

# Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal



Winter 2020 — Volume 4.4

*A quarterly journal for debate on current issues  
in the Anglican Communion and beyond*



# Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal

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## EDITORIAL

The Winter 2020 issue of the *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal* is rich and varied. In addition to an article by **John N. Collins**, an international scholar of the diaconate, there are six articles on the vocational diaconate by authors linked to the Scottish Episcopal Church: **John Reuben Davies**, **Norma Higgott**, **Stephen Mark Holmes**, **Harriet Johnston**, **Richard Tiplady** and **Anne Tomlinson**; the Scottish Episcopal Institute Annual Lecture 2020 by the missiologist **Cathy Ross** entitled 'Mission and Formation in a Time of Lament and Hope: Reflections after COVID-19'; a response to the Doctrine Committee's ['Theology of Authority in the Ministry of the Church'](#) (Grosvenor Essay no. 13) by **John Hind**; an article about pilgrimage and running by **Mark Calder**; an informal reflection on ministerial practice by **Gregor Duncan**; and, finally, five book reviews.

This Winter issue marks four years for the *Journal*, with sixteen issues having come online since Spring 2017. Thanks are due to those whose contributions over these last four years have made the *Journal* a significant source of theological reflection in Scotland and the Anglican Communion, especially **Nicholas Taylor** and **Alistair Mason**, who both stand down from membership on the Editorial Board at the end of this calendar year.

As we approach the Fourth Sunday of Advent, our Prime Minister and First Minister have both announced renewed restrictions in light of a new strain of the Covid-19 virus. The Collect for Advent IV is a particularly apt prayer at this time insofar as it asks the Good God to 'speedily help and deliver us'.

*O Lord, raise up (we pray thee) thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of thy Son our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.*

(Scottish Book of Common Prayer)

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## AUTISM AND LITURGY

A special request regarding a research project on autism and liturgy

[Dr Léon van Ommen](#) needs your help for a research project on autism and liturgy.

Léon is a lecturer at the University of Aberdeen, a member of [St Ninian's Church](#) (Aberdeen) and a member of the [Liturgy Committee of the Faith and Order Board](#).

Léon is conducting a research project on autism and liturgy. He is looking for participants. If you (self-)identify as autistic/on the autism spectrum and are willing to share your experience of worship and liturgy, please get in touch with him at [leon.vanommen@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:leon.vanommen@abdn.ac.uk). People anywhere on the autism spectrum, including non-verbal, and of all ages, are welcome to join.

The project is based at the Centre for the Study of Autism and Christian Community, at the University of Aberdeen. Ethical permission has been obtained from the University. Please email Léon for more information, he would love to hear from you.

## PROFESSOR DONALD M. MACKINNON

A special request regarding the late Professor Donald M. MacKinnon

Dr André Muller, who is working on an intellectual biography of Professor Donald M. MacKinnon (1913–94), would be very interested to hear from anyone who knew the Scottish philosophical theologian, or heard him lecture or preach, or corresponded with him, or has any information about him.

André may be contacted via email ([mulan398@gmail.co.nz](mailto:mulan398@gmail.co.nz)) or post (14a Arnot Ave, Clouston Park, Upper Hutt, 5018, New Zealand).

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Revised Friday 15 January 2021





[‘Yet here am I among you like the waiter’](#)  
[\(Luke 22. 27\)](#)

JOHN N. COLLINS  
[Yarra Theological Union \(Australia\)](#)

Deacons are all familiar with the Lord’s saying in the Gospel according to Luke, ‘I am among you as one who serves.’ For this reflection I have drawn on the slightly different translation in the New English Bible of 1961, ‘Yet here am I among you like the servant,’ but I have changed the word ‘servant’ to ‘waiter’.

The New English Bible is not much used these days, but at this point I think it hit the mark. I changed ‘servant’ to ‘waiter’, however, because I want to emphasize the focus Luke maintains throughout this scene. That focus is ever so sharply on a group of people at the closing stage of an important and formal meal. And I like very much the way the New English Bible captures the shock value in what Jesus says. ‘Yet here am I among you like [...]’ Obviously, he is about to tip the scales, to say something unexpected, something challenging whose import is critical for his confused companions. When, by contrast, we turn to our contemporary version, ‘but I am among you as one who serves’, the table scene tends to slip from view and we easily begin to consider a broader scenario where Jesus is reminding us of all kinds of serving that he has engaged himself in and now sends us out too. The earliest English translators had no inclinations in this direction. They kept the attention very much on the meal. Both John Wyclif (1380) and William Tyndale (1526) have Jesus and his disciples sitting ‘at meat’ — in 1611 the Authorized Version retained this — and the two figures Jesus introduces into the scene are ‘he that sittith at the mete’ and ‘he that mynystrith’, that is the table attendant or waiter. Jesus then turns things around with — as Wyclif put it — ‘I am in the middle of you as he that mynystrith.’ In taking up Jesus’s saying for a reflection, we will keep the same table scene in view.

***Luke’s Passover***

Helping us here is the way Luke has structured what we call the Last Supper, although the word ‘supper’ is something of a distraction. This antique word ‘supper’ speaks of an evening meal but, as the dictionary describes it, a ‘light and informal’ one, which is not at all what Luke aims to present. Like Mark and Matthew, Luke is particular about establishing the character of the meal as a Passover. Disciples are sent into Jerusalem to make the preparations. Of the Passover itself, however, with its lamb, unleavened bread and bitter

herbs, we hear virtually nothing, but that is of little matter as we hear the emotive expression of Jesus's 'earnest' desire 'to eat this Passover' with his disciples before he suffers (Luke 22. 15).

With the mention of the suffering — a salient feature of Jesus's earlier warnings during their long journey up to Jerusalem (Luke 9. 22 and 44; 13. 33–34; 18. 31–33) — a looming tragedy at once sets its frame around the whole of the proceedings. Even as these conclude Jesus identifies himself as the Suffering Servant of the later Isaiah; he is to be 'reckoned with transgressors' (Luke 22. 37), a clear reference to Isaiah 53. 12: 'he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.'

This is the destiny Luke has set before Jesus from the moment the prophet Simeon held him as a baby and recognized in him 'a sign that will be spoken against' (Luke 2. 24). It is the destiny Jesus himself grasped on the mountain when he was talking with Moses and Elijah about the '*exodos*' — the epochal transformative passage obscured in many translations — he would complete in Jerusalem (Luke 9. 31). Luke is singular in making this striking reference to Jesus's death and resurrection in terms of the constitutive saving action that defined Israel. While the NRSV translates Luke's Greek word *exodos* as 'departure', the Good News Bible felt obliged to spell out its broad theological implications in the following paraphrase: 'Moses and Elijah [...] talked with Jesus about *the way in which he would soon fulfill God's purpose by dying* in Jerusalem.' Risen, Jesus would insist that this destiny was part of the ancient promise. He opened the disciples' minds (Luke 24. 45) in explaining that 'everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled' (Luke 24. 44). This theological appraisal of Jesus's death also traces a path through Luke's narrative of the Passover meal.

The Passover is both memory and longing. 'Remember this day,' Moses says in the earlier narrative (Exodus 13. 3); 'it shall be to you [...] as a memorial between your eyes [...] for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt' (Exodus 13. 9). But the Passover also gives participants confidence to look to future paths under the same 'strong hand'. At each Passover the last ritual looks to 'Next year in Jerusalem!' with an eye even further forward towards the Messianic era. Taking one's part in it,

however, was always more than ritual. Each member under the covenant is to 'look on himself as if *he* came forth out of Egypt'.<sup>1</sup>

Luke is no less particular. Here is a 'remembrance' of the Messiah who died (Luke 22. 19), but also intimations of a further kingdom where 'you may eat and drink at my table' (Luke 22. 30). This Supper itself is the culmination of a whole series of banquets in Luke's narrative that display the bounty of the kingdom,<sup>2</sup> and the future shape of the banquet within the kingdom is anticipated in the encounter at Emmaus with the Messiah breaking bread anew (Luke 24. 30–31) and revealing his identity.

### ***Luke's Greek symposion***

In drawing up this farewell scene between the Messiah and his followers, Luke keeps in mind his Hellenistic audience. A departing leader and teacher has so much to tell that he must reserve for such an occasion his most urgent messages. Luke's Greek readers would assume a gathering modelled after their own formal kind, with a meal all to itself followed by a period of inspiring conversation which they knew as the *symposion*.

We can see Luke attempting this arrangement. Immediately after the bread and wine he gathers together various apposite teachings of Jesus to form a farewell discourse (Luke 22. 24–38). Of interest to us is the first section of this discourse, the dispute among the disciples about 'which of them was to be regarded as the greatest' (Luke 22. 24–27). Here, we encounter the saying that is of interest to us, 'Yet here am I among you like the waiter.' It brings the dispute to a close but not before revealing the secret of the presence of Jesus among us when we really gather as his Church.

### ***Two spheres***

In dismissing the dispute about greatness as pointless and irrelevant, Jesus reminds disciples of the two spheres of existence: one sphere is the world, the other is discipleship. In spite of the disciples' confusion as to which is which, the matter is simple, as Jesus makes brutally plain.

The world is the all-conquering domain of the Roman Empire. Within this domain, as today's social scientists have reminded us, only three realities are recognized. These are power — also known as authority or force; then wealth, and honour. Jesus has these clearly in mind in depicting

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<sup>1</sup> *The Passover Haggadah*, ed. by Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken 1969), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 5. 29–32; 7. 36–50; 9. 12–17; 10. 38–42; 11. 37–44; 14. 1–24.

the 'lordship' of 'kings', and the 'benefactions' of 'those in authority' (Luke 22. 25). Among these terms 'lordship' is an absolute before which rights, property, and dignity dissolve. The so-called 'authority' of bureaucrats and imperial appointees differs only in degree from the vile abuse inherent in the exercise of 'lordship'. And their benefactions — the building of marketplaces, the maintenance of aqueducts, the marbling of temples — were designed to elevate their own public profile and to promote their own advancement.

Plutarch tells us that when Sicilians protested at Pompey's takeover of their cities he replied, 'Stop quoting the laws to us; we carry swords.'<sup>3</sup> Suetonius records that under Tiberius each day up to twenty men, women and children were executed and their bodies 'dragged to the Tiber with hooks'; from the cliff top on Caprea 'he used to watch his victims being thrown into the sea after prolonged and exquisite tortures'; when one prisoner begged for death, Tiberius replied, 'No, we are not yet friends again.'<sup>4</sup> Tacitus records of Christians after the fire of Rome that 'dressed in wild animals' skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark as substitutes for daylight.'<sup>5</sup>

Against a world in which 'the greatest' and 'the leaders' win their places in such ways, in discipleship status disappears. Where a list of equivalent expressions depicts the inner workings of the world — king / lordship / authority / benefaction (Luke 22. 25), within discipleship pairs of social opposites denote the contrast between this sphere and that sphere of the world: greater — younger, leader — waiter (Luke 22. 26). This part of Jesus's teaching proscribes for discipleship the power that drives the world; at the same time the teaching exposes the domination, oppression and adulation that greatness requires to maintain itself in the sphere of the world.

### ***Discipleship of the Messiah***

The final confrontation of the two spheres is in terms of the world and the person of the Messiah himself. The great one of this world indulges his greatness by reclining at table, while the Messiah manifests the nature of his Messiahship by acting like a waiter (Luke 22. 27).

We must read this part of the Messiah's teaching in the light of the dinner setting that Luke has previously put in place. As the formalities of the Messianic meal began (Luke 22. 19), Jesus broke and gave the disciples bread, but he called the bread 'my body given for you' (not, we notice, 'that will be given for you', as we hear in today's Eucharistic liturgy). Next, he passed the cup, but he called the cup 'my blood poured out for you' (again,

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<sup>3</sup> Plutarch, *Pompey* 10.

<sup>4</sup> Suetonius, *Tiberius* 61–62.

<sup>5</sup> Tacitus, *The Annals*, xv. 44.

not ‘that will be poured for you’). This is at once bread and wine for food, and the new life it nurtures is by virtue of the body and blood of the looming death. As host of the ritual, Jesus nourishes and supports discipleship by giving — at the table — nothing less than his life. The discipleship must retain this ritual, as Luke makes plain at Emmaus (Luke 24. 31). Within this ritual, disciples encounter Jesus, and beyond the ritual the disciples’ way of life models itself on Jesus’s level of self-giving. A disciple gives all.

Thus, this part of the discourse displays the bounteous generosity discipleship requires. Nothing within discipleship operates on the principles of this world — its powers and prerogatives. At the same time, the discipleship requires leadership. In fact, Luke presents the meal as shared by Jesus and the Twelve, going on to report immediately the role of the Twelve within the kingdom (Luke 22. 28–30), and Luke will reinforce the reality of leadership in the first part of Acts.

### ***Diakonia***

From this first and dominant part of the discourse we are to conclude that the *diakonia* of Jesus is the total giving of himself to support the discipleship. Jesus has expressed this self-giving metaphorically as ‘waiting’ or ‘serving’ because the meal setting created by Luke demands this kind of terminology. Jesus does distribute the bread, and he does pass the cup. But his usage reflects further sensitivity here. He does not use the Greek noun for ‘waiter’ (*diakonos*) but the present participle of the verb (*diakonōn*). This was the preferred usage in Greek accounts of banquets. The imagery, however, is no mere symbol because the bread and wine are body ‘given’ and blood ‘poured out’. What the disciples are called to do ‘in remembrance’ of Jesus is not just the ritual of distributing bread and passing cups. In partaking of the ‘body given’ and the ‘blood poured out’ they become part of it and are to give themselves as fully. The demands of discipleship and of leadership within discipleship are total.

The extent to which Luke relies on the context of the meal to project his teaching is evident from a comparison of his handling of the dispute with the report of it at Mark 10. 42–45. Where Mark retains throughout a reference to political rulers and lordship, Luke switches to the dinner setting of the greater and the younger; where Mark continues with the socially ‘great’ and the ‘first’ of society, Luke stays in the meal setting with the reclining community leader and the waiter.

Mark’s teaching about Jesus issues in a theological formula about the saving power of Jesus’s death: ‘The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.’ And Mark sets the scene on the road going up to Jerusalem. Luke, on the other hand, has locked up the whole of Mark’s teaching in the ritual of bread and wine given to disciples as an

ongoing source of the body and blood which gives life. Luke also makes sure, however, that the ritual assures disciples of Jesus's abiding Messianic presence. The ritual says that if disciples remember Jesus, Jesus will never forget them.

What are deacons to take from Luke's scene of Jesus's sharing the Passover with his disciples? Although the scene is much loved by deacons, deacons do not enjoy an exclusive claim upon the passage or upon its clinching saying. The passage is a text for all the Church: for leaders, deacons, all disciples. The passage is more about what Jesus is amongst us — namely, a constant source of life — than about how leaders and disciples are to shape their conduct. *Diakonia* in this narrative remains a table metaphor for the deep-rooted openness to life and self-giving on the part of Jesus. That metaphor speaks forever in the Church as it meets 'in remembrance' of him 'given' and 'poured out'. Disciples are to call down from the Jesus in their midst what they have the courage to open themselves to in his self-giving. For deacons this message may well be especially meaningful, but deacons do not take their name from here. They take that from another kind of *diakonia*. We see this clearly in what the later writer, Ignatius of Antioch, had to comment about the deacons among the Trallians: 'they are not deacons (*diakonoi*) of food and drink but are officers (*hypēretai*) of the Church of God.'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Trallians*, 2. 3

# What is a Deacon? A Liturgical Perspective<sup>1</sup>

JOHN REUBEN DAVIES

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Member, SEC Liturgy Committee

In the renewal of the order of Deacons, the liturgy must be our starting point; for until we understand the liturgical nature of the Deacon, we cannot understand the way in which Deacons relate to the world. The argument of what follows is therefore that the work of Deacons in the world is to be seen in the light of their role in the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy, which is ‘for the life of the world’ (John 6. 51).<sup>2</sup>

## ***The Order of Deacons***

The role of the Deacon in the Scottish Liturgy has its roots in the Mass of the Roman Rite and the Eucharistic Liturgies of the Eastern Orthodox churches, which give a special place to the Deacon in the liturgical action. Drawing on both traditions, the reading of the Gospel, the introduction to the prayer for the Church, and the delivery of the cup, was explicitly allowed to the Deacon in the First Prayer Book of Edward VI, of 1549, which is the ancestor of the various forms of the Scottish Liturgy. All rubrical mention of the Deacon, however, disappeared in 1552, and did not reappear in any of the English books that had parliamentary sanction.

We should nevertheless note that the reading of the Gospel was explicitly mentioned in the English Ordinal of 1550, which remained the

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written originally for publication in this journal, but it was also incorporated in a very similar form as part of the SEC Doctrine Committee’s *Theology of Authority in the Ministry of the Church*, Grosvenor Essay No. 13 (Edinburgh: General Synod Office, 2020), pp. 51–60.

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<sup>2</sup> See also *Scottish Liturgy 1982*, section 19 (Breaking of the Bread): ‘The living bread is broken for the life of the world’. Alexander Schmemmann’s classic, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s, 1973), suggested that the world can be understood from the perspective of the unbroken experience of the Church, as revealed and communicated in worship, above all in the Eucharist, which he interpreted as ‘the sacrament of the world, the sacrament of the Kingdom’ (p. 8).

normative rite until 1662: 'Take thou authoritie to reade the Gospell in the Church of God', says the bishop, 'and to preache the same, yf thou bee thereunto ordinarily commaunded.' The Ordinal of 1550 continues:

It pertaineth to the office of a Deacon [in the Church where he shall be appointed,] to assist the Priest in divine service, and specially when he ministereth the holy Communion, and [to] help him in distribution thereof, and to read holy scriptures and Homilies in the congregation, and [to] instruct the youth in the Catechism, to Baptise and [to] preach if he be [commanded] by the Bishop. And further more, it is his office [where provision is so made] to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish, and to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell to the Curate, that by his exhortation they may be relieved by the parish or other convenient alms: will you do this gladly and willingly?

The Scottish Ordinal did not depart from this wording in any significant way before 1984.

The Scottish Liturgy, from 1637 onwards, began to introduce explicit roles for the Deacon in the rubrics. Following the Clementine Liturgy, it was sanctioned that the Deacon may deliver the cup. In 1764, the role of the Deacon was expanded, allowing him to say, 'Let us present our offerings to the Lord, with reverence and godly fear' — a text influenced by the so-called Clementine Liturgy of the Apostolic Constitutions, published by Bishop Rattray.<sup>3</sup> The role of the Deacon was greatly expanded from 1912 onwards, with explicit sanction to read the Epistle and Gospel, to introduce the confession, the prayer for the Church, and to read the exhortation after Communion. All explicit mention of the role of the Deacon in the rubrics of the Scottish Liturgy was lost, however, from 1970 onwards, and *Scottish Liturgy 1982* notably has no rubrics at all. The *Scottish Ordinal 1984* gives us the following diminished and somewhat vague picture of the diaconate:

Deacons share with the bishop and presbyters in the ministry of word and sacrament and in works of love.

In a distinctive way deacons are a sign of that humility which marks all service offered in the name of Christ. They bear witness

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Rattray (1684–1743), bishop of Brechin 1727–1731, bishop of Dunkeld 1731–1743, Primus 1738–1743. See *The Ancient Liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem* (London: James Bettenham, 1744), p. 113.



to the Lord who laid aside all claims of dignity, assumed the nature of a slave and accepted death on a cross.

In the name of the Church, deacons care for those in need, serving God and the world after the pattern of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

This represents a significant shift away from the ancient understanding of the role of the Deacon. The SEC Diaconate Working Group's second report, *Truly Called ... Two*, published in 2013, has nevertheless outlined what it understands to be the liturgical role of the Deacon, as follows:

The Deacon's traditional ministry in the liturgy represents the ministry of service and mission of the whole Church. This includes: calling the community to confession of their sins; proclaiming the gospel; preaching; leading prayers of intercession; receiving the gifts and preparing the altar for Holy Communion; assisting the president with the distribution of Communion; and sending the community out in the service of the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Diakonía and diákonos***

In 1990, John N. Collins, a Roman Catholic scholar, produced *Diakonía: Reinterpreting the Ancient Source*.<sup>6</sup> Nearly three decades later his philological conclusions about the meaning of *diakon-* words remain not only undisturbed, but were adopted in the third edition of *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, and have been reinforced by the work of Anni Hentschel.<sup>7</sup> Collins began by identifying a particular understanding of *diakonía* taken up among theologians of the Lutheran churches in the nineteenth century and which had become entrenched (especially in German theology) by the 1940s, and then also by many in the Roman Catholic Church from the 1960s. Based on a certain reading of Acts 6 in conjunction with other key texts — especially Mark 10.45 — this understanding has seen *diakonía* as meaning self-giving service to the poor

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<sup>4</sup> *Scottish Ordinal 1984* (amended 2006), Ordination of Deacons, section 2, 'Response of the Bishop'.

<sup>5</sup> *Truly Called ... Two* (Edinburgh: Scottish Episcopal Church, 2013), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> John N. Collins, *Diakonía: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: OUP).

<sup>7</sup> *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, ed. by Frederick Danker (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001); Anni Hentschel, *Diakonia im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2007).

and needy. The *Scottish Ordinal 1984* reflects this also: 'In the name of the Church, deacons care for those in need'.

Collins has demonstrated, however, from examination of secular and sacred Greek usage, that the word *diakonía*, and its cognates, have a quite different root sense: that of one person's commissioned service to another person.

So, the essence of the diaconate, according the argument of Collins, is first of all something other than to follow Christ who came 'to serve rather than to be served', or to bear witness in a special way 'to the Lord who laid aside all claims of dignity, assumed the nature of a slave and accepted death on a cross'. The Deacon's ministry and function does not begin with washing the feet of the poor, caring for widows and orphans, and feeding the hungry. Such works of philanthropic love and charity are indeed the essence of Christian discipleship, and certainly good and worthy in themselves. *Diakonía*, however, is not fundamentally about such works of 'humble service'.

In its essence, Collins has argued, *diakonía* is about being commissioned to serve the bishop, the Eucharistic president; about serving the Eucharistic president in the administration of the Lord's Body and Blood; serving the Eucharistic president in the proclamation of the Holy Gospel. This is not primarily a philanthropic, but a cultic, liturgical, service. In as far as their duties may extend in the direction of philanthropy or administration, it is instructive to observe the role of the Deacon in the *Apostolic Tradition*: to attend the Bishop (8:2) and 'report to him who are sick so that he, if it seem good to him, may visit them' (34). Their ministry is primarily to the bishop (8:2), not to the needy. This role survives almost verbatim in the classical English and Scottish Ordinal already mentioned: the Deacons are 'to search for the sick, poor, and impotent [...] to intimate their estates, names [...] to the Curate'; the 'Curate' here being the rector, the priest instituted by the bishop to the cure of souls in the congregation, and who stands in the place of the bishop in overseeing the work of the Deacon in that context.

In fact, Collins seeks to rehabilitate 'ministry' as a more accurate translation of *diakonía* and 'minister' as a translation of *diákonos* (a translation found, as it happens, in the King James Version of the Bible). So, when in Matthew 25. 44 the servants of the king say to him, 'Lord, when was it [...] that we did not take care of (*diakon-*) you?', we should understand them as asking, 'Your majesty, when was it that we did not carry out your commands?'. The task was diaconal, not because it was aiming to relieve hardship, but because it was being carried out according to instructions from

a mandating authority.<sup>8</sup> The orientation of *diakonía* and its cognates is not towards the person in need but derives its 'potency from the person who mandates the activity'.<sup>9</sup>

As a more general summary of Collins's position, a number of points can be set out. The most important are as follows. *Diakon-* words, which have deep roots in Greek religious language and culture, and which also occur in the Septuagint (a Greek transmission of the Old Testament), can apply at the highest levels of civic and religious functions, always expressing the notion of a mandated authority. In religious contexts, a connotation of the noble and even of the divine characterizes the usage. In most contexts in the Hellenistic world, the person or activity designated by *diakon-* would be held in the highest respect, and even in awe. There is no imputation of inferiority, and *diaknonía* was in certain circumstances unthinkable for slaves. *Diakon-* words implied no personal service in relation to the recipient of the *diakonía* and never expressed or connoted love of any kind, and the values expressed by these words in Christian writings were no different from those expressed in Hellenistic and classical Greek. There is, indeed, no nuance or shift between New Testament and non-Christian usage.

### ***The ordination of deacons***

Bearing all this in mind, it comes as no surprise to find that the early ordination rites of the Western churches do not make reference to the notion of humble service. Instead, there is an emphasis on the Deacon's function in Christian worship. The prayer for the ordination of Deacons, which is found in all the earliest sacramentaries (whose origins lie before the seventh century), reads:

electis ab initio Leui filiis qui mysticis operationibus domus tuae  
fidelibus excubiis permanentes haereditatem benedictionis  
aeternae sorte perpetua possiderent. Super hos quoque famulos  
tuos quaesumus Domine placatus intende quos tuis sacrariis  
seruituros in officium diaconii suppliciter dedicamus.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John N. Collins, 'From presbyter to priest to ... minister?', *Gateway to Renewal: Reclaiming Ministries for Women and Men* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), p. 137.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> *Sacramentarium Leonianum*, ed. by Charles Lett Feltoe (Cambridge: CUP, 1896), p. 121; see also *The Gregorian Sacramentary under Charles the Great*, ed. by H. A. Wilson (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1915), p. 8; *The Gelasian Sacramentary: Liber sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae*, ed. by H. A. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1894), p. 27.

From the beginning the sons of Levi were chosen as faithful guardians, devoting themselves to the mystical offerings of thy house, who would possess as an everlasting portion the inheritance of an eternal blessing. We beseech thee, O Lord, to look with favour also on these thy servants, whom we humbly set apart for the office of deacon to serve in thy sanctuaries.

Here the Deacon is seen as the successor of the sons of Levi. Just as the Levitical ministers of the Jewish temple served the sacrificial priesthood, so Christian Deacons are set apart to do service at the holy altars presided over by the bishop as 'high priest'.

The evidence strongly suggests that this language of the earliest Roman sacramentaries, in use until the late twentieth century, has firm roots in the earliest traditions of the Roman Church, as expressed in the *First Epistle of Clement*, written towards the end of the first century:

(40.4) Those, therefore, who make their offerings at the appointed times are acceptable and blessed, for those who follow the instructions of the Master cannot go wrong. (40.5) For to the high priest (ἀρχιερεῖ) the proper services (λειτουργίαι) have been given, and to the priests (ιερεῦσιν) the proper office has been assigned, and upon the Levites the proper ministries (διακονίαι) have been imposed.<sup>11</sup>

Collins has argued that this passage shows that the term 'service' (λειτουργία, *leitourgía*) and its cognates refer exclusively to worship ('those who make their offerings at the appointed times'), so that 'the office of bishop' (ἐπισκοπή, *episkopē*) 'is referring to the central function within Christian cult'. The term 'priesthood' of the Levitical cult therefore changes to one 'meaning something like "presidency" in Christian assemblies'.<sup>12</sup>

Clement of Rome and the ordination prayers of the early sacramentaries therefore see the Christian ministry in terms of the Old Testament Hebrew priesthood. In short, the bishop equates to the high priest, and the Deacons to the Levites. The earliest sources give no indication that that *diakonía* is to be service to the poor. Christian ministry was cultic in essence and grew out of the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

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<sup>11</sup> Lightfoot's text is reproduced in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. by Michael W. Holmes, 3rd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), pp. 98, 99.

<sup>12</sup> Collins, *Diakonía*, p. 238.

With the evidence of Clement of Rome, we can see that this idea goes back to a point in the first century before the New Testament scriptures had become universal or normative. Not until Irenaeus, Cyprian, and Eusebius (who were writing between one and two and a half centuries later than Clement) do we find speculation on a link between the Seven of Acts 6 and the diaconate.

The Roman ordination rites, before the reforms of Paul VI, maintained the understanding of the diaconate as a Levitical and cultic office, containing nothing of the ‘service-to-the-poor’ concept of *diakonía*. Later medieval additions to the earliest texts added a mention of Saint Stephen, commending him for his example of chastity rather than his philanthropy. A final prayer, of Gallican origin, which also alludes to Stephen and the Seven, continues to focus on the Deacon as one who ministers in the sanctuary.

We might also note that beyond the debated passage in chapter 6, Acts does not provide a view of Stephen or Philip as men with a special ministry to the poor and needy. Indeed, the noun *diákonos* is not used, and the only members of the Seven who appear again are engaged in proclaiming the Gospel, not table service.

The Prayer Book Ordinal, then, remains in the tradition, via Sarum, of the Roman Rite: it expands the Sarum formula as follows:

It pertaineth to the office of a deacon, in the church where he shall be appointed to serve, to assist the Priest in Divine Service, and specially when he ministereth the Holy Communion.

### ***Conclusions and questions***

Responses to Collins have been accepting of his philological conclusions but their implications have been ignored in practice. Most notable is the continued insistence that the diaconate is to be understood in the context of Mark 10. 45, rendered as, ‘the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve (*diakonēsai*) and to give his life as a ransom for many’, an expression of Jesus’s humiliation and giving up of himself for others, a value reflected in Luke 22. 26–27 as the voluntary self-humiliation of the disciple, ideas pointing to a radical change in the previously held values, and hence ‘loving action for brother and neighbour’.<sup>13</sup> Agreeing with Anni Hentschel’s interpretation, Collins has rendered Mark 10. 45, ‘The Son of man did not come to have people attending upon him but to carry out his mission and

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<sup>13</sup> Collins, ‘A monocultural usage: *διακον*- words in Classical, Hellenistic, and Patristic sources’, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 66 (2012), 287–309 (p. 292), citing *The New International Dictionary of New Theology*, ed. by L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, H. Bietenhard (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), p. 546.

give his life as a ransom for many.’<sup>14</sup> Collins has gone on to support this interpretation on the basis of Origen’s Commentary of the Gospel of Matthew:

in order to carry out his mission and to go to such an extent in this mission for our salvation as to give up his own life.<sup>15</sup>

The argument I am making is not that Deacons should never have anything to do with any charitable and philanthropic activities, but that ‘diaconate as service to the needy’ is at odds with the evidence, and with the essentially cultic job-description given for the Deacon — a role rooted in the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy — and by the repeated references to the performance of diaconal functions ‘in conjunction with the bishop and presbyterate’.

The question of the nature of the diaconate, it has to be admitted, is far more complicated than this. Not least among the other components of *diakonía* is the ministry of upholding the presence of the word of the gospel within the community (that is, the local Christian assembly, or *ekklēsia*); in this, the relationship of the Deacon with that local church and its worshipping life is crucial. Before we go further, therefore, I am seeking to ask questions about how the ministry of the Deacon and the Deacon’s calling relates to the worshipping community, the Eucharistic community, out of which the candidate has been called; how Deacons in general minister within the Eucharistic liturgy, and the worshipping life of a particular local Christian community where they are placed; and how any Deacon will relate liturgically to bishop or presbyter (presiding pastor). For if a Deacon is to be a specially commissioned minister of the Bishop, then the primary liturgical relationship must surely be with the Bishop and the wider diocese. Likewise, if a Deacon is commissioned to minister within a local congregation, then the primary liturgical relationship must surely be that which mediates between pastor and congregation.

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<sup>14</sup> Collins, ‘A monocultural usage’, p. 307.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 308.

## Diaconal Ministry

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*Diakonía* is more than humble service; it signifies the undertaking of a task or mandate commissioned by another, of 'being sent forth to fulfil a task on behalf of the one who has the authority to send'.<sup>1</sup>

Deacons are people 'on a mission, a messenger or ambassador — making connections between liturgy and pastoral need, building bridges between the life of the Church and those who are not yet within it'.<sup>2</sup>

Two descriptions of what the role of a deacon is — the first talking of them being sent, commissioned by God and by their bishop to the work they are called to, and the second talking of the in-between place where deacons often find themselves when they are working in the world and yet trying to incorporate that world into the life of the Church. The hymn, *I the Lord of Sea and Sky*, which was sung at my ordination, speaks in the chorus about listening to God's call:

Here I am, Lord, Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

I chose it because, for years, those words had haunted me as I sought to discover how I could best serve the God who seemed to keep calling me. I felt called but I truly didn't know what to — eventually with the change of focus on the diaconate and following much discussion as part of the Diaconate Working Group, I began to feel that this was perhaps what God was calling me to.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Avis, *A Ministry Shaped by Mission* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> 'Discerning the Diaconate', Ministry Division of the Church of England (2011).

However, it was never going to be an easy calling firstly because it was so rarely recognized at that time as a true and necessary part of the Church's ministry, and secondly because being called to the diaconate meant being called to a ministry that was challenging, exciting and often unexpected. It is a ministry which is often misunderstood and underestimated and one which requires people who are secure in their faith and calling, and willing to say, 'Here am I Lord, send me.'

Following my ordination, I then had to discover where it was that God was calling me to serve his people, and quite by chance he handed me an opportunity which I have found fulfils my vocation and ministry, serving as a chaplain to the Highland Hospice. There God has called me to walk, as his Son did, alongside the sick, the troubled and the anxious as they face their journey with cancer. There God challenges me to be his face to many folk who have lost their faith in him, to many who are struggling with their faith, to those who are not sure about faith but want to believe in eternal life and to those who have no faith but need spiritual care to ease their path to death. God asks us to let his light shine, to show his love and compassion to all those we meet and to be his Church in the world. Deacons are sent by God and by their bishop to serve as a prophetic voice, to be heralds of God's kingdom, but there is no 'one size fits all' way of doing that and we must all learn what is needed in our own situations so that we can just BE alongside God's people.

Deacons are often called the servants of the Church. In the Old Testament the word for servant (particularly used by Isaiah) is the one sent to live out God's mission in the world and bring light to the nations. The Ordinal draws out this prophetic dimension to the deacon's ministry:

They are to proclaim the gospel in word and deed, as agents of God's purposes of love [...] searching out the poor and weak, the sick and lonely and those who are oppressed and powerless, reaching into the forgotten corners of the world, that the love of God may be made visible.

Chaplains are particularly called to be that agent of God's purpose, walking alongside the poor, the weak, the sick, the lonely, the despairing and the bereft, to make the love of God visible to them. As a chaplain I am committed to being God's loving face in the hospice to ensure the spiritual wellbeing of those I encounter. I am there to love and care for people, patients, family and fellow staff members, through the good times and the bad, with love and compassion, helping them to make connections between life and faith.



