Journal of Theology and Mission



Learn, pray, participate in mission

VOL 32, ISSUE 1



Welcome to our first online edition of ANVIL, now hosted by Church Mission Society (CMS). Some of you will be aware of ANVIL's long journey over the past few years and now we are delighted that it has found a home in CMS. We believe that this will strengthen one of the journal's core values which is to think and engage creatively in mission. The editorial team is strengthened with the addition of Jonny Baker alongside Craig Holmes and Cathy Ross. Tom Wilson continues as our book reviews editor.

ANVIL was launched 30 years ago as a journal focused on theology and mission. Now that we are based at CMS in Oxford, we hope to draw on insights from the world church as well as from those who are pioneering in mission. Do feel free to suggest themes and articles to us – we welcome any suggestions.

This issue has three CMS commitments as its theme: learn, pray and participate. These are the lenses or frames through which we engage with mission. There are three longer reflective essays followed by some shorter pieces written by practitioners who are trying to model these commitments in their place and space. This will be our pattern from now on. We will begin with longer, theological pieces followed by shorter pieces from practitioners who are reflecting missionally on their practice in their context. Our final section contains book reviews for which ANVIL has been much appreciated over the years. If you would like to review a book, do contact us.

John Drane picks up the learning commitment by considering what education for mission might look like if we took engagement in mission rather than content as our primary focus and question. Adrian Chatfield draws on ancient traditions and mysticism to consider the relationship between prayer and mission. Debbie James reflects on the importance of partnership and presence drawing on Anglican social tradition and the concept of 'prophetic dialogue' as a resource to encourage participation and presence.

The shorter pieces begin with one by Sue Butler who reflects on her experience at Thirst, her missional community. Themes of prayer, hospitality, and threshold are explored as ways of encouraging people into a relationship with Jesus. Luke Larner reflects on the impact of *missio Dei* as part of his learning on the Pioneer Leadership course at CMS and how this has transformed his understanding of mission in his context in Luton. Finally, Jon Soper tells Nigel's story to illustrate what they have been learning about missional participation in their context in Exeter.

We hope that this issue of ANVIL will stimulate you as you engage in mission in your particular context.

Cathy Ross, co-editor.

LEARNING FOR

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PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Christians have been learning for mission since the time of Jesus. It was one of the key objectives of his own ministry that his followers should share the message of God's love with other people. In the immediately following generations that passion for learning was never lost, but over the centuries the missional focus gradually diminished and learning about the faith became either an end in itself or a way of training individuals to sustain the life of the church.¹ There was nothing wrong with either of these things, indeed they were the natural outcome of Christendom, a world in which all citizens were assumed to be Christians and in which intellectual endeavour in many subjects was expanding exponentially.

As Europeans explored other parts of the world, the realisation that not everyone was a Christian eventually inspired the establishment of specialist mission agencies whose concern focused on distant places where the spread of Christianity might also be a "civilising" influence on other apparently primitive cultures. In the decade following World War I public perception of the church changed significantly, but the inherited paradigm of theological education as "the method of the maintaining and perfecting of the church"² continued as if nothing had happened and theological learning happily existed in its own cultural bubble. In the early 1930s theologians were falling over themselves to align with Rudolf Bultmann's programme of "demythologisation" apparently without noticing that at the very same moment Einstein's research was moving science in an opposite direction, which just happened to coincide with a growing interest in psychic phenomena and the paranormal among the general public - trends that subsequently combined with other cultural factors to produce whole generations who would leave the church behind and become the mission field of the future.

years, but it is only relatively recently that church leaders have woken up to the importance of being equipped for mission as well as maintenance.³ There is widespread recognition that things need to change, but we do not begin with a blank sheet – something that is true of society more widely, though it is easier to make a completely fresh start in that context just by abandoning old ways and adopting something new. In the church, however, there is a conviction that what we do today should be recognisably continuous with the past, and in working out the implications of that we tend to struggle with differentiating between the good news of God's love in Jesus (which doesn't change) and the cultural trappings which have communicated that message appropriately to previous generations.

Henry Ford famously declared that "history is more or less bunk"⁴ and though we might feel more comfortable with affirming that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it"⁵ one of the lessons of history is that prior to the 20th century our forebears seem to have known how to contextualise the gospel in their own time and place, which means that if we fail to do likewise we are not at all continuous with our own Christian past. When we ask about contextualisation in relation to theological education, though, the answer is not entirely straightforward as the context is itself ambiguous. We are in a liminal space where there is widespread agreement on the need to prioritise learning for mission and explore new ways of being church, though alongside this the paradigm inherited from Christendom survives (and in some places thrives) so there is still a need for traditional ministry styles and skills even as we look beyond what we now have in order to create new spaces in which the Spirit of God might bring to birth forms of Christian discipleship and community that can speak more convincingly into the changing culture. Though all would agree that the creation of new things is at the heart of the tradition (Isa. 43:19, Eph. 4:24, Heb. 8:13, Rev. 21:5, etc), moving from theological theory to practical outworking can be threatening because by definition the new

That future has been upon us for at least the last 50

¹ On the history of theological education, see Harold H Rowden, 'Theological education in historical perspective', in *Vox Evangelica* 7 (1971), 75-87; Justo L González, *The History of Theological Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015). And for a more specifically mission focus, Stephen Bevans, 'Theological education as missionary formation', in Stephen Bevans et al (eds), *Reflecting on and equipping for Christian mission* (Oxford: Regnum, 2015), 93-105.

² The phrase used by Schleiermacher in the mid-19th century in an effort to place practical learning as an equal partner to a more theoretical approach, though in the event it was the theory that took precedence with the practical being very much application of the theory: see F D E Schleiermacher, *Die Praktische Theologie* (Berlin: G Reimer, 1850), 27-28.

³ A church report published in 1945 highlighted the need for evangelism, but for a variety of reasons never got the attention it deserved. See Church of England's Archbishop's Commission on Evangelism, *Towards the Conversion of England: a plan dedicated to the memory of Archbishop William Temple* (London: Press & Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1945).

⁴ Henry Ford, in an interview with Charles N Wheeler, *Chicago Tribune*, May 25, 1916, 10.

⁵ George Santayana, *The Life of Reason* (New York: Scribner's, 1905), 284.

means innovation and change, and the fact that the world is itself changing at breakneck speed and in unpredictable ways only serves to elevate that threat. Some rare individuals might be capable of combining missional innovation with institutional maintenance but in essence they are different callings. This distinction is recognised in talk of a "mixed economy" of church, and therefore of styles of ministry and by inference of what learning for missional innovation might look like,⁶ though we have yet to become fully comfortable with what that means and how it might be implemented. Perhaps that is a good thing, as we can all swap notes and learn from our mistakes: my observations here are offered as a contribution to an ongoing conversation, and are unlikely to be even my own settled conclusions let alone the final blueprint for missional learning. They certainly raise questions about curriculum design and pedagogical process that cannot be addressed here.

CHALLENGES FOR THE SYSTEM

The starting point for any sort of structured learning is always going to be recruitment and selection, which puts the spotlight on the criteria that might match the diversity of the mission field with a corresponding diversity of styles and attitudes among those who engage with our training programmes. The introversion of traditional clergy is well documented,⁷ and the typical learning pattern offered in theological education suits that sort of person with its emphasis on bookishness, on solitary reflection in the library, and on personal attainment that can be assessed individually. There is of course nothing wrong with being an introvert: the first page of the Bible (Gen. 1:27) affirms that we are all made in the divine image, in all our diversity. But if church caters for only one sort of personality type, then no matter how successful we might be, we will only ever touch those sections of the population who are like us. I suspect that this has been a significant factor in church decline throughout the late 20th century, though this is not the place to explore that further.⁸ I have been involved with

encouraging and facilitating creative mission for much of my adult life, and it seems obvious to me that missional leaders are generally not introverts, nor do they learn through the isolated individual pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. They recognise the need for innovation, and they know that most innovation comes about through collaboration with others. They learn through teamwork, tackling problems with colleagues and doing so in open conversations, not by retreating into libraries to come up with bright ideas that can be shared in what is often an adversarial setting of college seminars in which people pit their wits against one another in order to produce a hierarchy of winners and losers. To put it simply, if somewhat bluntly, many of the skills that characterise the work of successful missional pioneers are not highly regarded in the world of academic theology. Collaboration is of the essence in problem solving, and in many cutting edge areas of professional education (medicine, architecture, engineering, to name a few) that is taken for granted. But in theological education (and the humanities more generally) if a student works with others and incorporates their insights into her own work, she is more likely to be accused of cheating than praised for being a team player. Yet team players are what we need to be effective in mission in today's culture.

All this can be distilled into one simple question: in identifying a missional learning paradigm, will we be guided by the past or by the future? Looking to the past in order to discover what is worth knowing, and therefore what should be taught and learned, works tolerably well in a stable culture where change is continuous with the past and to some extent predictable. Today's world is not like that: change is discontinuous, rapid, and unpredictable, and to empower leaders in this sort of world we need to start not with the past but with the present and the future. I may not agree with Henry Ford's opinion that there is nothing to be learned from the past, but I am more in tune with what he went on to say (and which is rarely quoted): "We want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a tinker's dam is the history we

⁶ A term originally coined by Rowan Williams, and aptly defined as "... the truth that no single form of church life is adequate on its own in the development of mission to our diverse culture. We need traditional forms of church life but we will also need new forms of church to connect with different parts of our society." Steven Croft, 'What counts as a Fresh Expression of Church?', in Louise Nelstrop & Martyn Percy (eds), *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: explorations in emerging church* (London: Canterbury Press, 2008), 5.

⁷ Largely due to the researches of Leslie J Francis who has a formidable database of clergy from around the world research going back thirty years or more and reported in very many publications. For a typical report, see Leslie Francis & Raymond Rodger, 'The personality profile of Anglican clergymen', in John Swinton & David Willows (eds), *Spiritual dimensions of pastoral care* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2000), 66-71.

⁸ There is a substantial body of research exploring this question: see most recently Leslie J Francis, Howard Wright & Mandy Robbins, 'Temperament theory and congregation studies: different types for different services?', in *Practical Theology* 9/1 (2016), 29-45, and the extensive bibliography there. make today." The way we understand and utilise the resources inherited from previous generations must be focused through the needs and opportunities of the present and the future. I wonder if that is an application to theological education of Jesus' teaching about law and gospel (Matt. 5:17)? It is certainly the case that, however we care to interpret it, Jesus' message had a consistently future focus, encouraging us to imagine what we might yet become rather than languishing in what we have been. In the rest of this article I want to reflect on what that might mean in terms of learning for mission, and suggest that far from jettisoning the tradition, it will involve excavating it in more creative ways that might well reveal treasures that would otherwise go unnoticed but which can provide the foundation for a missional paradigm in a fast changing world.

To express it in a different way, what would education for mission look like if our foundational question is not so much "what do we need to know?" but "how do we need to act?" Or, if you like, what are the core skill sets and competencies that are essential for missional leaders? With 12 years of experimentation in fresh expressions of church behind us, there is a broad consensus emerging in relation to the key attributes that will equip pioneers in this missional enterprise. None of them are particularly surprising, and many of them correspond to key qualities that we should in any case already be promoting as they are fundamental gospel values.

WHAT DO WE NOW NEED TO KNOW?

It is almost a century since Karl Barth first spoke of the need to read the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other,⁹ and that requirement still holds good even if we might wish to add TV, movies, and social media alongside the newspaper. There has been a tendency to prioritise the Bible over the newspaper and in doing so we have produced whole generations of Christian leaders who know a great deal about the Bible but have very little understanding of the culture, and what they do know is often angled towards high culture rather than the sort of pop culture that is most likely to be embraced by a majority of their fellow citizens.

A. DISCIPLESHIP

So how much do missional leaders need to know about the Bible in order to communicate its message appropriately? I wonder if a better way of articulating this question might be to speak of discipleship rather than Bible, as the one surely embraces and includes the other. It might seem obvious that missional leaders need to be disciples, but that statement at once takes us beyond mere understanding of the Bible and places the emphasis on action and wisdom as well as knowledge and learning. To be effective witnesses in today's world, we need to encourage the conscious combining of reflection and action: more colloquially, mission is not only about talking the talk (though it can include that) but crucially about walking the walk.

Finding an appropriate balance between the talk and the walk presents a particular set of questions in the context of any sort of educational curriculum. Whether intentionally or not, our inherited paradigm has tended to assume that theological education is about training the next generation of scholars. When I was a student, it was taken for granted that I would learn Hebrew and Greek, and do so not as a minority interest but as discrete subjects within the framework of my education. As it happens, I turned out to be rather good at both of them, and I would be the last person to argue that careful scholarship is of no value. The reality however is that for most of my peers in those Hebrew and Greek classes, it was something that they soon discarded because they never quite grasped any of it in the first place, and some of them found that such detailed study of the Biblical text, far from making them better Christians, actually distracted them from the more important business of developing a holistic understanding of their faith. Ultimately, discipleship is a bit like dancing: you won't learn it from a book, but by living it. But there is a relationship between intellectual knowledge and discipleship, neatly summed up by Anselm (1033-1109) in the Latin motto fides quaerens intellectum ('faith seeking understanding'). When he spoke of 'faith' he was not meaning 'the faith' as an intellectual entity, but rather what today we might call 'discipleship', that is an active following of Jesus and, as if to underline the priority of discipleship, when he wrote of the Trinity he insisted that "with whatever degree of certainty so important a matter is believed,

⁹ The original context for this was most likely conversations with students, as reported in an interview in 1963: "Barth recalls that 40 years ago he advised young theologians to 'take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible." For the full article, see 'Barth in Retirement' in *Time* LXXXI/22 (May 31, 1963). http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/ article/0,33009,896838,00.html accessed online September 20, 2016.

[this] ... will be useless and as something dead unless it is made alive and strong by love".¹⁰

Nowadays there is a good deal of talk about formation and calling, but it is often the poor relation in terms of the content of theological programmes, even being outsourced to other agencies as not being academic enough to form part of a degree. This is another place where we could learn from other professionally oriented disciplines like medicine or architecture, where there seems to be no problem about recognising practical skills as appropriately academic. In our context, unless the development of discipleship is a core concern, no amount of biblical or theological knowledge is going to equip us for the missional opportunities available to us. Of course, different people find that different things enrich their spiritual development. I recall a retreat with a group of clergy where we were working on this very thing, and one person there could make no sense of all the talk of the history of spirituality, nor indeed of learning from the spiritual practices of others - until we came to a session on playfulness in which we explored colours, and that suddenly transformed everything for him. Shortly after that I decided to read through the gospels and asking one simple question of every story: what exactly was going on here, in terms of the playful human interaction between Jesus and those whom he encountered? That is a missional question and it changed the way I understood the texts, though I soon discovered that it was not generally well received in the academy (where it is perceived as "too confessional") nor in some church circles (where it can be regarded as "too subjective"). The academy has spent the last 200 years prioritising critical questions about history and dogma, and one of the challenges in nurturing discipleship within an educational context is avoiding the temptation to turn spiritual formation into yet another purely cognitive exercise in which we learn things like the history of spirituality, or models of pastoral care, or even by sampling experiences of different spiritual practices. There is nothing wrong with any of those things, but what we should be doing is creating spaces within which an individual's own sense of calling can be both enhanced and monitored. With very little ingenuity this is one of those points where creative use of the Biblical tradition, intertwined with personal experience, can provide a significant catalyst to that "growth in wisdom and understanding" which not only characterised Jesus' own journey but also undergirded the way he nurtured his disciples

(Luke 2:52). The Bible is full of stories of people with a calling, in both testaments, and exploring the call of others (using all the resources at our disposal for understanding the social context and significance of these stories) can not only define the nature of discipleship but provide tools for understanding our own calling. When the Biblical tradition and our own experience of following Jesus are combined in this way, the sum of them together is more than each one individually, in perpetual motion like partners in a heavenly dance.

B. CULTURE

Separating discipleship and culture can help to highlight particular issues, though we should never forget that discipleship itself is a culturally specific category and spiritual formation is not something that can easily be transferred from one culture to another because it is the product of interpersonal interactions at a given time and place, all of it viewed through the focus of the Christian tradition - which itself is not as simple as it seems, as the lens through which we see the tradition is also culturally determined. This poses particular challenges for pedagogical practice which there is no space to explore here. But one thing is clear: in relation to all these interwoven aspects of culture, one of the most important practical skills for today is listening. We are all familiar with the notion of the missio Dei, the understanding that mission is God's work and our role is to identify God's activity within our own contexts and to align ourselves with that rather than regarding ourselves as doing a good turn for an otherwise inactive God. The two-way listening to Bible and newspaper commended by Barth requires the spiritual gift of discernment to identify where God is at work, alongside skills in cultural analysis to enable us to engage effectively. To be effective in mission we need to speak in ways that make sense in the immediate context of an individual's life as well as within the cultural context, and when we read the Bible with this in mind it has plenty to offer us. Jesus' message focused on the possibilities for change and new life that are embodied in the terminology of "the kingdom of God" - a concept that could occupy an entire article in itself, but here I'm thinking of it in the generic terms I learned from my friend Ian Fraser who describes it as "God's way of doing things". Jesus consistently paid attention to his context, and so he speaks of fish and fishing when talking to a fishing community (Mark 1:14-19); with rich folks the talk is about money (Mark

¹⁰ Anselm, *Monologion*, ch 78, in *Complete Philosophical & Theological treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, translated by Jasper Hopkins & Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: Arthur J Banning Press, 2000), 84.

10:17-27); with a woman at a well, the conversation is about water (John 4:4-15); or with a business manager, about accountancy (Luke 16:1-13). The book of Acts offers a series of snapshots of how the gospel was expressed in different cultural contexts. In the synagogue, and more generally when engaging with Jewish people, St Paul speaks of the Hebrew scriptures (17:1-4), and in his letters addressed to the same constituency he shows considerable familiarity with various arcane arguments found in rabbinic discourse (eg Galatians 4:21-31). But at Athens (a context not dissimilar to our own), he made no reference at all to the Old Testament while quoting approvingly from the 3rd century BC poet Aratus and Epimenides, a 6th century BC mystic and shaman, as well as telling the story of Jesus (17:16-34). It is occasionally proposed that he was mistaken in doing so, but the truth is that he had done his cultural homework, for not only was Epimenides saying something that was consistent with Paul's understanding of the gospel, but he was also the one who first introduced the language of the "unknown god" into the Athenian consciousness.¹¹ The key question, then as now, is the one addressed by Philip to the Ethiopian in the desert: "do you understand what you are reading?" (8:30). Very few people today are reading anything remotely connected with Christian ideas, and in order to engage with what they are reading (watching, doing), understanding the culture is a core ministry skill. Any course focusing on mission needs to have units on theology and culture, including especially music, movies, digital culture, shopping and relationships, because these are the things that define most people's lives. The temptation is to regard such things as trivialities and to privilege the ideas of philosophers and social scientists. That might be appropriate for mission in an academic environment, but these so-called elites are no longer the driving force of cultural change. It is easy to dismiss popular culture as "amusing ourselves to death",12 but unless we know how to communicate the gospel in that environment our mission will fail. Even then it is not straightforward. Things are now so fragmented that it is increasingly problematic even to speak of 'culture' generically, and the pace of change is so rapid that what we learn today might easily be outdated by next week. Discernment is all-important in making value judgments, and here the Bible reminds us that there are no easy answers. As we wrestle with the ambiguities of our own cultural

context, we can do worse than reflect on the contrast between 2 Kings 9:30-37 where the violent death of Jezebel is depicted as divine justice, and Hosea 1:4 where the very same incident is denounced as contrary to the will of God.

C. PERSONAL CHARACTER

This is not an exhaustive list, but three things stand out as key missional characteristics:

Partnerships

One of the key lessons of the last decade or so has been the rediscovery of teamwork as a core element in successful mission. Church leaders can see this as a threat, not least because of the way it has been used as a tool for managing decline, with parishes rationalised and clergy organised into teams where the outcome is that fewer people are doing more work. Another reason why teams are often suspect is our inherited individualism, which has deep roots not only in the sort of theology that values personal salvation over against the ecclesial community, but also in academic assessment practices which can make the apocalyptic separation of sheep and goats seem remarkably benign. We have been conditioned by upbringing and education to believe that problems are solved by individuals going into their inner cave, working out solutions, and then telling others what they have decided. But wherever we look in the New Testament, we find teams at work. Jesus and Paul were both inspirational individuals who would no doubt have accomplished much had they worked alone, but they intentionally established teams and worked collaboratively not only with the members of those teams but with anyone else who shared aspects of their vision. The need for collaboration is more than mere pragmatism, and is actually a theological imperative in the strict sense of the word, based on the very character of God as Trinity and the divine action characterised as the missio Dei. This is another theme where the Bible can be a helpful dialogue partner, as Raymond Fung demonstrated almost a quarter of a century ago in his ground-breaking book The Isaiah Vision.13

Play

According to Maximus the Confessor, "we should consider our life as a game played by children before God"¹⁴ and knowing how to play is a key attribute for anyone seeking to engage missionally with today's

¹¹ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* I.11.

¹² The title of a book by Neil Postman: Amusing ourselves to Death: public discourse in the age of show business (New York: Penguin, 1985).

¹³ Raymond Fung, *The Isaiah Vision* (Geneva: WCC 1992); reissued 2009 by Wipf & Stock.

¹⁴ Ambigua 261-262a.

culture, whether that manifests itself as not taking ourselves too seriously or more proactively engaging in the sort of creativity that we find in the prophets and Jesus. The very mention of them highlights again the resilience of the tradition: whenever I come across those statements by Jesus about the first being last and the last being first (Matthew 19:30) I always imagine him moving people around from first to last, and vice versa, much like the holy fool of the middle ages.¹⁵

Hospitality

Relationality is at the heart of God, and therefore ought to be a core value of mission, showing itself in the way we value people. Writing of his own missional disposition, St Paul has no hesitation in using some very intimate metaphors: the breast-feeding mother and the caring father (1 Thess. 2:6-12). To develop that level of concern requires more than learning about theories of pastoral care because it is about personal disposition as well as professional provision. In a day when personal relationships are so disconnected – as much inside the church as elsewhere – the development of hospitable attitudes is an essential component of mission.

