, new and rev. ed. (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1903), 154–58, <https://archive.org/details/baptism0000summ/page/3/mode/1up?view=theater>.

⁶ Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes: Or, a View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity*, new ed. (New York: Lane & Scott, 1851), 2:625, <https://archive.org/details/theologicalinst02watsgoog/page/646/mode/1up?view=theater>.

⁷ R. Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 2:646.

⁸ ‘Hymn 72’, in John Wesley and Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, 2nd ed. (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1747), 51, <https://wesleyscholar.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Hymns-on-Lords-Supper-2nd-ed-1747.pdf>; *This Holy Mystery*:

elements is not clarified, but the language is surely incongruent with the memorialist position, which was standard among nineteenth-century American Methodists, though some added that the Eucharist was not just a sign but also a seal.⁹ In the memorialist view there is nothing supernatural about the elements. The notion of a special presence in the elements themselves would also be unacceptable to many Anglicans who believe articles 28 and 29 of the Thirty-nine Articles, notwithstanding the fact that the Wesleys were themselves Anglican. With respect to the other side of the eucharistic-theology spectrum, the language of infusion also does not fit well with the highly realistic doctrines, which say that the elements actually become, in one way or another, the body and blood of Jesus.

The document then says that Christ's 'body and blood in this sacrament nourish our very bodies and souls' (paragraph 173). Christians of various eucharistic theologies could agree that the body and blood of Christ nourishes believers' souls, though there would be different degrees of realism in the interpretations. However, the idea of the body and blood nourishing people's *bodies* has a narrower appeal; combined with the earlier statement about infusion, it is suggestive of doctrine somewhere in the Lutheran, Reformed, and receptionist Anglican realms. Nothing further is said about the presence of Christ in the sacrament, so there appears to be some room for a variety of opinions.

Notably, *The Faith Once Delivered* does not follow the previously mentioned United Methodist document in calling the Eucharist a 're-presentation' of Christ's sacrifice.¹⁰ It does say that 'Christ's sacrifice becomes present with us' (paragraph 173), but this is not the same as speaking of re-presentation. In eucharistic theology the term 're-present' conveys the idea, in Anglican circles strongly associated with Gregory Dix, that in the Eucharist the church again presents Christ's singular,

A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion (2003), 21, <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/gbod-assets/generic/THM-BYGC.PDF>. The hymn says, 'Thy Life infuse into the Bread'.

⁹ *This Holy Mystery*, 6. See Pope, *Compendium of Christian Theology*, 325, 333–34; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 995–97; Thomas O. Summers, *Systematic Theology: A Complete Body of Wesleyan Arminian Divinity Consisting of Lectures on the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion*, rev. John J. Tigert, 2 vols. (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1888), 2:446–48, <https://archive.org/details/systematictheolo02summ/page/n6/mode/1up?q=%22it+is+hardly+necessary%22&view=theater>.

¹⁰ *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion* (2003), 8, <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/gbod-assets/generic/THM-BYGC.PDF>.

final, and all-sufficient sacrifice to the Father.¹¹ The obvious counter from a Reformational theological position is that if Christ's sacrifice on the cross really was final, it does not need to be presented over and over again. One wonders whether the omission of this doctrine from *The Faith Once Delivered* indicates a deliberate move away from Catholic-leaning doctrine of re-presentation.

Sanctification and church order

A few other doctrinal points are worth mentioning. *The Faith Once Delivered* asserts the old Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification without apology. It says the entirely sanctified believer has 'freedom from the being of sin' and 'freedom to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:29–31)' (paragraph 131). This seems to summarise Wesley's own thoughts on the subject, but what is missing here is the distinction between wilful and accidental transgressions of God's law. Entire sanctification means the complete absence of *wilful* transgressions but not the *accidental* ones, since believers are imperfect in knowledge and judgement.¹² The doctrine therefore guarantees a perfection of intention but not of action. Exactly why the distinction is omitted from this document is unclear, and this omission does seem to limit the effectiveness of the presentation. Nevertheless, the document is still intelligible on the point of entire sanctification and may provide an occasion for Anglicans to interact with it. From what I can tell, Anglican theologians have generally not taken seriously the Wesleyan understanding of sanctification. This should be remedied, especially since Wesley argued that his doctrine of sanctification was expressed in the prayer book's Collect for Purity, which says, 'Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee'.¹³

¹¹ For information on the idea's association with Gregory Dix, see R. T. Beckwith, *Priesthood and Sacraments: A Study in the Anglican-Methodist Report*, Latimer Monographs 1 (Appleford, UK: Marcham Manor, 1964), 78–83. Here Beckwith is writing in the context of the twentieth-century ecumenical discussions between Anglicans and Methodists in Britain, and he is heavily critical of Methodists' acceptance of Anglo-Catholic ideas.

¹² John Wesley, 'Thoughts on Christian Perfection', in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (1964; paperback ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 284–87.

¹³ John Wesley, *An Answer to Mr. Rowland Hill's Tract, Entitled 'Imposture Detected'* (London: R. Hawes, 1777), 7, https://www.google.ca/books/edition/An_Answer_to_Mr_Rowland_Hill_s_Tract_Ent/SV0UAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover. The Collect for Purity is included near the beginning of the Holy Communion service in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

One other aspect of sanctification needs addressing here. Entire sanctification is widely known as the most distinctive point of Wesleyan theology, the doctrine that conflicts most strongly with the rest of Protestantism. Many theologically informed evangelicals are familiar with the idea and are ready, at a moment's notice, to dispute it with scriptural texts and the general experience of Christians with sanctification. Yet this doctrine is, arguably, not the one that challenges the rest of Protestant theology the most strongly; a case can be made that that doctrine is Wesley's understanding of *partial* sanctification, the level of holiness experienced by those who are justified but not yet perfected in love. Wesley insisted that the partially sanctified Christian was not free from *inward* sin – that came in entire sanctification – but nevertheless did not commit *outward* sin.¹⁴ This is, of course, an idea that is alien to modern evangelicalism and that runs contrary to the general Protestant understanding of the Christian life. Kevin Watson, in his book on entire sanctification, makes special note of this idea and recognizes how surprising it may be even among Methodists.¹⁵ Yet *The Faith Once Delivered* does not delve into this subject. The focus, as in most Wesleyan resources on sanctification, is on entire sanctification. Wesley's understanding of partial sanctification is important, since it immediately raises consequential questions about the millions of professing Christians who do claim to commit outward sin, even if they make a point of confessing and repenting of at least the more obvious transgressions. This is a concern that needs to be addressed.