My diaconal role takes place mostly outwith the normal life of a congregation. I am there to live out the prophetic role of a deacon to build bridges between what happens in church and what happens in the world, offering God's love and compassion, and sharing and representing Christian values and beliefs. My ministry allows me to discover what is happening out there beyond the Church, with sensitivity and respect for the beliefs and values of all those I encounter. We are called to build bridges with those of all faiths and none, encouraging them to discover that spiritual wellbeing which will help them to value their life and to discover what it is that is important to them, what it is that makes their life complete and whole. We encourage them to look at faith and what part it plays in that spiritual wellbeing. It is challenging and exciting work, reflecting part of the ministry of Jesus during his lifetime when he too ministered outside the walls of the Temple and largely outside the gathered communities of faith. This diaconal ministry is about living out the Gospel in word and deed, making Jesus's ministry as real as possible in today's world with empathy and understanding, and without using religious terminology in a world that so rarely understands it or welcomes it.

My ministry is incredibly varied; no two visits are the same. When asked, I can't really describe what it is I do as a deacon other than that it means meeting people where they are on their journeys, listening to them, encouraging them in their questioning about life and death and enabling, supporting and being alongside them as their journeys come to an end. It also involves leading worship, facilitating groups and working alongside many others collaboratively. My role may involve being with people on a one-to-one basis but also engaging with families.

Diaconal ministry also means that I have an opportunity to bring the world into the Church, to share what is happening, to encourage prayer for those outwith the Church and to help church members to explore some dreams and visions for their community involvement. Deacons can help local church members to explore their own gifts by sharing their gift of being available, of being present and of sharing their call. Deacons can help local folk to understand some of the issues people are dealing with in their lives and encourage them to deal with some of the difficult questions and experiences of life and death.

Pastoral care is one of the most fulfilling parts of my vocation and ministry as a deacon. Being alongside folk in the hospice, at times of bereavement, in times of joy and sorrow, sharing in conversations and in prayer, is a very great privilege but it also comes with great responsibility. We are perhaps the only face of God they have ever met and got to know personally, and so it falls to us to ensure that we are the very best, most loving and compassionate, prayerful face; one that will truly show we are

sent by God as his emissaries in the world, to bring his love and compassion to all.

It is my vocation and ministry as a deacon to be a presence without trying to 'do' anything, and thereby to allow *God's* agenda to happen, for we are ordained to be God's servants, following the path set out for us by Christ, the true servant, not a human one. We are commissioned to be the agents of God's purpose of love in this world which does not mean that we have to do anything other than be there for all those we meet, sharing love, compassion and care. This means listening carefully and being alert to all kinds of possibilities — finding the kingdom right under one's nose (the treasure in the field) for often even when we aren't looking for Jesus or expecting to find him, we stumble across him in unexpected places and people. Often just being alongside people and giving them space to talk can provide amazing insights into how God works in this world to bring the kingdom into people's lives and to bring light to the nations. If, as Isaiah tells us, we are to live out God's mission in the world and to bring light to the nations, then we need to BE alongside people to recognize and encourage that light to shine, even when it is hidden from the eyes of the world. It is a privilege and a joy to have this opportunity just to BE.

Being commissioned by God to carry out his work in the world calls us to listen to what it is we are being asked to be and then to be his voice and his body in the world, to be prophets in a world that doesn't understand the term, and to be bridge builders to enable those we encounter in our liturgical role to better understand the needs of the world of which we are all a part. The vocation of the deacon is not solely in the world; it must also be within the wider Church, sharing the work of ministry alongside their bishop, and thereby enabling the Church to support and pray for the work which is happening outside in the world. As the Ordinal says, 'to fulfil such a task is not in human power but depends upon the grace of God'.

# Durandus and the Deacon: How Medieval Liturgical Interpretation Can Help Us Understand the Diaconate

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Recent years have seen much theological exploration of the diaconate and the restoration or reinvisioning of the ministry of the permanent or distinctive diaconate. One significant document was *The Distinctive Diaconate*, produced by the Diocese of Salisbury in 2003, which defined the deacon not so much by the ministry they do but where it takes place — in the Church, in the world and on the boundary. This article will examine the identity of the deacon from their ministry in the Church, more specifically in the sacred liturgy. It is the first time that this has been done using the tradition of liturgical interpretation as found in its most comprehensive form in the *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* of William Durandus of Mende. We are thus not trying to understand the diaconate from the things done by the deacon in the liturgy but from how these were interpreted and understood during most of the history of the Church. As liturgical interpretation is not a well-known genre, the first half of this article will explain what it is so that the way the deacon appears in it may be understood.<sup>1</sup> I have written on liturgical interpretation before in a historical and theological sense but behind the present study is the question of whether this way of understanding the diaconate has anything to contribute to our theological reflection on the place of the deacon in the Church today.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the name 'liturgical interpretation' for this genre is proposed and defended in Stephen Mark Holmes, *Sacred Signs in Reformation Scotland: Interpreting Worship, 1488-1590* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 16–17.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Mark Holmes, 'Liturgical Theology before 1600', in *The History of Scottish Theology: Volume 1, Celtic Origins to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. by David Fergusson and Mark W. Elliott (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 54–68; Holmes, *Sacred Signs*; Stephen Mark Holmes, 'The Latin Literature of Liturgical Interpretation: Defining a Genre and Method', *Studia Liturgica*, 43.1 (2013), 76–92; Stephen Mark Holmes, 'Reading the Church: William Durandus and a New Approach to the History of Ecclesiology', *Ecclesiology*, 7 (2011), 29–49.

The scope of this article is precisely as defined above and one should not expect to find here a survey of other ways of understanding the diaconate. Whether the teaching of Durandus and other medieval liturgical commentaries expounded here does have anything to contribute is a question for the reader to answer.

Liturgical interpretation was a central part of Christian culture in the West until about 1600 and remains so in the Christian East. It is the explanation of Christian liturgy using the methods of traditional patristic and medieval scriptural exegesis. In its most common form, it involves an extensive use of allegory and this is based on the idea that the external words, things and actions of Christian worship have an inner spiritual meaning. Liturgical interpretation was first developed in the fourth and fifth centuries in mystagogical catechesis, explaining the sacred rites to the newly baptized, as found in the *De sacramentis* and *De mysteriis* of Ambrose in the West and the homilies of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia in the East.<sup>3</sup> The task of the mystagogue is simply explained by Theodore in these words: 'Every sacrament consists in the representation of unseen and indescribable things through signs and emblems; such things require explanation and interpretation.'<sup>4</sup>

The method used in mystagogical catechesis developed into a distinct book-genre of liturgical commentary which first appeared in the East with the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 500).<sup>5</sup> In the Byzantine East commentaries were composed by Maximus the Confessor (c. 580–662), Germanus of Constantinople (d. 740), Symeon of Thessalonika (c. 1385–1429), and Nicholas Cabasilas (1322–1392) among others.<sup>6</sup> In the

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<sup>3</sup> Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, trans. by Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo, 1989); and Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, ed. by Alphonse Mingana (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1933), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> Paul Meyendorff, *St Germanus of Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984); *The Liturgical Commentaries: St Symeon of Thessalonika*, ed. & trans. by Steven Hawkes-Teepes (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2011); Nicholas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, trans. by J. M. Hussey and P. A. McNulty (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977); René Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins de la Divine Liturgie du VIIe au XVe siècle* (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1966).

West, apart from the *De ecclesiasticis officiis* of Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) and the *Expositio brevis antiquae liturgiae gallicanae* (c. 700), few liturgical commentaries were written until the Carolingian renaissance which inspired a new interest in understanding the liturgy.<sup>7</sup> From this period the most influential and controversial commentary was the *Liber officialis* of Amalarius of Metz.<sup>8</sup> Amalarius was controversial because of his extensive use of allegory, for which he was condemned at the Synod of Quiercy in 838. This condemnation was of little account and, on the basis of his influence and the extant number of manuscripts of his work, his method ultimately triumphed. While contemporaries such as Walafrid Strabo (c. 808–49), Agobard of Lyons (779–840) and Florus of Lyons (c. 810–60) used a predominantly historical method to interpret the liturgy, Amalarius was the first to use the classic four-part exegetical division into the literal (or historical), allegorical, tropological (moral), and anagogical (eschatological) senses of interpretation, which Henri de Lubac shows in his magisterial *Medieval Exegesis* to be essential to the interpretation of Scripture in the middle ages.<sup>9</sup> Many commentators followed Amalarius and the method was

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<sup>7</sup> *Sancti Isidori Episcopi Hispalensis De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Christopher M. Lawson, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 113 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), see also Books 6 and 7 in his *Etymologies*, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri xx*, ed. by Wallace Martin Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), *Expositio antiquae liturgiae gallicanae*, ed. by Edward Craddock Ratcliff, Henry Bradshaw Society 98 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1971). Susan Keefe, *Water and the Word: Baptism and the Education of the Clergy in the Carolingian Empire* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia*, Studi e testi 138–140, ed. by Ioannes Michael Hanssens (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948–1950); Amalar of Metz, *On the Liturgy*, 2 vols, ed. & trans. by Eric Knibbs, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> *De institutione clericorum libri tres: Hrabanus Maurus*, ed. by Detlev Zimpel (Freiburg: P. Lang, 1996); and Alice L. Harting-Correa, *Walafrid Strabo's libellus de exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996); Agobard, *Contra Libros IV Amalarii*, ed. by J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1844–45) [henceforth cited as PL], 104:339–50; Florus, *De expositione missae*, PL 119:15–70. Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 3 vols [of 4] (Grand Rapids, 1998–2009), II, chapter 6: 'Names and Number of the Biblical Senses', Amalarius derived the quadripartite method from Bede's commentary on the Old Testament tabernacle.

also found in other genres such as sermons and theological summae, but the definitive summary of this tradition was the *Rationale divinorum officiorum* of William Durandus, Bishop of Mende, produced between 1286 and 1296.<sup>10</sup> This covered all aspects of the Latin liturgy in eight books and was part of his program for the liturgical education of the clergy. It is a synthesis of previous tradition, often including whole sections from previous commentators, and for over three hundred years it was the most popular and comprehensive liturgical commentary with about 300 extant manuscripts and over 100 printed editions between 1459 and 1635.<sup>11</sup> The Durandus tradition was taught in the universities, used in the formation of clergy, and was an important part of the grammar school curriculum; it influenced the design and decoration of church buildings and pastoral and homiletic manuals show that it was taught in the parishes.<sup>12</sup> It is the

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<sup>10</sup> *Guillelmi Duranti Rationale divinorum officiorum*, ed. by Anselme Davril and Timothy M. Thibodeau, CCSL 140, 140A, 140B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995–2000), henceforth cited as *Rationale*. English translations of the first four books: William Durandus of Mende, *The Rationale of William Durand of Mende: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, trans. by Timothy M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); William Durandus of Mende, *William Durand, on the Clergy and Their Vestments: A New Translation of Books 2-3 of the 'Rationale Divinorum Officiorum'*, trans. by Timothy M. Thibodeau (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); William Durandus of Mende, *William Durand, Rationale IV: On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to it* (Corpus Christianorum in Translation 14), trans. by Timothy M. Thibodeau (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Anselme Davril, 'Les états successifs du texte du *Rationale*', in *Guillaume Durand, Eveque de Mende (v. 1230-1296): Canoniste, liturgiste et homme politique*, ed. by Pierre-Marie Gy (Paris: Éditions du C.N.R.S., 1992), pp. 137–42; Timothy M. Thibodeau, 'Les sources du *Rationale* de Guillaume Durand', in *Guillaume Durand*, ed. by Gy, p. 143; Michel Albaric, 'Les éditions imprimées du *Rationale divinorum officiorum*', in *Guillaume Durand*, ed. by Gy, 183–200. The forty-five editions of the *Rationale* printed before 1501 put it just outside the list of 50 'best-selling titles (1455-1500)' in which the lowest had fifty-four printings; see Michael Milway, 'Forgotten Best-Sellers from the Dawn of the Reformation', in *Continuity and Change: The Harvest of Late Medieval and Reformation History*, ed. by Robert J. Bast and Andrew C. Gow (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 141.

<sup>12</sup> Holmes, *Sacred Signs*, pp. 78–144. Stephen Mark Holmes, 'Education in the Century of Reformation', in *The Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland*, ed. by Robert Anderson, Mark Freeman and Lindsay Paterson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 57–78 (p. 63).

comprehensive nature of the *Rationale* which makes it the best source for discovering what liturgical interpretation can teach us about the deacon. Durandus was writing in a period when the liturgy was in Latin, deacons were all male, most deacons were on their way to the priesthood, and the reception of holy communion by the laity was infrequent, but the basic shape of the liturgy was the same as today and, as we will see, liturgical interpretation is of its nature adaptable to liturgical change and variety. The commentaries were written with male deacons in mind and so in discussing them I will use masculine pronouns but, as will be seen, the teaching transcends this limitation.

In the modern period the tradition of liturgical interpretation has largely fallen out of use in the West and it has been seriously neglected by modern scholarship, largely because of a deep-rooted prejudice against allegory in the church and academy.<sup>13</sup> This modern suspicion has its roots in the Protestant and Renaissance humanist critique of allegory, but the method had previously survived not only the Carolingian challenge seen at Quiercy but also a major challenge in the thirteenth century. This came from scholastic theologians such as Albert the Great and was caused by an epistemological shift from this Platonism to Aristotelianism, from seeing things as signs pointing to a higher meaning to studying the world of sense for its own sake.<sup>14</sup> Liturgical interpretation is thus a robust tradition, but if we are to gain any benefit from it for the Church today we need to understand its methodological presuppositions and rid ourselves from this long-running prejudice; allegory is, after all, found in the sacred text.<sup>15</sup> One modern way of domesticating allegorical interpretation is to distinguish between typology (good) and allegory (bad). This distinction in Christian exegesis was first formulated by the Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) and popularized in the middle of the twentieth century by the Roman Catholic theologian Jean Daniélou, but it is a purely modern construct,

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<sup>13</sup> Holmes, *Sacred Signs*, pp. 44–49. There has been a small revival of interest in American Roman Catholic circles: Charles Belmonte, *Understanding the Mass: Its Relevance to Daily Life* (Princeton, N. J.: Scepter, 1997); Scott Hahn, *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth* (New York: Doubleday, 1999); Thomas Crean, *The Mass and the Saints* (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press, 2009); Denis R. McNamara, *Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Holmes, *Sacred Signs*, pp. 44–45.

<sup>15</sup> Galatians 4. 21–31, Matthew 13. 1–9, 18–23. The Fathers interpreted II Corinthians 3. 6, 'the letter kills, but the spirit gives life', to mean that Scripture (i.e. the Old Testament) had literal and spiritual meanings, de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, I, pp. 1–9, 19–27.

rooted in epistemological squeamishness, and has no basis in Scripture or the writings of the early church.<sup>16</sup> To benefit from liturgical interpretation we need to understand its principles and method.

Philosophically, liturgical interpretation is based on an Augustinian-Platonist epistemology. More specifically, in the case of Amalarius and Durandus it is based on Augustine's doctrine of signs as found in his *De Doctrina Christiana* for which, 'a sign is a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses.'<sup>17</sup> Hugh of St. Victor in the twelfth century summed up the theological implications of this epistemological principle: 'It is impossible to represent things invisible except by means of things visible; all theology necessarily must therefore make use of visible representations in the showing forth of the invisible.'<sup>18</sup> This view of reality was not just confined to things explicitly religious, liturgical interpretation makes use of signs from the natural world and reflects a coherent world-view which Denys Turner describes as, 'a view of the created world common to nearly all forms of medieval Platonism: creation is, above all, to be understood as a *symbol*'.<sup>19</sup> On the basis of this principle of the invisible being accessed by physical signs, liturgical interpretation is theologically rooted in the very nature of the sacraments themselves and it is from this that it retains its perennial validity: bread is the body of Jesus (Luke 22. 19), eating bread and drinking wine signify

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<sup>16</sup> The literature is listed in Peter Martens, 'Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 16.3 (2008), 285–296. There was no word for 'typology' in patristic Latin or Greek and Martens shows that there is no basis for the distinction in Origen's use of τύπος and ἀλληγορία. Cf. also Peter Martens, 'Origen against History? Reconsidering the Critique of Allegory', *Modern Theology* 28.4 (2012), 635–656 (pp. 641–46); Holmes, *Sacred Signs*, pp. 15–16.

<sup>17</sup> *De doctrina christiana* (henceforth DDC) 2.1, Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. by R. P. H. Green (Oxford, 1995), p. 56. Kirstin Faupel-Dreves has shown that Durandus's method of liturgical interpretation was rooted in the teaching on signs in Books 2 and 3 of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, although he did not, like Amalarius, state this explicitly, cf. *Rationale* 4.42.25, Kirstin Faupel-Dreves, *Vom rechten Gebrauch der Bilder im liturgischen Raum: mittelalterliche Funktionsbestimmungen bildender Kunst im Rational divinorum officiorum des Durandus von Mende, 1230–1296*, *Studies in the history of Christian thought* 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 71–94.

<sup>18</sup> *In Hierarchiam Coelestem S. Dionysii Areopagitae*, 1.1., PL 175.926D.

<sup>19</sup> Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 103–4.



Christ's death (I Corinthians 11. 23–26), immersion in water is a participation in the death of Christ (Romans 6. 3–4) and the practice of liturgy forms morality (I Corinthians 10. 17, 21). None of these has any meaning without the handing of an interpretation of the liturgical action. A more fundamental theological justification for liturgical interpretation, and indeed for the whole sacramental economy, may be found in the Incarnation where the visible, human body of Jesus connects us to the unseen, spiritual world of heaven. This is supplemented by the idea that earthly liturgy is related to a heavenly prototype, as found in Exodus 25. 40, Hebrews 8. 5, and Revelation 4–5. The incarnation and the sacramental system that flows from it are simply God speaking to humanity about divine reality in the only way it can hear: through symbols. Liturgical interpretation thus also has an anthropological basis because the embodied human person is a creature designed to attain divine truth through symbols.

These roots imply firstly that the world of sense experience is a shadow of a higher reality, albeit a shadow that hints at its prototype.<sup>20</sup> Secondly it suggests that the inner meanings of things exist in the realm of God, or in the mind of God, in such a way that God can reveal them as he revealed the prototypes of Old Testament worship in the Book of Exodus. We see this in the Prologue to the *Rationale* where Durandus teaches that liturgical interpretation requires prayer so that Christ can guide the mind to the inner meanings of the symbols of the sacred liturgy.

Whatever belongs to ecclesiastical offices, objects and ornaments is full of divine signs and mysteries [...] an interpretation (*ratio*) cannot be given for everything handed down to us by our ancestors, but because any one of these things that lacks an interpretation (*ratio*) must be uprooted, I, William, bishop of the holy church of Mende by the indulgence of God alone, knock at the door, and will continue to knock until the key of David deigns to open it for me, so that the *king might bring me into his wine-cellar* in which the celestial model shown to Moses on the mountain shall be revealed to me so that I can discuss clearly and openly each thing among the ecclesiastical offices, objects and ornaments, and describe their interpretations (*rationes*) and what they signify or represent, according to that

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<sup>20</sup> This sounds like Platonism but Margaret Barker, in her controversial works on 'Temple Theology', argues that it is part of the original religion of Israel, see Margaret Barker, *On Earth as it is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 1995).

which has been revealed [...] to the praise and glory of the Trinity.<sup>21</sup>

In this passage the word *ratio* is hard to translate, it is usually translated 'reason' but has a wide range of meaning that includes 'explanation' or 'an interpretation'. In theological Latin it can also refer to the inner and spiritual meaning of a thing which corresponds to its prototype in the mind of God, something expressed in Greek by the word *logos*.<sup>22</sup> Durandus is teaching here that liturgical interpretation discerns the inner meanings of the words and actions of the liturgy as they exist in the mind of God, just as traditional Biblical exegesis discerns the spiritual meaning of the Sacred Text.

It takes some effort to enter the worldview of liturgical interpretation, but the benefits are great. It involves a putting aside of the modern scientific method, in which we have all been formed, in order to explore beneath the surface of reality. Before looking at the deacon through the lens of liturgical interpretation, it is useful to be aware of some aspects of its method which I have analysed more fully in *Sacred Signs*. It is firstly very flexible, which may be a secret of its success for over a thousand years. Durandus, drawing on his work as a lawyer, wrote:

Often in this work different senses of interpretation are employed of the same thing, passing from one sense to another [...] just as no one is prohibited from employing diverse exceptions or defences in legal proceedings, neither should anyone be barred from using a variety of explanations in the praise of God, with the faith always being preserved.<sup>23</sup>

We can see the proximate origins of this polysemy (one thing having several meanings) in Augustine's teaching on scriptural exegesis:

Sometimes not just one meaning but two or more meanings are perceived in the same words of Scripture. Even if the writer's meaning is obscure, there is no danger here, provided that it can be shown from other passages of the holy Scriptures that each of

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<sup>21</sup> *Rationale*, Prologue, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Holmes, *Sacred Signs*, p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> *Rationale*, Prologue, 12. 'It is not inappropriate for the same thing to signify a diversity of other things' (Aquinas, *In IV Sent*, d.12, q.1, a.3, q.3, ad 4) was a common scholastic principle rooted in early Christian scriptural exegesis; see Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London, 2006), p. 300.

these interpretations is consistent with the truth[...] Could God have built into the divine eloquence a more generous or bountiful gift than the possibility of understanding the same words in several ways, all of them deriving confirmation from other no less divinely inspired passages.<sup>24</sup>

Polysemy provides a flexibility which allows the method to respond positively to variations in practice. On the literal level Durandus is aware of a wide variety of different practices in the Latin liturgy, for example when expounding the meaning of the thurible he gives different interpretations to thuribles with one, three or four chains.<sup>25</sup> Both the passages above reveal the principle which preserves the flexibility of this method from falling into incoherence: 'with the faith always being preserved' (Durandus) and 'all of them deriving confirmation from other no less divinely inspired passages' (Augustine). The Christian faith provides the boundaries for the playfulness of the method, although, with a sound Catholic sense of the goodness of the created order, the signs of nature are not excluded.

The main methodological principle used in liturgical interpretation is comparison. For this one needed a knowledge of languages, the natural world, numerology, history and the liberal arts, and also a generous attitude to secular sciences because 'a good and true Christian should realize that truth belongs to his Lord wherever it is found'.<sup>26</sup> For Augustine and his successors the secular sciences were used to interpret Scripture, although the prime source for comparison was found within divine revelation itself, in Scripture and Christian Tradition, the 'rule of faith'.<sup>27</sup> Whereas many today would presume that symbolism is used to supplement words which are the primary form of communication (though words are themselves symbols), Durandus says of the words spoken by the priest, 'The Peace of the Lord be with you', that 'the joy of the resurrection is to be expressed not only through signs but even through words'.<sup>28</sup> By this he seems to give primacy to symbolic over verbal communication. In a similar way Durandus gives symbolism primacy when discussing concomitance, the doctrine that the

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<sup>24</sup> Augustine, *DDC*, 3.84–85. He gives similar teaching in Book 12 of the *Confessions*, 12.23 (32) – 12.32 (43), although both there and in 12.18 (27) he emphasizes that seeking the original author's meaning is the prime task of the exegete (CCSL 27, 233–241, 229–30). The same teaching is given by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. q.1 a.10.

<sup>25</sup> *Rationale*, 4.10.3.

<sup>26</sup> Augustine, *DDC* 2.72.

<sup>27</sup> Augustine, *DDC* 2.31; 3.3.

<sup>28</sup> *Rationale* 4.51.14.

whole Christ (body, blood, soul and divinity) is present under the appearances of both bread and wine. In a way which would seem shocking to a later Tridentine Roman Catholicism, Durandus gives symbolism (*sacramentum*) at least as much weight as the theological reality (*res*): ‘even if the blood of Christ may be in the consecrated host, it is not there sacramentally because the bread signifies the body not the blood and the wine the blood not the body’.<sup>29</sup>

Given this primacy of symbolism and its Augustinian background, liturgical interpretation is best seen as a way of ‘reading’ the symbolism of the liturgy, a reading which has its own ‘grammar’ and ‘vocabulary’. This reading also has, as noted above, its own epistemology — a theory of knowledge. Someone who looks on a chalice and just sees a cup, even a liturgical cup, has a different way of looking at the world and knowing things than one who looks at the chalice and thinks of the tomb of Christ, the joys of heaven and the passions of this world as he or she is taught by the *Rationale*. This epistemology involves more than a straightforward correspondence (the earthly altar signifies the heavenly altar), it also involves association, where a chalice can point beyond itself to other things. In this association, it is the distance between material object and heavenly prototype that leaves room for polysemy; the earthly thing can relate to more than one heavenly ‘inner meaning’. This epistemological method, rooted in Augustine’s teaching on signs in *De Doctrina Christiana*, is thus symbolic because it is concerned with how things symbolize or signify other things, whether these be the things of heaven or the realities of Christian life on earth. When this epistemological distance is collapsed, as it is by the theology of transubstantiation, liturgical interpretation loses its purpose and power and it is not surprising that it fell from fashion in the Roman Catholic Church after the Council of Trent.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Rationale* 4.54.13. Concomitance is also discussed in *Rationale* 4.41.27 and 4.51.17. There has been a revival of interest in concomitance in Anglicanism because of the imposition of communion under one kind during the coronavirus pandemic, see my 26 June 2020 post on the blog *Amalarius*, [Undoing the Reformation: Communion in One Kind](#).

<sup>30</sup> Transubstantiation was taught as a doctrine for centuries before Trent, and is found in *Rationale* 4.41.16–27 and 4.42.6, but Tridentine Catholicism, as found for example in the Decrees of Trent and the Roman Catechism, emphasized the reality of the presence and sacrifice of Christ to the extent that liturgical symbolism is merely said to ‘enhance the majesty of the sacrifice’, Council of Trent, *Decree on the Sacrifice of the Mass* (September 1562), chapters 5 and 8; cf. *Decree on Reform* (July 1563), canon 18, Norman

With this centrality of symbolism, liturgical interpretation has its own 'grammar' or basic way of ordering this system of symbolism to reveal the inner meaning to which the signs point.<sup>31</sup> This 'grammar' has both natural and supernatural elements. In the *Rationale* some signs take their meaning from the thing itself, as a circle symbolizes completeness and a kiss unity, whereas others take their meaning from Scripture, as with the idea that the right side symbolizes faith and the left infidelity (4.53.2) which is used in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25. 31–46). Such association or comparison of ideas is an essential part of this 'grammar'. A complex system of symbols can be built up using it, for example when Durandus says without explanation that the right of the altar symbolizes the Jews, the left the gentiles (4.55.3, 4.57.1) and the middle of the altar the union of both in faith in Christ (4.57.3), this is clearly based on the fundamental interpretation of right and left found in Matthew 25. 31–46 with its sheep and goats. It is the same with numbers: if the priest drinks the consecrated wine thrice it is in honour of the Trinity, if twice it recalls the double commandment of love (4.54.12). This is not arbitrary as there is a direct link via the number between the sign and the mystery it symbolizes. Elsewhere it is the symbolic potential of the body that mediates the meaning: the priest's hands on the altar at the *Agnus dei* are a sign that his mind is attentive to God, his joined hands express focussed attention and his bow humility (4.52.3). The method is also sometimes used to relate actions within the rite, for example the sign of the cross made by the priest with the elements before communion is related to the Canon (Eucharistic Prayer) where he had previously made the same sign over the same elements while consecrating them: by it he both sanctifies and asks to be sanctified (4.54.11). This association of things and ideas within the linguistic world of medieval religion is the centre of the 'grammar' of liturgical interpretation.

A key feature of this 'grammar' is its free nature. It is a method, not simply a fixed tradition, because it can be used in a variety of ways as long as one keeps within orthodox belief, 'with the faith always being preserved'.<sup>32</sup> Within this structure the method of exposition is generally spiral not linear, as in the Johannine writings in the New Testament the same subjects are returned to again and again, each time with new meaning

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P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols with continuous pagination (London, 1990), pp. 734–35, 751.

<sup>31</sup> The following two paragraphs are largely based on Holmes, *Sacred Signs*, pp. 29–31. References to the *Rationale* are given in the text.

<sup>32</sup> *Rationale*, Prologue 12.

added.<sup>33</sup> The chapters on the six priestly vestments in Book 3, for example, the longest sustained discussion of vestments in medieval theological writing, use this spiral method within the linear structure of dealing with each vestment in turn: amice, alb, girdle, maniple, stole and chasuble.<sup>34</sup> The method of liturgical interpretation is thus characterized by variety and repetition not only in method but between commentaries. Apart from those by original writers such as Amalarius, most commentaries follow medieval conventions on authorship by repeating previous interpretations while developing the tradition. Modern academic worries about plagiarism would be incomprehensible to Durandus.

Using the methods in this grammar, a clear ‘vocabulary’ of interpretations is built up and passed on. The tradition itself, however, like the liturgy, is constantly in process and, as noted above, we see in the *Rationale* how Durandus is aware of change over time in the liturgy. If one set of interpretations were to become fixed and canonical to the exclusion of others it could be argued that the method had died and had become simply a fixed tradition, but this is not an adequate use of ‘tradition’. The method itself, if rightly understood, is a tradition because the creativity of interpretation found in Durandus and his sources exists within clearly defined parameters and coexists with the handing on of a corpus or ‘vocabulary’ of interpretations. This is similar to T. S. Eliot’s view of the value of tradition in literature where tradition is the place of innovation and is constantly being modified by the incorporation of the new. This is an organic process distinct from both a static view of tradition and a view of novelty as disruption, because the new comes out of the tradition and exists in relationship with what has come before, altering our perception of it.<sup>35</sup> The distinct ‘vocabulary’ of signs thus joins the ‘rule of faith’ in preventing the openness of the method from lapsing into incoherence and enabling it to develop over time. The following analysis of the way the deacon is interpreted in the *Rationale* is thus a snapshot of this tradition as it existed at the end of the thirteenth century and is capable of further development.

The teaching of Durandus on the diaconate is largely found in the *Rationale* in Book 2 on the ministers, Book 3 on the vestments and Book 4 on the Mass. When explaining the literal or historical sense of the Christian

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ignace de la Potterie, ‘Structure du Prologue de saint Jean’, *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984), pp. 354–81.

<sup>34</sup> *Rationale* 3.2–7.

<sup>35</sup> T. S. Eliot, ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent [I]’, *The Egoist* 6:4 (September 1919), 54–55, and ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent, II’, *The Egoist* 6:5 (November 1919), 72–73 (republished in his *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (New York: 1921)).

diaconate, Durandus bases his discussion in chapter 9 of Book 2 of the *Rationale* on the Latin verb *ministrare* which, from Isidore of Seville, he knows is the equivalent of the Greek verb *diakoneo* from which the word 'deacon' comes. He begins with the Greek noun *diakonos* but moves immediately to the Levites of the Old Testament as 'a certain order of deacons' (2.9.1) because they assist the priests and have stewardship of cultic vessels (Numbers 3. 5–8). He relates the Levites to deacons via an allegorical interpretation of the deacon's vestments but the association is initially one of function, as they are assistant ministers, and name, because Numbers 3. 5–8 in the Vulgate speaks of them using the verb *ministrare*: '*ut ministrent ei*' ('that they might minister to him', i.e. Aaron) and '*servientes in ministerio eius*' ('serving in its ministry', i.e. the Tabernacle). This is not surprising because Durandus is following the teaching on the diaconate from the order for ordaining deacons in the Roman Pontifical (a book of services used by bishops) which relates the diaconate to the tribe of Levi and speaks of them as the 'levitical order'. This reference to the Levites goes back to the earliest levels of the prayer for ordaining ('making') deacons in the Roman rite which is found in the Gregorian and Verona sacramentaries and goes back to the fifth or sixth centuries.<sup>36</sup> The identification of deacons and Levites is also found in the *Exsultet* at the Easter Vigil where the deacon sings '*qui me non meis meritis intra levitarum numerus dignatus est*' (God who 'deigned to include me, not because of my merits, within the number of the Levites').<sup>37</sup> The presence of this association at the key moments of diaconal ministry in the Roman rite suggests that it is of very ancient origin. In the Letter of Clement, written at Rome at the end of the first century, Christian ministry is compared to the Old Testament orders of High Priest, Priests and Levites and a high degree of continuity between Israel and the Church is assumed, and an explicit assimilation of deacons to Levites is made in the East by Origen in the third century.<sup>38</sup> The connection between deacons and Levites in Christianity is thus at least as strong as that between deacons and Christ and is of particular importance in the Roman tradition.

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<sup>36</sup> Paul F. Bradshaw, *Rites of Ordination: Their History and Theology* (London: SPCK, 2014), pp. 106–13.

<sup>37</sup> This is from the version of the *Exsultet* in the Roman Missal, which goes back at least to the seventh century, A.G. Martimort, *The Church at Prayer Volume IV: The Liturgy and Time* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1986), p. 37.

<sup>38</sup> 1 Clement 40.5, Origen, *Homilies on Joshua*, 2.1, Bradshaw, *Rites of Ordination*, pp. 30, 43. Bradshaw also notes that while the diaconate was most commonly assimilated to the Levites, some early writers such as Optatus of Milevis saw the diaconate as a third level within the priesthood.

The distinction between traditional and twentieth-century views of the diaconate is shown in the changes to the Roman Catholic ordination prayer in the post-Vatican II reforms where the extent and importance of the Levitical typology has been reduced, mention of the seven men full of the Spirit in Acts 6 has been added and a reference to Christ the servant has replaced the final allusion to promotion to a higher order.<sup>39</sup> This is following the same path as Anglican Ordinals which, from the first text of 1549, removed Levitical typology, replaced it with an emphasis on Stephen and the seven in Acts 6, and then, in modern ordinals such as the 1984 *Scottish Ordinal* and the 2005 *Common Worship Ordination Services*, replaced this with an emphasis on assimilation to Christ.<sup>40</sup> The Levitical association which was at the centre of diaconal identity in Durandus and goes back to the first centuries of Christianity seems now to be a bit of an embarrassment, perhaps this is because ancient liturgical texts are now read with a historical-critical eye and not within the great web of interconnected symbols that underpins liturgical interpretation. The result is an impoverishment. Even the new emphasis on Christ is reduced to aspects of the Christ of the Gospels and not as he is manifested in his Body, which includes Israel and perhaps also, if we take Durandus's secular comparisons seriously, aspects of the wider created world. If we could learn to inhabit the liturgical commentators' way of thinking as well as that of the modern academy, we could perhaps have a richer understanding of the ministry of the diaconate.

In the prologue to Book 2, Durandus explains the process and theory behind the importance of the Levites in his understanding of the diaconate. The association is important because there was a 'transfer of persons [...] from both the Gentiles and the Hebrews to the rites of the present Church', a teaching which the critical edition says is drawn from the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville.<sup>41</sup> Durandus gives as his first example of this 'transfer of

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<sup>39</sup> A. G. Martimort, *The Church at Prayer Volume III: The Sacraments* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1988), p. 178, quoting M. Cnudde, 'L'ordination des diacres', *La Maison-Dieu* 98 (1969), 88–89.

