

Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal

Volume 3.1
Spring 2019
ISSN 2399-8989

Articles

Liberating the Laity: Theology for a Learning Church

ELAINE GRAHAM 3

A Call to Resist the Colonization of the Term *Christian* by Far-right
Politicians: Through Prayer, Lament, and Making Your Voice Heard

LYNSAY DOWNS 19

Scripture and Mission

NICHOLAS TAYLOR 32

The Roman Catholic Church and Ecumenism:
Twenty-First Century Perspectives

PHILIP KERR 52

Encountering the Gifford Lectures

BRIAN SMITH 56

Book Reviews

SIGURD BERGMANN, ed. *Eschatology as Imagining the End: Faith between Hope
and Despair*

Reviewed by NICHOLAS TAYLOR 60

PAUL MIDDLETON. *The Violence of the Lamb: Martyrs as Agents of Divine
Judgement in the Book of Revelation*

Reviewed by NICHOLAS TAYLOR 61

JENNIFER R. STRAWBRIDGE. *The Pauline Effect: The Use of the Pauline Epistles by
Early Christian Writers*

Reviewed by NICHOLAS TAYLOR 62

ANTHONY J. BLASI. *Social Science and the Christian Scriptures: Sociological Introductions and New Translation*

Reviewed by NICHOLAS TAYLOR 63

JOHN-FRANCIS FRIENDSHIP. *Enfolded in Christ: The Inner Life of a Priest*

Reviewed by ANNE TOMLINSON 64

Enquiries

Enquires to the Revd Dr Michael Hull
Scottish Episcopal Institute
21 Grosvenor Crescent
Edinburgh EH12 5EE
Scotland-UK
0131 225 6357
dos@scotland.anglican.org

Disclaimer

The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the authors in the *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal* do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church or the Scottish Episcopal Institute.

Copyright

The author of each article published here owns his or her own words. The articles in the *Scottish Episcopal Journal* may be freely redistributed in other media and non-commercial publications as long as the article is not abridged, edited or altered in any way without the express consent of the author. A redistributed article may not be sold for profit or included in another medium or publication that is sold for profit without the express consent of the author. The articles in the *Scottish Episcopal Journal* may be included in commercial publication or other media only if prior consent for republication is received from the author. The author may request compensation for republication for commercial use.

Revised Monday 3 June 2019

Liberating the Laity: Theology for a Learning Church¹

ELAINE GRAHAM

Grosvenor Research Professor of Practical Theology (University of Chester)

Introduction: Passions and Problems

In an article entitled *Richness and Ruefulness: Looking Back over a Life in Adult Education*, the adult theological educator David Goodbourn² reflected on his lifetime commitment to three causes: adult theological education, ecumenism and the promotion and development of the laity. Yet even though, for David, these three aspirations were clear priorities and fundamentally interconnected, he also noted that they often were frustrated by the syndromes of clericalism and institutional introversion on the part of the churches.³

The problem was in part, he said, that 'those who join lay formation schemes come increasingly to see their own ministries in terms of church-based roles'.⁴ The pressure is all to direct participants in lay ministry programmes towards validated routes and to define their ministry in ecclesial terms, such as licensed lay preacher, Reader and pastoral assistant roles. All too often, the lion's share of resources was directed towards the training of clergy and not the broader formation of the laity. Similarly, as churches come under increasing financial pressure in terms of future viability and survival, he notes, they 'tend to prioritize the institution's needs even while their public discourse talks of mission'.⁵

David Goodbourn also remarks on the strong ecumenical impetus of adult theological education, and how at the time it seemed to make so much sense to provide theological education collaboratively and ecumenically,

¹ Delivered as the third annual Scottish Episcopal Institute Lecture on Thursday 11 October 2018 in Parliament Hall of the University of St Andrews.

² David held adult education posts for the Northern Baptist College, Church of Scotland, CCTBI and was president of Manchester Partnership for Theological Education, Luther King House; Ecumenical Association for Adult Education and board of advisors of Ecumenical Institute, Bossey. He died in 2014, aged 66.

³ David Goodbourn, 'Richness and Ruefulness: Looking Back over a Life in Adult Theological Education', *Journal of Adult Theological Education* (2012), 78-93.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

and how this enabled new and innovative approaches to emerge.⁶ I will argue that this connection between ecumenism, ecclesiology and the liberation of the laity find a common integration in an understanding of the Church as the people of God participating in the mission of God. Drawing on the most recent denominational attempt to promote a theology of the laity – the Church of England’s report on lay leadership, entitled *Setting God’s People Free*, published in 2017⁷ – I will argue that we can renew his commitment by viewing these concerns as unified through a renewed understanding of mission: mission as equipping God’s people to discern, participate in and bear witness to the activities of God at work in the world. So it is with the idea of mission and *missio Dei* that I will conclude. That will necessarily require the church to adopt radical, inductive and contextual models of learning, and necessarily requires a way of being church that places the learning and continuing development of its members at the very heart of its priorities.⁸

Whatever Happened to the Laity?

The syndromes of clericalism and hierarchy against which David Goodbourn and others struggled regrettably still plague us. The formation and promotion of the laity are still marginalized. In 2015, a report from the Church of England, *Developing Discipleship*, made the following frank admission:

The Church [of England] has not devoted a great deal of time and energy to reflection on the discipleship [of] the whole people of God in recent times [...] Our vision for the Church and for discipleship is not as clear as it could be [...] Where do we find a compelling vision for lay discipleship in the world? Our understanding of service becomes restricted to the life of the Church [...] there has been some reflection on licensed lay ministry but very little on the service offered by the majority of Christians for the majority of time through their discipleship [...] [M]ost seriously, the witness and the mission of the whole Church is impoverished as Christians are neither encouraged nor sustained in the living out of their Christian faith in daily life.⁹

⁶ Ibid., pp. 83-85.

⁷ Archbishops’ Council Lay Leadership Task Group 2016, *Setting God’s People Free* (London: Church House Publishing, 2017).

⁸ Goodbourn, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁹ General Synod of the Church of England, 2015, pp. 7-8

Anyone wishing to pursue research into a contemporary theology of the laity will struggle to find resources of much substance. Certainly, most churches would support the principle of the discipleship of the whole people of God, endorsing the importance of following God from Monday to Saturday as well as on Sunday, and drawing no distinction between lay ministry within the church and the secular vocation of baptised Christians in the world.¹⁰ Yet whilst many programmes of laity development exist, both denominationally and cross-denominationally, they often struggle to articulate a systematic understanding of the relationship between lay and ordained ministries, and to strike a balance between the laity's contribution to the worship and maintenance of church organization and the exercise of Christian vocation within the wider world.

There has been a dearth of institutional thinking about the laity. For example, it is twenty years since the World Council of Churches held a major consultation on the subject.¹¹ Whenever attempts are made to articulate a robust and sustainable theology of the laity, they never seem quite to be, as *Developing Discipleship* conceded, 'fully absorbed into the lifeblood and culture of our Church'.¹²

As David Goodbourn observed, many denominations conflate lay discipleship with forms of accredited lay ministry within the church, or regard lay people as administrative support workers.¹³ Little is done, however, either to educate or support ordinary Christians in the many responsibilities they exercise every day in the world beyond the institutional church; for the best part of a generation, as Goodbourn noted, there has been a gradual withdrawal of resources away from formal programmes of laity education.¹⁴

So does that mean that the sum total of the church's thinking about the laity is merely that of a 'reserve army', to be mustered up to compensate for declining clergy numbers? Or might it be possible to articulate a theology of lay vocation as distinctive, and complementary to that of ordained ministry? Is lay ministry only legitimated within the gathered church or is it also recognized as something exercised by the dispersed church, present in the workplace, the wider community and family life?

¹⁰ Elaine Graham, 'Luther's Legacy: Rethinking the Theology of Lay Discipleship', *Ecclesiology*, 13.3 (2017), 324-348.

¹¹ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-lay-formation/on-being-christian-in-the-world/index>.

¹² General Synod, 2015, §37.

¹³ Goodbourn, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Despite the paucity of recent thinking there is an impressive ecumenical legacy of debate which, in its day, was truly inspirational and innovative. Yet despite that the church appears to suffer from an acute case of amnesia towards an inheritance which has the potential to provide us with a robust and expansive theology of lay vocation on which to build. Yet, as David Goodbourn observed, such initiatives are often the first casualty of ecclesiastical retrenchment,¹⁵ even though, as I shall argue, they are actually the key to a reinvigorated mission strategy.

Ecumenical and Historical Perspectives

The Swiss Reformed theologian and historian Hans-Ruedi Weber has argued that 'Laity is not a biblical word',¹⁶ a claim which should alert us from the start that we must not assume that words we use today have always meant the same. Whilst the Greek term *laos*, meaning 'the people of God' (*laos tou theou*) is certainly a biblical concept, it may not map neatly onto our structures of bishops, presbyters, clergy, deacons, or lay readers.

Weber argues that it may be more fruitful to trace our word 'laity' back to the Greek word *laikos*, which is already in use by the end of the first century, and features, for example, in the first letter of Clement, dated around 96 CE.¹⁷ It carries the sense of those who were not clergy or religious, denoting those who might be considered 'profane' since they stood beyond the sacred space of the temple. This begins to point us towards a distinction between those who are in the world rather than being concerned with the liturgical and ecclesial ministries of word and sacrament. Overall, however, the unity of 'the people of God' was the primary concern. Any division of labour was tempered by the understanding that the 'people of God' included everyone, regardless of status or office. Even as the church community became organized into a hierarchy, it would have been understood that whatever the function or specific role might be, it was exercised as part of one body and one common relationship in Christ.

Furthermore, this terminology does not simply denote 'people' in a general sense, but as in covenanted, or chosen people. Initially, Israel is called out from among the nations to serve as 'a kingdom of priests and a

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Hans-Ruedi Weber, *On Being Christian in the World: Reflections on the Ecumenical Discussions about the Laity* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1997). <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-lay-formation/on-being-christian-in-the-world> [accessed 2 May 2018].

¹⁷ Ibid.

holy nation', representing the world to God and God to the world.¹⁸ The idea of the 'priesthood of all believers' is rooted in biblical understandings of the priestly and kingly office of Jesus: in baptism Christians take on the incarnational and sacrificial ministry of Jesus. Priesthood entails mediation, intercession, reconciliation and sacrifice; this is the quality of the whole people as the Body of Christ and not just something conferred at or by ordination. Finally, the language of 'the people of God' should also serve as a reminder that Christian discipleship and vocation are not simply individual, personal or private, but spring from being 'incorporated', to a community: to the Body of Christ, 'the people of God' – usually through baptism. Insofar as all baptised Christians share in the work of representing and offering the world to God, everyone indeed shares in the priesthood of *all* believers.

The roots of a contemporary theology of the laity may be traced to certain significant developments within the church from the mid-twentieth century. The rise of a theology of the laity went hand in hand with the emergence of the ecumenical movement. Perhaps we see here the fruits of a desire to work beyond the conventional denominational boundaries; to find new ways of being church, in the light of a renewed sense of the laity as the vanguard of God's mission in the world and the need to evangelize contemporary secular culture as once the Church evangelized overseas nations.

In Germany after 1945 the movement for the laity gained credence by playing a significant role in the reconstruction of the state in the post-war situation and found form in the *Kirchentag* and the Evangelical Lay Centres and Academies. The first *Kirchentag* was held in Essen in 1950, drawing 25,000 participants and 200,000 worshippers for the final service. Its vision was clear: the reconstruction of society via the auspices of ecclesiastical renewal. As its founder, a layperson called Rudolf von Thadden-Trieglaff, wrote in 1958:

The *Kirchentag* has set itself the task to call Protestant lay Christians to their responsibilities in all sectors of public life and to make them active, particularly in the economic, social and political fields where Christian principles are on trial and where Christian obedience has to stand the test. The layman is anything but some sort of marginal figure on the outskirts of the Church. He is the essential interpreter of the Christian message in the battlefield of the world. Therefore he must be spiritually

¹⁸ Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1958), p. 155.

prepared for open confession of his faith, and for active service in everyday life as well as the congregation.¹⁹

Perhaps some of that military language reflects von Thadden-Trieglaff's experiences as a soldier on the Russian front, but his conviction that the laity are the ambassadors and agents of the gospel at the very front-line (terminology that has found new currency in our day) is clear. Inspired by the rise of Protestant lay academies in Germany in the generations after 1945, this spirit infused emerging patterns of adult theological education more widely, and set down the strong principle that 'lay training meant equipping people as Christians in the world more than it meant training them for roles in the church'.²⁰

Lay Christians as integral to the churches' mission in the world also lay at the heart of the establishment of the World Council of Churches. It was at the second WCC Assembly, in Evanston in 1954, that the question of the laity was foregrounded. Taking as its theme 'Christ the Hope of the World' the sixth section was devoted to 'The Laity: the Christian in His [sic] Vocation.' Here the statement was unequivocal:

The time has come to make the ministry of the laity explicit, visible and active in the world. The real battles of the faith today are being fought in factories, shops, offices, and farms, in political parties and government agencies, in countless homes, in the press, radio and television, the relationship of nations. Very often it is said that the church should "go into these spheres"; but the fact is, that the church is already in these spheres in the persons of its laity.²¹

In 1955, as a direct consequence of this emphasis, the WCC set up a dedicated department of the laity, led by Hans-Ruedi Weber. Its aim was 'to provide a worldwide network of people, movements and organizations related to the ecumenical discovery of the laity'.²²

¹⁹ Cited in Nelvin Vos, Daniel Pryfogle and Melvin George, *Faith in the World: Mark Gibbs and the Vesper Society, Being God's Lively People* (San Francisco: Vesper Society, 2009), p. 41.

²⁰ Goodbourn, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

²¹ Cited in Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr., *Theological and Biblical Perspectives on the Laity* (Division for Ministry, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1989) at <http://www.jardigitalworks.com/mdl/stuempfle06.html>.

²² Weber, *op. cit.*

Similarly, the establishment of the ecumenical study center at Bossey was set up with three inter-related emphases: 'on laity, on the renewal of the church and on "the penetration of the Church into all realms of life."' ²³To this end it sought to become a 'laboratory' where people from all walks of life could meet to confront 'the urgent agenda points of the world with the exigencies of biblical faith'. ²⁴ At the first course, which gathered thirty-seven lay people from fifteen nations, over two hundred hours of lectures and seminars were scheduled – including forty hours on thought and development in the post-war world, forty on the life of the church and forty on the vocation of the laity.