IN CONCLUSION

I have suggested here that while cultural sensitivity and awareness is vital for missional education, how we approach this can be resourced from within the historic tradition though it will require a different methodology than the one we have inherited from the immediate past, where the technicalities of critical thinking – whether in relation to the provenance of Bible books or the philosophical roots of dogma and apologetics – have regularly been prioritised over discipleship and spiritual nurture. Somewhat to my surprise, I have ended up with a threefold paradigm that might superficially look a bit like what Schleiermacher proposed using the image of a tree with roots, a trunk, and branches,¹⁶ though I would make the Bible the root, church history the trunk, and practical missional ministry the branches, and in relating them one to another I would work in reverse by beginning with the crown of the tree (branches) and view the other two from that perspective. But to do that is well beyond the scope of this article, and requires further reflection on curriculum design and a pedagogical process to match.





¹⁵ The subject of creative playfulness in relation to mission and the Bible is explored more fully in my *The McDonaldization of the Church* (London: DLT 2000), 112-132.

¹⁶ Schleiermacher regarded the roots as philosophy, the trunk was historical studies (a category that for him included Bible and systematic theology), and practical theology the branches (which was only 'practical' inasmuch as it concerned itself with the normative form of church life). See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief outline of the study of Theology drawn up to serve as the basis of introductory lectures*, translated by William Farrer (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1850), originally published in German in 1811.

PRAYER AND MISSION ENTERING INTO THE WAYS OF GOD

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Adrian Chatfield

CHURCHMISSIONSOCIETY.ORG/ANVIL - LEARN, PRAY, PARTICIPATE IN MISSION

The essential foundation of missionary spirituality is prayer and contemplation since Christian mission does not depend on human resources... *Redemptoris Missio* strongly emphasises the point: "The future of mission depends above all on contemplation. If a missionary is not a contemplative he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible manner."²

Christian spirituality is a gift and a task. It requires communion with God (contemplation) as well as action in the world (praxis). When these two elements are separated, both the life and the mission of the church are deeply affected. Contemplation without action is an escape from concrete reality; action without contemplation is activism lacking a transcendent meaning. True spirituality requires a missionary contemplation and a contemplative mission.³

These two assertions, one Catholic, the other Protestant, serve as a useful starting point for an assessment of the relationship between prayer and the *missio Dei*. They share the insight that prayer in all its forms – including wordless ones – is the expression of a living relationship between God and God's people: God with me, God with us. That relationship necessarily results in mission because God is a missionary God, but prayer is not primarily the instrument of mission. We pray because of who we are, not because of what prayer might accomplish. Indeed, as Jean Daniélou implies, "prayer [is] the mission of the church."⁴ That is what we are called into: our "primary purpose is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."⁵

WHY PRAY

We pray, first of all, in acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God and our own creatureliness and dependence. "He who comes into the presence of God to pray must divest himself of all vainglorious thoughts, lay aside all idea of worth; in short, discard all selfconfidence, humbly giving God the whole glory, lest by arrogating anything, however little, to himself, vain pride cause him to turn away his face."⁶ Calvin's emphasis here is a salutary reminder that prayer does not in the first instance turn us outward, as crusaders called to demolish strongholds with the tools of prayer. It turns us inward, in the primary act of obedience, to a relationship restored by God in Christ. This is the true worship (*weorðsciper*) demanded of the disciple: 'follow me' means first of all, 'return to me'. Prayer is a converting action.

Ian Randall has rightly drawn attention to the tension between divine initiative and human activity implicit in the conversionist language of much evangelical spirituality.⁷ However, from the perspective of prayer, the 'new birth' demands both a recognition of the gracious, uninvited action of God and our reception of that grace, through faith. We pray because we have been 'converted' to Christ, and we pray that we may be daily and fully converted.

We pray, secondly, in order to remember these fundamental truths. Prayer is the central act of memory, and the rehearsal of the good news of Jesus Christ in the liturgies of the church builds on that premise. The quasisacramental nature of Deuteronomy 6:8-9 reinforces this outward expression of the inner truth: "Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." The prayer of remembrance is indeed both word and action. Conversely, the wicked in Psalm 34 will be eliminated from God's memory⁸ because they are no longer in active relationship with him.

If prayer is response to God's grace and remembrance of a restored relationship, it also reshapes us. We are reformed by the truths which we have apprehended – through acts of confession and of thanksgiving.

It has become fashionable in recent times to criticise the language of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer for overplaying our failures and our shortcomings: 'the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable.' Matthew Fox's Original Blessing⁹ is an extreme version of this liberalising tendency, with its sideways swipe at 'original sin', and reminds us how easy it is for the church to collude with postmodernity's dislike

- ¹ With acknowledgement to Jean Daniélou, Prayer: The Mission of the Church, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 9.
- ² Sebastian Karotemprel, (ed), 1995, Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology, (Nairobi: Paulines, 1995), 135.
- ³ C. Rene Padilla, Spirituality in the Life and Mission of the Church (Edinburgh 2010 Study Group 9), 1
- ⁴ Daniélou, op.cit.
- ⁵ Opening of the Shorter Westminster Catechism of 1647.
- ⁶ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Chapter 20, Section 8; 1536.
- ⁷ Ian Randall, What a Friend we have in Jesus: The Evangelical Tradition, (London: DLT, 2005), 37.

⁸ 'Remembrance' in the NRSV and 'name' in NIV but 'memory' in John Goldingay's translation. See John Goldingay, *Psalms Volume 1*, (GrandRapids, Baker Academic, 2006), Kindle loc. 9702-9704.

⁹ Matthew Fox, Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality, (Rochester VT: Bear and Company, 1983)

of any admission of fault or failure. The classical Christian tradition of confessing one's sins, whether in Catholic sacrament or Protestant solitude, reminds us that there is no reshaping without repenting. The struggle to be holy – sanctification – is predicated upon the honesty of our prayer, and those who would be transformers must themselves first be transformed.

Similarly but less contentiously, those who remember what God has done for them in Christ respond to grace with gratitude, which results in generosity. Paul's impassioned plea for the collection for the saints in Jerusalem in 2 Cor. 8 is the classic example of this. Thankful prayer bears fruit in changed lives.

THE ECCLESIAL CHARACTER OF PRAYER

Whether we pray as individuals or congregationally, we pray ecclesially. Karl Barth says that "[o]ne cannot ask whether it is the Christians who pray, or the church. There is no alternative, for when the Christians pray, it is the church; and when the church prays, it is the Christians."¹⁰ Jean Daniélou comments

That we do not say "My Father" is of fundamental importance. There is nothing individualistic about the Our Father: it is a prayer in which we embrace all other people, a prayer that is at the same time an expression of love. We go to the Father only with our sisters and brothers.¹¹

Behind the claim that prayer is primarily ecclesial lies a set of theological premises. The Holy Trinity is a unity of persons with a single will, in perfect harmony and in constant communication. Because of this, the creation of humankind in God's image and likeness bears a deep Trinitarian imprint: the same harmony, will and communicating relatedness in creaturely form. The fact that we have fallen from the divine intention does not invalidate this truth; what makes us human is our interdependence and mutuality. All sin makes us less than human; our redemption in Christ restores our essential relationship with the Father and our potential relationships with other human beings. This is why the metaphor of reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5 is fundamental for understanding not just what we might become in Christ but also what it means to be human at all.

That is why God calls people together: not simply because we are stronger or better or more loving or more useful, but because the gathered people express a fundamental truth about the created order and its restoration through God's redemptive action. The people of God in the Old Testament – Israel – and the new and enlarged Israel of the New Testament are called together as a sign of the imago Dei, expressed interiorly as worship to God and exteriorly in the *missio Dei*.

The ecclesial character of prayer has over the centuries been worked out in both monastic and mystical theologies. Both these streams have much to teach the contemporary church about its vocation to enter into the ways of God, and it is to elements of these two streams that we now turn.

ANCIENT DISCIPLINES AND MONASTIC TRADITIONS

This is not the place to sketch a history of the monastic movement, but it is worth reminding ourselves that its growth coincided with the acceptance and adoption of Christianity as the imperial faith: Christendom. White martyrdom¹² replaced red martyrdom, as the faithful saw a rise in conventional faith and reacted adversely to it.

That said, I will now highlight key themes in Christian monasticism as they help to elucidate the missional character of the prayer of the church.

The eremitic tradition, the radical withdrawal from society which we associate with Anthony of Egypt, bears witness to the fact that there is an inherent conflict between a life lived towards the world, and a life lived towards God. Whether we understand Anthony's demons as internal or external, spiritual or psychological, we recognise that there is a stark choice to be made between worship of the true God, and the many idolatries offered by the world. Today we pose the choice in terms of counter-cultural faithfulness to the gospel. The eremitic tradition reminds us that we withdraw to pray because it is only in that withdrawal that we bear witness to absolute and uncompromising surrender to a God who brooks no rivals. This surrender the Radical Reformers of the 16th century called *Gelassenheit*.¹³

The Desert Mother Amma Sarah said it more simply: "For 13 years she waged warfare against the demon of

¹⁰ Karl Barth, *Prayer: 50th Anniversary Edition*, (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 5.

11 Daniélou, op. cit. page 26

¹² This is martyrdom without blood or violence such as strict asceticism.

¹³ For example, in the Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit by Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, in (Furcha EA, 2013), Fifteen tracts by Andreas Bodenstein (Carlstadt), (Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1995).

fornication. She never prayed that the warfare should cease, but she said, "O God, give me strength." Although Sarah may have been a deeply passionate woman, keenly aware of her sexuality, fornication principally meant anything that possessed her heart and separated her from God. A part of our being belongs only to God and can only be satisfied by God. Replacing God with anyone or anything is idolatry."¹⁴ To pray is to turn away from idols to the pursuit of the living God.

Paralleling the rise of eremitic Christianity was the coenobitic¹⁵ tradition, often linked with Anthony's near contemporary Pachomius. If the former privileged the single-minded pursuit of God to the exclusion of all rivals, the latter gave the early church an architecture for the praying community. The Rule of St Benedict¹⁶ sketched this out as demanding stability, obedience and *conversio or conversatio* morum. To this we can add the disciplines of the daily office,¹⁷ of accountability and of hospitality.

There have been times in the history of monasticism when the religious community has been over-identified with the Kingdom of God, but this theological excess need not detract from the essential emphasis on a people gathered together and organised for the express purpose of faithful corporate prayer that the will of God may be fulfilled on earth as in heaven. The office frames the whole; the community is formed by its common prayer, and it is unsurprising that Benedict dedicates many chapters to what can seem trivial detail. To him, a community fit for purpose is a community that prays. Out of prayer arise hospitality, service and mission. The Prologue describes this praying community as a dominici schola servitii, 18 a 'school of the Lord's service'. At its heart, it is a disciplined school of prayer, a school of disciples.

When Dietrich Bonhoeffer established a semi-monastic discipline at Finkenwalde to secure the Confessing Church against the predations of National Socialism, he drew on the revived monastic traditions of the Church of England, at Kelham,¹⁹ at Mirfield²⁰ and in Oxford.²¹

The strong implicit Benedictine spirituality that he found emerges in the early pages of *Life Together*:

According to God's will Christendom is a scattered people, scattered like seed 'into all the kingdoms of the earth' (Deut. 28:25). That is its curse and its promise. God's people must dwell in far countries among the unbelievers, but it will be the seed of the Kingdom of God in all the world.²²

Here, as in the declining years of the Western Roman Empire, we have a people with no city to sojourn in, exiled, a spiritual diaspora, for whom their scattering is both terror and vocation, terror because of the loss of any homeland, vocation because in that diaspora they are called together to witness to a new kind of community that may transform the world. This is a community which looks away from the world to structure, regulate and authenticate itself, prays to the Father in order to orient itself, prays in the name of Jesus to identify itself, prays in the power of the Spirit to dispel the powers of darkness, and then is reseeded back into the world to witness to a better way.

Much of what Bonhoeffer writes in *Life Together* is scandalous to our ears. In explaining that Christian community is a spiritual, not a human reality, he observes that "within the spiritual community there is never, nor in any way, any 'immediate' relationship of one to another... Because Christ stands between me and others, I dare not desire direct fellowship with them."²³ But it is precisely in the scandal of his writing that the monastic spirit is identified. The only valid community, the only community that bears within itself redemptive and Kingdom possibilities, is the community which is a gift of God. And it keeps that character only as long as and insofar as it is true to the Christic character of that community: rò ζῆv Χριστὸς, to live is Christ.²⁴

In the current fascination with hospitality as one of the key opportunities for the church's mission, Bonhoeffer's point needs to be attended to carefully. We are not in the business of presenting the church as a good place

¹⁴ Laura Swan, Forgotten Desert Mothers, The: Sayings, Lives, and Stories of Early Christian Women, (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), 37.

¹⁵ κοινόβιον or 'coenobium' from κοινός (common) + βίος (life).

¹⁷ 'officium' or work of the people in relation to the worship of God

- ¹⁸ Luke Benedict and Dysinger, *The Rule of St Benedict: Latin & English*, (Santa Ana CA: Source Books, 1996), Prologue 45.
- ¹⁹ Society of the Sacred Mission.

²⁰ Community of the Resurrection.

- ²¹ Society of St John the Evangelist.
- ²² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, (London: SCM, 1954), 7.
- 23 Ibid, pages 20 & 22.
- 24 Phil. 1.21.

^{16 6}th century.

to make friends, reach the lonely, home-make or model good social skills. Rather, we are called to form authentic community, clearly and unapologetically built into Christ, on prayer, and yet utterly open and vulnerable, welcoming and spacious for all who will come. Let this alone be the good news.

The emergence of 'new monastic movements' since the Second World War is testimony to the missional potential of this radical, disciplined and uncompromising attempt to follow Jesus together in the face of threatening cultural challenges and an often compromised institutional church. These movements have recognised the power of the monastic stream, both eremitic and coenobitic, to locate the primary action of the church in its relational axis with God the Holy Trinity, and the consequent impact of this in forming resilient, resourceful disciples under orders, ready for battle. In this, they echo the spirituality of the Carolingian church, which at a synod at Metz in 888 observed that 'we should seek Christ's piety, by which the pagans will be kept out.'²⁵

What the newer movements have done, very much in the spirit of the 6th century Society of Jesus, is to recognise that what they have, the world needs. The looking in demands more clearly than before a consequent looking out. The inward action of prayer and contemplation enables the outward action of mission, the 'battle'. The message that new monastic movements are wanting to send out is that when we are who we ought to be towards God, we are enabled to be who we ought to be towards the world, a people of God acting as a sign or sacrament of the coming Kingdom.

One of the key texts of this new stream of thinking about monastic spirituality is Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove's *New Monasticism*.²⁶ In his chapter on 'God's plan to save the world through a people' he says that though personal conversion and faith are significant, the church is key: "If the Bible is a story about God's plan to save the world through a people, then my salvation and sanctification depend on finding my true home with God's people. Apart from the story of this people, I can't have a relationship with God."²⁷ His 12 marks of new monasticism²⁸ strongly emphasise the foci of the third and fourth marks of mission,²⁹ which have been somewhat lacking in evangelical Christianity since the middle of the 19th century. It is most important, however, to note that his attempt to recover this missional focus lies in 'nurturing common life among members of intentional community.'³⁰

Graham Cray regards new monasticism as key to the missional process which is at the heart of fresh expressions of church. In New Monasticism as Fresh Expression of Church, he offers a missional trajectory based on communities of prayer:

- community demands commitment
- commitment forms disciples
- disciples stand firm against contemporary cultural temptation, together
- such disciples stand a chance of 'sustaining the long haul in planting church'

And so "[n]ew monasticism offers the possibility of important frameworks of support for those deployed on such mission."³¹ To juxtapose this with the monastic "pray much, and that God would count you worthy, for the Will of God is known only to him to whom God will reveal Himself"³² is to demonstrate the congruity of monastic discipline with missionary commitment so desired in the contemporary church.

ANCIENT DISCIPLINES AND THE MYSTICAL QUEST

The use of the terms 'mysticism' and 'mystic' tend to put off evangelicals, worried by any suggestion that there is available to us an access to God independent of or superior to the Holy Scriptures. James Wiseman helpfully draws a distinction between the contemporary use of the term, in which 'a special state of consciousness surpassing ordinary experience through union with the transcendent reality of God'³³ is intended, and a

²⁵ Canon 1, quote in S Coupland, "Rod of God's wrath or the people of God's wrath? The Carolingian theology of the Viking invasions", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 1991; 42.

²⁶ Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, New Monasticism: What it has to say to today's church, (Grand Rapids MI: Brazos, 2008).

- ²⁷ ibid, 58.
- 28 ibid, 39.

²⁹ [3] to respond to human need by loving service, [4] to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

30 ibid, 39, Mark 6.

³¹ Graham Cray, et al (eds), New Monasticism as Fresh Expression of Church, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2010), 6.

³² Herbert Kelly, *Principles: Society of the Sacred Mission*, (Kelham: SSM, 1909), Principle vii.

historic, more orthodox approach, in which mysticism is about presence and immediacy: "the mystical element in Christianity is that part of its belief and practices that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God."³⁴

Here, two examples will have to suffice: the Eastern tradition of the Jesus Prayer, and the allegorical use of the Song of Songs.

JESUS PRAYER

This prayer, whose deep origin lies in the cry of blind Bartimaeus³⁵ and in the semi-formulaic 'in the name of Jesus' of the Acts of the Apostles, is described by the Pilgrim as 'the abbreviated form of the Gospel.'³⁶ It aims to develop the remembrance of Jesus, to make the invocation of Jesus spontaneous and 'self-acting' so that we call out to him even in sleep, keep guard over the intellect or heart and reach out beyond language into the living silence of God. It is a unitive prayer which is "a way of unifying the inward attention, stripping the mind of images, and so attaining *hesychia*."³⁷ To the mind unfamiliar with the seemingly esoteric, detached and apparently mechanical repetitiveness of this prayer, it is easy to discount it as an individualistic journey away from the things of earth.

The truth is entirely other. The Pilgrim's search for the way of unceasing prayer leads him not away from the world, but into it. Praying the Jesus prayer opens the door to life-changing encounters with others, new ways of looking at the world, a heart broken in intercession, and the exercise of spiritual power. This last we will return to later in touching on the rise of Pentecostalism. À propos of life-changing encounters, we need only observe that the pilgrim is both recipient and giver, of grace, of goods, of spiritual insight. His journey is one of profound interdependence, in which his search for 'true prayer' gives him back God, other people and himself.

Similarly, this prayer helps him to see the world as far more alive, both to itself and to others, more, not less real: "When I began to pray with the heart, everything around me became transformed and I saw it in a new and delightful way. The trees, the grass, the earth, the air, the light, and everything seemed to be saying to me that it exists to witness to God's love for man and that it prays and sings of God's glory."³⁸

The intercessory character of the Jesus Prayer, which must surely lie at the heart of any missional prayer, is best illustrated by Simon Barrington-Ward's response to his early encounter with the Franciscan Brother Ramón: "I had already had the feeling when I was praying with him of a further pull, flowing underneath all our talk and laughter, of a profound, far-reaching compassion for all those for whom he would intercede... Within that intercession was an immense, almost lonely hunger and thirst, on behalf both of himself and of our world, a longing in the depths of his being for the living God. This was the driving force behind his quest for solitude."³⁹ It is remarkable though unsurprising that the quest for solitude is the journey that took Ramón – and takes many mystics – right into the heart of the world.

SONG OF SONGS: LOVER AND BELOVED

In 1547, the reformer Sébastien Castellión was driven out of Geneva by Calvin for claiming that the Song of Songs was a "lascivious and obscene poem... As it dealt merely with earthly affections, he deemed it unworthy of a place in the sacred canon and demanded its exclusion."⁴⁰ For most Christians in the Middle Ages and beyond, and for many still today, the book's presence in the canon of scripture invites a multi-layered interpretation which at its heart contains an invitation to intimacy with God. Bernard of Clairvaux first wrestled with the text in convalescence, and from 1135 till 1153 preached on it in a now famous series of sermons.

The second sermon, 'On the kiss', reflects on 'the ardour with which the patriarchs long for the incarnation of Christ' and the privilege which is ours of letting Christ speak to us, by way of a 'kiss', an encounter. In the third sermon, the kiss is divided into three: the kiss to the feet, in repentance; the kiss of the hand, in receiving Christ's

- ³³ James Wiseman, Spirituality and Mysticism, (New York: Orbis, 2006), 9.
- ³⁴ ibid, page 10, quoting Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, (New York: Crossroad, 1991), xvi.
- ³⁵ Mark 10.46ff.

- ³⁷ Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff & Jean Leclercq, Jean, Christian Spirituality: Origins to the 12th Century, (New York: Crossroad, 1993),
- 406. Hesychia ($\dot\eta\sigma\upsilon\chi\dot(\alpha)$ is quietness or stillness in the Orthodox tradition.
- 38 Bacovcin, op.cit, 25'

⁴⁰ John Baildam, *Paradisal Love: Johann Gottfried Herder and the Song of Songs*, (Sheffield: Academic Press, 2009), 140.

²²

³⁶ Helen Bacovcin, The Way of a Pilgrim and The Pilgrim continues his Way, (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 23.

³⁹ Brother Ramón, and Simon Barrington-Ward, *Praying the Jesus Prayer Together*, (Oxford: BRF 2001), 23.

grace for growth in holiness; and the kiss on the mouth, in intimacy. "And now what remains, O good Lord, except that now in full light, while I am in fervour of spirit, you should admit me to the kiss of your mouth, and grant me the full joy of your presence."⁴¹

Four hundred years later, John of the Cross wrote a series of poems, several of which pick up on the same theme and relate it to the dark night of the soul in which nothing is known but God:

En mi pecho florido, Que entero para él sólo se guardaba, Allí quedó dormido, Y yo le regalaba, Y el ventalle de cedros aire daba.