<sup>40</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559 and 1662*, ed. by Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); *Scottish Ordinal 1984, amended 2006* (Edinburgh: Scottish Episcopal Church, 2006); *Common Worship: Ordination Services, Study Edition* (London: Church House Publishing, 2007), which retains Acts 6 as a reading and notes on p. 134 that the rite for the ordination of deacons has been influenced by the 1984 *Scottish Ordinal* – though unfortunately the index calls this Scottish Episcopal Church text 'the Church of Scotland Ordinal 1984', p. 201.

<sup>41</sup> *Rationale*, 2.1.15.



persons' the connection between the Pope and the pagan High Priest of Rome, saying that in this gentile connection deacons have the place of the quaternions (group of four soldiers) in the Roman army (2.1.15). This is an example of the 'secular' comparisons in liturgical interpretation and shows that for Durandus there was no bold line between grace and nature. There was not a direct handing over between the Pope and the pagan High Priest but by way of comparison they both fulfil an analogous function. The comparison of deacons with the quaternion of Roman soldiers is repeated in 2.9.13 in a passage that is only found in some manuscripts and has no source given in the critical edition, although in the background is Acts 12. 4 where Peter in prison was put into the hands of four quaternions of soldiers. Only in 2.9.9 does Durandus eventually come to the New Testament in his explanation of the diaconate, where the origin of the diaconate is placed in the choice by the Apostles of the Seven in Acts 6. 1–6 for *ministrare mensis* (serving at tables) as opposed to the apostolic *ministerium verbi* (the service of the word). After linking the Seven with other groups of seven in the Bible, he then uses the medieval collections of canons to define the deacon canonically by what he does 'to assist and serve the priests in all things associated with the sacraments of Christ' (2.9.10). Durandus also quotes with approval on the teaching of St Cyprian: 'deacons should remember that just as the Lord elected bishops and superiors, after the Ascension of the Lord into heaven, the Apostles themselves established deacons; and in the time that followed, the Church herself established subdeacons and acolytes' (2.1.24).<sup>42</sup> For Durandus this is the historical sense, but so is the connection with the Levites and the Roman army. By using a wide range of comparisons, both sacred and profane, and by speaking of Old and New Testament sources without distinction, Durandus is using an inclusive method and building a picture of diaconal identity different from the one that would be obtained if a simple historical origin was sought.

If we were to ask today who the deacon represents, the obvious modern answer is Christ who came 'not to be served but to serve' (Matthew 20. 28), a text which uses the verb *diakoneo* (*ministrare*). This is not just a modern trope, as seen in the contemporary ordination rites mentioned above, because Ignatius of Antioch told the Trallians in the early second century to 'hold the deacons in as great respect as Jesus Christ' and wrote to the Magnesians that 'the deacons are entrusted with the ministry (*diakonia*) of Jesus Christ'.<sup>43</sup> Durandus makes the same connection and uses Matthew

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<sup>42</sup> A quotation from Cyprian, *Ad Rogationum*, Ep. 3.3, taken by Durandus from a canonical source.

<sup>43</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Trallians*, 3. *Common Worship: Ordination Services*, p. 124, notes that the modern emphasis on Christ the servant in

20. 28 to say that as Christ was a minister when he preached the Gospel, so it is right that a deacon should read the Gospel (4.14.8). Like that of the priest, the deacon's stole also signifies the yoke of Christ (2.5.3–4), but the deacon as Christ is not prominent in his analysis, indeed when commenting on the liturgical greeting 'the Lord be with you' he teaches that:

Fittingly the deacon does not say 'the Lord be with you' during the canonical hours because he is not an image of Christ, who used this greeting through Boaz, just as the priest who uses it stands in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*).<sup>44</sup>

This seems decisive but the analogies in liturgical interpretation are not fixed, this is a theology of symbols, not of ontology; the section in Book 4 on transubstantiation seems like an alien insertion. When Durandus discusses the deacon handing the paten to the subdeacon at the offertory he associates him with Christ handing on the power to preach to his disciples (4.30.31). This sort of interpretation is not confined to the deacon, when the subdeacon carries the paten, he himself is Christ carrying his cross, as Durandus says 'our subdeacon, namely Christ' (4.30.26). These few times when the deacon is Christ are not a statement of who the deacon is but rather part of a series of roles in which the sacred ministers play parts in the story of Jesus symbolizing different aspects of the story. Each role played by the deacon does, however, build up different aspects of the diaconal identity. This dramatic way of doing theology is not surprising given the relation between liturgical interpretation and liturgical drama.<sup>45</sup> The deacon thus both is Christ and is not Christ, an ambiguity which reflects both reality and the nature of analogy. Significantly this ambiguity is absent from the modern ordinals.

If the deacon is not Christ, perhaps he is an angel? This is the case in the Byzantine tradition and is the most common way of understanding the deacon in the tenth-century commentary on the Byzantine Liturgy by Germanus of Constantinople. For Germanus the priests attending the bishop are the seraphim, with their heavy vestments being seraphic wings, while the deacons are 'images of the angelic powers' as 'ministering spirits sent

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diaconal ordination has its roots in the teaching of Ignatius in the second century.

<sup>44</sup> *Rationale* 4.14.8, in scholastic teaching the idea that a priest acts *in persona Christi* is a technical term related to his ability to confect the sacrament and the ontological character of the priest which is received at ordination.

<sup>45</sup> Christina Catharina Schnusenbergh, *The Mythological Traditions of Liturgical Drama: The Eucharist as Theater* (New York: Paulist Press, 2010).

out for service' with their lighter vestments as wings appropriate to this outward-facing task. Likewise at the Great Entrance, Christ enters the world in the sacred elements carried by the priest and prepared for the sacrifice, with the Holy Spirit in the smoke and fire of the incense, and the deacons together with the liturgical fans bearing images of seraphim represent the heavenly host. This is a heavenly or eschatological interpretation, but passion imagery is not absent and the deacons are again angels during the anaphora when their liturgical announcements make them the angels at the tomb of Christ.<sup>46</sup> Here the understanding of the deacon comes from his actions in the liturgy, going out and giving proclamations, and from the words of the liturgy, particularly the *Cherubikon* sung at the Great Entrance, 'We who mystically represent the Cherubim, and who sing to the Life-Giving Trinity the thrice-holy hymn, let us now lay aside all earthly cares that we may receive the King of all, escorted invisibly by the angelic orders'. This identity of the earthly and heavenly liturgies, noted above in the Bible in Exodus, Hebrews and Revelation, is also found in the Roman Mass, in the Sanctus ('therefore with angels and archangels...') and in the *Supplices te rogamus* in the Canon:

We humbly beseech you, almighty God, to command that these our offerings be borne by the hands of your holy angel to your altar on high in the presence of your divine Majesty; that as many of us as shall receive the most sacred Body and Blood of your Son by partaking thereof from this altar may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace.

Durandus, however, does not use the imagery of heaven and has the deacon as an angel only in relation to the life of Christ, particularly the story of the passion. Perhaps this reflects a particular Western emphasis on the passion in the high and late middle ages but it is more than just a focus on the cross; for Durandus the Mass encompasses the whole paschal mystery, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost and he does not omit the Incarnation. At the fraction (the breaking of the bread) when the deacon uncovers the chalice, which represents the tomb of Christ, and looks into it, he is the angel who rolled away the stone from the tomb and folded the grave clothes (4.51.1). When the deacon gives the dismissal at the end of Mass, he is the angels in Acts 1. 11 speaking to the disciples after the Ascension before they return to Jerusalem (4.57.4), but Durandus also associates this dismissal with the Incarnation, with the angel calling the shepherds to the manger in Luke 2. 9–12 (4.57.6). The only interpretation in the *Rationale* which recalls

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<sup>46</sup> Germanus, *On the Divine Liturgy*, pp. 67, 87, 91, 95.

that of Germanus is when Durandus quotes Pope Innocent III who, thinking of the seven gifts of the Spirit and the Spirit which filled Stephen, compares the seven deacons surrounding the Pope at the liturgy to the seven angels who stand before God blowing trumpets in Revelation 8. 2 (2.9.9).

In addition to being an angel and very occasionally being Christ, deacons also play other roles in the *Rationale*. These are usually from the New Testament as, although deacons are associated with Levites in the literal sense, there are few Old Testament allegorical interpretations. One is given for those churches where the deacons hold up the priest's hands during the Lord's Prayer, in doing so they are Aaron and Hur holding up the arms of Moses while he prayed during the battle against Amalek in Exodus 17.12 (4.47.3). In general, for Durandus, the Mass is like a passion play. The sanctuary and altar which the bishop or priest approaches at the offertory is the 'furnished upper room of Christ' at the Last Supper and the supper at Bethany (John 12. 1–2) and, because of the etymology of his title, the deacon is one of those who served Christ then (4.30.2). The Canon or Eucharistic Prayer symbolizes the crucifixion and at the end Christ is buried. In this the deacon and priest are Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who take Christ's body for burial at the time when they replace the blessed sacrament on the altar after the elevation at the doxology of the Canon (4.46.22). Slightly later it is the deacon alone who is Nicodemus and Joseph as he places the corporal on the chalice, rolling the stone over the tomb and wrapping Christ's body with a shroud (Matthew 27. 60 and John 19. 38–42). This connection with Nicodemus and Joseph is also found in the commentary of Germanus but there it is applied to the Great Entrance which, among other interpretations including Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, is associated with the burial procession of Christ's body.<sup>47</sup> For Durandus, as the Mass progresses the deacon takes on more roles related to his activities. The bow of the deacon waiting for Holy Communion during the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer symbolize the seven weeks the Apostles waited before the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (4.47.12). One striking feature of the commentary on the Mass in the *Rationale* and other medieval commentaries is that holy communion does not feature prominently, probably because it was infrequent apart from the clergy. When it is discussed its primary interpretation is as the Ascension of Christ, when his body disappeared from

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<sup>47</sup> Germanus, *On the Divine Liturgy*, p. 87. The Great Entrance in the Byzantine Liturgy is when the bread and wine are taken through the Church from the Prothesis (the table of preparation to the north of the altar and sometimes in a separate chapel) to the Holy Table. The bread and wine are prepared at the very start of the Liturgy, but the Great Entrance has a similar place in the Byzantine rite to the Offertory in the Latin West.

earth, but the communion of the sacred ministers does give the deacon other symbolic roles. When he and the subdeacon receive their communion from the priest, they are the disciples with Christ at Emmaus, recognizing him in the breaking of bread, or the weary fishermen on the shore eating grilled fish with Jesus (4.54.3, cf. Luke 24. 30, John 21. 9–13).

One of the most striking sets of roles played by the deacon in the *Rationale* is when he is a woman. This is not a hint of a female diaconate. Durandus follows canon law in teaching that a woman may not proclaim the Gospel unless it be an Abbess at Matins in private (4.24.38) and he shows no evidence of being in favour of the ordination of women, but aspects of the nature of the diaconate are revealed in the *Rationale* by the roles he plays in the liturgy in a way that may provoke new insights in a time when the deacon is actually a woman. If the ordination of women to major orders is a development of Christian tradition, as it is held to be in the Scottish Episcopal Church, it is of limited use to seek justification in hints that women have been ordained to major orders in the past. If this is an authentic theological development of the deposit of faith, approved by the appropriate ecclesiastical authority, it does not need precise historical justification as the Holy Spirit is not confined to the past, but the study of the role of women in Church history may help us understand women's ministry. Durandus's teaching that the deacon symbolizes Biblical women can thus have relevance today without attributing to him anachronistic views. The most striking example is in Durandus's commentary on the blessing of the paschal candle and the singing of the *Exsultet* at the Easter Vigil in chapter 80 of Book 6, away from his main commentary on the deacon in Books 2, 3 and 4. Although he has earlier said that the deacon in this important role 'represents the resurrection of Christ' (4.14.9), he notes here the strange fact that even if a bishop or priest is present this blessing is done by a deacon although he is of a lesser order and blessings are usually given by the senior cleric. He explains this from the events of Easter morning:

Because Christ, rising from the dead, manifesting himself first to Mary Magdalene wished to announce by the weaker sex the glory of his resurrection to the Apostles so that as the beginning of our death entered the world through a woman, so he wanted the beginning of its restoration to be announced to the world by a woman (6.80.3).

Here the deacon is Mary Magdalene and, after the end of the Canon when the deacon moves behind the priest and also after the Lord's Prayer when he receives the paten from the subdeacon, he and the subdeacon represent the Marys returning from the tomb; likewise, when the priest accepts the paten

(its circular form representing love) from the deacon, the priest represents Christ and the deacon Mary (4.46.24; 4.50.1). Earlier in the liturgy at the offertory there is a hint that the deacon is Martha who served at table at Bethany (4.30.2) and then, during the Canon which represents the crucifixion, the deacon and subdeacon, standing and looking on as the priest strikes his breast at the words *nobis quoque peccatores* (to us sinners also), are 'the women who had followed Christ from Galilee, standing at a distance and looking on' (4.46.2). The interpretations are not arbitrary. The deacons, because of their role in the liturgy, are assimilated to the women in the passion narrative and by this strategy the experience of women is inserted into the heart of a eucharistic sacrifice which is celebrated entirely by men. In this place women are presented through the ministry of the deacons as preachers, faithful disciples and lovers of Christ.

Love in the understanding of the diaconate takes us away from the passion narrative to the realm of mysticism. In the *Rationale* and in other commentaries we see the deacon understood in the context of the Christian spiritual life; the servant is also a mystic. The basic hermeneutical structure of liturgical interpretation is the same as that of contemporary exegesis, there are literal, allegorical, moral and eschatological levels. The eschatological level for the deacon is primarily that of the angels in the heavenly liturgy, prominent in Germanus, whereas the allegorical sense is dominant in Durandus and is primarily associated with the passion and resurrection narratives. The moral level is concerned with virtues but when the deacon's role is considered it is particularly associated with the spiritual life and we can trace this back to the earliest liturgical commentary. Dionysius the Areopagite in his treatise *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* has the three orders of ministry represent the three activities of God acting on the human soul: to purify, illuminate and perfect.<sup>48</sup> Dionysius calls the deacons 'the order that purifies' and writes that:

The order of deacons has the task of purification and it uplifts those who have been purified to the clear, sacred acts of the priests. It makes clean the imperfect and incubates them by means of the cleansing enlightenments and teachings of Scripture.<sup>49</sup>

As with those of Durandus, this interpretation is related to the deacon's function in the liturgy, in this case the proclamation and teaching of Scripture and the guarding of boundaries, Dionysius notes that 'the

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<sup>48</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, p. 238.

<sup>49</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, pp. 248 and 238.

hierarchical ordinance gives them the charge of the sanctuary doors'.<sup>50</sup> In writing to Dorotheus the Deacon, though, Dionysius goes beyond purification and speaks of the divine darkness of contemplation and it is this theme which is found in the *Rationale* of Durandus.<sup>51</sup> In his commentary on the return of the deacon and subdeacon to the bishop after the deacon has read the Gospel at Mass, Durandus says, with a word play clearer in the Latin than in English, that the subdeacon carries the book back 'but the deacon returns empty-handed [*vacuus*] so that he can show, with the preaching finished, that he frees himself [*se vacare*] for contemplation' (4.24.31). This return to the bishop is interpreted as a return to God from whom the Gospel has gone forth and the deacon symbolizes both the place of contemplation in the ascent to God and the mixed life of preaching and contemplation. This is the interpretation of an action in the liturgy, and with Durandus the meaning is often more associated with the resonances of the action than with the actor, but a contemplative aspect of the deacon's identity is taught in Durandus's commentary on his vestments: 'The deacon uses a dalmatic that he might learn to hunt for the hidden meaning of lofty things' (2.9.18). The deacon is a seeker of mysteries. In Book 3 the dalmatic is first considered as a pontifical vestment, worn by the bishop under his chasuble because the bishop possesses all the orders that he bestows on others in ordination. After noting the literal sense that it comes from Dalmatia (3.11.2) he allegorizes the wideness of its sleeves which signify the wideness of the love and the mercy of Christ as shown in the parable of the Good Samaritan (3.11.3, 8). He also notes the fact that it has two sides, two bars on front and back and, sometimes, fringes on one side but not the other, to say that it represents the combination of the active and contemplative lives in the life of the deacon (3.11.6). This is summed up in the phrase 'diversity without division' which means the combination of the many good works done by the person who wears it and the unity which comes from prayer and contemplation (3.11.6). This contemplation is not to be divided from the Cross as the dalmatic is cross-shaped and is thus 'worn in the office of the Mass where Christ's passion is represented' (3.11.7). As in the chapter on the deacon in Book 2, Durandus is particularly interested in those times such as Advent when the deacon does not wear the dalmatic but rather a folded chasuble (*planeta plicata*).<sup>52</sup> The dalmatic signifies the beauty and love of the

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<sup>50</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, p. 238.

<sup>51</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *Complete Works*, pp. 265–66.

<sup>52</sup> In the first millennium the chasuble (*planeta* or *casula*), which developed from Roman secular wear (*paenula*, *casula*), was not an exclusively priestly vestment but was worn by deacons, subdeacons and those in minor orders. The *planeta plicata*, worn in penitential seasons including Lent, survived the

Gospel (as the tunicle of the subdeacon symbolizes the Law) and, as the Gospel does not arrive until the Incarnation, the dalmatic is put aside until the fullness of love can be contemplated at Christmas (3.11.9).

The practical purpose of liturgical interpretation was to keep the truths of the faith before the eyes of those celebrating or present at the sacred liturgy. I have shown in chapter 4 of *Sacred Signs* how the liturgical interpretation of church buildings was understood as part of the medieval *ars memorativa*, the use of 'memory palaces' to keep information in the mind. To one formed in liturgical interpretation the church in which they ministered constantly spoke to them of the truths of the faith. This education of the memory was also one of the purposes of the interpretation of the actions and words of the liturgy and a reason why the method was so prominent in medieval education and catechetics.<sup>53</sup> In extracting the interpretations relating to the deacon we can gain some idea of what Durandus thought the deacon should signify to himself and to others who saw him at work in the liturgy. Supplementing this with interpretations of the deacon from the Syrian and Byzantine traditions of Dionysius and Germanus can only enrich what is in its very nature a composite tradition. The interpretations only concern the deacon in the liturgy (although there are hints of teaching and liminality) because that was where the distinctive gift of the deacon was seen at the time, but because of the inherent flexibility of the method it could be extended beyond the liturgy just as it was extended to the church building and included 'secular' interpretations from Roman antiquity. These interpretations are all rooted in what the deacon actually does so from them we can gain a picture of diaconal identity. Durandus's presentation of the literal or historical sense of the diaconate shows that there is some confusion over its origin and so it would probably be better to ground our understanding of the deacon in the deacon's liturgical roles, as Durandus has done, than to assimilate the deacon to a function or identity of Christ as is done in the modern ordinals. From the liturgical roles, the deeper aspects of diaconal identity emerge and become clear.

Behind the great variety of interpretations is the idea of service and loving care: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea with the body of Jesus, Aaron and Hur holding the arms of Moses, the Levites at the service of God in the Temple and Tabernacle, Martha serving Jesus' bodily needs, the Marys bringing spices to his tomb, and the angels gently bringing tidings to the

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restriction of the chasuble to priests and bishops but in the Roman Rite it was abolished for use on Good Friday in 1955 and at other times in 1960.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Holmes, *Sacred Signs*, chapter 3, 'learning liturgical interpretation'; and Holmes, 'Liturgical Theology before 1600' in *History of Scottish Theology*, ed. by Fergusson and Elliott.



downcast and marginalized. It is interesting to note how the comparisons are not with authority figures like Peter, James, John and Paul but with the quietly faithful. In this category the gospel women are prominent, with the women at the cross perhaps the most powerful icons of this strong, quiet faithfulness. Mary, Jesus's mother is among them but not cited by name (perhaps she was too elevated a figure in the devotion of the time to be drawn into this playful web of symbols), whereas it is Mary Magdalene who is the hinge-point between the two dominant aspects of the diaconate here. She brings her loving care to Christ's tomb, but, with the encounter with another aspect of the diaconal charism in the angel, she turns and becomes a preacher. For Durandus Mary Magdalene is the key to diaconal identity, as we see in his commentary on the blessing of the paschal candle at the *Exsultet*. In the Church of his time women were grudgingly given only the tiniest of spaces in which to read the Gospel, yet, even as he briefly connects the deacon's ministry of the Word with Christ, his prime image of the deacon as preacher of the Gospel is not Jesus or Paul but the Magdalene.

All this comes from the literal facts of what the deacon does in the liturgy and the method of liturgical interpretation, outlined in the first part of this article, enables these to ground a whole web of meaning. The deacon assists and serves the priests in their sacramental ministry, he proclaims the Gospel, and he makes announcements to the congregation. These are still the key points of the deacon's liturgical ministry and the adaptable and playful method is still relevant today. In all of these activities the deacon is also an angel and the flexibility of the method means that the deacon can be all these things at the same time. The commentary on the deacon handing the paten, meaning love, to the priest at High Mass is a turning point and again here the deacon is Mary Magdalene. Whether with the crucicentric interpretations of Durandus or the celestial ones of Germanus, the deacon is defined by his actions, but the love in the paten and the interpretation of the distinctively diaconal dalmatic opens up the theme of the deacon as a mystic and contemplative. Avoiding the danger of interpreting the story of Martha and Mary as descriptive of two different types of life, Durandus points to two aspects of diaconal life, action and contemplation, loving service and loving attention. This unity in diversity in the life of the deacon is held together, like the dalmatic, by the mystery of love.



# A Reflection on the Ministry of Deacons in the Church of Sweden in Light of the Theology of the Diaconate

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In 2017 I spent the summer in Gothenburg on a six-week ministry formation placement with the Church of Sweden in Bergsjön. Located in the north-east of the city, Bergsjön is a working-class suburb of Gothenburg consisting of social housing, schools, municipal services and a small shopping centre. Bergsjön has one of the largest migrant communities in Sweden, the majority of whom are housed in the blocks of flats which dominate the local area. The church is centrally located, within easy walking distance of buses and trams, making it a natural community hub. During my placement I worked alongside the church's team of priests, deacons, youth workers, musicians and support staff. Much of my time was spent working with the four deacons who were responsible for coordinating the church's diaconal work in the community.

The church's diaconal ministry began responding to the growing number of migrants moving into Bergsjön in 2000. The decision was taken to open the church, make coffee available to those who came, and see what emerged. From the beginning the deacons recognized the need to work with other organizations. When Bergsjön Church's Refugee Support project was launched in 2004, its services were developed quickly to respond to the needs of refugees from the Balkan crisis. Since then, the deacons have listened carefully to the needs of the people and dialogued reflectively with their colleagues and partner organizations so that they can respond to the changing needs of the population of Bergsjön. This paper is a reflection on my experience of the ministry of deacons in Bergsjön in conversation with the theological foundations of the diaconate in the Church of Sweden. The background to the present-day diaconate in the Church of Sweden (hereafter in this paper referred to as the Church) is a complex one because the theology which underpins the diaconate has been formed through nineteenth-century pietism, traditional Lutheranism, ecumenical influences and contemporary social challenges.<sup>1</sup> Today's deacons are called to carry the diaconal responsibility of the Church through social action, participation in the liturgy and by exercising their prophetic voice. In doing so they are reminding the Church of Christ's concern for the poor and challenging

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<sup>1</sup> Marianne Rodriguez Nygaard, 'Reflective Practice of Diaconia from the Margins: Ecclesiological and Professional Implications', *Diaconia*, 8 (2017), 166–87 (p. 176).

society as a whole to acknowledge the human dignity of all people, who are all created in the image of God.

### **Background**

The nature and function of the deacon today is rooted in the pietistic charitable work of the Mother House deaconess communities and diaconal institutions which emerged in the nineteenth century. Influenced by the German Kaiserwerth Mother House movement, the Swedish Mother Houses established 'institutions such as hospitals, homes for the elderly, the handicapped and the destitute'.<sup>2</sup> Deaconesses lived and worked in these institutions or served in parishes as nurses, teachers or social workers.<sup>3</sup> The Swedish Mother Houses remained influential throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but by the 1960s the institutions had become the responsibility of the welfare state and the parish was the context for diaconal work. The separation of the Church of Sweden from its responsibility for healthcare and education was largely due to liberal political ideologies that were in the ascendancy from the mid-nineteenth century. The Church's acceptance of its changing role was theologically justified using the Lutheran two-realm doctrine that God's rule of the world is two-fold. God orders society and creation through the 'realm of the world and the law' and brings salvation and restoration to humanity through the 'realm of the Christian community'.<sup>4</sup>

Parish-based diaconal activities continued to focus on assistance to individuals in need, pastoral counselling and community building principally organized by deacons.<sup>5</sup> The office of deacon was canonically recognized by the Church in 1987.<sup>6</sup> The distinctions between male and

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<sup>2</sup> Sven-Erik B. Brodd, 'The Deacon in the Church of Sweden' in *The Ministry of the Deacon*, ed. by Christine Hall (Uppsala: Nordic Ecumenical Council, 1999), p. 132.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> J. Idestrom, and S. Linde, 'Welfare State Supporter and Civil Society Activist: Church of Sweden, in the "Refugee Crisis" 2015', *Social Inclusion* 7(2) (2019), 4–13 (p. 5).

<sup>5</sup> Ninna Edgardh Beckman, et al., 'The Church of Sweden as an Agent of Welfare—the case of Gävle'. in *'Churches in Europe as Agents of Welfare — Sweden, Norway and Finland. Working Paper 2 from the Project: Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective*, ed. by Anne Birgitta Yeung (Uppsala: Institute for Diaconal and Social Studies, 2006), 1, pp. 20–85 (p. 36).

<sup>6</sup> Tiit Pädam, 'Ordination of Deacons in the Churches of the Porvoo Communion: A Comparative Investigation in Ecclesiology' (PhD diss., University of Uppsala, 2011), p. 57.

female deacons were removed and deacons gained 'a canonical status equivalent to that of priests'.<sup>7</sup> Since the late twentieth century the Church has sought to establish ecclesiology as the basis for defining the nature and role of the diaconate.<sup>8</sup> The 1990 document *Bishop, Priest and Deacon in the Church of Sweden* confirmed the place of the deacon in the Church's liturgy making explicit the connection between the worship of the congregation and Christian service of love and merciful kindness.<sup>9</sup> The 1999 Church Ordinance of the Church of Sweden provided canonical regulation of the three-fold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, placing the Church's diaconal responsibility in the hands of the deacon.<sup>10</sup>

In 2000 the Church of Sweden ceased to be the official state church and became a different legal entity: a faith-based community.<sup>11</sup> This change has allowed the Church to renew its role as a welfare state agency. The Church's role as the largest third sector provider of social care in the welfare market has significantly influenced its diaconal work, provision that is led by its deacons.<sup>12</sup> The Church of Sweden now requires each congregation to prepare a 'pastoral programme, which has to be approved by the diocesan chapter'.<sup>13</sup> It includes the provision of worship, mission and diaconal work. The latter is commonly based on an assessment of needs 'in cooperation with other local agencies'.<sup>14</sup> While the deacon, 'as the leader and source of inspiration of the diaconal responsibility of the congregation',<sup>15</sup> has a decision-making role concerning the nature and direction of their work, development of the pastoral programme is shared with the congregational board of elected lay representatives and the vicar, 'who is responsible for the overall supervision and coordination of the work'.<sup>16</sup> Arguably the Church's enhanced profile in the third sector has increased the emphasis on the social care aspect of the deacon's role, the aspect most associated with the concept of *diakonia*.

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<sup>7</sup> Brodd, *Deacon in the Church of Sweden*, p. 116.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>9</sup> Ninni Smedberg, and Katharina Nordin Norrfjärd, 'The Diaconate and the Diaconal Work in the Church of Sweden after the year 2000: Development or Backlash? To be ordained — A Scene', *Estudos Teológicos*, 55(2) (2015), 260–275 (p. 264).

<sup>10</sup> Brodd, *Deacon in the Church of Sweden*, p. 109.

<sup>11</sup> Idestrom and Linde, *Welfare State Supporter*, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Beckman, et al., *Church of Sweden as an Agent of Welfare*, p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> Smedberg and Norrfjärd, *Diaconate*, p. 271.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>16</sup> Beckman, et al., *Church of Sweden as an Agent of Welfare*, p. 33.

### ***Diakonia***

The theology of the diaconate in the Church of Sweden is articulated in terms of *diakonia* and ecclesiology. In recent years theologians have increasingly emphasized the ecclesiological dimension of the Church's theology of the diaconate.<sup>17</sup> Deacons are ordained to a specific office a function of which is charitable work conducted through the ecclesiological construct of *diakonia*.<sup>18</sup> *Diakonia* is routinely translated from the Greek as meaning ministry, charity, service, relief or support. Traditionally the motivation to develop diaconal ministry was a response to the call to care for the poor found in the Gospels and the practice of the early church.

Acts 6 describes the challenge from one section of the Jerusalem church whose widows were being overlooked when it came to the distribution of food. Seven men, full of the God's Spirit and wisdom, were appointed and ordained to care for the widows. In Acts 6 *diakonia* is translated in a number of ways: the distribution, to attend [tables], and ministry. Rodriguez Nygaard integrates these concepts of *diakonia* arguing that *diakonia* is, 'the Gospel of *interactions*, and it is expressed through loving your neighbor, creating inclusive communities, caring for creation, and struggling for justice'.<sup>19</sup> Her definition acknowledges the complexity of what *diakonia* entails, stressing where the focus of *diakonia* should be: 'working at the margins'.<sup>20</sup>

Theologically *diakonia* was, and continues to be, understood as a mark of the Universal Church and the responsibility of all who are baptized.<sup>21</sup> The role of the deacon is to inspire and recruit church members to engage in *diakonia* through volunteering.<sup>22</sup> Deacons are to encourage all God's people to care for others, 'so that the love of God is made visible in the world'.<sup>23</sup> The Church of Sweden views *diakonia* not merely as a voluntary activity but core to the Church's identity and therefore the existence of deacons to lead this aspect of the Church's ministry is essential.<sup>24</sup> According to Beckman et al., 'Deacons have a special responsibility, according to their ordination, to seek

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<sup>17</sup> Brodd, Deacon in the Church of Sweden, p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> Sven-Erik B. Brodd, 'Caritas and diakonia as perspectives on the Diaconate', in *The Ministry of the Deacon: 2 Ecclesiological Explorations*, ed. by Gunnel Borgegård et al. (Uppsala: Nordic Ecumenical Council, 2000), pp. 23–69 (p. 58).

<sup>19</sup> Rodriguez Nygaard, *Reflective Practice of Diaconia*, p. 176.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>21</sup> Brodd, *Caritas and diakonia*, p. 47.

<sup>22</sup> Smedberg and Norrfjärd, *Diaconate*, p. 260.

<sup>23</sup> Beckman, et al., *Church of Sweden as an Agent of Welfare*, p. 36.

<sup>24</sup> Brodd, *Deacon in the Church of Sweden*, p. 107.

out and help anyone in bodily or spiritual need, defend human rights, actively support the oppressed.’<sup>25</sup> In practice deacons have a professional role delivering activities ranging from visiting the sick and elderly, providing food and financial assistance to those in crisis, to running activity groups for children.

Due to their work with vulnerable and marginalized people, deacons have an outward facing role that often leads them to interact and partner with other third sector agencies. Priests are perceived as having a key role in providing important rites of passage within the Church. Deacons, with their secular professional training and practice of *diakonia*, are viewed as being more active in wider society. The work of deacons has enhanced the perception of the Church as a trustworthy organization in the minds of Swedish people in general and public authorities in particular.<sup>26</sup> The Christian aspect of deacons’ work, rather than being viewed as an impediment, is regarded as ‘a positive contribution to the benefit of the whole person and for the whole society’.<sup>27</sup> This together with the quality of their work has led to the public sector commissioning the Church to provide services on its behalf.<sup>28</sup>

Bergsjön Church is a meeting point between those in need and a range of education, health and welfare agencies willing to work with undocumented migrants. The church community has become well known and regarded for its commitment to the poor and the prominent positioning of the ministry of its deacons has enabled the church to be immersed in an incarnational way in people’s lives. The deacons at Bergsjön Church cite Isaiah 58 as inspiration for their work. Verses 6–9, particularly, provide motivation to challenge injustice and oppression and to provide food, clothes, and other necessities to those in need. Some who have benefited from the deacons’ ministry are now volunteers, helping others living locally. Some have come to faith in Christ and been baptized, but the church community is much bigger than those attending worship services. It consists of all those who engage with the church, for whatever reason. This is largely due to the work of the deacons in building relationships in which people are loved and affirmed for who they are, including refugees and other marginalized people.

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<sup>25</sup> Beckman, et al., Church of Sweden as an Agent of Welfare, p. 36.

<sup>26</sup> Rodriguez Nygaard, Reflective Practice of Diaconia, p. 167.

<sup>27</sup> Brodd, Deacon in the Church of Sweden, p. 108.

<sup>28</sup> Beckman, et al., Church of Sweden as an Agent of Welfare, p. 40.

### ***Liturgy and worship***

Since the 1980s the Church of Sweden has consciously integrated deacons into the liturgical life of the Church. At this time there was a growing recognition that the 'teaching and the deeds of the Church go together and form the witness of the Church'.<sup>29</sup> Deacons were acknowledged as having a crucial responsibility for transcending borders; for translating the teaching of the Gospel from the preached word into service to the poor. The deacon acts as 'a bridge between diaconal work among the most vulnerable and downtrodden, and the liturgy and worship'.<sup>30</sup> Rather than only focusing on work at the margins, it is the deacon's responsibility to connect the needs of marginalized people with the worship and prayers of parishioners who are at the heart of their congregation.

In the Church of Sweden the orders of 'bishop, priest and deacon are not hierarchically ordered, but are charges emerging from the gospels with equal value'.<sup>31</sup> The Christological foundation of the diaconate is emphasized in the deacon's call to continue Christ's mission by bringing the needs of the people to the Church and engage the people of God in fellowship with Jesus Christ.<sup>32</sup> While the ordinal identifies the deacon's role as standing alongside the marginalized and defending human rights,<sup>33</sup> deacons are also called to remind the Church that it is a symbol of God's saving action in history. Deacons are permanent representatives of God and the Church in the world. This is shown through the liturgical and educational aspects of the deacon's role,<sup>34</sup> which are aimed at 'building up and equipping the church, so that it can become what it is: the sacrament of Christ to the world'.<sup>35</sup>

In the Church's liturgical life, 'the deacon's voice emerges in the Eucharist, to reorientate the Christian community towards the kingdom of God, to proclaim the Gospel and its values, and, in doing both these things, to express the longing of the whole of creation for the fulfilment of everything in Christ.'<sup>36</sup> Deacons typically read the Gospel, lead the intercessory prayers of the church and administer the chalice at the Eucharist.<sup>37</sup> In Bergsjön

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<sup>29</sup> Brodd, *Deacon in the Church of Sweden*, p. 107.