There is also a link with the twentieth century world missionary movement, too. As former European colonies became independent from mid-century, many of these former missionaries returned home to the West from international postings with experience of a global church that extended beyond Western Christendom, and with a heightened awareness of the encounter between Christianity and other faiths. Often, this translated into a conviction that Western culture, which was already showing signs of secularization, was itself now in need of evangelization:

[...] mission was no longer to geographical areas of the world: it must be to a culture becoming world-wide. "World" began to assume a new meaning. "The Church in the world" meant not only the church on the map but the Church in a world of men [sic] and institutions – political, economic and social – which had become (in the proper sense of the word) "autonomous", a law to themselves. The era of domination of every area of life by the ecclesiastical institution was long since over, and with it the crippling restriction on human freedom and creativity. From a relationship of domination, the Church passed by successive stages to one of dwindling and often ineffectual contact with large areas of the life of society, especially those areas which were new. ²⁵

A key text from this mid-twentieth century period is Hendrik Kraemer's *A Theology of the Laity*, first published in 1958. Kraemer was a Dutch Reformed layman and missiologist, who served both in Indonesia and as the first director of the Bossey Institute. Kraemer essentially places the laity at

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Kathleen Bliss, *We the People* (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 52.

the centre of a new ecclesiology that is founded on a comprehensive theology of incarnation and redemption:

The responsible participation of the laity in the discharge of the Church's divine calling is not primarily a matter of idealism and enthusiasm or organizational efficiency, but of a new grasp of and commitment to the meaning of God's redemptive purpose with man [*sic*] and with the world, in the past, the present and the future: a purpose which has its foundation and inexhaustible content in Christ, God incarnate, who died for us on the Cross and rose from the dead.²⁶

In the UK Kathleen Bliss's short paperback, *We the People* published in 1963, crystallized much of what was being said in Protestant circles at this time. Her professional formation typifies that emergent caste of lay people who had come to prominence in the early ecumenical movement of the mid-twentieth century. She had experience of international mission (in Bliss's case, in the Church of South India); she had worked with J. H. Oldham in the industrial fellowships of the Christian Frontier Council; and she had pursued educational work with the YMCA and Church of England Board of Education.²⁷ *We the People* bears many of the hallmarks of the themes highlighted earlier: a sense of the global nature of Christianity and the need to transpose what had been learned from international mission to historically non-Christian cultures back 'home' to a nominally Christian but secularizing West; an awareness of the untapped potential of articulate, confident lay expertise available to the churches, plus a conviction that the role of the laity transcended other confessional or denominational differences, not least because in terms of 'mission' to those outside the churches these distinctions mattered little.

Throughout, Bliss stresses the double reality of the church: its creation as 'divine community' as the Body of Christ, the spirit-filled community, and its material existence as social institution, 'cast out upon the world'.²⁸ For lay people, that tension encapsulates the double aspect of their lives as Christians living between the 'gathered' church in parish or congregation and the 'scattered' church, which is in, but not of, the world.²⁹ Yet Bliss is adamant that these two aspects form a unity; neither should eclipse or displace the other – and I will pick up later on the interconnection between

²⁶ Kraemer, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

²⁷ (1908-1989) <http://austausche.ioe.ac.uk/Kathleen%20Bliss.htm>.

²⁸ Bliss, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

gathered and scattered as one of the hallmarks of a learning church. How do the activities of the gathered church: liturgy, preaching, Bible study, prayer – nurture and reflect its dispersed or scattered activities? How can people be encouraged to bring the insights of theological tradition to bear on the issues they face at home, at work, in the public square? And what kinds of models of learning – and to what end – does the church need to promote as a result?

But regrettably says Bliss, for most lay people, the normal experience is one of disconnect and a growing gulf between the expectations of the church and the culture of everyday life:

All the laity of all churches are in a common situation in the world. Wherever he [*sic*] works, wherever he meets the community at large, he finds that Christians are in a minority. His faith comes under fire or is ignored, or even pitied. He is regarded often as a relic of the past.

When he goes to church that past comes alive, he hears, speaks and sings its language with sincerity and it becomes for him a vehicle of eternal realities. But he is conscious, acutely or vaguely, that all sorts of ideas about man [*sic*] and the world, hidden in the words, are of the past, belonging to a pastoral or patriarchal society, and to a triple-decker view of the universe. Instead of making sense of the world for him, the Christian's faith, couched in this language, is often a problem he himself is trying to make sense of. Yet he needs it to guide and sustain him in the world.³⁰

Another name closely associated with the post-war movement in Europe to mobilize the laity to carry their faith into secular areas of society was Mark Gibbs (1920-86) a school teacher based in Audenshaw, in Greater Manchester. Gibbs too had been active in a number of post-war lay movements, including the international committee of the German *Kirchentag*, the Christian Frontier Council and the Iona Community. His book, *God's Frozen People*, co-written with T. Ralph Morton, and published in 1964,³¹ was effectively a manifesto for the empowerment of the laity –

³⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

³¹ Mark Gibbs and T. Ralph Morton, *God's Frozen People: A Book for and about Ordinary Christians* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964). Morton was a Church of Scotland minister and deputy leader of the Iona Community.

whom he defined as Christians 'who are committed to God's will as revealed in Jesus Christ, and to that will not only on Sunday and in our private religion, not only in church affairs, but also in the whole spectrum of our lives' activities.'³² Gibbs went on to say:

[...] the main vocation of God's people is not to build and to support church structures (though some of these may certainly be necessary). It is to find a new style of humanity – in explicitly Christian terms to be the Body of Christ, the intelligent and committed embodiment of Christian love and service – *in the secular structures in which God has placed or will place them.*³³

These world-affirming emphases are also reflected in much of the theology of the Second Vatican Council, with its emphasis on the reform of a church that saw itself as a servant of the Kingdom in solidarity with the unfolding of humanity's story in history:

At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task. In language intelligible to every generation, she should be able to answer the ever recurring questions which men [sic] ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other. We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live.³⁴

The church needs to nurture what Hendrik Kraemer referred to as 'spiritual intelligence': an ability to read the secular context theologically; to foster discernment capable of identifying the presence of God and the signs of the Kingdom in the midst of world events. This casts the calling of the lay person to the practices of action and reflection, since this is an interpretative task: of attending, understanding and responding to the questions posed anew by every generation. Lay people are ambassadors of Christ, mediating between

³² Vos, Pryfogle and George, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

³³ Mark Gibbs. 'In the Structures of the World', (Vesper society, 1970), p. 1 at <http://vesper.org/wp-content/uploads/GibbsEssayStructures3FLAME.pdf>.

³⁴ Gaudium et Spes, 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World', in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. by A. Flannery (Leominster: Fowler Wright, 1965 [1981]), pp. 903–1014 (p. 905).

the faith of the church and the culture of the world. This ambassadorial role is also one of apologetics, too, in terms of being prepared to 'give an account of one's faith' (1 Peter 3. 15) to those who ask.

Setting God's People Free

So: we are developing a sense of the interdependence of mission as a calling to new ways of being church in and for the world, and of the significance of lay ministry at the vanguard of this calling.

In January 2015, the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England announced a series of far-reaching reviews of its structures of finance, governance and training, known as 'Reform and Renewal'. The programme included a pledge to 'a debate on encouraging the discipleship of the whole people of God as the foundation for re-imagining ministry for the 21st century'.³⁵ Two working parties were duly established on the role of the laity: one on accredited lay ministry, such as Readers and pioneer evangelists; the second on lay leadership.³⁶ I was a member of this latter group, which met between March 2016 and February 2017.

Our guiding question was nothing less than how the laity could be released and empowered to exercise a range of ministries primarily within the wider world beyond the Church. We reached two main conclusions:

First, until, together, we find a way to form and equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that demonstrate the Gospel we will never evangelise the nation [...]

This reflects: (1) A conscious recognition of the crucial positioning of the lay person on (what we term) the Frontline, between Church and world, and the acknowledgement that the task of equipping lay people must be a central priority of mainstream church life. (2) Clarity about the fact that, in a new and overwhelming context, the Church has insufficiently grappled with and in general failed to equip and release its people actively to engage with these roles and responsibilities beyond the 'gathered' congregation.

Second, until, together, we recover a healthy relationship between lay people and clergy, based on baptismal mutuality and a proper complementarity of roles and gifts, we will never form flourishing Christian communities that can evangelise the nation.

This statement is drawn from a conviction that laity and clergy are partners, not rivals, in the Church's ministry, but that often the relationship is dysfunctional – one of rivalry, collusion or co-dependence. It is also underpinned by three key theological concepts: baptism, the nature of the

³⁵ General Synod, 2015, p. 1.

³⁶ <https://www.churchofengland.org/renewal-reform/setting-gods-people-free.aspx>.

Church and the primacy of mission. To begin with our common baptism: this marks us as one people in Christ, draws us into his Body and commissions us to share in his mission to the world. Beyond that, of course, there are further differentiations of ministry, whether that is ordination or some kind of licensed or accredited lay ministry. The metaphor of the Church as a body of many parts in I Corinthians 12 has traditionally been used to highlight its nature as one of unity and diversity.

This then raises a set of questions about ecclesiology and mission. Fundamentally, the nature of the Church's calling is never simply to exist as an end in itself, but to participate in and point to the mission of God in the world. The task of the Church – clergy and laity alike – is to be herald, sacrament and witness to the Kingdom of God. As the saying goes, 'It's not the church of God that has a mission, but the God of mission who has a church.'³⁷

A Theology Fit for Purpose

As a result, the Task Group called for 'a robust and theologically grounded narrative and vision of the role of the laity and lay leadership',³⁸ in order to attend to this important relationship between life in the gathered and scattered, or dispersed, church. It is about bridging that gulf of which Kathleen Bliss so presciently spoke. How might ordinary lay Christians be encouraged to 'make the connections' between collective worship and other practices such as reading the Bible, personal prayer and so on, with the varied pressures and demands of family, work and finance? How might the liturgies of the church – which after all means 'the work of the people' – speak to the dilemmas people are facing every day as voters, or consumers? Does the Church really equip lay people to connect the insights of Scripture and tradition with the complex realities of business or popular culture, or the challenges of caring for dependent relatives? Are lay people fully prepared to respond confidently to the questions that non-Christian friends, relatives or colleagues might ask about their faith? The tasks of mission and ministry are therefore about equipping, preparing and supporting the laity in these vocations.

Thesis 1: A mission-shaped church is a learning church. I want to suggest that this vision is given greater substance if we continue to think about the connection between a learning church, a theology of the laity and an

³⁷ <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/mission/missionevangalism.aspx>

³⁸ Ibid.

emphasis on *mission*.³⁹ This has added impact if we consider contemporary understandings of mission not as expecting everyone and everything to be assimilated into the priorities of the institutional Church, but in terms of *missio Dei* or the activity of God in reconciling creation back to Godself in Christ. This also goes beyond personal evangelism and conversion; it is evangelization as the transformation of social structures and the whole of human culture – that emphasis that found currency in the early years of the ecumenical movement. Mission entails a kind of public theology insofar as it is the proclamation, in word and deed, of God-in-the-world, to the world. That, I would argue, entails a three-fold process of discernment, participation and witness – as with the extract from *Gaudium et Spes* given earlier. How do we read the signs of the times in the world around us; how does God’s spirit move us to share in God’s redemptive activity; are we sufficiently theologically literate to ‘give an account’ of the Gospel in public?

Essentially, then, we need to build on the idea that the relationship between ‘gathered’ and ‘scattered’ is one of synergy or synthesis rather than dichotomy. How do the activities of the gathered community – including liturgy, prayer, Bible study, spiritual formation as well as more formal or intentional programmes of adult theological education – actually represent the work of a ‘learning church’ that seeks to equip its members for the parts of their lives in which they are ‘dispersed’ into the world? And what kinds of theological literacy and formation are needed for the three-fold task of discernment, participation and witness?

Thesis 2: At the heart of a learning church is an empowered laity. It follows that there is an urgent and non-negotiable need to equip and nurture lay Christians to be the Church in the world – which begins from trying to make sense of the questions the world is asking, and acknowledging the gulf between Church and the rest of our everyday lives, including the assumptions of most of those whom we encounter in the world beyond the Church.

I have been arguing that the idea of the *missio Dei* leads us to see the life of faith as a response to God’s actions in the world as those of attending, then acting and then bearing witness. That requires the Church not just to treat the laity as reserves of labour or activism, but to build them up as sources of wisdom -- an informed and theologically-literate laity. I don’t necessarily think that’s about cognitive learning or acquiring qualifications, either. It is much more in line with the Second Vatican Council’s emphasis on glimpsing the signs of the times and seeking the presence of God at work in

³⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission*, 2nd ed. (New York: Orbis, 2011).

the world. As a practical theologian I might also talk about ‘practical wisdom’ (an increasingly prominent theme in my discipline) as one of the marks of an authentic, lay, world-affirming, missional knowledge – that capacity to draw creatively on experience, tradition/ Scripture, culture. But I think it also goes beyond activism alone to embrace virtue ethics and an emphasis on Christian character.

How are Christians who are not in specialist ecclesial roles within the Church [...] equipped to integrate their regular patterns of [...] worship, personal devotion, Bible reading and other practices of faith with the demands of family life, finances, personal relationships, politics, media and consumerism?

Does the Church really resource lay people to connect the insights of Scripture [reason] and tradition with the fast-moving realities of commerce and popular culture, the challenges of caring for those around them, or of responding to the concerns of non-Christian friends, relatives or colleagues?⁴⁰

It seems to me, then, that part of the work of the ‘gathered’ Church is to cultivate Christian virtue – the formation of character – and foster discernment – by enabling people to make sense of their faith. How such a spirituality is cultivated, therefore, also seems an important theological and practical imperative. This goes beyond formal educational programmes to embrace a broader range of attributes. Clearly, the practices of prayer, worship, private devotion – such as forms of structured and guided reading of Scripture and other literature – study groups, formal and informal pastoral care are already vital sources of nurture and support for many lay Christians.

So I am led to ask, what kind of skills/aptitudes does an empowered laity exercising effective leadership in church and world require? And how might these be ‘delivered’ – imparted and communicated? Where do we begin: from the givens of doctrine which are then ‘applied’ to life’s dilemmas or from the challenges and opportunities of the everyday?

Thesis 3: A learning church is a listening church. Again, the kind of adult theological curriculum espoused by David Goodbourn seems highly relevant here. For him, theology (and theological education) ‘responds to the questions raised by the context, [...] operates in categories defined by the

⁴⁰ Lay Leadership Task Group, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

context and [...] reads the theological resources through the perspectives of the context.⁴¹

If discipleship is also about learning these kinds of skills of reflection on/in action, then the question becomes, what does it mean to become a 'learning church'? Certainly, formal programmes of basic Christian education – such as [Pilgrim](#) and [Alpha](#) – are very important in offering a foundation for learning. However, the task of equipping laity and clergy for this journey of life-long learning goes beyond a model that is purely about academic or cognitive knowledge. It is about nurturing our sensibilities and our abilities to make those connections between what happens in church and the task of living faithfully more like a kind of spiritual or practical wisdom, perhaps, than a set of qualifications. If this is so, then the entire activity of the Church – and especially its worship, its preaching, its teaching, its pastoral care – should be dedicated to helping the laity to grow into the fullness of Christ. In this way, the 'gathered' and 'scattered' are complementary to one another.

But it also goes beyond formal 'programmes' of theological education into the very heart of what Church is about in its gathered mode, which is the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Another reason, I think, to consider how to establish a creative interdependence and dialectic between gathered and dispersed.

So I return to the conviction that a theology of the laity depends on a robust (but hopefully ecumenical) ecclesiology. I've been arguing that, in Kathleen Bliss's terms, the scattered church (probably) needs (some sort of) a gathered church. I have also been reflecting on David Goodbourn's concern at the difficulties of upholding any model of lay leadership that does not become absorbed into one of supplementing clerical roles or maintaining ecclesial structures,⁴² and how that seems such an entrenched position.

Yet as Kathleen Bliss once pointed out, the gathered and scattered people of God exist as an interdependent whole, not least since the transmission of faith and the support of the laity in their dispersed or 'scattered' activity still requires the continuity of established resources, structures and offices. Yet in turn, if that interdependence is to thrive, we need to ask whether those same structures might have to change – or even die – in order for new areas of growth and innovation to emerge.