I gave him there My thought, my care, So did my spirit flower. Love lay at rest Upon my breast That cedar-scented hour. ⁴²

Both Bernard and John are mystical activists whose desire for intimacy can be dismissed as erotic displacement, or more seriously as a theological dualism in which mission is regarded as secondary or inferior, because it deals with the evanescent things of this world, while 'in your presence there is fullness of joy.' (Psalm 16:11) The truth is that both were busy men engaged in reaching out to the communities around them with deep vocational commitment. The end of Bernard's Third Sermon has him interrupting his reflections in mid-flow, saying "These guests whose arrival has just been announced to us oblige me to break off my sermon rather than bring it to an end."43 This is no navel-gazing, but an intimacy with Jesus which drives us out to 'kiss' others with the kiss with which we ourselves have been kissed. To change the metaphor, in order to love with Kingdom love, we must daily know ourselves loved.

For John's part, apart from his exhausting and often harrowing ministry in a conflictual era, it is worth remembering that the first 31 stanzas of his Spiritual Canticle were composed while he was in prison, in filthy and severely deprived conditions, yet another testimony to the deeply engaged and world-affirming resilience which intimacy with Jesus has brought to many saints of the gospel.

NEW LANGUAGES AND A NEW PENTECOST

Having addressed monastic and mystical traditions as sources of missional prayer, I turn to the Pentecostal movement of the past century for my third and final example of the interface between prayer and mission.

Ronald Knox's idiosyncratic study of religious movements: Enthusiasm⁴⁴ has fascinated me for many years, not least because of its dismissive perspective on ecstatic forms of religious experience as 'ultrasupernaturalism' in which "the first fervours evaporate; prophecy dies out, and the charismatic is merged in the institutional. 'The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard' – it is a fugal melody that runs through the centuries." In his chapter on 'Some Vagaries of Modern Revivalism', he mocks glossolalia interminably: "When men and women got so carried away as to be frankly unintelligible, you could see... that they must be actuated by some Force wholly out of the common."⁴⁵

It is neither my task here to show (though I could) that Ronnie Knox's argument is driven more by intellectual prejudice and snobbery than by academic rigour, nor to argue the opposite on the basis of the extraordinary way in which Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal movements have embedded themselves in the mainstream of Christianity in little less than a century and a half. My aim is rather to suggest in this final section that the rise of Pentecostalism, from a missiological perspective, gives the church back its gospel voice, and that this voice is given back primarily through prayer.

Velli-Matti Kärkkäinen says that "the key to discerning and defining Pentecostal identity lies in Christ-centered charismatic spirituality with a passionate desire to 'meet with Jesus Christ as be is being perceived as the Bearer of the 'Full Gospel'.⁴⁶ Stephen Land summarises this spirituality as 'worship and witness in the light of the End'.⁴⁷ As Pentecostals give voice to their spirituality

⁴¹ G R Evans, Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works, (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 223.

⁴² Kathleen Jones, tr., The Poems of St John of the Cross, (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1993), 20f.

⁴³ Evans, op.cit, 224.

⁴⁴ R A Knox, Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion with special reference to the 17th and 18th centuries, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1950), 1.
⁴⁵ ibid, page 554.

⁴⁶ Velli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "The Pentecostal Understanding of Mission", in Wonsuk Ma, Velli-Matti Kärkkäinen, & Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds (2014), *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity* (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 34.

primarily through testimony, I will use an early Anglican Pentecostal narrative to further elucidate the point that in Pentecostalism, as in our examples from the ancient church, it is in "returning and rest [that] you shall be saved" and "in quietness and trust shall be your strength".⁴⁸ The missionary imperative is rekindled in the Holy of Holies.

Alexander Boddy, vicar of All Saints' Monkwearmouth in the Diocese of Durham, went to Oslo in 1907 and found his ministry transformed by the new Pentecost to which he was introduced by TB Barratt, 'Apostle to Norway'. In a pamphlet published the same year, he describes the impact on his own congregation and wider church context.⁴⁹

He begins by describing a vision of Jesus blessing the world, a particular act of God in mission: "An earnest 'Seeker' whilst kneeling before the Lord in one of our meetings suddenly saw Him with outstretched hands – as if blessing the world. The great world in darkness was below Him, and from His fingertips slowly fell drops of living flame... So she saw many little fires kindled in this country of ours."⁵⁰

He goes on to explain that "Pentecost' is a 'life of union with the Lord Jesus". This union is experienced in prayer, which is key to new life in the church: "We were tarrying until we should be endued with power from on high. We were praying for revival, and we did not know how God was going to answer our prayer, but we were sure He would answer, and the answer has come. And the answer is from Him.⁵¹ In the prayer meetings of the Pentecosttouched church, power is given. When that power is given, then we can validly pray, with Boddy, "Open today doors of service and of confession, and give me boldness to enter in, in the power Thou hast given me."⁵²

The tract is pietistic, simplistic, and not much suited to contemporary tastes. In one or two places, it smacks of the prosperity gospel, though it does not shy away from speaking about suffering.⁵³ The most remarkable thing about it, however, is that it is above all else an extended prayer and paean of praise, in which Boddy simply gives glory to God for the wonder of new life and growth that come when ordinary people pray without restraint. For Boddy and his contemporaries, the continuum is a simple one: repent – receive – rejoice – respond.

The first Assemblies of God church that I worshipped in was in a former mining town in Nottinghamshire. I was struck as a young undergraduate by the easy confidence with which these miners and generally working class folk spoke of their Jesus, their faith, their mission. It was as if this mysterious ability to speak in tongues had given them many more tongues: to story-tell in their personal testimonies of lives that were radically changed; to preach, even on soapboxes in Nottingham's Market Square, without shame, simply yet articulately; to proclaim Jesus and a vision of the Kingdom of God without inhibition, in the local idiom; and to pray with conviction, knowing that God was an active, healing, lifechanging God.

PRAYER AS MISSION: SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The link between prayer and mission is a simple one. Prayer leads us deeper into an active relationship with a missional God, and the inevitable consequences are worship, service and mission, the three marks of the church.⁵⁴ When I launched the Simeon Centre for Prayer and the Spiritual Life in 2007, I said in my address that "I keep reminding myself that the energy of a centre for prayer is a listening ear, an obedient heart, and a driving passion to rediscover daily what it means to be friends with God – and to help others who cross our threshold to do the same."

I then went on to say that the "passion of the Simeon Centre is to find people who are hungry for prayer, whether or not they know Jesus in a personal and intimate way yet, pray with them, and introduce them to Jesus. Let's find out where God is at work in the people around us who don't know him, and join in with God's

⁴⁷ Steven Land, Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 95ff.

- 48 Isa. 30.15 NRSV.
- ⁴⁹ Alexander Boddy, (1907 republished as ebook by Full Well Ventures, 2012), A Vicar's Testimony: "Pentecost" at Sunderland.
- ⁵⁰ ibid, Kindle locs.41-44.
- ⁵¹ ibid, Kindle locs.183-185.
- ⁵² ibid, Kindle loc.392

⁵³ It is worth noting that though "for the last sixteen years of her life, she [Mary Boddy] was an invalid... she still ministered healing to others." Stanley M Burgess and Gary B McGee (eds), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1988), 91.

⁵⁴ I often use these as the three marks of the church, and often wonder why the Lambeth Conference of 1988 gave us five marks of mission but has never seen fit to give the prior marks of the church. I would be interested to know if any readers have similar lists!

work." In other words, if prayer is the language of our ongoing encounter with God, then inviting others to pray with us, whether or not we deem them to be disciples yet, must necessarily be at the heart of our missional task. Prayer makes disciples; in prayer disciples are transformed; and an apostolic church emerges.

'I'm not religious, but I am spiritual' is one of the enduring clichés of our age, a strapline of postmodernity. Suspicion of institutions of all kinds abounds, political and social, economic and ecclesial. In the face of difficulties about believing anything with a degree of assurance, and resistance to most forms of committed belonging, the surprising persistence of prayer 'to an unknown God' is surely a reminder to the church that prayer is one of the few contexts within which meaningful spiritual engagement and evangelism remain possible. The offer of prayer is rarely refused by the unchurched.

Let me end with a personal testimony, slightly adapted to preserve anonymity. Some years ago I went to a baptism in a Pentecostal church in the Midlands. It had been a small, struggling, prayerful, inward-looking fellowship for many years. A few faithful women (and they were mostly women) had kept it alive. There's no formula for what happened next, but faithfulness in prayer and faithfulness to God's work were somehow central. Now, the church having grown to a respectable 100 or so on a council estate, four people were to be baptised. One was a young man with Down's syndrome and a deep fear of water. The second was a middle-aged man with a failed marriage and a recovered faith. The third woman was a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, and the last had come into the church in a wheelchair, been prayed for, got out of her wheelchair and never returned to it. I wept my way through their four testimonies and baptisms. I often wish that I could belong to a church like that.

But I'm not sure that I have it in me to belong there. I'm too impatient. I want quick results, and I suffer from the temptation to dismiss churches that don't seem to be missional. This church in particular for so long seemed to have lost its way, and I thought little of it. Now that I've been privileged to see the end of this part of their story, I've learnt yet again that prayer whose primary aim is to achieve results is of little worth. It has to be enough that I pray because of who God is. God is faithful and his mission will be done. In prayer, I too will be part of it.

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FAITHFUL PRESENCE A RE-EMERGING MISSION PARADIGM

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INTRODUCTION: SHIFTING PARADIGMS

Amidst a climate of growing anxiety around church decline and attendant attempts to find solutions, there appears to have been a quiet yet noticeable re-emergence and appreciation of faithful presence as an approach to mission today. Attentiveness to place, relationships and community has particularly surfaced in the contemporary movement of New Monasticism and in the growth of small missional communities. These maintain a strong emphasis on face-to-face engagement, hospitality and communal life and give attention to what it means to be rooted in a particular place and context. Some of these characteristics are also found among churches that are bucking the trend of decline in attendance amongst young adults. Beth Keith's 2013 report on such growing churches, "Authentic Faith: Fresh **Expressions of Church Among Young Adults**", reveals that although the churches studied differ in style and practice, they share common characteristics of which community is one: food, socials and hospitality are all "key components of church life rather than additional activities."1

In my role at Church Mission Society I have the privilege of coming alongside churches who have taken the bold and courageous step of becoming more deeply present and engaged in their communities. In particular l've seen how those churches involved in the Partnership for Missional Church process, which I detail later, engage in practices that help them to discern God's presence and reflect on their own presence, within the mission of God, in their communities. At a more structural level, the Church of England's Presence and Engagement national programme (and task group) has been equipping Christians for mission and ministry in multi-faith contexts. The importance of mission that is rooted and engaged in a particular place, in and amongst our (diverse) neighbours, is strongly affirmed. I could cite many more examples, but it is clear that there is a growing sense that mission is about a life lived as presence among and in relation to others. The mission paradigm of inviting people onto our turf (or seeker service), or parachuting into another context 'to do'

good or 'to proclaim' good news, or offering intellectual arguments to convert others, seems to have waned. Instead, there is a recovery of something that is deeply human, personal, communal and God-shaped – being present.

Not only has there been a quiet shift in a mission paradigm, but there has been a socio-political shift in relation to the role of civil society that I suggest affords the Church a renewed opportunity for mission expressed through local presence. The concept of civil society has enjoyed a reawakening of interest in the last 10 to 20 years² which can be traced to three major trends: (1) changing ideas about the delivery of public services alongside (or instead of) governmental agencies; (2) growing disillusionment with "big government" and "nation states" as a means of ordering lives and institutions; and (3) the challenge of building democracy in countries which had never known (or barely remembered) such political systems.³ At the same time there has been a marked decline in social capital in western societies, attributed to the fragmentation of the market economy and increasing individualism. These trends have focused attention on the need to re-invigorate civil society; the public space that is outside of the state, the market, family and friends and which is occupied by many groups, associations, institutions and churches.⁴ What does mission as presence look like in this public space?

In this article I seek to dig a little deeper into this new reality, unearthing resources from Christian tradition (notably Anglican and Catholic), theology and practice that can shape and inform an understanding of mission that is centred on presence. Firstly, I attend to tradition and theology in the work of Kenneth Leech, Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder. I also consider perspectives offered by Elaine Graham and Margaret Harris that highlight opportunities and challenges for mission as presence in civil society. Finally, I examine the theology of "being with" as described by Samuel Wells in relation to Partnership for Missional Church - a missional process that more than 60 churches in the UK are currently following.⁵ In so doing, I offer a perspective as to why our present mission paradigm reflects the very heart of God.

¹ Beth Keith, Authentic Faith: Fresh Expressions of Church Among Young Adults (Fresh Expressions, 2013). The churches represented included

Church of England, Methodist, Baptist, free churches, CMS, Church Army Plants and independent churches.

² David Fergusson, Church, State and Civil Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 144.

³ Margaret Harris, 'Civil society and the role of UK Churches: An exploration', *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 15 (2002),46-7.

⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁵ Churches in America, South Africa and other places are also following the Partnership for Missional Church process.

ANGLICAN SOCIAL TRADITION AND INCARNATIONAL THEOLOGY

In some senses, faithful presence in attentiveness to the local is an affirmation of what the Church particularly the Church of England – has historically been: present, and deeply embedded in society. For Kenneth Leech, "the strength of the Church is in the neighbourhoods ... the small ecclesial community which is basic to the life of the Christian movement."⁶ In The Eye of the Storm Leech examines the link between spirituality and human liberation. He approaches this from an Anglo-Catholic, socialist perspective rooted in practical experience - his pastoral and social ministry in the East End of London. He argues that the Church needs to reassert the corporate character of spiritual life and, in so doing, recover the social character of the gospel itself.⁷ He strongly critiques the cleavage that has arisen between 'spirituality' on the one hand, and 'social action' on the other. For Leech, the Kingdom of God is very much a social conception.⁸ He critiques the 'implicationist' discourse that serves to reinforce the social-spiritual cleavage - "the notion that the gospel is one thing, and its social implications are something else, derivative perhaps, but essentially an offshoot." Rather, he asserts that there is in fact no distinction between the gospel and a transformed society:

The proclamation that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, the vision of a transformed society – the Kingdom of God – and the commitment to work with the incarnate, crucified and risen Christ to achieve it, through the power of the Spirit and nourished by word and Eucharist, is the gospel. There is no other.⁹

I contend that such an understanding of the social character of the gospel that is lived out in and amongst others (mission as presence) is vital for the Church's public witness within civil society today and is to be found, in part, within the Anglican social tradition and in a theology of the incarnation to which that tradition held. Anglicanism, particularly in England, where the parish system is so significant, has been closely identified with incarnational understandings of mission because Anglicanism since *Lux Mundi* (1889) has "stressed the theological, as well as missional, significance of the incarnation."¹⁰

Leech traces two strands within the Anglican social tradition over the last two centuries: (1) A "moderate reformist socialism rooted in incarnational and sacramental theology" that was led by those in positions of power. It emerged from the Oxford Movement, was later influenced by the Christian Socialist FD Maurice and came to dominate mainstream Anglicanism until the death of William Temple (then Archbishop of Canterbury) in 1944.¹¹ (2) A grass-roots tradition rooted in the life and struggles of the poor which commenced in 1877 when Stewart Headlam founded the Guild of St Matthew at St Matthew's Church, Bethnal Green. Within a few years it had become the main socialist Christian movement in Britain.¹² In both strands Leech perceives "the centrality of the Kingdom of God as a hope for the transformation of this world" and he affirms the value of the social vision that emerged (and which has long been in abeyance) for the Church and society today.¹³ In summary, this vision is (1) corporate and social; a community bonded together by solidarity. It is (2) materialistic; matter and spirit are seen as one. At the core of the Anglo-Catholic tradition is the doctrine of incarnation, the Word made flesh. It is a vision of (3) "a transformed society, not simply an improved one." It is (4) a 'rebel tradition' with a culture of dissent that has "the ability to establish links of solidarity with marginalised groups without losing its own identity". It has (5) a Kingdom theology rather than a Church theology.14

In contrast, Leech insists that a fundamental problem with political liberalism today is the lack of vision; there

⁶ Kenneth Leech, *The Sky is Red* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997), 238.

¹² Ibid., 39-40. Leech states this was a fusion of the theology of Maurice with the sacramentalism of the ritualists.

¹³ Ibid., 40.

¹⁴ Leech, *The Sky is Red*, 127-132.

⁷ Kenneth Leech, *The Eye of the Storm* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992), 19.

⁸ Ibid., p. 26. He further states: "Today what needs asserting strongly is that the gospel is social at its very heart. There is in fact no 'social gospel' apart from the gospel itself."

⁹ Leech, The Sky is Red, 139.

¹⁰ Samuel Wells, A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God, (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015) p. 17. Lux Mundi is a volume that affirms the incarnation as the central doctrine of Anglican theology.

¹¹ Leech, *The Eye of the Storm*, 37-38.

is "no idea of the kind of community within which its individuals might flourish."¹⁵ Further, he writes:

Politics ceases to be about concerns, hopes and aspirations of ordinary people, bound together within a polis, and becomes something done by professional elites for the people. Politics is something done by experts, supported by a massive army of civil servants who, it is believed, combine value neutrality and manipulative power. Whatever dialogue takes place is between government, business and various elites, and takes place over the heads of people.¹⁶

Similar concerns have been stated in the House of Bishops' pastoral letter to parishes ahead of the 2015 general election.¹⁷ Both Leech and the bishops recognise the need for the state and the market, but acknowledge the imperative to beat them back from trespassing on the role of civil society – "those aspects of life which governments can influence but not control."¹⁸ I suggest that the Church – as small ecclesial communities embedded in communities across the country – can embody and concretise the Anglican social vision that Leech affirms. Through such missional presence and engagement churches can live out a different vision and reality.

BIG SOCIETY: MISSION OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

I pause here in my reflections on tradition and theology to consider two perspectives which highlight possibilities and tensions for the Church in terms of its missional presence in public life: Elaine Graham (practical theologian) and Margaret Harris (researcher on voluntary and community sector organisation). Graham examines the way in which churches and faith-based groups have increasingly been perceived to be catalysts of the 'Big Society' and she affirms the local nature of the Church – its rootedness in local communities – in this context.¹⁹ She perceives the strength of 'localism' whereby churches, in association with others, foster practices of active citizenship in the neighbourhoods and networks to which they belong.²⁰ While noting that it is not the 'sole' mission of the church to underwrite a healthy civil society, Graham asserts it is a necessary dimension in the context of religious and cultural pluralism today. For a plurality of groups and rival moral conceptions to coexist within a democratic system it is vital that healthy interactions between groups, institutions, organisations and movements are fostered. From an Augustinian perspective, she considers active citizenship to be a temporal expression of 'the Church's vision of the heavenly city.' It is not simply a matter of mobilising 'social capital' within churches into local civil society, but "upholding and promoting the 'common good': a public theology that seeks the 'welfare of the city' over the 'interests of the church"'.²¹ This I contend coheres with the social character of the gospel as espoused by Leech above.

Such public engagement takes diverse forms both within traditional and new forms of church, and across all denominations. Graham offers several case-studies of which I here summarise two: (1) An Anglican church incorporates a surgery; it has become a sacred space of choice for the celebration of weddings between people of Christian and other faiths; and is visited by Muslim women who wish to discuss personal issues with the female vicar. (2) A Roman Catholic church is involved in broad-based organising (London Citizens) with trade unions, mosques, gurdwaras and other civic institutions to campaign for a living wage, along with other common causes.²² I suggest this practice of hospitality and the embodiment of local social capital for wider civil society is not merely a means to an end, and it cannot be reduced to a 'social implication' of the gospel. Rather, it is an embodiment of the gospel as the church lives out (incarnates) "its particular vision of the common good through influence, conversation, shared resources and the making of common cause."23

However, it would be naive to suggest that missional

¹⁵ Ibid., 100.

¹⁶ Ibid., 99.

¹⁷ The Church of England, 'Who is My Neighbour? A Letter from the House of Bishops to the People and Parishes of the Church of England for the General Election 2015,' <u>https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2170230/whoismyneighbour-pages.pdf</u> 40-41 [accessed 2 May 2015].

¹⁸ Ibid., 18 paragraph 41.

¹⁹ Graham, 'The Establishment, Multi-culturalism and Social Cohesion', 129.

20 Ibid., 138.

21 Ibid.

²² Ibid., 130-132.

presence expressed in such civic engagement is without challenges. Drawing on empirical research amongst churches and synagogues, Margaret Harris warns that churches need to be aware of attempts to co-opt congregations to the governmental agenda. She notes that participation in welfare servicedelivery and local civic activities, if too dominant in the "constellation of a church's activities" should raise questions about whether 'core' religious purposes are being 'eclipsed'. Similarly, there may be concerns that associating, partnering and collaborating on shared projects with others - particularly those of other faiths or those hostile to faith - will lead churches to 'tone down' their Christian convictions and principles. More pragmatically, it may place competing demands on churches' human and financial resources.²⁴ Further, a paper that analyses the Church of England and community organising identifies the significant 'gatekeeping' power of clergy in determining (and inhibiting) a church's involvement. It reports that "the traditional parochial role and often the self-identity of the clergy encourages a culture in which they define and articulate interests on behalf of others", as opposed to permitting 'grassroots voices' to 'frame the action' as occurs in community organising.²⁵ Clearly, Graham and Harris show that there are both possibilities and dangers inherent in churches being present and engaged in the public space. How is such presence to be faithful and missional, avoiding the 'social-spiritual cleavage' of which Leech makes mention?

SPIRITUALITY OF PROPHETIC DIALOGUE

I contend that a spirituality of "prophetic dialogue" as developed by Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder may prove a vital resource for the Church's mission in such a context. This spirituality (as opposed to strategy) emerges from a Catholic missionary tradition and draws from *missio Dei*, Reign of God and Christocentric theologies.²⁶ Central to a spirituality of dialogue are the virtues or characteristics of respect, humility, vulnerability, repentance, orthopraxis, mutual trust and discernment (listening). Such characteristics, they assert, "point to the fact that mission is never about imposition or conquest. On the contrary, it is about the love of God for all peoples and all of creation, and that love is expressed first and foremost in a gentle presence and an offer of self."²⁷ As churches serve their communities and associate with others to seek the welfare of the city, such characteristics will be of paramount importance.

