

# newdirections

May 2008  
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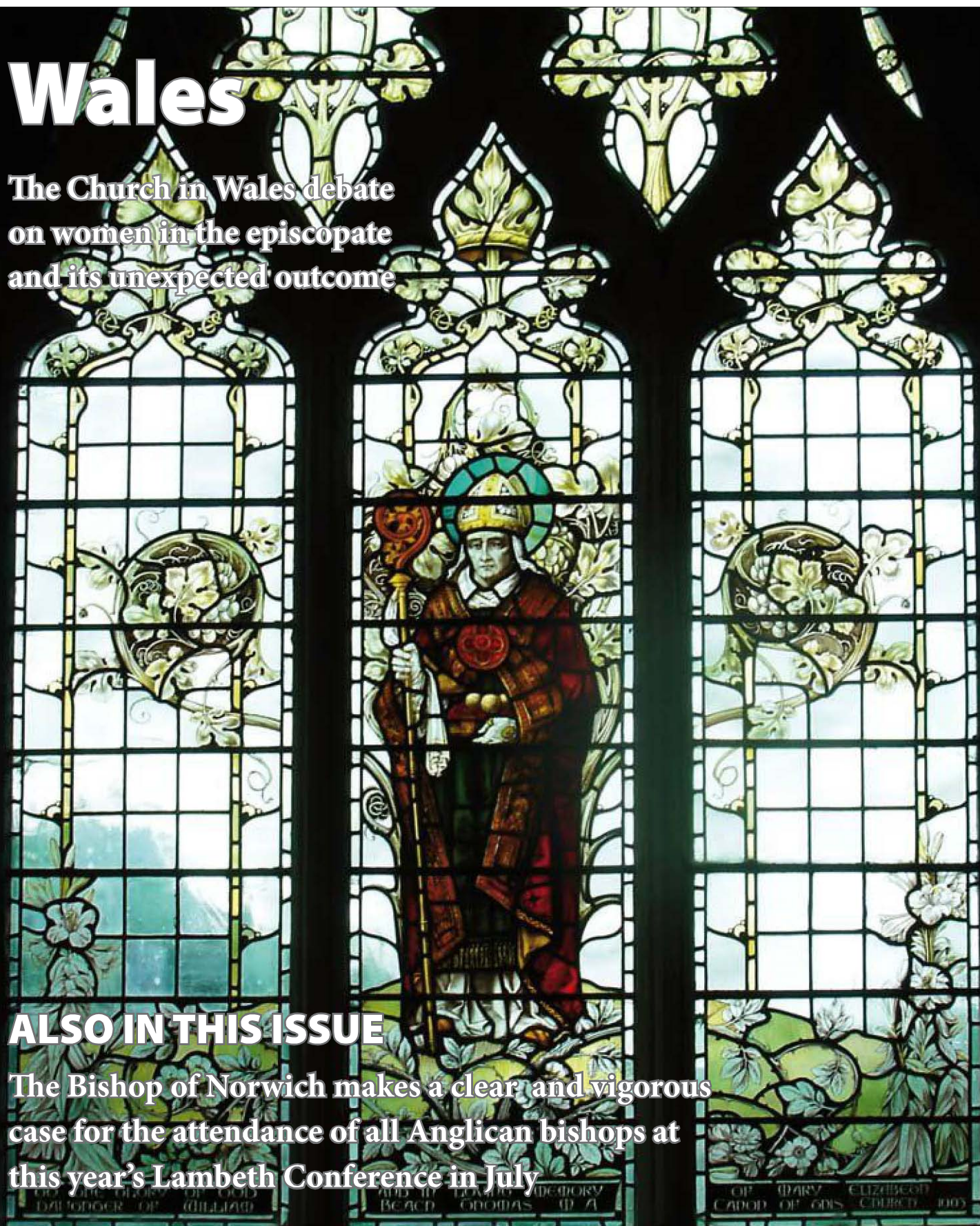
*serving Evangelicals and Catholics seeking to renew the Church in the historic faith*

## Wales

The Church in Wales debate  
on women in the episcopate  
and its unexpected outcome

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

The Bishop of Norwich makes a clear and vigorous  
case for the attendance of all Anglican bishops at  
this year's Lambeth Conference in July





## REGULARS

**6**  
**GHOSTLY COUNSEL**  
ANDY HAWES on global prayer

**11**  
**DEVOTIONAL**  
Selections from St Ambrose  
on Corpus Christi

**12**  
**PATRICK REARDON**  
Faith and history

**12**  
**SACRED VISION**  
MARK STEVENS on  
Sebastiano del Piombo

**16**  
**FAITH OF OUR FATHERS**  
ARTHUR MIDDLETON on pastoral burnout

**17**  
**THE WAY WE LIVE NOW**  
GEOFFREY KIRK on the world  
of Shannon Matthews

**31**  
**TOUCHING PLACE**  
SIMON COTTON on St Etheldreda's, Horley

<b>30 DAYS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>FIF UPDATE</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>LAST CHRONICLE</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>LETTERS</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PEVS' DIARIES</b>	<b>35</b>

## CORRESPONDENTS

**20 ITALY**  
MAGDI CRISTIANO ALLAM on his  
conversion to Christianity

**21 WALES**  
JOHN RICHARDSON on synodical process  
and the Church in Wales

**22 AUSTRALIA**  
The news of the election of the  
first woman bishop in Australia

## REVIEWS

**24 ART**  
Cranach at the Royal Academy of Arts

**25 BOOKS**  
*What God hath Wrought*  
*The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*  
*Daily Eucharistic Lectionary*  
*The Realm*  
*In the Eye of the Storm*

# contents

Vol 11 No 156

May 2008

## FEATURES

**7**  
**Refusing invitations**  
**THE RT REVD GRAHAM JAMES**  
warns that the refusal of  
some bishops to attend the  
Lambeth Conference will  
surely cause damage to  
the unity of the church

**8**  
**Christianity Lite**  
**DIGBY ANDERSON**  
calls for a return to  
full-bodied religion, and  
a rejection of the contemporary  
watered-down and insipid  
versions of the real thing

**9**  
**Continents and isles**  
**LEE KENYON**  
on how the Church of England  
can avoid the tempting trap  
of becoming isolated from  
the rest of the Church

**10**  
**Gamaliel principle**  
**OWEN HIGGS**  
explains existing Synod legislation  
relevant to the forthcoming  
debate on women bishops  
in the Church of England

**11**  
**Cheerful givers**

**ALAN EDWARDS**  
wonders how to encourage more  
realistic giving by church-goers

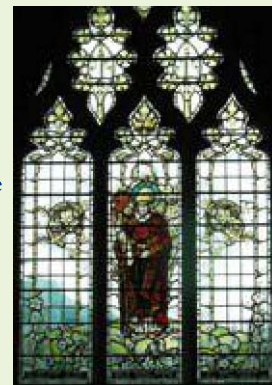
**13**  
**Easter triumph**  
**ARTHUR MIDDLETON**  
looks at the teaching of two bishops  
on the subject of 'Holy Dying'  
and finds theological unity  
in their outlook, spanning  
the seventeenth and  
twenty-first centuries

## LEAD STORIES

**4 Confused debate**  
**Richard Rolands**  
gives a blow by blow  
account of the key debate  
in the Church of Wales  
and its unexpected  
outcome, the result of  
folly or arrogance.

**5 Are they serious?**  
**John Shepley**

wonders why the Church in Wales bishops were so  
determined not to provide adequate provision for  
the orthodox that they torpedoed their own motion.  
When a House of Bishops shoots its own proposal in  
the foot, you have to ask why.



**15**  
**Pension reactions**  
**GEORGE AUSTIN**  
revisits the current developments  
in clergy pensions, in light of  
responses to his previous treatment  
of the debate, and letters from  
the Pensions Board itself

**18**  
**Guide me gently**  
**NIGEL ELBOURNE**  
asks us to reconsider the church  
guide as a means of explaining  
the symbolism present in church  
design to those who have  
no experience of its history

**18**  
**Cleansing fire**  
**PETER LYON**  
acknowledges his own fear of the  
purifying fire of God's cleansing,  
even as he knows his need of it

**29**  
**Using new brooms**  
**PAUL GRIFFIN**  
argues that a new appointment  
is not an opportunity for  
sweeping aside all that has gone before,  
and that the past can be respected

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The next issue of **newdirections**  
is published on 6 June

**'M**OVE FORWARD IN FAITH, Pope urges Catholics at Yankee Stadium Mass' ran the recent *Catholic News Service* headline. Amen to that. May blessings continue to flow from Pope Benedict's triumphant visit to the United States.

