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

Eastern wisdom

**Ian Falconer examines the Cyprus Statement
from the Anglican-Orthodox Commission**

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NEW DIRECTIONS evokes a wide range of angry responses to its articles and the opinions expressed, which is just as it should be. But nothing recently has stirred up quite such a unified outburst of rage and fury from readers as the inadvertent omission of our cover strap-line 'serving Evangelicals and Catholics seeking to renew the Church in the historic faith'. It has been a frustrating mistake, for it appears each time in the layout only to disappear on the paper. However, it is encouraging if there is such a strong commitment not to separate the two believing branches of the Church of England.

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The next issue of **newdirections**
is published on 5 October

In what looks like a rush to pre-empt the CofE, the Church in Wales has published a draft Bill to enable women to be ordained as bishops. It is a strange confection.

It begins by claiming that it is 'now appropriate in the Church in Wales that women may be ordained as bishops.' The operative words, it seems, are 'now' and 'appropriate'. By them the Bill is asserting two things: that there never was a good or fundamental reason for restricting the episcopal ministry to males, and that in changed circumstances what was once 'inappropriate' is now permissible and desirable. This is a large (and as yet unsubstantiated) claim.

The Bill goes on, 'The Church in Wales is mindful of the provisions of the civil law relating to discrimination upon the basis of gender, and of the need to provide pastoral care and support for those who in conscience object to the ordination of women as bishops.' There is confusion here, though whether it is deliberate it would be hard to say.

Nothing in the civil law compels the Church in Wales to ordain women to the episcopate. The civil law, indeed, shows a higher degree of theological sophistication than the Church in Wales. It grants that there *may* be good and fundamental theological grounds for restricting the episcopal ministry to men, and so grants an appropriate exemption. The proposed Bill will remove that exemption, exposing those who cannot accept its provisions to prosecution.

It is, moreover, misleading to describe opponents as 'those who in conscience object to the ordination of women as bishops.' Object they most certainly do *now*. If the Bill is passed, the time for objection will be over. They will *then* be unable to accept the ministry of the women so ordained. They will hold that those women *are not bishops*. Even were opponents to trust the pledges which the Bench of Bishops goes on to give, no amount of 'pastoral care and support' would be able to mitigate what for them will be a matter of ontology.

There follows a clause even stranger and clumsier than the rest:

'No Bishop shall be obliged to bring proceedings before the Disciplinary Tribunal in respect of a cleric or other member of the Church in Wales who dissents in conscience from the terms of section I of this Canon.'

This is presumably intended to give some measure of assurance to opponents. Of course it does the opposite. Having removed the exemption that opponents previously had under the civil law (so opening them to secular prosecution by whomsoever), it warns them

that prosecution under church law would be dependent on the whim and disposition of the diocesan bishop. What was a doctrinal position respected by both Church and State has been reduced to a theologumenon to be held at the sole discretion of ecclesiastical authority.

The proposed Bill is, in short, a shabby piece of legislation which wilfully restricts the human rights of members of the Church in Wales, both clerical and lay, whose only offence is to adhere to the theological principles of their own Church heretofore. If passed in its present form it would initiate a period of civil disobedience in the Church in Wales unknown in its short history, which moreover would spill over into the Church of England, where we hope and pray that under the guiding hand of the Bishop of Manchester, wiser counsels will prevail.



In July the Prime Minister stated, 'If you commit a crime you will be deported.'

In August, the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal declared that Learco Chindamo, who had murdered the London headteacher, Philip Lawrence, could not be deported after his prison sentence has been served.

Many will be have been moved by the quiet, compassionate expression of 'devastation' by Frances Lawrence, when this news was released. With great dignity, on radio and television, she expressed her sense of confusion that somehow ordinary people were being forgotten. She spoke of 'the Human Rights Act, which was set up...in order to be an exemplar to show how human beings should live together fairly and equally and kindly, and now it's allowed someone who destroyed a life to pick and choose how he wants to live his.' 'There seems to be this anomaly...that the law bypasses humanity.'

Next year sees the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document of immense importance. Has it really degenerated so fast into what Mrs Lawrence could not unreasonably describe as 'bureaucratic law'? There is, as she said, 'something missing' at the core of the Human Rights Act.

Courts alone cannot be allowed to monopolize the human rights agenda. If men and women are created in the image of God, it needs a greater and an older wisdom to maintain their rights.

It is not the law itself that is at fault, nor the concept of human rights, but the lack of a sound foundation on which to establish them; that is the challenge we face. **ND**



Wisdom from the east

Ian Falconer examines the contents of the most recent Anglican–Orthodox Agreed Statement and in particular the views expressed concerning women bishops and reception

the eternal
Son of God
'became
man' for
the
salvation
of all
humanity,
as a male,
but in his
human
nature
unites all
people to
God

Moscow 1976, Dublin 1984... Complete the sequence. No premium rate number to phone, but give yourself a prize if you got *Cyprus 2006*. These are the places where Anglican–Orthodox Agreed Statements were finalized and the years when they were published [paperback, £5.95].

The *Cyprus 2006 Statement* has theological, ecumenical and practical insights of considerable significance for Catholic Anglicans and for our Communion at large. As we look to our future within or beyond Anglicanism, we must keep not just the Roman but also the Orthodox tradition firmly in our sights. This Statement should encourage us in doing this.

The International Commission for Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD) met several times from 1989. In June 2005, it completed the last chapter at the monastery of Kykkos in Cyprus, hence *The Cyprus Agreed Statement*. Co-chairmen were Bishop Mark Dyer (The Episcopal Church of America, retired Bishop of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania) and Metropolitan John of Pergamon (Ecumenical Patriarchate). Members were set the task of looking at the doctrine of the Church, its unity and ministry, in the light of the Holy Trinity, hence *The Church of the Triune God*.

The cover illustrates this with an icon of the 'Hospitality of Abraham' (or 'Old Testament Trinity') from a Greek Orthodox Church in North Carolina. Inside is a well-presented document; some Greek words and theological terms are explained. The carefully reasoned theology is clearly set out. Where Anglican members of the International Commission have divergent views, these are generally fairly set out. In places, Anglo-Catholics will prefer the Orthodox viewpoint.

The starting point is a biblical word familiar from Anglican–Roman Catholic dialogue, *koinonia*. This fellowship or communion of the life of the Church reflects the divine life of the Trinity. God, as eternal communion of love, enables the fellowship of believers to be 'a real participation in the divine life, a *theosis*' [Section I paragraph 4]. A survey of how the doctrine of the Trinity developed leads to an exploration of the relationship of Christ and the Spirit within the Trinity. Through this, a new humanity is moulded; 'humanity shaped by God's Spirit is defined by the humanity of Jesus Christ and him crucified.' A Christology (study of Christ) shaped by pneumatology (study of the Spirit) can help avoid misunderstandings about the *filioque* ('and the Son', added to the Nicene Creed by the Church in the West, but rejected by Orthodoxy). A right theology of the Trinity can 'witness to the inseparable connection between the work of the Son and the work of the Spirit in achieving our salvation, without having recourse to the *filioque*' [II.47].

Next, the Gospel and culture. These may interact, but the distinction must not become blurred. 'Always embodied in a specific culture, [the Gospel] tran-

scends every culture' [III.26]. Engaging with human history and thought 'does not mean that the Gospel has to be relativized, and adapted to every current cultural achievement.' Anglicans, please note! But human thought and culture 'can prepare the way for the Gospel and interpret it' [III.24].

Inclusive language, especially about God, can be troublesome. The Statement affirms that God 'is neither male nor female nor any combination of the two.' But Jesus Christ is 'a perfect male person,' whose saving work extends equally to male and female' [IV.5]. To call Jesus 'Son' of the 'Father' is not to use gender language but to reveal his true identity within the Godhead that is a Trinity of persons. Such revelation 'can be truly understood only within the communion (*koinonia*) of the Church.' Here, 'Father' and 'Son' are understood as 'neither analogous, metaphorical or symbolic' but 'iconic' in language [IV.8]. The eternal Son of God 'became man' for the salvation of all humanity, as a male, but in his human nature unites all people to God. Through the resurrection of Christ, the distinction between male and female 'is radically transformed.' 'The Fathers look forward, not to...a humanity stripped of the distinctive qualities of men and women, but to a perfect communion in which human diversity is affirmed and glorified' [IV.14]. This bit may sound like something out of a local authority anti-discrimination policy, but the Commission is trying to express fundamental beliefs about God and humanity that merit further discussion and elucidation.