The prophetic companion to dialogue counteracts any fear that service and partnership with others (the embodiment of dialogue) might become detached from the Church's ability to criticise, advocate and speak forth - and thus lose its distinctiveness. For Bevans and Schroeder, prophecy is rooted in dialogue: a prophet is "someone who listens, who is attentive, who sees" and yet the prophetic role also entails "speaking forth" and "speaking against", in word and deed.²⁸ This necessitates engagement in society, and yet it also entails being a distinctive "contrast community". This is evident in the way Christians "care for one another, their hospitality, their involvement in the world of politics and the arts, their moral stances - all these can be gentle or not-so-gentle challenges to the world around them."29 Indeed, Leech recognises the vital need for the prophetic dimension within the local church: "The theme of the local church as a community, marked by commitment, discipline and prophetic witness, is an essential corrective to that of the 'servant church'."30 In similar vein, Bevans and Schroeder assert "we cannot and dare not separate them" for prophecy and dialogue offer a vital check on one-another.³¹

The centrality of the doctrine of the incarnation in the Anglican social vision that Leech espouses is embedded, as I see it, in this spirituality of 'prophetic dialogue'. Bevans and Schroeder write:

The church is called equally to incarnate what it says in its community life and in its engagement in the world. It does this by

²⁸ Ibid., 42-52. These features of prophecy are also exemplified in a series of images: teacher, storyteller and trail guide.
²⁹ Ibid., 61.

³⁰ Leech, The Sky is Red, 240.

²³ Fergusson, 164. I find Fergusson's views on civil society complement Graham's.

²⁴ Harris, 'Civil society and the role of UK Churches', 49, 53-54.

²⁵ Robert Furbey, Peter Else, Richard Farnell, Paul Lawless, Sue Lund and Benita Wishart, 'Breaking with Tradition? The Church of England and Community Organising', *Community Development Journal*, 32.2 (1997), 148.

²⁶ Bevans and Schroeder, 2, 59. The phrase was first coined at the General Chapter of their missionary congregation, The Society of the Divine Word, in 2000.

²⁷ Ibid., 30-1, 112. These characteristics are further exemplified in a series of images that evoke the thinking and practice that dialogue requires (see 31-34).

participating in God's mission – radically dialogical as God is in God's self, and radically prophetic as is seen especially in God's speaking forth God's Word of hope, encouragement, challenge, and, where need be, condemnation.³²

I contend that such an incarnational approach is radically demanding. There is no 'implicationist' discourse here, for the common life of the Church and engagement with the world are each shown to be embodiments of the gospel. The vision that Leech affirms in conjunction with the spirituality of 'prophetic dialogue' would seem to guard against some of the fears that Graham and Harris articulate. Mission as faithful, local presence incarnates the gospel with humility and respect, and seeks the welfare of the city through critical (prophetic) cooperation.

MISSION AS "BEING WITH": THEOLOGY, PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

In A Nazareth Manifesto Samuel Wells offers another perspective on missional presence, but in the context of a theology and practice of "being with" which I suggest complements the views of Leech, Bevans and Schroeder. His perspective also offers a more nuanced understanding of the type of community engagement which Graham names and provides a valuable check on some of the concerns flagged by Harris. For Wells, 'with' is the most important word in theology.³³ He shows how deeply the notion of being with is rooted in the life of the Trinity and asserts it is both the nature and destiny of God and God's purpose for humankind and the creation.³⁴ It is a view that is both deeply incarnational (God is present with us) and thus closely aligned with Leech and the Anglo-Catholic social tradition, and yet also eschatological (being truly present with God and one another is the destiny of all things in God).³⁵ Examining the biblical story through this lens, Wells argues that scripture is not primarily an account of

God's action for us, but is rather an account of God's yearning to be with us. This is most poignantly evident in the atonement: "Jesus restores the with between God and us. There is no for that is not designed to bring about with. [...] Being with is the telos of all God's action, and thus should be of ours." ³⁶

If being with is "the heart of mission" and the telos of all our action as Wells asserts, what does it look like for churches to be with - to embody faithful presence - in their localities and within the context of civil society today? Wells describes eight dimensions (principles or practices) of being with, three of which I now examine in relation to Partnership for Missional Church (PMC).³⁷ PMC is a three year process of spiritual reflection, transformation and engagement that groups of 10-12 churches take together. Originating in the United States, it has travelled to South Africa and Europe and is now being offered to churches in the UK through Church Mission Society in partnership with Church Innovations, who developed the original concept. There is a deep resonance with a theology of "being with" as congregations (re)discover and engage with their communities (being truly present) through a process that facilitates deep and long-term cultural change in congregational life towards being missional, rather than just carrying out mission activities.

The first dimension of being with that Wells explores is presence and on this rests all the others. Presence is rooted in a theology of incarnation and as such is not to be mistaken for passivity or imposition. It requires genuinely entering into the life of others and as such it is demanding, for presence means an encounter with the pain, messiness, complexity and joy of others. It takes seriously the culture and context in which churches are placed. The first year of the PMC process is centred on discovery and in so doing enables churches to reflect on what it means to be present, to be with, their local community. Central to this is the idea that congregations are "invited into a journey within the life of the living God," and this enables the discovery of God's own presence, God's life, in the community.³⁸

³¹ Bevans and Schroeder, 55.

- 32 Ibid., 71.
- ³³ Wells, 11 and 231.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 15.
- 35 Ibid., 23.
- 36 Ibid., 25.

³⁷ Space only allows for an examination of three, but all eight create a rich and holistic description of mission as 'being with'. The dimensions not discussed here are: mystery, delight, participation, enjoyment and glory.

³⁸ Patrick Keifert, *We are Here Now: A New Missional Era*, (Minnesota: Church Innovations Institute Inc, 2006), 61. Available to purchase in the UK from Church Mission Society. A concise summary of the PMC process can be found in: Nigel Rooms and Patrick Keifert, *Forming the Missional Church: Creating Deep Cultural Change in Congregations* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2014).

A constant refrain throughout the process is "What is God up to?" and "Where have you seen God at work?" Discovering and affirming the presence and life of God in a particular neighbourhood opens up possibilities for congregations to be more deeply present and engaged themselves (which links to another dimension Wells describes: participation) and guards against the fears of co-option of which Harris warns. There will always be competing agendas in associational and community life – but the role of the church is to discern and join in with God's presence and activity, however unexpected and messy that may seem.

The second dimension goes beyond but is dependent upon presence: attention. Wells writes:

If the potential of a neighbourhood lies first in its unlocked gifts, attention is the slow and purposeful listening to stories, abiding in silence, befriending time, and the acceptance of fallibility that leads to the discovery of gifts.³⁹

In many ways, the PMC process is that of giving patient and loving attention to a community, as opposed to doing something to or for that community - a mindset of "being with" as opposed to "working for" as Wells puts it. In PMC, the nurturing of attention is evident early on with the introduction of Dwelling in the Word, one of six spiritual practices that congregations learn. It is a practice that develops the "corporate character of spiritual life" to which Leech alludes. The idea is to dwell in one passage of scripture over a period of time (for which a set of instructions is given), cultivating attentiveness to the text, to each other (one-to-one), to the group and to the congregation. In so doing participants discern how their lives are being lived within the life of the living, triune God. As a result, "they begin to see and experience the world, especially their immediate community, service area, and those with whom they live their daily lives, in new terms, no longer only as humans would see them but also as God does."40 Similarly, another practice called Dwelling in the World helps congregations be observant of their wider communities, looking for the people of

peace God sends and enabling interaction in the local neighbourhood and public space.

Partnership is the dimension "where being with genuinely becomes working with."⁴¹ Whereas "attention notices and highlights particularities and unique qualities, [...] partnership translates those qualities into complementary activity."42 Yet Wells makes it clear that such activity needs to be rooted in "with"; there should be no overemphasis on product or outcome. For Wells, such reasoning is founded on an understanding of God's own self: "The life of the Trinity incorporates both the purposeless joy of participation for its own sake, and the purposeful intent of partnership for the exercise and enjoyment of the diverse gifts of the respective persons."43 Partnership is at the heart (and in the title) of PMC; it is first and foremost a reminder that God is our primary partner in mission. This shifts the focus from the church's mission to God's mission, in which we are created partners.⁴⁴ Partnership is also intrinsic to how the church is present and engaged in and amongst its own local community and the discovery of partners arises from the overlap of different narratives: (1) the biblical narrative, through the practice of Dwelling in the Word; (2) the narrative of the local church, developed through congregational interviews and a corporate time-line activity; and (3) the narrative of real, specific persons and households within the neighbourhood of the church, along with demographic research. As these narratives engage one another and the practice of Dwelling in the World is adopted, the dimension of attention leads into partnership with others in the mission of God (including with groups and associations in civil society). Keifert writes:

Within the process of innovating a missional church, local church leaders are invited to discover the congregation's role as public companions within this civil society. Some very powerful discoveries about connecting the life of the local church to the mission of God come from exploring this role of public companion and the dynamics of civil society.⁴⁵

- ³⁹ Wells, 259.
- 40 Keifert, 70-71.
- 41 Wells, 263.
- 42 Ibid., 136.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 135.
- 44 Keifert, 63.
- 45 Ibid., 78.

Churches who have engaged in the PMC process have discovered what it means to be missionally present in a whole array of ways. For one church, it meant giving up a programmatic approach to mission - giving up a wellattended (but frankly exhausting and not missional) holiday club. The congregation underwent a remarkable shift from "doing to" and "for" to deciding they would only work "with" people of peace in the community. "Being with" has led to opportunities to collaborate with others, so much so that people in the community have commented "I notice what you're doing in the community - I don't get the God thing but can we be part of what you're doing." This missional presence leads to the formation of Christian community with strangers which changes the congregation in contrast to the traditional "join us" attractional approach on the church's terms.

For another church it took three to four years of setting themselves the challenge of overcoming barriers to their community (and some excellent failures with potential partners) to get to the point where they could notice and discern an opportunity with a group of wrestlers. The group were looking for a venue to hold affordable family entertainment through an energetic contact sport and so the church extended hospitality by offering their hall, having discerned that God was at work in this relationship. Not only is this in itself an expression of faithful presence expressed through hospitality - but it has impacted wider public life for good. When these events take place the police report that anti-social behaviour in that particular district noticeably drops. What is more, the church has maintained its distinctive Christian identity in the midst of this new partnership. A prayer station is set up in the church at each event which some of the wrestlers visit before they perform. Faithful presence and attention has been expressed in hospitality and the building of trust, rooted in the discovery that in and through this God is present and active.46

CONCLUSION: FAITHFUL MISSIONAL PRESENCE

I began by noting two particular shifts: the reemergence of faithful presence as an approach to mission today and a renewed socio-political interest in civil society. Drawing on the work of Leech, Bevans, Schroeder and Wells I have identified resources from theology and Anglican and Catholic tradition that can inform and shape an understanding of mission as presence: notably, theologies of incarnation, *missio Dei* and eschatology. I have also discovered that faithful presence is not one approach to mission but is at its very heart, for it is rooted in the life of the Trinity. For Bevans and Schroeder this is expressed as dialogue and for Wells as "being with".

Increasing attentiveness to place and context on the part of churches and missional communities and an awakened interest in civil society on the part of Government present opportunities and challenges (as detailed by Graham and Harris) for the Church as it practices faithful presence. Yet my brief examination of Wells' dimensions of presence, attention and partnership (as but three principles of "being with") in relation to Partnership for Missional Church suggest that there is no place that is beyond the presence of God and God's activity, and that entering into public space is not to be feared. The focus on "with" that underpins each dimension guards against the temptation to be 'doing mission' - to be doing something to or for others (perhaps, dare I say, without reference to what God is doing or without asking whether others even want to be 'done to') - yet it is far from passive. The theology and traditions on which I have drawn recalibrate mission around a mode of being - faithful presence with and amongst others - that is profoundly rooted in the life and mission of God.

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⁴⁶ With thanks to Reverend Canon Dr Nigel Rooms (PMC Leader at Church Mission Society) for sharing these stories.

RE-DEFINING THRESHOLD

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Sue Butler

CHURCHMISSIONSOCIETY.ORG/ANVIL - LEARN, PRAY, PARTICIPATE IN MISSION

Thirst's beginnings have been well rehearsed in George Ling's Encounters on the Edge¹ and elsewhere,² as well as on the Fresh Expressions website.³ Praying Christians in a Cambridge socially mixed primary school welcomed all parents to engage with spirituality during school hours in the school community lounge. Thirst has evolved into a relational, eucharistic community and after nearly eight years we continue to meet on Friday mornings and also offer all age, interactive Saturday gatherings. Whole families have been baptised and we recently married a couple. Eucharist is regularly celebrated yet most of the Thirst community had never entered a church building and they currently have no intention of doing so on any regular basis. However, when asked by visitors, how they would describe Thirst, the answer is always "it is my church!" How do they know that and why do they think this?

People say they come to *Thirst* because it is a nonjudgmental, non-threatening, accepting, welcoming relational community. We offer generous hospitality through good coffee and tasty breakfasts and this opens the door to spiritual engagement. My friends at *Thirst* are at various places along their spiritual journeys; they have been able to engage with things scriptural and liturgical without being part of an inherited Sunday centric model of church. How has this happened and how can it be?

What Church exactly is, remains a vibrant and germane question. The churched continue to be challenged with the question of why the unchurched do not easily come. Such a question is really loaded; the insiders want to know why the unchurched do not and will not come to church. It's a question often laden with hurt; when we host events which we believe will attract people, and when we offer creative services in a non-relational centripetal model. Whilst I appreciate there are exceptions to this, the figures showing declining church attendance, except in Fresh Expressions and cathedrals, is perhaps evidence that there may be a back story. The recent reports from the Church Growth Institute and the report From Anecdote to Evidence, suggests that we need to re-think how and possibly where we 'do' church.⁴

PRAYER

For some years before *Thirst*'s official birth we prayed regularly for the transformation of the whole school

community, we explored faith together through playground conversations and healing prayers. The formal inception of *Thirst* however, began with a question from a member of the clergy who wanted to know why those exploring faith with us wouldn't attend church. Although happy to engage in conversation about the Christian faith, they never 'darkened the doors' of the church. Many had never attended a wedding or baptism and the funerals they attended were at the crematorium; there really was no need to go inside a church, so why would they?

HOSPITALITY

Perhaps people sense whether or not we are hospitable and whether our welcome is not only genuine but generous. Elizabeth Newman in Untamed Hospitality suggests that, "hospitality is the practice of small gestures...a practice and discipline that asks us to do what in the world's eyes may seem inconsequential but from the perspective of the gospel is a manifestation of God's Kingdom."⁵ We have discovered this to be true at Thirst and our welcome and non-judgmental acceptance is shared in the community. The emphasis is on practice, not just for special events or gatherings, but week in week out. Intentional kindness without an agenda creates authentic friendship. Some aspects of postmodern culture don't recognise the importance of creating community, which requires consistency and commitment and is based on deepening long term relationships.

THRESHOLD

Traditionally the physical entrance of a church building is perceived as the threshold to Church by those inside and out, and crossing this can be daunting for the unchurched. Events can be effective for drawing people into our buildings, but sometimes that's all they do. Is the challenge for the church today, how to draw people into something deeper, into long term relationship with us and of course with God? Coming across the threshold of a church takes courage once; coming more than once and making it a habit is another matter altogether and will be determined by the initial welcome and the relationships that are created. To cross a threshold requires movement from one place into another. Maybe it is us not the unchurched that need to cross a threshold? *Thirst* grew as we crossed the threshold going out to an already existing

¹ <u>http://www.encountersontheedge.org.uk/55-thirst-download.html</u>, accessed August 23, 2015.

² <u>http://www.fromevidencetoaction.org.uk/case-studies/growth-through-a-fresh-expression-of-church</u>, accessed August 23, 2015.

³ <u>https://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/stories/thirsttoo/mar14</u>. accessed August 23, 2015.

⁴ <u>http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Reports/FromAnecdoteToEvidence1.0.pdf</u>, accessed August 23, 2015.

⁵ Elizabeth Newman, Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2007), 174.

community. We joined with them and have had "... the courage to go with them, to a place that neither we nor they have ever been before."⁶ Is the threshold of church about buildings or about communities and relationships?

RELATIONSHIP

Over the years we have built many relationships through the already existing networks at school and in the wider community. Belonging at Thirst is normally a realisation, a slow organic process rather than a decision made to join something. It takes time, it takes conversation, it takes empathy, it takes sacrifice and at times it is incredibly frustrating. I cannot assume that unchurched people want to come into my world. Vincent Donovan in his work Christianity Rediscovered discusses invitational mission : "evangelization is a process of bringing the gospel to people where they are, not where you would like them to be ... between a faith and a religion...you have to respect that stage of belief'."7 For the Thirst community, 'respect[ing] that stage of belief,' requires active listening. I know this may be obvious to many, but frequently our church committees are more experienced and comfortable developing programmes and hosting events which insiders would like to attend themselves. Such events do not always appeal to the unchurched. Our church liturgies and cultures are familiar to us; we re-package them and hope to make them attractive to the unchurched. We really only discover what they need through relationships. Relationships are costly and takes effort, time, can hurt us and may not bring short term church growth.

However, relationships are messy; new life is messy; growth is messy, but the outcomes can often be glorious. Bishop Stephen of Ely and I recently baptised 13 people of all ages and social backgrounds who promised to follow Christ, watched by 100 or more of their family and friends. Many of the largely unchurched congregation were people broken by infidelity, prison and emotional and physical pain. They were welcomed, loved, accepted and valued and many reported 'feeling something' that day. Thirst friends know where the love is, they know that it is the power of Christ that transforms and sometimes

they can recognise the transformation for themselves; they continue to come because they know that together we are on a journey of transforming faith. At Thirst we believe in generous hospitality and being a welcome presence. We serve good food, the best coffee we can afford and have open hearts and listening ears."Faithful hospitality forms us to see that the destination and the journey cannot be separated."8

MISSION

I am often asked how I now practise mission at Thirst. I don't really do anything different from what I do in everyday life. I meet people for coffee; I listen to their stories and do the same things over and over again. We talk about God. We talk about life. We talk about the possibilities of combining both. The Gospel is simple and profound. God has always initiated creative mission. The Trinity crossed thresholds through creation, covenant, incarnation and the cross in order to have relationship and community with humanity. God invites us to participate in this mission in being a thresholdcrossing, welcoming community. I have found through my experience at Thirst that mission must be organic and fitting as well as credible for that community.

Transformation will occur through loving presence. Perhaps our physical thresholds are more of a barrier than we realise and it requires us to become conduits for the grace and mercy of God flowing into our communities. As the family of the Living Christ, we offer ourselves laid down over the threshold as a welcoming presence within our already existing communities. We are a tangible sign of the grace of God given for each of us through Baptism and Holy Communion, which itself is a transforming and healing narrative and is the threshold between heaven and earth.

SUE BUTLER IS AN ORDAINED PIONEER MINISTER IN CAMBRIDGE WHERE SHE FOUNDED *THIRST*, A FRESH EXPRESSION OF CHURCH THAT GREW OUT OF MUMS MEETING AT THE SCHOOL GATES.



⁶ Vincent Donovan, Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai. [3rd] ed. (London: SCM, 2001), xix. 7 Ibid.

⁸ Newman,. Untamed Hospitality, 174.

CATCHING THE WIND EXPLORING MISSIO DEI IN CONTEXT

ANVIL: Journal of Theology and Mission **VOL 32, ISSUE 1**

Luke Larner

CHURCHMISSIONSOCIETY.ORG/ANVIL - LEARN, PRAY, PARTICIPATE IN MISSION

I first discovered the term missio Dei (Mission of God) in my theological studies with the Church Mission Society. The term gave language to a construct of missiology born out of my (at the time) 16 years chasing Jesus, both in and out of vocational Christian 'ministry'. This construct had grown in my mind through both my Reformed theological roots and my own experiences of faith and mission, seeing everyday people like myself encounter Jesus. People who often weren't 'looking for God', and who often encountered God outside the formal 'mission' activities of the Church. These encounters happened in all kinds of places: on building sites (I'm a bricklayer by trade), overseas mission trips, riding with motorcycle clubs, among the homeless and even way back on the school playground as a new believer. Oh, and I should of course say, sometimes even in Church. Some of these experiences, including my own conversion, were visibly powerful, others were so tender and fragile they could have been missed in a blink.

In simple terms missio Dei is an expression that mission is primarily a part of who God is, rather than an activity or aspect of the Church.¹ Alternatively, to use a now popular phrase, "It is not so much that God has a mission for his[sic] Church in the world, but that God has a Church for his mission in the world."² In the late 1930s Karl Barth was one of the first theologians to articulate mission "as an activity of God him[sic]self"3, and the concept was articulated more clearly (without yet being named) at the Willengen Conference of the IMC in 1952.⁴ The concept is more specifically derived from trinitarian theology, the sending of the Son by the Father, and the Spirit by the son, is expanded to a fourth mode, by God's sending of the Church. This is expressed most explicitly in John 20:21: "As the Father has sent me, so am I sending you."