⁴¹ Goodbourn, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁴² Bliss, *op. cit.*; Church of England Board of Education, *Called to New Life: The World of Lay Discipleship* (London: Church House Publishing, 1999); Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

I end with two quotations from *Setting God's People Free*:

It is when people become aware of the great things that Christ has done for them and wake up to the gifts that the Holy Spirit has bestowed on them that a joyful and willing leadership emerges, for it is out of communities of disciples that cadres of leaders will appear. The opportunity before us is therefore nothing less than the liberation of both clergy and laity into the fullness of following Christ for the sake of the church and the world.⁴³

Liberating the laity to be confident and faithful disciples is integral to effective mission and to building a healthy church. Without proper theological undergirding, however, it will be impossible to form and nurture Christians who are capable of proclaiming and living out the gospel in their daily lives, engaging confidently and faithfully with the complex challenges of today, and becoming an effective presence in their communities.⁴⁴

⁴³ Lay Leadership Task Group, *op. cit.*, p. 8

⁴⁴ Lay Leadership Task Group, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

A Call to Resist the Colonization of the Term *Christian* by Far-right Politicians: Through Prayer, Lament, and Making Your Voice Heard

LYNSAY DOWNS

Rector, St Ternan's Church (Banchory)

As an Episcopal priest with an academic background in European Studies (languages, political history, philosophy, and economics) it is hardly surprising that I am perturbed by the growth of right-wing politics throughout the continent. We are living at a time when the nation state is under strain. Due to the globalization of capital and the stateless opportunities for trading and influence offered by the internet, the extent to which national governments can exert political and economic control over those they govern is changing. Political engagement in the *West* is increasingly issue based and local, whilst economic, environmental, security and employment decisions need to be negotiated at a supra-national level. The advantage in this complexity is that a wider variety of people than ever before may participate in our societies. There is greater freedom to express and define ourselves in relation to others, and it is more noticeable when we exclude *others* from our societies.

I am excited to see the emergence of such complexity, as it is consonant with the glimpses of the Kingdom of God offered by Jesus in parables and described by St Paul as a way of being in which 'there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3. 28 NRSV). Human beings do not, however, have a strong track record of handling complexity well. In Europe, at present, opinions are polarizing as those who offer clear, simple ways to identify one against another and to define a solvable cause for an apparently self-evident problem attract the support of many who are struggling to negotiate their place in the new, more complex society that is developing. It is particularly disturbing that so many of these polarizing leaders are claiming the defence of *Christian* values or society as the basis for their reactions against complexity.¹ As practising Christians, we should

¹ For example, "Liberal democracy is no longer able to protect people's dignity, provide freedom, guarantee physical security or maintain Christian culture. Some in Europe are still tinkering with it, because they believe that they can repair it, but they fail to understand that it is not the structure that is defective: the world has changed. Our response to this changed world, the Hungarian people's response, has been to replace the shipwreck of liberal

be querying the derivation of this appeal to Christian values and (indirect) claim to be acting in the name of God. To understand this, we need to go back to the beginning.

Beginnings

All societies have their creation myth. In Babylon, the first city-state, the myth was told thus, “Tiamat, “salt water, primal chaos,” lay in primordial bliss with Aspu, “sweet water,” “abyss”. From their mingling waters precipitated a beginning.’² As the Babylonian state became imperial, creation-by-war superseded the tale of cosmic procreation. The Enuma Elish is a re-writing of Babylon’s creation myth in which Tiamat is slaughtered by the heroic Marduk, conquering chaos and giving a new creation-by-war into a single hand who becomes Lord of the Universe.³ Since the Enuma Elish served not just to commemorate the creative deed, but to justify therewith the political hegemony of the city-state of Babylon, we are not surprised to read its raw will to power. Marduk’s heroic deed was based on a negotiation to end all negotiation:

democracy by building 21st-century Christian democracy. This guarantees human dignity, freedom and security, protects equality between men and women and the traditional family model, suppresses anti-Semitism, defends our Christian culture and offers our nation the chance of survival and growth. We are Christian democrats, and we want Christian democracy” (Extract from Orbán Viktor’s speech at the beginning of his 4th Mandate, Published in *The Visegrad Post*, 12 May 2018). Or, “We see that many Euro-Atlantic countries have de facto gone down the path of the rejection of... Christian values. Moral principles are being denied... What could be a greater witness of the moral crisis of the human socium than the loss of the capacity for self-reproduction. But today practically all developed countries can no longer reproduce themselves. Without the values laid down in Christianity and other world religions, without the norms of ethics and morality formed in the course of millennia, people inevitably lose their human dignity. And we consider it natural and right to defend these values” (Extract from Vladimir Putin at the Valdai Forum in 2013). Note too that American President Donald Trump defended what he described as America’s spiritual bedrock in an impassioned speech to conservative voters in Washington, pledging to “stop all attacks on our Judeo-Christian values” (Extract from article by Nash Jenkins in *Time*, 13 October 2017).

² Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (Oxford: Routledge, 2003), Loc 977 Kindle ebook.

³ *Ibid.*, Locs 977-1021.

If I am indeed to be your avenger, to vanquish Tiamat and to keep you alive, convene the assembly and proclaim my lot supreme [...] May I through the utterance of my mouth determine destinies instead of you. Whatever I create shall remain unaltered.⁴

This is the first known dominology myth. It has been suggested that the Elohist (writer of the Genesis 1 creation story) was writing a Hebrew version of this myth, deliberately subverting the dominology whilst the Hebrew people were in exile in Babylon.⁵ 'At the beginning of the Creation of heaven and earth, when the earth was without form and void and there was darkness, the breath of God vibrated on the face of the waters and God said, "Let there be [...]"'.⁶ The Elohist's creation narrative is about letting be... By the words of Elohim's mouth possibilities are given the opportunity to exist. As the breath of God vibrates over the waters of the *tehom* new possibilities emerge... Of the endless possibilities in the waters of the *tehom*, God "lets be", gives existence to [...]. For the Elohist this was happening at the beginning of the creation of heaven and earth, an ongoing process not performed once and for all. Elohim's tone, read in this light, is closer to that of a would-be lover seducing possibilities from the *tehom* into being than that of a commander issuing fiats. It is a much more complex and gentler picture than we are used to and does not easily break down into binary oppositions. It is a creation narrative far better in keeping with that described in the whirlwind tale of Job and consonant with the God Jesus embodies who will not use force to get his own way but invites participation in a kingdom of endless new beginnings. It is the kind of beginning the first followers of Jesus would have recognized.⁷

Unfortunately, it is not the kind of beginning many Christians recognize today. Since the third and fourth centuries CE the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* has come to dominate the Christian imagination. In the patriarchal councils where the many emerging forms of Christianity were argued and tested, the conviction that God was omnipotent emerged. With

⁴ Ibid., Loc 2968.

⁵ See Ibid., Chapter 6 'Sea of Heteroglossia'.

⁶ *Pentateuch with Targum, Onkelos, Haptaroth and Rashi's Commentary: Genesis*, trans. by M. Rosenbaum and A. M. Silberman (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1965), p. 2.

⁷ *Recognized, not believed* as people of the first century understood the truth system of mythos as well as logos as described in Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God* (London: Vintage, 2009), especially the introduction and first two chapters.

that conviction in mind the Elohist's narrative became problematic. God is omnipotent, *He* could not, therefore, depend on anything but his own logos to create. So, a two-step creation was proposed in which God first created the *tehom* and then began the creation of the heavens and the earth. This eventually cohered into the *creatio ex nihilo* of Augustine that has dominated our thinking since the fourth century CE.

Creatio ex nihilo is a doctrine of absolute power based on a negotiation to end all negotiations just as in the *Enuma Elish*. The Christian negotiation happened off-stage, however, in councils and treaties and by the gradual eclipsing of the second verse of Genesis – the silencing of the *tehom*. Without the complexity of the *tehom*, cosmogony is much easier to understand. God commands and it is done. No wonder the Roman Empire was willing to ally itself with this new monotheism. When people are ruled in the name of an omnipotent God, then their leaders will also be seen as omnipotent. So it has been for emperors, absolute monarchs, the governments that deposed them and their successors throughout the Western tradition of politics. It is to this dominology that leaders such as Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and Viktor Orbán are appealing when they seek to defend *Christian* culture and values. In the face of complexity, they are each trying to make the negotiation to end all negotiations.

Case Study

As someone who lived and studied in Hungary during Orbán's first term in power, I turn my attention to Orbán's bid for supremacy and wielding of *Christian values* in Hungary. Orbán's first term in power coincided with that of Tony Blair in the UK and there were frequent comparisons made between the two. This is not surprising as both were lawyers, both drew ideals of community from life in Oxford colleges and both were unusually young to be Prime Minister. Both men also spoke of promoting Christian values and saw religion at the service of the state in building up communities and promoting the *common good*. As Blair put it, 'what is the idea of community but the national acknowledgement of our own interdependence? In truth faith is reason's ally [...] Religions help to make our communities, communities of values'.⁸ Mark D. Chapman, however, notes the irony that:

In Britain church membership and practise have halved in 40 years [...] Christianity has become a lifestyle choice rather than something that is simply the warp and weft of British society[...] Churches will no doubt continue to exist for their adherents for

⁸ Mark D. Chapman, *Blair's Britain: A Christian Critique* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005), p. 20.

a long-time yet, *but it is impossible to recreate the Christian nation: the culture of Christianity has vanished.*⁹

If this is the case in Britain, where Christianity is still available as a background to the public discourse, how much more impossible must it be to recreate the Christian nation in Hungary, where the Christian discourse was suppressed under Communism? It does beg the question, what is Orbán trying to do?

We might begin to unpick the answer considering Orbán's reaction to losing power in the elections of 2002:

József Debreczeni, an adviser to Orbán after his first rightward turn – and later his biographer – [states]: “They say that power spoils good politicians,”. “With Orbán that wasn't the case. It was the loss of power that did that.” During an intense one-and-a-half days after the election, Mr Debreczeni listened as Mr Orbán blamed his political demise on a partisan news media that needed to be reined in. Mr Debreczeni said that Mr Orbán had drawn one conclusion: “This democracy thing, where power can slip so quickly from you, was no good.” “And from that point on,” Mr Debreczeni added, “he spent his time preparing so that if he ever won power again, he wouldn't lose it”.¹⁰

Jiri Pehe, a former aide to Václav Havel, reflecting on this pattern in Central Europe more widely, said, ‘democracy proved to be a very difficult project for this generation of politicians to master’.¹¹

It is my assertion that the frustration felt by Orbán and others in the face of the complexity of life at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when the great metanarratives with which we have held back the chaos for so long are breaking down, is driving their desire to end all negotiation and reign supreme. For this reason Orbán and others reinvent themselves as defenders of a way of life that is under attack, a way of life that needs their defence; all the people have to do is allow them to have absolute power.¹²

⁹ Ibid., pp. 21-22 (italics added).

¹⁰ Patrick Kingsley, ‘How a Liberal Dissident Became a Far-right Hero, in Hungary and Beyond’ *New York Times*, 6 April 2018 (Italics added), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/06/world/europe/viktor-orban-hungary-politics.html> [accessed 12 September 2018].

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See Patrick Kingsley, ‘How Viktor Orbán Bends Hungarian Society to His Will’, *New York Times*, 27 March 2018 at

For Orbán's narrative to be convincing, the life that is under attack must be a way of life that once existed in Hungary. The Hungarian parliament still displays the crown of St Stephen (István I) who converted the Magyars to Christianity (in the bloodthirsty manner of Christendom) in order to unite the Roman and Byzantine churches in recognizing his authority to rule. A *Christian* way of life is, therefore, part of the national narrative, the collective memory, but because religion is a matter of practice,¹³ not knowledge, Christianity is known only to a small minority who continued to worship, even under Soviet rule. Orbán is therefore free in Hungary to offer an account of Christian values that will appeal to those who are struggling with complexity and wish to see some clear boundaries marked. The Christianity Orbán conjures is, therefore, inherently xenophobic as can be seen in statements such as:

Let us confidently declare that Christian democracy is not liberal[...] Christian democracy gives priority to Christian culture[...] Christian democracy is anti-immigration[...] Christian democracy rests on the foundations of the Christian family model; once more, this is an illiberal concept.¹⁴

Stop and read that through again. I will now begin to break down the ways in which I find these statements problematic as a follower of Jesus, commonly called 'Christian'.

Firstly, let us consider *Christian democracy*. Each constituent word holds a great variety of meanings depending on the person with whom you are talking and the context that you are talking in. The two words together are resonant of the European Christian Democrat parties but appear to be describing a political system rather than a party affiliation. The question as to what a Christian democracy might look like, whether it is possible or even desirable, could keep social scientists, philosophers, theologians, and political analysts in work for years. Here it is simply dumped with the weight of borrowed authority, as if it were an unproblematic concept.

Secondly, what does the statement '*Christian democracy gives priority to Christian culture*' mean? If we accept Christian democracy as a term, one acceptable reading of it is: a democracy shaped by the teachings of Christ and the people that follow them. Despite the fact that, throughout the centuries, there have been Christians who have colluded with nation states

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/world/europe/viktor-orban-hungary.html> [accessed 13 December 2018].

¹³ See Armstrong, *op. cit.*, Loc 110.

¹⁴ Viktor Orbán: Tűsnádfürdő speech, 28 July 2018.

and their rulers to impose Christianity on others and build up their power, there have also always been those who held close to the truth that Christianity is not about imposing our will on others, but letting be and serving indiscriminately.¹⁵ The Russian Orthodox Metropolitan A. Bloom said:

The Church must never speak from a position of strength. The Church ought to be, if you will, as powerless as God himself, who does not coerce, but who calls and unveils the beauty and the truth of things without imposing them.¹⁶

Christians are the churches and thus a follower of Christ must never speak from a position of authority. Looking directly to Jesus, we know that although Jesus was a rabbi, he was by all accounts no ordinary one. Jesus was in crucial respects a religious and cultural revolutionary. He taught that although God had revealed himself uniquely to the Jews (John 4.22), Jewishness alone was no guarantee of favour with God (Matthew 8.10–12). He taught that the temple would be destroyed (Matthew 24; Mark 13), and that worship of God would be centred in the heart, not in Jerusalem (John 4. 21–24). He taught that a kind Samaritan or a repentant tax-collector was better than a pious but proud or heartless Pharisee (Luke 10.29–37; 18.9–14). He invited women to be his disciples (Luke 10.38–42). He granted healing to Gentiles (Matthew 15. 21–28). He ate in the homes of outcasts (Luke 19.1–10).¹⁷

The third statement, that *‘Christian democracy is anti-immigration’*, is one of the most outlandish. Accepting the reading of Christian Democracy in the paragraph above, the Scriptures that Jesus was familiar with, along with the Gospels and Epistles of the Christian Bible, tell a very different story. I will allow them to speak for themselves. ‘Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares’ (Hebrews 13.2 ESV). ‘For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you

¹⁵ The Crusades, Inquisition and barbarous extension of Christianity under rulers such as István I cannot be denied. Concurrently we have held up determined pacifists as saints, including Hippolytus of Rome; Tertullian; Gregory of Nyssa; St Francis; St Maximilian & St Magnus.

¹⁶ Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, Reflecting on the parable of the Vineyard, 24 August 1980.