Of course it was thoroughly planned, and certainly there was a great deal of spin on the part of the Vatican. The fact remains, it worked. The Holy Father did all things well. He faced the issues of priestly child abuse, not once but several times with directness and humility; there was not more he could have done in so short a time.

He prayed at Ground Zero, spoke at the United Nations, met President Bush, presided at an ecumenical gathering, and celebrated Mass with the faithful. He even managed to have a birthday while on American soil.

And all of this without compromising his firm proclamation of traditional Christian teaching. Here was a wonderful example of the power of orthodox theology, to encourage us all. The Church's greatest living theologian and chief pastor came to the heartland of liberal ascendancy and was received with acclaim.

**A** Greenpeace demonstration takes place against Unilever for its production of palm oil in Indonesia, and in so doing destroying the rain forest and other parts of the environment. Whether you agree or not, or are particularly well informed on the use of such tropical oils, it is the sort of demonstration to which one would give the benefit of the doubt.

So how is it, then, that under pressure from environmental groups – if not actually Greenpeace then certainly others from the same stable supported by the same activists – we are all to use more and more biofuels to reduce carbon emissions, which in this local case in Indonesia, means replacing the rain forest and other parts of that environment with palms for palm oil, to be turned into the required biofuel.

The current confusions over the merits of renewal fuels and wind farms – 'destroy the environment to save the environment' is not the greatest rallying cry – should make Christians pause, and think.

Has the Church of England got nothing more to say than simply urging the use of low-energy light bulbs? Where is the teaching on a more modest and sober style of life, on the environmental benefits of marriage and family

life? Where is the challenge to government for the narrowness of its energy vision? Where is a Christian teaching on God's world?



**W**ith so many other dull and gloomy items of news, the delightfully contentious progress of the Olympic torches proved a light-hearted distraction, whether in identifying the sinister commandos in their blue tracksuits, relishing the fumbling equivocation of officials, sympathizing with the slighted nationalism of Chinese exiles, and the sight of politicians, who had turned the event into a crass political statement, pleading (with unabashed hypocrisy) for others to keep politics out of sport.

Let us hope that the athletes have a successful summer games, the Chinese can enjoy a fortnight's choreographed jamboree, that one and all have a thoroughly good time. And that Tibet and all other internal minorities receive the improvements in human rights they were promised by their government when the Olympic Games were first awarded to Beijing.

Further developments – boycotts and non-boycotts – we can leave to others. But it is worth noting and censuring the modern world's failure to understand sign and symbol – mirrored as it so often is in the pronouncements of our own Synod and its Liturgical Commission. It is the substance that matters not the decoration; the thing itself, not later accretions.

It is the Olympic Games themselves that are a symbol of peace – young men and women competing freely and fairly at the highest possible level. Opening ceremonies and gas flames only have value if they point to this central substance: they have no worth in themselves.

May we too hear the exhortation to get back to the heart of the matter. Let us celebrate the sacraments, not merely talk about them, and worship God, not merely think about it.



**W**e shall pray for Kay Goldsworthy on 22 May, however much we may disapprove of those who come to lay hands on her, and of what she is to become. It is worth noting that it has been fourteen years since the last province of the Anglican Communion indulged in this innovation. It is possible that after years of stagnation, this unwanted disruption to holy order is now to return with renewed energy (Wales notwithstanding). Let those who have been sleeping awake. **ND**



# Confused debate

*Richard Rolands gives a blow by blow account of the debate in the Church of Wales over women bishops, and how it came up with the wrong answer, to the annoyance of its archbishop*

he urged  
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message  
to modern  
Wales

**T**he Governing Body of the Church in Wales met in its usual home, The University of Wales, Lampeter on Wednesday and Thursday, 2–3 April 2008. The main item on the agenda was the Bill to enable women to be ordained to the episcopate – a preliminary debate on this subject being held last April at the University of Aberystwyth, the motion being passed on that occasion by a straightforward majority. This time the Bill needed to receive a two-thirds majority in each of the three houses.

Before the Bill itself could be debated, it had to pass through the Committee Stage of Bill Procedure. In the end the Committee proposed two amendments of its own – the crucial one being that ‘the Bench of Bishops will provide pastoral care and support for those who in conscience cannot accept the ordination of women as priests and bishops through the ministry of an Assistant Bishop or Bishops.’ The Chairman of the Select Committee, His Honour Judge Nicholas Cooke QC, presented the report of the Select Committee and said that although the Committee had come to a good measure of agreement, there were differences of opinion as to what provision should be provided.

Mr Anthony Jeremy (Llandaff) began the debate by saying that we had come to a defining moment in the history of the Church in Wales. The Church in Wales should pay attention to the traditional reasons why the episcopate should be restricted to males. The Church had unbroken obedience to this for 2000 years, and it lay beyond the competence of the Church in Wales to change those rules without the consent of the Universal Church. The ministry of an Assistant Bishop would allow those who disagreed to remain within the church.

The Bishop of Monmouth argued that passing the amendment would fudge the issue, and that the pastoral provisions proposed by the Bench of Bishops would work better than the amendment. Canon Jeremy Winston (Monmouth) said that many who were unhappy about the Bill wished to remain loyal members of the Church in Wales, and that the provision of a Provincial Assistant Bishop (PAB) would prevent possible schism in the church. It would allow those who are not in agreement with women bishops to continue to play a full and active part in the life of the Church in Wales.

The Archbishop said that people who wanted women bishops might see the amendment as attractive, but it differed from the present arrangements in not being voluntary for the bishops, but constitutional and canonical. He said that they would be appointing a male bishop who had doubts about the validity of the orders of a woman bishop. Such a bishop and his followers would have real doubts as to whether the sacraments presided over by her were real sacraments and real doubts about whether anyone ordained by her, male or female, was actually ordained. He said that the amendment was seeking alternative, not additional pastoral care.

The Provincial Assistant Bishop, David Thomas,

said that he had found the debate painful to listen to. He agreed that there were anomalies, but said that the most basic and extraordinary anomaly was that in 1996 the Church in Wales legislated for the ordination of women to the priesthood, and that anomaly would become greater with women bishops. He hoped that his ministry over the past 11 years had helped to maintain the highest degree of unity possible, and said that there was a deafening silence regarding provision of a bishop for those who could not accept women’s ordination when he retired at the end of June.

When the amendment was put it was defeated. The Governing Body then moved on to debate the Bill itself. The Archbishop proposed the Bill, providing what he felt to be theological and biblical reasons for ordaining women to the episcopate. The Bishop of St Asaph, seconding, called on the church to have the courage to move forward to the future and not recede into the past. He said that a refusal to ordain women bishops would send a negative message to modern Wales.

There were many contributions to the debate – both for and against. Canon Andrew Knight (Swansea and Brecon) said that although he supported women’s ministry as priests and bishops, he was concerned for the unity of the Church in Wales and felt the Bill as presented was too hard and too negative. The Dean of Monmouth said that the appointment of the PEVs in England had at least enabled the church to live together as one family; we should be bold and honest enough to say ‘not yet’.

Significantly as it turned out, Canon Joe Griffin (Swansea and Brecon) said that he wanted to support the Bill but was perplexed as to why there was so much silence from the bench regarding future provision of a PAB. Canon Tudor Griffiths (St Asaph) also felt deeply for those who could not accept the Bill, and wanted to hear more about what was entailed in the pastoral support and care offered. On the other hand, Dr Gill Todd (Swansea and Brecon) said that she wanted a celebration of the unified ministry of men and women, working together over the past 11 years, and supported the bill as a way to enable members of the church to move together and ‘celebrate their diversity’.

In summing up, the Archbishop felt that opponents should not be fearful of the Bill, and that the Bishops had tried to be even-handed with the pastoral principals they proposed. He even went so far as to point out that the bench had not yet had time to consider the possibility of a successor to Bishop David.

The vote was then taken – ‘that henceforth in the Church in Wales men and women may be ordained as Bishops’, and the result was Laity for 52, against 19, abstention 1, Clergy for 27, against 18, abstention 1, Bishops for 4, against 0, abstention 0. There not being a two thirds majority in the House of Clergy, the Bill failed. But because it failed in only one house, it can come back at any time; as no doubt it will. **ND**



# Are they serious?

*John Shepley reflects on the debate in the Church in Wales and wonders whether the proponents of women bishops are really serious in their expressed desire to introduce them*

**W**hat concessions are proponents of the ordination of women as priests and bishops prepared to make in order to achieve their end? Recent events in Wales have brought that question to the fore. The Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, made it clear through speeches and newspaper articles before the Bill was brought before the Governing Body that he opposed any formal provision for opponents. It was even widely rumoured that if amendments making such provision were passed, then the House of Bishops would withdraw the legislation and await a more favourable opportunity.