As I've already noted, the concept particularly appealed to me given my Reformed roots – it seemed to invoke something of the sovereignty of God – the "I can't do it" aspect of mission (1 Cor. 12:3). This is important in diminishing the evangelical guilt experienced by many Christians at their lack of evangelistic competence. I remember an encounter with a work colleague many years ago, who had heard about my former exploits with an international mission agency. He said, "If you're

a missionary then save me. Make me believe". In my characteristically subtle and gentle way, I replied by saying something like, "I can't save anybody mate. I'm just a human being. That's between you and God. Not my problem." I had already learned the hard lesson that taking responsibility for other people's salvation was a one-way ticket toward spiritual exhaustion and disillusionment - for the minister and lay person alike. Missio Dei at its most basic level means that I can't do it and I don't need to. Not long after returning from time spent overseas, at a Church event in St Albans I met a young lady from a North-African country I had recently visited. We got talking, in my somewhat limited French, about her homeland. During this conversation I offered to pray for her, knowing how difficult a place she came from, and while praying I had some sense that God wanted her to be a light in her homeland. I prayed into this (still in broken French). The young lady began to weep, and started passionately calling out to God in her beautiful language. The night went on and eventually I went home, encouraged by the encounter. The next day I received a call from her friends, who excitedly told me that their friend hadn't been a follower of Jesus before that night, and had been baptised the very next day after giving her life to Christ. I felt sick. I never would have been so bold had I known she was a visitor to Church. I never would have dreamed of being so non-'seeker-sensitive'. And I still probably wouldn't. The point of my telling this story is that if mission is the story of God, there's isn't always much we can do to get in the way. Of course I'm not saying that we should forget about being seeker sensitive, what I am saying is we should try to discern where God is at work, and get involved. God was obviously at work in this young lady's life. Did God need me to be part of it? No. Was it a great privilege and pleasure to be a part of it? Emphatically, yes.

I wish I had those kind of experiences on a regular basis. But I don't. I don't think there are many people who do. In fact I believe that the way extraordinary events and miracles are written of in the Bible hints that they were probably surprising and unusual to the people involved in them. In our present culture of individualism, we battle the demon of over-inflated self-importance. In his excellent little book on leadership, Henri Nouwen suggests the three biggest temptations for the 21st century Christian worker are to be relevant, popular and

¹ David Bosch, Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission, (Maryknoll:Orbis 1991), 390.

² Christopher J H Wright, The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 62.

³ Bosch, Transforming Mission, 389.

⁴ Ibid., 390.

powerful. ⁵ He suggests instead, that in post-modern culture a more appropriate model is that of prayer, vulnerability and trust.⁶ This translates well into the concept of missio Dei – if mission is born of the activity and nature of God, we do not need to be relevant, popular or powerful; the outcomes do not rest on our shoulders. Instead we prayerfully engage with what we discern God is doing, we trust God and our Christian communities, and we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, living works-in-progress. Our stories are stories of redemption and restoration intertwined with God's big story.

The most challenging part of this perspective in practice for me has been its breadth. Living and working as a lay chaplain in the town recently voted the worst place to live in the UK,⁷ it's easy to be overwhelmed by need and opportunity. After telling a non-churchgoing friend that my 'job' is to be a Chaplain working with homeless and socially excluded people in Luton, they replied "sounds about the most secure job in the country". At other times the challenge has been to think, "Is God even at work here?" the sense of need can be overwhelming. This has been a critique of missio Dei as a missiology. It has been criticised for being overly broad, to the point where it can become meaningless or can be embraced by mutually exclusive theologies.⁸ It has also been criticised for potentially diminishing the Church/human input to mission to such an extent that it can lead to apathy. 9 In other words, "getting involved with what God is doing" is potentially an invitation to running away or burnout. Herein lies the importance of discernment. A course I recently took on Spiritual Accompaniment encourages the process of "listen, notice, stay" - listen to the person you are accompanying, notice what God is doing, stay with that movement.¹⁰ It occurred to me that this is potentially a useful model for a contextual application of missio Dei. Listen to the place, the community, the subculture you are serving; notice where God is at work in individuals, groups, places, stay with the movement of God where you are serving. This has been a challenging process for me. It is time consuming - building the relationships

required and acquiring the data and experience to understand a place and a community enough to do this can't be done in under a year. The fruit of this time spent has been the birth of much of what we are doing now. For example we listened and noticed that people at a homeless welfare centre were engaging with Christmas and Easter services held at the dropin, but weren't going to Church. So we brought Church to them, in the form of pastoral care and running a weekly service. Today we met for the first time in the little "chapel" we've commandeered in a disused temporary building onsite. We also noticed that people from a drug and alcohol recovery group in Luton were engaging with faith and spirituality through their recovery programmes. For some this engagement took the form of a tangible encounter with Jesus, but didn't translate into Sunday morning attendance. Thankfully our Vicar was willing to meet them where they are, not expect them to come to us, and so he helped us start a Fresh Expression of Church, modelled half way between a recovery meeting and a Sunday morning service. The group's inception from the beginning has relied heavily on input from its members. There are other examples I could give, and I'm sure given enough time there will be plenty of examples of where we got it wrong. But what we are doing feels less like ministry and more like midwifery. We are playing a part in the incarnation of God's Kingdom in surprising places. Sometimes we are just trying to stay out of the way.

In conclusion, I don't really know! What I can say is that having embraced missio Dei as a steering principle, my "work" feels a lot less like the awkward door-to-door and street preaching of my youth, and a lot more like going on a treasure hunting quest with Jesus. In the numerous sources I have read on the subject, I have found no other which better captures the essence of missio Dei than the following passage from J. Bavinck's An Introduction to the Science of Missions:

We can think thankfully of the names of numerous great missionary heroes without forgetting for a single moment that importance is not to be attached to them, but only to God. God alone

⁵ Basil Hume and Henri J. M. Nouwen, In the name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership (Lodon: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1989), 71.

⁸ Craig Ott, Stephen J Strauss, and Timothy C Tennent, Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical foundations, historical developments, and contemporary issues (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010),65.

⁹ Wright, Mission of God, 63.

¹⁰ Jesuit Institute, 'Emmaus programme, What is Spiritual Accompaniment?', <<u>http://jesuitinstitute.org/Resources/EmmausResources/What%20</u> is%20Spiritual%20Accompaniment%20(Session%201).pdf>, last accessed 4.08.16.

⁶ Ibid., 73.

⁷ 'It's the end of humanity': Luton is voted the worst town in the UK <<u>http://metro.co.uk/2016/01/19/its-the-end-of-humanity-luton-is-voted-the-worst-town-in-the-uk-5632960/></u>, last accessed 4.08.16.

is great. We suffer defeats, we erect barriers, we dig graves; we are repeatedly discouraged, disappointed and powerless, but God goes forth from age to age and does his[sic] great and glorious work, in spite of, and yet also with the utilisation of, our weak and unworthy powers.¹¹

What I have learned is that mission finds its genesis in God, not in human effort. The history of missions is God's story of mission. I believe that we as the Church can be most effective when listen, notice and stay with what God is doing, and calling us to, specifically.

My prayer is that God's Church will continue to embrace mission as a part of her identity, her raison d'etre, not an optional extra.

LUKE LARNER IS A RAGAMUFFIN CHAPLAIN IN LUTON AND PART OF A NEW FAITH COMMUNITY CALLED "CHURCH? - A FELLOWSHIP OF LOST SHEEP'



¹¹ John M. Bavinck, An Introduction to the Science of Missions, trans. by David Hugh Freeman (Philippsburgh: P & R Publishing, 1992), 280-281.

A MISSION STATEMENT

ANVIL: Journal of Theology and Mission **VOL 32, ISSUE 1**

Jon Soper

CHURCHMISSIONSOCIETY.ORG/ANVIL - LEARN, PRAY, PARTICIPATE IN MISSION

A couple of times a year we sack our regular Sunday gatherings and go and do things in our city which express the love of Christ to those outside the church. This is called Edge Sunday (as in, we want to be "strong at the core and blurred at the edge" as a church). We pray for people in the streets, we give cakes and thanks to the emergency services, we invite our neighbours over, we feed people, we wrap their Christmas presents.

One Christmas a few years back we did a flashmob carol sing, where a crowd of people suddenly gathered together in the high street and a shopping centre and sang a funky version of 'Joy to the World'.

A well known local busker called Nigel,¹ an atheist of 58 years standing, was watching and came up to the choir and said: "Whatever is coming off you, I've got to have it." He didn't know it then, but it was his first experience of the tangible presence of the Spirit of God, and he was encountering God right in his workplace, the streets. He was invited to the next Sunday's gathering and he then came regularly for about eight months as an atheist (his father had brought him up to be committed to atheism) until he experienced God's power again in physical healing and he gave his life to Christ.

His early habits of reading the Scriptures nearly ended in severe disappointment when he read how Jesus had been executed and so was therefore dead. After being encouraged to read on, he was very happy to discover the resurrection. He'd had no framework for faith in Christ, and now he was learning a new story into which his own story could find a home. Pretty soon he was baptised in the sea, understanding that he was now dying and rising with Christ.

Since Nigel turned to Christ, he's been growing as a follower of Jesus, he's been helped to sort out his finances, he tells others about God, he writes songs about him, prays for others, experiences church as the family he never had, and startles people with his boldness and his spiritual insights ("Nigel, what's God's mission?" "He's redecorating the whole world").

This summer he was playing a gig with some other musicians when the guitarist, Fabrizio, collapsed midsong on stage. In front of the crowd and the band, Nigel went forward, laid hands on the man and said loudly: "By the power invested in me by the Lord Jesus Christ, I command the darkness to come out of Fabrizio!" At that, the man came to, stood up and carried on with the song, which was inevitably 'All Right Now'. The musicians, who have known Nigel as an atheist, subsequently appointed him as chaplain for the rest of the tour.

Nigel's story demonstrates a lot of what we have been learning about mission at Exeter Network Church, since we planted in 2005.

First, it's been crucial that we ruthlessly shape our activities primarily around mission (what God is up to in our city). We regularly teach about the four dynamics of church life, under the banner of High, Wide, Deep and Long. 'High' means worship, which means encounter with the living God. 'Wide' refers to an inclusive community, where everyone's gifts and participation are encouraged. 'Deep' reminds us that we intentionally follow Christ in order to become more like him. And 'Long' is all about mission and reaching out to those outside our church. 'Long' is the tail that wags the dog.

There are so many activities a church can pursue, but if we don't keep ourselves primarily focused outwards, our human tendency is to curve in on ourselves and lose our ability to transform the city around us. And in the end, the church exists to be a sign and agent of the kingdom of God coming on the earth right where we are, in real time and space. So having a couple of Sundays where we go out, rather than stay in, reminds us that church isn't first and foremost about us, but about God and what he is doing here. Keeping that shape is essential, and hard to do.

Second, we place a high value on pursuing the tangible presence and power of God in every place and by everyone. There is no more important and adventurous habit for believers to have than putting themselves in a place where they are dependent on God to act in power. So we train everyone to be able to say at any time and place "Can I pray for you?", by which we mean right now, and with authority. In the queue for a club, or in a shop, or by the watercooler at work, praying "Your Kingdom come on earth, your will be done right here and now." It's remarkable how many people are open to being prayed for outside of church gatherings and how many make their first steps towards God by opening up to be prayed for right where they are.

Third, we encourage people to try things out on their journey towards God. Before he made a cognitive and cogent commitment to Christ, Nigel sang the songs, took communion, prayed for the sick, contributed to discussions and made friends. Every 'Yes' to Jesus was a step towards him. We try to make only one distinction

¹ Name used with permission.

between people – those who are moving towards Christ, and those who are walking away from him. And for those moving towards Jesus, we encourage them to hop on the bus wherever they are on the journey. We've become more used to thinking about people's journeys towards God following the 'belong, believe, behave' (or become) route. At the heart of belonging is joining in with what the church community is doing as a way of finding out if God is there.

For example, we see Holy Communion as a missional meal, the benefits of Jesus' passion being available to anyone who want to respond to him. And healing the sick is a gift from the Holy Spirit, which bypasses any lack of spiritual maturity (which is nonetheless a vital goal). By engaging in these activities, people taste and see that the Lord is not only good, but real, personal and life-changing.

Fourth, understanding our identity and authority in Christ (what Vineyard pastor Alan Scott calls "who we are and what we carry") is essential for raising up everyone in mission, from the newest to the oldest believer. Jesus sent out his disciples on mission with only one big bit of kit - authority. Wherever they went they demonstrated their delegated authority over sin, sickness, evil and death. We teach and encourage one another on a regular basis that we are all saints, entirely loved by God, recipients of grace, forgiven, both individually and as a church a dwelling place for the Spirit of God, gifted, empowered and authorised to go to everyone, anywhere and bring life and transformation. We see the church as a body, an army, a people and a family, with a message about Jesus and the power to demonstrate it.

When Nigel first came on our church weekend away in Newquay, he shared a room with two others whose lives had seen similarly remarkable transformations. They called themselves 'The Princes' as they had already understood their identity as sons of the King of heaven. Lastly, we tell stories of God's work in and through us, just as I have done here on Nigel's behalf. When we come together, on Sundays or midweek, God Stories are a non-negotiable part of our life. As people tell their stories, we are able to link their stories into the overarching story of a God who so loved the world that he sent Jesus and also sends us. We read the Scriptures with a missional hermeneutic, that from Adam and Eve, through Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua and so on, through the prophets, to Peter, Paul and Ananias, God is always sending us out from what is known and comfortable to what is unknown and outside our comfort zone.

God Stories work missionally in other ways too. When people tell big God Stories here (such as a woman healed of blindness a few years ago), they declare that God is alive and active, powerful and life changing. When small or unfinished God Stories are told, they invite others to imitate the teller (as with Nigel's bold praying for the guitarist). More than that, we've seen God Stories work like prophecies, so that what is being told is reissued again in real time in the gathering. For example, in one of our Sunday gatherings, a young lad told the story of how he and a friend had healed a sportsman's foot through prayer, and two of his hearers found their feet had been instantly healed while he told their story. These two were not Christians at that point, but they are now.

Our shape, the Spirit, the journey, our authority and stories – these are some of the gifts we have attempted to steward over the years. And God, in his grace, continues to take our efforts and make something out of them.

JON SOPER IS CO-LEADER OF EXETER NETWORK CHURCH.


ANVIL BOOK REVIEWS

ANVIL: Journal of Theology and Mission **VOL 32, ISSUE 1**

VOL 32, ISSUE 1

CHURCHMISSIONSOCIETY.ORG/ANVIL - LEARN, PRAY, PARTICIPATE IN MISSION

1. RECOMMENDED READS

Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox* (Second Edition), (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

I would not normally do a full review of a second edition, but this particular second edition is well worth investing in. This is a sociological, big picture view of the religious context of the UK that is an informative and stimulating read. For some readers it will be more a case of articulating and clarifying what you already know, but for those who are thinking through these issues for the first time, this is an excellent introduction to the religious landscape of the UK.

Much has changed in Britain since the first edition of *Religion in Britain* was published in 1994, when Davie first introduced the notion of "believing without belonging" to describe the religious habits of many in the UK, and the place of religion within public life. The secularisation hypothesis of the increasing marginalisation and personalisation of religious belief and practice has come in for serious scrutiny, but to simply declare it wrong is perhaps an oversimplification of a complex picture. Davie herself has developed her own thinking on the topic, introducing the notion of "vicarious religion" to complement that of "believing without belonging," by which she means a small minority believe on behalf of the masses, and are subject to critique if they "do not do this properly" (6).

Davie identifies six key factors shaping religious life in the UK: the role of the historic churches in shaping British culture; an awareness that while these churches have a place at particular moments in the lives of British people, they are no longer able to influence the beliefs and behaviours of the majority of the population; a shift from a model of obligation to a model of choice or consumption in religious activity; the recent arrival of immigrants who have a variety of religious aspirations; the reactions of Britain's secular elites to the increasing salience of religion in public as well as private life; and a growing realisation that patterns of religious life in the UK (indeed in Europe) are the global exception, not the global norm. These six factors are discussed at length throughout the book.

Davie writes as an outsider, a sociological observer who asks questions of those whom she terms "religious professionals" (arguably anyone serious about communicating faith). As an Anglican cleric, the concepts of "vicarious religion" and "believing without belonging" do resonate with my experience of the occasional offices. Mourners at funerals want me to believe in the bodily resurrection even if they are uncertain themselves; all those at a wedding – at that moment at least – ascribe to the concept of a faithful life-long marriage between one man and one woman. The reality that most will not then involve themselves at all in the worshipping life of the church does potentially support Davie's argument that belief has been outsourced to me as a religious professional. As she puts it

Those that minister to a half-believing, rather than an unbelieving, society will find that there are advantages and disadvantages to this situation, just as there are in any other. Working out appropriate ministerial strategies for this continually shifting and ill-defined context is the central and very demanding task of the religious professional. A firm and necessary grasp of the sociological realities is the beginning. (80).

Religion in Britain offers an overview of these sociological realities, in a very readable and accessible form. The book is divided into five parts, covering preliminary issues; religious legacies; shifting priorities (from obligation to consumption); public religion and secular reactions; and finally a concluding chapter. The discussion is wide ranging, but focuses primarily on Christianity. This is one weakness of the book: at least some discussion of how those of other faiths practise their beliefs would have given a fuller picture. There is much for Anglicans to engage with, including discussions of chaplaincy, faith schools, women bishops, same-sex relationships, and why cathedrals have a lot in common with large charismatic churches. From Davie's sociological perspective, "both the cathedral and the charismatic service embody religion in the sense of the sacred or 'setapart.' It seems that late modern populations respond warmly to this feature" (143).

Davie has written sociology, not theology. This is clear from her observation that Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons are, sociologically speaking, difficult to distinguish from some smaller Protestant denominations. Her aim in writing is simply to increase the religious literacy of her readers, and in this she succeeds. She acknowledges areas of growth as well as those of decline. Her summary of the overall state of the nation is cogent:

Britain is markedly more secular than it used to be, but by no means totally so; it is also more diverse, but unevenly – the regional variations are considerable. Indifference, moreover, interweaves with unattached belief on the one hand, and more articulate versions of the secular on the other. Each of these elements depends, moreover, on the others (223).

This book should be read as a complement to the discussions of the church growth movement. It provides a good overview of the state of *religion in Britain* today (although, as noted above, this is perhaps overly biased towards Christianity) and thus gives people a place from which to begin. If you want to help anyone who lives primarily in a Christian environment understand the whole of British society, this is an excellent place to start.

Tom Wilson St Philip's Centre, Leicester

Andrew G Walker and Robin A Parry, Deep Church Rising: Rediscovering the roots of Christian orthodoxy, (London: SPCK, 2014).

Walker and Parry begin with the same sociological realities that Davie carefully charts, but rather than simply making sociological observations about them, offer a theological critique and response. In their view, Christianity has historically faced three great schisms. The first great schism was the divide between the Western and Eastern churches, which began with the controversy over the addition of *filioque* ("and the Son") to the Nicene Creed. The second occurred with the Reformation and the third is underway in the West at present. They describe this third schism as follows:

"Growing numbers of people want to remain Christian in some way, despite the fact that they can no longer assent to many of the doctrines of the creeds, believe in the Bible as a broadly reliable record of historical narratives, or find credible the possibility of miracles in either the past (including the virgin birth and resurrection of Christ) or the present" (9)

Walker and Parry respond by drawing on the notion of "Deep Church," which they define as deep in both a solid and a liquid way, having both a historical and an existential reality. The solid depths of Deep Church are the bedrock of faith, built on Christ himself. The liquid depths are the flowing streams of the Spirit. The historical reality rests on God's self-revelation to the world of himself in the person of his Son and on the Son's institution of the Church. We must avail ourselves of all the historical resources at our disposal if we are to adequately build Deep Church for the twenty-first century. But at the same time we must have existential, not just historical or intellectual, experience of God; we must be part of the Church constituted by the Spirit, experiencing the presence and indwelling of the Spirit. Rooted in history, the Church should seek spiritual experiences in the present.

Walker and Parry outline the roots of the third schism through a clear and concise overview of the rise of modernity and postmodernity. They are realistic about the present situation: Christendom has ended and the model of church that presumes Christendom is therefore no longer useful. While this may be lamented, they also believe it to be an opportunity for "a fresh improvisation of the faith that is both deeply rooted in Scripture and tradition but also alive to the worlds we now inhabit" (28). *Deep Church Rising* begins this process.

The issues are discussed in seven chapters which tackle issues such as the relationship with Scripture and Tradition, the nature of Orthodoxia (Right Believing and Right Worship) and Orthopraxia (Right Practice), the need for catechesis and Deep Church as a Eucharistic Community. Walker and Parry's arguments are primarily directed towards the evangelical and charismatic wings of the church. They argue for Christians to establish deep roots in their history, to avoid becoming like orphans bereft of family history. They understand the creeds as "national borders" defining Christian territory and argue in favour of the historic understandings of the Christian faith. They challenge consumerist approaches to worship and any form of passive engagement with church services. They suggest a cruciform approach to ethics, argue for the value of catechesis and the significance of the Eucharist. They are strong advocates of recognition of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, whilst recognising the diversity of opinion "from pious agnosticism to transubstantiation to Luther to Calvin" (155).

Deep Church Rising is a stimulating and challenging wakeup call to the Church to remember rightly, to be rooted in tradition but engaged in the present, to remain faithful to Jesus but alive to the present. Where it perhaps falls down is in the lack of specific examples of what the Deep Church response to the present issues facing the church might be. Debates about the environment, sexuality and the place of women in church all hinge on the relationship between the historic teaching of the church and its present expression. Some more moves from theory to practice would have strengthened an already strong book and given specific insights into how Walker and Parry envisage Deep Church engaging with the complex reality of twenty-first century Britain. When I finished reading, I was still not entirely clear as to what constitutes the "third schism" and what constitutes "a fresh improvisation of the faith." Perhaps Walker and Parry's aim was simply to get me to think harder about these questions. In this they succeeded, and for this their book is to be warmly commended to all thinking Christians. But a slightly clearer idea of their own views might have helped me begin to see my way through the fog.

Tom Wilson St Philip's Centre, Leicester

David Goodhew, (Editor), *Towards a Theology of Church Growth,* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

This is an important book. It is the first time such a diverse group of scholars and church leaders from across the different traditions of the church have come together to explore church growth in a positive way. That, in itself, makes it worth the read. But it is not without its flaws. The book is the product of a conference and as such is something of a mixed bag.