¹⁷ Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., ‘Christ and Cultures: Multiculturalism and the Gospel of Christ’, <https://bible.org/seriespage/12-christ-and-cultures-multiculturalism-and-gospel-christ> [accessed 14 September 2018].

gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me' (Matthew 25.35 ESV). 'When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself' (Leviticus 19.33-34 ESV). 'Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God' (Romans 15.7 ESV). 'You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him' (Exodus 22.21 ESV). 'You shall have the same rule for the sojourner and for the native, for I am the Lord your God' (Leviticus 24.22 ESV). God, as understood by Christians, has a real soft-spot for immigrants and no tolerance for those that wrong them.

The Christian family model requires some deeper thinking. What is *the* Christian family model? The Hebrew word for 'family' (*mishpaha*) is a fluid term blurring distinction between family and tribe, and family and household. The family consists of those who are united by common blood and common dwelling-place. To found a family is to build a house (Nehemiah 7.4). The term for 'house' (*beth*) is also fluid. It may refer to the smallest family unit, the clan or even the entire nation (the 'house of Israel').¹⁸ As Pederson put it, the family in ancient Israel 'extends as far as the feeling of unity makes itself felt'.¹⁹ Therefore, in Jesus's cultural and linguistic inheritance: a family is what people think is a family.

Secondly, Jesus inaugurates God's reign, which the New Testament describes in family terms. Believers have the status of sons, not slaves (John 8. 35). Jesus's followers are to address God as 'Father', not 'King'. Paul uses family images to describe the Church. Christians are addressed or described as brothers in almost every paragraph of Paul's letters.²⁰ The eschatological community, God's family, resembles earthly families in its basic father-son structure and in the family-type quality of its relationships. It is important, at this point, to note that this structure should be understood as a parent-child, rather than specifically a father-son hierarchy. Moltmann, amongst others, has shown how we cannot see the Father purely as male. God-likeness is expressed in both sexes (Genesis 1.27). Where God's pity is spoken of, the metaphor of mother is used (Psalms 22.9; 123.2; Isaiah 42.14;

¹⁸ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: DLT, 1961), pp. 20-21.

¹⁹ John Pederson, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 48.

²⁰ Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), p. 53. See also Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man* (London SCM Press, 1967), pp. 229-30, and more generally Helen Oppenheimer, *Law and Love* (Leighton Buzzard: Faith Press, 1962) in which 'God's family' is a central concept.

66.13). The Son proceeding from the Father has connotations of giving birth. We should see God as a 'Motherly Father'.²¹

Next we need to think about the purpose of the family in the biblical narratives. The biblical ethic focuses attention on what the family accomplishes by creating a particular type of community. It is more outward-looking than many traditional 'defences' of the family. Though not concerned primarily with the family, Genesis 1 and 2 have implications for the family. Children were given to the first man and woman not simply to complete their creation, to enable them to show parental love, but in the explicit context of creating a community which would fill the earth. 'The nations all form one great family [...]'²² Israel itself is seen as a community bound together by family ties. The closeness of relationships in the smallest family unit, wherein what happens to the individual directly affects the whole and vice versa, therefore also characterizes the national family. The people look on themselves 'as one living whole, a single animated mass of blood, flesh and bones, of which no member could be touched without all members suffering'.²³ The smallest family unit was to help create this wider family through procreation. The smallest family unit was also a means of bringing foreigners into the nation. Foreign women taken in battle could become members of the covenant community through marriage (Deuteronomy 21.10).²⁴ Residence in an Israelite home also brought alien slaves into the covenant (Genesis 17.12).²⁵

The purpose of marriage in the Hebrew Bible narratives makes Jesus's promise – that there will be no marrying in heaven – quite startling. Marriage ceases because, in the absence of death, there will be no need for

²¹ Jürgen Moltmann, 'The Motherly Father: Is Trinitarian Patripassianism Replacing Theological Patriarchalism?', in *God as Father*, ed. by Johannes-Baptist Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), pp. 51-6.

²² Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), p. 216.

²³ W. Robertson-Smith, 'Lectures on the Religion of the Semites', in *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, ed. by Wheeler Robinson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981), p. 28.

²⁴ I am aware that this notion of 'taking women in battle' is problematic in myriad ways and needs to be resisted.

²⁵ Equally I am not in favour of slavery. As above, I am attempting to show that within the cultural understandings prevalent at the time of writing, there was still a concern to bring outsiders into 'member' status within the family.

procreation.²⁶ Equally, there will be no need for a multiplicity of parents since the children of the resurrection are God's children.²⁷ The divine Motherly-Fatherhood has replaced human parentage.²⁸ Human families have dissolved into one family. Membership of this family no longer depends on belonging to the households of the people of God: it is accomplished by adoption through Christ.

Paul saw *singleness* as freeing people from the concerns of the world so that they could be more totally committed to the cause of the Kingdom, which was a profound innovation in the context of the Jewish expectation that everyone should marry (1 Corinthians 7.32). The exclusive love of Christ in total abstinence becomes an objective form in which the eschatological Kingdom is partially realized in this world.²⁹ Yet if singleness is made an option, so too must marriage which means, as Stanley Hauerwas notes, that the family is not something 'we do' because we are in the habit or it is necessary. Like the life of singleness, it is a vocation for creating a particular kind of community.³⁰ Entering marriage involves commitment to a vision that entails the human family acting as a foundational unit for the family of God by transmitting knowledge of God to the next generation and by practising the way of life and rituals inaugurated by Jesus.³¹

In summary, one Christian reading of *the Christian family model* would be: a household living together in a web of parent-child relationships in which what happens to the individual directly affects the whole and where both singleness and marriage³² are recognized as vocations to building a community reflecting the image of God's Kingdom.

²⁶ Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 110-11.

²⁷ Luke 20.34

²⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 742.

²⁹ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, VI (Sheed and Ward: London, 1965), 131.

³⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 174.

³¹ Section (f) has thus far drawn heavily from: Michael Moynagh, 'Home to Home - Towards a Biblical Model of the Family', https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/anvil/03-3_209.pdf [accessed 14 September 2019].

³² Here marriage does not have to be heterosexual and for procreative purposes as the gender fluidity within the Godhead has already been noted, as has the redundancy of procreation in the Kingdom of God.

What Might a Christian Democracy Look Like?

In contrast to Orbán's definition, I would like to offer this considered proposition of what a Christian democracy might look like, offered by Mark Chapman in his critique of Blair's Britain. Chapman recognizes the need for:

a Christian vision of society which does not necessarily require either notions of the common good, or the formation of Christian character through some kind of neo-Athenian theory of education but regards freedom and its expression as central to the Christian Gospel.³³

Recognizing that at the heart of pluralism lies the solving of conflicts or at least the determination to learn how to live with them, Chapman finds inspiration for a Christian form of government in the work of Figgis, who reminds us that 'whether, however, the doctrine of omnipotence be proclaimed in church or state, whether it take the form of monarchy by divine right or the sovereignty of the people, always and everywhere the doctrine is false.'³⁴

Chapman's vision of a Christian form of state is one in which the role of the state is 'to prevent the universal claims of any community, to prevent the right of any group to define the common good' and 'to ensure full participation of competing groups and to equalize the distribution of resources and power, which in turn requires a commitment to pluralism, that is the rights of others to exist as different'.³⁵ This would require 'thoroughgoing reforms of democratic accountability and participation "pointing" to the need for [...] a reorientation to the periphery, where participation can begin to bite and life-shaping decisions can be made'.³⁶

Living with others and being in conflict implies that our group might just possibly be wrong, that we might have something to learn from another group. Current ethnic tensions in Europe suggest that, as human beings, we are not always willing to concede that our group might be wrong. Chapman suggests that rather than fostering a new moral consensus, a healthy society will be one that promotes what Ralf Dahrendorf called a 'creative chaos'. Indeed, the role of government might be better understood as ensuring creative communication between different participatory groups, rather than

³³ Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

³⁴ John Neville Figgis, *Churches in the Modern State* (London: Longmans, 1914), pp. 154-55.

³⁵ Chapman, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.

³⁶ Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

government seeing itself as some kind of an agency whose role is to set the moral agenda.³⁷

Resisting: Prayer, Lament, and Lifting Up Your Voice

As the twenty-first century matures, we will continue to see competing models of political organization and religious understanding deriving from our basic reaction to the *tehom* (depth, possibility, complexity, chaos). Those for whom depth/chaos is a monster to be slain, will continue to find ways to silence and exclude the other from their realm. This is the impulse we are witnessing in Trump's America, Putin's Russia, Orbán's Hungary, recently in Sweden and in the deeply divided Britain of Brexit.

If, as Christians, we are to avoid becoming silently complicit in the oppression of people and suppression of knowledge; the manipulation of societies and the re-framing of Christ as a leader siding with the strong and the powerful, we have work to do. First, we will need to be aware of our reactions to *tehom*; complexity is creative, exciting *and* tiring. Part of being able to live in such creative chaos is remembering that we are *creatures*. God calls possibilities into being; our purpose is to wonder, to enjoy the interplay and to ask, 'what can I learn of God from this?' In order to do this we need to keep our relationship with God close, regular prayer is vital. Part of that prayer in the face of the multiple human attempts to seize control of the world and God's people has to be lament.

Lament is not despair. It is not whining. It is not a cry into a void. Lament is a cry directed to God. It is the cry of those who see the truth of the world's deep wounds and the cost of seeking peace. It is the prayer of those who are deeply disturbed by the way things are... The journey of reconciliation is grounded in the practice of lament.³⁸

Out of this lamenting we may find that we have a stronger sense of how and why the term Christian is being misused. We will need to work hand in hand with those practised in the arts of critiquing and shaping discourse in the academic, political, and public spheres. These may be small acts of offering a courteous challenge in conversation or on social media. It might mean contributing to the academic, political or public debate, depending on the platforms available to you. It must always mean resisting our own desire to be in control.

³⁷ Chapman, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

³⁸ Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace, and Healing* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), p. 78.

Scripture and Mission

NICHOLAS TAYLOR

Rector, St Aidan's Church (Clarkston)

"It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us ..." (Acts 15:28).

The document, commonly known as the Apostolic Decree, is cited in the Acts account of a gathering to address the most divisive of issues to have beset the infant Church during the first two decades of its mission. The apostle Paul recounts the same deliberations in Galatians 2:1-10.¹ Scholars differ quite widely in their reconstruction of the history, and of how precisely the various parties understood the issues and the solution agreed. Nevertheless, a clear but neglected aspect of this episode is that **it was in a context of Christian mission that received traditions of interpretation of Scripture, and their application to individual conduct and the corporate life of the Church, were found to be inadequate, and that a radically different approach to quite fundamental aspects of Christian life was required.**

To understand the significance of these developments, we need to understand something of the Judaism from which Christianity emerged.² In order to do this, we need to set aside modern notions of "religion", and recognise that Judaism was the set of beliefs and cultic and ethical practices which bound a particular nation, Israel, to its particular god, Yahweh, and to the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan which they believed that Yahweh had given them.³ While this point may seem to some self-evident, and to others unduly complicated, the reality is that the components of Jewish identity were all constructed. Ethnic exclusivity and the genealogies which rationalised it were the product initially of myth-making for national

¹ For a review of the substantial volume of scholarship on this episode, see N. H. Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), and, more recently, J. D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

² S. J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); W. Horbury & al. (ed), *the Cambridge History of Judaism. III* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999); E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 B.C.E. – 132 C.E.* (London: SCM, 1992).

³ For further discussion see W. Bruegemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways* (London: SCM, 1991).

formation during the early monarchic period, and subsequently of the post-exilic reconstruction which excluded those who came to be known as Samaritans, and others, from the entity increasingly known as Judaea rather than Israel.⁴ Nevertheless, the notions of election and covenant were ethnocentric, and accordingly belonged to a particular cultural context. The same was true of other nations, each with its own myths and deities, and its traditional homeland, with coherence founded upon a sacralised relationship between god(s), people, and land. If we understand this, we can begin to understand just how radically Christianity redefined the notion of religion.

Within Judaism, the prophetic tradition testified to an expectation that gentiles would worship the god of Israel in the temple in Jerusalem (Isaiah 49:6; 56; 60-62; Zechariah 8:20-23). This was generally understood as an eschatological expectation, to be fulfilled at an indeterminate point in the future, as part of the restoration of Israel to political integrity and military power. Few if any Jews believed that this future hope imposed any mandate on them to bring about its realisation through proclaiming the Jewish faith to members of other nations.⁵ Notwithstanding the forced conversion of the Idumaeans by John Hyrcanus, and of gentiles living in Galilee by Aristobulus,⁶ there was no sense that the eschatological conversion of the gentiles would be brought about through mission or any other form of human agency, or that it would in any way redefine Israel's sense of election through God's promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 15-17), Isaac (Genesis 26:1-5), Jacob (Genesis 28:10-17; 35:9-15; 46:2-4), and Moses (Exodus 3:15-17; 19:4-6; Deuteronomy 28; 31). On the contrary, it was expected that the nations would travel to Jerusalem to offer tribute to the nation as well as worshipping the god of Israel. The eschatological triumph of Israel would see the gentile worshippers of their God in subjection to Israel, and not integrated in the covenant community.

⁴ L. L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (London: SCM, 1991); E. T. Mullen, *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997); P. Sacchi, *The History of the Second Temple Period* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); S. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (London: Verso, 2009).

⁵ Cf. Matthew 23:15; cf. John 7:35. For discussion of Jewish attitudes to gentiles, see M. D. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); S. McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); R. Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962).

⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.9.1; 13.11. The conquest of these territories by the Hasmonaeans took place late second century and early first century BCE.

This is not to say that Judaism itself had not spread beyond the ethnic and geographical boundaries of Israel. The Babylonian exile (587-538 BCE) had seen the formation of Jewish communities in Mesopotamia, and further eastward migrations saw the establishment of Jewish communities in Persia and India. The experience of exile had challenged the geographical parameters of ancient Israel and its devotional life. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion ... How can we sing the songs of Yahweh while in a foreign land?" (Psalm 137:1,4). It was through the experience of dissonance in exile that ancient Judaeen religion developed its universalist tendency and that monotheistic beliefs and observances were crystallised, but this did not fundamentally alter the ethnic basis of identity, culture, and of religious belief and observance. Post-exilic writers such as deuter- and trito-Isaiah certainly envisaged the salvation of gentiles (Isaiah 49:6-7; 60), but this was an eschatological expectation, and conceived in terms of their subordination to not only the god but also the nation of Israel. By the first century CE there were Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world, in Egypt and north Africa, in Anatolia and Greece, and in Rome, as well as the longer established communities to the east.⁷ The region had been under Greek cultural domination for three centuries and more. This had not broken the close bonds between people, land, and deities within the successive empires of the period. Greek, and later Roman, cultic fashions were superimposed on existing local cults, which retained their local characteristics even in the most cosmopolitan centres.⁸ This is not to say that with geographical mobility many ethnic cults did not spread to other regions, or that foreign imports did not find local appeal where they became established. Nor did migrants fail to attach themselves to the cultic institutions of the places where they settled. While the religious outlook of the Roman empire during the first century was one of promiscuous syncretism, there remained inextricable links between ethnicity, land, and gods. Notwithstanding this apparent scope for tolerance and diversity, there

⁷ See J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1996); S. K. Catto, *Reconstructing the First-Century Synagogue* (London: T & T Clark, 2007); P. A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003); P. R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991).

⁸ H.-J. Klauck, *The Religious context of Early Christianity* (London: T & T Clark, 2000); R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale, 1981). Judaism, in Palestine as well as in diaspora areas, was not immune to this process. For discussion see M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (London: SCM Press, 1976).

remained jealousy of ancestral and local deities who were on no account to be provoked.