It was a high-risk strategy. Will there ever be a time, in the foreseeable future, when opposition will have dwindled to such an extent that provision for those of the original integrity will be unnecessary?

In England, it has to be said, enthusiasts for the new ministry have been eager to make concessions; so much so that opponents have viewed their provisions with suspicion and sometimes downright antipathy. The Act of Synod nevertheless provided space for the development of an ecclesial life for those who could not accept the innovation, which has proved flexible, extendable and acceptable. Its quasi-legal status proved sufficiently robust to withstand the inevitable attacks on its integrity.

Wales, from the beginning, took a different course. Had it not been for a last-minute intervention by the then Bishop of Monmouth, Rowan Williams, there might have been no provision to speak of for opponents. And even then it was a 'grace and favour' provision with little or no legal backing. Barry Morgan is merely returning to the drawing board; and, incidentally, bringing Wales into line with other provinces of the Communion who have similarly made no formal concessions. What are we to make of all this?

The strong suit of the Morganites (and the Christina Rees tendency in England) is that to limit in any way the jurisdiction and competence of women bishops would be to deform episcopacy itself. A bishop is a bishop is a bishop, the argument goes. To create a cadre of second-class bishops whose writ runs only among those who like that sort of thing would be to compromise the Catholic credentials of the Church – and defeat the egalitarian objectives of the campaign.

Of course they have a point. No one, least of all opponents of women's ordination, wants to do permanent damage to Holy Orders. But that, of course, is what women's ordination has done. The recent words of the Holy Father at an ecumenical gathering in New York, come immediately to mind:

'Fundamental Christian beliefs and practices are sometimes changed within communities by so-called 'prophetic actions' that are based on a hermeneutic not always consonant with the datum of Scripture and Tradition. Communities consequently give up

the attempt to act as a unified body, choosing instead to function according to the idea of 'local options'. Somewhere in this process the need for diachronic *koinonia* – communion with the Church in every age – is lost, just at the time when the world is losing its bearings and needs a persuasive common witness to the saving power of the Gospel' [cf. Rom 1:18–23].

Provision – statutory provision – which safeguards the integrity of those who oppose these *soi-disant* prophetic actions, preserves rather than disturbs the traditional ecclesiology. It makes a return to the practice of the Undivided Church at some future time possible and achievable.

Archbishop Morgan is no doubt sincere in his single-minded pursuit of what he supposes to be just and right. But he and those who think like him need to ask themselves serious questions about the implications of their position. Are they really so sure that they are right – that they carry the whole burden of history; that this is the necessary action and this is the appropriate time? So much of their argument is contingent. It bases itself on the credibility in contemporary society that such a change promises. But these have more often than not been disappointed in the past. Who now remembers, without acute embarrassment, confident claims that a revised liturgy would draw in the disaffected and the unchurched?

Women's ordination, moreover, has incontrovertibly been shown to be linked to a wider agenda of 'inclusion', which will generate further inevitable divisions among Christians. Anglican Communion concerns about the blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of gay bishops can now be seen to be part and parcel of the ethical *a priori* stance which was first adopted by the movement for women priests.

Barry Morgan's heroic posturings look very different when they are seen as ensuring the exclusion from the Church of their birth and baptism of priests and laity whose strong suit (as they see it) is obedience to Scripture as the Christian centuries have unanimously interpreted it. How does he measure that loss (and both morally and numerically it is very great) against the putative gains which women bishops are supposed to bring with them?

Like George Carey before him, Morgan sees this change as essential, in our modern world, to enliven and defend the core doctrines of the faith. But when he has driven out those of quiet fidelity, where will the Archbishop find allies in the defence of what he himself holds to be essential? The advocates of simple legislation for women bishops with no legal provision for opponents certainly have directness and clarity on their side: everything else is admittedly cluttered and complicated. But blindness to the wider implications of such a policy raises another, more serious question. Do they, perhaps, hate opponents of women's ordination more than they want women bishops? **ND**

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# A late news item

*Relevant to this month's 'consecration' and some of the invitees to Lambeth*

**C**hurch vestment suppliers in the USA, UK, Australia, and New Zealand are vying to be first to produce a new line of clothing for women bishops. A person familiar with the situation, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said he thought the older women in particular did not want the flamboyant colours worn by the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church in the United States. 'They want lighter-weight and shorter mitres,' the source stated, 'and also lighter-weight copes – all in the traditional colours and symbols used by male bishops.'

When women were first ordained, Whipple's came out with tailored black suits with skirts for women that were eagerly purchased by women in the US. Eventually, most apparel suppliers offered both skirts and trousers with these suits. For women who preferred white shirts and black rabats, the suppliers offered custom tailoring, as women's chest sizes are so different from

men's. With this experience, the suppliers could then offer a range of sizes in purple rabats after women started to be ordained as bishops.

In discussing orders now being filled for those bishops who will be attending the Lambeth Conference, the source noted that

most orders were for 'no iron' shirts and summer suits. A well-placed source at the Anglican Communion Office said that a letter had been sent to all bishops giving the range of sizes of copes, mitres, and cassock albs that will be available for those participating in worship services.

**ND**



**O**ur home is surrounded by countryside. Over the past few years, the use of the land has changed dramatically. Until recently, most of the pasture had flocks of sheep and much of the arable land was 'set aside'. This spring there are no sheep and every field seems to be green with winter wheat. These changes reflect the changes in the global food economy.

A little corner of Lincolnshire is shaped by Australian drought and the collapse of the Russian sheepskin market. Our lives are globally and cosmically connected. If this is true for lamb chops, it must be true for our souls.

There is something pathetically parochial about much contemporary spirituality with its obsession with self-realization. Much of the current 'green spirituality' is at one level motivated by self-interest: NIMBY rules OK! There is a good argument for saying that our prayer life should begin on the other side of the world.

For some people, this happens in a spontaneous way through personal connection and relationships. If this is true for you, the burden of prayer that you carry is a blessing to you and you should engage with the task with all

## Ghostly Counsel

### Global prayer

*Andy Hawes is Warden of Edenham Regional Retreat House*

your gifts of body, mind and spirit. But for those of us whose life experience has rooted us to a particular place, I think we should as a matter of discipline look for ways to pray 'globally'.

An obvious first step is to use the media – printed or broadcast – as a prompt for prayer. Why not cut a picture out of the newspaper and place it in your Bible or prayer book? The news that disturbs you the most might be the situation that brings you to your knees. In other words, we ought to see our access to world news as an invitation to pray. This would be a graceful response to the often bizarre experience of the horror of current events being piped into the corner of our living rooms.

There are several good reasons for a deliberate and prayerful engagement with the wider world in this way. The first is that it must make a positive difference within the economy of God's grace for faith, hope and love to be put to work for his beloved creation.

The second is the converting power of intercession. If we engage in prayer with poverty or injustice, and if we enter into conflict with the confusion of good and evil, we will be drawn nearer to the heart of God's love and purpose. These seem to me to be compelling reasons to become global in our prayer time.

I recognize the genuine anxiety that once one picks up the world as a cause for prayer it might never end! I think that this anxiety is ill founded; if we ask the Lord to guide us in our prayer, he surely will. Experience shows that all intercession, if it is offered with total commitment, is transformed into another way of being in God. It is always the case that God takes our prayer and uses it to his own end. But perhaps this is most fruitful if we can begin in the best place. The best place is in bearing the burden of our neighbour in the global village.



# Refusing invitations

*The Rt Revd Graham James, Bishop of Norwich, warns that the refusal of some bishops to attend the Lambeth Conference signals a change in attitude which could cause damage to the unity of the church*

I have lost count of the number of people who have commiserated with me because I am going to the Lambeth Conference. They either assume it will be an ecclesiastical punch-up or imagine the company of over six hundred bishops must be a foretaste of everlasting punishment.

An overload of episcopal fellowship will be bearable because of the cultural and theological diversity among the bishops, let alone their varied personalities. My real regret is that the diversity will be diminished compared with the last two Lambeth Conferences, because there have been so many refusals of the Archbishop's invitation. While I wouldn't relish any sort of ecclesiastical punch-up, I will be disappointed if we don't discuss the issues which are currently so divisive. We need to do so in ways less oppressive than some of the plenary sessions last time, but it is difficult to have a debate if some of the main contenders are not represented.