<sup>30</sup> Smedberg and Norrfjärd, *Diaconate*, p. 260.

<sup>31</sup> Pädam, *Ordination of Deacons*, p. 59.

<sup>32</sup> Smedberg and Norrfjärd, *Diaconate*, p. 263.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>34</sup> Pädam, *Ordination of Deacons*, p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>36</sup> C. Hall, 'Research on the diaconate: a retrospective view of promise and challenge', *International journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 13(4) (2013), 258–269 (p. 266).

<sup>37</sup> Brodd, *Deacon in the Church of Sweden*, p. 114.



Church the deacon's role in the liturgy aims to unite the needs of the people and the worship of God. The congregation is composed of people from several countries, denominations and language groups. Even for those with limited understanding of Swedish, elements of the liturgy are recognizable to those from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Methodist, and other Lutheran church backgrounds. Deacons lead the intercessions each week often inviting different members of the congregation to contribute short prayers in their native languages. This makes it possible for migrants to hear prayers in their language and the congregation to pray in solidarity with them in the context of the deacon's prayers on the church's behalf.

Whilst lay people play a role in the prayers of the church and the distribution of the Eucharist, it is the deacons' role to equip people for such service. Occasionally deacons preach in church services but more frequently communicate the teachings of the Christian faith through conversations, study groups and educational programmes for new believers and those preparing for baptism and confirmation. They interpret events as being part of God's saving work in the world. In doing so they connect what is happening in people's lives with the message of salvation, redemption and liberation found in the Gospel. According to Smedberg and Norrfjärd, the deacon's movement 'is the one of being sent from the altar, sent to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, the downtrodden and marginalized. And then again moving back to the altar, the Eucharist, enclosing in intercessions, those suffering with burdens and brokenness of all kinds.'<sup>38</sup> Whilst *diakonia* is the more visible aspect of the deacon's ministry, for it to be more than social work it must be grounded in the deacon's liturgical role.

Bergsjön Church has put vulnerable people on the margins at the centre of the church's life. The vicar explained, 'We are the church; *therefore* we do this mission.' Bergsjön Church's mission to work with the poor is central to its identity and this has implications for the position and resourcing of its deacons.<sup>39</sup> Due to the priority it gives to working with marginalized people, Bergsjön Church receives additional funding to have four deacons working with different projects and groups of people. All of them have a role in the church's worship as well as in charitable work within the wider community. They also have a third role; to be a voice which is prophetic, challenging the Church and society to step out from what is comfortable and stand with the poor.<sup>40</sup> Through their advocacy and their preaching and teaching in church, the deacons seek to defend the human

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<sup>38</sup> Smedberg and Norrfjärd, *Diaconate*, p. 267.

<sup>39</sup> Rodriguez Nygaard, *Reflective Practice of Diaconia*, p. 182.

<sup>40</sup> Smedberg and Norrfjärd, *Diaconate*, p. 261.

rights of those whose voice is marginalized and challenge others to uphold them.

### ***A prophetic voice***

In recent years the public sector has funded the Church of Sweden to provide support to refugees and asylum seekers. The Church is popularly perceived as a place of refuge and gathering community and the Church of Sweden plays an important role in ministering to the needs of refugees and immigrants in specific areas, such as Bergsjön, where they are housed. The growth in Bergsjön Church's diaconal ministry coincided with the Church of Sweden's change of legal status and it became an early adopter of partnership working with secular agencies to meet local needs. The deacons' engagement in this work is founded on the Christian belief that all people are equal. Through their teaching and enabling role, the deacons are actively engaged in making work with undocumented migrants part of the mission of the whole Church.

Bergsjön Church's Refugee Support project brings together volunteers from a range of professions including doctors, dentists, nurses, opticians, lawyers, and translators. All of them are focused on meeting the needs of undocumented migrants who are seeking permission to remain in Sweden. The deacons have a central coordinating role as well as providing counselling and acting as advocates for individual migrants. Refugees without papers have usually lost everything and cannot access state services until they have official permission to stay. In 2012 the Church of Sweden published guidance on engagement with migrants acknowledging the experience of exile in Christian history and the call on Christians to welcome the stranger and show hospitality.<sup>41</sup> Christians from various parts of Gothenburg have been attracted to worship at Bergsjön Church and become involved in the deacons' work with refugees because it gives them the opportunity to 'translate their moral intentions into action'.<sup>42</sup>

During the 2015 refugee crisis, the values of the Church of Sweden made it a natural actor in the provision of services to those arriving in Sweden. Deacons performed a dual role in coordinating support to refugees and raising awareness of their plight.<sup>43</sup> This enabled them to promote tolerance and generosity within their congregations through the use of biblical texts in teaching and conversation. Taking a stand for those values,

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<sup>41</sup> Anders Jakobsen, 'To See Possibilities — A Study of Advocates for the Undocumented Migrants in Sweden' (Master's thesis, University of Gothenburg, 2014), p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> Jakobsen, *To See Possibilities*, p. 53.

<sup>43</sup> Ideström and Linde, *Welfare State Supporter*, p. 9.

shaped by Christian tradition and teaching, and contributing to the state's response to the crisis 'confirmed and renewed the church's calling and mission'.<sup>44</sup> The positive attitude towards the Church as a legitimate partner consolidated this.<sup>45</sup> The scale of the 2015 refugee crisis meant that many more areas of Sweden hosted newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. This made particular demands on deacons whose remit was extended to coordinate the Church's response in conjunction with local authorities and other welfare state agencies.

The Church's ministry to refugees is founded on the basis that 'all human beings have an intrinsic and infinite value as created in the image of God'.<sup>46</sup> Deacons bring together their knowledge of doctrine and experience of social action and *diakonia* to promote human dignity. While some deacons find engagement in public debate difficult, other deacons believe they should use the power of the Church's voice within society to represent those without power.<sup>47</sup> Bergsjön Church is well-known in Sweden for being at the forefront of ministry with migrants and refugees. Its deacons have been interviewed in the media and the church featured on television showcasing how local people have benefited. This media presence has given the deacons the opportunity to influence public opinion by advocating for the needs of migrants at a national level. In doing so these deacons are fulfilling their vocation to imitate Jesus's concern for the poor, to remind the Church of its role and responsibilities as well as persuading wider society to have the same concern.

### **Conclusion**

The ministry of the deacon in the Church of Sweden is 'marked by charity, exercised through teaching in the broad sense of the word, and grounded in the eucharistic liturgy'.<sup>48</sup> It seems to me that Isaiah 58. 6–7 offers fitting inspiration for those who are called to be deacons. In these verses God defines what he requires his people to do as their act of worship to him. Deacons have a vocation to prophetically remind the Church and society of God's concern for the poor and oppressed and the imperative to challenge injustice. Deacons are called to care for the marginalized, to provide food and clothing, find shelter for the homeless and build relationships of support. Deacons are to act as a bridge between those in need and the worshipping church community who, by virtue of their baptism, are called into diaconal

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Beckman, et al., *Church of Sweden as an Agent of Welfare*, p. 46.

<sup>47</sup> Smedberg and Norrfjärd, *Diaconate*, p. 273.

<sup>48</sup> Brodd, *Caritas and diakonia*, p. 57.

ministry under the leadership of the deacon. They are to encourage and equip their parishioners to intercede and provide for the poor and marginalized through teaching, preaching and leading their church in prayer. In doing so, deacons remind the Church that it is a sign of God's saving action in history. They propel their congregations into being this sign by their prayers and practical service.

This was evident in the ministry of the deacons I met at Bergsjön Church in the summer of 2017. With warmth, concern and prayerful insight these deacons imitated Jesus's care and concern for the poor. They gathered people around them who wanted to help by giving their time and expertise. They supported volunteers to work with undocumented migrants to the point that they could access State provision. They prepared the congregation to participate in television programmes showcasing the church's worship and the migrants' stories of how the church helped them both practically and spiritually. All this with a view to raising awareness of the needs of the marginalized and reminding people of the call of Jesus Christ to love God and love one's neighbour, whoever they may be. In doing so these deacons lived out their vocation to *diakonia*, their role in the worship of the Church, and prophetic proclamation to the Church and Swedish society.

### ***Postscript***

Since I began work on this paper the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated social restrictions put in place to restrict its spread have had a significant impact on the ministry of deacons. In Sweden the measures introduced by the government were limited by comparison with the rest of Europe. Nonetheless, deacons reported that as meetings of more than 50 people were banned most Sunday services were cancelled. During the worst of the pandemic Bergsjön Church closed its café and weekly Refugee Support Project. However, the church building remained open and people were able to drop in to receive help from the deacons. The deacons also coordinated the distribution of food and essentials provided by Gothenburg City Mission to local people most in need. This allowed the deacons to fulfil their vocation to comfort and help those who are suffering and maintain contact with the most vulnerable.

Support to older people continued to be a priority although visits into homes for the elderly were not permitted. For Bergsjön Church's deacons and musicians this meant changing the weekly service at the local care-home as one deacon described, 'Every week we go to Geråshus. We stay outside and sing and pray and dance.' The residents remained inside looking out through the windows and listening to the service via a speaker system. As there were only a few small meetings in the church building, the care-home residents were the largest crowd they 'met' each week.

Elsewhere, Church of Sweden deacons spent a lot of time providing support over the phone particularly to older people. They have continued to find ways to provide practical or financial help whilst at the same time 'spreading God's grace'. They were active in organizing help with shopping for older and vulnerable people and finding ways to address social isolation. 'We also keep our church open daily for individual prayer, meeting the odd visitor at a distance. Our authorities recommend walking outdoors (with some distance from others) so we also make walks with older people.'

It is clear that deacons in the Church of Sweden have continued to reflect on their vocation and used this as a source for identifying creative ways to reach out, provide help to those most in need and support people to remain connected. Deacons found ways to facilitate individual devotion to God through creative approaches to prayer and worship. This included developing meditation-walks in local surroundings, even using their churchyard to create walks with reflective exercises or questions to inspire a search for answers. Others have been using social media to maintain their prophetic voice, campaigning in support of human dignity for those who are marginalized.



# The Vocational Diaconate as a Vehicle for Pioneer Ministry in the Scottish Episcopal Church

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The emergence of pioneer ministry as a distinct approach to mission strategy raises questions about the appropriate vehicle for the expression of such a ministry in the Scottish Episcopal Church. Could it be the domain of new categories such as ‘ordained pioneer minister’ or ‘lay pioneer’, or should it remain the domain of those described in George Lings’s inelegant-but-effective phrase, ‘lay-lay pioneers’?<sup>1</sup> At present, no specific category for this exists in the list of ministries in the Scottish Episcopal Church. The recognized ministry of Lay Evangelist exists on paper, but this may not be sufficiently broad to encompass all the potential activities of and outcomes from pioneer ministry.

The goal of this paper is to explore whether and how the ministry of the Vocational Deacon might be a suitable vehicle for the expression and development of pioneer ministry in the Scottish Episcopal Church.<sup>2</sup> It will address this question by looking first at pioneer ministry and what is meant by this fluid and elastic phrase. We will then look at the diaconal ministry as expressed in the SEC and recent literature and consider the relationship between the two.

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<sup>1</sup> George Lings, [\*Evidence about Fresh Expressions of Church in the Church of England\*](#) (Church Army Research Unit, 2014). ‘By this invented term we mean people without any church badge, office, or in many cases training’ (p. 14). Or ‘normal people’, as they are otherwise known.

<sup>2</sup> This proposal should not be taken to mean that it should not also be accompanied by a wider lay-lay led movement of pioneering. But it is important not to overstate the importance of lay-lay initiatives in the recent history of pioneer ministry, as encouraging as they are. In Lings’s 2014 report (see note 1 above) of a survey of ten Church of England dioceses, 40% of fresh expressions of church had been founded by lay-lay leaders, with 46% being led/founded by clergy (incumbents, curates, NSMs, OLMs, and so on). The remaining 14% were led/founded by Lay Readers (9%), Church Army evangelists (3%), and Ordained Pioneer Ministers (2%); some of these proportions will be a function of cohort size, but the numbers are interesting, nonetheless.

### ***What is meant by the term 'pioneer ministry'?***

The term 'pioneer ministry' is often used somewhat loosely and flexibly, and it can lack definition. But at its very base it is language that expresses an aspiration for something new and different in the Church's mission in contemporary Western society. For its advocates, it is used to remind us of the need for engagement with those who are currently well beyond any contact with churches as currently formed (that is, it is not about those on the fringe of church; it is about those who never give church a second thought). As the concept of a 'mixed economy' or 'mixed ecology' of church reminds us, there is still much that can be done in and through our existing models of church, as they still have the potential to reach a significant proportion of the UK population. In 2015, two separate and unrelated pieces of research<sup>3</sup> showed that around 10% of the UK population still attend church on a regular or more-than-occasional basis (that is, more than just at Christmas and Easter) and that another 10% would accept an invitation to attend if invited by someone that they knew. This suggests that there is much we can still do in and through our existing and familiar models of church. But the remaining 80% of the UK population are currently indifferent and hard to reach. And as we follow someone who spoke about leaving the ninety-nine to go after the one (Luke 15. 1–7), it doesn't seem unreasonable to sometimes leave the twenty to their own devices and put a bit of effort into reaching the eighty.

Pioneer ministry is often connected to and conflated with the idea of 'fresh expressions' of church. They are related but by no means identical. It may be helpful to think of pioneer ministry as a process (or a verb), with a fresh expression of church as one possible outcome (i.e. a noun). However, there is a close relationship in terms of the outreach strategy outlined above (reaching the 'eighty'). Lings included the following principles in his definition of a fresh expression of church, produced for the purpose of his research:

- The aim is for Christians to change their patterns and practices to fit into a new culture and context, not to make people change to fit into an existing context.<sup>4</sup>
- The intention is that the outcome will be a church, not a bridge back into 'real church'.

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<sup>3</sup> The two pieces of research are found at [Talking Jesus](#) and in Stuart Murray, *A Vast Minority: Church and Mission in a Plural Culture* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> It might be argued that Paul said something similar in his Letter to the Galatians.



- The majority of those who participate see it as their major expression of being church.<sup>5</sup>

As Male and Weston have recently shown, there is evidence that fresh expressions of church have been more successful in reaching a higher proportion of younger and unchurched people than other contemporary mission strategies.<sup>6</sup>

The term 'fresh expression' is falling from use in some places and is being replaced by the less jargonistic but more cumbersome phrase 'New Contextual Christian Communities'.<sup>7</sup> Whichever term is preferred, they do lead us to the need to identify and discuss what is central to our ecclesiology. What do we mean for something to be a 'church', and how much room do we have for flexibility and creativity?

As I have noted above, pioneer ministry aims to engage with people where they are, to build community and explore what it means to follow Jesus in their own context, rather than inviting them to come to us. This is sometimes summarized as being 'incarnational' rather than 'attractional'. However, despite Lings's definition above, Moynagh also advocates for an 'engaged' model of pioneering, which leads to growth in existing churches.<sup>8</sup> In 2018, Leicester Diocese undertook research after 10 years of pioneer ministry within the diocese, and 180 different projects and initiatives were identified. Of these, around a quarter had led to a fresh expression of church, another quarter were still in development and were called 'Edgelands', and the main outcome of the remaining half were that they served as a 'Bridgeback' to existing churches.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lings, *Evidence about Fresh Expressions*.

<sup>6</sup> David Male and Paul Weston, 'What Does the Development of Fresh Expressions of Church in the UK Tell us about Mission Today?', *International Review of Mission*, 108.2 (2019), 276–89.

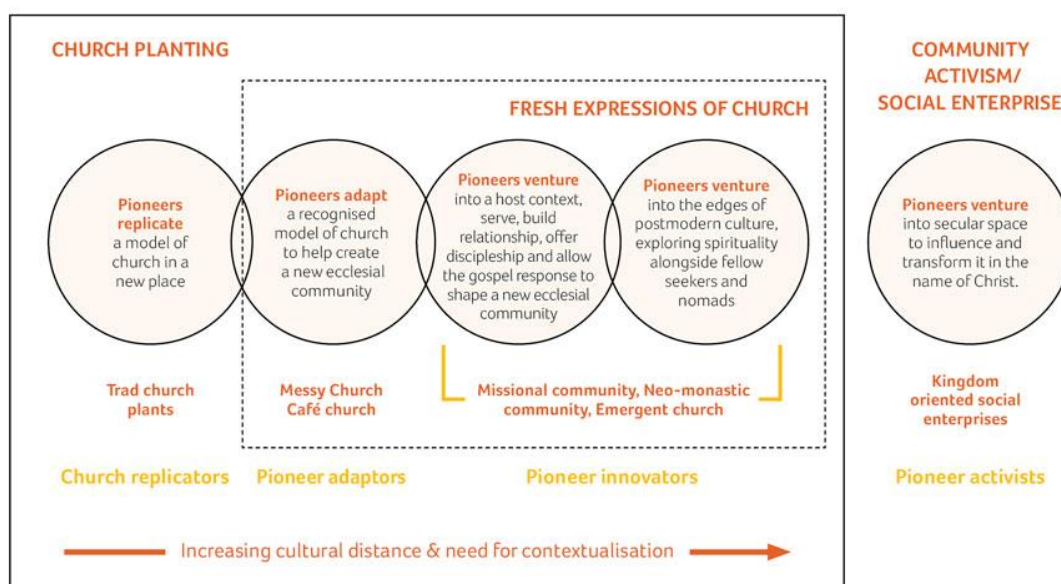
<sup>7</sup> Michael Moynagh, *Being Church, Doing Life: Creating a Gospel Community Where Life Happens* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2014); David Male, *How to Pioneer (Even If You Haven't A Clue)* (London: Church House Publishing, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Michael Moynagh, *Church for Every Context* (London: SCM Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> They defined Edgelands as 'a new pioneering missional enterprise whose current charism is not yet clear, but it is not yet "church taking shape" at this time'. A Bridgeback is 'a missional pioneering enterprise that finds its charism is to connect or reconnect people to inherited church'.

This diversity of outcomes is explored and theorized by Hodgett and Bradbury<sup>10</sup>, who show that a variety of missional expressions are possible outcomes of pioneer ministry, including social enterprises. They also show that the term ‘fresh expression’ covers a wide range of possible outcomes, from café church and Messy Church to neo-monastic communities.<sup>11</sup> They also include ‘traditional’ church plants as outcomes of pioneer ministry, but there are those within the pioneer movement who are unhappy with that inclusion as they think it undermines the distinctive nature of pioneer ministry.

*Fig 1: Hodgett and Bradbury’s pioneer ministry spectrum*



Given this variety of outcomes, it is helpful to think of pioneer ministry as a learning and development process, and as a way of exploring different possible futures for the Church. Male and Weston note that it has a clear emphasis on listening and serving a locality and call it ‘a “slow burn” model, taking time for the communal shape of the Gospel in *this* particular setting to take form’.<sup>12</sup> Baker argues that this is helpful because the current landscape is unmapped due to the huge social changes we have faced and are facing, and that this new world is a challenge for churches because ‘their

<sup>10</sup> Tina Hodgett and Paul Bradbury, ‘Pioneering Ministry Is A Spectrum’, *Anvil: Journal of Theology and Mission*, 34.1(2018), 30–34.

<sup>11</sup> This point was also clearly made in 2004 in the seminal report, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing).

<sup>12</sup> Male and Weston, ‘What Does the Development of Fresh Expressions [...]’, p. 285.

identity, imagination, theologies and practices have been more shaped by modernity than perhaps at first we realised or like to admit'.<sup>13</sup> Like Abraham, it is time to set out on a journey, even if we don't know where we are going (Hebrews 11. 8).

A focus on pioneer ministry and/or fresh expressions of church can leave those who lead existing or 'inherited' models of church feeling criticized, undermined, or somehow bypassed. There is some legitimacy to these feelings, but perhaps also to the implied criticism too. My experience of conversations with both pioneers and inherited church leaders is that both feel somewhat threatened and criticized by the other. It is here that a concept of a 'mixed economy' or 'mixed ecology' of church is helpful in providing for a degree of mutual recognition and respect. It is important that Michael Moynagh, one of the strongest advocates for fresh expressions of church, wrote the following:

New communities with a fragrance of church are not better than the existing church. Nor need they be alternatives. New and well-established types of church have their own distinctive missions, and it is possible to be involved in both at the same time. Emphasising the value of both will remove the fear that individuals are being asked to make a choice.<sup>14</sup>

However, given that we still mainly operate under inherited models of church with the vast majority of people and financial resources being poured into sustaining these, and that change tends to happen where it is facilitated and supported, a more diverse ecology that gives greater room for the expression of pioneer initiatives does mean that this requires some significant attention at this time.

### ***The role of the vocational deacon as pioneer***

The seeds of this paper were sown at the June 2019 meeting of the SEC's Diaconal Working Group, which I was asked to attend to explore how the discussions on pioneer ministry that were taking place at the Mission Board might be connected to their work on the role of the diaconate. The meeting observed that the diaconal role can lend itself well to pioneering work (every Vocational Deacon at the meeting said, when I described pioneer ministry in the terms outlined above, 'that's what I do'). Pioneers and deacons both have

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<sup>13</sup> Jonny Baker, 'The Pioneer Gift' (chap. 1) in *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission*, ed. by Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2014), p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Moynagh, *Being Church, Doing Life*, p. 253.

a translational role, to allow the liturgy to meet people in their own space and using their own language, instead of expecting them to adapt to our existing traditions, language, and liturgy. The meeting asked, 'are diaconal and pioneer the same?', concluding that there was potential overlap and asking that this be explored. This is what this paper seeks to do.

In the Scottish Episcopal Church, the role of Vocational Deacons is described in the following way:

Deacons are heralds of the Gospel, called to proclaim and make visible God's love in word and deed. They seek out those in need to bring them the good news of the Kingdom, and bring the concerns of the world to the attention of the Church and its congregations, reminding them of their call to serve others in love in their mission to the world.<sup>15</sup>

It is the 'seeking out' function of the diaconate that concerns us here. We have already noted above that the pioneer expects to go where people are, rather than expecting them to come to us. Their criteria for selection make clear the primacy of mission, evangelism and discipleship in the role:

E1 Candidates demonstrate their commitment to mission and evangelism in their thought, prayer and action. They demonstrate an excitement about the loving and saving purpose of God for the world, and have a firm desire to share this by word and deed.

E2 Candidates have a knowledge and understanding of mission and evangelism. They are alert to the opportunities for engagement with contemporary culture and are sensitive to the demands of particular contexts.

E4 Candidates are committed to developing the discipleship of others. They are able to nurture the faith of others and to equip others to witness to their faith in Christ.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, there is a clear expectation that innovative, creative and entrepreneurial initiative will shape their ministry, with a deep focus on contextual priorities:

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<sup>15</sup> ['Ministries in the Scottish Episcopal Church'](#) (2018), p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> 'Ministries in the Scottish Episcopal Church' (2018), p. 11.

F4 Candidates have the potential to lead strategically. They are able to look forward in an imaginative and theologically-informed way. They can take the initiative and have a creative, entrepreneurial approach. They are prepared to take risks and to implement a process of change with flexibility and resilience.

F5 Candidates understand and work with the dynamics of a community.<sup>17</sup>

The SEC's 2019 alternative text for the ordination of Deacons confirms this theme and focus:

In the name of the Church, deacons are sent to declare the kingdom of God and to care for those in need, serving God and the world after the pattern of Christ. They have a commitment to outreach and witness, advocacy and prophecy, flowing from their historic ministry for the poor, needy and sick, and seeking out the careless and indifferent. They are called to build bridges between the Church and the world, and to be an expression of the unconditional love of God.<sup>18</sup>

In the above extracts from SEC documents, there are clear overlaps with the pioneer ministry principles discussed above. There is a focus on mission and evangelism, including inviting others into the journey of discipleship, and an expectation that this will be done in creative and entrepreneurial ways, allowing the shape of the local community to form the shape of any outcomes from their ministry, including the forms of discipleship and Christian community.

Other recent writing on the diaconate has affirmed its role in terms that sound remarkably similar to the pioneer ministry literature.

A mission-shaped church needs a mission-shaped ministry. It needs an outward-facing ministry as well as one that can build up the already existing body of Christ. In episcopally-ordered churches, bishops must be 'bishops in mission' as 'the chief pastors of all that are within their dioceses'. Readers, Local Preachers and other lay ministers must become orientated to those outside the worshipping community as well as to those

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<sup>17</sup> 'Ministries in the Scottish Episcopal Church' (2018), p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> [The Ordination of Deacons](#), alternative text (2019).

within. But the missionary reshaping of the church's ministry bears particularly closely on deacons.<sup>19</sup>

Deacons are charged to reach into the forgotten corners of the world so that the love of God may be made visible. We should free them to be busy on those margins with the lonely, the overlooked, the homeless and the misfits; to be the church present and active in those situations.<sup>20</sup>

We could argue that the SEC was ahead of the curve in the way it has described the role of deacons as pioneers:

It must be clearly stated that Deacons, while being communicant members of congregations, having a liturgical ministry and dovetailing with the work of presbyters, are primarily a task force at the disposal of the Bishop, for work, most of which is out in the world. They have their proper place in a diocesan rather than a congregational strategy of mission. They are a pioneer corps rather than auxiliaries to share the load of existing intra-congregational ministries.<sup>21</sup>

The mark of true diaconal ministry is to foster the initiation of lay ministries galore — to pioneer and then hand over in order to be free again to pioneer.<sup>22</sup>

One of the advantages and challenges for diaconal ministry is that it is open to redefinition and reinterpretation. Klaasen notes that 'from a church historian's point of view, the semantics of *diakonia* are not clear [...] *Diakonia* can be understood from different and varied perspectives and the term is not static in both its meaning and semantics'.<sup>23</sup> Clark sees this as a positive thing, arguing that 'the diaconate has always been an order of ministry well

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Avis, 'The Diaconate: A Flagship Ministry?', *Theology and Ministry*, 2 (2013), 24–25.

<sup>20</sup> Rosalind Brown, 'Expanding the Theological Foundation of the Deacon's Ministry', *Ecclesiology*, 13.2 (2017), p. 218.

<sup>21</sup> *Truly Called by God to Serve as a Deacon: The Report of the Bishops' Working Group on Distinctive Diaconate* (Edinburgh: General Synod Office, 1987), p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> J. S. Klaasen, 'Diakonia and Diaconal Church', *Missionalia*, 48.1(2020), p. 122.

suited to adapt to the changing needs of society and world. Over the years it has fulfilled a wide diversity of responsibilities.’<sup>24</sup> He notes that the diaconate is still embedded in one form or another in the lives and work of many denominations (including the SEC) and suggests that there is no need to invent new forms of ministry when the diaconate already exists to fulfil this purpose. For the sake of the topic of this paper, he goes on to make a specific proposal:

A diaconal order of mission would carry greater credibility and significance if it were able to embrace and give coherence to the bewildering diversity of ministries — such as so-called ‘mission enablers’, ‘pioneer ministries’ and, even worse, ‘mission champions’ — which the church in the West is currently inventing to try to stem its decline. Such ministries frequently have vague or vast job descriptions, are unrelated to each other and, more important, to the ministry of the people of God in the world. It would give coherence to such ministries and add experience and skills to a diaconal order of mission, if they were incorporated into the latter.<sup>25</sup>

And so, in a variety of ways, a firm connection can be established between the vocational diaconate and the vision of pioneer ministry. As Clark notes, this connection helps in both directions. It roots the practices of pioneer ministry in a historic (but fluid and redefinable) order of ministry, and in return pioneer ministry thinking and practices both serve to give a specific focus and direction to the diaconal ministry ‘for such a time as this’.<sup>26</sup>

One additional contribution that this connection between the pioneering and the diaconal can make is based on an observation by Klaasen; ‘the functions of [the diaconate since] the early church have been liturgical and caritative.’<sup>27</sup> This combination is also found in the World Council of Church’s 2017 report on *Ecumenical Diakonia*, which notes that ‘Christian diakonia flows from the divine liturgy, it is a “liturgy after the Liturgy”. As Christians experience the gracious gifts of sharing, healing and reconciliation at the Lord’s table, they are commissioned to a lifestyle and to

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<sup>24</sup> David Clark (2020), [\*A Diaconal Church and Order of Mission: The Shape of Things to Come\*](#), p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> *For Such a Time as This: A Renewed Diaconate in the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Klaasen, ‘Diakonia and Diaconal Church’, p. 124.

practices that bring these gifts to the world.’<sup>28</sup> The question about the ecclesial status of fresh expressions was noted above, i.e. in what ways are they ‘church’? This is something of concern for more sacramentally minded Christians and which they have sought to address.<sup>29</sup> The deacon’s role is a combination of liturgical and missional, and while a diaconal status does not allow every question to be answered easily<sup>30</sup>, one might hope that the vision for a creative and entrepreneurial diaconal ministry as outlined in the SEC’s selection criteria could also be applied to the ecclesiological questions that arise out of their missional initiatives. It is not as if we are not already having to grapple with these questions, given the geographically scattered nature of churches and ministries in the SEC. A pioneering diaconal ministry will simply serve to add new and emerging Christian communities into this mix. I would argue that this would be a nice problem to have to address.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ecumenical Diakonia*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2017), p. 46.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Steven Croft and Ian Mobsby, *Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2009), and Ian Mobsby and Phil Potter, *Doorways to The Sacred: Developing Sacramentality in Fresh Expressions of Church*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> You know that I mean the Eucharist, right?



# Formed in the Field: Steps Towards the Provision of Dedicated Diaconal Formation in the Scottish Episcopal Church

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The lexicographical work of John Collins published in 1990<sup>1</sup> had ‘a seismic effect on the understanding of diaconal ministry’.<sup>2</sup> In this seminal work, Collins examined the meaning of *diakonía* and its cognates in classical and biblical Greek texts and proposed a wider range of meaning for the words than previously allowed. Hitherto interpreted as having connotations of menial service, Collins’s research suggested that other meanings should be added, chief amongst which were those of ‘message’, ‘agency’ and ‘attendance’:

The sense ‘to serve at table’ cannot be called ‘the basic meaning’ — in fact that sense has to be perceived as a particular application of a word capable of signifying doing messages and being another person’s agent — and ‘the more comprehensive idea of “serving”’ is vague and inadequate. The root idea expressed by the words is that of the go-between [...] express[ing] concepts about undertakings for another, be that God or man, master or friend.<sup>3</sup>

*Diakonía* is more than humble service; it signifies the undertaking of a task or mandate commission by another, of ‘being sent forth to fulfil a task on behalf of the one who has the authority to send’.<sup>4</sup> Subsequent scholarship has concluded that ‘there are no substantial problems with Collins’s interpretation of *diakonía* and its cognates’<sup>5</sup> and his reading has been largely accepted, with huge and exciting consequences for the interpretation of

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<sup>1</sup> John Collins, *Diakonía: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Avis, *A Ministry Shaped by Mission* (London: T and T Clark, 2005), p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Collins, *Diakonia*, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> Avis, *Ministry Shaped*, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> Paula Gooder, in ‘*Diakonía* in the New Testament: A Dialogue with John N. Collins’, *Ecclesiology*, 3 (2006) 33-56 (p. 33).

‘ministry’. As the report of the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England put it, Collins’s proposal shifts the focus ‘from what is done — the act of loving service — to why it is done — because someone has been commissioned by God or by the church.’<sup>6</sup>

Collins’s findings have since been mapped onto the role of the ecclesial deacon, such that the term ‘emissary’ has been adopted in many quarters alongside ‘servant’ as an interpretation of *diakonos*. Deacons are seen as having an apostolic, missionary function, being sent by God in the name of the Church to proclaim the good news in word and deed beyond the doors of the place in which the worshipping community meets, and to galvanize that community to live its diaconal vocation in the world. In the other direction, they gather into the Eucharist the needs and concerns of that wider world, representing them and offering them up to God — or enabling others so to do — in the midst of the worshipping community Sunday by Sunday. They are:

Holy stirrers, dancing on the edge of the Church, facing outwards, building bridges, taking church to the community, to people who don’t usually encounter it, and taking the community to the church, encouraging the baptized to carry out their ministry.<sup>7</sup>

Deacons are people ‘on a mission, a messenger or ambassador — making connections between liturgy and pastoral need, building bridges between the life of the Church and those who are not yet within it.’<sup>8</sup> They straddle the boundary between church and public square, discerning Christ at work in both locations and helping others make the crossing. As such they require the skill of bilingualism: the ability to understand the cultures of church and community, speak both languages and facilitate dialogue between the two. As agents of transformation, they may find themselves addressing ‘structures of power and political stakeholders’,<sup>9</sup> working with those on the margins to transfigure all that countermands God’s shalom in the world. The role demands skills in advocacy and a ‘regrounding in the prophetic

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<sup>6</sup> [\*The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church\*](#), GSMisc 854, The Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England (2007), 16.

<sup>7</sup> [DIAKONIA World Federation Members](#).

<sup>8</sup> [‘Discerning the Diaconate’ Ministry Division of the Church of England \(2011\)](#).

<sup>9</sup> Stephanie Dietrich, ‘Mercy and truth are met together’ in *Diakonía as Christian Social Practice*, ed. by Stephanie Dietrich et al. (Regnum, 2014), pp. 28–45 (p. 43).

tradition’,<sup>10</sup> speaking truth to power, critiquing the status quo and energizing others to join in the work.

Nor is it simply the world that gets critiqued; deacons may find themselves also calling out apathy within the Church, tackling structures and systems which inhibit mission and prevent the budding into growth of new ways of being. As those who cross boundaries, deacons are well placed to serve as pioneers and planters, moving into new contexts and breaking fresh ground; being ‘bridges between a church that is stuck, and a church that is moving forward; a church that is anxious about her survival, and a church into which the Spirit’s breath is blowing vibrant new life’.<sup>11</sup>

In short, the diaconal calling is to be a sign of the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church. Deacons are agents of the Kingdom, both within the Eucharist and the world:

The Deacon’s Kingdom-orienting voice of prophecy and challenge acts as a powerful advocate within the Christian community for those who have no voice; it challenges vested interest and complacency, and urges the Christian community to live its own serving and transforming ministry to the full in the world beyond the perceived borders of the Church.<sup>12</sup>

Such a revisionist reading underpinned the Scottish Episcopal Church’s reassessment of *diakonía* outlined in the report of the Diaconal Working Group, *Truly Called ...Two*, which was received at General Synod in 2012 in response to the Porvoo Communion’s challenge to its Anglican members to develop ways in which the element of *diakonía* in the mission of the Church might be more explicitly understood and named, and to consider how the vocation of those called to the distinctive diaconate might be discerned, encouraged and supported. In responding to this challenge, the Diaconal Working Group defined deacons as those ‘sent with authority to assist the

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<sup>10</sup> Suzanne Watson Epting, ‘Common Vows and Common Mission’, *Anglican Theological Review*, 92.1 (2010), 71–87 (pp. 84–85).