The role of bishops in both traditions is considered in its historical context. 'Apostolic succession is best regarded as a succession of communities represented by their bishops, rather than a succession of individuals with power and authority to confer grace apart from their communities' [V.15]. Both Orthodox and Anglicans 'understand themselves as communions of local churches.' The unity of local churches and the catholicity of faith are maintained by the bishops who represent those churches in wider councils. Ecumenical councils and synods relate both to local churches and to the issue of primacy, including the universal primacy of the see of Rome. Primacy and conciliarity are inseparable. The Statement cites what the first Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission (ARCIC I) stated about this. While both Orthodox and Anglicans explore this in their own dialogues with Rome, I should welcome further joint consideration.

Priesthood is derived from the one priesthood of Christ. The ordained priesthood is a charismatic gift within the priesthood of the whole Church, given in and expressed through the Eucharist. 'Ultimately the celebrant of the Eucharist is Christ himself, acting through the presiding bishop or presbyter and the community to build up the body of Christ' [VI.18]. Not all Catholic Anglicans might agree with the rejec-

tion of the notion of an irremovable 'indelible mark' bestowed on a priest. The Commission reckons that this would give the priest 'an autonomous power above the Church itself'. It is unknown in patristic teaching. Those deposed or excommunicated have 'returned to the rank of layman' [VI.22-3]. 'The distinction between a priest and a lay person is not one of legal status but of distribution of the gifts of the Spirit.'

So to the current big issue, *Women and Men, Ministries and the Church*. An uncontroversial survey of lay ministries in both traditions is followed by a look at the diaconate. The Ecumenical Patriarch is quoted: 'The ordination of women deacons is an undeniable part of the tradition coming from the early church.' He seems to support the restoration of the order. The Statement maintains that the Anglican history of women's ordination to the presbyterate and the episcopate must be seen against the background of their ordination to the diaconate. There is no mention of this as a lost opportunity of developing the permanent diaconate, nor of the view of many opponents that this was the thin end of the wedge that would lead to women priests. But 'Anglican and Orthodox members of our dialogue do not disagree with regard to the ordination of women as deacons and deaconesses' [VII.19].

The Statement acknowledges that 'although the priestly ministry of women in the Anglican Communion is now widely accepted... a significant minority within the Communion opposes the ordination of women as presbyters and bishops,' both whole provinces and also within provinces that do ordain women [VII.20]. I think 'minority' might be inaccurate in respect of the Anglican Communion as a whole, particularly as regards bishops, but the divisive nature of the issue is recognized. The theological arguments 'for and against the inclusion of women in the presbyterate and episcopate are identical.'

The Commission revisits the matter of the humanity of Christ and the equality of women and men in the baptized community. This is renewed in the Eucharist as 'the community of the reign of God'. It participates in both the mission of Christ to the world and in God's 'future reign'. The Statement asserts that it is in the light of 'the transformation of gender in the new life of the kingdom' that 'many Anglicans hold that there are compelling theological grounds for ordaining women as well as men' or at least no compelling reasons against [VII.35-6]. I do not know how many Anglicans that is, or whether this is the jargon they use when justifying their position.


'An Orthodox member of our dialogue has reminded us that some of the most persuasive arguments against the ordination of women have come from Anglican writers' [VII.20]. The Orthodox objections correspond very much to those of Anglican opponents. The Orthodox see no convincing theological reason for deviating from the tradition of reserving the ministry of eucharistic presidency to male members. That president acts in the person of Christ, whose maleness is part of his identity. While the Church must listen to society, sociological concerns are not in themselves sufficient to justify innovations pertaining to the ministry of the Church, particularly in its eucharistic form.' No injustice is done to women by not ordaining them, 'since ordination does not involve the exercise of some kind of power...but

is a specific service to the community.' Women's ministry is in no way inferior to the ordained ministry. 'In the context of the ongoing ecumenical dialogue,' say the Orthodox, 'profound theological examination' is required. 'The cost of schism or the perpetuation of division is too high to outweigh any pastoral benefits that may result from such innovation' [VII.37]. The Commission wishes further reflection to take place. Will our General Synod heed such a plea?

The Commission tackles the subject of heresy from its root meaning of 'personal choice', pertinent considering much contemporary opinion. Schism in the Church does not necessarily imply heresy. We are out of eucharistic communion with one another, despite 'a common recognition of the basic and central dogmas of the Church' and being able 'to proclaim the Scriptures and recite the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed together.' We are in the 'abnormal situation' of a 'disrupted Christian people seeking to restore our unity' [VIII.13].

Since 1992, the Church of England is supposed to have been in a period of reception regarding the ordination of women, something many advocates of women bishops seek to ignore or deny. The Statement's final section, *Reception in Communion*, is therefore particularly important. Reception begins in the Trinity. 'God gives his Son to us in the Holy Spirit' [IX.12]. Reception takes place in concrete Church communities and within the context of the Eucharist. Classically, decisions of the bishops in council had to be received by the community. 'If the community could do nothing without the bishop, the bishop had to receive the 'Amen' of the community' [IX.13]. For universal communion, universal reception must take place through an episcopal head of a local church. 'This ministry should be sought in the Bishop of Rome,' says the Commission. Some evangelical Anglicans might dissent, as they did from ARCIC's conclusions on primacy. With regard to Scripture and Tradition, 'receiving and re-receiving is a process which is never finished' [IX.15].

Protagonists of women's ordination should note: 'While the process of reception continues, the theological debate remains open.' Two things need to be kept in mind: 'all must seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and submit to it' and, crucially, 'no one should claim the authority of the Holy Spirit for accepting or rejecting any new doctrine or practice until the process of reception is completed' [IX.19]. The Statement differentiates between innovations, e.g. monasticism, which do not affect the Church's basic structure and those, e.g. the papal ministry and non-episcopal communities, which do. 'The recognition and reception of the ministry of women presbyters and bishops is a question which concerns the practical life of the ecclesial communities involved, including sacramental communion.' Such practical matters affect reception immediately. This is particularly true of the ordination of women to the episcopate, 'for the churches receive one another at the level of structure through the bishop' [IX.29].

The Orthodox are major partners in ecumenism. If our synodical representatives are serious about it, they should consider the implications of the *Cyprus Statement*, particularly regarding women bishops and reception. 

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Perfect joy

*There is a lesson to be learned from St Francis' definition of joy, as **Paul Griffin** explains*

The story is always worrying. St Francis and Brother Leo are walking home through the snow on one of the coldest evenings ever recorded at the Assisi weather station. 'Brother Leo,' says St Francis, 'write down some pleasant thing, and I will tell you whether it is perfect joy.'

So Brother Leo writes down: 'Happiness in work.' 'No,' says St Francis, 'that is not perfect joy.' 'Good food,' suggests Leo, looking hopefully at the lights of the distant friary. 'Or warm fires, perhaps?' 'No,' says St Francis. 'Neither of these is perfect joy. But suppose when we get home we are not recognized, and are beaten up by the porter, and left for dead in the snowy night, *that* will be perfect joy.'

Oh, dear! we think. Weird, kinky: like a Scottish minister intent on the virtues of suffering. Not so. It is more an illustration of prudence, that ancient virtue seen in Christian terms. I wonder if poor Brother Leo saw that.

To the ancients, prudence was avoiding trouble, looking both ways before crossing the street, avoiding unnecessary risks. C.S. Lewis said that Christian prudence was exactly the same. In the Kingdom of God, that needs qualifying; which was surely what the dear Saint was getting at.