Jewish communities around the Mediterranean could and did attract adherents from among the populace where they established themselves. These gentile worshippers in the synagogues are described as “godfearers” in most English translations of Acts; a term which disguises both a variety of Greek words and a variety of forms of adherence to the Jewish communities.⁹ As well as the curiosity and mystique attached to an oriental cult, Judaism had considerable theological and moral attraction in the Roman empire. Under the influence of the philosophical schools, especially the Platonist and Stoic, monotheism became intellectually acceptable, and even popular in the Greek world. However polytheistic their cultic practices, many people believed that there was in reality only one god. In the absence of any cultic institution or community to embody these philosophical principles,¹⁰ the monotheistic worship of the Jewish synagogues could fill a gap in the proverbial market. It was in the Jewish synagogue that belief in one god was professed and one god was worshipped. The rigorous ethical standards of Jewish life were also in marked contrast to those of the plethora of Graeco-Roman religions with some cultural taboos but little conscious and developed moral component, and no community in which the ethics of monotheistic belief could be practised.

While Jewish communities accepted gentile adherents, receiving foreigners into their fellowship in no way indicated abandonment of the essentially ethnic basis of Jewish identity. The boundary between Jews and others remained, at least theoretically, rigid. The Jews were the inheritors of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Moses, and to David, and gentiles could avail themselves of these promises in the present only by proselytising into Judaism. Simply adhering to the synagogue, and joining its worship, was not enough. To become part of Israel required abandonment of one’s inherited ethnic and cultural identity, undergoing circumcision (if male), and acquiring a new identity as a member of the nation of Israel. For

⁹ S. J. D. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew”, *HTR* 12 (1989) 13-33; T. L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles* (Waco TX: Baylor University Press, 2007); Harland, *Associations*; A. T. Kraabel, “The Disappearance of the ‘God-Fearers’”, *Numen* 28 (1981) 113-26; B. Ollson & M. Zetterholm (ed), *The Ancient Synagogue* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003).

¹⁰ The reference to an altar in Athens dedicated “to an unknown god” (Acts 17:23) does not imply an established cult with defined beliefs, monotheistic or otherwise, but rather an “insurance policy” to ensure that no potentially malign power was neglected and offended. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. Phil* 1.110; Philostratus, *Vit. Apol* 6:3.

the rest, gentiles who worshipped the god of Israel but retained their inherited identity could only anticipate eschatological salvation at some indeterminate point in the future. In the meanwhile, the criteria of righteousness by which gentiles were judged were the Noahide Laws, and Torah prescriptions regarding aliens resident in ancient Israel (Exodus 25:47; Deuteronomy 5:14; 14:21). At the conclusion of the flood narrative, Noah is given a set of commandments forbidding the taking of life and the consumption of blood (Genesis 9:4-6). These were interpreted and expanded within Judaism during the Second Temple period, particularly to include moral as well as ritual prescriptions.¹¹ The assumption was that, as Noah was the mythical ancestor of all humanity who survived the flood, prescriptions given to him by God were incumbent on all humanity. The criterion of righteousness for gentiles was therefore observance of the Noahide laws. This tradition was to play an important role in defining the place of gentiles in early Christianity, as we shall see.

It was into this context that Jesus of Nazareth emerged as a prophet, teacher, and healer in Galilee.¹² Notwithstanding the complexity of Galilean history,¹³ and the ambivalence of Galilean identity in the eyes of at least some critics, there is no doubt that Jesus was identified, ethnically and culturally, as a Jew.¹⁴ Furthermore, Jesus was Torah-observant,

¹¹ Jubilees 7:20-28; *t. Abodah Zarah* 9.4. Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*; M. D. Goodman, *Judaism in the Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); *Mission and Conversion*; D. Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* (New York: Edward Mellen, 1983); *Natural Law in Judaism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998).

¹² D. C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2010); *Jesus of Nazareth* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) P. M. Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: T & T Clark, 2010); P. F. Craffert, *The Life of a Galilean Shaman* (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2008); S. V. Freyne, *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean* (London: T & T Clark, 2004); R. A. Horsley, *The Prophet Jesus and the Renewal of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); E. W. & W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999).

¹³ M. A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004); *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009); S. V. Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 BCE to 135 CE* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1980); R. A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee* (London: Continuum, 1996); *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge PA: Trinity Press International, 1995).

¹⁴ J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); P. Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (London: Macmillan, 2000); J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew* (New York: Doubleday & New Haven: Yale

notwithstanding that the gospels record his having disputed with Pharisees and other representatives of the diverse range of schools of interpretation within Judaism of the period.¹⁵ The disciples who gathered about Jesus were Jewish men and women who identified with his proclamation of God's rule, in fulfilment of prevailing Jewish eschatological expectations. Jesus' proclamation of the destruction of the temple (Mark 13:1-2)¹⁶ was essentially an act of prophecy in continuity with the tradition of Micah (3:12) and Jeremiah (7:2-8:3; 26:2-19), and does not represent in any way a break with Torah-observant Judaism.

Given that Jesus and his disciples inhabited a Galilean Judaism in which observance of Torah and expectation of the fulfilment of the hopes of Israel were central, we can readily appreciate that the first Christians would not have been immediately concerned with a universal Gospel of salvation. Nor would they have viewed their inherited culture and traditions, in particular those prescribed in Torah, as an impediment to the reception of the Gospel. Christianity was essentially a movement within Judaism, and operating within those same ethnic and cultural parameters as defined other forms of Judaism. It is precisely for this reason that perhaps the majority of the first Christians saw the mission of the Church as being essentially within Judaism. The conversion of the gentiles was not envisaged as an immediate missionary imperative but a future eschatological development to be realised through divine action rather than evangelism.¹⁷

The Acts narrative relates the spread of Christianity from Jewish Palestine to Samaria and to centres of the Mediterranean Jewish diaspora in a schematic fashion, which is certainly selective, and may not entirely reflect a sequence of historical events.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is entirely plausible that persecution of the church in Jerusalem provided an impetus to the spread of Christianity to areas beyond Palestine. It is also at the very least likely that

University Press, 1996-2016); E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985).

¹⁵ Mark 2:1-3:6, etc. Cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; N. H. Taylor, "Prolegomena to Reconstructing the Eschatological Teaching of Jesus", *Neotestamentica* 33 (1999) 145-60.

¹⁶ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; N. H. Taylor, "Jerusalem and the Temple in early Christian Life and Teaching", *Neotestamentica* 33 (1999) 445-61.

¹⁷ Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*; McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles*.

¹⁸ H. G. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Dunn, *beginning from Jerusalem*; M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Early Christianity* (London: SCM, 1977); C. C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); A. J. M. Wedderburn, *A History of the First Christians* (London: T & T Clark, 2004).

continuing Jesus' proclamation of judgement on the temple was a significant factor in provoking persecution,¹⁹ as is apparent from the account of Stephen's death (Acts 6:14-7:53).²⁰ This does not imply that those fleeing persecution at the same time abandoned their Jewish heritage or observance of Torah, even if they expected the temple to be destroyed in an act of divine eschatological judgement.

Having spread to places where Jews were a minority, the Church drew into its fellowship people and households whose cultural heritage and ethnic identity did not lie in Israel. In this the Church was entirely consistent with many other Jewish communities of the Mediterranean world. However, as noted above, patterns of gentile adherence to the synagogues varied a great deal, and did not necessarily involve becoming members of Israel. Some relationships with Jewish communities may have been commercial or patronal, and involved no conviction or commitment, while for others a philosophical interest or sympathy fell short of unequivocal identification as Jewish, even if some customs were adopted to facilitate fellowship.²¹ It was only those who formally converted, renounced their adherence to pagan cults and institutions, identified themselves as Jews, underwent such rites as effected this transformation, and committed to observing Torah, who could become fully integrated in Israel.²²

¹⁹ N. H. Taylor, "Jerusalem and the Temple in early Christian Life and Teaching", *Neotestamentica* 33 (1999) 445-61; also "Palestinian Christianity and the Caligula Crisis: I. Social and Historical Reconstruction", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 61 (1996) 101-24.

²⁰ N. H. Taylor, "Stephen, the Temple, and early Christian Eschatology", *Revue Biblique* 110 (2003) 62-85.

²¹ Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary"; P. A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of Early Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 2009); G. Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002).

²² In the case of the male, circumcision was the normative conversion-initiation ritual, as mandated in the Law (Exodus 12:48). The Jewish rite of passage which accompanied birth into a Jewish family, was adapted to effect the change in identity proselytes underwent on abandoning previous identities to become members of Israel. Ritual washing, akin to Christian baptism, is also attested in later rabbinic literature (*b. Gerim* 1.1-5). It is a matter of debate at what date proselyte baptism was introduced, and whether it was strictly initiatory or rather the first ritual ablution undergone by the proselyte after having become a Jew. For discussion, see S. J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*.

How Christian baptism related to Jewish rites of passage, and their adaptation to the reception of gentile converts,²³ is a quite fundamental issue behind the controversy regarding gentile converts to Christianity, and their obligations under Torah, which is prominent in some passages in the New Testament. For those for whom Christianity was a movement within Israel, and who accordingly expected any inclusion of gentiles to be a future, eschatological, development of God's initiative, not only was there no imperative for mission to the gentiles, but there was no place in the fellowship of the Church for gentiles who did not become members of Israel. This position is attested in Acts 11:1-3, when Peter is challenged after the conversion of Cornelius, and in 15:1-5, where the practice of the church in Antioch is questioned, occasioning Barnabas and Paul to travel to Jerusalem to discuss the issue with the apostles there; the gathering with which the Apostolic Decree is associated. It is reflected also in Paul's rebuttal of a contrary position in Galatians and Romans. While this may appear at first sight a minority position, Gospel passages such as Matthew 10:5 attribute it to Jesus, and there can be little doubt it was the presupposition on which the Christian Church began its mission to Israel. It persisted in the forms of Jewish Christianity reflected in gospel fragments preserved by patristic authors and in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, which endured in parts of the Middle East until after the Muslim conquests.²⁴

That this conceptualisation of the Church and its mission came to be quite fundamentally reconfigured was neither inevitable nor predictable. The controversy through which this came about, and the theological resolution reached by the Church, are commonly associated with the apostle Paul. We need, however, to recognise that Paul was a part of a movement larger than himself, and his was not the only solution to the theological and socio-economic problems posed by the conversion of gentiles to Christianity. It is Paul's literary legacy which has made him a formative influence on Christian theology, and his establishment of churches in major centres of the Roman empire, partly recorded in Acts, which has made him seem a

²³ For explanation of these issues, see N. H. Taylor, *Paul on Baptism: Theology, Mission, and Ministry in Context* (London: SCM Press, 2016).

²⁴ For texts see B. D. Ehrman & Z. Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels* (Oxford: OUP, 2011). For discussion see D. H. Carlson, *Jewish-Christian Interpretation of the Pentateuch in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013); P. Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008); R. A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 1988); A. Y. Reed, *Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018); O. Skarsaune & R. Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers in Jesus* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2007).

dominant figure in retrospect. But many of the missiological, if not the theological, breakthroughs took place before Paul came to prominence.

In Acts 11:19-26 we read that in Antioch, capital of the Roman province of Syria, gentiles were admitted to the church without circumcision, in other words without incorporation into Israel, before Paul joined that community. This development is associated with Christians who had fled Jerusalem following the death of Stephen. That movement also brought the Gospel to Samaria, that liminal district of Judaea whose population followed ancient Torah traditions distinct from those preserved in Jerusalem, and towards whom other Jews were notoriously ambivalent.²⁵ That Greek-speaking Jews from diaspora settings, who had converted to Christianity after travelling to Jerusalem, should have been the agents through whom the Gospel was first proclaimed outside Palestine, is no occasion for surprise. Given the openness of synagogues to sympathetic gentiles, that such should have heard the Christian gospel was not surprising either. How those who were converted related to Israel, what rituals they underwent to signify this, and how their lifestyles were altered, were the issues. The brief account in Acts gives no indication of controversy in Antioch, a city in which the Jewish community was well-established and accustomed to interaction with its neighbours. How the common life of a community of Jews and gentiles was ordered is not known, but we can assume that some version of the Noachide laws guided their coexistence, and that patterns of accommodation which had evolved in the Jewish community for centuries formed the basis for Christian fellowship. However, Acts 11:26 reports that it was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called “Christians”, which implies that the church was recognised by outside observers as a distinct entity, apart from the synagogue, and not defined as a movement within the Jewish community.²⁶

²⁵ R. J. Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975); J. Frey & al., *Die Samaritaner und die Bibel. The Samaritans and the Bible* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018); G. N. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans* (New York: OUP, 2013).

²⁶ See R. E. Brown & J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome* (London: Chapman, 1983); W. A. Meeks & R. L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch* (Missoula MN: Scholars, 1978); M. Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century CE* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003); J. J. Taylor, “Why were the Disciples first called ‘Christians’ at Antioch (Acts 11.26)?”, *Revue biblique* 101 (1994) 75-94; N. H. Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*; “Caligula, the Church of Antioch, and the Gentile Mission”, *Religion & Theology* 7 (2000) 1-23; M. Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch* (London: Routledge, 2003).

About a decade after Barnabas and Paul began actively evangelising cities in southern Asia Minor, the common life of the church of Antioch was challenged by visitors from Jerusalem. According to Acts 15:1-5 they demanded that gentile Christians undergo circumcision and observe the Law of Moses in full, and this would seem to be at least partially corroborated by Paul's account in Galatians 2:2-3. The demand is founded on the assumption, which most Jews of the day, at least those living in Palestine, would have regarded as self-evident, that God's covenant was with Israel, circumcision was the sign of that covenant, and the Law of Moses regulated life for those within the covenant. Gentiles who wished to be part of the covenant would therefore need to become part of Israel also.

In response to this challenge, Barnabas and Paul travelled to Jerusalem to confer with the leaders of the church there. The deliberations which took place are sometimes rather grandiosely referred to as the Council of Jerusalem, but the scale of the gathering was very much smaller than is generally supposed. Paul's account in Galatians 2:4-10 and the lukan account in Acts 15:6-21 agree that Barnabas and Paul made their case for inclusion of gentile converts in the churches without their having first to become Jews. By both accounts the point was supported, or at least conceded, by Peter and James. The details of the discussion are not recorded, and the theological rationale for the agreement reached not stated. It is clear that their ethnic and cultural identity did not need to be abandoned before Gentiles could be accepted into the Church, and that, while they were not required to proselytise into Israel, they were required to bring their lives into conformity with certain cultic and moral prescriptions, presumably in the tradition of the Noahide laws.²⁷ How this was to work out in practice was very much more difficult, and it was at this point that the conflict became more serious.²⁸

²⁷ Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*; cf. B. W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), who argues that the Jewish ethic of charity towards the poor was imposed on gentile Christians.

²⁸ Whether the text known as the Apostolic Decree, which clearly does reflect the tradition of the Noahide laws, was formulated at the gathering reported in Galatians 2:1-10 and Acts 15:6-21, or represents a later attempt to resolve the problem, conflated into the account of this meeting, is disputed in scholarship. The majority of scholars would argue that the Apostolic Decree reflects further deliberations, after the previous agreement had been found to be inadequate, and Paul had left Antioch (cf. Galatians 2:11-14; Acts 15:36-41). Cf. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*; Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*.