<sup>11</sup> Suzanne Watson Epting, *The Prophetic Voice of the Deacon*, North American Association for the Diaconate Monograph Series 19 (2008), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Christine Hall, ‘The socio-liturgical axis of the Deacon’s ministry: sign and instrument of the Kingdom of God’ in *The Ministry of the Deacon; Ecclesiological Explorations 2*, ed. by Gunnel Borgegård et al. (Uppsala: Nordic Ecumenical Council, 2000), pp. 71–106 (p. 102).

Bishop and Priests in a diocese in proclaiming the Gospel to the world',<sup>13</sup> a sign and sacramental embodiment of the Church's Gospel commissioning and missionary task.

This rearticulation of the role of deacons likewise informed the crafting of the Scottish Episcopal Church's *Pastoral Offices for Deacons*, authorized for experimental use by the College of Bishops for a period of three years from January 2017. In the introduction to the rites, the balancing of 'service' and 'apostolicity' recommended by Collins can be clearly seen:

Deacons express the *diakonía* of Christ's church, an apostolic ministry as well as an expression of service. *Diakonía* may include prophetic witness, advocacy and empowering action, not simply giving aid but also confronting the causes of poverty, exposing structural injustice and empowering the voiceless, serving the mission of God in so doing. This diaconal concern for God's mission of loving, healing and restoring the world expresses itself in deeply practical and pastoral ways. Thus, deacons are to be found sharing with others in compassionate care for the sick, the weak and the marginalised, and in equipping other disciples for this service.<sup>14</sup>

This nuanced understanding also underpinned the shaping of dedicated 'criteria for selection' for those discerning a calling to the vocational diaconate and of 'formational outcomes' for those so trained:

Deacons are heralds of the Gospel, called to proclaim and make visible God's love in word and deed. They seek out those in need to bring them the good news of the Kingdom, and bring the concerns of the world to the attention of the Church and its congregations, reminding them of their call to serve others in love in their mission to the world.<sup>15</sup>

Scrutiny of the 'formational outcomes' similarly indicates this dual character:

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<sup>13</sup> *Truly Called ... Two*, A report to General Synod by the Diaconal Working Party (Edinburgh: General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church, 2012), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> [\*Pastoral Offices for Deacons\*](#) (Edinburgh: General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church, 2017), p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> [\*Ministries in the Scottish Episcopal Church\*](#), pp. 8–9.

### Deacons

- understand the importance of the community's reading of the Bible in the light of Christian tradition. (Christian Tradition, Faith and Life)
- put into practice their enthusiasm for and understanding of mission, nurturing the prophetic element and the call to empower other (Mission, Evangelism and Making Disciples)
- develop ways of sharing the spiritual life of the community they are serving, and are confident in inhabiting the deacon's role liturgically, communicating its meaning and significance (Spirituality and Worship)
- have an outgoing personality that is keenly aware of and responsive to need, both in individuals and in society as a whole (Personality and Character)
- form good relationships with many different kinds of people. They are skilled in working with groups and in relating to secular agencies, mobilizing others effectively to meet needs in the local community and engaging in advocacy in the public arena. (Relationships and Community)
- use their gifts in the service of the Church beyond the local context (Vocation and Ministry).

These outcomes were further elaborated to enable the discernment of ongoing development during the first three years of public ministry (IME 4-6), with the addition of demonstrable indicators: a 'checklist of areas of experience' (what should be done), 'range' (where it should be done), and 'performance evidence' (what was actually done), this matrix being akin to the competency model outlined in *The Iona Report* for the Anglican Church in Canada.<sup>16</sup>

These changes in the Church's understanding of *diakonía* coincided with a renewed emphasis on the centrality of mission. The Spirit appeared to be calling the Scottish Episcopal Church to look outwards at the society in which it was set and to connect its worshipping life with the needs of God's world more effectively than hitherto. The *Whole Church Mission and Ministry Policy*,<sup>17</sup> approved by General Synod in 2011, affirmed the primacy of mission in the life of the Church and challenged it to reshape its life in the

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<sup>16</sup> *The Iona Report. The Diaconate in the Anglican Church of Canada*, (General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, 2016), Section 2.

<sup>17</sup> [\*Whole Church Mission and Ministry Policy\*](#) (General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church, 2011).

cause of mission and growth; its primary vocation was described as participation in the redemptive work of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and of God's love for them and building Kingdom communities.

As dioceses and congregations became more aligned to this missional imperative, so did they also become more conscious of the value, and need for, deacons, 'ecclesial sign(s) of what the whole Church in all its members is called to be'.<sup>18</sup> Signs which had long been part of Anglican polity, albeit somewhat occluded.

The result of this concatenation of events has been an upsurge in interest in the Order over the past five years, with a consequent increase in the number of candidates enquiring about, and testing a vocation to, the permanent diaconate. Such a surge in vocations has been paralleled in other provinces and traditions, albeit over a longer period, as the Church Ecumenical has reawakened to her outward-facing role and rearticulated her understanding of this essential Order, describing it with greater clarity and demarcating its boundaries more precisely.

This increase in candidate numbers triggered thinking in the Diaconate Working Group about the type of curriculum best suited to forming vocational deacons as it was increasingly evident that it is not sufficient to train those called to different forms of ordained ministry identically; different gifts and roles require differentiated training. Rather 'deacons need to be formed in the best possible manner for their calling to this distinctive ministry'.<sup>19</sup>

Research indicates that until very recently this desired level of specificity of training has been uncommon, other than in the Lutheran Church. A recent research project into the formation of deacons from several traditions in the UK and Europe revealed great dissatisfaction on the part of deacons at the undifferentiated nature of the formation received. Participants in the researcher's qualitative process indicated that their training had been designed around that offered to presbyters, with 'a few additional extras added on. It feels like sometimes the slant is initially presbyteral and then [they] say "oh and deacons ..."'.<sup>20</sup> The Anglican students interviewed noted that amidst this predominantly priestly-focussed curriculum there was no consideration of the theology or development of

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Avis, 'The Diaconate: a flagship ministry?', *Theology and Ministry*, 2 (2013), 11–12.

<sup>19</sup> Alison McRae, '[Diaconal ministry and the reshaping of the mission of the church: 20 years of the Renewed Diaconate in the Uniting Church of Australia](#)', (2012), 14.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Orton and Todd Stockdale, *Making Connections* (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2014), p. 126.



the diaconate. Such a dearth of attention to heritage and history has been shown elsewhere to lead to 'a certain timidity about the diaconal identity.'<sup>21</sup>

A similar situation prevailed in the States and Canada at the end of the twentieth century, the norms for diaconal formation being simply a modified version of the list of academic areas mandated for priests. From 1997 onwards, however, Formation Directors in diaconal programmes across North America began to address this issue, leading to radical change in both curricula and canons. Title III.6 and III.7 of the ministry canons (issued 2003, amended 2006) set out a new statement of norms for diaconal formation:

Before ordination each Candidate shall be prepared in and demonstrate basic competence in five general areas:

Academic studies including the Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the Church.

*Diakonía* and the diaconate.

Human awareness and understanding.

Spiritual development and discipline.

Practical training and experience.<sup>22</sup>

Commenting upon this change Rod Dugliss, Dean at the Episcopal School for Deacons, California, noted that:

The primary changes brought about by the new canons recognize the distinct nature and needs of the Order of Deacons and bring to the forefront experience and experiential learning. There is a very practical dimension in diaconal ministry that was not heretofore recognized in describing formation [...] there is an emphasis now on helping people to live into their being as a deacon ... The difference between this and presbyteral formation is significant, tangible and authentic.<sup>23</sup>

The Association of Episcopal Deacons (AED) has sought to flesh out these canonical regulations by setting out norms for, and training others in, diaconal formation, thereby answering such questions as 'what does a deacon need to know?' and 'how do we ensure commonality in learning

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<sup>21</sup> Stan Barrs and Bart Koet 'Mapping the diaconate in the Diocese of Haarlem-Amsterdam: a reflection', *New Diaconal Review* (2012), 47–53 (p. 51).

<sup>22</sup> [Constitution and Canons together with The Rules of Order](#) (New York: The Episcopal Church, 2018), p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> Personal communication to the Revd Canon Lisa Eunson, 2015

across the diversity of our dioceses?’ The guiding parameters offered can be summarized as follows: in addition to teaching about the essentials of the faith (core theological curriculum), diaconal students learn also how to understand the world (contextual theology and social ministry), build capacity (the coaching, equipping and training of others), communicate well, organize for change (community development and missional ministry) and speak truth to power (direct advocacy and action). Or as Suzanne Watson Epting put it, ‘the task must include not only the essentials of our faith but also an understanding of the world.’<sup>24</sup>

These insights are mirrored in work done on this side of the Atlantic, outlined in two recent papers. Andrew Orton ran a project in the Diocese of York between 2015–16 which ‘explored the implications of distinctive diaconal vocations for theological education under the Common Awards framework’.<sup>25</sup> This underlined the need for dedicated content in addition to the core curricular requirements, proposing that:

It would be helpful to include a balance of material relating to being with those on the edge, making connections, community building, working with people’s behaviours and particular social issues, seeing the church from the outside and engaging with people from a practical perspective. Programmes should [...] develop a strand of diaconal studies that gives attention to historical roots and to today’s needs, with a focus on social sciences and community development such as Christianity in public life, ecological responsibility and management of change.

In making further recommendations for formational programmes, the role and significance of a placement in a secular agency (with distinctive learning outcomes linked to diaconal ministry) was noted as being of particular importance, as was the need for Personal Tutors of diaconal candidates to understand this ministry, and for those in charge of diaconal programmes to explore the use of content from other routes (e.g. contextual training).

Rosalind Brown contributed a discussion paper to Orton’s qualitative research process which considered the implications of theological

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<sup>24</sup> Suzanne Watson Epting, *Unexpected Consequences. The Diaconate Renewed* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), p. 150.

<sup>25</sup> [‘The implications of distinctive diaconal vocations for theological education within the Common Awards framework: a case study’](#), p. 3.



understandings of diaconal ministry for the formation of deacons.<sup>26</sup> In it she suggested some particular diaconal emphases: training in the facilitation of the laity (particularly in pastoral care); a greater focus on reading the local context and engaging with socio-caritative agencies; training in personal and medical ethics; and equipping in the ability to speak truth to power.

Gradually in the UK, curricula are being created to address such recommendations. The Principal of Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, recently outlined a proposed IME course for Anglican candidates on diaconal identity which included the following:

1. Learning about community engagement, building and empowerment. This could include ministerial reflection on the practice of ministry among those who are marginalised; reading mission primarily through the fourth 'mark' of mission; the experience and self-understanding of deacons being 'beyond' the gathered church; skills of community development, using asset-based community development models and/or using Citizens UK models of community engagement and empowerment.
2. Apologetics which takes popular culture seriously and engages those who are 'hard to reach'.
3. Learning more about diaconal identity, its history, theology and vocation.<sup>27</sup>

These proposals have received support from the Director for Theological Education in the Anglican Communion (2018). Similarly in 2019, the House of Bishops of the Church of England approved a new 'Shared Discernment Process' comprising six 'qualities' — the call of God, love for God, love for people, wisdom, fruitfulness and potential — each of which are considered in four dimensions. Such a framework is intended to enable 'different contours of ministry to become apparent. Accordingly within the draft document there is a helpful 'high-level' grid for distinctive deacon discernment.<sup>28</sup> This important development should, in due course, effect even greater improvement in the IME Phase 1 and 2 curricula offered to diaconal candidates south of the Border.

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<sup>26</sup> [Rosalind Brown, 'Formation, training and CMD for vocational deacons', 2016.](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Deacon.](#)

<sup>28</sup> Mark Berwick, ['Discernment Process and Framework — longer briefing paper'](#) (January 2019).

North of the Border attempts have been made to incorporate the learning garnered from other provinces and traditions into the formation of Episcopalian diaconal candidates. Such students are currently trained alongside candidates for other callings — Incumbent-status Priests, Associate Priests and Lay Readers — on a three-year part time, part-residential course which combines classroom teaching with on-line learning.

There are many positives in candidates for a variety of ministries training together. In the first place each comes to understand the other's ministry and to respect its distinctiveness; in the liturgical practicum, for example, all are helped to appreciate the different roles of Reader, Deacon and President in the Liturgy. Such sharing during student years, moreover, sets good foundations for close collegial working in the future, given the small size of the Province as indeed of Scottish church life in general. The presence of URC students in the Institute and the habit of locating many placements outwith the Scottish Episcopal Church also make for enduring ecumenical relationships.

Such sharing has other benefits. Alison Peden has written at length about the way past diaconal candidates in the Institute — with their particular aptitude for theological reflection and their peculiar spirituality — have leavened the whole community.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, attempts have been made to ensure that diaconal candidates do have access to the kind of dedicated diaconal formation described above. Given the size of the cohort — on average twenty students at any one time — and the need to create coherent community by means of the provision of a core curriculum, the offering of a wide range of diaconally-attuned modules is not feasible. But there *are* ways in which to offer such specificity. Chief among these is the annual placement, taken by all candidates: fifty hours' duration in the first two years and one hundred in the third. Candidates on all the different vocational pathways take a placement in their first year which is based outwith a congregation — with a mission agency or in workplace chaplaincy — thus giving everyone an experience of mission early on in their formation. Thereafter, while candidates for other ministries go on to do two congregational or chaplaincy-based placements, diaconal candidates carry out a further attachment in a secular agency or non-congregational setting, while their final year placement is intentionally situated at the interface of church-and-community.

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<sup>29</sup> Alison Peden, 'Challenges to diaconal formation in the Scottish Episcopal Church', in *The Diaconate in Ecumenical Perspective*, ed. by D. Michael Jackson (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2019), pp. 185–191 (p. 187).

The choice of 'beyond the walls' placements offered by SEI incorporates the very topics that the AED recommended: gerontology, mental health, community engagement, health care, social outreach and contextual theology. In recent years, candidates have worked with refugees, engaged in cross-cultural work in Canada and Sweden, shadowed Street Pastors in their ministry in a city centre or funeral directors in theirs, and worked variously with a Community Wellbeing Centre, a Peace and Justice centre, a Residential Care Home, a psychiatric hospital and a Dementia Club. Two have engaged with food bank provision and homelessness projects, and another attended a course in 'Ministry Among Older People' devised by the Anna Chaplaincy community before putting the learning into practice locally.

The value of these placements in forming the future boundary-breaking and interpretative ministries of the candidates can be seen from the participants' own comments:

My final long placement [was] in a local care home where many of the residents had dementia. The placement offered the opportunity to be with residents in groups, or one-to-one in a pastoral situation, helping me to develop more fully an understanding of the intentional use of self in ministry. During the six months I met many residents who knew of my connection with my local church by my bringing church members to support the services on a Sunday afternoon. I came away with a good grasp of what is required to introduce a new activity like a spiritual meeting. This placement had laid the foundations for my future Diaconal ministry in linking church and residential communities.

Several of them found their vocations confirmed by working on the margins:

The work of Street Pastors is really diaconal ministry. They are the church in the community; the work they do really resonates with my calling. A deacon's role is to serve the church and the community, to be Christ's witness to the world and bring the world's needs back to the church. When people see Street Pastors they see the church out in the streets, not just remaining in their buildings. They see Christians living out their faith in their community.

I learned so much from working in the field of homelessness and addiction. Sharing food over time leads to conversations; just

something as simple as saying grace leads to questions about God and God's love for all [...] the simple human activity of sitting round a table together and chatting. Doing this work, but then also experiencing a placement in the field of dementia care, really confirmed my diaconal calling [...] I realised anew the sheer value of tangible things in ministry, like bringing knitted nativity figures in to show the residents and using them as conversation starters, as memory prompts. It was all so very practical. A way of making connections.

Some got to grips with partnership working:

I worked in a pilot partnership between NHS Highland and a community interest company, in effect a community care resource centre which identifies health problems in the community before they need medical intervention [...] tackling loneliness before it develops into clinical depression, for instance. Interacting with the lonely and the marginalised has given me a better understanding of the problems, hopes and fears of those on the edges of society, especially in a rural area. I now feel better equipped for the ministry God has called me to.

Some candidates had the added benefit of being mentored by diaconal ministers (from other provinces or traditions) in these contexts:

Walking alongside (the Deacons) as they worked with the most vulnerable folk there was amazing, I was learning how to do my future ministry while seeing them, feeling them, walk the walk. I was walking it too, alongside. It felt like a safe place to make mistakes, grow and experiment — amongst people who really got diaconal ministry.

The core curriculum itself has diaconal spin-offs, particularly when the elective topic for an assignment can be aligned closely with diaconal formation (as in the case of the Christian Ethics module.) The Reflective Practice module, a mandatory component for all students every year, while helping them to hone their skills in this crucial area for their future ministries of 'interpretation', also includes material on community analysis, liberation theology and change-management. The final year portfolio emanating from this module crucially includes reflection upon material the students have created and used to equip others, a crucial aspect of a deacon's ministry.

Diaconal candidates have also drawn-down learning in mission offered to those on the Mixed Mode pathway in the very way Orton recommends. A module on *Developing Mission and Ministry in Context* has enabled them to gain skills in community development and engagement (including Asset-based Community Development), identify and reflect theologically upon some key social and cultural trends, and explore what it means to exercise leadership in ministry and mission, working collaboratively with others. The module requires them to carry out research by profiling a community and to consider the implications of their findings for ministry and mission. Similarly, *Evangelism in Practice* has enabled them to gain insights into culturally-appropriate and theologically-informed approaches to evangelism, and to form their own evaluations of particular approaches to process evangelism by critically analysing an evangelistic project and leading one of their own. Such candidates also study *Mission Entrepreneurship: Principles*, along with all other SEI students, and have the opportunity of taking *Mission Entrepreneurship: Practice*, the follow-on module.

Such candidates have likewise benefitted from the mandatory third-year module on pastoral care, and from the input given at residential events from specialists in restorative justice, pilgrimage, youth ministry, public speaking, gerontology, palliative care, Values-based Reflective Practice, the latter having the added advantage of acquainting them with practitioners in these fields working across Scotland; contacts made ‘in the classroom’ have gone on to bear fruit in the candidates’ ministries, post-ordination.

Admittedly much more could be done; in future, for instance, it would be good to tailor core curriculum assignment titles more specifically towards the specific needs of diaconal candidates, and to include material about community advocacy, political engagement and organization for social change. Other topics for study that have been suggested by deacons themselves are the management of volunteers, personnel policies and skills in partnering with third-sector projects.<sup>30</sup> Whether the latter provision can or should be front-loaded, however, is debatable; the experience of Methodist deacons<sup>31</sup> suggests that it is wiser to place some of this training in the IME 4-6 years/IME Phase 2. Indeed, the provision of dedicated modules within this phase of formation is currently under discussion within the Scottish Episcopal Church.

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<sup>30</sup> *Op cit* 21, 53 see comment above.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Orton and Todd Stockdale, *Making Connections* (Duham: Sacristy Press, 2014), p. 128; see also [‘The implications of distinctive diaconal vocations for theological education within the Common Awards framework: a case study’](#), p. 5:

A more radical and hugely exciting curricular change would involve Vocational Deacons being trained via SEI's Mixed Mode pathway given the emergent understanding, cogently outlined in Dr Tiplady's paper in this volume, of the connection between the vocational diaconate and the vision of pioneer ministry. This suggestion is at present only in its infancy but holds great promise.

One final development envisaged include the use of existing Episcopalian distinctive deacons as mentors and supervisors of candidates in formation. As Louise Williams, onetime President of *Diakonía*, the worldwide Federation of Diaconal Associations, writes:

The ministry that diaconal workers today are part of must be cycled back not only into their own reformation but also into the formation of those who are students and candidates — the diaconate yet to come. I pray God that what I am and what I do will help to shape those who are to come after, not to confine them but to give them a foundation on which to build.<sup>32</sup>

This paper has been offered by the Diaconal Working Group of the Scottish Episcopal Church in that same vein: that the work in which the Group engages might continue to improve the formation of the Church's diaconal candidates and be to the glory of the One who sends.

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<sup>32</sup> Louise Williams, *Growing in Ministry: Formation for Diaconal Service*, North American Association for the Diaconate Monograph Series 10 (1999), 10.

# Mission and Formation in a Time of Lament and Hope: Reflections after COVID-19<sup>1</sup>

CATHY ROSS  
Church Mission Society

Who would have thought? Who would have thought that we would still be here, in this space, communicating and connecting online, six months after our initial lockdown? Apparently, I did not think so, when I gave Anne the title for this lecture back in early May! 'Mission and Formation in a Time of Lament and Hope: Reflections **After** COVID-19.' We are not yet in the 'after' — we are still in the midst of it with seemingly more to come. Of course, 'after' can also mean influenced by, or in the school of; after Shakespeare, or after Van Gogh, so we are still in the school of COVID and still learning in this school! However, we do believe that there will be an 'after', that this too will pass, like other pandemics, and that we may be able to take learnings from this time into the 'after' which is still to come.

In this lecture I would like to take us on a journey from lament to hope and then to reflect on what this might mean for mission and formation in our current context and what we might take into the future — after COVID...

At the beginning of lockdown, like many of you I suspect, I was listening to podcasts, reading articles that came through on the pandemic and going back to old favourites. I listened again to a podcast by North American writer and chronicler Rebecca Solnit who writes and speaks powerfully about hope. She finds ground for hope in the altruism she sees at work in the world as well as in our responses to disaster, such as Hurricane Katrina on which she was reflecting. She writes, 'thus a disaster is a lot like a revolution when it comes to disruption and improvisation, to new roles and an unnerving or exhilarating sense that now anything is possible.'<sup>2</sup> As I read those words, it made me wonder. Disruption and improvisation ... anything is possible. Can we even begin to think like that in the midst of such trauma and tragedy? Then I read an article by Indian novelist Arundhati Roy who considers the pandemic as a portal, 'a gateway between this world and the next'. She urges us not to return to normality but to reimagine our world

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<sup>1</sup> The [Scottish Episcopal Institute Annual Lecture 2020](#), delivered via Zoom on Thursday 29 October 2020.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jul/15/rebecca-solnit-hope-in-the-dark-new-essay-embrace-unknown>.  
<https://onbeing.org/programs/rebecca-solnit-falling-together/>

anew so ‘we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.’<sup>3</sup> Like Solnit, she sees hope in the possibilities for newness and change but that this will not come about automatically — we must be prepared to struggle for it.

I also listened to a podcast by beloved Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann whose ideas on change resonate with Solnit’s and Roy’s approach. Brueggemann advocates change by the use of the term ‘disruptive’. He explains:

I think we think in terms of systems and continuities and predictability and schemes and plans. I think the Bible is to some great extent focused on God’s capacity to break those schemes open and to violate those formulae. When they are positive disruptions, the Bible calls them miracles. We tend not to use that word when they are negative. But what it means is that the reality of our life and the reality of God are not contained in most of our explanatory schemes.<sup>4</sup>

I found that so challenging! When they are positive disruptions we rejoice and call them miracles, but when they are negative, we don’t! Now I don’t think anyone would want to call COVID a miracle but it is certainly a major disruption that has upset all our plans, called into question some of our most basic values and desires, unleashed unprecedented levels of uncertainty for those of us in the Western world and has challenged our whole way of life. It has also caused more than one million deaths and hardship and suffering for millions worldwide. So, I think we can be clear that this is indeed a negative disruption and that an appropriate response is to lament.

I have found hope in being able to lament, I have discovered that the biblical language of lament helps us to name and face dark times, or negative disruptions, and then to find hope. As we name and face our situation, mourn and grieve the current realities, sit with it and not rush on, then we can begin, tentatively, to find hope.

### *Lament*

Some reading that has begun to open up this for me has been the work of a Roman Catholic Ugandan theologian, Emmanuel Katongole and North American Biblical scholar Kathleen O’Connor with her book *Lamentations &*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>

<sup>4</sup> <https://onbeing.org/programs/walter-brueggemann-the-prophetic-imagination-dec2018/>



*The Tears of the World*. Katongole's latest book is entitled *Born from Lament, The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa*.<sup>5</sup> This is a book that looks squarely at the truly terrible, evil, cruel violence and tragic suffering in Congo and reflects on how and why this has happened. He details the trauma and the depth of loss experienced — the loss of community, the loss of humanity, the loss of future. He asks, how does one live with this? Can there be a future and if so, what kind? And, where is God? He finds the clue to the future in the power and hope of lament.

He reminds us that nearly one third of the psalms are psalms of lament which meant that the core of Israel's life — social, religious and community was framed by lament. A key component of lament is complaint. However, to complain is risky and seems almost improper. But I think it shows that the relationship with God is alive, dynamic, and open. It also refuses to accept things the way they are; it protests God's silence and presses God for deliverance. I think this requires courage to protest in this way against God — but we see it again and again in the psalms and in the prophets such as Jeremiah. It may also be a way forward into newness. In the psalms of lament while the writers draw on memories of God's saving actions in the past, there is always the risk and possibility that God will act in totally new ways as a result of this present suffering so we may see and learn something totally new and unexpected about God and about our own situation. This is important for us to remember in our present context — that we may be learning new things about God and what may lie ahead for us in the future — after COVID. 'It is not those who lack faith who complain, but those recognised for strong faith who bring their most honest and passionate feelings to God.'<sup>6</sup> It ensures that the relationship is alive, dynamic, negotiated, contested.

It is also risky — because complaint is a form of protest and pain. It refuses to accept things the way they are, it presses God for deliverance, it challenges God — 'How long, O God?', 'Why do you hide your face?' The first word of the book of Lamentations is *ekah*, a cry of mourning a kind of primordial and primeval cry to give voice to deep suffering. This ancient cry embodies a whole range of emotions — grief, despair, anguish, forgiveness, shame, hope, compassion. It is also a cathartic expression and an invitation to the audience not only to see and experience the grief but also to protest this pain. In the book of Lamentations, the voice of God is silent and seemingly absent — there are five distinct voices heard throughout the book but the one voice that is never heard is the voice of God. Kathleen O'Connor

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<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Katongole, *Born from Lament, The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

believes God's silence is inspired and notes, 'God's silence in Lamentations leaves wounds festering, open to the air and possible to healing. The benefit of exposed wounds is that they become visible and unavoidable. Left exposed, they require us to see, acknowledge, and attend to them.'<sup>7</sup>

Brueggemann has highlighted the absence of lament in our churches. He connects it with the inability to face suffering and to embrace negativity in our Western world. Pemberton suggests that the Church, as a middle-class institution, has become increasingly embarrassed by the earthy and gritty language of lament. He writes:

[...] we have chosen to live protected lives in insulated communities, whether our community is a middle-to-upper class neighbourhood or a church with a fortress mentality. Our lack of solidarity with those in need is what causes us to wonder why these prayers are in the Bible and question who would ever need them.<sup>8</sup>

Lament sounds dreary and negative to those who do not wish to be reminded either of their own vulnerability and suffering or that of those around them. But lament allows us to articulate our pain. Voicing lament and pain can be a form of resistance and a path to healing. It means that we will not be rendered powerless and voiceless, we will not remain paralysed by despair.

As a form of resistance lament can encourage agency. African-American spirituals are a good example of this. The cry of anguish, such as *ekah* at the beginning of Lamentations, is not only a way of naming and mourning what is lost but is also a way of standing in the midst of the suffering. And so lament not only deepens our engagement with the world of suffering but also invites us into more active social and political engagement.

Lament is a form of complaint and resistance and as we see in the psalms, and in Lamentations, can turn to hope. However, the turn to hope is a struggle. Lament is a kind of discipline that involves multiple actions — crying out, remembering, keeping silent, repenting and praying. It is a way of keeping hope alive amidst the despair.

Intriguingly, the psalms of lament do show us a surprising turn to praise. However, it is important to note that lament and praise are not simply juxtaposed. Rather there can be an unexpected movement which brings about a fresh perspective and new language. So this possibility of lament

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<sup>7</sup> O'Connor, *Lamentations*, p. 88.

<sup>8</sup> Glenn Pemberton in Katongole, *Born from Lament*, p. 180.

turning into praise ‘reflects a transformation and innovation, a novelty that is only possible with the articulation of both pain and belief’.<sup>9</sup> Biblical lament has the potential to bring us to a new place, to a new depth, to a new song of praise which is qualitatively different from the praise that has gone before. It is a new kind of depth of knowledge and experience; only made possible by the experience of the suffering and the pain.

‘There are things that can be seen only with eyes that have cried’ said a martyred Congolese Bishop. Grief keeps our hearts soft. North American psychotherapist Francis Weller tells us that grief is a gift. ‘Our hearts are kept flexible, fluid, and open to the world through this closeness with loss.’<sup>10</sup> It is a new kind of seeing — a kind of seeing emerging from pain, suffering and anguish. There are no short cuts to this — this newness and hope emerge from the vulnerability, the suffering, the anguish. So we believe and trust that lament has the possibility to bring us to a new place and a new song; there will be newness and hope — but it will be qualitatively different and we will only arrive there because of the pain.

Brueggemann encapsulates our current experience so accurately when he says, ‘the world we have trusted in is vanishing before our eyes, and the world that is coming at us feels like a threat to us. We can’t quite see the shape of it.’<sup>11</sup>

So, what might this world that is coming to us mean for mission and formation in the light of COVID-19.

### ***Mission and formation***

If we think back to Solnit’s challenge that disaster can bring disruption and improvisation and Roy’s plea to imagine another world, what might that mean for mission and formation? Some of you will know that I have been doing some work on John Taylor’s missiology. He was a General Secretary of CMS from 1963–1974 a wordsmith and a poet, and an exciting missiologist with some quite radical and innovative ideas. He is probably best known for his book *The Go-Between God, the Holy Spirit and Christian Mission*.

Taylor is also the person who offered us the now succinct and popular summary of mission as ‘seeing what God is doing in a situation and trying to do it with him.’<sup>12</sup> He rooted this in Christology and the Spirit for Jesus had

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<sup>9</sup> Addition required Ellington in Katongole, *Born from Lament*, p. 109.

<sup>10</sup> Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow, Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief* (North Atlantic Books, 2015), p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> <https://onbeing.org/programs/walter-brueggemann-the-prophetic-imagination-dec2018/>

<sup>12</sup> *CMS Newsletter*, 382, June 1974.

his eyes opened by the Spirit to recognize God at work in the world, 'Jesus said to them, Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.' (John 5. 19). As disciples, we are called to take the same position in relation to Jesus as Jesus had in relation to his Father. Mission means joining in the unfinished task of creation and redemption.

I would like to frame this part of the lecture around some of Taylor's ideas for mission as a larger canvas for reflecting on how we could engage in our imaginations in missiological formation, and what these ideas might mean for how we participate in mission. Then I will conclude with some ideas, again inspired by John Taylor, for imagining another world that can bring us hope during and after a time of lament.

### ***An adventure of the imagination***

Taylor challenges us to think of mission as an adventure of the imagination. What might that do for our formation and engagement in mission? Well I think it means encouraging us to share the Gospel with creativity and imagination. Taylor originally used this phrase in his book *The Primal Vision*.<sup>13</sup> In that book he is reflecting on the question of translation in relation to primal religions in Africa and how to use the imagination to make the Gospel understandable in that context. Similarly, we desperately need this same gift of imagination in our postmodern and post-Christian Western contexts. He argues for more creativity, more imagination and more gentle and nuanced 'cultivation' as we engage with people:

The evangelist, as Paul well knew, has to cultivate what grows from God's planting without trampling it with his own dogmatic boots... And may it not be that if we are ever to learn how to sing the Lord's song in the strange land of our secular world we shall have to learn to use more of his obliquity?<sup>14</sup>

If we do not use the divine imagination given to us, we will be embarrassed by a world capable of far more imagination than the Church itself. What we need is not more technique but more imagination, "to see the unseen" in what is familiar and contemporary and to offer to men [*sic*] as a parable, in all its liability to be missed or misunderstood.'<sup>15</sup> We need to cultivate our imaginations along these lines so we can intrigue and surprise when we

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<sup>13</sup> John Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, (London: SCM, 1963), p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> *CMS Newsletter*, 295, July 1966.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

present the Gospel so that people are given the opportunity to discover for themselves what the cost of discipleship means and what gifts Jesus brings.

This has led us at CMS in our Pioneer Missional Leadership Training to think about the air we breathe in our training environments — in other words is it an air that encourages imaginative, creativity, generative ideas, possibility and hope or is the air more concerned with the right ways of doing things? We have found books about art schools enlivening and full of good ideas for nurturing creative behaviours. For example, *The Creative Stance* summarizes seven behaviours that might help an artist to flourish.<sup>16</sup> They are imagination, provocation, risk, rigour, ambiguity, agency, and resilience.

We encourage and promote curiosity and exploration to embark on this adventure of the imagination. In *The Creative Stance*, Grayson Perry introduces a section on rigour describing two internal characters — hobbit and punk. Hobbit is the one who does the hard graft of learning the skill of making pots, glazes and learning the craft. He says that students will not be good artists without that learning, without putting in the 10,000 hours of work. But hobbit can be a bit boring so she also needs punk who can come along and mess with things creatively, play, break pots, rework them, contravene conventions and take risks. The interplay between these two characters leads to an innovative practice.<sup>17</sup> This is exactly what we need in theology — a rigorous engagement with the content and a creative angle to work that content.

### ***Imagining mission as local***

Mission is best done by the insiders or the local people. The Gospel is universal, but the Gospel's thought forms, metaphors and the way it is communicated will vary from place to place and age to age. Each age and context need imagination to communicate the Gospel afresh. This is best done by insiders. If the Gospel is to be genuinely understood and lived out by a local culture and context, then the locals are the best ones to work this out.

We need to be far more radical and creative in allowing this to happen. Too often, we want to protect, to guard and to defend the Gospel, thereby limiting its power and potential to embed and root itself in the local context.

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<sup>16</sup> Bob Smith, Roberta Smith, Edmund de Waal et al., *The Creative Stance* (London: Common Editions, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Grayson Perry in *The Creative Stance*, p. x.

We become 'the guardians of universality'<sup>18</sup> and therefore mistrust the local and the particular. We need not be afraid of the local; instead, we need to allow the locals to mine their own culture and contexts for its riches, seams and veins that can begin to communicate the Gospel afresh. The Word is basic everywhere but 'the thought forms, the metaphors, the logic in which it is communicated, these differ from culture to culture and from age to age'.<sup>19</sup> Even the story of salvation may have to be told differently as each of the four Gospels demonstrates.