Church order is mentioned in a heading, but the ensuing paragraph (147) does not actually address it. This subject needs to be addressed, because the visible church is hugely important and cannot be avoided. Since this Wesleyan restoration is meant to be an interdenominational movement rather than a denomination itself, a fully fledged church order is probably not appropriate. Still, church order should not be seen as a matter of complete indifference to be determined by each body without reference to their undergirding Wesleyan commitments, and surely the Wesleyan heritage has something to say on the subject. Just as importantly, a robust church order may go a long way in keeping the evangelical and catholic elements of Wesleyanism together, as it can provide channels in which each element can flow vigorously but not wildly. A church order that reflects a high ecclesiology will counter the sectarian impulses of the evangelical side, yet it can also uphold and enliven the doctrinal orthodoxy for which the evangelical element so tirelessly contends.

¹⁴ John Wesley, 'Christian Perfection', in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (1964; paperback ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 259.

¹⁵ K. M. Watson, *Perfect Love*, 59–60.

Conclusion

The Faith Once Delivered should be an encouraging sign to orthodox Anglicans. In the face of liberalism and other challenges, an alliance of Wesleyans has risen up and reasserted the core doctrines of the Christian faith and the chief distinctives of the Wesleyan heritage. This document could possibly be a step toward a greater phenomenon in Protestant Christianity. According to my observations, the last fifteen years or so have seen three major theological resurgences in Protestantism, not counting the growth of so-called progressive theology. The first is the Calvinist and complementarian resurgence, which has been led, in part, by popular preachers such as John Piper and John MacArthur and which has famously gained a large following among millennial men in particular. The second is the Anabaptist resurgence, led by Gregory Boyd, Brian Zahnd, and others, which has reacted against Christian nationalism and has sometimes welcomed more theological diversity or vagueness than evangelicals have typically felt comfortable with in the past. The third is the liturgical resurgence, which does not have current charismatic leaders in the way the other two do and which has attracted dissatisfied evangelicals with its beauty, its participatory worship, and, often, a regard for the early church fathers.

One wonders whether there will be a fourth resurgence, a Wesleyan resurgence. Wesleyanism could be credibly portrayed as a moderate, centrist form of evangelicalism, one that avoids the distinctives of other traditions that many find unsatisfying, such as Calvinism's unconditional election and Anabaptism's pacifism. Such an option may be attractive to people who feel that they do not fit into any of the camps of what seems to be an increasingly divided evangelicalism, at least in the United States and similar countries. *The Faith Once Delivered* could support this perception of Wesleyanism and may therefore have an eventual effect on the landscape of evangelicalism.

Anglicans might wonder what these developments have to do with them. There is much that could be said here, but one consideration worth mentioning is the overlap between Anglicanism and Wesleyanism. John Wesley himself, of course, died a member of the Church of England, if a prolifically disobedient one, and the fact that an Anglican or two helped write *The Faith Once Delivered* is a testament to the continued existence of Anglicans who identify with the tradition of Wesley. What should orthodox Anglicans make of this phenomenon? Perhaps a good place to start is the observation that a deliberate, large-scale combination of Anglicanism and this recovered Wesleyanism, in whatever country or countries it might take place, would likely have a close resemblance with what in England has been called 'open evangelicalism', an alternative to the complementarian and Reformed 'conservative evangelicalism'

that is generally egalitarian and less defined in the details of its churchmanship. Further, Les Fairfield is correct in portraying Wesleyanism as the genesis of the charismatic stream of Anglicanism.¹ So, at least at first glance, a Wesleyan stream of Anglicanism seems sensible. The chief distinctive of a Wesleyan stream, of course, would be the doctrine of entire sanctification, which, as noted above, Wesley found in the Collect for Purity. The distinctive would not inspire much sympathy from most Anglican evangelicals, but there is much opportunity for fruitful theological discussion here. Perhaps this next Methodism will provide an occasion to correct, more than has been done so far, the lack of positive engagement between Wesleyanism and standard Anglicanism that characterized the Evangelical Revival and the ensuing decades.

DAVID A. DOHERTY is a priest in the Canadian diocese of the Anglican Church in North America.

¹ Les Fairfield, 'The Anglican Tradition: Three Streams, One River', Truro Anglican Church, accessed January 16, 2024, https://anglicanchurch.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Anglican-Tradition_Three-Streams.pdf.

BOOK REVIEWS

Creation, Cross & Everlasting Rest: A Guide to the Message of Three Great Oratorios**Robert Bashford**

The Latimer Trust, 2023 (ISBN: 9781906327828 pb, 296pp)

This is a unique book! Robert Bashford's previous book focussed on Handel's *Messiah*, and here he gently guides us through three more musical masterpieces: Haydn's *The Creation*, Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, and Brahms' *Requiem*. Although he is clearly an expert on the music, there is a much greater emphasis on theological content than you would ever get in a purely musical commentary. He states his aim clearly on page one: 'The three selected oratorios can be enjoyed without the aid of this study. But if the following pages help to increase that enjoyment and, more importantly, to deepen understanding of their message, this work will have achieved its goal.' And achieve this goal it does.

The work is clearly set out, with each musical scene or section having its own short chapter. Here Bashford provides the sung text in English translation, a discussion of the biblical content, some points for application or reflection, and musical highlights. For example, with *The Creation*, Bashford helps to bring out the colour in the storytelling, pointing out how the music paints pictures of the words. He challenges us to slow down and really enjoy the beauty, variety and wonder of creation, and the many theological insights and applications encourage us to lift our eyes to the one it's all pointing to, and to see the big picture of God's redemptive plan.

With the *St Matthew Passion*, we are rapidly immersed in the emotion and a drama of the story. Bashford's commentary gives the wider biblical and historical context for what's going on, but in a concise and focused way that aids our appreciation of the intense music rather than distracting us. There is much to ponder as we listen to the chorale sections, where Bach asks listeners to reflect on how Jesus' death affects them personally. The musical comments are brief and straightforward enough not to overwhelm a novice.