Paul's importance lies in providing a theological rationale not only for including gentile converts in the Church without their having undergone incorporation into Israel or observing Torah in ways which were considered essential in Judaea, but also for interpreting this process as theologically significant, redefining a future eschatological expectation to a present mission imperative.²⁹ Not only was the conversion and salvation of the gentiles a present reality in Paul's thought, it came to be understood as a prerequisite to fulfilment of Christian eschatological expectations. In this light, Paul's redefinition of Torah obligations, not only for gentile Christians but for the Jewish Christians who shared fellowship with them, was secondary. **This reorientation in Paul's theology, and ultimately in that of a much wider spectrum of early Christianity, was founded quite radical changes in the ways in which Scripture was understood and interpreted. This was a matter not of abstract theological speculation, but of reflection on experience in Christian mission, and of recognising the fruits of that mission as testifying to truths which required fundamental and costly relinquishment of presumptions and values, as well as of customs, which had helped define Jewish identity in an often hostile world.**³⁰

It would be a mistake to assume that Paul's theology crystallised immediately upon his conversion, rather than developing in response to the challenges he encountered during the course of his ministry.³¹ His surviving writings, and in particular the letters to the Galatians and the Romans, all date from the period following the events of Acts 15 and Galatians 2:1-10, and reflect many years' experience in Christian mission in quite varied circumstances. Whether or not Paul had been engaged in mission in Arabia

²⁹ B. W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*; P. J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law* (Leiden: Brill, 1990); F. B. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

³⁰ Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1998); M. J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1993); R. Riesner, *Paul's Early Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

³¹ Cf. Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*; H. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1984); H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (London: SCM Press, 1983); N. H. Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*; "Paul, Pharisee and Christian", *Theologia Viatorum* 24 (1997) 45-65.

(Gal 1:17),³² he was for many years engaged in mission, and no doubt also in teaching, under the auspices of the church of Antioch, working for at least part of the time in partnership with – if not subordination to – Barnabas (Acts 11:26; 13:1-15:35). It was during this stage in Paul's career that Christian mission directed to gentiles, as opposed to including gentiles who heard the Gospel proclaimed to Jews, evolved.³³ Paul's relationship with the church of Antioch was severed, and his partnership with Barnabas ended, for reasons related rather differently in Acts (15:36-41) and Galatians (2:11-14).³⁴ Thereafter, he operated as an independent Christian missionary, gathering about him a team of collaborators such as Timothy and Titus, and founding churches in the Roman provinces of Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia, including, significantly, those of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, to which letters crucial to our understanding of Paul's theology were addressed. This period in Paul's life, during which the letters to the Galatians and Romans were also written, ended in his arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:33), and imprisonment pending trial in Rome.

It is the letters to the Galatians and the Romans which are particularly significant for understanding those aspects of Paul's theology most relevant to the gentile mission and the relevance of Torah for gentile Christians. It is also perhaps in these letters that we can see most clearly Paul's grappling with Scripture, and with the ways of interpreting and observing Torah which he had inherited. Invaluable as Galatians and Romans are for our understanding of Paul, it is important that we recognise the particular context in which they were written, and Paul's agenda in furthering his mission and governing the lives of churches in whose foundation he had played a part. It is important also to recognise the fundamentals of Judaism which remained unaltered in Paul's theology.

Jewish monotheism was well known, if widely misunderstood: many pagan writers of the period regarded Jews as atheists.³⁵ Their god was not depicted in two- or three-dimensional art; still less were such depictions used as an aid to devotion or object of worship. Furthermore, observant Jews would not participate in the cults of other deities. Monotheism was a conviction which the Christian church inherited, and, despite later evolving the doctrine of the Trinity, adhered to quite resolutely. Paul's Christology,

³² Cf. M. Hengel, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch* (London: SCM Press, 1997); J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul* (Oxford: OUP, 1998); Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*; Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*.

³³ Taylor, "Caligula, the Church of Antioch, and the Gentile Mission".

³⁴ B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*.

³⁵ Apion, *apud* Josephus, *C.Ap.* 2.148; Ptolemy, *Apot.* 2.3.31.

like that of his contemporaries and successors, in no way even qualified the strict monotheism of his Jewish heritage. On the contrary, his interpretation of Jesus was founded upon interpretation of Scripture, and in particular the fulfilment of prophecy and of God's promises to the patriarchs.³⁶ As Paul's mission preaching survives only in the reconstructed speeches of Acts, we cannot ascertain what steps he may have taken to communicate his teaching about God and Jesus to gentiles not conversant with the Jewish tradition.

It is not in the area of cardinal beliefs, but in their application to Christian life, that we can see Paul's theological reinterpretation of Scripture most clearly. This is most conspicuously the case in his teaching on Torah-observance, and the fulfilment of God's promises associated therewith. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Judaism, even if not visible in everyday life, was that males were circumcised; female genital mutilation was not practised.³⁷ Circumcision originated in God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:1-14), and is mandated in Torah (Leviticus 12:1-3). While some other nations also practised circumcision, it was specifically with the Jewish people that it was a distinctive covenantal identity marker. Since the Seleucid persecution, which provoked the Maccabean Revolt, had included proscription of circumcision and prescribed the sacrifice of pigs to the emperor (1 Maccabees 1:41-2:28),³⁸ the significance of these particular observances had been intensified in Jewish piety. Not being circumcised was associated with impurity (Isaiah 52:1), and with the moral and cultic abominations attributed to the gentiles, as well as with the people themselves (Judges 14:3; 15:8, 1 Samuel 14:6; 17:26,36; 31:4; 2 Samuel 1:20; Galatians 2:7). To enter the covenant, a male was therefore required to undergo circumcision (Exodus 12:48). Therefore, it was only logical that a gentile wishing to enter the covenant, in anticipation of the eschatological conversion of the gentiles, would undergo circumcision.³⁹ There were several obstacles to doing so, however. The attendant pain, in a world without anaesthetic and with little analgesic medicine, might have been accepted as a demonstration of sincerity, and as an endurance test in a world in which physical ordeals were regarded as a defining measure of character.

³⁶ Dunn, *Theology of Paul*; G. D. Fee, *Pauline Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013); V. P. Furnish, *Jesus according to Paul* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008).

³⁷ S. J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

³⁸ See also Josephus, *Ant.* 12.5-6.

³⁹ Examples from this period include king Izates of Adiabene (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.2) and, slightly later, Onqelos, who famously rendered the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic, producing *Targum Onqelos* (*b. Gittin* 56b; *Megillah* 3a; *Abodah Zarah* 11a).

A more important disincentive would have been that, in Greek culture, the beauty of the human body was highly valued, and to remove any part of it was considered mutilation. Most significantly, to become a member of Israel was to abandon one's inherited ethnic identity, and the rights and obligations which went with it, including access to public office and the prestige which accompanied it.⁴⁰

The Jews were known also for their dietary observances, of which the prohibition of pork was particularly noted.⁴¹ The meat of numerous other animals was also forbidden (Leviticus 11), and there were prescriptions as to how permitted meats should be prepared. This had serious implications for social intercourse between Jews and gentiles. The distinction between social and economic life to which we have become accustomed did not apply during this period. For a gentile therefore to adopt Jewish dietary practices would have limited his ability to receive hospitality from other gentiles. This in turn would have curtailed his participation in public life, and have had serious repercussions for his business activities. Jews were frequently regarded as anti-social on account of their non-participation in social activities which would have involved violation of kosher laws, and some writers thought that their abstinence from pork implied that their god was a pig.⁴²

Another distinctive observance for which the Jews were famous or notorious was the Sabbath. The week as we know it is rooted in the interpretation of the P creation account in Genesis 1, which Christianity has inherited and modified. The concept of a regular day of rest was accordingly a Jewish peculiarity, and they were widely regarded as idle on that account.⁴³ Other calendrical observances also distinguished Jews from other cultic groups, but it was the Sabbath which was most conspicuous.

In addition to these observances, the Jews followed a moral code which was unique, but widely admired, in the world of the time. The notion that fidelity in marriage was expected of husbands as well as wives was something of a curiosity in a society in which prostitutes were frequently served after dessert at dinner parties. Young men customarily kept slaves or

⁴⁰ Cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.52. For discussion see Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*.

⁴¹ Apion, *apud* Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.137; Epictetus, *apud* Arrianus, *Diss.* 1.22.4; Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 4.5; Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.4.1. As with circumcision, the enforced sacrifice of pigs and consumption of their meat during the Seleucid persecution had intensified the significance of this particular Torah prohibition.

⁴² Petronius, *Fr.* 37; Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 4.5.

⁴³ Seneca, *apud* Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 6.11; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.4.1.

other low-born women as concubines while accruing sufficient means to marry a woman of comparable social standing. Slaves, both male and female, were constantly subject to the sexual whims and fantasies of their owners. Judaism was distinctive also in its abhorrence of abortion, contraception, and infanticide, which Graeco-Roman society regarded as equally acceptable means of birth control, in order to limit the size of families and prevent dissipation of wealth and social demotion when estates were divided among heirs. Jewish families tended accordingly to be larger than others, and the growth of the Jewish population in many places was perceived as a threat by local communities.⁴⁴

It is clear from the above that Paul's response to the question of gentile observance of the Law of Moses was not one of simple repudiation, and the same is true of other early Christian leaders who grappled with the complex social, economic, and moral, as well as theological, issues raised by the unanticipated presence of gentiles in the Church. **It was the experience of the Church in mission, in new contexts in predominantly gentile societies, rather than any theological premise or principle, which showed inherited traditions of Torah interpretation and existing patterns of accommodation of gentile adherents on the fringes of Jewish communities to be untenable.** This becomes clear as we review developments in Paul's teaching in the light of changing circumstances in his career as a Christian apostle.

According to Paul, Peter visited Antioch at some time after the gathering in Jerusalem, and evidently found the pattern of coexistence between Jew and gentile in the church entirely acceptable (Galatians 2:11-14). This included table fellowship between Christians of Jewish and gentile background, which presumably means either that gentile Christians had adopted kosher dietary practices, at least for the purposes of Christian fellowship, or that Jewish Christians had waived these, or at least interpreted them in the most accommodating fashion possible. Jewish Christians who had lived in diaspora would have had long experience of finding ways to coexist with gentile neighbours without compromising their heritage unduly, and the new experience of fellowship within the church would have been but a development of this. For Peter as a Jew from Capernaum, near the border between Jewish Galilee and the Decapolis, this may have been less threatening than for Christians from Judaea and Jerusalem who were not accustomed to having gentile neighbours with whom they needed to coexist. It is therefore not necessarily surprising that when a further group of

⁴⁴ Hecataeus, *apud* Diodorus Siculus, *Bib.Hist.* 40.3; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.1. See discussion by R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

visitors from Jerusalem visited Antioch, they found the pattern of common life in the church unacceptable. As Paul makes only a passing reference to this episode, and it is not mentioned in Acts, it is not possible to reconstruct exactly what happened or why.⁴⁵ It is unlikely, and should not be assumed, that the party from Jerusalem was seeking to reverse the decision previously reached, and to which James had agreed. Rather, Judaeans Christians with little exposure to gentiles other than occupying Roman troops, and no experience of life in diaspora, would not have appreciated the implications of the agreement in a context alien to them. It was, I would argue, their arguments, reflected to some extent in Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Romans, which were to prove the catalyst for the development in Paul's theology which initially posed a dichotomy between Israel, defined by circumcision and Torah observance, and the Church, defined by baptism, and subsequently struggled to find an accommodation or symbiosis between God's covenant with Israel and that formed by Christ's death and resurrection.

The issue was resolved between the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch by what became known as the Apostolic Decree, an adaptation of the Noahide laws preserved in Acts 15:23-29. This includes provisions concerning idolatry, sexual morality, murder, and diet. The last two are included in the Genesis narrative, in which Noah and his descendants were forbidden to commit murder and to eat meat with the blood of the animal (symbolising its life) still in the flesh (Genesis 9:1-17). The sanctity of human life was such that murder was forbidden. This would have included abortion and infanticide. While animal life was not sacrosanct, the life in the animal still came from God, and the blood should therefore not be consumed even when the animal has been killed. This reflects the monotheistic Jewish conviction that God is creator and sovereign, and that the created order is of moral significance, which polytheists and many of the Hellenistic philosophical schools would not have recognised. The other provisions represent developments in the Noahide traditions which are similarly not specifically Christian, but which formed the basis for fellowship between Jews and their gentile neighbours. The proscription of idolatry implied acknowledgement of the god of Israel as the only God, and required that no other deity be worshipped. The requirement of sexual morality required gentile Christian adaptation to Jewish standards of conduct, including fidelity within marriage and abstinence without, therefore proscribing concubinage, recourse to prostitutes, sexual exploitation of slaves and other

⁴⁵ Cf. Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*; P. F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987); Holmberg, *Paul and Power*; Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*.

dependents, and all other sexual activity outside marriage. The Apostolic Decree, while not explicitly requiring Torah observance, nevertheless required considerable adaptation by gentile Christians to Jewish ways. This document was to regulate Christian life, in at least some parts of the Church, until the fourth century.

As noted above, it is uncertain whether Paul ever accepted the Apostolic Decree, but his regulation of Christian behaviour in many ways reflects a similar approach to the problem. This can be observed most notably in 1 Corinthians. This is a letter addressed to a predominantly gentile Church, addressing precisely the issues which arose as a result of the formation of a community from people with no previous common ethic, and who were not steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures. Before looking at some examples of the issues, it would be useful to consider Paul's approach in letters where it is more explicit, namely Galatians and Romans. These reveal a very much more fundamental premise of Paul's theology, that baptism and not membership of Israel fundamentally defines Christian identity.⁴⁶

In Galatians and Romans Paul bases his argument for a Christian way of life in which Torah observance is not required of gentiles, precisely on the interpretation of Torah.⁴⁷ The significance of this is not simply that Paul is seeking to undermine Torah on the basis of Torah, but rather that he is seeking to redefine Christian identity in terms of Torah. His interpretation of the figure of Abraham illustrates this very clearly. In the Genesis narrative Abraham is the ancestor of Israel, with whom God entered the covenant which entailed the promise of the land of Canaan to his descendants (Genesis 12; 17). Given the sacred bond between people, land, and God already noted, this made Abraham a more significant figure in the Jewish tradition than any other, with the exception of Moses, the mediator of Torah. It is particularly important that Abraham surpasses his grandson Jacob, also known as Israel, both in the Genesis narrative and in the interpretive tradition which arose from it. While Abraham is the ancestor of many nations (Genesis 17:1-6), Jewish tradition does not consider all Abraham's descendants in Genesis to be inheritors of the covenant. It is precisely this point which Paul exploits in his interpretation, particularly in Romans 9:6-13, arguing that while the covenant community had been progressively reduced to a faithful remnant, Christ the ultimate heir of Abraham enables God's promises to be extended to all Abraham's descendants. Paul observes also that Abraham underwent

⁴⁶ Cf. Taylor, *Paul on Baptism*.

⁴⁷ J. M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988); Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*; Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*; Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*; Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*; Taylor, "Paul, Pharisee and Christian".

circumcision not when he entered the covenant with God, but much later, shortly before Isaac was conceived (Romans 4:11-12). He argues on this basis that circumcision is not integral to God's covenant with Abraham. He observes also that Abraham lived long before Moses, the mediator of Torah (Galatians 3:17). Torah therefore cannot be considered integral to the covenant. We do not need to consider the arguments in detail to recognise that Paul is interpreting Torah to define a Christian identity in terms of which God's promise to Abraham is fulfilled apart from ethnic descent, and apart from Torah observance. In other words Paul is employing the figure of Abraham to define a Christian identity which is not only not equated with ethnic Israel, but which is not founded on ethnic identity at all. The household of God, which Christians enter through baptism, embraces all Abraham's descendants and knows no distinctions of ethnicity, social status, and gender (Galatians 3:26-29).⁴⁸ The land of Israel is similarly relativised with the notion of a heavenly Jerusalem in Galatians 4:21-31. Paul breaks apart the link between nation, land, and God, and in its place delineates a Christian identity which is universal in scope, embracing in principle all nations.