We work in the context of a mission society which is important because it exposes us to the global context. We have had our imaginations sparked and enriched by learning from other contexts. Students love reading theologies from other places. There is a lovely book we use with students called *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*.<sup>20</sup> It is a local theology talking about God from within an African worldview using imagery, parables and stories from that context. It is creative and insightful and wonderfully African. To be able to think, dream and talk about God in one's own language is vital. We are well aware of the damage done when historically much Western mission confused Western culture with gospel and therefore not only undermined the goodness of local culture but also made the Gospel seem like a foreign or exotic import to that context. Of course, it is exactly the same issue here in our own contexts. Often, the way that faith is expressed here is foreign to many outsiders so we need to be encouraged to seek to find ways to do theology that relates to their own communities and to be encouraged to work out what theology might look like brewed in the pot of their own community. This requires imagination and improvisation and ideally is something co-created together with the community, not just something they do on their own.

Even more exciting is that this uncovering of the Gospel is a two-way process of mutuality. Christianity is nurtured by and in cultural encounters and then in turn, develops and nurtures those cultures. For example, it was only when the Chinese took in Jesus and nurtured and understood him in Confucian ways that he became Chinese enough to be understood. In this way other cultures can also benefit from the 'Chinese-ness' of the Gospel and the creative interchange that is sparked by this. The local church must be allowed and permitted to develop and express its Christian life and faith in ways pertinent and relevant to its own context.

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<sup>18</sup> CMS Newsletter, 299. December 1966.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> A. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (New York: Orbis, 2008).

***Imagining mission as prophetic***

Mission needs to discern the signs of the times and be alert to the winds of the Spirit. In other words, it needs to be prophetic. Taylor outlines what is needed to become a prophet: sight, sign and solidarity. We need the gift of sight because the prophetic impulse begins with the seeing eye. In terms of sign, we need to recapture this ability to be signs of God's Kingdom in ways that communicate and pique interest rather than spell out the meaning in a literal, dreary or dogmatic way. His third and most challenging concept is solidarity. For 'in order to be a sign of the Gospel we have to walk the sacrificial way of solidarity with the people and the situation concerning which we have been given a gift of insight and a word to proclaim.'<sup>21</sup>

An excellent example of engaging in mission in this prophetic space is 'Clean for Good'. A few years ago, a parish in London noted a surprising number of low paid cleaners working in unjust circumstances. So, they decided to set up a cleaning company to provide work for cleaners with decent working conditions and paying the London Living Wage:

Clean for Good enables cleaners to thrive, not just survive. Every cleaner is viewed and treated as a person with skills and potential. We want to promote the idea that cleaning is a respected and dignified career. We care about our employees and want to enable them with the skills and confidence to progress not only within our company, but in their life.<sup>22</sup>

***Imagining mission as costing everything***

Mission will mean conversion and conversion is a turning, a radical reorientation of a person towards God, a changed relationship through repentance and faith in Christ. We need to face some difficult questions as to what conversion means and how it works in cultures with little or no Christian heritage and be realistic about the challenge this presents. 'But is that kind of repentance and faith immediately possible to a man [sic], whose ideas and attitudes are completely untouched by what we might call the presuppositions of the Bible?'<sup>23</sup> Words such as 'sin, life and death' may mean something different or even nothing at all so something else must happen before the Gospel can even be heard. Indeed, Taylor says that sin may be the last truth to be told. The culmination of evangelism is conversion, but it seems that God may be more patient with people than we are and that God's

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.cleanforgood.co.uk/> [accessed 17 October 2020]

<sup>23</sup> *CMS Newsletter*, 279, February 1965.

ways of eliciting a response are more varied and unexpected than any of ours.

The rich young ruler, for example, had to abandon his privilege as a condition of discipleship and his coming to Christ had social as well as spiritual implications. There are no universal rules — each situation has to be measured and judged afresh. ‘So the heart of the problem seems to be to distinguish between the stone of stumbling Christ lays before those who approach him as an inescapable demand, and the stumbling blocks which we create unnecessarily while calling them basic.’<sup>24</sup> This requires much discernment and wisdom and is a harder road to follow.

### ***Imagining mission as dangerous***

Our practice of mission is undergirded by our theology. What if our theology were not safe? Taylor believes there is no such thing as a safe theology because a theology that is in touch with the world will be a living theology with all its attendant risks, mistakes and developments. Theology has a missionary role in its task to communicate the truths of the Gospel to a world that is constantly changing. Therefore, theology must emerge out of a dynamic encounter with the world. A theology of mission that is grounded and rooted in current realities must be interdisciplinary and ask searching and challenging questions. Nearly fifty years ago now back in 1976, Kenyan theologian John Mbiti asserted that we are kerygmatically universal but theologically provincial.<sup>25</sup> In other words, we believe in and proclaim the Gospel but we allow our theology to remain limited and constrained by our own safe, provincial horizons.

Hard questions face us as we engage in mission. Taylor gives the example of a young Anglican monk in a Buddhist context where he includes a reading from a Buddhist text in the preparatory part of the Communion service. Taylor muses, ‘is this truth or compromise?’<sup>26</sup> Such are the hard questions that face us there and everywhere as we struggle to communicate the Gospel appropriately and in context. Just as Jacob wrestled with an angel, so we too need to wrestle with theological questions and issues that arise as we engage in mission. It is a serious undertaking. It is a long undertaking with no certain outcome. We need to experiment. We will make mistakes, but it is absolutely necessary if we are to develop a missional theology that is fit for purpose and be of service to the world and the church. ‘All theology

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Underlining in original.

<sup>25</sup> John Mbiti, quoted in Tienou, ‘Christian Theology’, 45.

<sup>26</sup> *CMS Newsletter*, 326. April 1969.



which is earnest is also dangerous. It is an act of adoration fraught with the risk of blasphemy.<sup>27</sup> This is why mission can be dangerous.

***Imagining mission as sharing the Gospel in all humility and gentleness***

This is a real issue for the Church of England as an established church. Evangelism, as a practice of mission, must be practised with all humility and gentleness. In a *Newsletter* reflecting on Christian witness in China, Taylor sharply criticized the use of power and wealth in evangelism:

The use of superior power to commend the Gospel, whether the power of money, or the power of expertise or the power of access to political authority, even though it is used to do good and to serve the needy unconditionally, may result in conversions, but many of them will be conversions to the more successful way of life, not conversions to Jesus Christ.<sup>28</sup>

He believed that when the reaction sets in to this approach, then it may also mean a rejection of Jesus, whose name is associated with this method. He makes a plea that we ‘power-conscious Westerners’ learn the secret of Paul’s method, ‘For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.’ (I Corinthians 2. 2–3). He implored us to open our minds and to see things from the Chinese point of view so as to prepare ourselves for a creative interchange with Chinese people when the opportunity presents itself. He reminds us that, at that time (1973) ‘our most telling form of witness to our Lord’s power will not be the things we can say to China but our readiness to listen to what China is saying to us.’<sup>29</sup> This remains a continuing challenge in each of our contexts, as we need to listen to what each of those contexts is saying to us and what gifts they may bring to us.

Now let me conclude with some ideas drawn from John Taylor that we are learning in the School of COVID which I hope we can take with us after COVID.

***Imagining another world is possible ... after COVID***

Here I am drawing again on inspiration from John Taylor to inform our current context. We have tried to make this an opportunity for new reflection and responses. For example, this is how my colleague Jonny Baker responded to the Rule of Six.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Quoting from *The Expository Times*.

<sup>28</sup> *CMS Newsletter*, 369, March 1973.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Taking church as an example how can church work, grow and be if limited to homes and groups of six? When you stop and think about it there have been loads of times and places where the church has only been able to meet in homes and has flourished. I think I would go so far as to say that households is the most natural habitat for communities of disciples.<sup>30</sup>

*Cherish the weakness of limited means.* With financial challenges already present and looming for the foreseeable future, we are learning to ‘cherish the weakness of limited means’. We are learning to cherish weakness and vulnerability, uncertainty, and our inability to fix things. Unsurprisingly, we are finding that this puts us in line with most of the rest of the world. We are also trying to use our imaginations instead of relying on assumed and former ways of doing things.

*Enough is enough.* I think we have all learned that enough is enough and that we need to develop — a theology of enough. We are learning that we need to respect the planet and not to be so consumerist and extravagant. In 1972, nearly fifty years ago, Taylor wrote:

Our Western way of life is marked by excess whichever aspect of our situation one looks at — our consumption of food and our accumulation of goods, our wage claims and price rises, our waste and pollution, the concentration and congestion of our cities, our destruction of living creatures and our plunder of fuels and minerals, our expenditure on armaments and the wanton disproportion of the way we use them — excess is the word that comes continually to mind. Ruthless, unbridled, unthinking excess.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps we are learning to respect the planet, to live more simply so that others may simply live and to take delight and joy in simple pleasures.

*The missionary frontier is on our doorstep.* We are learning that the missionary frontier is on our doorstep — literally. Many of us have got to know our neighbours in new ways and this has been a joy and surprise for many. A good place to start is with whoever is at home and we have quite

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/jonny.baker.965>.

<sup>31</sup> *CMS Newsletter*, 363, September 1972.

literally been forced to start here as around the whole of the UK we are stuck at home with various restrictions.

*Come as a stranger with everything to learn again.* We have learned to be more humble, to listen more to others and to our own bodies as our generation has never encountered anything like this before. This is a new experience for all of us and we have had to learn again. We have been forced to come as a stranger with everything to learn again as all this is such uncharted territory for us.

*The world is the Church's milieu.* We have learned that the world is the Church's milieu — again quite literally as we have been forced out of our old ways of doing things. Perhaps church is not the point of church and this pandemic has forced us to be in the world — both physically where we can as well as online. Taylor says, 'leap over the wall or perish' and we agree that we need to leap over walls we have created to be in the world.

*Look to the fringes, watch the things that are pushing out on the edge.* We have learned to look to the fringes because that is where new things start and where Jesus was. It is no different now — surprising things emerge on the edges. Jonny Baker writes,

The church is most surely herself when she is at the periphery with those who are fringe dwellers. Jesus was loved by outsiders, fringe dwellers. If the church wants to be renewed she should do likewise and look to the fringes rather than the centre.<sup>32</sup>

*Get off your high horse and muck in.* We have been learning to get off our high horse and muck in. There have been wonderful stories of the community mucking in during this time. This resonates with Solnit's comments on altruism and disaster response. George Monbiot reminded us that this pandemic has catalysed community action 'on a vast scale.' Hundreds of thousands have signed up to be volunteers. Local schools are making visors with 3D printers for their local GP surgeries. People are shopping for those who cannot get to the shops. Charities and churches are still providing meals and food for homeless people, asylum seekers and migrants. Our local pubs are offering free accommodation for NHS workers and making hot meals for those who need them. In Johannesburg communities have made survival packs for people in informal settlements, in India young people have self-

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/jonny.baker.965>

organized to provide aid packages for those with no cash flow.<sup>33</sup> All over the world people are being kind, gentle, helpful, courageous, creative; getting off their high horse and mucking in.

*The art of being a minority.* We are learning the art of being a minority. We need to let go of any expectations of status and power and learn how to practise the art of being a minority, being on the margins and on the edge. Richard Rohr writes about 'the edge of the inside'. He encourages this posture:

When you live on the edge of anything with respect and honour, you are in a very auspicious and advantageous position. You are free of its central seductions, but also free to hear its core message in very new and creative ways.<sup>34</sup>

Stefan Paas, in his book *Pilgrims and Priests*, believes that the minority posture is the 'natural position' for Christians in the West especially as we learn what it means to live as a Christian on other people's terms.<sup>35</sup>

*The song notes of joyous witness.* Lament and hope has offered us the opportunity to offer the song note of joyous witness. Surely, we of all people can offer presence and hope for those suffering in these days. As we are present alongside others in all our vulnerability and pain, we can at least point to healing and wholeness as well as a future hope.

*The long trek into the terra incognita of Christ.* Finally, I think we are learning the long trek into the *terra incognita* of Christ. We are learning to live one day at a time which is perhaps more difficult than we ever imagined. We are learning that life indeed is a *terra incognita* and that we are not in control. Much of Jesus's teaching about the Kingdom is exactly this — not only about its hiddenness and its veiledness, but also about its unpredictability and the sheer length of time discovering it can take. Indeed, the journey into 'the *terra incognita* of Christ' can be a long journey, and a journey of disruption and improvisation, a journey of lament and hope, a journey to another world — after COVID.

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/31/virus-neighbours-covid-19>

<sup>34</sup> Richard Rohr, quoted in Brown Taylor, *Holy Envy*, p 217.

<sup>35</sup> Stefan Paas, *Pilgrims and Priests, Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society* (London: SCM, 2019), p. 209.

## 'Theology of Authority in the Ministry of the Church' (Grosvenor Essay No. 13): A Response

JOHN HIND

Retired Bishop of Chichester

It should be clear from what follows that I have found this a stimulating essay. It contains much to encourage members of the SEC to ponder God's gift of authority in the ministry of the Church. I think however it a pity that the Introduction begins by locating authority within a sociological rather than a theological context. Although a sociological critique is necessary for any consideration of the terrestrial Church and how it structures its life and ministry, this is an unfortunate starting point as it both belies the title of the document and may encourage the unwary to assume a somewhat limited viewpoint from which to approach the treatment of the theme as a whole. This would be unfortunate, because there is plenty of theology in the essay to encourage the reader to think about the (official) ministry of the Church in the context of its participation in the authority received by Christ from the Father as well as in relation to the ministry of all the baptized.

The title itself is ambiguous. The essay is about theology, but it also goes into considerable detail about the actual functioning of the Church as an institution. Much of the theology, moreover, is about the ministry of the Church rather than its authority. Although both the Introduction and the main text acknowledge that the authority of the ministry is wider than that of the ordained, the essay is said to be concerned with the latter, and, by a process not totally explained, also with otherwise authorized 'ministries'. Notwithstanding the assertion 'A theology of the laity true to our Christian convictions and to the context in which we are called to be Christ's Church is for another occasion' a substantial chapter is devoted to precisely this topic. Indeed, it would be impossible to consider the authority of part of the *laos* without considering the authority of the body as a whole. This does of course raise the perennial question about how to describe those members of the Church (the overwhelming majority) who are not ordained. In passing, I wonder what understanding of 'catholic' tradition makes a 'a clerical emphasis' inevitable! To my mind, clericalism is an offence against catholicity rather than an expression of it.

While ordained and 'authorized' ministries are an important aspect of how the Church exercises its ministry (*diakonia*) they do not exhaust its meaning. A later paragraph indeed asserts that 'ministry embraces the whole life and work of the Church'. In the absence of further explanation,

however, this is in danger of evacuating the term of meaning. Many will remember Helen Oppenheimer's famous observation that:

The trouble is that ministry [...] is what one might call a greedy concept. The notion of ministry tends to gobble up everything into itself so that it becomes impossible to sort out what is and what is not ministry. All are ministers but some are more ministers than others.<sup>1</sup>

This oft-quoted statement, which might be in danger of being a truism, suggests the need for some clarification of how the terms authority and ministry are being used.

As far as ministry is concerned, I think it is important to investigate whether ordained and authorized (or for that matter unauthorized) ministries are of the same character, in other words whether they differ in quality or only degree. To put this another way, this invites us to consider whether there is something about ordained ministry that makes it in some way constitutive of the Church and why. Here is a closely related question about what may be described as 'ordinary' authority, that is to say authority that is rooted in the character or status of the person exercising it, and what it is derived from another. Without some such distinction, there is a danger of reducing authority to a matter either of coercive power or of canonical, institutional structures, thereby evacuating the concept of any theological (even if one wants to avoid the rather problematic term 'ontological') content. It is at this point that the distinction drawn in paragraph 13 of the 1973 Canterbury Statement of ARCIC I is relevant:

In the eucharist, thanksgiving is offered to God, the gospel of salvation is proclaimed in word and sacrament, and the community is knit together as one body in Christ. Christian ministers are members of this redeemed community. Not only do they share through baptism in the priesthood of the people of God, but they are particularly in presiding at the eucharist

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Oppenheimer, 'Ministry and Priesthood', in *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, ed. by E. James (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1979), pp. 11, 12. Cf. [\*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry\*](#), 7 (b) 'The word ministry in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal Church. Ministry or ministries can also denote the particular institutional forms which this service may take.'

representative of the whole Church in the fulfilment of its priestly vocation of self-offering to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12. 1). Nevertheless, their ministry is not an extension of the common Christian priesthood but belong to another realm of the gifts of the Spirit. It exists to help the Church to be 'a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (I Peter 2. 9).

Commenting on this passage, Alan Clark wrote, 'The ordained ministry is not to be interpreted as the ministry of the people of God developed to its highest possibilities [...]'.<sup>2</sup>

Although the appropriateness of describing the eucharistic president as a priest has been hotly debated, even between signatories to the Canterbury Statement, and although few people seem to like the actual expression 'another realm of the gifts of the Spirit', there seems to have been general agreement that the ordained ministry of the Church differs in kind from the common priesthood of the people of God as well as from the unique priesthood of Jesus Christ.

It is true that the authority Jesus received from the Father is not transferred to the 'eleven' disciples, but it is exercised through them. As he himself said, 'you will do greater things than these, because I go to the Father' (John 14. 12) and 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' (John 20. 21). This is important as a way into understanding the unity of head and members. Whatever the sins and failures of the earthly Church and its leaders, even here below Christians should only think of it ultimately as the visible body of which he is the head. Of ordained ministers [\*BEM\*](#) says:

They manifest and exercise the authority of Christ in the way Christ himself revealed God's authority to the world, by committing their life to the community. Christ's authority is unique. 'He spoke as one who has authority (*exousia*), not as the scribes' (Matthew 7. 29). This authority is an authority governed by love for the 'sheep who have no shepherd' (Matthew 9. 36). It is confirmed by his life of service and, supremely, by his death and resurrection. Authority in the Church can only be authentic as it seeks to conform to this model.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Alan C. Clark, *Ministry and Ordination, The Official Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Catholic Information Office, 1973), p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> *BEM, Ministry*, 16.



This link between authority in the Church and participation in Christ's death is well emphasized in the present paper. That the hierarchical ministry of the Church has so often (to this day) been arrayed in the trappings of glory is acknowledged, although how and why this has happened could benefit from closer analysis. So too could the relationship between the baptismal identification with Christ's sufferings, in which all Christians share, and the particular form this identification takes in the ministry of those who preside in 'proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes' (I Corinthians 11. 26) or who 'spoke the word of God to you' (Hebrews 13. 7).

There is a useful, if difficult, section on power and authority in social organizations. The difficulty lies partly in the fact that it is not immediately obvious how this follows from the theological section preceding it or leads into the church-historical section embedded in it. As I have said earlier, such a sociological perspective shines a necessary light on the exercise of authority in the Church, including, but by no means exclusively on ministerial authority. It would, however, be better if this formed a separate chapter.

Of particular interest, especially to one who is not a member of the SEC, is the description of how history has endowed this church with 'a dynamic liturgical and doctrinal tradition, in which the ordered liturgies mutate within a dialectic relationship with the living community of faith'. (p. 12) This is a good description, reminiscent of the dictum 'Tradition is the handing on of fire, not the worship of ashes.'<sup>4</sup> Such an understanding of the dynamic of tradition does however cry out for criteria for discernment and authoritative organs of decision making in the inevitable event that judgments conflict. In the absence of a universal magisterium, whether papal, conciliar or 'covenantal' (in terms of recent Anglican history) it needs to be shown how 'the living community of faith' is to be identified and its voice expressed. The essay goes on to show how this:

Places an additional burden on what might be termed the secondary authority, viz. that vested in the Canons, and in the constitutions of dioceses, congregations, and other entities within it, and indirectly in the laws of the state which regulate charitable and similar organisations, and the regulatory bodies established under these laws to oversee the conduct of such bodies.

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<sup>4</sup> Attributed to Gustav Mahler and others. An alternative version is attributed to Pablo Picasso, *Tradition means having a baby, not wearing your grandfather's hat.*



This emphasis on canons and constitutions over doctrinal and confessional standards leads inevitably to questions of accountability and adjudication in case of disputes and which may draw Christians in an increasingly litigiousness age into an unedifying recourse to the secular courts.

While valuing Max Weber's analysis of charisma and its routinization, the essay helpfully distinguishes 'the theological gifts of the Holy Spirit from the sociological quality of charisma.' (p. 15) This whole paragraph is a wise warning against facile interpretations of the origins and development of Christianity, as also against the notion that the exercise of authority on earth can ever be free from the danger of corruption. It might be noted that movements that purport to protest against corruption often themselves succumb to arbitrary and coercive forms of authority.

The first chapter of the essay ends on a note that highlights questions that are explored in the second chapter (Baptism and the Priesthood of All Believers). As well as the general authority of the Church as a whole:

Authority is vested also in ordered ministry, received through episcopal ordination, and in lay ministry authorised and exercised in particular ways in the life of the Church. It is with these specific forms of ministry, and the authority exercised therein, that this study is concerned.

I think the relationship of and distinction between ordained and non-ordained ministries needs teasing out. The authority of the ordained is 'ordinary', while its exercise is normally governed by canon; the universal priesthood of the non-ordained is equally 'ordinary', it follows from baptism and requires no further authorization. 'Authorized' or 'commissioned' lay ministries are a 'tertium quid'. They enable the bearer to act on behalf of the whole body by carrying out specific functions that belong in principle to the whole. This is why the room for confusion is great, especially when those exercising such ministries, especially 'lay readers', have a distinctive form of liturgical dress that makes them look like clergy.

This whole chapter repays careful reflection and suggests a number of areas where action is necessary, especially to honour the Christian activity of believers in secular life and to equip them for it. A warning is given against the tendency to co-opt 'lay people' (an almost unavoidable solecism!) into clerical tasks, and by commissioning many of those so co-opted, often offering them training that approximates to that of the clergy, to give the impression that everyday ministry in the home or workplace is less important. I frequently found myself saying, 'Hear! Hear!'

The opening paragraph of the chapter on Ordained Ministry is a clear and robust assertion of holy order as understood in the SEC and usefully distinguishes between sacramental character and jurisdiction. A helpful clarification would be the insertion of the word 'normally' in the sentence referring to the limitation of ministry to the sphere of activity specified in the bishop's licence, as I assume that the SEC like other episcopal churches assumes that duly ordained ministers may and indeed must *in extremis* exercise the ministry for which they were ordained.

I did find the logic of this section quite difficult to follow and think it could be helped by tighter editing and dividing into more paragraphs. While the analysis of the complicated (and compromised) history of the episcopate in relation to secular power and feudal structures is clear, what is not clear is how the ministries of William Temple, Michael Ramsey, Rowan Williams etc. fit into what went before. The further list of notable theologian-bishops reinforces the notion that this is really part of another discussion about the role of bishop as theologian. All of them witness in various ways to the vision of the Church reflected in S. Hauerwas and W. Willimon *Resident Aliens* 1989, protesting not only against the 'Constantinian captivity of the Church' in previous times but also against the continuation of this captivity in contemporary Christian attempts to prove the utility of the Church in terms that conform the Church to the world rather than offering an alternative vision of the world. There are more ways than one of being 'Erastian' and, as a Nordic bishop once observed to me, one can be just as prelatric from the back seat of a black Mercedes as from an episcopal throne!

One of the consequences of the professionalization of the clergy is, as this essay makes clear, their increasing (and often unequal) competition with other professionals, especially in the caring, and more recently, the managerial professions. It would be too easy to say that this needs the recovery of an earlier understanding of the cultic, pastoral, kerygmatic and didactic centre of the Church's ministry, since as is abundantly clear this 'centre' can never exist in a vacuum, idealistically separated from the world it serves. Nevertheless, 'our citizenship is in heaven' (Philippians 3. 20) and our usefulness in the world is something that the world can never understand. Part of the tragedy of Christian infidelity lies precisely in swinging between, on the one hand, affirming or renouncing this world and, on the other, claiming the power to transform it. It may be that the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus and for which we pray every time we say the Lord's Prayer transcends all Niebuhr's distinctions. It seems that the Church as a whole is called to witness to this kingdom, and that the ordained ministry is given to hold the Church firm in this vocation. In one of the classic confrontations between the reign of God and earthly power, Jesus told Pilate 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18. 36). Here he does not seem to be

challenging Pilate's (or Caesar's) authority within their own (limited) spheres of influence, but rather recalibrating the whole character of authority and power. This is hard to understand and even harder to live by, which may explain why so many Christians have fallen for the easy seductions of accommodation, and have embodied this accommodation in their institutions and identified these with the 'kingdom of God', by claiming too much for either ecclesiastical authority or so called 'gospel values'.

A consistent question throughout this essay is how words are being used. I have already hinted at my concern about the application of the term 'laity' to mean those not ordained.

Another problematic word is 'Church'. On page 34 we read:

There must [...] be some doubt as to whether vocation and authority deriving from God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, can ultimately be distinguished from vocation and authority derived from the Church, the Body of Christ endowed with the Holy Spirit.

This pertinent question opens the door to the only theologically acceptable understanding of the Church, that is to say the body of which Christ is the head. Humanly speaking of course, we need to be bilingual — fluent both in our first language drawn from Scripture and faith and in the secular language we share with our contemporaries. This means that with the Bible we must speak of the Church as the unsullied body of Christ, whose *polis* and hence our *politeuma*, are in heaven, and with the world we must speak of the Church as one social institution among many and accept the world's judgments (which may in many but not all cases coincide with God's judgments) on its contribution to the common good.

I found myself troubled by the statement that 'a bishop in the SEC functions in the light of the church that somehow found its vocation after 1690 to preserve, against all the odds, the catholic and apostolic tradition in Presbyterian Scotland.' As someone whose first teacher of Church history was a minister of the Church of Scotland who taught me the importance of apostolic succession for that church, I find this a difficult and even an aggressive assertion. Of course, as a bishop I value the way the SEC has defended episcopacy in difficult times, but I am troubled by the implication that episcopacy is as such to be preferred over papacy or Presbyterianism (or for that matter congregationalism). It is probably not surprising that the vicissitudes of history require the SEC to stress its episcopal, and, in Anglican terms 'high church', structure, but this does run the danger of isolating a particular form of episcopacy as the unique criterion of ecclesial authenticity. I am no lover of the Erastian establishment of the Church of

England but must accept that this inheritance now requires the Church of England even in the changed circumstances of a secular democracy and constitutional monarchy to be aware of and take formal note of the powers that be. I do not think many people would wish things to be quite the way they are, but state involvement has sometimes provided something of a bulwark against sectarian introspection. It must also be remembered that even non-established churches may find themselves reflecting the mores of their own societies. Every local church (parish, diocese, province) needs protecting against the dominance of the culture of the society in which it is set. Of course, even the worldwide Church needs this protection, which is why checks and balances are necessary at every level, but episcopacy, even episcopacy-in-synod, cannot provide this except in the context of the Church as a whole. The theological vitality the SEC claims to have demonstrated since the nineteenth century (p. 40) may indeed have been due in part to its independence from the state, but without binding accountability to other churches, it is hard to see how this can ultimately be put at the service of the Catholic Church as a whole — which includes, I suppose, even the national church from which it also distinguishes itself.

The relationship between the episcopate and the presbyterate is indeed complicated, both historically and theologically, and I think could have been explored more fully. In particular, although the SEC and Anglicanism as a whole emerged as a distinct portion of the western Church out of the turmoil of the sixteenth century, something could have been said about how the debate had earlier developed differently in West and East, and also about different understandings even within the West during the patristic and medieval period. On page 43, the important quotation from the Preface to the Ordinal loses some of its force by being grammatically unconnected with the preceding and following paragraphs. The whole section is an interesting reflection of the role of the priest in relation to the parish community, the diocese and the bishop. I particularly rejoiced at the criticism of any polity that does not provide for regular meeting between the bishop and the diocesan presbyterate — and also the firm assertion that the parish priest is not the employee of the vestry!

The section on the diaconate reflects the work of John N. Collins and is a robust invitation to the contemporary Church to reassess the widespread assumption, presumably based on the experience of continental Lutheran and Reformed churches, that the principal activity of deacons is to be engaged in works of charity.

The very term 'Lay' Ministries is of course problematic and both in the section devoted to this topic and elsewhere in the essay ample evidence is adduced of the need to rethink ministerial roles. The Oppenheimer quotation at the beginning of my comments is apposite. Clergy may all too

easily assume roles that properly belong to those who are not ordained, and ordination become a mark of some kind of Christian excellence (although would that were always true!). Clerical status, and what looks like clerical status, exercises a powerful centripetal force which simultaneously tends to clericalize the 'laity' and undermine still further the proper priestly function of lay people in the world.

Challenging as it does the individualism of modern culture, this study could make a valuable contribution to nurturing for the good of the Church the collegiality it regards as 'of the essence of ministry'.

# Running with Patience: Pilgrimage as Journeys of the Church

MARK CALDER

Embrace the Middle East

Why is the wind always in my face? Why is it never behind me?  
Why are you fighting me? Why are you not running with me?

These words burst from my dry mouth at an especially low ebb. I had been running since dawn, when I left Aberdeen, and it was now dark, cold, and nearing eleven in the evening. The headwind persisted, as it had all day, and I was off my intended route, on the A92, somewhere west of Arbroath.



*'Headwind face' on the St Duthac pilgrimage, Leuchars*

This was the second of my fourteen ultramarathon-length pilgrimages in Scotland and the north of England, a challenge I'd undertaken to raise awareness and funding for a new Embrace the Middle East project in the north of Iraq, helping displaced people return home and rebuild their lives.

I have often reflected on this episode since. Later, running through a quiet and slightly less windy Dundee in the wee hours, I wondered whether I really had the right to feel such despair. These runs pushed me to the edge of my ability to cope, but they were journeys of choice. People forced to flee their homes, of course, have no option to quit, little support and no encouragement; just danger, loss, and frequently hostility rather than hospitality. These are the people, I thought, who truly have the right to express Psalm-like disorientation to God.

I learned to treasure that dark moment with hindsight. It was then that I felt I was given a tiny taste from a vast well of pain and vulnerability which, every day, perhaps for years, many people in Iraq have had to draw. At my limit, my sense of injustice and indignation turned into an embodied sense of solidarity, of 'standing with', and I have no doubt that this experience of brokenness ultimately strengthened my resolve to complete these runs.

This points to a relatively uncontentious, but often overlooked, fact about walking in general and Christian pilgrimage in particular. This 'limit' experience throws into relief the *sociality* of an apparently solitary undertaking. The calling to mind of these displaced Iraqis and Embrace the Middle East's Iraqi Christian partners, and the involuntary address of God and his (apparently unhelpful) angels on the A92, both support and expand the claim of Ingold and Vergunst that 'all walking is social'.<sup>1</sup> This article more or less takes this claim as read and, thinking with John Milbank's additional claim that the Christian *ecclesia* is the historical antecedent of the society concept, asks whether it is equally true to claim that Christian pilgrimage is necessarily *ecclesiological*, whatever else it may be.<sup>2</sup>

I am not here developing anything like a 'theory of pilgrimage' based on the *ecclesia*. I am not a pilgrimage expert but a pilgrim, and these are personal reflections albeit anthropologically as well as theologically informed. I should also disclose my own background in the Reformed tradition which, for most of its history, has excluded pilgrimage, among other Christian disciplines: no doubt this influences my experience and this analysis of it. At least, this article shows simply that thinking of pilgrimage ecclesiologically resolves certain dilemmas of authenticity that arose for me

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Ingold and Jo L. Vergunst, *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot* (London: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (London: Blackwell, 1990).

as a pilgrim last year and asks whether this is a useful framing for other Christian pilgrims.



*The fourteen pilgrimage routes as run, including unplanned breaks between Brechin and Arbroath, and Lindisfarne and Warkworth.*

### ***Running home 2019***

It all began on a recreational run around my home village of Inch in spring 2018. As I came over the Hill of Knockenbaird from the north — overlooking Inch and seeing Bennachie and Dunnydeer hillfort glowing in spring light — I experienced what we call the ‘runner’s high’. Chemically, this is the euphoria from a sudden release of serotonin that distance runners, all too occasionally, enjoy. On this occasion, the ‘high’ was above all a feeling of freedom. What a gift to be free, physically, to run long distances; what a gift to be free, politically, to traverse a landscape unmolested by occupation troops or hostile enemies, unimpeded by walls, checkpoints and minefields.

My mind ran ahead, to those I’ve met who lack this freedom. I thought of Sania, a wee three-year old girl from Syria whom our partners helped in Beirut. She lost her father, her brother and her home in Aleppo before she’d had a chance to enjoy her childhood. She had to make a journey with her



mother away from mortal danger into serious risk, physical agony — due to a skin condition that causes blistering when exposed to sunlight — and crippling poverty. I wondered, as I finished my run that day, whether I could use the freedom I have to run, and run far while feeling deeply ‘at home’, for the sake of those whose environments are shot through with peril, for whom home is an insecure, contested place, and for whom ‘running’ is associated with flight, with loss and despair.

We eventually settled on the idea of supporting, through these pilgrimages, our then-nascent first project in Iraq. During years of occupation by, and then war with, Daesh, the Islamic State Group, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis fled or were evicted from their homes in the north of the country. This doubled the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had first sought refuge from fighting during and after the 2003 US-led invasions.<sup>3</sup> In these historic heartlands for several confessional minorities, including ancient Syriac Christian communities, this wave of displacement poses an existential threat — a threat in turn to the deeply-rooted pluralism of Mesopotamia. In half a century, Iraqis have endured dictatorship, bloody war with Iran, crippling sanctions, invasions, civil war, and then the inhuman and grotesque tyranny of Daesh. Unsurprisingly, many have sought to flee.

In the wake of this devastation, however, there are green shoots: people have begun to return to their hometowns. Indeed, a few months before my run in Insch, the number of returnees overtook the number of IDPs. Admittedly, what they have been returning to will have disheartened even the most optimistic: shattered infrastructure, contaminated agricultural land, a lack of opportunities, and a weary and mistrustful population. Still, Embrace the Middle East found a trusted partner in the north, the Christian Aid Programme Nohadra Iraq (CAPNI), which works with returnees who may have lost livelihoods or businesses, or simply lost years in which they would have been learning and developing employable skills. Their work ranges from educating and enskilling young people and women, to providing microloans for entrepreneurs; from peacebuilding workshops between representatives of the various communities, to irrigation system repair. They also provide relief to Syrian refugees who continue to this day to arrive in their region.