In Part 1 editor David Goodhew offers a comprehensive introduction summarising each chapter and seeking, not altogether successfully, to weave a common thread through each whilst passionately making the case that church growth is both good and necessary.

In the second chapter David Marshall calls for a confident Christianity comfortable with proclamation, conversion and church growth even from within a diverse interfaith context. He offers a devastating critique of John Hick, arguing persuasively that, with appropriate humility, proclamation and dialogue can effectively complement one another.

Part 2 offers a biblical account of church growth. In one of the stronger chapters Mark Bonnington locates church growth within a broader kingdom theology that expresses itself through the proliferation of local churches.

C Kavin Row explores the ecclesiology of Acts. In a particularly academic chapter that appears to draw on earlier work, he argues that though the church in Acts was fundamentally counter-cultural it was never revolutionary. It was not clear to me why this chapter was included, other than, perhaps, to challenge the complacent and reassure the skeptical that church growth does not have to be triumphalist.

In Part 3, three essays explore church growth and doctrine. The first by Alistair McGrath and the second by Martin Warner are the most disappointing. They seem to be a mishmash of previous work and peculiar interests that do little to develop a theology of church growth. Thankfully, this section is rescued by a superb essay by Graham Tomlin examining the pneumatology of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches that have seen some of the most significant church growth. He develops a pneumatological doctrine of mission that is compelling, elegant and practical.

In Part 4, the focus shifts to church growth throughout history. Ivor Davidson offers a solid essay on the growth of the early church, but one can't help but feel there is a hidden agenda here as there is with Benedicta Ward's chapter on the early English church. Though they both offer some fascinating insights into what made Christianity so attractive in these particular historical contexts, both authors seem nervous about overt evangelism and mission, arguing instead that Christians simply lived well and that this in itself was enough.

The final three essays are the strongest and most interesting so the book ends on a high. Miranda Threlfal-Holmes considers church growth in the medieval period. She highlights the more organic understanding of church growth in which church leaders sought to keep the weeds at bay whilst allowing the garden to grow, a helpful corrective to more modern managerial approaches to growth. Ashley Null examines Cranmer's systematic approach to the re-evangelisation of the nation, an approach which is breathtaking in its scope and determined intentionality, as Cranmer sought to form, not right doctrine, but right desire across the nation, recognising that liturgy could be effectively contexualised whilst still alluring the soul with the truth of the Gospel. Dominic Erdozain brings us up to date with the growth of the church in the modern period, contending that the church has too readily embraced a narrative of doom and a theology of resignation instead of a more positive, joyful spirituality that engages the affections and is optimistic for the future.

Goodhew ends with a recognition and celebration of what he describes as a "modest missional ecumenism" and suggests some areas for further research. Despite its flaws and frustrations, it remains a pioneer in its field and, I hope, the shape of things to come as the Church of England embraces the growth agenda.

Rod Green London

Kenneth E Bailey, *The Good Shepherd:* A thousand-year journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament, (London: SPCK, 2015).

Anyone who wants to get a better grasp of Biblical texts in their original context will be an avid reader of Kenneth Bailey's books. This volume is no exception to that rule. His central thesis is that there are echoes of Psalm 23 running throughout scripture, and he demonstrates this with reference to a variety of texts. Chapter one is packed with Bailey's wealth of knowledge of the Middle East. He illuminates details of the Psalm, restoring it to its original context. I was especially struck by the discussion of the causative polel of shuv (return) in verse three, indicating a translation along the lines of "he causes me to repent" being much more accurate than the KJV "he restores my soul," and by Bailey's discussion of the image of the host in the Psalm. He argues strongly that preparing food was a woman's job, and so if God is the host who prepares food in Psalm 23, then female imagery is being ascribed to God.

The next three chapters pick up echoes of Psalm 23 in three Old Testament texts: Jeremiah 23:1-8; Ezekiel 34; and Zechariah 10:2-12. I found these the weakest chapters. There are clear echoes of Psalm 23, but Bailey perhaps magnifies them slightly louder than they really are. The chapters which follow, on Luke 15:1-10; Mark 6:7-52; Matthew 18:10-14; John 10:1-18 and 1 Peter 5:1-4 are stronger, especially the discussions of the Gospels. Bailey's point about Jesus' hermeneutic Christology and his suggestion of the idea of Jesus as the Good Shepherd offering a suitable starting point for dialogue with Islam were two ideas that I will consider further. If you regularly preach on Psalm 23, then buy and read this book for chapter one alone. If you want to understand a bit more about Jesus the Good Shepherd, then buy this book. It is a rewarding, enriching read.

Tom Wilson St Philip's Centre, Leicester

Don A Carson (Editor), The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures, (London: Apollos, 2016).

This is an excellent and timely book. It is some time

since the last attempt to produce a collection of essays offering an up-to-date conspectus of evangelical thinking on a broad range of topics. On the whole, this volume does not disappoint. In well over a thousand pages, the book comprises thirty-five essays, preceded by a substantial introduction by the editor, who has also provided a series of FAQs based upon the essays. As this is really a book of reference, there are helpfully four indexes.

The book is structured around four main areas of concern. First, historical topics. Here are essays ranging from Scripture in the Patristic Period through to recent Roman Catholic Views of Biblical Authority, taking in (inter alia) the Reformation, Karl Barth and a very helpful essay on the issue of Accommodation. Next comes Biblical and Theological topics. This includes Reflections on the Unity and Diversity of OT Theologies, a substantial essay on the Question of Double Authorship (human and divine) and a piece on Myth, History and the Bible, which in parts I found too technical. There are also two essays on the use of the OT in the NT. But the essay by Kevin Vanhoozer on the problem of doctrinal development is the one which will repay closer study. More on this later. The third section deals with philosophical and epistemological questions; not the most appetising topics perhaps! But there are two worth further comment in a moment. One on the endlessly debated matter of inerrancy and the other on Science and Scripture. The fourth section tackles Comparative Religions, dealing specifically with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Finally there is an essay by Daniel Doriani of a more devotional nature on thinking holistically.

Having attempted to outline the broad scope of the book, I think it might be useful to focus on three essays which I found especially helpful in expanding my own thinking.

First, Vanhoozer on doctrinal development. The very terms used may sound suspiciously liberal. All I can hope to do here is to show how Vanhoozer's argument is not just legitimate but necessary. It is not sufficient to reiterate the Reformation mantra sola Scriptura, without pausing to ask what this actually connotes. The sheer variety of genres which make up the Bible means that doctrines cannot simply be read straight off the page. Thus, to take one example, the doctrine of the Trinity is nowhere explicitly stated in Scripture, but early Christian experience of the worship of Jesus as the divine Son led to the OT monotheistic doctrine of God being "expanded" to include Jesus. In the course of time, the divinity of the Holy Spirit was acknowledged and Trinitarian orthodoxy became the norm. The essential point to note is that Scripture is the basic source, but interpreted in the light

of both experience and doctrinal controversy. Thus, in this way, doctrine goes "beyond" the strict letter of Scripture. For those readers wanting to pursue this, I strongly recommend his 2005 book The Drama of Doctrine.

The idea of inerrancy is another contested area. Paul Helm's helpful essay on this topic is written from a philosophical perspective. He develops his argument based on the premise that inerrancy connotes more than being wholly true. He takes issue with the well-known propositionalist approach by way of the newer and more fruitful speech-act approach so ably expounded by Vanhoozer. Helm's sophisticated essay goes some way towards removing some wrong perceptions of this much misunderstood tenet.

The third essay I would commend is from the pen of Kirsten Birkett on another hotly debated question: Science and Scripture. Birkett writes as a specialist in the History and Philosophy of Science. In this lucidly written essay, she covers a lot of ground, guiding the reader expertly through some of the earlier history of this debate, before focusing on some contemporary writers and issues. One such issue concerns chronology, the age of the earth and the days of Genesis. She is able to demonstrate that the 'days' of Genesis have been controversial since the days of the early church. She helpfully characterises the most recent debate as the rise of Creationism: Scripture against Science versus the alternatives: evolution alongside Scripture, moving on to science dominating Scripture. Birkett develops these approaches by focusing on the writings of exponents of the latter two. In his book Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?, Denis Alexander's answer to the question is that we don't and his is a brave attempt as both an evolutionary scientist and a conservative Christian to explain why this is so. As representatives of the 'science dominates Scripture' position, Birkett selects the theoretical physicist John Polkinghorne and Arthur Peacocke who developed his views over a lifetime. It may be a little unfair to bracket these two since Polkinghorne is decidedly more orthodox than Peacocke. Birkett tacitly acknowledges this, but still sees Polkinghorne as a thinker whose scientific training drives his interpretation of certain key aspects of Scripture. There can be no doubt, however, that Polkinghorne's numerous books written at a popular level have contributed greatly to our understanding of the place of science in relation to theological issues. Birkett sums up Peacocke's position as a "naturalism that allows for theism, but not supernaturalism."

The target readership of this book is not indicated, but it will certainly be read by both scholars and students.

Fundamentally, however, as the accompanying blurb says, the aim and purpose of this encyclopaedic collection is that Scripture is to be read and studied reverently and holistically. I commend it warmly.

Howard Bigg Cambridge

Nancy DeClaissé-Walford, Rolf A Jacobson & Beth L Tanner, *The Book* of Psalms. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

This commentary has been thirteen years in the making. It has been worth the wait. Three specialist scholars on the Psalms have worked collaboratively, yet with their distinctive contributions marked (for the most part), to produce a strong, long, one-volume commentary on the Psalter.

The NICOT series is both evangelical and critical. The former highlights respect for the text, concern for theology and the desire to hear God's voice for today through the text. The latter emphasises the appreciative use of critical methods in the making of the commentary.

The commentary comprises a lengthy introduction, brief orientations to each of the five books of the Psalter (and to The Songs of the Ascents), a fresh annotated translation of every Psalm preceded by opening comments and (usually) followed by detailed analysis of the stanzas (or, sometimes, verses) and some reflections. The commentary helpfully ends with three indexes, of authors, of names and subjects, and of scripture and other ancient literature. The index of names and subjects is somewhat intimidating, with around 280 places where "humanity" is discussed!

In terms of division of labour, deClaissé-Walford wrote the introductory section on the canonical shaping of the Psalter, while Jacobson wrote the rest of the introduction. The psalms of Book I (1-41) are divided between Jacobson and Tanner (22, 25, 26, 31, 32, 35, 37, 38); Book II (42-72) are divided between deClaissé-Walford (42-51) and Tanner (52-72); Tanner comments on the whole of Book III (73-89) and, in Book IV, on 90-99. Jacobson tackles the rest of the psalms of Book IV (100-106). DeClaissé-Walford addresses all the psalms of Book V (107-150). Only the introductions to Book I (Jacobson) and Book III (Tanner) are attributed.

At points the collaborative nature of the production of the commentary is evident. In the introduction, Jacobson

mentions "we" (e.g. 8-9, 19); there is a collective decision to regard the Hebrew word hesed as a loan word, like shalom, and leave it untranslated (8). At other points, differences are evident. Jacobson is more positive about constructing a theology of the Psalter than Tanner (44). Tanner is less convinced of the Psalms telling a story of Israel's history than deClaissé-Walford (compare 685 with 21-38). Jacobson's analysis of individual psalms is more detailed than the others (357 pages for 40 Psalms, as opposed to Tanner's 303 pages for 56 Psalms and deClaissé-Walford's 260 pages for 54 Psalms). Jacobson alone marks concluding comments on individual psalms with a title, "Reflections," and his reflections are significantly longer than the others'. DeClaissé-Walford had finished her contribution by 2007, while Jacobson cites works years after that, both in his commentary and in the introduction. This reader would have appreciated an explanation of the assigning of the psalms, especially in Book I, and an account of the input that the other authors had to each individual's work.

The introduction is well-written and incisive. The psalms' authors are anonymous; the superscription *ledawid* did not originally indicate authorship. Historical superscriptions are a clue to early interpretation rather than an indicative of the occasion of composition. The discussions of form-criticism and canonical shaping are concise and strong. The select bibliography includes many of the main works in English. The compositional process of the commentary explains why deClaissé-Walford's 2014 work, *The Shape and Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter*, occurs here, but not in the introductory section on shaping.

Commentary on the psalms themselves pays close attention to text-critical questions, gives careful translation and thorough attention to poetics and theology. This reader would have appreciated more in the way of biblical-theological / christological reflections in the final section. Overall, this is an impressive work, valuable for scholars, for pastors and for seminary students.

James Robson Wycliffe Hall, Oxford

Stephen Garrett and J Merrick (Editors), *Five Views of Biblical Inerrancy,* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy is one of the stronger volumes I have encountered in this series. As a project, it brings clarity and sensitive debate to a contentious

subject of Christian identity. While Christians all see the Bible as very important, there remain substantial differences on how it should be approached and handled.

Each writer is given space to both introduce a viewpoint and critique the other outlooks. This ensures that the merits and liabilities of each perspective are brought to the fore. To guard against overly abstract arguments, each contributor is required by editorial directive to apply their perspective to three biblical case studies. The first case study, Joshua 6, invites exploration of the link between biblical interpretation and archaeology. The second involves Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9, which contain an ostensible contradiction. The third requires grappling with whether or not the teaching of Matthew 5 is terminally at odds with Deuteronomy 20.

The first contributor, Albert Mohler, affirms inerrancy along the lines of the notable (or notorious) Chicago Statement. For Mohler, the Bible – in its autographic form – is wholly inerrant. Mohler's assertion appeals to historical evangelicalism and ancient Christianity. He sees particularist inerrancy as a longstanding "theological reflex" of the church.

The second contributor, Peter Enns, is sharply opposed to Mohler. While the Bible possesses a historical impulse, its depiction of events has been transformed by centuries of tradition. As such, inerrancy – as conceptualised by 20th century American evangelicalism – fails to capture the varied character of the biblical texts. More than this, it creates all sorts of problems. It stymies the kind of critical dialogue that is part-and-parcel to any healthy intellectual pursuit. In this posture, Enns is much more open to extra-biblical interpretative input than Mohler.

The third contributor, Michael Bird, sees inerrancy as a focal point of debate largely in the American context. Simply put, it is not exceedingly relevant to global evangelicalism. While inerrant concepts have guarded the integrity of the American church, they are not an "essential facet" of the faith. Bird laments the way that American biblicist battles have falsely assumed universal significance. He reminds us that the majority of evangelicals have been content with attesting biblical infallibility and truthfulness.

Kevin Vanhoozer's perspective is a carefully tailored, nuanced view of robust biblical authority. Though Vanhoozer quickly contends that inerrancy is not the issue that "separates the sheep from the goats," he does acknowledge its importance. After critiquing the Chicago Statement, Vanhoozer requisitions the "Augustinian Theology of Veracity" to develop an alternative. Accordingly, he characterises biblical inspiration as "the authors speaking truth in that which they affirm." Vanhoozer's critical defence of inerrancy exhibits refreshing sensitivity both to the operations of human language and to the nature of biblical literature.

A final view hails from John Franke. Suspicious of conventional evangelical ideas of inerrancy, he surmises that they have been used less out of a concern for truth and more for securing power and control. Franke's alternative is dubbed "progressively evangelical." Central is the Barthian notion that God's revelation is not static. Rather, revelation is event - something that is continually established by God. For Franke, biblical interpretation must be ever mindful of the "divine accommodation" that is at play in Scripture. The Bible is not a precise, rigid manual; it is a "map" that guides the Christian journey. Franke stresses the Spirit's use of the Word and champions what he calls the "inerrant plurality" of Scripture. This concept, he argues, upholds biblical authority while refusing to advocate a single universal theology.

This set of essays is an apt, concise resource for the pastor needing to teach on a topic which easily intrigues and confuses. Given that questions concerning biblical authority often permeate the minds of new converts, this collection can also be of benefit for outreach ministries of the local congregation (Alpha, etc.). Biblical authority is not just the theologian's concern! This book would also be ideal for a church-based catechetical group, though a facilitator may be needed to unpack its sometimes dense sections.

All in all, *Five Views* provides a helpful platform for walking through key issues surrounding the nature of the Bible. The essays are brimming not only with engaging, careful exegesis, but also with demonstrations of how one's prior view of Scripture imprints biblical exposition. It is well worth the price.

Roger Revell St Peter's Fireside Church, Vancouver

Wesley Hill, Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and the Pauline Letters, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

Pastors, scholars, and students will all enjoy grappling with the insights in Wesley Hill's fresh take on Paul's letters and the Trinitarian faith of the Christian tradition. Mindful of the many pitfalls associated with clumsily reading Trinitarian categories into scriptural passages, Hill resists the move to set aside Trinitarian thought and instead deftly articulates the "hermeneutical fruitfulness of Trinitarian theology" for Pauline scholarship. As he crafts his argument, he expertly unites scriptural exegesis and systematic theology in ways that will inspire those who desire a closer relationship between the two and politely challenge anyone who might initially resist such a synthesis. Hill's particular style of theological exegesis allows him to transcend the usual disciplinary boundaries and speak not only to those within the "guild of biblical and Pauline interpreters" but also to the broader Christian community of believers.

Hill displays an impressive command of the Pauline corpus and the relevant Pauline scholarship as he steadily builds a compelling argument for a shift away from debates about just how "high" or "low" Paul's Christology really is. He suggests that these debates assume a vertical relationship between God and Jesus that subtly distracts or even prevents Christians from realising that we cannot really know who God is without reference to Jesus, and vice versa. Furthermore, conversations about "high" and "low" Christology tend to miss the Spirit's constitutive role in Paul's theology. This blind spot is of vital importance if Hill is correct that "...For Paul, the Spirit is necessary if we are to identify God and Jesus, just as we must have recourse to God's and Jesus' identities if we are to identify the Spirit." According to Hill's careful reading of key Pauline texts, Paul did not merely place Christological and pneumatological concepts alongside an independent, fully formed monotheism. Instead, Paul's theology relies on a complex "matrix of relationality" (165) between Father, Son, and Spirit that frustrates attempts to portray Paul in binitarian or unitarian fashion. Hill thus argues that a carefully crafted Trinitarian hermeneutic that recognises different levels of speech about God in Paul's writings best coheres with Paul's intricate understanding of the relations between God, Jesus, and the Spirit.

Hill succeeds with this project for many reasons, but here I will highlight two. First, he does not shy away from the strongest arguments of those who disagree with his convictions about the Trinitarian character of Paul's theology. Hill consistently chooses to engage the same scriptural passages that his interlocutors use in their formulations and shows how those passages could be read differently. His Trinitarian hermeneutic enables him to trace a clear continuity between Paul's thought and later theological statements from both Eastern and Western perspectives. Second, in addition to being well researched and convincingly argued, *Paul and the Trinity* is pastorally relevant. As Hill notes throughout the book, Paul's letters contain "tensions and trajectories" that push readers to try to move past surface level readings. Hill's book beautifully charts pathways for Christians to follow that move through Paul's letters and into the mystery of the relational, triune God.

Nick Mayrand University of Dayton

Mark Klitsie, *Minority reports: Voicing Neglected Biblical Texts*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016).

One telling difference between the Psalter of the ASB and that of Common Worship is that those rather awkward parts of some of the Psalms are no longer presented to us in parenthesis. There are no convenient square brackets releasing us from urging God to slay the wicked, or contemplating dashing Babylon's children against the rocks. Instead are left with what Mark Klitsie describes as "raw scripture," the biblical text without the difficult bits taken out. Having recently sat through a deeply thought provoking Bible study on the uncomfortable sections of Ps 139 I can recognise both the desire to avoid these harsh texts and the value of engaging with them. The importance of that engagement lies at the very heart of this fascinating book.

A central argument of *Minority Reports* is that postmodernity, with its distrust of meta-narratives, leaves open the possibility of giving greater space to discordant voices within scripture and for marginalised texts to be considered anew. When these texts are heard we face the contradictions of an omniscient and immutable God who can be surprised and change his mind. We have an all loving God who also expresses jealousy, anger, vengefulness and hate. Theology becomes messy and less buttoned down, as we encounter a God who is deeply, even vulnerably, invested in relationship with humanity, a "Most Moved Mover."

It is very evident in his writing that Klitsie's reading of scripture is deeply influenced by Jewish writers, drawing heavily on the work of Abraham Heschel, whom he describes as his virtual rabbi. The spectre of the Holocaust, and its influence on Jewish thought, lies behind some of his reflection on the paradox and ambiguity of God's relationship with his people. He also notes that while Western-modernist thought seeks to iron out paradox, creating flows of logic, Hebraic thought contains "block logic" where apparently contradictory units of thought can sit alongside one another without needing to be harmonised or synthesised. It is here that he identifies some parallels with post-modern perspectives.

The book very helpfully critiques a sanitised reading of scripture in which God comfortably conforms to our own notions of what it means to be good. Instead he directs us towards the competing truths concerning YHWH whose holiness transcends our over manicured concepts of goodness. However, it does contain some paradoxes and contradictions of its own. While Minority Reports highlights the diversity of thought within scripture, the final, and very wide ranging, chapter on application occasionally lacks that space for competing truths, uncritically adopting very conservative perspectives, evidenced on issues such as gender. The book also exhibits its own marginalised texts. A section on ethnocentrism makes the critical point that exposure to the testimony of Christians from around the world will help Westerners see that they do not have a monopoly on truth about the Bible. However, the book gives scant space to Christian voices from the majority world, drawing almost exclusively on Western and Jewish thought. This seemed like a missed opportunity, particularly for a writer originating from South Africa.

This is a thought provoking book which does, as one endorsement notes, "rush in where angels fear to tread." It poses some important questions and, while I found myself at odds with a number of its conclusions, it is well worth a read particularly for the way it engages with the parts of scripture that we may be tempted to put our own brackets around.

Colin Smith Dean of Mission Education, CMS

Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary: Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries vols.* 15-16, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014).

Nearly thirty years after one of his first books, *How to Read the Psalms* (1987), the prolific pen (or keyboard) of Tremper Longman III has produced two-volumesin-one in the revised series of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries.