Paul's practical application of this principle in 1 Corinthians is interesting in several respects, not least as it concerns in several ways the relationship of gentile Christians to their inherited identity and culture. A very obvious example is the case of meat which had been offered in worship in the pagan temples (1 Corinthians 8; 10).⁴⁹ This would not necessarily have involved direct participation in pagan liturgies, as meat not consumed in the sacrifice was sold in the market. Any meat not sold by a Jewish butcher was likely to have been obtained from a pagan temple, and purchase and consumption thereof could be construed as indirectly participating in the cult of that temple. It is clear from the context that Christian opinion in Corinth was divided on this issue, and led to the question being posed to Paul in a letter. Paul's response in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 is in some ways ambiguous, but in terms of the rhetorical conventions of the day none the less clear. He concedes the point that the pagan deities do not exist, but not the corollary that participation in their worship, even indirectly, is harmless. While Christians are not obliged to enquire into the origins of the meat served at social gatherings, they are not to participate in the worship and accompanying feasts which took place in the temples, nor are they actively

⁴⁸ N. H. Taylor, "Liturgy and Identity", *Anaphora* 6.2 (2012) 1-18.

⁴⁹ See J. K.-M. Chow, *Patronage and Power* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); D. G. Horrell, *the Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996); W. L. Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

to procure meat which had been offered in pagan sacrifices. It is important that we recognise that this has nothing to do with Jewish kosher laws, but with monotheism. Paul makes no prescriptions about how such meat is to be prepared, or about what varieties of animal might be eaten.

Paul's directions about marriage and related issues, including relations between Christians and their neighbours, concern very much how the Christian gospel was to be lived in a culture alien to its Jewish roots.⁵⁰ In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul, while upholding an ideal of celibacy, affirms marriage as the legitimate context for sexual activity against the prevailing custom of pre-marital concubinage and extra-marital use of slaves and prostitutes for sexual purposes, all of which Paul labels temptation to immorality.

Paul's prohibition of divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10) is particularly interesting, in that he is dealing not with the relevance of Jewish moral law for gentile Christians, but specifically with the teaching of Jesus.⁵¹ The Torah permitted divorce, initiated by the husband, and Jewish interpretation in the first century differed as to the grounds on which divorce was permissible.⁵² The Gospel stories depict attempts to involve Jesus in that debate, and his response is effectively to prohibit divorce. In Graeco-Roman societies, women had greater freedom to initiate divorce proceedings, and the Gospel texts reflect development of the dominical tradition to reflect this. Paul applies the teaching of Jesus, effectively in opposition both to Jewish and to prevailing Graeco-Roman law and custom. This is the clearest example in Paul's letters of his citing Jesus' teaching, and it is notable that most other examples are found also in 1 Corinthians, the letter in which Paul deals most extensively with defining a Christian way of life in the midst of pagan society. **Where Jesus had been radical in his approach to Torah observance within Judaism, Paul applies the same radicalism in prescribing Christian practice outside of Israel.**

It has not been possible to offer a comprehensive survey of ways in which the early Christians developed their doctrine and reinterpreted traditions inherited from Israel in the light of Christ. What has been shown is that significant theological developments were achieved in a context not of abstract or academic scholarship in which immutable traditions were preserved and transmitted in unquestioning fidelity to Scripture, but of

⁵⁰ Chow, *Patronage and Power*; Horrell, *Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence*; D. B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); B. W. Winter, *After Paul left Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁵¹ Mark 10:2-10; N. H. Taylor, "Paul and the Historical Jesus Quest", *Neotestamentica* 37 (2003) 105-26.

⁵² Sir 25:8-26; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 3.79-82; *m. Git.* 9.10.

mission. When the Gospel was proclaimed in societies and cultures where it had not previously been heard, and Christian communities formed which included outsiders to Israel and its heritage, inherited traditions of interpretation of Torah were challenged by the reality of Christian believers with no ethnic or cultural connection with Israel, and who did not observe Torah, but who nonetheless manifested signs of God's grace. **The experience of the Church engaged in mission required that the clear meaning of Scripture be fundamentally revised, and that explicit prescriptions and prohibitions in Torah be set aside.** Where Christ is proclaimed to the world, the response of the world confronts the Church with the inadequacy of its received traditions, brings fresh insights into the Gospel, and requires that Scripture be reinterpreted to illuminate what God is doing in the world. When the Church responds with grace to the movement of God's Spirit to overcome its own prejudices and vested interests, and embraces those brought to faith despite rather than through us, then we may say, "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us ..." (Acts 15:28).

The Roman Catholic Church and Ecumenism: Twenty-First Century Perspectives

PHILIP KERR

Parish Priest, St Patrick's Church (Edinburgh)

In the creed of Nicaea-Constantinople, which is part of the worship of God's people, one of the articles of faith is that the Church is "one, holy, catholic and apostolic". It is part of the tragedy of Christian experience in this world that we come across many situations where Christians have not lived up to these marks of the Church down through the last two millennia, and this is still very much the case. Whilst Christian disunity is obviously a countersign to the mark of oneness, it is fair to say that disunity among Christians also affects the visibility of the other marks.

Failure to co-operate with the prayer of Jesus – "May they all be one" (John 17:21) – is to be found even in the New Testament. Fracturing among the People of God has been a common occurrence throughout Christian history, especially in very significant ways during the last millennium, in the schism between East and West in 1054, and in that movement in the West which can be said to have begun in 1517 with Martin Luther's protest and which has resulted in a multitude of Christian denominations being formed in western Europe. Thankfully the last century of the second millennium witnessed concerted endeavours to counteract this disunity in what we call the ecumenical movement, inspired in great deal by the International Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh in 1910. The Roman Catholic Church began to formally engage with this movement in the second half of the twentieth century, and this received formal approval at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), especially in the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (*Lumen gentium*) and the "Decree on Ecumenism" (*Unitatis redintegratio*), and this was re-affirmed in Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter *Ut unum sint* (1995), especially when he wrote, "At the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church committed herself *irrevocably* to ecumenism."¹ In the first decades subsequent to the Second Vatican Council there were many who dared to dream that an end to the existence of so many separate Christian denominations might indeed be in sight. Now whilst there have been some formal unions, e.g. the establishment in 1972 of the United Reformed Church, the fact that most denominations have continued as before suggests to some that the ecumenical movement has lost impetus and is in vain. But, as is so often the case with regard to matters divine, we forget

¹ *Ut unum sint*, no. 3.

that unity, like the other marks/properties of the Church, is first and foremost the work of God, a divine gift – we can make efforts so as to be receptive to God’s gifts, but these are not matters which we establish by ourselves. Indeed when we observe the fruits of some formal unions between previously separate Christian denominations, we often see that on the local level many divisions remain, because hearts and minds had not been adequately changed for the acceptance of the new reality.

Indeed if we take time to reflect, we can perceive a change in the Christian landscape over the last 100 years – Christians of different traditions mix for prayer and action in various circumstances with an ease which was for many unthinkable only some decades ago. The challenge before us at this period in Christian history is to help everyone within our communities of faith to make this reflection, a reflection which needs to be part of an openness to understand more deeply all aspects of our faith, accompanied by a humility which recognises that we all have something to learn from each other, especially from those of different ecclesial traditions.

So as a Roman Catholic, what do I see as being the priorities for us Christians in the twenty-first century as we look in hope to the realisation of an ever-deeper unity among Christians?

First, we need to continue with greater fervour the promotion of a truly Christ-centred spirituality. Roman Catholic piety has always embraced a devotion for the Virgin Mary and the saints, but is it always obvious that we are in our worship first of all focussed on the person of Jesus, the eternal Son of God made man? Certainly our constant commitment to the central place of Sunday Mass maintains this focus on Christ in theory, but historically people were often present at Mass because the institutional Church told them to be but were more actively engaged in private devotions. The celebration of liturgy in the vernacular has made a huge difference in this, but do people truly appreciate that it is in the liturgy that they primarily meet Jesus, through the proclamation of the Scriptures and in the celebration of the Eucharist, and that the best form of personal prayer is that which is biblically based?

Second, what comes to mind when we think of the Church? Do we think only of the visible community here in this world, or are we also conscious of the spiritual dimension, which underpins all that is authentic in visible form in this world? Roman Catholic theology about the Church since the Second Vatican Council has more and more promoted the notion of *koinonia* (*communion*) as underpinning all that is claimed about the Church. But what do we mean by *koinonia*? The concept attempts to describe the unity which exists between Jesus and the Church and amongst the members of the Church themselves, a unity which exists in the midst of the diversity of all the individual members. As St Irenaeus (d.202) wrote, *koinonia* exists

within God (the unity in diversity which exists among the persons of the Trinity) as well as between God and humans. For the later Fathers the emphasis became more on the external criteria for recognising this, for instance participation in the sacraments especially the Eucharist; and this visible sharing implies then a bond among Christians, in particular between the bishop (president of the Eucharistic assembly) and the faithful. The significance of the concept for me has always been that it reminds us that whatever it is that unites us Christians together, these things will only be of value if they have their origin in a living relationship with the Triune God. A practical consequence of the above is that we need to root our common activity in prayer and common worship.

Third, there is an urgent need, in my opinion, to find consensus among Christian traditions on how we exercise authority. The Roman Catholic Church is often acknowledged for the clarity of its doctrinal/moral teaching, although sometimes this is not presented as well as it could be, for instance when an issue is not seen in context or when a matter is presented in very “black and white terms” when in fact the reality is more “grey”. Mary Tanner, in writing about the World Council of Churches Document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, states: “No church has got the exercise of authority right. We have much to learn from one another.”² A good example of this statement being recognised as true is to be seen in the agreed statement of ARCIC III issued in 2017 *Walking Together on the Way* with its emphasis on “effective instruments of communion” and reflecting on how authority is exercised for the building up of communion in our respective traditions.

Perhaps in our modern world with its surfeit in means of communication, what above all has to be developed throughout the Christian community is the ability to truly listen. John Henry Newman in writing *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* spoke about this listening as not so much just asking for judgment but as enquiring into fact. This listening to the faithful is surely not to be confined to matters specifically doctrinal but to all that concerns the life of God’s people. And it is not just about bishops/church leaders listening to their people, but about us all listening to one another. How we facilitate this in practice is no easy matter, but it surely has to be attempted as well as possible and involve all who are baptised into Christ’s body and consciously striving to live in his grace.

² Mary Tanner, “The Church: Towards a Common Vision” – Ecumenical Breakthrough and Ecumenical Hope,” in Donald Bolen, et al., eds., *Towards Unity: Ecumenical Dialogue 500 Years after the Reformation* (New York: Paulist Press, 2017), p. 78.

Fourth, Roman Catholics make much about the goal of Christian ecumenism being organic unity among all Christians, and about how this will necessarily involve a mutual recognition by Christians of the various constituent aspects of what it means to be the Church as found in our particular denominations at present. We have moved a lot in this regard over the last 100 years, but there are still issues to be overcome, especially with regard to the Eucharist and ordained ministry. Now to talk of looking towards mutual recognition of this or that suggests looking for changes in the other so that we can reach this recognition. But what we also ought to be working towards is mutual accountability. Thomas F Best describes mutual accountability as follows:

“...it signifies at least that each church takes responsibility for its own actions as a member of the one body of Christ. It signifies that each church, before acting, considers the consequences of its actions for other churches, as fellow members of the one body of Christ. It recognises that, in today’s world, there are hardly any ‘purely internal’ documents or actions; rather, virtually all that we say and do as churches, both internally and externally, has an impact upon all the other members of the one body of Christ. And it seeks continually to make the unity which is ours as members together of the one body of Christ, both more visible and more effective in witness and service.”³

Despite the rhetoric of having moved from co-operation to commitment which underlay the development of new ecumenical instruments in Britain and Ireland in 1990 and was affirmed in the papal encyclical of 1995, as a Roman Catholic I am all too aware of decisions taken within the Roman Catholic communion which seemed to be made without much regard for the views and practices of other Christian traditions⁴. I am sure that those of other traditions will recognise some failings in their own tradition in this regard. The convergence text of the World Council of Churches, of which I have already made mention, *[The Church: Towards a Common Vision](#)* (no. 18),⁵ suggests that the promotion of a culture of mutual accountability should now be a priority at all levels of the life of the Church.

³ Thomas. F. Best: “From Mutual Recognition to Mutual Accountability: A Next Step for the Ecumenical Movement”, in Bolen et al., p. 335.

⁴ A good example would be the revision of the English translation of the Roman Missal (2011) which in practice meant that Roman Catholics were unilaterally withdrawing from the use of texts approved by the International Consultation on English Texts.

⁵ <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/mission/missionevangalism.aspx>.

The modern ecumenical movement owes a great deal to the spiritual vision of the French priest Paul Couturier (1881-1953), who is known as the father of spiritual ecumenism and who in 1944 wrote that "Visible Christian unity will be attained when the praying Christ has found enough Christian souls of all communions for him to pray freely in them to his Father for unity."⁶ Such an authentic prayer will surely enable them to see beyond what divides us at present and enable us to be fully one body in Christ united at the altar.

⁶ Cf. Geoffrey Curtis, *Paul Couturier and Unity in Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 345

Encountering the Gifford Lectures

BRIAN SMITH

Former Bishop of Edinburgh

Looking back on matters, I find it surprising to see how varied are the ways in which, and how diverse are the points in my life where, I have encountered the Gifford Lectures.

About the time I was starting university life in Edinburgh (1961), I purchased an old suitcase in a sale of 'junk'. I had to take the contents with the case. In the case were a copy of Young's *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, and the two volumes of A. E. Taylor's Gifford Lectures of 1926-1928, entitled *The Faith of a Moralist*. As the whole package cost me one shilling (5p. in our newer currency), I did not feel myself to be the victim of overcharging. Taylor's volumes proclaimed that they were indeed his Gifford Lectures – it was written in gold on the spine. Gifford Lectures were clearly something important!

Also about this time, there was published a book of humorous poetry, entitled *Pi in the High* by the Reverend Father E. L. Mascall, an Oxford theologian of the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Some of his poems are simply frivolous:

*The barnyard fowls that lay our eggs
Have pointed beaks and scaly legs;
But some, which are considered freaks,
Have pointed legs and scaly beaks.*

Some are frivolous with a theological reference:

*When Baron von Hügel
Came to church with a bügel,
The Abbé Loisy
Asked him not to be so noisy.*

But one longer poem particularly stuck in my mind. It began:

*You need not hear what somebody is saying
To know if he is giving Gifford Lectures,
You have only to watch his eyes
Wearing a strained expression.*

I do not know whether such a ‘strained expression’ was visible on Mascall’s own face when he himself delivered the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh in 1970-71. But not many lecture series become the subject of poetry.

Gifford Lectures take place in the ‘ancient’ Scottish universities. The Gifford website describes them thus:

The prestigious Gifford Lectureships were established by Adam Lord Gifford (1820–1887), a senator of the College of Justice in Scotland. The purpose of Lord Gifford's bequest to the universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews and Aberdeen was to sponsor lectures to “promote and diffuse the study of Natural Theology in the widest sense of the term—in other words, the knowledge of God”.