Finally, we have Brahms' *Requiem*. It is not a requiem mass à la Mozart or Verdi, but rather a collection of biblical passages chosen by Brahms to reflect on the promise of eternal life. Bashford explores the theological richness of the text and the way the words weave together with the music to create an emotionally impactful masterpiece.

Who is it for? Two main groups of people. Firstly, those approaching from the musical side – those who want to know more about the message of these oratorios so they can appreciate them more fully. Even for someone

with no knowledge of the Bible, the treatment is accessible, though having a Bible to hand would be helpful. It could even be evangelistically powerful. Secondly, it's for Christians who want to get into the music by learning how it can encourage their faith. Practically speaking, it's simple to find performances of all the works on YouTube, some with English subtitles which would benefit non-German speakers. No prior musical knowledge is necessary, and there is a very helpful musical glossary at the back. All-in-all, this guide is a great way to discover more about our sacred musical heritage.

Anna Marsh, Manchester, UK

Central and Eastern European Bible Commentary
Corneliu Constantineanu and Peter Penner (general editors)
 Langham, 2022 (ISBN: 9781783688227 hb, 1676pp)

This book is a one-volume commentary on the whole Bible, written by scholars from central and eastern Europe for general readers in that region. There are almost a hundred contributors, mostly pastor-theologians, from countries from Austria in the west to Estonia and Moldova in the east (with no contributors from Belarus or Ukraine), including a significant number of women. Each biblical book has a short introduction and comments on every passage. There are also over a hundred short articles on issues ranging from gender to secularism to bereavement. The book is intended to be a reference work for any believer and would be particularly suitable for home-group leaders or youth or student leaders. It is written in English, because the region has no single common language and, for better or worse, English is the most widespread second language.

The book has many strengths. Given the constraints of space, the comments are perceptive, insightful and edifying, with balanced discussions of difficult passages such as 1 Peter 3:18-22 and the number of the beast in Revelation 13. The topical articles are admirably crisp and wise distillations of complex topics. On controversial issues within evangelicalism, from the new perspective on Paul to women in ministry leadership, the different authors incline to different views, but are balanced and nuanced. Similarly, the short articles on Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy (historically the majority expressions of Christianity within the region) are gracious and appreciative. The book is accessible to readers without theological training, but never patronising. There are many moving and astute illustrations from the history and culture of the region, but these do not distract or dominate.

A particular strength of the volume is how it is so clearly written not merely for, but also *by* Christians in the region. The cultural and ideological dominance of Anglophone (dare I say it, particularly

American) conservative evangelicalism is refreshingly absent. There is an immediately obvious willingness to question conservative shibboleths, without ever questioning biblical truth. For example, on biblical-critical issues, the commentary is relaxed about plural authorship for the Pentateuch and Isaiah. More conservative readers of *The Global Anglican* may balk at this openness to historical criticism, but it is an important sign that the authors' understanding of faithfulness to Scripture emerges from their own prayerful reflection, not the assumptions of evangelical elites in English-speaking countries. Similarly and importantly, the book is unashamed to challenge and rebuke Christian nationalism as a political movement, a challenge much needed in many countries in the region.

With any work of this size and scale, there will be a few minor quibbles about how this or that particular issue was addressed. In particular, I think some of the critical debates surrounding the NT books are oversimplified and it would have been valuable to include textual criticism and the Septuagint in the short, topical articles, but fundamentally, this is an excellent resource, deserving a wide readership. I would emphatically commend it to readers within, but also outside, the region. Any Christian can learn significantly from the voices of other cultures and contexts and this book brings to life the vitality of central and eastern European faith.

Michael Dormandy, University of Innsbruck, Austria

Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation
Collin Hansen
Zondervan Reflective, 2023 (ISBN: 9780310128717 pb,
306pp)

This is the best book I've read this year. Once I picked it up, I struggled to put it down and went through it front-to-back in three days. It is not a biography in the traditional sense. It does chart aspects of Tim and Cathy's story but is more interested in tracing the formative influences that shaped their lives and ministry.

Hansen briefly narrates elements of Keller's upbringing in Allentown, Pennsylvania, but quickly moves to describe the impact of Tim's university days – his conversion, and the role of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in moulding his appetite for Scripture. In their early twenties the Ligonier Valley Study Centre, under the direction of R. C. Sproul, provided a model of persuasive apologetics. During their time at Gordon Conwell, influences included Meredith Kline, Elisabeth Elliot, Edmund Clowney, and Roger Nicole. The latter modelled the ability to disagree without being disagreeable. Richard Lovelace taught Tim about the spiritual dynamics of revival.

After attending Gordon Conwell, the Kellers took up their first pastorate in small rural Hopewell, Virginia (1975-1984). During this time Keller found great help in the writings of the Puritans as those who understood the human condition and taught him to speak with empathy and insight, addressing the heart, not just behaviour.

In 1984, Tim accepted the invitation to join the faculty at Westminster Theological Seminary. His mentor, Edmund Clowney, had taught him a biblical theological approach to preaching Christ from all the Scriptures. Harvie Conn taught him how to contextualise the gospel, with a special interest in the city. This meant, among other things, learning to bring together gospel proclamation and social justice, something that had divided liberals and evangelicals up until this point. These influences were steadily moving Tim and Cathy towards urban ministry, though, as Hansen points out, Tim was hoping to find someone else to take up the opportunity in New York.

In 1989 Tim and Cathy moved to launch Redeemer, at a time when life in New York was rough – rates of violent crime had quadrupled in the previous decade. Nobody held out much hope that such a venture could be successful. Keller learned that gospel preaching provided edification and evangelism. In the wake of 9/11 Keller wrote *The Reason for God* as he was engaging with people's real and deep questions. Cultural commentators such as Charles Taylor, Philip Rieff, Robert Bellah, and Alasdair MacIntyre proved helpful as Keller engaged the presuppositions and worldview of his hearers.

Striking throughout Hansen's work, is Keller's humility and his passion to go deeper in his relationship with Christ. He never sought the fame that came his way. He longed to know more of the Saviour in prayer. He engaged thoughtfully with his culture, but fundamentally he knew revival came from increased dependence on the workings of God's Spirit. Keller knew that his character was more important than his gifting – something his favourite mentors (modern or puritan) had taught him. This book will not give you a blueprint for a successful ministry. Nor will it provide juicy new details of Tim's life. It will inspire you to pursue a deeper love for the Saviour. Hansen has done something of which Tim would approve. He has provided not just interesting information but has moved the heart. Even more remarkably, Hansen's work doesn't just increase admiration for Tim Keller (though it does); it has served to increase the desire for the Saviour.