## Reasons for refusal

Those bishops who refuse to come stand in a longer tradition than they may realize. Archbishop Longley invited 151 bishops to the first Lambeth Conference in 1867. (He even included all retired bishops: we would need an extra university campus if that was tried again.) In the event 76 bishops turned up, almost exactly half those who were invited. This time the proportion will be a good deal higher.

Back in 1867 some bishops could not come because of illness, or distance, but quite a few, the Archbishop of York among them, refused on principle. They feared the authority of this new conference. Wouldn't it inevitably weaken the established position of the Church of England by subjecting it to colonial and foreign influence? So they stayed away, despite Longley's assurance that 'such a meeting...would not be competent to make declarations or lay down definitions on points of doctrine'.

Bishops will stay away from this year's Lambeth Conference for the opposite reason given by the original refuseniks. They think the Lambeth Conference has too little authority. They also believe its standing has been fatally weakened by the way in which Resolution 1.10 from the

last conference has not been obeyed in some parts of the Anglican Communion. There seems to be less concern over the failure of the Communion to implement and obey many other resolutions over the years. But they ask, not unreasonably, what is the point in passing Resolutions if nothing is resolved? Doesn't this simply reveal a vacuum of authority at the heart of Anglicanism?

## A worrying development

It is intriguing that the Lambeth bishops have, from the beginning, produced a stream of resolutions, reports and pastoral letters. The Colenso affair (the hot topic at the first conference), evolution, birth control, the South India scheme or the ordination of women: there has always been some Communion-breaking issue which has tested episcopal unity and also spawned lengthy pronouncements. The current convulsion over sexuality doesn't seem at first sight so very different.

But it has introduced a new, if not entirely unprecedented, factor. The Dean of Sydney, the Very Reverend Phillip Jensen, was recently reported as saying that the problem with the Lambeth Conference was the attendance of bishops who had consecrated Bishop Gene Robinson (who has not received an invitation himself). Those who consecrated him, argued Dean Jensen, were 'false teachers who have acted in a way which makes fellowship with them impossible'. So it seems you cannot even confer, let alone worship, with those whom you believe have led the Church into error.

I am glad the same stance was not taken by the vast majority of English Anglicans when the decision was made to ordain women to the priesthood. The Act of Synod on episcopal ministry, as well as the provisions within the Measure itself, were grounded in a desire on both sides of that issue to remain in fellowship with each other despite profound differences. If things had been different, then I don't suppose I would even be writing this article. If progress is slow on the ordination of women to the episcopate, it is the desire to remain in fellowship and with as much sacramental unity as possible which makes the task of devising legislation exacting.


Perhaps in these matters we need to

renew our acquaintance with the Donatists. The parallels are inexact, though Dean Jensen's words do carry some echoes of those fourth-century schismatics who thought they were more faithful to the Gospel than anyone else. The origins of the Donatist controversy centred on the consecration of Caecilian as Bishop of Carthage around 311. The claim, especially of bishops in Numidia, was that the consecrators included those who had betrayed the Christian faith in the Diocletian persecution and so were false teachers.

## Lessons from the past

As time went on, the Donatists exploited economic unrest in North Africa, and consequent resentment of Rome as an imperial power and ecclesiastical authority, to add fervour to their cause. More locally, Numidia had no fondness for Carthage. In the current controversies within our own Anglican Communion, resentment of American hegemony and Western cultural imperialism is frequently exploited too.

St Augustine cut the branch on which the Donatists sat by stressing that the unworthiness of the minister did not effect the validity of the sacrament, a theological position so central to Anglicanism that it found its way into the Thirty-Nine Articles. But the long-lasting nature of the Donatist controversy weakened severely the North African Church. The Donatists only disappeared when almost the whole of the North African church was wiped out by Muslim conquest in the seventh century. If parallel it is, it is a grim one.

Back in the 1860s, Archbishop Longley recognized the imperfections of Anglican ecclesiology but placed considerable faith in the determination of this developing worldwide Communion to remain in fellowship. He believed that conferring with one another was a way to unity. In his day, St Augustine challenged the Donatists to public debate about that theological imperative derived from Christ himself – the unity of the Church. They were not responsive. I fear that those who have refused the Archbishop's invitation to this Lambeth Conference will damage the unity of the church and the mission of Christ in our own time more than they seem to know. 

# Christianity Lite

*Those who regard Christianity as 'simple' are subscribing to a watered-down and insipid version of the real thing.*

**Digby Anderson** calls for a return to full-bodied religion

**O**ne prominent supermarket has threatened that it will soon be selling wine with less alcohol. One may guess that it will be called 'new' and 'light' – or rather, 'lite'. Lite products are growing in number. Supermarkets offer lite biscuits, lite olive oil, lite cigarettes, lite beer, lite fizzy drinks and lite bread. Restaurants and airlines offer lite menus.

The modern church has yet to use the term, but the religion it offers and the religion that many of its members espouse might well be called lite. Sometimes 'lite' means next to nothing. When it does mean something, it is that these lite products all have something missing. It may be several things: Cola without sugar and without caffeine; biscuits with less sugar and fat. With lite goods, you pay more for less. The effect on taste is usually insipidity, weakness, less Oomph. Thus lite religion is religion with the best bits removed and a lot of water added.

## Two forms of religion

A proper religion, a full-bodied religion, has depth. The church member, feels his faith deeply. But proper religion also has width. The sociologists distinguish between thick and thin religions. A pukka religion is thick, wide. It affects all aspects of the believer's life. It may prescribe rules of diet (abstinence, fasting and feasting) or dress (veils and soutanes), determine forms of special sacred music (plain song) or painting (iconography). It will certainly have a special holy language – Latin, Old Slavonic, seventeenth-century English. It will provide a specific religious outlook on work and social order so that what the religious person does and those he does it with are seen by him to be very different activities and people from the 'same' activities and people viewed by the non-religious person. Though subjective 'views' are part of this, the religious person's world is objectively different. Centrally the religion will determine forms of family relations and prohibit various sexual behaviours such as polygamy and homosexuality.

To see the sheer width of full-bodied religion, consider its opposite. It has been alleged that today the life of the typical, white, American Roman Catholic, apart

from one hour at Mass on Sunday, is no different from that of his non-Catholic countrymen. Conventional indices seem to show that he does the same jobs as them with the same work ethic, divorces as they do, has the same number of children (and, implicitly, uses the same contraception), eats the same burgers and drinks the same drinks; indeed worships the same secular gods as they do.

## Far from simple

This thin religion does not call itself thin. Instead it appeals to another term, simplicity. 'You know', it folksily proclaims, smiling in a friendly fashion, 'I think Christianity is really a very simple religion. When you remove the trappings, all you really have to do is love God and

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## the proof of loving God is keeping his commandments, and they are neither simple nor narrow

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your neighbour. That about sums it up.' Indeed, and its founder said that much the same thing was the sum of the law. But he said lots of other things too, and they explain what this sum means. The proof of loving God is keeping his commandments, and they are neither simple nor narrow. They will affect every part of your life. He devoted the evening before his death to establishing and empowering his Church. Those who love God will submit themselves to the rules and customs of this Church, his continuing presence on earth. This Church used to teach that the faith is rich. St Ephraem talked of it brimming over. While entry into it is a simple matter, growing in it thereafter is to discover a whole world. It is a journey from baptism to heaven, learning more, and subjecting more and more aspects of life to the Christian way as each year passes – the reverse of simple religion.

The lite church and the lite Christian may not say so, but that friendly smile says for them that they believe their simple religion to be a happy one, a sunny

one. Full-bodied religion is a vale of tears. Of course, Christians have the joy of the Incarnation and resurrection, the comfort that God loves them, the means of grace and the hope of glory and everlasting felicity. But when they look at themselves, they know that it was while they were yet sinners that God loved them, that they crucified the God who saved them and still do so. Their sin means that despite his sacramental presence, they are parted from him. From baptism they live with one foot in this world, one in the next. And this world is fallen. We have to live out our lives here but it is not our home. We do not belong here. We are exiles. Our true native land is elsewhere. Grins are out of place.

## Becoming full members

The lite Christian has a lite and simple theology. He thinks that God is his friend. So he is, but he is also God, the Almighty, the Creator of the world, all holy, who will come to judge the world by fire. The full-bodied Christian, because he knows this, when he enters a church with the sacramental presence, recognizes it as a terrible place, its doors as the gates of heaven. He approaches the altar rail with fear and trembling lest he eat and drink condemnation. The Lite Christian treats church much as he does his friend's house. He makes himself at home, relaxes, chats to his companions, makes no preparation for communion, grabs the host in his hand and eats it much as he would one of his lite biscuits at home.