But perfect joy? Jesus, suffering rather worse than being beaten by a porter, gives the impression more of obedient resignation than of joy. The very great joy was in the future. As ever, we struggle in the wake of Jesus.

St Francis gives us yet more to think about. Joy under the circumstances he describes comes from a conviction that one's suffering is totally undeserved. If Francis had been unjust or tyrannical to the porter, the joy would have been less deserved, and therefore not perfect.

This is summed up in Peter's first Epistle, when he says, 'if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God' [2.20]. St Francis

no doubt had this text in mind.

Can fallen humans be innocent and suffer? Common sense and St Francis say yes. Can we, in our differences with the rest of the Anglican Church, be innocent? Convinced that we are right, yes; but those who feel that women have an equal right with men to all types of holy orders are also passionately convinced. They appeal to the whole concept of fair play, so dear to the English people. Can we argue with that?

Only by asking if God's concept of fair play is exactly that familiar to Lords and the Oval. That takes us into the whole Problem of Pain, and the justice of attributing what we dislike to God, not only earthquakes and diseases, but the fact that women have babies and men Adam's apples. Is this because of human sin? Who knows?

This matter being so difficult, we shall probably all continue in the perception of our rightness, and when the time comes for us to be beaten up, we shall assume it is for our good works and right thinking. God is merciful, and I hope will ultimately accept both parties as innocent, but this and other beliefs of humanity may seem shabby under the clear light of heaven. In that clear light we shall see God's concept of fair play, and I hope not be denied perfect joy. **ND**

It is a terrible experience not to be able to settle to prayer. To pick up the Bible or a Prayer Book and have no inclination to open it and on opening it find the words meaningless chewing gum for the mind; going round and round and extracting nothing from them. It is awful, to experience something more than the usual distraction, to feel a knot of despair, a huge weight of darkness or a burning sense of frustration.

I am not writing here about an experience of emotional or spiritual dryness in prayer. I am not even talking about prayer being boring, dutiful and routine – that is altogether something different. I am talking about the experience of organizing oneself to pray – sitting or kneeling down in a preferred place and simply not being able to stay. It is more like experiencing submission in a wrestling match. It is a sense of resignation. God has become a threat.

You are fortunate if you have had nothing like the experience I am trying to describe. If you have, take some comfort from the fact that it is not at all unusual. There are several reasons that 'prayer block' can occur, but I offer you one scenario that might be helpful to a

Ghostly Counsel

Prayer block

Andy Hawes is Warden of
Edenham Regional Retreat House

few readers now or in the future. One cause is spiritual and mental fatigue; this is not the kind of fatigue that would produce sleep. The fatigue I mean is the sense of being thin and stretched; when one's whole being is in tension and stress. To come to prayer is impossible because there is too much tension, too many interior drivers to keep going.

If this is the cause, then take 'prayer block' as a serious warning. It means there is a real need to stop, to rest, to eat, and to be re-creative. My experience is that when one becomes over-reliant on self and on one's own capacity to work a way through tasks, the first thing that breaks down is a pattern of prayer. This is because prayer, even in its simplest and

most curtailed form, is recognition of dependence on God. It is the recognition of relationship. If one is in a situation where, little by little, all responsibilities and decisions are made without reference to God, prayer becomes impossible – the self has become all-consuming and begins to consume the true self which can only be liberated and sustained by the grace of God.

Having recognized and heeded the warning signs, there are several simple strategies to follow. The first is to use the body to pray – re-direct the tension into repeated bowing or prostration in the Lord's presence or focus on describing slowly and deliberately the sign of the cross from the floor by your feet to the crown of your head and across the whole width of your body. The second is simply to call out a name of God, or to use the Jesus prayer – this can be done with particular attention to the breathing. The third is to use the imagination to make real the invitation of Jesus: 'Come to me, learn from me – my load is easy', and let oneself be held in the arms of the Lord. Seek rest in his embrace. Remember the Lord is always watching and waiting for us to seek or knock.

Lambeth?

Peter Toon explains why the Lambeth Conference's pretensions to being a synod are the cause of its problems

Let us begin with two simple definitions.

A Conference is a meeting for formal discussion and exchange of opinions. It normally has minimal entrance requirements and does not bind anyone present to its 'mind', and certainly does not bind anyone not present to any majority opinion expressed in the meeting. In contrast, a Synod is a governing assembly composed of authorized persons who together make authoritative decisions for their constituency.

The Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops is called a Conference, but it is not really a Conference, pure and simple, and never really has been since it first met in 1867. Why? Because it prepares Reports and passes Resolutions which it gives to the world and the Church as the mind of the Anglican Communion of Churches. Yet, though it does this, none of the Provinces of the Communion automatically accepts what the Conference sets forth and, further, none of the bishops present is obliged to go home to propagate what was accepted by majority vote at the Conference.

In the nineteenth century, Bishop J.C. Ryle of Liverpool – along with others – refused to attend because he saw that it had tendencies or pretensions to being a Synod, and, thereby, it challenged the autonomy of the Church of England, by law established. By vow and promise he was bound to this Church.

Creating controversy

The fact that it is not a Conference at all, but a would-be Synod or a Conference-trying-to-be-a-Synod, is one of the major reasons why there is such controversy over who should or should not attend the next one planned for July 2008.

Bishop Ryle refused to attend in 1897 because it was a would-be Synod and not simply a Conference; but, in 2007, Evangelical bishops and archbishops of the Global South, who admire Ryle as an evangelical theologian, are refusing to attend the 2008 gathering because it is not being treated as a would-be-Synod in the way that they understand such to work.

They want excluded those North American bishops who have transgressed the majority mind of the Anglican Communion, as that mind was expressed at the last Lambeth Conference in a Resolution on Sexuality. They want included those bishops who have 'invaded' the territory of The Episcopal Church in the name of the AMiA and the CANA (and who likewise have transgressed a Resolution of 1988).

The problem is that the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has always been seen as the one who calls the 'Conference' and invites bishops to it, agrees with them that it is a kind of would-be-Synod but disagrees with them as to who should be invited.

Instrument of unity?

If the would-be-Synod of 2008 could be downgraded by the Archbishop of Canterbury to being merely an international Conference, then all the bishops of the 38 Provinces and of the major Extra-Mural Anglican Churches could be invited. And there could be in-depth study, debate, fellowship and the like without creating Reports and without making Resolutions. And the benefits of such would be massive.

There could be honest discussion between those with differing viewpoints over coffee or beer and all this without having to take a vote at the end. Imagine Akinola talking to Gene Robinson and Archbishop Hepworth of the Traditional Anglican Communion talking to the Archbishop of York! Wow!

As long as the so-called Conference is not a Conference but a would-be-Synod, there will be massive problems and they will increase rather than decrease. Right now, to call the Lambeth Conference the primary instrument of unity is to speak in a language that has no value.

Perhaps the current global crisis of Anglicanism requires a fresh start, and to make the Lambeth Conference into a real Conference could well be a basic start. Then, flowing from this, the other so-called instruments of unity and the place of the classic Formularies could be evaluated calmly! **ND**

it is not really a conference, pure and simple, and never really has been since it first met in 1867

Word's word

'Abishop [+Martyn Minns] in the United States has been revealed as the principal author of a seminal letter to the Church of Nigeria from its Archbishop, the Most Revd Peter Akinola,' began a *Church Times* article in August.

The reference to 'computer tracking software' was probably to a little-known feature of Word called 'Track Changes'. Like several things in Microsoft, this does more than you might realize and much more than you might want. As one internet article puts it, 'Accidentally sending personal information about yourself can cause embarrassing consequences.'

To which Akinola, Minns and others can only add, 'Hear, hear!' The good news for them is that many more Word documents floating around will suffer from the same problem. So if you've got a Word document sitting on your computer – no matter how far removed from the original author – that could show up the colour of someone's underpants, now's the time to get looking.