The plan crystalized as fourteen ultramarathon-length pilgrimages, run across Scotland and the north of England, coinciding with the feast days of saints associated with each of the routes. The plan was to run 1725 miles, the crow-flies distance between the capital cities of the countries in which

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<sup>3</sup> IOM Iraq, [\*Displacement Tracking Matrix\* \(2018\)](#).

we work: from Baghdad to Damascus to Beirut to Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to Cairo and back to Baghdad.

The shortest of these was the first, a one-day, 47-mile route from Dunfermline Abbey, where we launched the project, to the shrine of St Mungo at Glasgow Cathedral. Unlike most of the routes, some of which recalled less well-remembered saints, this ended at a large service involving church and civic leaders. In contrast, the longest, a seven-day, 350-mile run from Carlisle to Edinburgh via Whithorn and Glasgow, ended with a quiet service of prayer with my family at St Cuthbert's Parish Church in Princes' Gardens.

The routes contrasted in landscape, weather (of course, being mostly in Scotland), and in countless experiential ways, not least my mental and physical resilience. But throughout, I was reliant on the support of others for solidarity and sustenance and motivated by the knowledge that my running journeys might help some whose journeys were not choices but ordeals of tragic loss.

### ***In search of 'authentic' pilgrimage***

One of the less expected challenges I faced, alongside the physical and other mental challenges, was the haunting, insistent question of whether my ultramarathons were authentic enough to be called 'pilgrimages'. This may sound like a quintessentially postmodern struggle, but I recalled the ways in which pilgrimage is *authenticated* in the Camino de Santiago. Despite the acknowledgement that people who undertake the Camino today are much less likely to be doing so in response to an instruction from a confessor or even as part of the traditional Roman Catholic moral and symbolic world in which the pilgrimage to the shrine of St James emerged, it still matters to pilgrims in my own experience that they have accumulated an imagined 'minimum' of pilgrim stamps showing their passage *along* the way, not merely their arrival at Santiago. It matters too to the guardians of that original authorizing discourse, embodied by the pilgrim officers at Santiago: when you arrive at the cathedral, you have to show your *credencial*, in which your stamps are kept, and you have to pledge that you did the pilgrimage for religious or spiritual reasons, in order to receive your Compostela certificate. This document reads:

The Chapter of this Holy Apostolic Metropolitan Cathedral of St James, custodian of the seal of St James' Altar, to all faithful and pilgrims who come from everywhere, all over the world as an act of devotion, under vow or promise to the Apostle's Tomb, our Patron and Protector of Spain, witnesses in the sight of all who read this document, that [name] has visited devoutly this

Sacred Church for religious reasons (*pietatis causa*). Witness whereof I hand this document over to him, authenticated by the seal of this Sacred Church.

Not being myself Roman Catholic, I nevertheless discern in the *credencial*-Compostela system a clue to the experience of authenticity in Christian pilgrimage even, as in Running Home, when some of the routes are created by the individual pilgrim and some of the saints' biographies are mostly lost in fanciful legend. Specifically, I'm asking whether the Church might be the grounds of the authentic Christian experience of pilgrimage, even where the ecclesiologies behind these discourses may differ widely?



*St Drostan pilgrimage near Glenfiddich*

### ***Pilgrimage as ecclesiological: Walking as social***

Before elaborating this proposition, let me begin by putting a minimum of flesh on the bones of the claim that walking is social. Perhaps this seems obvious to the reader and yet we — in scholarly and everyday discourse alike — often speak as if walking could be a flight from the social. On the one hand we talk about solitary recreational walking as an escape to 'nature', as a chance to enjoy time with ourselves, time away from society. Meanwhile, social scientists have, until recently, paid scant regard to the ways in which walking expresses and produces social and cultural realities.

University of Aberdeen scholars Tim Ingold and Jo Vergunst have this latter lacuna in mind with their 2009 edited volume *Ways of Walking*. Not

only, as Marcel Mauss long ago argued, is the bodily discipline and practice of walking shaped decisively by a person's 'education' in walking, received especially as a child, but every walk picks up where someone else left off, usually tracing the same way as others in the past, and conveying the body through environments already decisively inscribed by the 'lifeways' of countless other beings.<sup>4</sup>

My Running Home pilgrimages brought home to me just how densely 'populated' even the apparent wildernesses of Scotland are: the division of land and management of movement; the organization of flora and fauna; and the paths themselves, with all their echoes of past development, conflict, and communication.

Not least, in the 'Great Wilderness' east of Poolewe, my pilgrimage for St Maelrubha was reduced to a slow walk as I ascended the Clach na Frithealaidh. Here I was about a kilometre from the most remote part of the British mainland to the west of Loch Beinn Dearg. And yet, this path is less than 9km from the nearest road to the south-east — perhaps more relevant, the path itself is well-used, and the heather had recently been burned back, the most obvious sign of ongoing estate management.



*Detail from OS Map route of St Maelrubha 1 pilgrimage*

St Maelrubha would have of course encountered something a lot less domesticated had he come this way, and this is not to say that such landscapes are benign — I would have had difficulty myself in inclement conditions that would have made Strath na Sealga from Shenavall impassible. But no matter what a physical challenge this landscape may yet present, or what dangers may persist, the point is to highlight the impossibility of pursuing pristine 'nature'. For all its beauty, it is a landscape decisively shaped by the interaction of humans and animals with other organisms over

<sup>4</sup> Ingold and Vergunst, *Ways of Walking*, pp. 1–3.

centuries. Neither I, as a runner clad in technical gear practising skills developed since I was taught to walk as an infant, nor the landscape, could for a second allow me to think I was removed from the social, notwithstanding my solitude.

This simple reflection helps us then to think a little about the relationship of somewhat individually expressed Christian practices such as pilgrimage in the context of what we inherit and pass on within the Church. John Milbank shows how limited the attempts of social scientists to locate 'the religious' have usually been *within* the social 'whole',<sup>5</sup> despite the lived experienced of Christians and others outside of secular modernity, for whom the whole may take as its key referent a non-secular phenomenon. The Church is one such, not in any given institutional expression, necessarily, but as the site of redemption history for all things. Moreover, the idea of a universal human 'whole' which encompasses other institutions does not begin with nineteenth century sociology but with the New Testament Body of Christ, within which all other allegiances are relativized (though not erased). In Christian thought, the story of humanity, and its redemption, has been located 'within' the story of the Church as Christ's Body, however that has been imagined, and in a sense, other human institutions can be imagined to interact 'within' it. Modernity's social has placed a novel 'religious' category of institution alongside other institutions within a secularized whole called society.

Whether or not we accept this analysis, it seems to me that a phenomenology of my pilgrimage experiences bears out the idea that these journeys are not only irrevocably social, in the sense that they are not solitary but shaped by countless relations, but that they are ecclesiological, in that these relations are refracted through an experience of the Body of Christ, in relation to other invisible others such as God, the saints, and angels.

### ***Dilemmas of authenticity***

With this in mind I turn to address three questions that arose in the process of Running Home, especially questions that prompted me to reflect on the authenticity of my pilgrim experience. I will take these in turn.

*Does pilgrimage-for-something-else invalidate it?* The question of the relationship between my pilgrim journeys and refugee journeys in Iraq was never straightforward in my mind. On the one hand, there seemed to be at least an analogy between 'voluntary displacement', identified by scholars

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<sup>5</sup> John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (London: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 101–41.



as at the heart of pilgrimage,<sup>6</sup> and involuntary, forced displacement. And yet, as we have seen, it is impossible to lose sight of their radical difference from one another: indeed, there seems to be a danger of insulting the violent experience of refugees by straining this analogy to the point of vulgar comparison.



*Refugee camp, northern Iraq*

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<sup>6</sup> *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, ed. by S. Coleman and J. Eade (London: Routledge, 2004).



*Fundraising on the St Columba pilgrimage, near Cleish, Fife*

I was somewhat reassured on this point by Father Emsley Nimmo, with whom I spoke before setting off on Running Home. His take was that running for refugees was singularly appropriate due to a shared sense of dependence upon others and some measure of vulnerability. Not, for sure, of the same kind or to the same extent, but I began to see experiences such as my A92 despair — for it was real despair, justified or not — as similar to fasting which gives one a sense of embodied solidarity with hungry people, without giving one the same experience.

However, more surprisingly, I was sometimes burdened by the question of whether instrumentalizing pilgrimage *for* an agenda beyond itself — however worthy that agenda might be — could be to render it something other than a ‘real’ pilgrimage. This may seem odd: historically, surely, pilgrimages were often means to other ends. Certainly, the idea that pilgrimage might exist as some ideal typical pure form seems hard to sustain. On the other hand, it does seem important to ask how undertaking a pilgrimage differs from any other charity endurance challenge, especially as running is a key feature of it. If pilgrimage becomes just a fundraising ‘hook’, then I would argue it cannot really be pilgrimage, even before a clear definition of what pilgrimage may be. Pilgrimage must at least be more than simply a word or even a mere route.

The ecclesiological frame we have begun to set up provided me with a horizon in which Running Home remained pilgrimage, not *despite* a tolerable instrumentalization of the word but because of the material and symbolic connection with others, partly expressed through fundraising. Fundraising

adding value to the pilgrim endeavour rather than detracting from it. An individual's Christian pilgrimage is not only not for itself, begun at one's door and ended at the destination shrine, but it is explicitly conjoined with the foregoing and future journeys of others. It is an act of stewardship, not only devotion, or rather it can be an act of devotion through stewardship practised with, within and, in some sense, *for* the Body of Christ. This is especially obvious on a well-established pilgrim route such as the Camino de Santiago, with its large and ancient pilgrim infrastructure, along which one feels especially conscious of joining one's journey to those that went before and leaving the way to other pilgrims that come after. Still, this vivid expression of the ecclesia, sustained by the sheer volume of pilgrim traffic, is simply an obvious example of something that is real even where it is less obvious. I didn't have a network of pilgrim hostels and inns serving 'Pilgrim Menus' during Running Home, but I was still greatly dependent upon the hospitality of Embrace volunteers, churches, and other supporters and had a palpable sense of running *with* them as well as *for* those in Iraq. Put another way, the Christian pilgrim makes their journey on behalf and as part of the whole household of God, and so raising funds for one part of this household begins to look like quite a natural expression of an ecclesiological fact, rather than an instrumentalization of a Christian discipline for a *separate* cause. Moreover, if we take seriously the prophetic refrain in scripture (e.g. Isaiah 58) in which mission and worship are collapsed together, the devotion of pilgrimage can surely be oriented towards mission, just as mission is itself an act of devotion.

However, it is important that the Iraqi beneficiaries of Running Home were kept in view not as recipients of charity or aid but as brothers and sisters in the Church and partners in the mission of God. My own personal transformation as a pilgrim in pursuit of God through engagement with the lives of ancient saints, just as much as any fundraising or activity on behalf of Embrace the Middle East, become within this frame part of the same building-up of the Body of Christ.

To illustrate this, I recall one particularly painful episode in which all of these elements were present. My first multi-day pilgrimage was route three of Running Home, commemorating the feast of St Cuthbert. I planned to run the St Cuthbert's Way on day one, rest overnight on Lindisfarne, take two days on the St Oswald Way to Heavenfield, before a shorter fourth day of running from Heavenfield to Durham Cathedral. The Community of Aidan and Hilda had invited me to stay at their retreat centre, the Open Gate on Lindisfarne, so I knew I had to get to the tidal causeway by 10pm if I was to get across in time. Unfortunately, I took a wrong turn after about 15km, and ran along the wrong side of the river for some time before realizing my error. Thereafter I was chasing my tail and, inexperienced as I was at this time,



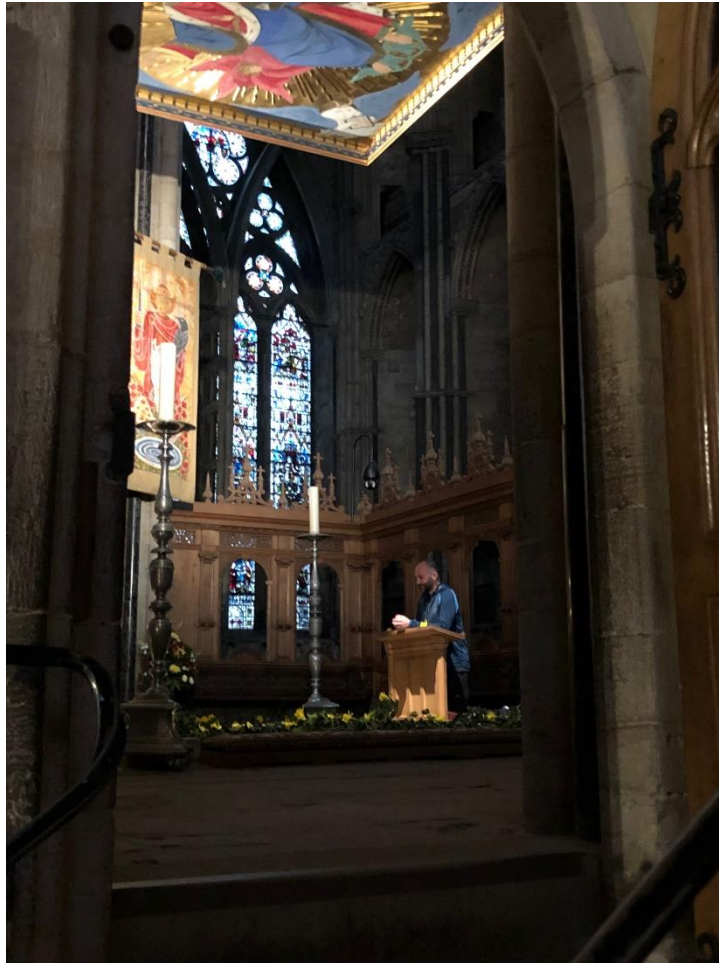
made the critical error of trying to 'catch up'. This initiated a series of mishaps: forgetting a battery pack for my phone at the next checkpoint, being incommunicado and therefore unable to find my support vehicle at the next checkpoint, running on to the next while dehydrating, and arriving in Wooler just after dark having not seen my crew for 40km. This period of dehydration led to me waking up sick the next morning, and unable to fulfil my target for day two — you can see the gap in the line along the Northumbria coast on my routes map.

I had signed up to deliver a talk in Alnwick that evening however so I called our volunteers nearby who kindly let me sleep in their house for a few hours while I recovered some electrolyte balance. I remember lying in their spare room reflecting on the 'failure' of the day and thinking, 'Actually, *this* is who I am. And *this* is the pilgrim experience, not bounding triumphally over the hills.' As I received the support of volunteers, I experienced myself more truly as a small part of the Body of Christ, not as some virtuoso doing something exciting and challenging but as a weak part being nourished, even as I supported another part of the Church through my fundraising. As I learned this important lesson about rushing, my personal transformation was part of one single experience of healing and growth that included God's household in Northumbria as well as in Dohuk.

Here again we see a striking difference compared with the one-way relationship of a more typical fundraising endurance challenge.



*St Drostan pilgrimage, Old Deer.*



*St Cuthbert pilgrimage, Durham Cathedral*

*Are medieval saints ‘real’ companions on pilgrimage?* The role of memory is a favourite theme of anthropologists, not least scholars of pilgrimage. While the literature is large, the most relevant point for this article is that memory — what is recalled, enacted and participated in, *and* what is forgotten — is shaped decisively by specific social contexts, authorizing discourses and, for want of a better word, ‘worldviews’. This is even the case within Christianity, with the role of memory in pilgrimage for Swedish Protestants in Jerusalem differing markedly from Anglo-Catholic ritual memory at Walsingham.<sup>7</sup>

I toyed, even while running, of writing up my pilgrimages as a series of ‘runs with the saints’, as I found myself compelled by their stories and legacies, and by the rather large gaps in their stories. On a few of the routes, especially those of St Mungo, St Cuthbert and St Ninian — I had a powerful

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<sup>7</sup> Simon Coleman, ‘From England’s Nazareth to Sweden’s Jerusalem: Movement, (Virtual) Landscapes and Pilgrimage’, in *Reframing Pilgrimage*, ed. by Simon Coleman and John Eade (London: Routledge, 2019).

sense of their ‘presence’ traced in the landscape and animated by my imagination. For Mungo and Cuthbert, this was certainly informed by the sediments of their personalities and characters that are preserved in the *vitae*, by history more or less, as well as by the physical proximity to their remains experienced by arriving at their tombs. But, at the same time as relishing that literary-imaginative exercise, I began to wonder if this would be dissonant with the desire to attend as far as possible to the historical personalities of the saints, rather than creating characters that suit my purposes. For the even more shadowy Ninian, I can’t be sure that the object of felt affinity was any more than a projection of my own imagination. Would it not be precisely the opposite of honouring the saints to recreate them in my own image?

I was therefore somewhat ‘torn’. On the one hand I engaged in a certain amount of imaginative contemplation, dialoguing with these saints informally and seeking to attend to their imagined ‘responses’ to my many questions and the many decisions (including many errors) I made from day to day. And yet I felt compelled, in getting to ‘know’ some of these saints, to acknowledge their radical otherness from me, to hold my figments and confections at arm’s length, exposed to the unforgiving winds of historical and cultural distance, before attempting to salvage what is left. There were two written inspirations for this intentional avoidance of familiarity. The first was the famous injunction of Emanuel Levinas to acknowledge the difference expressed in the face of the other, upon which he builds his ethics, and which informed my own practice as an ethnographer.<sup>8</sup> I felt that truly *real-izing* the saints entailed the difficult step of acknowledging them as radically other. The second was, earlier this year, reading Laura Fabrycky’s *Keys to Bonhoeffer Haus*, in which she wrestles with the same temptation to co-opt Bonhoeffer, to conform him to her own ideal, rather than submitting the known fiction to the less-known truth.<sup>9</sup>

For Fabrycky, careful, self-critical, and actively sympathetic attentiveness to the historical detail of Bonhoeffer’s life and time, the patterns of his actual behaviour (and their gaps) and writing, was a safeguard against creating a domesticated Bonhoeffer. In the well-preserved built environment of the Bonhoeffer Haus in Berlin, she had a clear advantage over anyone wanting truly to honour the far more remote figures of early medieval history in these islands. However, just as for Fabrycky who

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<sup>8</sup> See especially, Emanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Laura Fabrycky, *Keys to Bonhoeffer Haus: Exploring the world and wisdom of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2020).

volunteered in the house in which Bonhoeffer lived, worked, and hosted others, place is part of otherness that *is* salvageable.

We cannot of course reconstruct people from places but, in my attempts to engage 'in truth' with the ancient saints of these islands, I was in fact grateful for the slowness of geological time knowing that, for all the dynamism of the landscapes through which I ran, ancient eyes did, for instance, look out of St Ninian's cave south of Whithorn towards the Isle of Man, and seek to make sense of their *situation* with reference to the Way of Christ. I stood there too, with trepidation, on painful feet having run a little under three days from Carlisle, knowing I had four days yet to run on what felt like an empty tank. We do not know much of Ninian, indeed we do not know if Ninian was a figure called Ninian! We know a little about the political and social dynamics of the pre-Anglian Britons, including the southern Picts in Damnonia and their relations with the kingdoms of Dál Riata, Gododdin, Bernicia, and Rheged.

But I felt that I could legitimately imagine that someone's eyes gazed out to sea here: at some point turning to the north, prayerfully ploughing a trail for those who adopted the Way of Christ. We know that someone who stood here was among the first followers of that Middle Eastern rabbi to establish a monastery in Scotland, and we can reasonably imagine their trepidation when they stood in this spot. And then, perhaps, we must let go, acknowledging that, while the raw emotion of fear may be the least 'cultural' and most intrinsic of human feelings, I simply cannot know even the form of this person's trepidation.

But in the Church, that mysterious unknown one becomes my forebear, my ancestor in the household of God. In the Church, that dialogue becomes prayer, and following the Ignatian example, imaginative contemplation does not flounder at its failure to exhumate historical fact, but uses the dimly discerned historical reality as a reference point in creating a channel through time by which God might speak to and through us. In the same way that we might ask an Apostle, as we place ourselves imaginatively into the Gospel scene, how they felt when such and such an event occurred, and through that we come to understand our *own* responses to analogous scenarios, so here the ecclesiological link to Mungo, Cuthbert, Ninian, Margaret and all the rest, makes possible imaginative contemplation based on somewhat confected reconstructions, *and* at the same time, a deferring of judgment as to what may be of the saint and what may be of one's own imagination. Both my imaginative pursuit of God's word through contemplating the human possibilities of the past, and the mostly lost historical facts, are vehicles of the Spirit at work in the Church. Notwithstanding the extreme difference between Christian expressions, sentiments, aesthetics, doctrines and presuppositions about power that a fifth-century monk or apostle may have

had compared with me, the Church becomes the place in which our journeys are connected. The identity of St Ninian may mostly elude me, but the contemplation of what we share and what we do not share, both being held together in the identity of Christ, enables a humble acknowledgement of participation in the same endeavour, and thus a sense of solidarity that is not borne of domesticating a mysterious saint for my own purposes.



*St Magnus pilgrimage, Egilsay (Tom O'Brien/The Orcadian)*

*Can you run a pilgrimage?* Authors have long extolled the benefits of walking for thinking and perceiving. The question of whether *running* these pilgrimages could yield the same benefits is one that, compared with the first two dilemmas, caused me no great burden, but about which I was nevertheless curious. Arguably, a key part of pilgrimage is a certain commitment to *attend*, and attentiveness is well-attested in the literature on walking. In comparison, then, is the runner *inattentive*?

Firstly, I should acknowledge that my 'running' was not as different from walking as the reader might suppose! If my fastest marathon race pace hitherto is a little slower than four minutes per kilometre, Running Home paces rarely exceeded 5:30 per kilometre, and I learned eventually that a 100-kilometre day of running would be less agony, and in fact no slower, if I walked 500 metres of every two kilometres from the start of my journey. Maintaining a pace of eight-minute kilometres overall was more common than anything much faster, and adding breaks into this, my overall start-to-finish pace was pretty much walking pace. Of course, a walker would be adding these breaks into a slower base pace, so completing in excess of 100 kilometres in a day of walking would be very challenging indeed. Still, I want



to dispel the image of me sprinting from dawn until midnight — ‘plodding’ is the word that comes to mind.

Nevertheless, experientially, I was not walking. The body responds differently when running, even at this modest pace, from a walking body, being much more susceptible in my experience to sudden changes like chills, dehydration, hunger, and blood-sugar dips. Moreover, I do *not* think I was attentive in the same way or *at the same scale* as I would have been were I walking. Physiologically and perceptually running is different from walking. Nevertheless, it is not the case that I was necessarily *inattentive* when I ran. The calamitous episode I described from my St Cuthbert pilgrimage *was* a day of inattentiveness, to landscape and the body’s quiet cues, but this was because of rushing, not because of running. In contrast, I remember the middle two days of my St Columba pilgrimage from Inchcolm Abbey, the ‘Iona of the East’, to Iona Abbey, and having a sense of the great transition of the landscape as a whole, from the plains south and west of Perth, through a crescendoing highland landscape around Loch Tay and Loch Lyon, and through the west Highlands to Loch Etive.

Running, even at my modest (slow!) long-distance pace, I was taken by the sense of this landscape as an organism, the tissue of mud, rock and pasture held together by the sinews of path, disused railways, and road, and sustained by arteries and capillaries of water above and below ground. The more I ran through it — along its roads and forest trails, through its dark tunnels and sunlit fields, over its hills and beside its lochs the more I felt it shaping me, as if it was the one doing the moving. I bore the salt of the sea on my skin, black mud through which I’d squelched hours ago, water from forded rivers, and scratches and bites from smaller lives growing in, and being nourished by, the same landscape.

This was a kind of ‘emplacement’, a powerfully-felt sense of my dependence upon my environment and of belonging to it. It was significant that I was planting my feet on the soil itself, my attention telescoping from the immediate and minute to the overall and vast, while being constantly called back to the body-in-motion. This scale of attentiveness, to a larger landscape, is perhaps a trade off with the details one perceives when walking, but it is not inattentiveness.

One feature of this pilgrimage, that I think is related to the attentiveness that characterized it, was how I noticed other people and found their fleeting presence on the same path to be a source of joy. It is the kind of reaction I would rarely if ever have while recreational running or hill-walking but did remind me of my response to others on the Camino de Santiago. Towards the end of the second day, as I ran away from Loch Tay along River Lochay, a woman came out of her home into a rainstorm to give me snacks (and to tell me I looked ‘wobbly on my feet’). My joy at that

gesture, even though I was heavily laden with snacks, was itself a kind of supernatural nourishment at that moment. Even the gardener who wished me a 'pleasant walk' when I thought I was running nevertheless put a smile on my face.

For me, these encounters evoked the opening of Hebrews 12, which links the 'great crowd of witnesses' to the practice of patient endurance: 'run with patience', as the KJV has it. Running with patience, then, seems to me to be a key to running as part of, with, and within the Church of Christ, which entails true attentiveness to others and to the still small voices discerned on the road. Running with patience is perhaps the only way a pilgrim can endure, as my St Cuthbert mishap showed me, a patience expressed more in attentiveness than in running more slowly in absolute terms (though it frequently entails just that). Patience, conscious of the great cloud of witnesses, involves a de-centering of the individual endeavour, 'one's own' endeavour, in favour of the knowledge that the course set before us is part of something much bigger. I am on the road with — truly with — countless others, whether *hospitaleros* on the Camino de Santiago, supporters of Embrace accommodating me during Running Home when on my last legs, people unable to run but able to encourage me, and by others affected by and affecting my journey, separated as they are by time and space. The responsibility to endure is not then about simply finishing a route and moving on but crossing the notional finish 'line' more conscious of the relationships that make the endeavour effective and meaningful within the household of God.





*Makeshift wall in Hebron dividing Palestinians from Israeli settlers*

### **Conclusion**

At Embrace the Middle East, in normal years at least, we take pilgrims out to the lands of the Bible. Occasionally, though fortunately not often, we receive negative comments from people who did not expect to encounter 'politics'. We try to explain that such an expectation is rather unrealistic in the context of a land so contested, divided, and subject to so many powerful forces: 'politics' is at work wherever there are unjust power relations.

However, we don't seek to show people 'politics', we seek only to show them real people attempting to live fruitfully on their land, to introduce them to their kin, and to give them a sense of the truth of the challenging existences in that place. This encounter occurs in powerful proximity to the places that shaped the life of the Messiah, the one whom these places bequeathed to us. In particular we seek to show them that their Christian kin are like their older siblings, the inheritors of the oldest Christian communities, and are not merely passive victims of oppression who demand our charity, but, just as in northern Iraq, are active agents of change, committed to their homelands and full of courage in their witness to Christ's compassion.

There is a danger that, in the context of the pilgrimage revival, expectations are shaped more by late capitalism than by this ecclesiological commitment. This is especially evident in a certain kind of Protestant Holy

Land pilgrimage, described both by Coleman<sup>10</sup> and Feldman.<sup>11</sup> I have written above of the desire to, in a sense, 'consume' saints that are really the product of my spiritual expectations, not of historical evidence. In the context of pilgrimages where oppressive power relations abound, this solipsism is arguably dangerous, and these imaginative effects easily co-opted.

I believe that the lessons from Running Home can help a pilgrim today to navigate these temptations. On the one hand, Running Home was the most embodied, immediate, unselfconscious undertaking in which just putting one foot in front of the other was 'the thing'; on the other it is metaphor, an allusion to the bigger thing. Perhaps like all pilgrimages it serves its enduring function as an analogy of life in its fullness but the points at which the analogy collapsed into the truer journey that we're all on were when I was at my limit and others stepped in to bear my pain with me. If the running wasn't the point, the relationships certainly were: the new links with churches, inspired by the stories of refugees turning their faces toward home; the personal friendships fired in kilns of shared pain, wonder and companionship; and my new relationship with our partner in Iraq (CAPNI) through whom we now see Running Home bearing fruit.

Beyond that, we can also pursue a cautious communion with those individuals whose shadows we encounter in legend, history and landscape, while resting securely in the knowledge of the ecclesial whole in which we share a story with them. With attentiveness to the life of the Church through time and space: the complex and contradictory motivations of a pilgrimage can be rendered harmonious and purposeful; figures lost in history among the millions of unknown faithful can be honoured by the purposeful response of the attentive pilgrim-as-kin, and the slow, painstaking work of change can commence, not as a rushed response to the impulse of righteous anger, but in response to the felt presence of a cloud of witnesses, the Church, through which all things are being made new. *You can read Mark Calder's blogs from Running Home and support Embrace the Middle East's work in Iraq by visiting [www.runninghome2019.co.uk](http://www.runninghome2019.co.uk).*

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<sup>10</sup> Coleman, 'From England's Nazareth'.

<sup>11</sup> J. Feldman, 'Tour Guides as Cultural Mediators: Performance and Positioning', in *Ethnologia Europea*, 48.20 (2019), 5–13.

# Liturgy: Some Informal Reflections by an Episcopal Practitioner

GREGOR DUNCAN

Retired Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway

‘It is a natural instinct to be reticent about something one holds precious. Publicity cheapens [...] In the publication of everything we hold sacred, there has been a loss, not only for ourselves, but perhaps also for non-Christians, but the loss is irreparable. There is no way in which secrecy can be re-established.’<sup>1</sup> The liturgy and worship of the church is precious to believers, and sacred, whatever form it takes, so that there is a proper reserve and care to be exercised when talking about it. Such care, sadly, is not always exercised for the simple reason that liturgy generates enormous passion in a liturgically minded church like the Scottish Episcopal Church. Nevertheless, though one may not like this or that, one should not proclaim and absolutize likes or dislikes at the expense of *reticence about something one holds* — or ought to hold — *precious*.

A bishop, who has been a parish priest, is no longer largely in control of the liturgies over which he or she presides, unless they be specifically episcopal in nature, and this not least in the choice of hymns. But in this ministry the preciousness of the liturgy and worship of the church requires of a bishop an acceptance more than grudging of things that may be personally less than ideal, as does respect and love for the worshippers themselves, whatever their tradition. It is certainly important for one called to preside over the worship of a diocese to keep thinking about the experience of doing just that. This article seeks to outline what one recently retired bishop thinks in relation to liturgy and worship. It will therefore show both his strengths and his limitations, and it may not at all cover what readers are usually thinking about these things. Topics to be covered are, in a sort of order, Centrality, Priest and People together, Not just for ourselves, Traditional or Modern Language, Styles of celebration, Diversity and experiment, Personal tastes.

## ***Centrality***

A fascinating booklet about the liturgies produced by Leicester Cathedral for the ceremonies surrounding the reinterment of the remains of King Richard III reminds us of the centrality of liturgy. It contains this very simple

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Yarnold, quoted by D. Jasper, *Literature and Theology as a Grammar of Assent* (Farnham, 2016), pp. 227–28.

statement in the chapter written by the Precentor of the cathedral: ‘offering worship is the prime *raison d’être* of any church.’<sup>2</sup> Now, it is often said that the church lives for and by ‘mission’; but mission, it may be argued, makes no sense unless it is inspired by an encounter with the living God in worship. What makes the church distinctive is its nature as a worshipping community, gathering around the celebration of Word and Sacrament, knowing in its midst these life-giving divine mysteries. If it is not that, it is nothing more than another kind of club — and maybe not a particularly interesting or attractive club at that. The church lives by its liturgy and worship, and God’s life courses in it through its liturgy and worship. It is frighteningly easy to lose sight of this core identity in these days of charity numbers, OSCR, charity trusteeship, charity law etc. The church, seen and experienced with liturgy at its very heart, is surely not primarily to be understood as a charity defined by the law of the land, but rather as a society defined by its origin in and dependence upon the love of God in Jesus Christ for all people as celebrated and made real in its liturgy.

If that is anywhere near the truth, it follows that the most important thing about the church is what is bound to seem most strange to the surrounding culture, not just because it involves ritual of one kind or another, or may involve some people dressing up in rather odd clothes — and even the most informal ways of doing liturgy have ritual, form and structure — but because to offer worship is to assert that we human beings are not self-determining, not autonomous forgers of our own destinies, but rather creatures dependent for our fulfilment on a life-long journey towards and, even more shocking in a way, *into*, a Person, a Divine Person, indeed three Divine Persons. Liturgy expresses and enacts that journey of creaturely dependence at the heart of the church’s common life and indeed at the heart of the world’s life. It is therefore bound to come across as a somewhat strange, maybe even esoteric activity. So, there is a quite understandable desire, especially in relation to mission, to make it all more accessible, more immediately understandable to people who are new to it. For this reason, liturgy booklets may have a written commentary as the service unfolds or some clergy may give, as it were, stage directions during the service (‘kneel’, ‘sit’, ‘stand as you are able’, ‘now we do this...’ etc.). But it is worth wondering whether what really engages people, what makes them wonder and think, is a living sense that here they are finding — without fully grasping or

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<sup>2</sup> J. Arens, A. Buckle, G. Campbell and T. Stratford, *The Richard III Reinternment Liturgies: An account of the Planning and Execution of the Ceremonies and Liturgical Reburial of the Bones of King Richard III in Leicester Cathedral in Passion Week 2015*, Joint Liturgical Studies 81 (Norwich, 2016), p. 58.

understanding it — something beautiful by which people are being taken up, being taken beyond their immediate concerns, being drawn into a greater, a transcendent reality which is manifestly about love and life. In other words, atmosphere may be more important than explanation, something like that.

### ***Priest and people together***

In Anglican tradition, as I understand it, a priest may not celebrate the Eucharist without a communicant present. This apparently simple rule specifically related to the liturgy of the Eucharist — which of course is not all that is meant by liturgy — enables us to ponder a fundamental characteristic of liturgy. Liturgy is not something the ordained organize and lead for the people to come along to and enjoy or not enjoy. It is something the ordained and also authorized lay ministers of various kinds are called to *preside* over in such a way as to allow all to be drawn into the mystery of worship as it unfolds in a sacred drama. Presiding is an art which involves far more than saying the words and the prayers you are given by the church to say, vital as that is. It is about having an overall vision of the liturgy, including its music, allowing it to unfold at a proper pace, letting it live; some of that at least is worked out in posture, movement, positioning and so on: it is not just ‘taking the service’.

As Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, I had the enormous privilege of attending and participating in sessions of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Paisley’s Synod, including sharing in lay-led discussion groups. Much was familiar, not least how to be church, to survive as church and do more than survive as church, in our culture. In many ways my fundamental Catholicism was reinforced by feeling pretty much at home, but in other ways so was my fundamental Anglicanism. For example, in one of the discussion groups a laywoman spoke of the great need for more priests, because priests ‘confect’ the Mass, ‘confect’ the Eucharist. I heard myself, hardly without thinking, countering, no, people and priest *together* celebrate the Eucharist. Liturgy is something we offer together, each playing their own proper part. The same might, indeed should, be said of Daily Prayer: it is best celebrated not by the priest ‘saying the office’ on his or her own, though in reality this is often the case, but by priest and people together — it is, after all, like all liturgy, the common prayer of the church, prayer together, that is, *The Company of Voices*. When in our services, members of the congregation offer the readings, the intercessions, help to administer Holy Communion, they are not helping the priest out, or taking the place of the priest — they are expressing the corporateness, the togetherness of the whole celebration of the people of God.