Warrant for revision does not arise from the lack of quality of the previous volumes by Derek Kidner (1973-1975). Longman describes them as "incisive, tightly written, insightful" (10), an analysis with which I wholeheartedly agree. Nor does it derive from a change of outlook. The conviction of both the editor and the authors in the series remains that the Old Testament is the word of God for the contemporary church. Further, the target audience is the same: thoughtful Bible readers, students and pastors. It is the conviction that the series should reflect an up-to-date reading of the text, taking into account recent scholarship, that demands fresh work. That same scholarship has meant that the format of the Old Testament series has changed slightly, with each Psalm having three sections: Context, Comment and Meaning. Longman has a distinctive perspective on the first and last of these, to which I shall presently return.

The opening introduction covers the expected territory: the title of the book; the titles of individual psalms; composition, collection, organisation, and use; genre and types of psalms; poetic style; theology of the book of Psalms; the Psalms and human experience; the psalms in worship.

There is unabashed acknowledgement of the role of editors or redactors in giving titles to the psalms, along with the insistence that such titles are "canonical" (24); to take these titles "seriously" is to view them as indicating authorship (e.g., *ledavid* = by David) and particular historical circumstances (31); these circumstances are intentionally omitted from the psalm itself, so as to enable wider use (32). Discussion of genre or type surprisingly omits mention of Hermann Gunkel and includes a new type, "remembrance" (41).

Throughout the commentary, there are helpful and lucid comments on the text. The distinctiveness lies in Longman's treatment of Context and Meaning.

The series as a whole, drawing on recent linguistic emphasis that "texts communicate in large blocks" (8), expects that Context will consider the literary context of the passage within the book. Longman, however, is critical of the conclusions of Gerald Wilson (and others), who have, since Kidner's commentary, discerned a shape to the Psalter as a whole (34-5). Longman maintains that there is "no systematic and overarching structure" to the Psalter, so "each psalm is treated separately from its immediate context" (54). Some connections are allowed or acknowledged. This is most obvious in the case of Ps. 1-2 as the introduction to the Psalter (35), Ps. 146-50 as the climactic doxology (25), and the Psalms of Ascent (409-10). It is also evident in occasional comments elsewhere (e.g., on Ps 16:8, "shall not be shaken" (cf. Ps 15; 105), on Ps. 20-1, "a pair of royal psalms" (121), and on 80:1-2 (cf. 79:13; 298). I wonder whether scepticism about overall shaping, even if justified, warrants a neardisregard for connections between Psalms (e.g., Ps. 1-2, "meditate/say" in 1:2; 2:1; "happy" in 1:6; 2:12; "way" and "perish" in 1:6; 2:12).

The editorial explanation for the Meaning section is

that this gives the "message the passage seeks to communicate within the book, highlighting its key theological themes" (8). Longman moves beyond this, sometimes a bit too quickly, but with characteristic biblical-theological acumen rooted in Jesus' warrant in Luke 24, to help readers consider the Psalms christologically. The three main ways of making connections are very helpful for readers and preachers: the psalms as words to Christ, as words of Jesus, and as words about Jesus (48-50).

This commentary does not supersede Kidner's, but provides a worthwhile complement.

James Robson Wycliffe Hall, Oxford

R W L Moberly, Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

When I picked up Moberly's Old Testament Theology, I was expecting to read a distillation of theological themes from the Hebrew Bible and an exposition of their influence and impact on the theologies of the New Testament authors. In fact Moberly's book is much more interesting that that! Instead of theological abstraction he takes key texts from the Old Testament and examines how they have been treated in the subsequent tradition. Rabbinic and Christian theological sources are referenced but Moberly reads the text as a Christian exegete. As the sub-title says, Moberly reads the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. Reading *Old Testament Theology* felt like I was sitting in on a brilliant seminar on the Old Testament; the book is the fruit of years of scholarship and prayer.

The eight main chapters cover eight texts/topics from the Old Testament. Chapter One deals brilliantly with the *Shema* in Deut. 6 and the theme of loving God. In Chapter Two Moberly grapples with the very difficult concept of *Herem*. I found this chapter to be ultimately disappointing, perhaps I hoped for a "solution" to a problematic tradition where none exists. Chapter Three is an entertaining and informative exegesis of the manna from heaven in Exodus 16. Chapter Four, one of the highlights of the book, looks at the issue of whether God changes His mind or not. Chapter Five, Isaiah and Jesus, is the one that I was most looking forward to reading and proved to be perhaps the weakest in the book; not for any real problem or shortcoming, rather the exegesis was simply not as interesting and engaging as the rest of the book. Chapters Six and Seven, Jonah and Psalms of Lament, were for me the most thought provoking in the whole book and both sent me not only to my study but, more importantly to prayer and worship. In Chapter Eight he looks at Job and asks what wisdom is in the Biblical tradition. In the Epilogue Moberly lays out for the reader his understanding of how to do Christian theological exegesis of the Old Testament that learns from and engages with other traditions, but retains its Christian perspective.

This book is well written and the style is clear and readable; it works in two different ways, first as brilliant exegesis of particular texts and issues within Biblical theology, and second more generally as a model for how to do Biblical theology. I learned a great deal about the Old Testament reading this book, and I enjoyed reading it. *Old Testament Theology* is the fruit of many years of prayerful grappling with the text of the Bible.

In the preface Moberly writes: "...I try to model a way of doing Old Testament Theology that is built around a dialectic between ancient text and contemporary questions, within a Christian frame of reference that is alert to other frames of reference." Moberly amply succeeds in these aims and in doing so he models for us a way of engaging with the Biblical text that is both scholarly and faithful. Reading Moberly's *Old Testament Theology* increased my understanding of the Bible considerably; but more than this it deepened my love of the Bible and of the God who reveals himself in the Bible. Thoroughly recommended.

Tim Gill Liverpool

lain Provan, Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters, (Waco: Baylor Press, 2014).

The title of this book is intimidating. I started reading it on an airplane; I was a bit worried what the folks next to me would think! Notwithstanding, this project is one to which I will return time and again. It is a gift that has been many years in the making, reflecting the thoughtfulness therein.

Provan does not systematically work through the books of the Old Testament. Instead, his chapters are organised around a series of ten questions. These questions are chosen because they are "precisely the kind that religions and philosophies have always tried to answer." These "big questions" govern the book's shape. Chapter 2, for example, takes up the question: What is the world? Here, in tune with Genesis, Provan advances several key points: the world is not eternal, it was created by a person, it has order, and creation is distinct from God. The points are developed against the backdrop of prevalent ancient Near Eastern cosmologies. Along these lines, Provan displays the Old Testament's subversion and displacement of familiar ancient theories about creation. Part-and-parcel to this is a construal of "Eden" that is both intriguing and compelling.

In each chapter, one discovers a delightful series of historical, literary, and poetic anecdotes and illustrations. Besides studying the Bible, Provan is well read in ancient philosophy, literature, and scientific theory. He is also well-versed in three extant theories about the world, alternative "big stories" about the nature and purpose of creation. These include the "axial age theory" (connected with Karl Jaspers, Karen Armstrong, and John Hick), the "dark green golden age theory" (associated with the work of David Suzuki and Thomas Berry), and the "scientific new age theory" (linked with new atheists such as Daniel Dennett and Sam Harris). As he articulates the theological, material, and moral vision of the Old Testament, he does so over and against these influential rival narratives.

Among its many virtues, readers will be pleased to encounter the comparative discussions at the end of each chapter. These reflections contrast the Old Testament's perspective on a given topic with alternative outlooks on offer. For example, after describing the function of hope in the Old Testament, Provan surveys ideas about hope found in other religious traditions (Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, etc.). These comparisons enable the unique features of biblical reality to gain clarity and appeal. This facet of his project is more than timely.

In drawing out the distinct features of Old Testament religion, Provan gives profound exhibition to its dangerous ideas. The religion of the Old Testament is dangerous because it unmasks idols. It exposes ideologies that all too often demean human dignity. It is dangerous to those who worship family, tribe, or nation instead of God. It opposes the vestment of such constructs with sacred qualities, using them then to justify the blood sacrifices required to sustain them. It is dangerous to all who worship money and possessions, which all too easily collude in the economic trampling of the world's least. It is dangerous to those who espouse the utopianism so often at the heart of modern economic ideology. The Old Testament is dangerous to those who think that humanity is merely the result of evolution and who would, in correlation, organise society along such brutish principles. In these and other ways, Provan reminds that the theological vision of Israel's Scriptures is seriously dangerous. At least in its opposition to pernicious ideologies and practices and norms that are readily taken for granted in our world.

If pressed to comment on the book's drawbacks, I would only mention one thing. I would like to see a bit more engagement with others who would guide our reading of the Old Testament. How might Provan square with Brueggemann's Testimony/Counter-Testimony rubric? Or Christopher Seitz' efforts to approach the Old Testament in light of the New? Such supplements, perhaps, warrant a second volume. If so, I'll anticipate it, for my suggestion here does not diminish the accomplishment of Provan's undertaking.

Roger Revell

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Geza Vermes, *The True Herod*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

The True Herod is a book that Geza Vermes long wished to publish, but sadly the project only came to fruition after his death. The lavishly illustrated colour volume is an easy and engaging read, even if many Christian readers may have difficulties with some of Vermes' arguments.

The book is divided into three sections. The first introduces the historical background to Herod's reign, the second the man himself, and the third his descendants. Each contains maps, photographs of historical artifacts and ruins as well as very accessible text. This is a very engaging and readable book.

The account of Herod's own life is beautifully supported by many photographs, which the extant ruins of many of Herod's great building projects. Vermes' mastery of the historical detail provides a rich and detailed portrait of Herod's life, supporting Vermes' central argument that Herod was not the evil man most Christians regard him as being. He regards him as a many-faceted personality, capable of reaching great heights as well as sinking to great depths. He was both staggeringly generous and staggeringly cruel. Vermes wants the reader to appreciate the complexity of Herod's personality, and in this he succeeds admirably.

Where Christians may take issue is over Vermes' views on Herod in relation to Jesus. Vermes casually dismisses Matthew's account of the slaughter of the innocents as a fabrication, arguing it to be a fantasy based on Pharaoh's order to kill the Hebrew boys. Vermes argues Matthew is working with Jewish *Midrash* of this story rather than historical fact. However, the standard Christian argument that even if it is unattested elsewhere, it is still in keeping with the character of Herod the king is, in my view, just as persuasive as Vermes' assertion. After all, by Vermes' own argument, Herod could be incredibly cruel. To give but one example, when Herod was summoned to Alexandria to appear before Mark Anthony in order to account for the death of the High Priest Aristobulus (killed on Herod's orders), Herod gave orders that his beautiful young wife Mariamme be killed should he fail to return.

The final section of the book, which covers Herod's descendants, brings them to life. It is especially useful for those wishing to clarify who all the different Herods mentioned in the New Testament are, and for understanding the relationships between them. Here also Vermes' own views are clear, as he, for example contrasts the New Testament's very negative picture of Herod Agrippa with the much more positive one given by Josephus. I found myself wondering why in Vermes' view, Matthew and Luke must be subjective and biased, while Josephus objective and balanced.

This is a very engaging book, and would be a valuable resource for libraries. Christian readers will probably not always agree with Vermes' dismissal of New Testament sources, but this should spur them to examine their own assumptions, rather than just meet assertion with counter-assertion. All sources have their biases, as do all interpreters of sources. Vermes' book has much to offer, and even if I did not agree with all his conclusions, my understanding of the Herodian dynasty has been enriched by reading this book.

Tom Wilson St Philip's Centre, Leicester

Nicholas T Wright, *The Paul Debate: Critical Questions for Understanding the Apostle,* (London: SPCK, 2016).

This is a timely and useful book, a slim volume which is an attempt to offer a summary of his much bigger two-volume study *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. The larger work is itself the final volume in Wright's massive four-part study begun in 1992, with the overall title *Christian Origins and the Question of God*. The scholarship demonstrated in this monumental undertaking is breathtaking and Wright's work has been reviewed in glowing terms by many of his peers. However, it will come as no surprise that he has also ruffled many feathers, especially amongst Evangelicals, since Wright unambiguously identifies himself as a member of that constituency. Why then the furore? To answer that question, it would be necessary to offer a resume of Wright's entire project, but in a brief review, that is not possible. I therefore propose to look briefly at his treatment of Justification, since this is regarded by Evangelicals as a, if not the, key Pauline doctrine. To put it simply, Wright believes that Justification is not about how someone becomes a Christian, but is a declaration that they have become a Christian. Or again, Justification is not an account of how people get saved, but a proclamation of the lordship of Christ. To understand just how Wright arrives at this conclusion, it would be necessary to understand his treatment of the basic Jewish doctrines of Monotheism, Election and Eschatology. These in turn lead us back to a fresh appraisal of Jewish self-understanding in Second Temple Judaism and the status of Gentiles in relation to the Covenant. Looked at in this fashion, it begins to be possible to see how terms like Justification and Righteousness find their place in the broader context of Paul's theology against his background as a Pharisaic Jew.

The book contains five chapters: 1.Paul and the Messiah, Knowing the Name or Having the Mind. 2. How to Begin with Jesus, and How Did He Come to Know It? 3. Apocalyptic, Covenantal Narrative or Cosmic Invasion? 4. The Justified People of God, Messianic Israel or Saved Sinners? and 5. Theology, Mission and Method, Paul's and Ours. Any reader, keen to gain an introduction to Wright's work will find here the ideal starting point. Wright has an uncanny ability in explaining difficult or unfamiliar topics in an accessible and engaging style. If the appetite is sufficiently whetted by this exercise, then I would recommend moving onto Wright's Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision, a book not in the main series, but written in response to The Future of Justification by John Piper, an attempt to refute Wright's principle arguments. Wright's is a combative book, but not at all hostile as he patiently rehearses his basic position with helpful exegesis of the important texts.

It will be evident from the above that Wright's work has attracted much criticism, mainly from those who maintain the traditional understanding of Paul stemming from Reformed positions. But it has also been welcomed by a good number of Evangelicals who regard his radical attempt to breathe new energy into the study of early Christianity as an exciting, even exhilarating change of direction. But it is perhaps ironic that when the dust has settled, the Tom Wrights and the John Pipers are fundamentally on the same side in placing their trust in the God who raised Jesus from the dead and promises those in Christ a glorious future in His presence.

Howard Bigg Cambridge

3. DOCTRINE AND PHILOSOPHY

Anthony Maranise, Sport and the Spiritual Life: The Integration of Playing and Praying, (Memphis: Anthony Maranise, 2013).

Few aspects of life lead to more passionate discussion and debate than religion and sports, so those who try to bring the two together face quite a challenge. Anthony Maranise tries to negotiate this tricky task by expounding on practical experiences as an athlete, coach, and sports chaplain that have convinced him that God can and should be found in the sporting world despite the raised eyebrows that such claims often inspire. He offers his takes on a rather stunning number of topics ranging from the pressures of parents on youth athletes to Trinitarian doctrine to what qualifies as an appropriate tattoo. At his best, Maranise is able to weave the theological and the athletic together as he does in his discussion of sports and the Benedictine integration of ora et labora (prayer and work). Unfortunately, some questionable assumptions and deeply problematic arguments tend to overshadow such moments of insight.

Maranise states openly that his book is primarily a work of spirituality rather than an academic text, a distinction that those used to the latter will need to keep in mind as they read. Maranise draws on personal experiences and his particular religious sensibilities in an informal, conversational style that conveys his passion for the task at hand. His willingness to make known his commitments may work well for readers with affinities for a deeply countercultural Christian worldview. Readers who do not fit that profile may still find the book of interest but should expect to struggle with certain assumptions and turns of phrase throughout the text. For example, a particular political agenda surfaces awkwardly at various points in the text, perhaps most evident in Maranise's blunt dismissal of those who do not vote in a certain manner. Also, the author's attempts to anticipate objections from his readers tend to be rhetorical caricatures of "fundamentalist" positions that few actually occupy (e.g. 69, 107).

I agree with Maranise that sports and spirituality are not mutually exclusive, but I fear that this particular effort to connect the two fails to deliver a healthy synthesis. Efforts to speak theologically about sports must attend to the messy details of our existence as embodied creatures. Unfortunately, Maranise tends toward dualisms that cause him to miss opportunities for a more compelling account. For example, he appeals to "simple, basic metaphysics" to say that the "spiritual world" is "more real than anything we shall ever know or experience in the finite physical world." These competing worlds align with stark divisions he draws along the way between temporal bodies and eternal souls or rational thoughts and wild emotions. His worries about the physical body as a source of sin are especially clear in the way he chooses to employ Augustine's Confessions. He chooses to focus on Augustine's struggles with issues of bodily temptation (including a strange, undocumented reference to legends that Augustine fathered up to fourteen illegitimate children) and Augustine's "coldturkey" conversion in the garden as he builds a case for a sport-spirituality of self-denial. Even more troubling than this surface-level reading of Augustine's long, winding path to conversion is Maranise's willingness to change (without any explanation) the scriptural passage that Augustine "picked up and read" to one that apparently better suits the sort of disembodied spirituality he is advocating (Luke 9:23 replaces Romans 13:13-14).

Despite the book's significant flaws, Maranise has provided a passionate book capable of provoking further reflection on the links between sport and spirituality. I certainly do not recommend that readers take this book as anything resembling the last word on these matters, but perhaps wrestling with Maranise's claims could be beneficial for those who wish to help Christians sort out the potential relationship between their sports and their faith.

Nicholas Mayrand University of Dayton

4. ETHICS AND PASTORAL MINISTRY

Matthew Caminer, with Martyn Percy, and Beaumont Stevenson, *Curacies and How to Survive Them*, (London: SPCK, 2015).

When, two years ago, I briefed my newly-arrived diocesan bishop that, in the previous eight years, only two curacies in the diocese had failed he expressed delighted amazement that the casualty rate was so low. This book perhaps helps to redress that balance! It is based on a series of case studies, fictitious but built on actual material derived from a recent online survey of curates and training incumbents. Each one forms the subject of a chapter and they are addressed by means of a three-way conversation between the authors. All three have wide experience of the Church of England, two being ordained and one being a clergy husband. Here they are making use of their professional expertise – one is a theological educator, one a therapist and one a management consultant.

Their conversations are warm, good-natured and supportive – there is no competition or point scoring and they are genuinely concerned to get to the bottom of difficult situations and to encourage good practice. Indeed each chapter ends with "points for reflection" for curates, for training incumbents and for dioceses. I guess that these three groups will be the target audience for the book but therein lies a weakness since its focus is broad rather than sharp and any one of the three groups might consider it was not actually sharp enough for their specific needs. Nevertheless, being about practical issues and being written in a conversational style the book has a freshness and maintains a rhythm that keeps the reader's attention and does not drag.

There is the minor anachronism of references to "IME 4-7," which is now "IME Phase Two" thus dating an otherwise up-to-date book.

But two substantive criticisms may be made. First the overwhelming bias towards stipendiary ministry. Now of course it can be argued that when a stipendiary curacy goes wrong this can be far more traumatic since both home and source of income are affected. This is undeniable yet since so many curacies are now of selfsupporting (over 47% of ordinations in 2012 were to selfsupporting curacies) it is highly unrepresentative. Living in their own homes SSMs may not feel "under siege" in the same way that some stipendiaries do but there are other pressures that specifically affect them and this book fails to address them. It wasn't until Chapter 7 that the first reference to a self-supporting curate was made. But to regard Chapter 7 as addressing SSM issues would be mistaken since that case study is really about a curate with health problems and the realism (or otherwise) of ministry working agreements. The fact that the curate in question is an SSM appears to be purely coincidental.

I accept that my second criticism may be regarded as less than fair since the title of the book is Curacies and How to Survive Them. For some years now I have been giving a talk entitled: 'Surviving or Thriving?' to the curates for whom I am responsible. It is a challenge to make the most of their ministries, to flourish despite the inevitable difficulties and to rise above mere survival mode. And therein lies my concern; to focus purely on negative case studies can be seen as colluding with the "curacies from hell" narrative that has become far too prevalent in the contemporary church. Consequently, though this is an honest and thoughtful book with good practical advice, the overall feel is a discouraging one because it does not tell the whole story! A curacy needs to be a time not merely to survive, but to thrive and to flourish. But perhaps the authors have a companion volume in mind...?

John Darch Diocese of Blackburn

Brian Castle, *Reconciliation: the journey* of a lifetime, (London: SPCK, 2014).

This book is, in the author's words, "an attempt to see what it means for Christian life to put reconciliation at the heart of who we are and what we do." In doing so, he aims to follow the lead of the apostle Paul, whose central concern was "to inspire reconciling communities of Christ to illustrate and proclaim God's reconciliation of the world." So the book is not a "how to" of reconciliation so much as a call to a way of life, geared towards a "full and complete realisation that we are embraced by the infinite love that is God." It draws on Brian Castle's experience of ministry in Africa and in theological education before being appointed Bishop of Tonbridge.

The first part of the book lays out what Castle calls a tapestry of reconciliation. There are, he suggests, certain drivers for reconciliation: memory, victimhood, forgiveness, otherness and gift (i.e. reconciliation is not within any one person's control). These "provide coherence to groups or individuals in their seeking of reconciliation." Furthermore, one can characterise 15 "marks", at least some of which need to be present if genuine reconciliation is being pursued. These are the marks: reconciliation is a lifetime's quest and journey; it flourishes and deepens in a climate of celebration and thanksgiving; it is a source of new energy, life and hope; it draws all involved into the "desert"; it requires listening; storytelling and narrative are important; it involves conflict; it is costly, painful and requires selfgiving; it requires transformation; it involves living with contradiction; it is sustained by hope; it requires willingness to be vulnerable; it is confirmed, celebrated and strengthened by ritual; reconcilers establish reconciling communities; relationship is a cornerstone of reconciliation.

The second half of the book explores what a reconciling life, a reconciling church and a reconciling society may look like, making connections with the drivers and marks already laid out. Here Castle poses some useful questions to systems of church government and ecumenical relations, and offers examples of how the attitudes displayed in Christian communities can be a powerful witness. I was particularly struck by his review of the work of truth and reconciliation commissions in a number of countries. I'm sure his salutary observation is right: programmes of this sort have no guarantee of success and tend to be more effective in getting the truth than in achieving reconciliation.