Here, apparently, is how you get to see those embarrassing details (should they exist). On the toolbar, click >View, >Toolbars, >Reviewing. This then gives you access to a 'Track Changes and Comments' toolbar. You will need to familiarize yourself with this function in order to see all the details the document contains. The most important thing, of course, is to know how to get rid of this information; it does appear to be a bit fiddly.

You might have noticed I say 'apparently'. This is because I do not use Microsoft Word, but have stuck with one of the original market leaders, namely Corel Corporation's WordPerfect. As someone whose tombstone will not read, 'I wish I'd spent more time on the computer,' I would state categorically that I find this a far easier and more efficient programme than Word, which makes me spit chips every time I'm forced to work with it on someone else's machine. And while it may still include so called metadata, at least it reminds you to look for it if it is there.

So, if you are a Word user, my thoughts go out to you. So, get panicking and scurrying, my little Microsoft friends.

John Richardson

II Those who mourn

Hugh Bates on the second of the Beatitudes and the nature of the Comforter's consolation

Blessed are those who mourn' – they are to be comforted, consoled. It is the same word. Perhaps we should not think in the first place of private grief and being helped through it by a sympathetic friend or counsellor. Comfort, consolation, is a rich and loaded word. In St John's Gospel, the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, the Paraclete. In the Candlemas story, Simeon is described as 'looking for the consolation of Israel' just as Anna and her friends were 'longing for the redemption of Jerusalem.'

What matters is not just that somebody is in mourning, but what they are in mourning for. Simeon was mourning not for himself but for the captivity of Israel. He and Anna were identified in their sorrow with the exploited and the oppressed of their people, and with all that made their lives unfulfilled and incomplete. 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people. This is what Simeon had waited all his life to see. Now that he had seen it, he might depart in peace.

Mourning the world's sins

A recent and classic example of mourning is that of the Archbishop of York who shaved his head and fasted in York Minster for a week at the time of the Israeli-Lebanese conflict, where he was joined by a great number of people. Like Simeon and Anna in the Gospel, he was not

taking sides. Even less was he suggesting terms for a settlement. This was the only way open to him to express his (and our) profound sadness that we are part of a world in which such things can happen.

The Book of Common Prayer provides a sound framework for the discipline of mourning in its colourful penitential material. Nowadays this is often criticized

Simeon was mourning for the captivity of Israel

as being far too rich for modern tastes. 'And though at morn and evening prayer / Of erring sheep our tale is, / Such florid Tudor rhetoric / We take *cum grano salis*' – so Fr S.J. Forrest.

Promise of consolation

But it is not florid Tudor rhetoric; it is the sober truth. 'Ye that do truly and earnestly repent...' Our mourning is heartfelt and genuine, but the ' manifold sins and wickedness' which we acknowledge and bewail are not so much our petty personal misdemeanours and peccadilloes but the grievous sins of the world and the society of which we are inseparably part. If we do not mourn for them, certainly nobody else will.

The catalogue is endless: the wanton exploitation of natural resources; the

cut-throat competition of the global market; the expensive rubbish on sale in Vanity Fair; the cruelty of national, social and ethnic rivalries. It is a mess, and we seem to be locked into it, unable to escape. I cannot, apparently, even do my weekly shop in the supermarket without committing a sin against creation and grinding the faces of the poor! 'The remembrance is grievous unto us. The burden is intolerable' – or it should be. At least we can mourn and mourn bitterly, while the general public takes it all for granted. Like Simeon and Anna, we are called to mourn our captivity, sustained by the promise of consolation.

The activity of the Comforter is varied. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgement. He takes the things of Christ and shows them to us. An example of the way that he operates is the Epistle to the Hebrews, an extended and densely argued 'word of comfort'. The climax of the letter is the string of the examples of the saints of the old dispensation. Faithful though they were in their day, they have not received the promise apart from us. Supported by the evidence of their faithfulness, we are now to enter our own contest, looking towards Jesus in whom faith begins and ends. The Comforter is not given to administer anaesthetics or painkillers, but to equip people for fruitful mourning, in the certainty that their mourning is not in vain. **ND**

To the point

What does Canon Law say about the use of church buildings for secular purposes, such as school speech days, concerts and plays, jumble sales, discos and dances?

The use of a church for secular purposes is not of itself unlawful since the canons specifically mention such use. The churchwardens 'shall not suffer the church or chapel to be profaned by any meeting therein for temporal objects inconsistent with the sanctity of the place' (Canon F15). If the speech day is to be addressed by the diocesan bishop, then the chance of profanity is probably remote. But if the speaker is

to be a pop star notorious for his or her bad language, or a local councillor whose party promotes racist views, then the use could be unlawful.

As far as plays, concerts and exhibitions of films and pictures in churches are concerned, Canon F16 provides (amongst other things) that the minister 'shall take care that the words, music and pictures are such as befit the House of God, are consonant with sound doctrine, and make for the edifying of the people.' The bishop may make general directions as to such use and the minister is under a duty to obey them.

Jumble sales, discos and dances would generally have been thought to be a

VII Secular uses of buildings

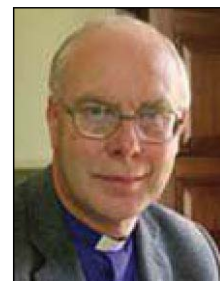
profane use of a church fifty years ago, but opinion is now more tolerant towards secular use. It will be a question of fact to be decided in each case whether or not a use is profane.

An incumbent may forbid any or all such secular uses, even if the churchwardens and PCC are in favour. If a minister fails to fulfil his duties under Canon F16, he could be liable to discipline under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. However, there is no legal sanction that can be taken against churchwardens who fail to fulfil their obligations.

Our lawyers are happy to answer reader's questions about church law - please email tothepoint@forwardinfaith.com

One Lord! One Church?

John Packer explains why we need to find a way forward over the issue of women bishops which enables us to go on listening and working together



Amongst the more unsettling aspects of life as a bishop is the amount of literature you get telling you that you are wrong – and that the writer of the literature is right. Some of it is personal: praying publicly for the City of Leeds alongside leaders of other faiths inevitably brings allegations that I should no longer describe myself as a Christian. More, however, is published material from those with a particular perspective within the Church; whether from the Modern Churchpeople's Union, from Forward in Faith or in *The Churchman*. All seem to claim that they represent the true heart of the Church of England – and they cannot all be right.

Or can they? Not if their rectitude means that those with contrary perceptions are wrong, as often seems the case. However, when they are saying that their perspective, the way God has led them, needs to be heard as a crucial element in the life of the Church, then this seems to me right. That is why I believe we need to find a way forward over the issue of women bishops which enables us to go on listening and working together.

Failure of TEA

I confess (and it feels like a confession now!) that I was a supporter of the concept of Transferred Episcopal Arrangements, whereby provision was to be made for those who cannot accept the authority of women bishops to worship and minister within the provinces of Canterbury and York. I have found the provisions of the Act of Synod helpful in my own ministry, where parishes under the Episcopal Care of the Bishop of Beverley remain a vibrant part of their deaneries and of the diocese. I do not want to lose this for the sake of the Gospel, the Church of England and (I believe) those parishes themselves.

I firmly believe that God has called women to ordained priesthood in the Church of England, and if that is so, I believe, too, that he will call them as bishops within the Church. I also need to learn from those who profoundly disagree with me, and work with them for the sake of the Gospel.

I was disappointed that the TEA proposals got such short shrift, not only from those firmly supportive of the ordination of women as bishops, but from those opposed. The editor, in his letter to me, says that, 'the failure of the TEA proposals was surprisingly disheartening.' I agree, but there was so little enthusiasm for them from those they were designed to include that it became inevitable that Synod would not see them as the way forward.

Coping with dissent

If those opposed to women bishops find it necessary to create a Continuing Church, or a third province, that will be to the immeasurable detriment of the Provinces of Canterbury and York. For some years in the 1980s, I was Rural Dean of Wath in the Sheffield Diocese, which some readers of *NEW DIRECTIONS* will know epitomizes many of the divisions in the Church of England. For me that was an exciting time – including being taught how to preside at Mass using the Missal at Bolton-on-Dearne.