Martin Salter, Grace Community Church, Bedford

Keeping Your Children's Ministry on Mission: Practical Strategies for Discipling the Next Generation

Jared Kennedy

Crossway, 2022 (ISBN: 9781433576874 pb, 226pp)

Those involved in children's ministry can very easily lose sight of the core gospel call as the necessary distractions of various competing and practical demands have to be taken seriously. Jared Kennedy, author and editor at the Gospel Centred Family, seeks to restore the gospel vision of all aspects of children's ministry so that children clearly know who Jesus is and what he has done for them.

The book is set out in five clear sections covering vision, hospitality, teaching, discipleship and mission. In each Kennedy writes engagingly with a clear eye to practice which makes this book easy to read and pass on to church volunteers and teams. It has many very useful sections and never loses sight of its core aim as a book.

The first section sets the vision for placing the gospel at the heart of all church work with children as well as delineating where that vision may be derailed particularly by a focus on family ministry. There is a very good balanced section on the varieties and shortfalls of family ministry and its relation to the church. In chapter one on 'the gospel and its implications for kids', the theology is explicitly Baptist and it felt lighter than I had hoped for, leaving more questions than answers around the status of the child. Although this is a book for volunteers, it felt like some of the nuance could perhaps have been more carefully explained.

The second section on creating welcoming environments is simply superb: evangelicals rarely think about the teaching space and this chapter is a good place to begin. However, it is only a beginning and it feels as though more work needs to be done in this area, a fault of evangelical children's ministry generally. Other ministry movements are way ahead of us when considering this. But Kennedy makes an excellent start and contribution to the discussion.

The third section considers teaching, or 'Connecting kids to Christ'. Kennedy covers well Lawrence Richard's model and this is a clear and helpful section for volunteer leaders. The move to application is carefully handled too. I would like to have seen more on the adult as a key factor in modelling the teaching. The adult needs to be more than merely the mediator of information; Kennedy pushes against this well but I felt it would benefit from a clearer role for the adult. Similarly, I felt it would benefit from a clearer role for the child: there is little mention (although some) of the role of the child in disrupting and challenging the session. This leads to a question of context: is there a difference between settings and groups in how the lesson is 'taught'? The volunteer needs help in reading their group and having confidence to adapt accordingly.

The fourth section covers discipleship of the growing child. I found the child development chapter a useful and applied summary of approaches to cognitive and moral development but it made no mention of the shortcomings or critiques of these methods, nor of any sense of spiritual development as a separate category. What of the cognitively disabled child? Are they limited in their relationship with Jesus? I would also question Kennedy's approach to catechesis, being too established in set catechisms rather than a historic discussion around the Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments.

The fifth and final section is on mission. It surprised me that the section that gave the title of the book is a short final section. There is some very helpful wisdom here around a sticky note activity to help families and churches establish a different focus to their ministries.

In all there are some excellent sections in this book and it is full of wisdom. I am sure many will benefit from it. I think it is a very useful and important volume for the US market, although I do have some lingering questions around how well it translates into a more global context than its key readership. I am willing to be surprised on that.

Robin Barfield, Oak Hill College, London, UK

The Surprising Genius of Jesus: What the Gospels Reveal about the Greatest Teacher

Peter J. Williams

Crossway, 2023 (ISBN: 978143358836 pb, 130pp)

When so many books are good, solid, helpful, fine, it is tempting to wax lyrical about how brilliant this book is. But what it seeks to display is the brilliance of Jesus as a teacher. Dr Williams makes no pretensions to genius but draws on other scholarship (including some in German, and the knowledge of manuscripts one has come to expect of Tyndale House in Cambridge) to show both the simplicity and depth of Jesus' communication.

The book concentrates on the parable of the prodigal son, first, we might say, in itself, and then in terms of allusions to Genesis, then more briefly to the wider Old Testament. I was completely convinced and struck afresh by the profundity of Jesus' four hundred word / two and a half minute story. The parallels with Jacob and Esau, Jacob and Laban, Joseph, Judah, Ishmael and Isaac, Cain and Abel are laid out and Williams suggests the rhetorical impact of each. He is particularly at pains to discuss how the parable makes sense in Luke and to the audience described in Luke 15:1–2, 'the tax collectors and sinners ... drawing near to hear' Jesus 'and the Pharisees and the scribes' grumbling. It is wonderful to see new things in a passage one thought one knew so well. In addition to Luke 15, which is the only other Bible text to mention a

friend, a goat and a supposed or imagined prostitute? And how does that relate to the meaning of Jesus' tale? All that Williams brings out made me think there must be many other treasures yet to discover even in the most familiar passages of scripture.

Another chapter discusses the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in relation to the parable of the prodigal son and the Old Testament. Williams then gives brief notes on Old Testament allusions in fourteen other parables, making the case that Jesus' teaching characteristically draws on the Old Testament.

There is so much of value and interest here to the exegete and preacher. The usefulness of the book is increased by three indices. But Williams (who is also the author of *Can We Trust The Gospels?*) has an apologetic purpose in mind too. He argues that the most plausible explanation of the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament texts examined is that they are the product of a single mind. This explains connections between parables in Luke and between Luke and Matthew. Jesus' teaching shows a knowledge of Palestine and rabbinic methods more likely to come from Jesus than from Luke. That is, Jesus said these things, the early church didn't make them up.

Williams concludes that Jesus was not only the genius behind these texts, but that they suggest that he is much more than a storyteller. This scholarly yet readable book could easily be put into the hands of a sceptic. I expect it will be a delight and a spur to many keen Bible readers and enthusiasts for the Synoptic Problem too.

Marc Lloyd, Warbleton, East Sussex

Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture

Christopher Watkin

Zondervan Academic, 2022 (ISBN: 9780310128724, hb, 648pp)

Christopher Watkin is associate professor of European Languages at Monash University, Melbourne. Watkins' academic burden (and Christian vocation) is to examine human attempts to make sense of the world, and particularly how humans interact with ideas and positions with which they disagree. As the subtitle of *Biblical Critical Theory (BCT)* suggests, Watkin contends that the biblical metanarrative of creation to consummation is the best lens through which to read every aspect of life, following C. S. Lewis, 'I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it I see everything else' (22).