Those who talk of the need for mission and evangelization today think largely of numbers; they look for more members – quantity. But the matter of quality is an even more important mission. Its task is to help those already in the Church to grow into full members, to learn full-bodied religion. It may also be that quality is the key to the quantity problem. Those who have travelled in lands where the great faiths compete may see an interesting phenomenon. In India, for example, there are several religions such as Hinduism which are unmistakably full-bodied and 'thick'. All too often the Christianity on offer (the Orthodox excepted) is thin. Why would anyone looking to save his soul chose the thin, diluted, lite option, when he can have what looks like the real McCoy? **ND**



# Continents and isles

*As a recently ordained priest, **Lee Kenyon** is aware of the temptation of indulging in isolation, and explains why and how the Church of England should avoid becoming isolated from the rest of the Church*

**A**s a 29-year-old priest – ‘hands still dripping with the oil of chrism’ (to quote an older priest friend) – the newness of ordained life within the Church of England brings many temptations to indulgence. Aside from (rightly) indulging in the joys of celebrating the life of God’s Word and Sacraments with his people, there is the temptation to indulge in a splendid isolation.

Many still fall into the trap of believing that the Church of England is the only institution that matters and that Synod somehow has the authority to redraw the lines of our theological and doctrinal inheritance. It is a fallacy which has its roots in a misunderstanding of the priesthood as something deserved and owned by the individual.

This view detaches the priest, turning his work into a private pursuit, forcing him to live a life between the vicarage and the church, blind to the outside Church and world, adrift and without adequate guidance or fellowship, and free to innovate according to his own understanding and interpretation of scripture, tradition and morality. This is certainly where the Church of England as a whole seems to have been since 1992.

## Wisdom of the ages

In my own ministry, this temptation to indulge in isolationism manifests itself most rudely when I attend training conferences for the newly-ordained. Here, as in other places, fractured Anglicanism gathers and ‘bonds’ with one another, sitting around tables and discussing *ad nauseum* ourselves and what we are doing, what our parishes are like, and what bits of gossip we know about so-and-so in the diocese, usually between PowerPoint presentations on topics deemed relevant to parish ministry: the environment, alternative spiritualities, race, etc.

I know these things have value, but, without wanting to seem a philistine, our priestly formation could be better spent examining doctrine, canon law, ecclesiology and other areas which, if taught in a spirit faithful to Christian tradition, have the potential to free us from the cold individualism of modern Anglicanism. Exposure to the warmth of the wisdom of the ages can only give us a more catholic approach to ministry and ecumenism, saving us, spiritually at least, from being divorced from the rest of Christendom.

## Abandoning its heritage

At my ordination, I was called to ‘the office of priest in the Church of God’. Yes, as a priest *within* that part of it called the Church of England which still has the good sense to recognize, at least in its *Declaration of Assent*, that it is ‘part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church’, and not a Church in isolation. Yet a consideration of the times is sobering. To the man on the street and in the pew, the Church of England might seem more concerned with her own internal wrangling than with the Gospel. Bit by bit the Church is being pushed – deliberately, I believe – further away from her claims to catholicity in doctrine and in practice, and don’t our Roman Catholic and Orthodox brethren know it well?

I am who I am because I try to be faithful to my calling and to my ordination vows made to God in Christ and to his Gospel. This is what makes me a traditionalist. It is not complicated. I don’t seek to pursue my own agenda in matters of faith and morals and I try to live with one eye on the domestic – on my particular ministry in the parish – and one eye on the universal – on what is going on in the Church of God as a whole, within and without the Anglican Communion. And I ask myself: what am I doing to further the cause for unity and truth in both of these? If the Church of England continues to ignore the moral and spiritual decay in society and in the Church, as it abandons its Catholic heritage in exchange for theological innovation, it will be mired in its isolation in ever-decreasing numbers. And it will die.

## Global concerns

This, I believe, is why those of us who seek to maintain the faith need to keep an eye on global Anglicanism, particularly in North America. As I write, parishes and dioceses across the

United States are embroiled in bitter legal disputes over property: the messy fall-out of the decline of the once-great Episcopal Church into an ever more progressive and heterodox mindset. Litigation is the new orthodoxy of Mrs Jefferts Schori and her like-minded bishops as they set about undoing the faith. Those who have kept their ordination vows are now finding them sorely tested by those who have

already abandoned theirs (and by those who never had them to keep!). The situation in the Diocese of San Joaquin – with the recent deposition of its orthodox bishop – is a microcosm of a state of affairs which has the potential to become the norm in the Church of England within a short space of time.

The failure of liberal Episcopalians to be liberal enough to accept those who seek to do as they have always done is a scandal. Yet the pursuit of splendid isolationism, seen in the Episcopal Church since the 1960s, has become infectiously appetising for many in the Church of England since 1992. How much longer can we expect our bishops and priests to abstain from the temptation to indulge?

The fellowship I find within the Catholic Societies reminds me of the unity to which I am called as a priest. My participation in them keeps me from the temptation to live my priesthood cut off from the rest of what the Church around the world and in other communions is doing.

The real sadness is that this sort of fraternity, which ought to be normative for Anglicans, is enjoyed by few and regarded with suspicion by many. We who enjoy the richness of Catholic faith and worship found within our Catholic Societies have a real task to promote the uniqueness of a way of life and practice which is genuinely Anglican.

The road ahead is uncertain and our freedom as traditionalists will continue to be threatened, as events in The Episcopal Church demonstrate. Yet despite all this, I love being a priest and doing what God has called me to do and, for all its errors, I love the Church – local and universal – and I hope to be here still in forty years’ time, with the oil of chrism as fresh as ever. **ND**

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**I try to live with one eye  
on the domestic and  
one eye on the universal**

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# Gamaliel principle

*As the debate on women bishops returns to the church arena  
**Owen Higgs** outlines how existing legislation enacted by Synod  
should be understood, so that effective progress can be made*

**D**ear Reader, you have the advantage, for it is likely that by the time you are reading these words the Manchester Group will have published its report on how the Church of England might proceed to ordain women to the episcopate. But in case the fog of ecclesiastical disputation has fallen over the report, **NEW DIRECTIONS** offers a compass with which to navigate the debate. That compass is drawn from the principles of 1992 Act of Synod which provided for the ordination of women to the priesthood.

The principles set out in the Act are in summary, that

1. Women should be ordained to the priesthood.
2. The bishop is ordinary of his diocese.
3. It is desirable that
  - a) all concerned should endeavour to ensure that (i) discernment of the rightness or otherwise of the decision to ordain women to the priesthood should be as open a process as possible; (ii) the highest possible degree of communion should be maintained within each diocese; (iii) the integrity of differing beliefs and positions concerning the ordination of women to the priesthood should be mutually recognized and respected.
  - b) there be practical pastoral arrangements in each diocese to reflect this.

## Underlying principles

The reasons why these principles were adopted show their continuing relevance. One reason was politics. Without some provision, it is unlikely that the legislation would have met the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament's concerns for the rights and interests of those who opposed the legislation.

However, there were also deeper principles at stake, as brought out by Dr John Habgood in an article written for **ND** [March 2004] in which he noted:

'No time limit was set on the Act, and those of us who promoted it were relying on the Gamaliel principle [Acts 5.38–9], whereby in due course it should become plain to all those open to God's guidance, when the time has come that it is no longer needed. We assumed that members of the Church of England would be open-minded enough, and generous enough, to learn from each other's experience whether this new ministry is

clearly being blessed by God or not' [3a.i in the above summary of the Act].

Sadly, in some people's minds the Gamaliel principle never seems to have been given a chance. Supporters of a one clause Measure which would leave no provision for their opponents have often argued that everybody knew the Act of Synod had only a short life. The submissions to Parliament by some of the Church's most senior figures, and Dr Habgood's article, suggest otherwise.

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## perhaps we should ask whether women's ordination achieved what its supporters expected

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General Synod has not actually asked that Gamaliel question: does experience show this innovation was correct? For many people the answer is obvious, yet that is far from so. It would take more space than this short article to do the question justice, but there seems to have been little serious thought given to what might be the marks of a blessed innovation. Is it just (!) a matter of goodness as people suggest when say the clergywoman next door has done a lot of good, so it must be all right? But what if good has also come from my neighbour the imam – and bad and good has come from our male Rural Dean? Or perhaps we should ask whether women's ordination has achieved what its supporters expected? If it has, why do fewer people come to church today compared to 1992?