The Church of England needs to demonstrate that principled inclusiveness which other Christian traditions seem to find it hard to imagine. So Roman Catholics tell me that if women were ordained in the Communion, all would need to accept their ministry; Methodists tell me that the Church of England needs to put into practice what it claims to have affirmed, that women should be able to be appointed to any post in the Church of England, and that those who cannot cope with that should go elsewhere.

I disagree. We need the facility within the body of Christ to dissent profoundly from one another's views without cutting ourselves off from one another. We need the mutual support of

**we need the facility to dissent
from one another's views
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those in favour of and those opposed to the ordination of women. We need the ways in which the inner urban ministry of so many traditional Catholic parishes in dioceses such as ours can be encouraged by working together with parishes of different persuasions, and can also enhance the ministry of the whole diocese. Whether God calls us to himself through evangelical charismatic wor-

ship or through pilgrimage to Our Lady of Walsingham, through the Calvinistic witness of the Reformation fathers or the Catholic tradition of the Caroline divines, we need one another in one Faith and one Lord.

The way forward

So we need to find a way forward which provides a structural solution for our differences. We do need to do more work on what constitutes a 'secure sacred ministry'. Within a fractured church, it is not easy to see what that means. A recent Roman Catholic correspondent has no time for Forward in Faith because, he argues, secure sacred ministry means that which is in communion with Pope Benedict and cannot be found elsewhere. Anglicans cannot believe that. Such 'security', if it ever existed, must have disappeared at the Reformation. Sacramental assurance cannot simply (can it?) be a matter of who has touched whose head in ordination, regardless of intention or the communion of the Church.

I hope that the Bishop of Manchester's group, and the subsequent discussions, will produce proposals which lead to the ordination of women as bishops because that is how I believe God is leading a majority in the Church of England and endless delay is disquieting to everyone. I also believe it is right! I hope, too, that sufficient sacramental assurance can be provided for those with whom I disagree and from whom I need to learn. The assurance cannot be total – that is not obtainable this side of heaven. It can provide space for us to live and grow together.

The proposals cannot provide 'what we want' for everyone – or indeed for anyone. They can enhance the good news of the Gospel. They could demonstrate how as Anglican Christians we live and work together, led by God in our variety – and that is a witness our world desperately needs. They might even look rather like TEA – but if that is to be the way forward, it will need a good deal more enthusiasm from those it is particularly designed to include. **ND**

Virgin of Guadalupe

Margaret Laird describes how a sixteenth-century vision of Our Lady of Guadalupe had a major impact on Mexico and beyond and looks at a poet who was inspired by this tradition

The advertisements on the back page of *NEW DIRECTIONS* give ample evidence of the popularity amongst Catholic Anglicans of pilgrimages to Fatima and Medjugorje. However, the shrine which marks the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico is probably less familiar to readers. The traditions which have developed around the Mexican Virgin are not well known in this country, and it is rather far away.

These reasons, however, do not excuse us from remaining ignorant about an ancient tradition which has had such an influence on the history and church of Mexico, where, despite scepticism and anticlericalism, the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe still remains a potent symbol of the modern nation.

The Virgin has also played an important role in the wider Church of that part of the world. This was recognized by Pope John Paul II when he proclaimed the Virgin of Guadalupe the patron saint not just of Mexico but of all the Americas. In recent publications too, specialists in Mexican Studies have stressed that the influence of what Professor Brading of Cambridge University describes as the 'Mexican Phoenix' (the title of his book on Our Lady of Guadalupe) must not be underestimated.

The miraculous appearance

Testimonies of the miraculous appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe abounded in the seventeenth century, although the event reputedly occurred in 1531. However, priority has always been given by historians to the account of the apparition given (originally in the Nahuatl language) by Laso de la Vega, who was the Vicar of Guadalupe in 1649.

His version relates how, in December 1531, an Indian, Juan Diego was walking at dawn past the hill in Tepeyac, north of Mexico City, to attend Mass. He caught sight of a colourful rainbow and heard the sound of beautiful singing. As he turned towards the sound, the Virgin appeared and spoke to him, declaring that she was the Mother of God and that a temple should be established on the hill from where she might help him and those devoted to her. She enjoined him to give a faithful account of this to the bishop.

The bishop at first did not believe him and sought a sign. The Indian returned

and unfastened his cloak, in which the Virgin had instructed him to gather flowers from the hill. The bishop then saw the image of the Virgin on the cloak and ordered a church to be built in the place where she had appeared – the very site where the indigenous inhabitants had once worshipped Tonantzín, an expiatory goddess whose name means 'our mother' in the native Indian language.

**the Virgin spoke to him,
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temple should be established**

Patron of New Spain

Throughout the 17th century, a vast quantity of Latin and Spanish literature followed in praise of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Juan Diego's cloak with the picture of the Virgin was seen as 'a cloak of protection for the people of Mexico'. Another tradition identified her with that of the Virgin in the Apocalypse in Revelation 12.

The Jesuit missionaries who began to work in Mexico in 1572 were greatly impressed by the popular cult. It was due to the negotiations of a Jesuit that Pope Benedict XIV (after seeing a copy of the Mexican Virgin painted by Miguel Cabrera and marvelling at its beauty) issued the papal bull of 1754, approving the election of Our Lady of Guadalupe as the principal patron of New Spain, and named her feast day as December 12.

Soon afterwards in 1767, Carlos III of Spain, fearing their increasing power and total obedience to the papacy, expelled the Jesuits from all his dominions. Many of the Mexican Jesuits found refuge in Italy, taking with them the Guadalupan traditions. The Latin poet and Jesuit priest Rafael Landívar was amongst the refugees. His father was a nobleman from Navarra, who had settled in the Spanish Colonies and married a 'criolla' wife. Their son Rafael was given a Jesuit education and gained a theological degree in Guatemala. Then, moving to Mexico, he joined the Jesuits, was ordained and eventually became Rector of a seminary.



In 1767, he was amongst those who were cruelly deported without warning, and after arriving in Italy, he joined the community of Jesuits in Bologna.

Rafael Landívar

Some years later, the 'ten book' edition of his Latin epic poem about his beloved Mexico was published. It included some vivid lines about the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe. He described how after she had shown Juan Diego a manifestation of her mercy, the Indian, 'mentally disturbed and perplexed' because of the miraculous event, was unable to find the places which the Queen had hallowed with her footsteps. In order to help him to guide his companions to the trail, the Virgin adorned the meadow with a health-bringing fountain and granted to the city 'an everlasting pledge of her devotion'.

Why mention this obscure Mexican poet? Because his devotion to the Blessed Virgin remained with him throughout his life and inspired him to write two Marian poems. They have now been translated for the first time into English in *The Epic of America – an Introduction to Landívar*, published by Duckworth. The lines quoted below from Landívar's 'Ode in Honour of the Blessed Virgin' demonstrate that the ideas he expressed about the role of Our Lady deserve to be more widely known. Perhaps they could even be incorporated into our own church tradition in praise of the Blessed Virgin.

See how the Father with just ordinance had long deemed to honour Mary, free from the sin of our first ancestor, and at once a Virgin and Mother, with his offspring. How the Virgin brought forth God for us; her breast was smitten with grim suffering inflicted by wounds and swords, and in shame she nobly positioned herself at the side of her Son.

In her kindness, she gave the people a formation in faith, she piously taught Christian ways; until borne up to heaven she departed, praised by Angelic song.

God the Creator gave her to the Angels as Queen, he too gave her to the Underworld as Mistress and to us, mercifully redeemed, as a Mother, outstanding in devotion. **ND**

devotional

Angel thoughts

Thomas Seville CR

It is a matter of Christian faith, part of the doctrine of creation, that human beings are not alone as intelligent creatures in the creation. There are the angels, part of the invisible, the unseen of the first article of the creed. At the end of September, there is the feast of Michaelmass, of Michael and All Angels, and I do not think I am casting doubts on the orthodoxy of readers if I own to the suspicion that it is a feast which is much enjoyed, but at which to preach makes us queasy. Our world is all but disenchanted, messed up, and the places for those things beyond our grasp are few.