All humans are social creatures, inextricably enmeshed in overlapping cultural contexts. Cultural symbols or 'figures' (e.g., our languages, ideas,

stories, how we view space, time, relationships, etc.) capture how societies read and relate to reality. Modern and late modern critical theories, such as those championed by Rousseau, Marx, Nietzsche, Sartre, Derrida, *inter alia*, seek to expose the deep, problematic structures of their host culture(s) in order to affect social change (even revolution). They offer a new way to view the world, that is, a new 'worldview' or 'social imaginary' (cf. Charles Taylor). While much modern theology interrogates the Bible through the lenses of one or more critical theories, Watkin turns the tables to scrutinise contemporary critical theories (CCT) with explicitly biblical and theological resources.

Watkin's main aim is to demonstrate "how the world of the Bible refigures our contemporary world with all its priorities, values, assumptions, and desires" (14). The Bible 'refigures' (and so reenchants) our world by simultaneously subverting error within CCT *and* fulfilling latent goods. The Bible tells a bigger, better story by 'out-narrating' (21) alternatives with the transcendental truth, beauty, and goodness of the gospel. For Watkin, such a method of subversive fulfilment, situated in the theo-dramatic arc of creation to consummation, finds its precedent in Augustine's *City of God*. Rather than argue *that* Christianity is true, Watkin seeks to help 'bring some to the point where they want it to be true' (3). To this end, Watkin takes his reader on a 28-chapter, 600+ page, journey from God and creation to eschatological glorification. Each chapter narrates the waypoint (e.g., the prophets), highlights a cluster of cultural issues (e.g., power), outlines various CCT proposals, before showing how the Bible 'diagonalises' all alternative options with a better way. 'Diagonalisation' is the methodological key for Watkin. Rather than a simplistic *via media*, 'diagonalization presents a biblical picture in which the best aspirations of both [CCT] options are fulfilled, but not in a way that the proponents of those options would see coming' (17).

Biblical Critical Theory is a well-researched, engagingly written, multi-disciplinary tome with an astonishingly ambitious scope. Without falling into lazy dismissal (an excuse for non-engagement), Watkin remains irenic and charitable throughout, coining playful neologisms (e.g., 'eupistemology'), with a sprinkling of helpful French, Latin, and German buzzwords. By situating cultural questions within the grand biblical story, one of the book's chief contributions is to encourage humans to ask better questions to find more satisfying answers. For example, considering issues of identity, when we appreciate our place and time within the biblical narrative, the apposite question shifts from 'who am I?' to 'whose am I?' (574). *BCT* is a resource I have already recommended to those exploring Christian things from a background in continental literature and philosophy.

Given the seventeen glowing endorsements in the front pages, a fulsome foreword by Tim Keller, as well as *BCT* picking up the Christianity

Today Book of the Year 2023 award (and being an Amazon #1 best-seller!), it is with some trepidation that I raise several lingering questions (at least for this bear of little brain). First, I am not *fully* persuaded by the method of ‘diagonalisation.’ Some examples are stimulating and insightful (e.g., the New-Old Creation Dichotomy diagonalised by Christ’s resurrection body). Yet others may appear somewhat strained, such as the appropriation of +Graham Tomlin’s work on Brexit to explain how the mystery of the hypostatic union diagonalises the purported dichotomy between the particular and the universal. At times it feels like differing opinions are caricatured (and quite quickly) to establish a sharp dichotomy, all so that Watkin can provide his diagonalised solution. Yet such swift solutions can at times lack textured nuance, thus amounting to assertion rather than persuasion. Perhaps there are times when the useful servant of diagonalisation can become a domineering master—a methodological Procrustean bed.

Secondly, I wonder if the method of diagonalisation already concedes too much to CCTs. Critical theories presuppose that we read the world rightly *through* certain texts. For Watkin, the Bible remains the superior (and supreme) text. However, do such methodological presuppositions disregard some kind of Reformed account of natural theology (Watkin’s self-confessed theological tradition)? Does human knowledge only work *through* texts, or do humans possess certain innate faculties that make knowledge possible by virtue of creation (whatever the noetic effects of the fall)? If we blindly follow the working assumptions of CCT, do we end up in theologically anaemic biblicism—the scourge of much modern evangelicalism?

This raises a third query: could Watkin have guarded and guided his main argument with theologically thicker guardrails? Watkin commendably wants to explicate the practical application of Christian doctrine to all of human life, such as how the Trinity answers the philosophical problem of the One and the Many (a similar concern relates to Watkin’s treatment of nature/grace issues). Yet without a robust account of analogy, so essential for Watkin’s historic Reformed forebears, the doctrine of the Trinity can quickly morph into a social partnership (*contra* creedal orthodoxy). Given Watkin’s right commitment to the Creator/creature distinction, perhaps a better doctrine to explore the One and the Many would be the church’s faith union in Christ. Throughout *BCT*, while Bavinck, Calvin, and Augustine have their place, the majority of Watkin’s theological guides come from the twentieth century (e.g., Lewis, Ellul, Frame, Bonhoeffer, Van Til, Bentley Hart, Bauckham, O’Donovan). This is not *necessarily* a bad thing, but theology in the twentieth century is infamous for eschewing classical Reformed convictions, such as those concerning Trinitarian metaphysics (e.g., simplicity, aseity, immutability, etc.), as articulated by Augustine himself in *City of God* 11.10. Perhaps

including more voices from the Apostles to the Enlightenment could have helped ground Watkin's thesis in theologically richer soil.

I realise I am in danger of expecting Christopher Watkin to be a polymath! And I am sure there are well-reasoned and well-researched responses to the three lingering questions posed above. At minimum, perhaps the ambitious scope of BCT is itself an argument for multi-disciplinary projects to be co-authored.