***Not just for ourselves***

The early Christians were determined to pray for the Emperor and the powers that be at their worship during their liturgy. Christian writers who sought to defend the faith against its pagan despisers constantly pressed home this practice of the church and argued that this was for the common good, for the well-being and health of the Empire, an Empire they believed that under Augustus at any rate had created the ideal conditions in the providence of God for the spread of the Gospel and the growth of the church.<sup>3</sup> Tertullian, a North African theologian writing in the early third century, typically says ‘we are ever making intercession for all the emperors. We pray for them long life, a secure rule, a safe home, brave armies, a faithful senate, an honest people, a quiet world — and everything for which a man and a Caesar can pray.’<sup>4</sup> And, as one scholar observes, ‘the prayer *Pro Salute Imperatorum* is among the oldest texts of the liturgy’.<sup>5</sup> Of course, the Emperor was hardly persuaded by this, and until Constantine in the early fourth century, the church had to endure periods of often quite severe persecution because while it regarded the Roman state as divinely sanctioned for the good of the world, it certainly did not regard its emperor as God or as a god.

But the point to be drawn from this little bit of history is that we still do the same today at the liturgy: we pray for the powers that be. This is deeply embedded in our tradition of worship. In other words, we offer the liturgy, we offer our worship not only because it is central to our life as Christians and indeed constitutes that life, but also on behalf of the world. We must believe that if we did not do this the world would be a far darker place than it is or may be. It is also worth being aware that the idea of *not just for ourselves* is implied by the very word ‘liturgy’. Its roots are in a Greek word which means a public work of some kind, not only a religious one. So, if you gave a library to your town, or had a road built or endowed a school or academy that was a ‘liturgy’, a good work done on behalf of others, an offering for the common good. That is pretty fundamental to the celebration of any liturgy today. In the Nicene Creed, we confess that Jesus came for us *men* and for our salvation, that is to say, for the whole human race, not just for we who believe. The liturgy is not just for believers, though it is celebrated by them, but for the whole world and for all peoples.

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<sup>3</sup> As, for example, Melito of Sardis, c. 175 translated in *A New Eusebius*, edited by J. Stevenson, 2nd edn, rev. by W. H. C. Frend (London, 1987), pp. 65–66.

<sup>4</sup> *Apology* 30.4, translated in *A New Eusebius*, p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> H. Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity* (San Francisco, 1992), pp. 16–17.



***Language in the liturgy***

The topic of language in the liturgy stirs deep passions and provokes a good deal of conflict. To start with, the Canons of the Scottish Episcopal Church authorize for use both contemporary and traditional-language liturgies.<sup>6</sup> The Canons do not accord differing levels of authority to these liturgies vis-à-vis their language or age. Nor do they distinguish or judge between them on grounds of the theological ideas or concepts which they may be thought to contain and express. The point is worth labouring because it should encourage us to exercise restraint, even reserve, in asserting preference for one liturgy over another, or in claiming that one is more relevant than another. Certainly, choices are made in congregations as to which liturgies to use, and these choices may very well be based on ideas of attractiveness to new people, of relevance to the world we live in, and so on; or they may be based on the long-standing tradition of the congregation — there is nothing at all wrong with any of that, quite the contrary. But people should not consign to the dustbin the liturgies they do not choose to use, for they remain, until such time as General Synod decides otherwise, proper liturgies *of the church*. They remain precious to those who *do* use them, week in and week out. It is a matter of truth and charity.

The language of the liturgy, even if it is contemporary, is never going to be the up-to-the minute language of daily life. If it were, it would be incapable of taking worshippers beyond the immediate, or of offering them an intimation of the Beyond and the Other; not, of course, that that is all liturgy is intended to effect. Nor would it need or require anything from worshippers by way of engagement and learning. People, it may be not too daring to suggest, need more than obvious relevance, more than the immediately graspable and understandable — they need beauty, mystery, a certain puzzlement, for such things draw them on, invite pondering, reflection, perhaps even initiate a journey. Both contemporary and traditional language liturgies may do just that, if decently celebrated and presented.

Language in the liturgy refers not only to the liturgical text itself, but also to the texts of Holy Scripture and to the words of hymns. Here, too, the church admits of both traditional and contemporary language. The choice of hymns is surely part of the work of presidency at the liturgy and ought not to be delegated. In this area there is really no need to buy into the idea that everything must be in contemporary language. Apart from anything else, that would deny whole swathes of the living experience and tradition of the church well beyond our own time and our own place and our own

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<sup>6</sup> Schedule to [Canon 22](#).

obsessions; it would, with breath-taking arrogance, canonize our time and our age as of supreme importance.

### ***Styles of celebration***

It is worth thinking a little about styles of celebration, even if it would benefit the church to be at least as much concerned with styles of belief as with styles of worship. Vestments or no vestments, facing the people or eastwards, incense or no incense, worship songs or hymns, choruses or Latin chants, choirs or no choirs, contemporary language or traditional language, Mattins or Eucharist, Service of the Word or Reserved Sacrament Communion, all-age worship or contemplative Taize, praise band or robed choristers, all of these have their place. Most of them a bishop encounters roaming around a diocese, knowing what he or she most likes and least likes — and trying not to make any of that too obvious. Beyond that, what matters most to this bishop, and what might just matter to some people who come to church for the first time, or who are being drawn into the life of faith, is not so much the style of celebration as the atmosphere generated by the celebration. Are the people gathered welcoming? Are they sincerely engaged in what is going on, giving the clear impression that it is deeply meaningful to them? Do I feel safe and at home among these people? Do I feel that they are glad to see me, but not in a desperate, overwhelming way? Is there discernible here a quality of life or relationship that I find attractive? Is there a seriousness which is yet laced with humour and humanity? Do I have space to explore and find my own way? Positive answers to these sorts of questions depend not at all on liturgical style but on the *quality* of whatever the style is and of the people who are living and celebrating according to it. In other words, whatever a congregation is doing, it ought to do well.

### ***Diversity and experiment***

It would be foolish to imagine that the canonically authorized liturgies express wholly the worshipping life of God's people in our church. They do not. And it would be unhelpful to think that they preclude adventurous experiment and innovation in the interests of mission and church growth and contemporary relevance, making real our conviction that we are churches for all. Of course, in a church such as ours there are limits, especially in relation to the liturgy for the Eucharist, and all bishops take very seriously their responsibility to uphold the integrity of our eucharistic tradition as expressed in the authorized liturgies. But even there, there is plenty of room for creative and imaginative variation and presentation.



Moreover, as Ian Paton makes clear in his St Aidan Lectures *The Futures of Worship*, 'liturgical change is sometimes the child of technology',<sup>7</sup> citing by way of historical example how the invention of printing made possible the mass-produced and standardized BCP of the mid-sixteenth century<sup>8</sup> and going on to point out that in our own day liturgical texts are no longer confined to printed books but that anyone with a computer and web access can find all sorts of things and do with them what they wish.<sup>9</sup> Interesting too, he claims, following the liturgical scholar Bryan Spinks, is the cultural phenomenon of consumerism and whether in response to it, and as part of it ourselves, we are creating a kind of supermarket of worship styles from which religious consumers can pick and choose. People seek (or even shop around for) worship experiences that suit them or appeal to them and so we may need to wonder where in all of this we find liturgy for 'the formation of individuals and communities for the life-long journey of faith'.<sup>10</sup> In all of our dioceses there are consistent efforts to provide different experiences of encounter with the living God, while always holding fast to that core thing of gathering around Word and Sacrament. And this is attractive and healthy.

Paton gives a very interesting survey of examples of liturgies which grapple with questions he identifies as fundamental such as: Are adaptations of existing liturgical models helpful or not? Is much more radical change needed to meet the needs of today? How can we both hold that which the church has found to be good and valuable liturgically through many centuries, and yet respond to the religious and spiritual needs of a generation with little or no religious memory? The liturgies he covers range from so-called virtual or online church, through Taizé with its simple yet 'symbol-rich' and 'reflective' style of worship, to the Lutheran Thomas Mass in Helsinki and the liturgy of St Gregory of Nyssa in San Francisco which was founded by the Episcopal Diocese of California in the 1980s 'to foster mission through liturgical experiment'.<sup>11</sup> Most of those who have joined it, it seems, have not been to any church for a long time, if ever. The few paragraphs he writes about each are stimulating and provocative.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ian Paton, *The Futures of Worship* (Glasgow, 2015), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Paton, *Futures*, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Paton, *Futures*, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Paton, *Futures*, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Paton, *Futures*, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Paton, *Futures*, pp. 10–13.

### ***Personal tastes***

Bishops, despite constant rumours to the contrary, are human beings and so have prejudices and personal tastes in liturgy. We are all different and need, at times, to be able to laugh about, and sit lightly to, our differences. It is in that kind of *very* personal spirit that this final section of the article is offered.

I see presiding at the Eucharist as an art, an art that involves allowing the drama to unfold. I think the corollary of that is a dislike of giving stage directions and intruding one's own personality too much. I recall, when I was at St Columba's Church, Largs, my then churchwarden saying that she thought I was really two people: one was Gregor Duncan the human being in pastoral and social settings and the other was Gregor Duncan the priest at the liturgy. To begin with, I thought this was a criticism and responded accordingly. But my churchwarden was (and is) a wise and patient person. 'Don't be silly,' she said, 'it is as it should be, why else do you wear vestments but to emphasize your office and sort-of-hide your particular personality? What matters in the liturgy is that you are a priest not that you are Gregor Duncan.' At core, I agree with that, though I have put it too simply and maybe she did too. To continue in this vein, it may be related to my personal preference for eastward-facing celebration of the Eucharist. As it happens, the two churches I served as rector, St Columba's Church, Largs, and St Ninian's Church, Pollokshields, Glasgow, had altars firmly fixed against the east wall, and I made no attempt to change them. I have always felt that facing the congregation across the altar, which of course I am happy to do most of the time, places a bit too much emphasis on the personality of the priest, whereas in the other position the priest is substantially less visible and, for me, closer to the congregation because she or he is facing in the same direction as the congregation.

Something I deeply love which we had at both Largs and Pollokshields, and which I now enjoy in my role as assistant priest at St Bride's Church, Glasgow, is the singing of the Nicene Creed. I cannot understand why this has dropped out of contemporary liturgy. For me, to sing the Creed brings it alive, transforms it from a recitation of propositions, however central and important, into the greatest and most exciting of all the hymns of faith. It gives me goose pimples — and goose pimples are important to me as they indicate that parts are being touched that are not always — what you might call the *Heineken* effect!

Another love, shared by not very many I realize, is incense. For me, incense immensely enhances the liturgy. Some of my happiest memories of worship have been when enveloped in clouds of the stuff, especially at Midnight Mass or at Benediction. Incense, to me, is one way of stressing what I think of as the 'otherness' of the liturgy, maybe even its strangeness. To return to Ian Paton's very helpful lectures, he quotes what Rachel Held Evans,

a non-liturgical evangelical, says about Episcopalian worship — it must be the American church:

I have found myself in the Episcopal Church, which is like super old-school worship style. They're not trying to be cool there. They're just doing what they've been doing for the last centuries. I don't think that the key is to try and make Christianity look cooler, or make the church look cooler. I think it's to keep the church weird. The church is weird. The sacraments are kind of weird. But there's so much power, and as much relevance in them just as they are.<sup>13</sup>

Keep the church weird. As I experience it, the Scottish Episcopal Church is very good at being weird. I suppose that what is in play here is what one scholar, referred to by Ian Paton, has called 'the sensory impoverishment and deprivation of so much liturgy today', which he contends, 'results from our rush to make intelligibility the centre-piece of reform and renewal'. The unintentional result, Nathan Mitchell claims, is 'liturgy which "explains" rather than "evokes", speaks rather than sings, drones rather than dances, and skulks rather than soars'.<sup>14</sup> To be fair, that's written out of a Roman Catholic context, and I happen to think that our eucharistic liturgies are rather better than that. Nevertheless, it does pretty much depend on how they are celebrated and presented and with how much ritual and ceremony.

Related to this is something else — a strong sense of the importance of what you might generally call the non-verbal in the enlivening of liturgy. Atmosphere again. The liturgical space and how it is ordered, vesture, gesture, silence, colour, are all important to participation and the engagement of all the senses. In the end liturgy is not so much said as done, and how it is done may be just as important to people as precisely what is said. In the best sense, liturgy is a performance.

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Paton, *Futures*, p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> Nathan Mitchell, quoted in Paton, *Futures*, p. 5.



## Book Reviews

ROBERT GOVAERTS, [\*Along the Side of the Pond: Memoirs of a Belgian Contemplative\*](#) (Millport, Isle of Cumbrae: independently published, 2020). xiv, 458 pp. £14.50.

This is an extraordinary memoir by a gentle and devout man, full of unpretentious wisdom and spiritual insight. Much of the book is concerned with Robert Govaerts's family and early life in Belgium, meticulously researched with often graphic accounts of the small incidents that form the memories of childhood and contribute in often hidden ways to the persons that we become.

Govaerts looks back in the history of his family beginning with, what was his original intention in his book, an account of his beloved mother's life. She, like him, it seems, was at once gentle and tough. It is a history with its joys and its sufferings that, in the end, is beautiful because it is so familiar rather than exceptional; stories of summer holidays in a caravan, of the misery of divorce, of siblings, each with their own history, of schooldays and leaving home for university. Finally, there is the trauma of the death of beloved parents and the slow growth into the maturity of one's own life. At the centre of it all is the author himself, a mild and contemplative boy, who yet knows his own mind, and his slow growth into his life as a contemplative seeking God in silence and a solitariness that is finally broken by his marriage. At the very end of the narrative Robert and Karen, who shares in his spirituality, return to the places of his Belgian childhood and where he had trained as a champion runner as a youth: 'and on the last day, Karen and I went to Rivierenhof — the other park that I frequented running — and sat for a few blessed moments along the side of the pond'. (p. 455) Thus, the book ends.

Govaerts has a marvellous eye for the small detail, the tiny everyday incidents and accidents that accumulate and make us what we are, though they are often forgotten. We are led through his sometimes-painful experience of and experiments in the religious life, with the Assumptionists in Belgium and later England, and his years at the Benedictine community of Quarr Abbey in the Isle of Wight, where he spent more than four years. Nothing is wasted, not even his unhappy years at the University of Wales at Lampeter, where he studied St Maximus the Confessor for his doctorate. He was later to write a fine book on the subject, *St Maximus as Spiritual Guide for Our World* (2016). Increasingly the narrative of the memoir incorporates his own notes, reflections and writings as he matures in his spiritual vocation, and many of these are gems, often at once simple and profound, to

be pondered and considered. Here is just one example on 'learning to discover God':

To watch for God is not to peer into the darkness with closed eyes, waiting to see some figures emerge as in a vision.

We are to discover God in the depth of our humanity. It is in the growing awareness of this depth that we become aware of God's presence.

God is ... above all, discovered in peace (a peace that comes upon us) (p. 384).

Govaerts has found his peace in his life with Karen on the Isle of Cumbrae, where he now lives. He is a man who seeks no fame, but in his search for God he brings something of the peace of God into the world, without pretension or boastfulness.

I was privileged to have met Robert Govaerts some years ago and I am delighted to have now read his memoir. It is a story of a journey towards God's presence. We should be grateful for it.

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MUNTER ISAAC, [\*The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope\*](#) (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020). viii, 248. ISBN 978-0-8308-3199-9. Paperback. £9.39.

This book is written by the Academic Dean of Bethlehem Bible College and Pastor of the Christmas Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, Palestine. It reflects not only the depth of scholarship apparent from his previous publications, but also the profundity of his theological insight, pastoral compassion, and spirituality.

The opening chapters present the reality of Christian life in Palestine, quite correctly pointing out that there have been Christians living in the "land of the Holy One" since the first century, representing continuity with the mission of Jesus and the first apostles. Their existence may not fit the binary "Judaean-Christian" West versus Islamic East or the "clash of civilizations" paradigm favoured by right-wing European and North American politicians, but the fact is Christians have endured the success of brutal empires, Muslim, Crusader, and Zionist, over two thousand years, and

it is the last of these which most aggressively threatens their existence. Yet there remains the commitment to maintaining the unbroken testimony to the Gospel in the land in which the events of our salvation took place.

The third chapter analyses the phenomenon of Christian Zionism, a tendency on the extremist fringes of Protestantism much older than the Jewish movements, secular and religious. Christian Zionism is founded upon, initially naïve and ignorant, readings of Revelation to require immigration of Jews to Palestine as a prerequisite to the return of Christ, in the expectation that those who do not convert to Christianity would be obliterated during the final battle. The contemporary capitalist and militaristic version combines unequivocal support for the Zionist settler-colonial project, with its brutal dispossession of the Palestinian people of their long-held homes and land, with the virulent anti-Semitism that gladly consigns all Jews to an eschatological holocaust. The disregard of justice for both Jews and Palestinians seems quite conscious and wilful.

The fourth chapter presents a brief but scholarly treatment of the biblical texts on which Jewish and Christian Zionists base their claim to exclusive Jewish possession not only of the land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, but in some versions vast tracts to the north, east, and south as well. This is an issue which Isaac has researched very thoroughly, and published previously in *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: a Christ-Centered Theology of the Promised Land* (Carlisle: Lanham, 2015). The fundamental principle he establishes is that the land belongs unequivocally to God, who makes clear to Moses that Israel would be “tenants”, not owners. It is clear from the biblical text that the parameters of the “promised” land fluctuated, the destruction of the Hebrew kingdoms was interpreted as divine judgement by the prophets whose writings are sacred Scripture to Jews and Christians alike, and that possession of the land has no part in Paul’s vision of the restoration of Israel in Romans.

Three chapters explore what it means to be a neighbour. Inspired by the parable of the Good Samaritan, Isaac explores what being a neighbour both to Jews and to Muslims means for Palestinian Christians in particular, but the principles he expounds are universal. While condemning Jewish exceptionalism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia with equal vehemence, he is frank about the socio-economic, theological, and spiritual challenges in the parable, and Christian call to neighbourliness with all human beings created in God’s image.

In the eighth chapter Isaac explores the challenges of the Beatitudes, particularly for people who have been oppressed and dispossessed for generations. Hard as the teaching of Jesus is to follow, he argues that this is the only way to overcome injustice and establish peace. As in other chapters, he uses his own experiences since childhood of the Israeli military

occupation and its violent repression to illustrate not merely an exegetical point or a theological exposition of the biblical text, but his commitment to living thereby.

The final chapters recognise the immense cost of committing to the way of life Isaac has identified as the calling of Palestinian Christians. Nevertheless, Christian hope is defined by the active commitment to realise justice and peace, notwithstanding the obstacles and the power of those who seek the liquidation of Palestine, and of its Christian population in particular.

The book may perhaps be intended primarily to address, and appeal to the consciences of, North American and other evangelical Christians for whom Zionism is integral to their faith and eschatology, and the brutal military occupation of Palestine by Israel at best irrelevant to their anticipation of Christ's impending return. In place of the violent, racist, and anti-Semitic visions of Armageddon peddled by right-wing fundamentalists, Isaac offers a vision of Christian hope, and articulates his own courageous and costly commitment to its fulfilment. His challenge to despondency may be just as relevant to post-Brexit Britain facing an ongoing coronavirus pandemic, with a hapless government, as corrupt as it is incompetent, seemingly determined to aggravate the recession it has precipitated while enriching ministers and their cronies at every opportunity. Isaac's call to recognise the reality of what is happening in Palestine, and to respond appropriately to it, applies as much to our own context. We might all do well to begin by reading this book.

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MICHAEL GRIFFIN, [\*Religion in the English Novel: From Jane Austen to Margaret Atwood\*](#) (Kindle Direct Publishing, Australia, 2020). 311 pp. £15.00.

It is indisputable that since the beginning of the nineteenth century the novel has been the primary literary form in western society, embedded in the intellectual and cultural movements of the time. Michael Giffin is an Anglican priest and academic living in Sydney, Australia, with a number of books on the fiction of Jane Austen, Patrick White and others to his credit. His aim in this book is to 'describe how post-Kantian philosophy and aesthetics influenced how Christianity was escribed in a particular kind of literary novel' (p. 1). It is set, therefore, against the background of the thinkers who, often beneath the surface of thought, have defined the nature of our world in the past two hundred years. These thinkers appear repeatedly through



the discussions of the novels themselves — Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, and in the twentieth century Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur in particular. From the perspective of his Christian background, Giffin explores a series of ‘canonical transitions’ in the novel from classicism to romanticism, realism to naturalism, modernity to postmodernity and beyond.

Against this background of shifting ideas his book is divided in three parts, novels written under the shadow of romanticism, those under the shadow of modernism, and finally novels in the twenty and twenty-first centuries under the shadow of psychology. The book’s riches and real energy are to be found in the close readings of a series of novels from Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* (1814) to the most recent fiction of the Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood, the latter writing not under the shadow but amidst the fragments of romanticism that remain with us after a long period of secularization within which the novel asks its questions about the human condition.

The novels here discussed are mostly though not entirely English. Giffin’s Australian context is betrayed by inclusion of Hendry Handel Richardson (pen name of Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson) and an excellent review of Patrick White’s fiction. They are largely standard literary classics — novels that should be on everyone’s reading list. In his readings of these great books, Giffin can be a quirky but always stimulating guide. For example, he takes Thomas Hardy to task in *Jude the Obscure* (1895), reading the novel through D. H. Lawrence, F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot, who accused Hardy of writing ‘out of a ragbag of beliefs’ (p. 66). I actually disagree with Giffin’s somewhat dismissive assessment of *Jude*, but he certainly took me back to Hardy’s novel and made me read it more carefully. And that is what criticism should do.

If fiction since 1800 has charted the decline of Christian belief — though there are Christian believers in the company here (sometimes admittedly odd ones), Graham Greene and Muriel Spark, for example, both converts to Roman Catholicism — then this sequence of novels should be compulsory reading for everyone involved and concerned with the Church today. The great novelists, even those whose works have become immovably a part of the canon of literature like Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens and George Eliot, are always somehow outsiders to the traditions which we inhabit, and precisely for that reason they reflect most sharply the gains and the losses made within the culture of which we are all a part. Giffin can thus write of Muriel Spark’s ‘odd capacity for vision [which] comes from remaining an outsider’ (p. 277). He reminds us that we need to attend carefully to this ‘odd capacity for vision’ as we reflect upon our own beliefs and religious assessments, and we need to make time in our busy lives for

pondering upon the dilemmas of religion as they are portrayed within the novels of our culture.

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ERIC ZIOLKOWSKI, [Religion and Literature: History and Method](#), Brill Research Perspectives in Religion and the Arts (Leiden: Brill, 2019). 112 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-4254-0. Paperback, £70.

Recent material published in the areas of 'Literature and Theology' and 'Literature and Religion' has increased considerably; this may confuse observers on the useful limits of these intersecting fields. Hence Professor Ziolkowski's short book is a very valuable guide. Ziolkowski suggests the value of such study, and the related fields of myth criticism and biblical reception, as an intrinsic part of what the arts and humanities might have to offer to the world. The book is, moreover, erudite, and challenging, for it also asks the question: what might be the future of this field of study?

What Ziolkowski presents is, of necessity, a partial analysis of the varieties of 'Religion and Literature' and its history, since the field is so vast that no introductory work would be able to dissect all of it. One of the problems he faces is, as he argues, that the subject of religion and literature is both of considerable antiquity and is completely contemporary. Greek and Norse myth, for example, is intrinsically religious (p. 6), but contemporary scholars have had, nonetheless, to develop the subject anew, since more recent writers have chosen to dispute the relevance of religion to literature or literature to religion or theology, arguing, for example, in the mid twentieth century that religious ideas employed in literary texts make them unworthily didactic (The New Criticism) and remove their beauty (p. 30). Such literary criticism, for example, the work of Cleanth Brooks, argues that a well-constructed text resists religious and philosophical idea. It is therefore only relatively recently that the field has gained academic status and value, urging upon us the need to formulate what we are doing when we talk about 'Literature and Religion'.

Ziolkowski's approach is to try and disentangle the terms being used by creating sections of his book devoted to different aspects of 'Literature and Religion/Theology'. What, for example, do 'Religion' and 'Literature' mean as individual semantic units (or 'lexemes', our author's own word), and how have the words been employed variously through the subject's

history? The answers, as we might imagine, are complex, since an apparently simple word such as 'Literature' proves to refer to a non-literary body of sacred writing (for example, in the title of the periodical *The Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis*), or a key term in literary criticism referring to a text and all the contested meanings such a text may offer, or all texts offering 'artistic merit' (p. 21). 'Religion', of course, is even more problematic, as a label with a disputed etymology and all kinds of variant definitions (and, as Ziolkowski himself explains (p. 8–9), using Gregory D. Alles, why should a supposed etymology explain 'current usage'?). Then we have the additional nuances of 'Literature and Theology/Religion' in terms of its use of lower— and upper-case initial letters — would 'literature and religion' be a different subject from 'Literature and Religion', for example? The problem here is that our terms have become infinitely fragmented into possible meanings, and it becomes an urgent task to drag them back together again into some kind of hybrid, to provide a road map for the whole enterprise.

Ziolkowski explains the development of the subject as a whole, focussing on key individuals and even includes their photographs, suggesting that the study of 'Literature and Religion' has been transformed in the recent past by academics such as Nathan Scott, who pioneered his version of such study at the Chicago Divinity School, and established in 1950 the program of 'Theology and Literature'. Scott insists on the opening up of 'Literature' to the ideas that 'Theology' offers, arguing against literary criticism such as the New Criticism and Deconstruction which see literature as a hermetic artefact: 'words have an incorrigibly referential thrust' (quoted p. 30). Thereafter, institutions and individuals, such as David Jasper, have pioneered other approaches to Literature and Religion which have burgeoned, generating innovative university departments such as the Glasgow University Centre for the Study of Literature, Theology, and Arts, from which developed the International Society of Religion, Literature and Culture. Periodicals, academic tomes and other academic associations have also sprung from such origins, some focussing primarily on 'Christianity and Literature', others on more general 'Theology', and others focussing on 'Religion'. 'Religion and Literature', the title of the discipline often used in the United States over 'Theology and Literature', used in Britain, has also become indicative of a much more wide-ranging approach — looking at religion through the lens of a greater diversity of world faiths, academic disciplines (such as history, anthropology, psychology and so on) rather than mainly through the lens of academic Christian theology.

Ziolkowski explores where such diversity springs from, concluding that there are two main approaches to the study of literature and theology/religion which derive from two different origin stories (p. 42). The

first account, by Jonathan Z Smith and William Scott Green, traces Matthew Arnold's lauding of poetry as a new form of religion, and develops into an understanding of the religious questions in literature as 'to do with literature's nature and role within some larger ideological system of meaning and significance' (p. 43). Such an approach does not mention the Bible, or reception of the Bible, focussing instead on how literature itself has affinities with such sacred texts. The second account, by Robert Detweiler and David Jasper, turns to Coleridge's judgement of the Bible: 'the more [...] tranquilly an [...] Inquirer takes up the Bible as he would any other Body of Ancient Writings, the livelier and steadier will be his impressions of its superiority to all other books' (p. 44), and it incorporates some of Strauss's argument, presented in his *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (translation by George Eliot), for a 'mythical-poetical ground' for reading the Bible. This account sees T. S. Eliot's essay 'Religion and Literature' as seminal for the current incarnation of 'Literature and Theology', and includes Paul Tillich's views on theology, literature and culture, and how the subject has been nurtured in American universities by Nathan Scott and others.

Ziolkowski concludes his analysis by offering some views about how the field of 'Literature and Theology/Religion' might develop in the future seeing as points of growth Sino-Christian theology with, for example, Yang Huilin, who has collaborated with David Jasper at Renmin University. Additionally, at Virginia State Polytechnic Institute and State University, the academic Zhange Ni has written about how a pagan religious understanding of literature revolutionizes 'Literature and Theology', revealing the pagan core of key literary works and deconstructing the normative relentless focus on monotheistic faith — in essence, Christianity.

Finally, Ziolkowski explores briefly how cognitive neuroscience might also transform the subject, exploring what impact human cognition has had on fiction and religious narrative. Some, such as Yuval Noah Harari, see such analysis as identifying religious narrative as merely necessary fictions to sustain human life, while others dismiss cognitive arguments as biologically reductive, placing no faith in the creative nature of human consciousness.

Such an ending to his book is a little disconcerting as it seems suddenly to locate the subject in an unfamiliar scientific framework, though Ziolkowski does explain (p. 96) that the cognitive is only one analytical technique among many, and may prove helpful in supporting other approaches, securing a healthy future for the academic field. However, he does not explain what such assistance might look like through a particular example, instead offering an intriguing list of articles from a recent edition of *Literature and Theology*. Moreover, one may well be disquieted by a scientific analysis of the subject of 'Literature and Theology' in neurocognitive terms purely from the point of view that it may be a self-

offering of Daniel to the lions of biological determinism. There is a sense in the book overall that science constitutes a force inimical to the nature of religious narrative and myth (p. 55) and cannot be questioned: 'While not challenging science in any way as the dominant explanation of the material world [...] twentieth century theories re-construed myth as being still concerned with the world but not as a literal explanation or description of it.' Ziolkowski does not mention the work of French phenomenologist Michel Henry, in, for example, *Barbarism*, for whom a scientific understanding of the human is, quite simply, erroneous, supplanting the life-force or 'pathos' of the body which is humanity's fundamental epistemological tool; religious myth reveals the nature of this pathos, whereas the scientific method just denies its existence and offers false and therefore harmful analysis.

However, quibbles are inevitable in a critique of a text of 112 pages, where the field of analysis is, as we have seen, composed of multiple layers of dense intricacy. It is, for example, entirely plausible to argue that in fact each scholar of 'Literature and Theology' has to devise her own method for each specific task in hand, and even that the most illustrious of academics over a long career have to develop new methodologies (or how else might they be at any level innovative?). How might one write about such disparities, short of devoting a lifetime to them? Ziolkowski's brief book is to be applauded, however, for bringing considerable clarity and information to such a complex field and for asking the most difficult question: why does any of this matter? He seems in the end to favour Nathan Scott's answer to this which is to study 'Literature' as a theologian to open the text 'outward' to the world (p. 30) and thereby find, even in a resolutely secular text that its 'deprivation of the Transcendent' wakes us up with a 'fresh proximity to the Mystery' (p. 31).

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ALVYN PETTERSEN, [The Second-Century Apologists](#) (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2020). xix, 177 pp. ISBN 978-1-7252-6535-6. Paperback, £19.00.

Alvyn Pettersen's new book is a delight to read, combining profound scholarship with an elegance and clarity of style that brings the second-century Christian Apologists to life and into the context of issues in contemporary Christianity. Without the didactic failings of a textbook, this book's lively style is complemented by a series of questions for reflection and discussion at the end of each chapter that relate the debates of the

second century to issues that remain alive today in questions of the nature of belief, our relationship with the environment, and the ethics of Christian behaviour in a world that still too often, as in ancient Rome, seems lacking in empathy and understanding.

Pettersen's first chapter deftly paints a portrait of the second century Greco-Roman world, a time, largely speaking of 'confidence, peace, and prosperity' (p. 1). The persecution of the early Christian communities was neither as widespread nor as straightforward as it is sometimes portrayed. For the Roman Empire was far from being a secular world, but its sense of religion was largely based on the observance of cultic rites while 'there was no particular interest in a person's *beliefs*' (p. 6). To that extent early Christianity was odd in its refusal to subscribe to the imperial religion, the bond that held the Empire together, from the Emperor downwards. Christianity, with its monotheistic roots deep in the traditions of the Hebrew Bible, simply offered a radically different world view, and it is against this background that the writings of the six Greek Christian Apologists treated in this book must be seen. Five letters have attributable authors: Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras and Theophilus of Antioch. A sixth is an anonymous *Letter to Diognetus*. Apart, perhaps, from Justin Martyr, they are hardly well-known today. But in Pettersen's highly readable prose they come alive as examples of religious and theological thinkers working out the articulation of their faith in a largely hostile culture.

Immediately one is conscious that this is not the complex and elegant Christian theology of the fourth century or post-Chalcedonian Church. Christian doctrine in the second century was in its early stages and was being worked out not as a merely intellectual exercise (though it was that), but in the face of a hostile and often uncomprehending world. The Apologists had to establish that Christianity was neither new (it is foreshadowed by Moses and the ancient prophets) nor untrue. Charged with a refusal to give credence to the gods of the ancient world, they had to admit to being guilty on this score as 'atheists'. But such a charge of atheism must fall inasmuch as they professed an immovable belief in the one God, 'the Creator of all, the Almighty' (Aristides, p. 96). Perhaps the most fascinating part of Pettersen's book is chapter 5, where we see the Apologists, drawing on the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophy, begin to articulate the nature of the Creator God of Christianity and the role of Logos, standing over against the whole of the created order of things. They had to make clear why Christians might certainly pray *for* the Emperor, but never *to* the Emperor.

The last chapter addresses the need for the Apologists to defend the Church against charges of cannibalism in the Eucharist and promiscuity and Oedipean intercourse in wider social perceptions of the 'kiss of peace' and the profession of love for all people. Bizarre though these accusations may

sound to us, the accusations were very real in the second century, and in the face of such misconceptions, Christian theology, both pastoral and systematic, had to be articulated, and from the dilemmas of the Church in second century Greco-Roman society, Pettersen draws questions that remain central and pertinent to our concerns today. For example, in the questions at the end of chapter 6, he asks:

What, if anything, should the early Christian practice of rescuing exposed infants who had been left by parents to die say about how children should be valued and treated by contemporary societies? (p. 143).

This is a book that can be read at one sitting, but its riches and learning take far longer to unfold and absorb as they reveal the early stages of Christian theology in the young Church beginning to form under the imperial rule of ancient Rome. For my part, I admit, it has been a long time since I have concerned myself with the second-century Apologists. The loss is mine, for in this book they come alive and speak to a contemporary Church that in its own time faces a largely uncomprehending and sometimes hostile world. It also reminds us of the need to articulate our belief and faith clearly, and with intellectual energy and precision – a responsibility that the Church does not always take to heart. It is to be hoped that Alvyn Pettersen's book will be read by all ordinands and students of theology, and widely by clergy and all members of the Church.

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