The role of angels

Yes – there are all those wonderful paintings and the narratives in Scripture which figure the messengers from God, which bring things otherwise unknowable to sinners or which bring healing and guidance. They worship God and do his bidding. They do so unfailingly.

Angels guard the presence of God, one of their functions; they watch, not in the way of protecting, but in the way of preserving those for whom God is there. Without them, some of the awe is lost, perhaps not even possible. Without them, Christianity becomes functional at best and we misunderstand the freedom which is God's and the depth of his mystery.

Angels are from God and, in the words of a great theologian of the Reformation,

are 'as it were, God in a mirror'; they reflect with reduced light that God who sends and heals and speaks. Between them and God, there is nothing other than the glory of Christ, around whom they worship and do. They serve that love of God for sinners.

If we wish to see them, we cannot, or rather we see them when we draw close to Christ and are as close to him as we can be here and now, namely when, in faith and penitence, we are at the Eucharist, 'with angels and archangels.' Charles Wesley wrote: 'Angels in fixed amazement around our altars hover, / With eager gaze adore the grace of our eternal Lover.' Because they are so intimately connected with that mystery, they will escape our attempts at understanding them.

The natural world

Despite the sinful abuse of the natural world, it is perhaps there that one can get an idea of an angel. Many years ago, the Visitor of our community came to Mirfield and brought his wife, an intelligent woman and a keen birdwatcher. In those days the Calder valley was brown, not green, and the smoke of the mills still covered the land; the river was mucky. At dinner there was talk and they talked about angels. The good bishop's wife said that she did not believe in angels. The discussion went on until the bell that ends dinner.

That afternoon, the good bishop went with his wife and binoculars down to the Calder; the weather was bright, late autumn sun. Suddenly there was a splash of bright blue, a kingfisher (a kingfisher on the Calder in the 1970s!), a flash of blue beauty. In great delight, the bishop's wife returned to the house, saying, 'Now I believe in angels.' **ND**



'And now a prayer for those who resisted sins which are now permissible.'

Words & words

Let's admit that occasionally the liberals could be right. For example, their view that Jesus was culturally conditioned by his first-century environment. Take the advice 'All you need say is 'Yes' if you mean yes, 'No' if you mean no' [Matt. 5.37].

Nowadays, Jesus' monosyllabic 'yes' would be replaced by 'absolutely'. 'I see where you're coming from' is less judgemental than his recommended 'no' – linguistic sophistication impossible for a first-century mind.

At this moment in time ('now' is oldspak), the communications revolution isn't just the technology that enables us to communicate in nano-seconds, but also the verbosity which occupies the time saved.

Fortunately the CofE is at the cutting edge of this words explosion. As one proof, look at your watch during the next intercessions you hear. Compare the time taken with that to read the impossibly old-fashioned Prayer of the Church Militant. It was also his first-century backg-round that led Jesus to condemn those who thought they would gain God's ear by overmuch speaking. He could never have dreamed of General Synods.

For his part, God, like all old men, is obviously getting forgetful, judging by the many-worded modern rite Prefaces reminding him in detail of his achievements. Those who square-bashed will recall that drill instructors relied on repetition to aid learning. In like manner, the BCP's approach of the same readings and collects cropping up every year was said to drill folk into memorization. Such a meagre diet and low word-count won't do for our Super-Size Me society. The solution? Cycles of Readings.

More readings, plus the proliferation of Bible versions, has improved biblical literacy to match Britain's rising educational standards. We have grown beyond being merely a 'People of the Book.' In the twenty-first century, we are 'People of the Books.'

Talking of books, have you reserved your copy of the new edition of *Common Worship*? This comes with a free CD of the Liturgical Commission singing 'Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered.' Forget 'obtainable from all good booksellers', and give a chance to a bad one. Call us today. Your call will be held in a queue. Be assured your call is important to us.

Alan Edwards

The Good Shepherd 1

The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is used by the gospel writers to explain Jesus' compassion
Patrick Henry Reardon is a Senior Editor of *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*

Except for the Lord's Prayer itself, it is arguable that the Good Shepherd Psalm is better known among more Christians than any other memorized prayer. I suspect that this may always have been the case. At least this much is clear: the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd has been among the most popular since the earliest days of Christian history.

The strong supports of this ancient popularity, of course, were the records of Jesus' explicit references to himself as the Good Shepherd, and in this respect the Gospel of John holds the primary place. At the very end of that Gospel, Jesus referred to Christians as 'my lambs' and 'my sheep' [John 21.15–17], but the longer development of the idea was found in chapter 10. In this chapter, several aspects of the image were treated: the sensitivity of the sheep to the Shepherd's voice, the uniqueness of the Shepherd in contrast to the hireling or the robber, the Shepherd's giving of his life for his sheep, the gathering of the lost sheep into a single flock [v. 16] and their total security [vv. 28, 29]. In all of these Johannine examples, the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is based on explicit statements of the Lord himself.

Fulfilment of prophecy

This is not true everywhere in the New Testament, however. In at least two cases, the picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is not based on what Jesus said, but on the gospel writer's mention of how Jesus felt. In these two instances, the evangelists were endeavouring to get inside Jesus, as it were, and lay hold on his emotion. In both cases, the emotion described was compassion. I propose to consider one of these passages now and the second one later.

The first text is found in Matthew, where we read: 'But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers few. Therefore pray the Lord of the

harvest to send out labourers into his harvest"' [9.3–38].

Since the pastoral reference in this passage does not come from Jesus' words, from where does Matthew get it? A simple glance at a concordance at this point sends us to the books of Numbers [27.17], 1 Kings [22.17], Ezekiel [34.5], Zechariah [10.2] and Judith [11.15], all of which speak of God's concern that the Israelites not be like 'sheep without a shepherd.' Matthew's appeal to this image signifies that the compassion of Jesus fulfils the prophetic content of these biblical texts.

The evangelist's reference here is unusual, in this sense. Matthew is interpreting holy Scripture by describing Jesus' emotion. While it is no rare thing for a New Testament writer to see the fulfilment of biblical prophecy in something Jesus did and said, what we find in the present text is the fulfilment of biblical prophecy in how Jesus felt. His compassion for the very people in front of him is identified with God's mercy manifest throughout Israel's history. Matthew explains Jesus' feeling by appealing to a biblical theme: 'He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.'

Historical context

In this text of Matthew, then, the compassionate feeling of Jesus contains a 'because,' inasmuch as this feeling is placed in a context of biblical history. Specifically, it identifies Jesus' compassion with that demonstrated to the Israelites during the desert wandering [Numbers], during the age of the monarchy [1 Kings], during the Babylonian Captivity [Ezekiel] and during the post-exilic period [Zechariah].

The human compassion of Jesus is seen to be of whole cloth with the divine mercy that unifies biblical historiography as the continuous narrative of God's flock. In the eyes of Matthew, Jesus represents the defining and most recent historical intrusion of this mercy. **ND**

Sacred vision

Through windows which are the principal source of light we are looking into a room in which Maarten van Nieuwenhove (age 23) is praying to the Virgin and Child. It is a real room, located in the real world – Bruges's Minnewater Bridge can be glimpsed out of the window on the right. The Madonna, moreover, is as real as the room and as real as van Nieuwenhove. Her child sits on the same tapestry-covered ledge on which his open prayerbook rests.

It is his room. Behind the young man and the Virgin, the stained glass windows attest ownership: his coat of arms, motto and family emblem, his patron saints George and Christopher, his name saint Martin of Tours. Hans Memling



Maarten van Nieuwenhove

has achieved, at one and the same time, a powerful portrait and a work of deep spirituality.

He has also alluded in his painting to the achievements of those artists he admires, and strives to excel. The composition alludes to Rogier van der Weyden's *Diptych of Phillipe de Croy*; the obliquely angled windows and convex mirror allude to Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*.