Sam Ashton, St Paul's, Hadley Wood, London, UK
Matthew N. Payne, University of Sydney, Australia

The Meaning of Singleness: Retrieving an Eschatological Vision for the Contemporary Church

Danielle Treweek

Inter-Varsity Press, May 2023 (ISBN: 9781514004852 pb, 336pp)

A comment which Dr Treweek heard in the lecture at theological college – that ‘singleness is eschatologically profound’ (xii) – drove her doctoral research which she unpacks in this book. For those used to books on singleness which are manuals on how to get married or a brief reflection on 1 Corinthians 7 without much beside, this book is not that. It is not primarily a book for singles; it is a book about singleness, for the church, exploring the theological meaning of singleness and how that can equip and serve the church as a whole. The book is an exercise in retrieval, but this is an exercise that speaks directly and pointedly into today's church and culture.

Part One deals with this context; the first chapter traces the historical and cultural understanding of singleness, concluding that ‘contemporary singleness has found itself caught in the riptide of a palpable cultural lag in which marriage, or at the very least intimate romantic and sexual partnership, continues to be idealized as socially normative and responsible’ (18). As we turn to the church, Treweek argues that in many ways the church is effectively baptising this cultural view: ‘contemporary Christian discourse typically regards the unmarried form of life as intrinsically problematic, dysfunctional, and even disordered’ (32). Treweek doesn't make this statement lightly, she deftly engages with historical text and positions ranging from Luther through to James Dobson.

Part Two explores the contemporary Christian thinking on singleness further, arguing that the single life is presented as deficient, aberrant, and ultimately unfulfilling. Even attempts to deal with singleness in a positive manner end up undermining other forms of singleness. ‘Ultimately both the gifting and calling kinds of singleness insist that not all forms of the unmarried Christian life can be said to be of equal value or even legitimate purpose’ (73).

Treweek's argument in Parts One and Two will leave those who agree with her singing and those who don't with serious theological engagement to consider. The underlying theological problem she identifies is that the church has been committed to 'gaze pensively back to the time of creation' without being 'equally committed to fixing our sight on that same creation's eschatological transformation' (91).

The rest of the book goes on to address this deficiency, through retrieval (Part Three) and conclusion (Part Four). Treweek is a master at retrieval. As she surveys church history, she avoids both traps of a romantic wholesale acceptance of historical thinking and a simplistic dismissal of old ideas. She recognises that the early church's elevation of celibacy was driven in part by a degradation of marriage, which she rejects. She does however show that the church's 'elevation of virginity ... was theological in content and more specifically, principally eschatological in character' (113).

In her exegetical summary (chapter six), Treweek convincingly finds support for the eschatological approach to singleness in Matthew 22 and 1 Corinthians 7, demonstrating that such an approach is in line with contemporary and historical exegeses.

She then enters discussion with four theological voices from the church: Saint Augustine of Hippo, Ælfric of Eynsham, Pope John Paul II and Stanley Hauerwas. Again, while engaging critically with all of them, she finds a constant witness to the eschatological nature and value of the single life. In her engagement with Hauerwas she draws out how he reflects the value of singleness for the whole church. 'Foundational to his account is the conviction that the eschatological character, significance, and mission of *the church* is central to any theologically thick construct of singleness' (211, italics original).

In the final part Part Four, 'The Meaning of Singleness', Treweek draws together the threads of retrieval and the application to her analysis in Parts One and Two, presenting the basis for 'a thick theology of singleness' and further theological and pastoral engagement. Central to her reflection is the 'telesocial' nature of the church, that is, how the church is a new community with a constitution directed to its eschatological future. It is this constitution which should reorient us from our nuclear family to our spiritual family. So, singles are not merely invited into nuclear families, but singles and families together make a new eschatologically directed family. This chapter includes some of the most profoundly helpful insights of the book, how singles can be spiritual parents, not in a token way but in an eschatologically *more* real way. Within this context Treweek deals with the common error that forfeiture of sin and the celibate life are 'inheritably sacrificial'. 'Contrary to the spirit of our age, Jesus' call to self-denial is not a call to deny our ideologically perceived inner-selves

(and the fulfilment it yearns for), but our theologically identified sinful selves (and the rebellion it is innately oriented toward)' (262).

Treweek's book is a theological foundation for much further thought in the area of singleness. It provides a deep, or as she would put it 'thick' theology of singleness which not only helps in how single people will view their position before God, but in the end will aid the whole church in how they relate as a telesocial family directed toward the new creation. Pastors should carefully study this book, and my prayer is that many will pick up on the threads that she has begun to unravel. Treweek unpicks the errors of the past, while giving us a vision which under God will help the church not only value single members, but as a whole be better prepared as a bride to meet Christ her bridegroom, a corporate reality, not an individualistic one.

Benjamin Williamson, Bury, UK

The call is to rediscover Christian journaling, and to use the physical act of writing to orient our hearts to God by providing for ourselves the time and space for careful thought and reflection. This was something known to the Puritans (Appendix: 'Write as the Puritans Did'), and they saw great spiritual benefit. The book quotes John Beadle: 'To keep a Journall or Diary by us, especially of all God's gracious dealings with us, is a work for a Christian of singular use.' (89)

I finish typing this, now with my journal next to me and my pen in hand. My journaling is poor, but I am encouraged to write. However imperfectly or slowly, to write honestly: to grow in godliness, aided by putting pen to paper.

Chris Kilgour, Hertfordshire, UK

Paul and Imperial Divine Honors: Christ, Caesar, and the Gospels

D. Clint Burnett

Eerdmans, 2024 (ISBN: 9780802879851 hb, 332 pp)

This is an extraordinarily important book that will change scholarship about the New Testament and its relationship to the Roman empire. In recent times, N. T. Wright, in particular, has strongly argued that there was a coherent, imperial cult in the Roman empire and Paul's goal in his ministry was to subvert the gospel of Caesar and his imperial cult by the preaching that Christ is Lord, not Caesar. Burnett's book challenges this paradigm.

Burnett argues that the imperial cult is better defined as 'imperial divine honours' and he establishes the archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence from Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. He further argues that these imperial divine honours differed from city to city (that there was no monolithic, centrally controlled, empire-wide, 'imperial

cult') and that any suffering that early Christians experienced was not due merely to their rejection of imperial divine honours but for the more complex reason of overturning Greco-Roman pagan culture in general.