So if more work needs to be done if the Church is to be faithful to the Gamaliel principle, what should we expect as signs of what Dr Habgood called 'continuing open-mindedness and generosity'? The fact that this report was commissioned by General Synod is a sign of generosity and should be welcomed as such. But what in the content of the report would show consistency between the Act and the report? Not theological or ecclesiological tidiness. The Gamaliel principle implies that in the discernment of truth, the testing of an innovation over time and the unity of the Church are at least as important as logical consistency.

So we should not require the Manchester Group to deliver theological purity. However, there are expectations which are surely legitimate: firstly, that women be ordained to the episcopate (for the avoidance of doubt, FiF thinks it is a mistake to do so but a Church which ordains women to the priesthood should in justice ordain them to the episcopate); secondly, that the bishop remain the ordinary of his diocese – how that diocese might be defined and how that jurisdiction be exercised is another matter; and thirdly, that there should be practical pastoral arrangements so that the integrity of the differing beliefs be mutually recognized and respected.

## Showing generosity

That third point is the key issue. The 1992 Act declared immediately after its statement of principles that there should be no discrimination against candidates for ordination or senior office. In many dioceses that declaration is ignored. However, the Act then provided for the 'flying bishops' and resolution parishes, and it is these which have become the practical expression of the Act's generosity.

So how the report deals with flying bishops and resolution parishes shows what consistency there is with the Act. The status of these bishops and parishes will be changed when women become bishops, because the ordination of women to the episcopate widens the sphere in which women have authority in the Church, in particular by giving women the authority to consecrate, ordain and discipline. If the principles of the Act are to be honoured, new space needs to be created for those who cannot accept this. Such a new space requires the continuation of episcopal oversight, broadened to take account of these new circumstances. It would continue to allow parishes to move to a different episcopal oversight as part of the process of discernment [3a.i] and would avoid, wherever possible, separate organization, e.g. of stipends [3a.ii]. It would also give PEVs rights which women bishops will have – the rights to choose men for ordination and to ordain them [3a.iii], to make appointments and to exercise discipline. To do this would show the open-mindedness and generosity, and faithfulness to solemn undertakings of a great and living Church. **ND**



# devotional

## St Ambrose on Corpus Christi

*St Ambrose, who may well be the first to refer to the Eucharistic Mystery as the 'Mass', has left us two great works that deal with the Eucharist: Of Sacraments and Of Mysteries, both of them published around 300AD. The following selections are taken from Of Mysteries.*

### Image and reality

Now consider which is more excellent, the bread of angels [i.e. the manna] or the Flesh of Christ which is indeed the Body of life. That manna was from heaven; this is from above the heavens. The former was from heaven, the latter from the Lord of the heavens; the former was subject to corruption if it was preserved for a second day, the latter foreign to all corruption so that whoever shall have piously tasted it will not be able to experience corruption.

For the people of Israel water flowed from the rock; for you Blood flows from Christ. The water satisfied them for a while; the Blood washes you for eternity. The Jew drinks and is thirsty again; when you drink you will not be able to thirst. The former was given as an image; the latter is given as the reality.

If that which you marvel at is an image, how much greater is the reality whose image you marvel at? Listen and learn that what was done for the Fathers was an image: 'They drank', he says, 'from the rock following them, and the Rock was Christ; but with many of them God was not pleased, for they were laid low in the

desert. These things moreover were done as a type for us' [1 Cor. 10.4–6]. You have come to know the more excellent things, for the light is more excellent than the shade, reality more excellent than image, the Body of the Giver more excellent than the manna from heaven.

### Divine consecration

Perhaps you will say, 'What I see is different from what you speak of; how is it that you assert that I receive the Body of Christ?' And so it still remains for us to prove this. And thus we use manifold examples so that we may prove that this is not what nature formed but what the blessing consecrated, and that there is greater power in the blessing than in nature, because by the blessing nature itself is changed.

We note, therefore, that grace is more powerful than nature, even when we are only speaking of the grace that comes from the blessing of a prophet. But if a human blessing had such power so as to be able to change nature, what do we say about the divine Consecration itself in which the very words of Our Lord and Saviour are at work? For that Sacrament which you receive is brought about by the word of Christ.

If the word of Elijah had such power as to call down fire from heaven, will not the word of Christ have the power to change the nature of the elements? You have read about the creation of the whole world: 'He spoke and they were made; he gave a command and they were created' [Ps. 33.9]. Therefore can not the word of Christ, which was able to create out of nothing that which did not exist, change those things that do exist into that which they were not? To create new things is no lesser thing than to change natures. **ND**



*"I think she had a better invitation."*

## Cheerful givers

**S**arah is a woman that more are talking about. Not, however, because of another slimming product launch by 'Fergie'. No, this Sarah is one of the new generation of successful young women who are **'Single and Rich and Happy'**; highly paid professionals with active social lives like the 'Sex in the City' girls, to quote an explanation of the acronym.

Once rich single women were often ecclesiastical benefactors, founding or beautifying churches and religious houses, and, in one case, Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, establishing a denomination.

Today with church attendances falling and with rich folk of either sex being less likely to support religion, the ordinary churchgoer has to dig deeper in wallets or purses.

Many Anglicans have increased their giving (though over-large central bureaucracies seem to take a disproportionate share of the pounds in the plate) but some congregations still contain Alices – 'A little in the collection each Sunday' or Freds – 'Fairly regularly evades donating.'

The most generous givers are often found in Protestant groups like community churches where tithing is frequently urged. They may be following Wesley's maxim 'Earn all you can; save all you can; give all you can' or have pastors who imitate the Scots Wee Free minister who was heard to say 'I'm no standing here to give thanks for a plate of thruppences.'

However, thrift can go too far. I recall a Sixties Battersea church with a devoted parishioner who saved milk bottle tops for eventual sale. Where she stored them puzzled us until the church was engulfed in an aroma that resisted the most vigorous censings and suggested that a maker of ripe French cheeses had set up business nearby. The bouquet, and her store, was eventually tracked down to a long-forgotten cupboard in the tower and we breathed again.

Long before Sarahs sashayed on the scene Paul wrote that 'The Lord loves a cheerful giver.'

Time then for any Alices and Freds in our congregations to join Paul's cheerful company; but go easy on the milk bottle tops.

*Alan Edwards*

# Faith and history

The concept of salvation history encompasses biblical interpretation

Patrick Henry Reardon is a Senior Editor of Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity

**T**he Bible not only records history; it also creates history. By this I mean that the Bible, as written down, read and proclaimed in the ongoing community of faith (the Church of both Testaments), influences and directs the course of history. We ourselves are part of the history created by holy Scripture. We are the *qahal*, the *ecclesia*, the gathering of those who in the Holy Spirit are assembled to attend to God's Word. In the history that it records, the Bible itself prolongs that history in those who receive it in faith.

This unified history, comprised of what the Bible records and what the Bible creates, is a single, living, ongoing reality, in which there is a continuity between the words of holy Scripture and the Church's understanding of those words. If there were to be a break between the Bible and its interpretation, that continuity would be lost. There would be a disruption in Salvation History. This is the tragedy known as 'heresy'.

## Inner sense of Scripture

The correct understanding of holy Scripture includes what some of the Church Fathers called *theoria*, meaning the spiritual discernment of the inner meaning of the Bible through the lens of Christ. This inner sense of Scripture is not abstract; it pertains to one's personal life in Christ. The Bible becomes the mirror in which we see our true faces [James 1.23]. It is not only an understanding of the Bible, but also an understanding of ourselves in relation to God. It entails the reading of the Bible as a path of self-knowledge and growth in the Holy Spirit.

*Theoria* includes the perception of historical analogies between our own lives and the history recorded in God's Word. What in the Bible is called *theoria* is in our souls called the image of God. Through the contemplation of these analogies, we understand our own life and grasp both what God is doing in those lives and

also what we ourselves are supposed to do. In these perceptions the past of the Bible is rendered effective in the life of the Christian, because both are parts of a single history.

The Bible is not a reservoir of truths that can be removed from an historical shape. Understanding of the Bible must not become something abstracted from the historical movement of the Bible itself. Its continuous line, which records history, is recorded within history, and gives form and shape to future history.

## Importance of historical context

What, then, should be said about dogmatic pronouncements by which the Church seems to 'fix' doctrine, to remove biblical teaching from its historical context? First, such dogmatic pronouncements, far from being an abstraction from history, also take place within history. Therefore, they 'fix' doctrine only in the sense that divine revelation itself 'fixes' doctrine. That is, they testify to the fullness of wisdom and knowledge that abide in the Word incarnate [Col. 1.19; 2.3, 9].