In van der Weyden's diptych the sitter and the Madonna inhabit different worlds: she is isolated by a background of gold leaf from the chapel or hall in which he sits. Memling daringly brings the divine into the mundane. It is the *Devotio Moderna* in oils.

Mark Stevens

Liberal Catholic

Simon Heans examines Rowan Williams' contribution to *The Religion of the Incarnation*, and his claim that conversion and judgement are the basis of dogma

It is often said that Archbishop Rowan is a Liberal Catholic. But what does that mean? A Catholic with liberal opinions on political and social issues? But this cannot really be the case, because if it were, many members of Forward in Faith would be Liberal Catholics. The UN Millennium Development Goals, which liberal North American bishops set such store by, are obviously admirable, although I suppose one might want to argue about the policy means to those ends. The problem, as Michael Heidt pointed out in last month's *NEW DIRECTIONS*, is that they have largely replaced the Christian religion in their minds. Rowan Williams' essay in the book published in 1989 for the centenary of *Lux Mundi* shows how this might have happened.

Incarnation

This book is, like its successor, a collection of essays on Christian doctrine. It is usually taken to mark the beginning of Liberal Catholic theology in the Anglican Church. One of the features of this Liberal Catholic scholarship was its openness to the new ideas about biblical interpretation coming from German Protestant universities.

However, the earlier Tractarian generation was not so keen on this 'historical criticism'. The issue was particularly divisive at Oxford, where the contributors to *Lux Mundi* were (or had been) college chaplains and fellows. But, although it was important at the time, historians have focused on a different *Lux Mundi* theme as being of more significance in the long term for the identity of Liberal Catholicism. Geoffrey Rowell writes of *Lux Mundi* 'recasting Anglican theology in an incarnational mould.'

'The Religion of the Incarnation' was the title once suggested for *Lux Mundi*, but it was chosen as the title for the centenary essays. The contributors to *The Religion of the Incarnation* were each assigned an essay in the original volume on which to comment. Rowan Williams, then Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford, was given *The Incarnation as the Basis of Dogma*, by R.C. Moberly.

Dr Williams begins by defending 'the legitimacy of dogmatic statement', and applauding Moberly's engagement in it, quoting with approval his stark either/or:

'Is it true that he was very God? It is either true or false... If it is not absolutely true, it is absolutely false.' However, by the end of the essay, Dr Williams has changed his mind, finding 'Moberly's expression of it [the doctrine of the Incarnation] unhelpfully positivistic.' In fact, he seems rather irritated, even offended, by Moberly's approach: 'His robust 'true or false?... short-circuits the details of doctrinal discussion in a way I think many a patristic writer would have found alarming... it is harder than Moberly makes it sound to

the origin of the doctrine of the Incarnation is in the Twelve's sense ... of the truth about Jesus

find a single brief formulation that intelligibly expresses the doctrine of the Incarnation.' So too bad, one is tempted to say, for the Creeds! But by what argument does Dr Williams arrive at this judgement?

Jesus' story

'It is not the Incarnation that is the basis of dogma,' claims Dr Williams, 'but judgment and conversion worked out through the telling of Jesus' story.' But how does the latter activity differ from expounding the doctrine of the Incarnation? Dr Williams begins by suggesting that the issue is one of comprehensiveness. The doctrine, he explains, is 'in danger of being a rather baroque formulation relating to the origin of Jesus' 'earthly career', although he then seems to take back this criticism in accepting that 'part of the force of the doctrine of the hypostatic union is precisely to deny that 'Incarnation' is an isolable event in or prior to the biography of Jesus.'

The real difference between Incarnation and 'Jesus' story' – and the reason Dr Williams insists on the latter in preference to the former – lies in the subject of each. 'Dogma about Christ,' he writes, 'stems from this primitive sense of a truth being told about us as human beings implicated in a network of violence and denial.'


By contrast, as Moberly argues, the

origin of the doctrine of the Incarnation is in the Twelve's sense, primitive or not, of the truth about Jesus. Moberly writes of 'the question which He would never let them escape, the question by which they were to be tested and judged; 'What think ye of Christ?' 'If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.' And, as Moberly's way of putting it shows, 'judgement and conversion' is very definitely involved in the formation of the dogma.

Dr Williams writes of 'the long-standing enthusiasm of Anglican theology about the incarnational principle', an enthusiasm which he clearly shares. But his is not the same as the principle Moberly expounds and defends. Dr Williams calls this 'the image of Incarnation', and his attitude towards it is iconoclastic: 'the slippage into ideology is perilously close, to the extent that such theology can lose sight of that element underlying the history of incarnational definition that is to do with the radical testing of the human 'sense' before the tribunal of Jesus.' The instrument of his iconoclasm is 'the story of Jesus' which, he explains, 'is not one of a miraculous suspension and interruption of the human world, nor is it a story of human moral and spiritual heroism; it involves us in a self-declaration and a self-discovery.'

Liberal or Catholic

But this is surely wrong. The story of Jesus is about both the miraculous and the heroic. These are each elements in the Catholic definition of the incarnational principle, which is of course a summary of 'Jesus' story'. But Dr Williams' redefinition of the Incarnation as self-declaration and self-discovery means that it concerns everyone's identity – except Jesus'. Thus the question, 'How shall we speak of Jesus in a way that is faithful to the fact that it is human existence in which he meets us...?' (emphasis original) can only have one answer: by not speaking of the Incarnation at all, since its subject is a human existence that is also divine.

It is easy to see that here 'the slippage into ideology is perilously close', and it is reached with Dr Williams' 'refinement' (!) of Moberly's title: 'Conversion and Judgement as the Basis of Dogma.' And that, rather than the Incarnation, is the basis of Liberal Dogma. 

You pays your money . . .

Many thanks to the website of something called *The Anglican Independent Communion Worldwide* at www.aicuk.org.uk, for the intriguing headline **This Website is Suspended**. 'On Sunday 10th June 2007 three key members of the team which administers the central services of the Anglican Independent Communion Worldwide, had a meeting. The meeting discussed the current situation in the Communion, and expressed deep regret that they now in a situation where they can place no reliance on messages they receive from within the British Province.

Messages and instructions to staff received from other senior clergy have proved to be bogus, and some unauthorised statements have been circulated to the Provinces by people who do not have authority to make them. Our faithful Brothers and Sisters around the world are being misled. Further, certain clergy have conspired to produce an alternative website, with the apparent intention of causing further confusion. The meeting decided, with regret, that they are no longer prepared to tolerate this abuse of their hard work, goodwill, and personal financial commitment which has served to build up the Communion over the past years. The following measures will take immediate effect.

1. The Rt Revd Prof Barry Peachey is acutely aware that it is the wish of a large majority of the Bishops of AIC Worldwide that he accept their nomination as Metropolitan Archbishop. After prayer and contemplation he has now decided not to accept this nomination, and will retire.
2. Mrs Patricia Donnelly, Treasurer of the AIC, resigns from that role with immediate effect. All AIC accounts at the Yorkshire Bank plc are frozen immediately. They will not operate again until a new Treasurer is nominated, and bank formalities have been complied with.
3. Mrs Heather Peachey, Webmaster, resigns from that role, and from her other ministry as Deaf and Disabilities Chaplain.
4. Staff who support these principal officers, such as our Computer Security Manager, also resign forthwith.

. . . and you takes your choice

Many thanks to the website of something called *The Anglican Independent Communion Worldwide* at www.aic.btk.com for this news: 'The Metropolitan Archbishop of the Anglican Independent Communion, Archiepiscopus Grandis Britannia, The Most Reverend Dr. Norman Sydney Dutton, has released the following communiqué. Be it known by all, Saturday 2nd June 2007, the Metropolitan Archbishop, Norman Sydney Dutton has terminated forthwith The Rt. Rev. & Rt. Worshipful Professor Barry F. Peachey from the office of Metropolitan Chancellor. With immediate effect, he is no longer a member of the above Communion. The Metropolitan Archbishop, The Most Reverend Dr. Norman Sydney Dutton, has accepted, with immediate effect, the resignation of Mrs Heather Peachey and Patricia Donnelly. Additionally, the website aicorg.uk has been taken off-line by The Rt Revd & Mrs Peachey's son. To prevent further inaccurate and unauthorised communications, all official notices will be posted only to this site. Any statements made outside of this site are not official and may contain inaccuracies and misrepresentations.'