In the first chapter, Burnett defines 'imperial divine honours' as cultic acts bestowed on certain deceased members of the imperial family that resembled in kind but differed in degree from the honours given to the traditional Greek and Roman gods in keeping with local customs. In the second chapter, Burnett explores divine imperial honours in Philippi which had a conservative Roman culture. He argues that there is no evidence that the Philippians referred to any member of the imperial family as 'lord' or 'saviour'. His reconstruction demonstrates that divine imperial honours were not the sole reason for the suffering of the Philippian Christians in Acts and Philippians and pagans mistreated the Philippian Christians because they accepted a Jewish gospel that they found preposterous and dangerous.

In the second chapter, Burnett moves to Thessalonica. Thessalonica was a Greek rather than Roman city in terms of culture, and divine honours were granted to the imperial family in appreciation for their benefaction. There is no evidence in the city that the term 'gospel' was an imperial term, 'lord' was not used for the imperial family, nor 'coming' used for the visit of the imperial family. Pagan Thessalonians mistreated the church in their city because Christians denied the existence of the city's gods, including but not limited to the imperial family.

In the third chapter Burnett considers Corinth. The evidence shows that the Roman colony established postmortem divine honours for the imperial family. Yet against Winter and Wright, there is no evidence from Corinth nor the Corinthian letters that supports a direct conflict between early Christians and pagans that stemmed from divine imperial honours. Rather it seems the Corinthian church interacted without conflict with its pagan culture. There is no indication, unlike Philippi and Thessalonica, that Corinthian pagans mistreated Christians. Burnett concludes that since Corinth was open to foreign cultural influences, that Corinthian pagans and Christians did not grasp the countercultural message of the cross and the gospel and hence the church was able to live peacefully in Corinth.

Burnett draws important exegetical and theological conclusions in his last chapter. He considers Wright's understanding of Romans 13:1-7 as an anti-imperial passage designed to upstage and delegitimise the 'gospel' of Caesar and Rome. Burnett says that if Roman emperors most often did not claim divine honours but were mostly granted them postmortem, then Wright's understanding of the background to Romans 13:1-7 is untenable. Rather, Paul seems to have had in mind the general Roman state and bureaucracy that kept the city going, not the emperor himself. Burnett also refers to Daniel and the prophet's lifestyle as serving the

Babylonian empire, yet he maintained his distinctive devotion to God. It will be interesting to read Wright's response to Burnett and see whether the academy concludes that Wright's paradigm is unconvincing.

Burnett's book is full of fascinating archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence to establish his arguments. It is difficult for the non-specialist to assess and confirm the validity of the Greco-Roman evidence. Assuming that other experts confirm Burnett's evidence, then we can say that the understanding that Paul's gospel is political and essentially anti-imperial and anti-empire is seriously flawed. It would be interesting if Burnett wrote a second book on divine imperial honours in Revelation.

Burnett's book raises the key hermeneutical question of the use of background sources as the exegetical key to understanding Paul. The conclusion ought to be that we must be very careful that our use of background material is not imposed upon the text. Further, we can conclude that Paul's gospel is essentially focused on theology, not politics. We can also suggest that Paul's gospel must mean that we should stand against the general paganism of our times, and that the church in a multi-cultural, pluralistic culture (like Corinth) could be blind to the countercultural aspects of the gospel.

Burnett's game-changing book is strongly recommended for NT scholars and all who are teaching Philippians, Thessalonians, and Corinthians.

Robintan K. Mody, North West Gospel Partnership, Leyland, UK

The Servant Lawyer: Facing the Challenges of Christian Faith in Everyday Law Practice

Robert F. Cochran, Jr.

IVP USA, 2024 (ISBN: 9781514007228, pb, 226pp)

This is a lucid and thought-provoking work which provides much wisdom on living out the Christian life in the midst of the daily challenges of legal practice and law studies. The author combines experiences gained principally from two worlds: that of the practising lawyer operating in a law firm environment and in the courtroom, and that of the teacher of law working in a university context. These are not rigidly separate realms and the accumulated pools of wisdom flow from one to the other. This is made quite plain to the reader.

The book clearly benefits from the author's extensive writing and reflections over the years on the numerous different dimensions which constitute the legal sphere, touching on important questions of principle, as well as matters of practical application. While it draws from the author's insights on and experiences of challenges facing the legal community in the USA, the book 'travels well' and offers much of value to Christian law students and lawyers whose academic and working lives have been spent entirely in the United Kingdom, or elsewhere. The book is also

valuable reading for those interested in the theological foundations of legal principle.

The Servant Lawyer is largely structured around various identified roles which lawyers perform and some of these are often performed simultaneously, such is the multi-faceted nature of legal practice. Lawyers are addressed as builders and trustees, as advocates and peacemakers, as prosecutors and defence attorneys, and as counsellors and colleagues. They are also considered in their roles as prophets and advocates for the poor and disadvantaged. By adopting these perspectives, the author not only sheds light on the biblical principles applicable to each role and the variegated nature of the challenges encountered in the conduct of each, but also provides the reader with much fertile material which stimulates reflection on the great privilege it is for the Christian lawyer to have such a rich diversity of roles to hand within the legal sphere. The author completely dispels any misconception that the practice of law occupies a dry and remote space, far removed from everyday life. Rather, the author overwhelmingly and quite rightly demonstrates, with numerous illustrations, how the practice of law is firmly embedded in the real world of fallen mankind.

Throughout the work, the touchstone is, of course, service – whether through wise counsel, the pursuit of justice in testing conditions, or the objective analysis of complex situations for the purpose of bringing clarity and discerning where the truth lies. Indeed, the author very helpfully makes it clear that there is in every situation a choice to be made between two vastly different approaches to professional life: either serving God and serving others, or, by contrast, ignoring God and serving ourselves.

Within its exploration of the various roles available for the Christian lawyer to pursue, the book is also mindful of both theology and history. It is replete with citations from Scripture and contains illustrations from history which are instructive and moving. It is virtually impossible not to be stirred and influenced by the succinct, yet enthralling, account of the indefatigable efforts of Granville Sharp and the Clapham Sect to strive, using a combination of Scripture and fundamental legal principles, to bring about the end of the slave trade. Similarly, it is exceedingly difficult, as a Christian lawyer, to resist the magnetism of Sir William Blackstone's pithy promotion (in his eighteenth-century *Commentaries on the Laws of England* – relied on by the author (167) when discussing the Christian response to the slave trade) of

... the eternal, immutable laws of good and evil, to which the creator himself in all his dispensations conforms; and which he has enabled human reason to discover, so far as they are necessary for the conduct of human actions.