Second, such dogmatic pronouncements, even when they are formulated in a positive way, tend essentially to serve a negative purpose. They are 'definitions' in the sense of setting limits (*fines*), lines to exclude heresy. They do not 'clarify' divine revelation by adding extra light, as it were, to what is already the fullness of light.

Finally, there can be no real understanding of the Bible in the present without an understanding of the Bible in the past, both the past as recorded in the Bible itself and the past in the sense of the Church's own historical understanding of the Sacred Text. The attempt to come to holy Scripture outside of that long historical context is not only presumptuous; it also separates the reader from the Bible's own history. This can be hard work, but in the study of the Bible there is no substitute for the knowledge of history. **ND**

## Sacred vision

**S**ebastiano took the painterly skills of the Venetians to Rome where he met the Florentine tradition of *disegno*, and in particular the style of Michelangelo. This *Pieta*, perhaps his greatest work, is a study in contrasts. Within an isosceles triangle, at the apex of which is the Paschal full moon, are the figures of the dead Christ and his mother.

Outside the triangle rages a tempest worthy of Giorgione, rich in colour and incident. Within it Mary is monumental – more a fresco or a sculpture than an oil painting. The pose is reminiscent of one of the Sistine chapel Sibyls. The lower part of her body is composed of planes of luminous blue.

Like the Vatican *Pieta* of Michelangelo the folds of her dress make a capacious knee. But the body of Jesus is not placed there. He lies, visually separated from her, on a white *sudarium* at her feet. His perfect Apollonian

body is drawn with Florentine precision, but rendered in all the painterly richness of oils. It has a deathly pallor; and yet in



its physical perfection seems to be quietly awaiting a bodily resurrection.

The painting is large – in the recent exhibition in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome it dominated the room – as it must have been intended to dominate the funerary chapel in Viterbo for which it was commissioned.

Sebastiano, by breaking the conventions of such pictures – both the anguished emotionalism of the Northern Renaissance and the statuesque calm of the Italian tradition – has created an image both memorable and puzzling. All the emotion has been transferred to the natural world around them. The figures of the Mother of God and her dead Son inhabit a timeless calm.

Mark Stevens



# Easter triumph

**Arthur Middleton** looks at the teaching of two bishops on the subject of 'Holy Dying' and is reassured by the unity of theological outlook

It is often said that the Victorians were obsessed with death but our present age is obsessed with sex. The Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter Sermon speaks to a nation where people have lost or never had any consciousness of regular Christian worship and so have deprived themselves of the Church's 'ghostly counsel for their emergent needs', either from Scriptural reading, Sacrament, Pulpit or from a spiritual guide.

The Archbishop speaks of how the New Testament and the Church understand death: '...the whole idea of a battle between life and death in the events of Christ's death and resurrection doesn't suggest an event that is 'nothing at all'. Death takes quite a bit of overcoming... Easter may tell us that death is conquered, but it doesn't tell us that there was never any contest'.

We are warned not to try avoiding it or to deny its seriousness, but to keep it in remembrance, 'as the tradition of the Church proposes that you think daily about death and prepare for it, it isn't being morbid but realistic: get used to it and learn to live with the fear.' Death can destroy anything in our universe – but not God. So to die is to fall into the hands of the living God.

Keeping death in daily remembrance is a source of life and hope that commends ourselves every day into God's hands. What follows death is not just a continuation of our present life in slightly different circumstances but a new world. 'Yet all that God has seen and worked with in this life is brought into his presence once more and he renews his relationship with it all, spirit and body.'

## Cultural denial

Our culture finds the thought of death too painful to manage and searches for security in an acquisitive way of investment in what will eventually die. It is the 'mark of an inner deadness'. Nations will be eclipsed as resources of energy, power and land expire. For individuals, material things cannot outlive their 'sell-by date'. 'We shan't really die' is a cry from individuals who cannot contemplate an end to our acquiring, and we as a culture cannot imagine that this civilization, like all others, will collapse. So the Church says: 'We shall die, we shall have

no choice but to let go of all we cling to, but God remains. God's unshakeable love is untouched by death. He and he alone is free to make us afresh, to re-establish the world on the far side of every catastrophe.'

As people of faith, we must prepare for death by daily seeking to let go of all that we cling to, so that our naked souls are left face to face with the creating God. If we are prepared to accept in trust what Jesus proclaims, we can ask God for courage to embark on this path. We do not hope for survival but for re-creation – because God is who he is, who he has shown himself to be in Jesus Christ.

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The Church must not only challenge human reluctance to accept death, but also challenge any human acceptance of death without hope, of death as the end of all meaning. Death is real; death is overcome. Mortality is a fundamental fact of being human. Equally, we are creatures made to hear the call of God, a call that no power in heaven or earth can silence. This conviction is the foundation at the heart of our Easter hope. 'The Gospel,' insists Dr Williams, 'by insisting on both our limits and our eternal hope in God, safeguards equally the humility and realism we need for mature human life and the sense of a glory embodied in our mortality because it has been touched by God.'

## Holy dying

In 1650–51, Jeremy Taylor published his books *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* which became one volume. His reason for such writing was 'the degraded state of the Church of England and the disturbance of all religious life' and 'the dispersal of the duly ordained ministers of religion'. In this state of the Church of England where the Prayer Book was forbidden in the celebration of feasts like Christ-


mas, churchpeople had been deprived of their liturgical services. This government prohibition and the practical extinction of the clergy made it impossible for the laity to obtain the Church's ghostly counsel, either publicly or through a spiritual guide.

The short book *Holy Dying* was written for Lady Carberry, whose confidant Taylor was, but she died before it was complete. When she first felt the approach of death, she was fearful, but as the thought lingered with her she grew from fear to consent and acceptance and expectation of it, as Taylor had counselled her. His own wife died shortly afterwards, so as he wrote his own personal experience of sickness and death was in his mind, as were the deaths of his children.

## Transitory life

His first aim is to convince healthy people that sickness and death are subjects they ought to think about and not leave only until it is unavoidable. So in the Dedication he advises that in contemplating death the first thoughts should be of the 'change of a greater beauty' that 'calls you to dress your soul for that change which shall mingle your bones with that beloved dust, and carry your Soul to the same quire, where you may both sit and sing for ever.'

The book's five chapters contain, first, a general preparation towards a holy and blessed death, followed by practical application as an exercise. The temptations brought by sickness are listed, with their remedies and the practice of graces a sick person may practice alone. Finally there is advice for the clergy ministering to the sick and dying.

His aim was to raise people's awareness that in the transitoriness of life 'we must look elsewhere for an abiding city, a place in another country to fix our house in, whose walls and foundation is God, where we must find rest or else be restless for ever'. Whatever ease we have here is soon changed into sadness. Where there is sorrow or an end to joy, there can be no true felicity. 'We must carry our affections to the mansions prepared for us above, where eternity is the measure, felicity is the state, the angels are the company, the Lamb is the light and God is the portion and inheritance.' 

## GAFCON the Golden

The Dean of Southwark, our old friend the Very Revd Colin Slee, has offended countless readers of the *Daily Telegraph* – to say nothing of the Prime Minister, who included it in his selection for *Desert Island Discs* – by banning William Blake's popular hymn *Jerusalem* 'because the words do not praise God and are too nationalistic', according to 'senior clergy' at Southwark Cathedral (whoever they might be). 30DAYS is not convinced; much more likely, surely, that it was a cunning subliminal attack on GAFCON – the Global Anglican Future event taking place in Jerusalem in June. We confidently predict that *Jerusalem the Golden, Jerusalem my happy home, Jerusalem! high tower thy glorious walls, Jerusalem that place divine and Jerusalem, Jerusalem, enthroned once on high* will all shortly suffer the same ignominious fate.

## Unmoving news

Mind you, perhaps Dean Slee was just feeling particularly grumpy. *The Guardian* reports that he was recently defeated in the election of the next Bishop of Christchurch, New Zealand. Quite why he would want to swap life on the South Bank for life on the South Island is something of a mystery, unless of course the excitement of working with Tom Butler has finally taken its toll.

## Moving news

Being the Dean of a Cathedral is nice work if you can get it, though, and especially if your name is Robert Taylor, until recently Dean of St Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Seattle. Taylor, the first openly gay Dean of an Episcopal cathedral, said in a letter to the congregation that he was resigning because he and the vestry diverged in their visions for the future of St Mark's and because there was a loss of trust between them – although he declined to say what the differing visions were. His resignation came after more than a year of turmoil at the cathedral and after an outside consultant issued a report outlining problems with church leadership both on the part of the dean and the vestry. After eight years in office, moving on must have come as something of a blow to the erstwhile Dean, but no doubt his golden handshake of \$313,333 (that's just over £150,000 in real money) helped him swallow the bad news.