As if

A visit to the website of Christ Church, Nanticoke, in the diocese of Niagara, Canada, is full of useful information about the church and what it has to offer: a list entitled 'Features of the Parish' runs as follows:

Air-Conditioned:
Wheel Chair Accessible:
Accessible Washrooms:
Change Tables:
Smoke Free:
Hearing Assistance:
Parking Lot: no
Street Parking:
Public Transit:
Hall For Rent:
Kitchen Facilities: no
Day Care Center:

Well, provided the absence of *no* actually does mean *yes*, that is not a bad start. Bit of a shame, then, to read what's been on offer under the heading 'Special Liturgies':

Quasi-Closing Service – August 12, 4.00 p.m. Service to mark the quasi-clos-

ing of the church. Services reduced to once a month 3rd Sunday @ 4.00 p.m.

'Quasi-Closing' of failing churches is an idea which could obviously catch on! After all, quasi-priests and quasi-bishops have gone down a storm, haven't they?



Delusional News

Readers may remember the 'sad' case of the Revd Nicholas Henderson, whose election as Bishop of Lake Malawi in 2005 failed to be confirmed by the Provincial Court in the Province of Central Africa, once the bishops realised just what the Modern Churchpersons' Union – of which he was of course General Secretary – stood for. Strange, then, that in an article in his Parish Magazine in November 2006 (almost a year after his rejection), Henderson was still referring to himself as 'Anglican Bishop elect of the Diocese of Lake Malawi'. Meanwhile, a website <http://anglican-information.org> appeared, peddling the same line – '**ANGLICAN-INFORMATION** further observes that the injustice seen in the failure to confirm the elected Bishop, the Rev'd Nicholas Henderson is the source of all the long running difficulties in the Diocese' and portentously proclaiming '**ANGLICAN-INFORMATION** is a network acting as a free conduit for news and information related to the Anglican Diocese of Lake Malawi, and the Province of Central Africa. It is organised by an international team of those who know and love Africa and Malawi well. We reserve the right to reflect on the news as we receive it for the benefit of our worldwide audience.' Or, at least, it was until Ruth Gledhill of *The Times* alerted readers of her Blog to the fact that the Anglican-Information domain was owned by a photographer living across the road from Henderson's West London Vicarage, whereupon the stream of Anglican Information (*sic*) dried up. Visitors to the website now simply get the message '**Forbidden** You don't have permission to access / on this server.' What can it mean? Surely not that Fr Henderson has given up his struggle for that elusive mitre?

*Copy for 30 DAYS should reach FiF office by the 10th day of the month:
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Fresh Expressions

Fresh Expressions – and great expectations?

Paul Kent explores Mission Initiatives

Throughout the history of the Church of England, stirrings have arisen spontaneously from within, and from time to time, to respond to the pressures of the world at large. In the present circumstances of growing secularization of society in the United Kingdom, the Church encounters progressive problems in presenting its message to a public often ill-informed and unresponsive to the spiritual. Secular considerations, if not secular values, appear to be becoming the general norm. It is understandable that in such a world, fresh ways of supporting the traditional Church and reaching out to the sceptical and indifferent should be explored.

In the last ten years, a number of new concepts have crept into common use. We are urged to think of ourselves as a 'mission-shaped Church' generating 'mission initiatives', and to be an 'emerging Church' with 'fresh expressions'. It is therefore timely to try to discover what these concepts involve, how they operate and what implications they may entail for Anglican belief and practice and in parish life.

More recently – mid-2006 – all this has gained more momentum as draft measures are now being considered by the Revision Committee of the General Synod with a view to giving recognition to these mission ventures, but without strictly defined parameters; only a 'light touch' is to be applied.

Principles and objectives

To arrive at an impartial assessment of the possible value of these ventures is scarcely achievable at this stage on account of the lack of definition of the terms in use, the fluidity of the operating conditions and the sheer profusion of ideas. This article thus deals with matters still in a formative stage.

Overall, it is largely agreed that the object of these mission ventures is that of introducing the Christian message, broadly stated, to non-churchgoers wherever they may be found. It is envisaged that this can be achieved by a wide diversity of social devices, complementary to traditional church and parish life.

The Cray Report, published in 2004, entitled *Mission Shaped Church*, drew attention to ageing church congregations, failing parishes, a growing public ignorance in times of falling moral standards,

a decline in understanding of religious issues and an upsurge in drugs, drink, crime and yob culture.

Archbishop Rowan Williams has appealed for the Church of the twenty-first century to become a 'mixed economy' – 'We need traditional churches alongside many different expressions of church.' This appeal rang a bell not only in some Anglican circles but also amongst some nonconformists, and especially the Methodists.

In essence, in earlier years there have already been attempts at mission ventures. It is arguable that the YMCA and YWCA church planting, the Alpha course and the Sheffield '9 o'clock' gathering were all such. Now, in a bid to coordinate the present ventures of Mission Initiatives or Fresh Expressions nationally, the Reverend Dr Steven Croft has been appointed as Archbishops' Missioner to advise and oversee progress.

Mission action

In general, Fresh Expressions takes the form of gathering lay people together in groups with a leader (who may be a trained lay person or an ordained priest) and of meeting where people are (not necessarily on church premises, though this is not excluded). Meetings can take place on a regular basis, for example, in cafés, public houses (at times after hours), working people's clubs or private homes.

The content of meetings may have a theme around what most interests the group, whether it be sport, discussion, eating together or just socializing – **in fact**, almost anything provided that it is friendly, welcoming and has a Christian flavour. It is assumed that opportunities will be made for meditation, prayer and questioning.

With such a widespread coverage and informality, it is foreseeable that a network of regular gatherings will arise, drawn from members of the public of all or every sort, transcending parish boundaries and even diocesan lines, without dependence on the parish structure or its clergy. It is to be hoped nevertheless that there would be constructive cooperation between parishes and groups.

The openness of Fresh Expressions groups must be a characteristic feature; it is not intended that groups should foster particular ecclesiologies such as funda-

mentalists, charismatics, the born-again or the liturgically-minded, but rather that they be available to any who want to know or who recognize a need. This is not without hazard in just producing a 'feel-good factor' in a sort of Christian club-land.

It remains to be discovered what may be the educational role of Fresh Expressions. This may be achievable less by formal instruction than by personal contacts and shared experiences. For the ventures to have lasting effect in serving the uninformed public, some transmission of Christian principles will be essential.

'How Anglican is all this?' one might ask. It appears that though Fresh Expressions are not to be regarded as recruiting drives to fill empty pews in empty churches, some connection with the sacramental life of the Church – especially baptism, the Eucharist and other channels of grace – must evolve. Christian living may come before belief, but both living and belief are encompassed fully within the Church community.

Fresh Expressions: organization

It is clear that much will depend on the personalities of the leaders and on their training, as well as on the support which they receive from the dioceses. One current proposal allows for a one-year part-time course for groups of potential leaders, from parishes (and possibly from Methodist circuits) which will include two Saturdays, a residential weekend, ten evening sessions and home study. It is hoped to start this at various centres early in 2007.

Group leaders, it is envisaged, will be appointed, and their activities regulated by the bishops. Notwithstanding the 'light touch' and informality of these astonishingly diverse mission ventures, some degree of oversight cannot be avoided, lest inappropriate situations were to arise. What would happen if the mission-shaped Church turns pear-shaped and if Fresh Expressions stale?, one might enquire.

At the ground roots

In the face of all these generalities, it may be relevant to enquire how groups actually operate on the ground. In these early days, there is comparatively little detailed information available and such as there is should not be taken as typical.