Rousing citations of this kind abound and render the book a most uplifting read.

Overall, while this work does not engage in discussion of the roles played within the legal world by Christian judges, arbitrators, or mediators in the resolution of disputes, or by Christian policy makers, academics and writers in the shaping and development of law and legal doctrines, it nevertheless covers a broad range of relevant issues and is a book to return to for ongoing wisdom and reflection as the Christian lawyer journeys through the frequently rough terrain of legal study and practice.

James Crabtree, St Albans, UK

She Needs: Women Flourishing in the Church

Nay Dawson

IVP, 2024 (ISBN: 9781789744521 pb, 100 pp)

She Needs is a short, clear and incisive book, a publication that should be read by Christian men and women alike. Its content offers the possibility of transforming our congregations into places where men and women can flourish together for God's glory.

A recurrent question in women's circles is finding a clear pathway for women in ministry, especially for those who have had the opportunity to go to Bible college. There is no clear cut answer, and many women have often wondered if their theological studies were a good decision. This reconsideration of their training does not stem from a lack of desire to learn more about our Saviour, but merely from the practical issue they face: there are few roles for them within churches.

Therefore, the pastoral or leadership teams in our churches will benefit by delving into the chapters of this book. They will find different ways to identify areas which need change and can also learn how to be better prepared to offer guidance and encouragement for theologically educated women. This will ensure that those women can continue learning and using that knowledge for the benefit of the church. It can also aid leaders in making sure they are enablers in the growth and the use of gifts of women in our congregations.

The book is deeply pastoral and biblical. It takes Jesus' model of relationships with women and entices us to apply it in our day to day living. On the one hand, it encourages us as women to stop listening to the cacophony of voices that say we are failures or that we have nothing to offer, and replace that with what Jesus thinks of us. On the other hand, it challenges men, to stop thinking of women as children, usurpers or temptresses, and replace those concepts with that of co-labourers, disciples and sisters.

A small criticism on my part, and perhaps it is something that stems more from my generational perspective, was the examples of the

temptress. One of these examples says ‘I was told that I needed to dress in such a way that it didn’t reveal anything that might ‘cause a brother to stumble’ (57). Though I know for a fact that a younger group of people will agree with this testimony in discrediting that assertion, I still believe that modesty has an important part to play in our society.

Having said that, Dawson brilliantly summarises her proposal in the section: ‘A vision for the church’, a few pages later. Quoting Aimee Byrd she says: ‘We have lost the beauty of brotherhood and sisterhood ... The way we relate to one another sends a message – to one another and to the watching world’ (63).

Some people might think this is yet another book to enhance the importance of women and diminish that of men; they could not be more wrong. It seeks not to belittle either gender, but to put them in the right place, as God sees them, both of equal value. Whether you are from a complementarian or egalitarian theological viewpoint, you will benefit from reading its pages. It is not a book to sway you into either position but is bold in seeking places where women can wholeheartedly serve in either setting.

There are other books that highlight the importance of women’s ministry, like Sharon Dickens’ *Unconventional* where the support and encouragement of her pastor at the early stages of her ministry helped her blossom. But I have not come across a book like this that summarises and provides a platform to start conversations, ask for forgiveness, be mobilised into action, and above all lift tensions in order to allow encouragement, mentorship and sponsorship of women.

This is a heartfelt and challenging book that hopefully will help us confront and acknowledge our mistakes and stir us into a unity where the beauty of God’s transforming power is seen in the way we relate to one another.

Ellelein Kirk, Gidea Park, London, UK

Eastertide: Meditations on the Easter Collects of Thomas Cranmer Ashley Null

Anglican House, 2024 (ISBN 9781735902258, pb, 146pp)

Anglican House is a partner ministry of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) whose Knowing Anglicanism series of books introduces readers to a deeper understanding of the Anglican Way. The authors are scholars who ‘hold firm the Apostolic Faith without diminution or addition.’ Previously published volumes cover the Articles of Religion (*The Faith of Anglicans* by John Rodgers), *Marriage According to the Book of Common Prayer* by Stephen Noll and *A Walk Through the 2019 Prayer Book* by Arnold Kuklas. Ashley Null’s *Eastertide* examines the

Collects and appointed readings from Easter Day to the Sunday after Ascension Day. Null helpfully explains that ‘Eastertide begins at sundown Easter Saturday and ends fifty days later at sundown the Saturday before Pentecost Sunday’ (x).

The Collects are those found in the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* and come from the pen of Thomas Cranmer. Five meditations for each of the seven weeks of Eastertide unpack the Collect and touch on the appointed readings. Because Dr Null is ‘in the front rank of contemporary Cranmer scholars’ (from Dr Peter Jensen’s preface, vii) we are not surprised to find that he draws in nuggets from the historical context including the lives of Cranmer himself, Henry VIII’s widow Katherine Parr, Cecily Duchess of York and Lady Margaret Beaufort. These touches bring the Collects to life.

I was pleased to learn that Cranmer inherited medieval theology’s concern for the affections and put it to work in the Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter: ‘grant unto thy people ... that they may love the thing, which thou commandest, and desire, that which thou doest promise; that among the manifold and sundry changes of the world, our hearts may surely be there fixed, whereas true joys are to be found’. This is the ‘doctrinal bridge by which medieval English devotional life crossed over into early Protestantism’ (70). I also found Null’s meditations on the much-neglected season of Ascensiontide full of reflection on that wonderful doctrine. In the Collect for Ascension Day, Cranmer inserted the ‘continually’ to emphasise that that ‘By constantly meditating on God’s promises to us in Scripture we may be ever present with Christ at God’s right hand’ (104).

An informative and reflective look into and around the Collects and the Archbishop from whose pen they flowed.

Ed Moll, St George’s Church, Wembdon, Somerset, UK

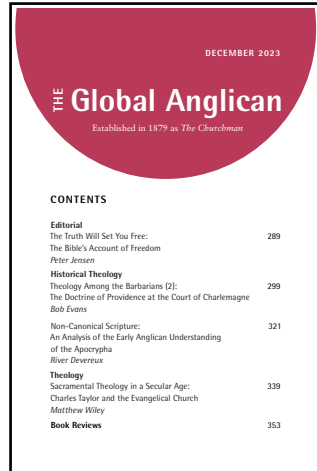
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