## Queer formation

Now that Robert Taylor has time on his hands, perhaps he'd like to indulge himself in a little further education. The Episcopal Divinity School, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is offering the following course from June:

**T3150 Queer Incarnation:** *The incarnation is sometimes presented as an arithmetic problem: What do you get when you add some divinity to a human body? But thinking about incarnation has to start much further back, in the realization that accounts of Jesus show us how little we understand about either divinity or bodies, much less about how bodies can show, act, and become divine. Just here and theology of the incarnation can learn from works of queer theory and the writings of queer thinkers. The body of Jesus – despised, de-sexed, and yet miraculously distributed – invites us to an exchange of bodies along the margins of human power and its certainties. We will think about the queerness of Jesus' body with the help of some traditional texts on incarnation and passion (Athanasius, Bonaventure, Aquinas, Julian) and much more recent work on gender performance, bodily transition or transformation, and the rituals of camp.*

EDS describes itself as 'A seminary for the Episcopal Church, USA...grounded in the Anglican tradition'. And you wonder why they elected that woman as Presiding Bishop?

## Panic over!

Talking of woman bishops, we ought not to let the announcement of Australia's first woman bishop pass without expressing our appreciation to the lucky lady, Archdeacon Kay Goldsworthy, for clearing something up for us once and for all. Interviewed shortly after her appointment, Mrs Goldsworthy opined 'Women were first made bishops over 20 years ago in the Anglican Communion and the communion has continued to work.' And there were we, and, at a guess, the Archbishop of Canterbury, thinking that the whole edifice was crumbling around us!

## Sob story

Many thanks to an eagle-eyed reader of the *Western Mail* for drawing our attention to the *real* reason the women bishops bill was defeated in Wales. Canon Mary Stallard, chaplain to the Bishop of St Asaph and 'a leading supporter of women bishops', revealed the opponents'

secret weapon in last month's Governing Body debate: *Miss Stallard said she thought speeches in which male clergy described their fears for the future may have been crucial in stopping the plans being approved. She said, 'I think people respond very differently to men expressing unhappiness at doubts and upsets than women. Men have much greater access to playing on people's heartstrings and I think we saw a really good example of that today.'* Now, if only the Catholic Group can be persuaded to do a Hillary Clinton and turn on the waterworks, a new province for England will be in the bag!

## You couldn't make it up

Once they've bagged up the new province, Frs Killwick, Houlding, Baker and the rest will need to look their best for the television cameras and, let's face it, none of us looks our best after a good long weep. Luckily, help is at hand at <<http://beautytipsforministers.com>> – 'Because you're in the public eye, and God knows you need to look good'. The work of a smiley lady calling herself PeaceBang, the site sets out its stall in terms that are clear, concise and, well, risible:

*PeaceBang thinks of herself as the stage mother to the American clergy, and she wants ALL her babies to be stars! This is the gospel of Beauty Tips For Ministers: if clergy people believe that religious life is vital, relevant and beautiful, they should look the part. PeaceBang is fond of saying that if we do not project an image intentionally, we will project one unconsciously. She believes that God has made a good gift in you, and you don't bring an unwrapped gift to God's party. This blog is for the encouragement of self-care, the sharing of tips, and the celebration of shoes, lip gloss, fragranced shaving cream, and all of the other accoutrements of vanity which have hitherto been considered wholly unholy, and therefore generally discussed only in hushed whispers among the servants of the LORD. In this space, we are free to remember that although we work from our hearts and our souls, we are also incarnate beings, and that our appearance does matter. It is also written with the intention of bringing a little bit of joy and laughter into your life. A kiss of peace to you, and thanks for being here.*

Copy for 30 DAYS should reach FiF office by the 10th day of the month:  
[30days@forwardinfaith.com](mailto:30days@forwardinfaith.com)



# Pension reactions

**George Austin** looks again at current developments in clergy pensions and the reactions to his earlier comments upon the changes that are being planned

**N**EW DIRECTIONS articles do not, I find, produce much response, save from the occasional aggrieved bishop – even though many bishops would claim not to read such a decadent journal. Not so when I wrote about the new pension proposals. A similar piece for the Retired Clergy Association newsletter even gained a response from the Secretary and Chief Executive of the Pensions Board itself.

In it he clarified some of the issues which had caused some anxiety – as I had hoped. For those already pensionable, it is a relief to know that ‘pensions in payment and all pension benefits earned up to the point of change (1 January 2008) will continue to increase annually in line with RPI up to 5%.’ This is a legal requirement and ‘it is only benefits earned after the date of change that will be subject to the lower 3.5% cap’. The same is true of all pensions at the point at which they first come into payment, so that ‘they will be continue to be based on the National Minimum Stipend fixed by the Archbishops’ Council and the Central Stipends Authority’.

## Added strain

He does however misunderstand the point I made about the ‘additional strain put on the pensions fund by clergy entering the ministry at a later age’. It is certainly the case, as I suggested, that in the Eighties younger candidates ‘were discouraged from entering the ministry on the grounds that they needed more experience of life’. Let me explain the problem, using notional figures: if in 1968 there were, say, 500 ordinations of whom 400 were in their mid-20s, then in 2008 those 400 would be eligible for a full pension. If in 1988 there were again 500 ordinations of whom 400 were in their mid-40s, those would also – together with the 400 from 1968 – be able to retire on a pension.

This would of course be a half pension rather than a full one, but it would mean that the Pensions Board would in effect be paying the equivalent of 600 full pensions. As I said in my article, ‘some of us then tried to point out that with many more older candidates, these would reach retirement at the same time as clergy already then approaching 50, putting a strain on clergy numbers as well

as affecting the pension requirements’. It still seems to me to be what I described as a ‘simple mathematical equation’. And ask those clergy and parishes now finding that they must share a priest – sometimes with ten other parishes – if this has not also had a deleterious effect on parish life and the pastoral ministry.

## CHARM scheme

Also clarified was the fact that differentials still apply with the CHARM scheme, so that clergy who retire to the more expensive counties of south-east England have an increased purchase limit of £225,000. This was always the intention of the original discussions of the commit-

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tee on which I served in the 1970s that produced the report on Housing for the Retired Clergy. It is perhaps an indication of the different world in those days that in November 1972 an announcement was made to the General Synod that the Pensions Board were about to increase the mortgage amount from 80% of the value of the property to a maximum of £3,500, to 90% with a maximum loan of £7,500 at an interest rate of 8%. It seems that house prices are slightly higher today!

Returning to 2008, the secretary of the Pensions Board also revealed the curious fact that ‘the economic interest in the loans granted to the Pensions Fund to fund the CHARM mortgage scheme’ which has been sold to a private company ‘covers loans granted to the Board over the period 1983–2004 only’. Why only that period? Of course it could be because of a very forward-looking financial decision in expectation of the present fall in the value of houses, some prophesying a drop of as much as 30%, making it a considerable loss but one now not at the expense of the Commissioners. But he then goes on to say that this sale ‘does

not change the position of any CHARM users. Their relationship is, and will always be, with the Pensions Board and not the third party purchaser’. That is as it should be – but is it as it really seems to be to the pensioner? And it is certainly here that problems have been raised in letters that I have received.

One problem that the elderly must face is growing incapacity. To meet this, my wife and I have decided to move nearer to our son in London so that we are 20 minutes away rather than 200 miles. But we are fortunate in that we own our own house, and if the house we are selling decreases in value, so too does the apartment we will hope to buy.

## Privatization

But as one correspondent points out, ‘those of us in the scheme are trapped in our retirement accommodation. Should we need to move there is no way we can afford to do so because according to the terms of the scheme we have to sell up and start from scratch’. For him, this would mean trying to service a loan of something like £130,000 in order to move to a similar property, instead of on the £50,000 mortgage he took out when he retired seven years ago.

In his case, he adds, ‘the Commissioners’ investment of £49,000 is now worth something like £120,000’. He adds, very reasonably, that ‘surely they could see their way to allowing one move in the course of a long retirement to properties of a similar value without applying monthly interest payments which are frankly more than could possibly be met. They would not have to find new money. The current value of their loan would simply be transferred to a different property.’

## Two masters

Very reasonable, yes – if the loans were still the property of the Church Commissioners who would be dealing with the matter as a charitable institution using their own money to meet the pastoral needs of the clergy. But the CHARM scheme has now been privatized and it is perfectly understandable that the first duty of a private institution is to its shareholders. The private company cannot be blamed if those pastoral needs are no longer the first priority, however much the