The first series of Gifford Lectures that I “sat through” were those delivered some five years before those of Mascall. In 1965 and 1966, the Gifford Lecturer in Edinburgh was Donald MacKinnon. MacKinnon was a notable Scottish Episcopal theologian, who was then holding the Norris-Hulse Chair of Divinity in the University of Cambridge. He spoke around the theme of “Tragedy and Theology”. His lectures were accessible and attracted many non-theologians. His lecturing style was distinctive. It was a style with which I would soon become very familiar, as I myself moved to Cambridge in 1966.

Arriving in Cambridge (to train for ordination at Westcott House), I have partial recall of a conversation. I must have made some remark about hearing MacKinnon’s Gifford Lectures during my penultimate and final years in Edinburgh. The person with whom I was speaking reported to me that he could recall an occasion when MacKinnon was evincing significant rage and anger. This anger was provoked by the fact that one year (I cannot recall which), when a significant theologian was giving the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh (it might have been Bultmann, but I can’t be sure), the Scottish Episcopal ordinands at Coates Hall had evinced no interest at all in spending threepence on a bus so that they could travel to the top of the Mound to hear this internationally renowned figure. And of course MacKinnon spoke ‘self-critically’ as he was himself a member of the Scottish Episcopal church. My full recollection of the conversation is incomplete, but the heart of it lay at the back of my mind for many years.

Effectively, it lay there till I found myself occupying the office of Bishop of Edinburgh, and I was conscious that there were many public lectures delivered by the University, of which the church appeared not to be taking full advantage. Accordingly, in the Diocese, we started, in a gentle way, to encourage clergy and laity to attend the annual Gifford Lectures, and with

the additional provision of a place to meet afterwards for informal discussion over a glass of wine. While this began as an informal initiative under our “Adventures in Faith” programme, the University itself eventually encouraged and advertised our meetings, which now were taking place in the Chaplaincy Centre.

However, the Giffords have moved on since we started such informal discussion. The lectures are now delivered to a large audience. They are video-recorded and put on line so that if one misses one s/he can catch up later. (One can also view many past series of the lectures). On-line discussion of the lectures takes place, and on occasion wider public discussion is held at such places as the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

The endowment of the lectures says that they should be on the subject of *Natural Theology*. This admits of a fairly wide interpretation, and the lectures vary widely in style and accessibility of content. Some are quite heavy going. Some are quite accessible. Some offer a mixed menu. But judgments on this vary. Often I have said to a fellow listener, “That was really heavy”, only to be met with the reply, “Oh, I thought that was one of the most accessible lectures we have had for some time!”

And the programme continues.

The next series of lectures in Edinburgh is to be by Mary Beard, Professor of Classics in Cambridge. They are entitled “The Ancient World and Us: From Fear and Loathing to Enlightenment and Ethics.” Six lectures will be delivered between 6 and 30 May 2019. Professor Beard, being well known in academic circles, and also known through her television presentations, ought to attract a large audience (at the lecture itself, and on-line). While attendance at the lectures is Free, those hoping to attend are always asked to book their place in advance (on the University website).

A further series in Edinburgh this year (28 October – 7 November) will be given by Professor Dr Michael Welker of Heidelberg, and next year (2020), Professor David N. Hempton, of Harvard will be lecturing.

So far in all I have said I have been talking about the forthcoming Lectures in Edinburgh. The four ‘ancient’ Scottish Universities each have series of lectures which are financed by Lord Gifford’s bequest, for example, Professor Lisa Sideris will be delivering a series in Aberdeen during 2020. Details will be found on the websites of the universities concerned.

My own view is that as a church we are fortunate in so far as open lectures on important issues of theology are being made freely available to us through Lord Gifford’s bequest. It would be a significant expense for the church to invite such persons of international standing to lecture in that way. We ought to be grateful to Lord Gifford’s legacy and to those who administer it, and we should use to the full the benefit it gives us.

Editor's note: Brian will report on [Mary Beard's Giffords](#) in the Summer edition of the Journal, due online 20 June 2019.¹

¹ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/news-events/lectures/gifford-lectures/gifford-lectures-2018-2019/mary-beard>.

Book Reviews

SIGURD BERGMANN, ed. *Eschatology as Imagining the End: Faith between Hope and Despair*. New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies (London & New York: Routledge, 2018). 188 pp. ISBN 9781138481367. £115.

This collection of essays by Nordic scholars makes a significant contribution to the interface in Christian thinking between environmental and social issues in the present world and the notion of eschatology. Not all the contributors are necessarily well-known in Anglophone academia, let alone to the educated and theologically engaged lay public. This has more to do with insularity and linguistic inadequacy among British readers than with the quality and relevance of the work contained in this book.

The central tenet of this book is perhaps that eschatology cannot simply be ignored as an embarrassing relic of a less sophisticated Christian past, or the obsession of mindless and irresponsible fantasists. The culmination of human history is an issue which has, if anything, acquired a renewed relevance through the current environmental crisis, the threat of nuclear war, and their consequences for the sustainability of human life. It is imperative that theology addresses, thoroughly, honestly, and urgently, the questions as to what this means for the doctrine of creation, of the fulfilment of all things in Christ, and the role of the Church, shaped and guided by the Holy Spirit. The authors have shown just how integrated are the issues of environmental, political and economic, and personal ethics, not only with each other, but with the central questions of Christian doctrine.

It would be an injustice to substantial, thoroughly researched, and carefully presented, but nevertheless eminently readable, essays to attempt to summarize them here. Rather, their affirmation of Christian hope, precisely while facing the bleak and precarious outlook for humanity in the world today, should be widely read, the challenges accepted, and the outstanding and unresolved issues explored further, with God as the focus and end of our theological endeavours.

NICHOLAS TAYLOR
Rector, St Aidan's Church (Clarkston)

PAUL MIDDLETON. *The Violence of the Lamb: Martyrs as Agents of Divine Judgement in the Book of Revelation*. Library of New Testament Studies 586 (London: T&T Clark, 2018). xvi + 283 pp. ISBN 9780567257123. £85.

Paul Middleton has, over the last decade and more, made several substantial contributions to the study of martyrdom in the world of early Christianity. In this volume he turns his attention to the Book of Revelation. While entering something of a crowded field in recent scholarship, he makes a distinctive contribution to the way martyrdom, as depicted in Revelation, is to be understood.

Middleton eschews any attempt to locate the provenance of Revelation too precisely. In keeping with recent scholarship, he understands persecution of the early Church to have been localized and sporadic, and the magnitude of the threat to Christian communities impossible to assess on the basis of perceptions implicit in texts such as Revelation. He argues also that tests such as that described by Pliny in his oft-quoted letter to Trajan may have been introduced earlier, and used more widely, than has generally been assumed. It is therefore impossible to date or locate Revelation on the basis of any externally attested outbreak of persecution.

In a careful exploration of the imagery in which Christology is expressed in Revelation, Middleton argues against notions of the slain lamb, in isolation from other metaphors, as a passive victim. Rather, the death of the lamb effects divine judgement, vengeance, and victory. Christians, as at the very least potential martyrs, are similarly to see themselves as agents through whose deaths God's wrath would be visited upon the world. However unpalatable to many contemporary Christians, violence and vengeance are central to understanding the hopes and expectations articulated in Revelation.

Rigorous scholarship is expressed with a lightness of touch, making this a very readable book. It is, however, unfortunately marred by poor proof-reading in places, both in the English text and in citation of Greek primary sources.

NICHOLAS TAYLOR

Rector, St Aidan's Church (Clarkston)

JENNIFER R. STRAWBRIDGE. *THE PAULINE EFFECT: THE USE OF THE PAULINE EPISTLES BY EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS. STUDIES IN THE BIBLE AND ITS RECEPTION 5* (BERLIN & BOSTON: DE GRUYTER, 2015). VIII + 309 PP. ISBN 9783110578157. £74.99 (HARDCOVER); £17.23 (PAPERBACK).

This book is a study of quotations or allusions to selected passages from the Pauline epistles in Christian writings of the centuries preceding the Council of Nicaea I. The passages chosen are I Corinthians 2.6-16; Ephesians 6.10-17; I Corinthians 15.50-58; Colossians 1.15-20. An appendix provides extracts from a database of quotations and possible quotations of these passages, and of texts in which the Pauline source cannot be identified. This constitutes a quantitative base on which the author hopes to develop this important field of study further.

The four passages chosen for treatment are among the most widely cited in the early patristic writings. The diverse ways in which they are appropriated and interpreted are also significant. As well as illustrating how Paul's authority and theological legacy are developed and contested, and employed in support of one or other theological position in subsequent Christian generations, this study examines the understanding of Christian formation reflected in these developments of Pauline teaching.

The book is clearly laid out and eminently readable. The appendix is similarly helpful to readers less familiar with the patristic texts. Translations accompany citations from the primary sources, where necessary, to assist readers unfamiliar with the ancient languages. It is therefore possible for students less educated in the technicalities of the relevant academic disciplines to acquire some appreciation of the complexity of the issues involved in this study.

It is undoubtedly important that Christian theologians acquire a clearer understanding of the ways in which Scripture was received, understood, and interpreted during the early Christian centuries. The time will surely come when patristic interpreters are recognized as relevant to many of the questions posed by critical New Testament scholars concerned with the historical context of the documents they study. This book has identified some of the work that will need to be done to make such insights more readily available to the contemporary reader.

The value of this book, and perhaps more particularly of the larger project it reflects, will undoubtedly be appreciated by a variety of readers for some time to come.

NICHOLAS TAYLOR

Rector, St Aidan's Church (Clarkston)

ANTHONY J. BLASI. *Social Science and the Christian Scriptures: Sociological Introductions and New Translation* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017). Three volumes: pp. viii, 243. ISBN 978-1-5326-1150-6; pp. viii, 268. ISBN 978-1-5326-1509-2; and pp. x, 212. ISBN 978-1-5326-1512-2.

For over forty years, there have been New Testament scholars who have used selected sociological methods to enhance historical critical readings of the biblical documents and their reconstructions of the history behind the texts. Not all their insights have proved to be of enduring value, not least because scholars not formally trained in sociology, psychology, and anthropology have seldom appreciated the complexities of the methods they have employed, or the debates within the social sciences regarding the theories which shape those methods. There have also been important debates regarding the applicability of such methods to documents and historical situations in extinct cultures.

Anthony Blasi comes to the New Testament and other early Christian writings as a sociologist, well versed in the theories and methods of his professions, and with the debates and scholarly traditions within it. As well as being a former President of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, he holds higher degrees in Biblical Studies and in Ethics. He therefore approaches the material with an unusual breadth of competence.

Volume One covers the Pauline letters, Hebrews, and the Gospel of Mark; Volume Two the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, with attention to the Coptic Gospel of Thomas and “Q”, and deuteropauline material; Volume Three the Gospel and letters of John, Revelation, the letters of James, Peter, and Jude, and further post-pauline material. As well as providing a fresh translation of each text, Blasi discusses the range of issues relating to each text. As well as questions of date, provenance, and authorship, he addresses a range of questions to which a sociologist is able to offer a distinctive and informed contribution to the scholarly debates.

These volumes offer fresh insights and challenge many long-standing assumptions. The particular arguments and reconstructions proffered will not persuade all readers, but they will require that New Testament scholars do not merely dabble with the social sciences but acquire the competence to use the methods of these disciplines in a well-informed and more rigorous fashion than has often been the case hitherto. It is to be hoped that scholars will respond to the challenge – the provocation even – posed in these volumes, and that closer integration of historical, literary, and social scientific methods in the study of Christian Origins will be the result.

NICHOLAS TAYLOR

Rector, St Aidan’s Church (Clarkston)

JOHN-FRANCIS FRIENDSHIP. *Enfolded in Christ: The Inner Life of a Priest* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2018). xxxv + 180pp. ISBN 978-1-7862-2-0462. £12.99.

In a paper given at the 1966 Wakefield Diocesan Clergy Conference, laywoman Monica Furlong addressed the question of what she hoped to see in the lives of priests. Her list of countercultural traits – an avoidance of the idols of status, success, ambition, strenuous activity – culminated in these magnificent sentences:

I want them to be people who are secure enough in the value of what they are doing to have time to read, to sit and think, and who can face the emptiness and possible depression which often attack people when they do not keep the surface of their mind occupied. I want them to be people who have faced this kind of loneliness and discovered how fruitful it was, as I want them to be people who have faced the problems of prayer. I want them to be people who can sit still without feeling guilty, and from whom I can learn some kind of tranquillity in a society which has almost lost the art.

How she would have appreciated John-Francis Friendship's book, for it seeks to cultivate the spiritual habits that lead to just such priestly lives. In a Church (let alone world) driven by the idol of instrumentalism, this book is brave, timely and itself countercultural.

The author is an Anglican priest, pastoral supervisor, retreat conductor, spiritual director and senior team member at the London Centre for Spiritual Direction. For twenty-five years he was a Brother of the Society of St Francis; he is also a founder-member of the Anglican-Catholic organization, the Sodality of Mary, Mother of Priests. The book draws on all these varied strands of experience; it makes wide use of the *Principles* of the Anglican Society of St Francis, the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius and wisdom from Benedictine spirituality. But it also uses the language of this hinterland, and herein lies a stumbling block.

This is a book that ordinands would do well to read, covering as it does such vital issues as the place of confession in the life and ministry of a priest, praying the Daily Office, Eucharistic living, rules of life, spiritual direction and pastoral supervision. But readers who do not share Friendship's ecclesiastical hinterland will need to be encouraged to push through the language barrier. The *cantus firmus* of the book is that priests are called to be nourished by – and reflect to others – God's everlasting compassionate love, that mercy shown to us in and through the humanity of Jesus; are called

to 'abide in the heart of Jesus'. But his repeated alignment of this to the image of the Sacred Heart – and perhaps also his use of capitalization – may distract readers, indeed prevent some advancing beyond the introduction.

That would be a shame, as the book contains much wisdom which is applicable to clergy seeking to develop their relationship with God, regardless of tradition. The chapter on the Daily Office should be required reading for ordinands, emphasizing as it does the profoundly formative nature of this corporate obligation, one which is not dependent on 'how we may feel' but draws participants into the redemptive dynamic of the Church's prayer in Christ. Likewise that on Confession, Absolution and Reconciliation is a skilful distillation of rationale and practice, filling a much-lamented current gap in the literature. Practical resources to help develop the cleric's inner life are offered variously by means of appendices on such topics as the Examen, *lectio divina* and vesting prayers, by the numerous extracts from a wide range of spiritual writers, and by the questions for group or personal reflection with which each chapter ends.

The book would also be helpful for those who guide others—clerical or otherwise—in their lives of discipleship, especially for those directees who have fallen out of that 'first fine careless rapture' and are seeking to re-establish their sense of being loved by, and loving, God: the *acedic*, the disillusioned and the disheartened, and those for whom the pressures or expectations of public representative ministry have caused them to live 'out of their role' rather than from their relationship with Christ. Friendship's book calls them back to their primary personal vocation and offers a practical lifeline for renewed vocational faithfulness. All the more compelling because it reflects the inner life of the author, an honest recounting of the hard-won and faithful experience of one priest's journey of self-discovery, despite the Church's denial for too many years of his God-given identity.

ANNE TOMLINSON

Principal, Scottish Episcopal Institute