There are some good principles and illuminating examples in this book but overall I found it rather unsatisfying. To me it came across as a wide range of ideas and stories, rather loosely threaded around a theme. Although there was much that I agreed with, I rarely seemed to get to something solid to chew on. References to concrete examples were often rather brief, and the questions at the end of each chapter usually seemed rather abstract and general. I would have appreciated more to help me, and to help me help others, root the idea of reconciliation at the level of preparation of the heart, personal initiative and following a demanding pathway. This is what I was hoping for after the introduction described reconciliation as the desire to repair fractured relationships, the opposite of enmity, and the journey of a lifetime.

If you want to explore Reconciliation (big R) as an allpervading idea and destination, this is a book worth reading. If you want to walk with others on a journey, living out experiences of reconciliation (small r), there are other better resources available.

Colin Patterson, Assistant Director of Bridge Builders

Jeffrey W Driver, A Polity of Persuasion: Gift and Grief of Anglicanism, (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2014).

It is hard to believe that it is over a decade since the publication of the Windsor Report sought to address the splits within Anglicanism over same-sex relationships. This book, by the Archbishop of Adelaide, is a reflection on the nature of Anglicanism and its ecclesiology – its concern for historical contextuality, dispersed authority and proceeding through persuasion and reception of new ideas – in the light of these developments and earlier tensions over women's ordination. It offers both an account and interpretation of recent decades and its own proposals as to how conflicts could be better handled from an Anglican perspective.

The second and third chapters offer a helpful overview of the series of reports from The Grindrod Report on women bishops for Lambeth 1988 through the Eames Commissions and Virginia Report to Windsor and then the development of the covenant. There is much here of value but the account also raises some questions. These relate to gaps in the history (such as the growth of the language of "instruments" and ACC reports on the Communion) and in the secondary literature (such as Doe's major study of the covenant which is not referenced) and also to emphases (too much is made of the draft covenant in an appendix to Windsor and, despite his post-colonial concerns, it is the northern rather than Global South critiques of the covenant drafts that get attention). I remained unpersuaded by his overall argument that Windsor and the final covenant text marked a significant centralisation of authority. This fails to recognise the protection of provincial autonomy internally while setting out agreed processes to oversee the inter-provincial life of the Communion.

The next two chapters set out some of the bases for Bishop Driver's critique and own proposals: a study of open reception and an informative account of the distinctive structures of his own province's polity and how it might help the Communion as a whole. He then sets out a way in which the Communion might move from restraining destructive conflict (the focus until now) to enabling appropriate and creative conflict within koinonia. His vision of a "polity of persuasion" with a focus on relationality, giving time and space for discernment, conciliarity and creative conflict has much that appeals although it is surprising that more attention is not given here to the Continuing Indaba Project (perhaps reflecting the fact no Australian diocese was involved in the initial conversations). There remains, however, a need for more clarity about how churches or Instruments should respond when the Communion clearly views a development as an unbiblical error and calls on provinces to pause but is ignored, as happened over same-sex unions but not over women's ordination. Here his important critique (most fully set out in his final chapter) of the idealism behind appealing to Trinitarian communion as a model for ecclesial communion needs to go beyond the realities of human frailty and brokenness to the need to respond to sin and disobedience.

Questions of faith and order within global Anglicanism, although currently not as high-profile, will inevitably surface again soon. This book is a valuable contribution which needs to be read by all interested in how we now move forward. Despite its weaknesses, its vision of a "polity of persuasion" as a gift that Anglicans can offer to the wider church and the world is an attractive one which needs to shape the new structures that are going to have to develop if we are in any sense to remain a global Communion.

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Charles Marsh, Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, (London: SPCK, 2014).

It would be interesting to know how much the average Christian knows of the life and theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He or she may be vaguely aware of *Letters* and Papers from Prison and maybe Cost of Discipleship but probably not much else. Some may know that 10 of the plinths above the west door of Westminster Abbey are occupied by statues of 20th-century martyrs, one of which is the subject of this splendid biography. It follows hard on the heels of the biography by the German scholar Ferdinand Schlingensiepen Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906-1945, A Biography published in Germany in 2006 and translated into English in 2010. Both cover similar themes, but for me, Marsh is the more gripping account. Stephen Plant, himself a distinguished Bonhoeffer scholar, in the blurb, calls Marsh "the finest Bonhoeffer scholar of his generation."

Unlike most protestant theologians of the 20th century, Bonhoeffer was not the son of a minister. Rather, Marsh tells us, he was the sixth of eight children (his twin sister Sabine being the seventh) born into a family of prodigiously talented humanists who would rather spend religious holidays with relatives or friends than in church. The young Dietrich could have pursued a musical career as a pianist, but it became clear quite early on that he wanted to study theology. It seems that his mother Paula recognised his attraction to ultimate questions. This review will attempt to trace the course of Bonhoeffer's relatively short life in the context of his quest for truth and its practical outworking in the turbulent years culminating in his death on 9 April 1945 at the hands of the Nazis barely a month before the end of the Second World War.

Dietrich was aware of his exceptional intellect and he graduated from Grunewald Gymnasium by the age of 17, two years ahead of most of his class. He became fluent in Latin and Greek, competent in Hebrew and French and over the next five years he would learn Italian, Spanish and English. Dietrich also loved travel and in an extended visit to Italy in 1923/1924 he was captivated by Rome and awed by the pageantry of the Catholic celebrations of Easter week in St Peter's Basilica. Although he never seriously contemplated embracing Roman Catholicism, Dietrich was deeply affected by what one might call "the beauty of holiness."

But university studies beckoned and Dietrich found himself at the theological faculty of Berlin's Friedrich-Wilhelm University at that time dominated by three liberal protestant luminaries, Adolf von Harnack, Karl Holl and Reinhold Seeberg. But Dietrich soon gave notice that he was not content to tread the well-worn paths of liberal Protestantism. When he submitted his doctoral dissertation, Sanctorum Communio in 1927, his examiners were slightly baffled. Its themes adumbrated Dietrich's emerging vision and life's work: Christ, community and concreteness were the key words, his conviction that knowledge of God begins in personal encounter. Apart from this, the doctrine of justification vanishes into thin air.

For Bonhoeffer, people mattered and in the course of his life, he entered into several intense relationships, both intellectual and personal. At this stage, the publication of his dissertation brought Dietrich into contact with Karl Barth who recognised in the young scholar a kindred spirit who was not afraid to challenge the status quo. Dietrich devoured the early volumes of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* and the two men remained in contact. Dietrich agreed with Barth on most of the basics: the theologian must be a servant of the church and the basis for thinking truthfully about God is Jesus Christ. But he found Barth's imperviousness to the social and ethical dimensions of doctrine disconcerting. Dietrich found theology in America shallow and disappointing when he spent a year at Union Theological Seminary, New York in 1930/31, although he was fascinated by the energetic American social theology of Reinhold Niebuhr.

Bonhoeffer's need for close relationships is nowhere better illustrated than in his friendship with Eberhard Bethge, who survived the war and wrote the first full-length of his friend and mentor. The two met at Finkenwalde, where in 1935, Bonhoeffer set up a seminary for pastors of the German confessing church as the menace of Hitler's Nazism was making things increasingly difficult for those who were determined to remain faithful to the gospel when many took the line of least resistance in joining the state-sanctioned German Christian church. This experiment in communal living appealed to Dietrich's ascetic streak which existed quite happily alongside his love of high culture. Bethge soon became Dietrich's inseparable companion, although there was never any hint of sexual impropriety. Dietrich had never felt such a bond with a female, although he later became engaged to Maria von Wedemeyer, his death preventing their marriage. Finkenwalde represented a fusion of theology and life and produced a delightful little book Life Together. But it was not to last. The seminary was closed by the Gestapo in 1937.

Bonhoeffer was now a marked man. It is remarkable, however that as Marsh observes, for all his activity and spadework on behalf of the Confessing Church he had been mostly passive, "ever bobbing and weaving amid the raining blows of authority, never standing still to face the consequences of real action." But in New York again in June 1939, he forged a new resolve to join the struggle in Germany that would cost him his life. Dietrich would pray and plot for the defeat of his country. He was finally arrested in April 1943 and remained in Tegel prison until shortly before his execution at Flossenberg on 9 April 1945.

There are aspects of Bonhoeffer's life and theology which have not been covered, perhaps most importantly his decision to be involved in the plot on Hitler's life. What had become of Bonhoeffer's theology of nonviolence? Again, his radical call to discipleship has not been explored, but his book The Cost of Discipleship is still a classic. Finally, how is his coining of the expression 'religionless Christianity' to be understood today?

This is a truly great account of a truly great man of God, and I heartily commend it.

Howard Bigg Cambridge

Emma Percy, *Mothering as a Metaphor for Ministry*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

This stimulating book is a published version of the author's PhD thesis presented to the University of Nottingham. It appears in the Ashgate Contemporary Ecclesiology Series. Percy has filled a gap in relation to the controversial issue of the application of feminine terminology to God. The stimulus for the topic of the book was her ministry as parish priest in Holy Trinity, Millhouses, Sheffield for seven years. Her purpose is to reflect on her experiences of being a mother and a parish priest, more specifically on the "analogous relationship between the contingent nature of the practice of mothering on the one hand, and ministry on the other." The analogy is a good one since the contingency arises from the fact that the work of both mothers and priests is connected to specific people who are constantly adapting and changing.

After a brief introduction, the book is divided into three parts, each containing three chapters. Part 1, Exploring Ministry, examines (a) Ministry: Ontology and Function, a useful study of differing theologies of ordination which have evolved over time, (b) Ministry: Relationship and Grace, which recognises both the universal priesthood of believers and the ministerial priesthood of persons commissioned and recognised as having a more specific role to minister and bear witness to the gracious work of God, but without being regarded as ontologically different from those to whom they minister. At this point, Percy introduces the maternal metaphor as an aid to exploring the role of a parish priest. (c) Maternal Imagery for Clergy in the Christian Tradition. Here, Percy looks at complicated issues around the idea of "Mother Church" and the Roman Catholic attention to Mary as having an ongoing role as a nurturing mother. As an Anglican, Percy does not endorse this tradition, but does see the appropriateness of regarding the Church as a mother nurturing her children without following the Catholic insistence on the essential maleness of the ordained priesthood.

Part 2, Mothering: Gender, Theory and Practice, explores the more cultural and sociological aspects of mothering. These three chapters deal with (a) Mothering: Gender and Culture. In this heavily contested area, Percy tackles issues such as gender and priesthood, contrasting the essentialism of a male-only priesthood as required by Rome with constructivist theories of gender, taking in the Conservative Evangelical view of the biblical idea of essential male headship. Percy helpfully challenges stereotypical notions of what is masculine and feminine. "Defining differences beyond basic biology is problematic." (b) Mothering: Questions of Instinct and Inter-Subjectivity. Here, Percy examines specific issues concerning the nature of mothering. It may sound logical to think that the bodily experiences of mothers makes them the natural carers and nurturers of children. She questions this, however, in suggesting that this is more of a social expectation than it being an essential female skill. Whoever takes responsibility for the care of a child male or female – has to learn and develop the necessary skills. (c) Mothering as a Practice. In this chapter, Percy draws on the work of the political philosopher Hannah Arendt. Human activity can be divided into three categories. Labouring deals with immediate human needs, while work provides for the production of lasting objects. The third, action, concerns human interaction speech, relationships and politics in a broad sense. Summarising her argument, Percy identifies mothering with labour and action. Work is not a suitable category as it is not concerned with a product with the associated ideas of blueprints, formulas and targets. Action is openended and concerns what mothers do as necessary for the flourishing of the child.

In part 3 Percy applies her earlier findings to ministerial practice in Mothering as a Metaphor for Ministry. (a) Chapter 7 is a densely argued study in Using Mothering to Think about Ministry. She focuses her attention on parish ministry although it may be applied in more specialised sector ministries. She draws a direct parallel between mothering and ministry as involving committed, attentive and responsive relationships and this naturally equates to the building up of the body of Christ. She explores the ideas of preservation, fostering growth and acceptability by which she means the requirement to work within the structures of (in this case) Anglicanism in all its complexities. It also has the dimension of the priest's acceptability before God. (b) Chapter 8 deals with The Virtue of Humility and the Issue of Power. The abuse of power by clergy is not uncommon and Percy warns against looking for blind obedience which she describes as "a degenerate form of proper trust." But the priest does have a responsibility to model values and on occasions to challenge behaviour and holding these in balance is no easy task. Finally, chapter 9 uses maternal language to articulate some examples of parish ministry. She treats such matters as multitasking and multiattending, which involves the ability to move between different environments without bringing inappropriate attitudes into each. Most of what she says here could be articulated without the support of maternal language, but the parallels certainly add weight to the various examples.

This is a book which might usefully form the basis

of post-ordination training and would provide both challenge and encouragement to those engaged in parish ministry. Readers might also like to know that Emma Percy has also written a more popular book with the intriguing title *What Clergy Do Especially When it Looks Like Nothing*. I commend both.

Howard Bigg Cambridge

Stephen J Plant, *Taking Stock of Bonhoeffer: Studies in Biblical Interpretation and Ethics,* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

Stephen Plant is Dean of Trinity Hall, Cambridge whose doctoral work was on Bonhoeffer's theology has brought together a collection of articles previously published in various journals. The book is divided into three sections, dealing with historical context, Bonhoeffer and the Bible and Bonhoeffer and Ethics. It is likely to be of interest to historians and academics who wish to bring themselves up to date on Bonhoeffer scholarship or to consult particular chapters. There are, however, some chapters which non-specialists will find helpful and which offer a flavour of Bonhoeffer's approach to the message of the Bible and perhaps correct certain misconceptions. An obvious example is the expression "religionless Christianity" often bandied about to convey the impression of Bonhoeffer as a dangerous radical. A response to this may be found in chapter 3, 'How Theologians Decide: Theologians on the Eve of Nazi Rule'. Here, Plant goes into some detail about the reasons why theologians decided to either to oppose or endorse Nazism. In hindsight, the case against Hitler seems clear-cut, but as Plant explains, the situation was less so at the time. Chapter 4 is also well-worth reading. This is the AS Peake memorial lecture delivered by Plant to mark the centenary of Bonhoeffer's birth. A S Peake (of Peake's commentary fame), is portrayed as an oldfashioned liberal in his handling of Scripture, which for him is nothing more than a record of human experience of revelation. Bonhoeffer, by contrast, is first and foremost a biblical theologian, who while acknowledging that a return to the pre-critical era was not possible, nevertheless saw the Bible as a witness to God's saving purposes. Plant takes as an example the treatment of Genesis by both writers. Peake predictably begins with the question of sources and tells us that the proper approach to the text is one of "dispassionate enquiry." For his part, Bonhoeffer is content to see the two creation narratives as complementary, but is clear that

the combined narratives are "quite simply the source of knowledge about the origin of humankind" expressing the physical nearness of the Creator to the creature'. Of course, Plant recognises that historical criticism was not understood in precisely the same way by the two writers, but nevertheless, Bonhoeffer did not find that such criticism was an obstacle to a proper theological interpretation of Scripture. Indeed, it may be argued that his approach has borne the more lasting fruit. Finally, I would recommend chapter 5, entitled 'Guilt and Promise in Bonhoeffer's Jonah. The way in which Plant weaves together Bonhoeffer's personal circumstances and the text of Jonah is beautifully done. I would add that the final chapter 'Reading Bonhoeffer in Britain' will help the reader to understand the changing fortunes of Bonhoeffer's theological legacy in Britain and perhaps encourage some to explore this further.

Howard Bigg Cambridge

Paul David Tripp, *New Morning Mercies:* A *Daily Gospel Devotional*, (Nottingham: IVP, 2014).

I received my review copy of *New Morning Mercies* back in November 2014 and resolved to begin using it daily in 2015. I also decided that I would not write a review for the March 2015 edition of *Anvil* as the timings of getting the review published would mean I would have written it only a month or six weeks into using it. I wanted to see if I still wanted to read *New Morning Mercies* every day after more than six months. And I did.

Tripp has written a genuine Gospel devotional, 366 thoughts (yes, it does include one for 29 February should it be needed) that remind you every day of your need for grace and the wonderful mercy of God in making that grace freely available. Tripp writes with a pastor's heart, recognising that our willful disobedience towards God is at the root of all human problems. He writes to remind us that each and every day we must return to God, whose mercies are new every morning, utterly dependent on his grace.

Each day there is a single page to read. There is a headline thought, and then that thought it expanded upon in some detail, ending with a suggested Bible passage to read. The headline thoughts were originally tweets that Tripp shared each day, and that have now become the basis of more substantial reflections. Tripp varies between poetry and prose, between exposition of Bible passages and discussion of his pastoral experience. This variety is what has help hold my attention over the months. The outline structure is the same each day, but the precise shape of the content varies. Whatever form it takes, it is always well written, easy to read and with a clear challenge to live a grace filled life.

I read *New Morning Mercies* as part of my morning devotional pattern, but for those with more limited time, there is enough here to become the foundation of a daily quiet time. Perhaps a short prayer at the end of each reflection might have helped some, but I am content to be pushed towards my own conversation with God. My only real request is that Tripp writes a companion volume for the evenings, to help me ground my reflection on the day in God's grace and commit the joys and sorrows into his hands before I sleep.

Tom Wilson St Philips Centre, Leicester

Frances Young, Arthur's Call: A Journey of Faith in the Face of Severe Learning Disability, (London: SPCK, 2014).

The former Edward Cadbury Professor of Theology at Birmingham University has given us a profoundly moving theological memoir on parenting, love and disability. Building on her 1985 work in this area Face to Face, which was a narrative essay in the theology of suffering, *Arthur's Call* is a masterful example of a theological and pastoral memoir.

The book divides into seven chapters; the first three of which are written primarily as biography. In the opening seventy pages we are given a parent's eye view of what it is like to live with a child with severe learning disability. We are granted access to Young's inner life. We hear first hand what it was like for Young, having successfully defended her PhD thesis at Cambridge a few weeks earlier, to give birth to Arthur and then be told he was "brain damaged, microcephalic (that is with an abnormally small head)" which would mean he would likely be dependent on her for the rest of his life. Young, with great grace and dignity, allows us to experience the pain and challenge this meant for her from the daily difficulties in feeding to the attachment Arthur made to a plastic hammer that he still uses 46 years later.

Young writes "Consciously or unconsciously all parents have dreams for their children. We had to accept we would dream no dreams. We began to reflect on how important it is to let children develop their own lives..." I was struck by how significant the words of both friends and strangers were to Young during those early days of coming to terms with Arthur's condition. Young allows us to witness the inner wrestle of her faith in God, even to the point where she describes her own faith as being 50:50. Evangelicals will struggle with some of Young's theology but will benefit from her questions, her honesty and many of her observations. For example when reflecting on miraculous healing, Young explores the fact that healings from the kind of genetic abnormalities that her son lives with are unheard of and indeed wonders whether a healing would rob her son of his identity. This is a fascinating question but Young's conclusion that "extraordinary things happen maybe, but the definition of a miracle as a breaking of the laws of nature is surely theologically suspect," makes me wonder how she understands the resurrection narrative.

For me the most powerful part of the book is when, in light of her own personal story, Young moves on to theological reflection. The key chapters for me were chapter 4, 5 and 7 which are Creation, Cross and Arthur's Vocation respectively.

One of the most interesting ideas at the heart of Young's chapter on creation was a fresh perspective on the nature of suffering. Young argues that modernity left no room for God because it was humanistic and optimistic. Modernity thought suffering was eradicable if humanity could simply come up with the right formula. Postmodernity has not shifted our assumption that life was meant to be perfect and thus "the biggest problem for religious belief remains the issue of arbitrary suffering." Reflecting on this, Young observes that having read a great deal of Christian literature from early centuries, she found a "lack of concern with this problem." Despite the ubiquitous experience of suffering, Young concludes that in earlier centuries there was a greater understanding of the nature of creatureliness and our dependence on God.

Similarly in her chapter on the cross, Young's argument is that it is "through tragedy that we discover what is most deeply life giving, and the clue is provided by the cross along with lives like Arthur's." Young raises questions about the classical, evangelical and liberal approaches to the atonement: "the whole approach to atonement offers a moralistic and individualistic gospel. The question remains: what relevance has this to Arthur? Isn't he so limited as to be innocent as a baby?" Young's thoughtful exploration of these questions nevertheless left me frustrated. Without any substantial engagement with scripture she concludes: "Just as I couldn't believe in a devil of a God who would punish me for some misdeed or other with a child like Arthur, so I could not believe that the cross was a sacrifice to propitiate or placate God's wrath." What do we do if scripture demands this

and we can't bring ourselves to believe it? Do we bend scripture to the limits of our beliefs, using our own rationality, experience or emotions as the standard to which scripture must measure up?

In her chapter on Arthur's vocation Young gives us a rich reflection on not just Arthur's call in the world but how all of us no matter how broken, fallen or damaged can be useful in God's purposes. Young writes of Arthur "might not he and others like him have a vocation to enable the shift in values... away from individualism, dominance, competitiveness, to community, mutuality?" I found Young's conclusions here very profound especially as someone who regularly brings children from vulnerable backgrounds, many of whom also have learning difficulties, to church. Our foster children have benefitted in numerous ways from being included in our church family. But our church has also benefitted through the presence of these children in their midst. Like Arthur they point to a broken yet beautiful creation, the majestic power of the cross to include all people and how tragic circumstances somehow draw the best out of community.

Frances Young has given the church a great gift in this book. Her honesty and humility as she has wrestled with the joys and challenges of caring for Arthur alert us to pastoral, practical and theological concerns we may well have ignored. You won't agree with all of her conclusions but you will find yourself both profoundly moved and challenged.

Krish Kandiah President, London School of Theology

Francis Young, Inferior Office? A History of Deacons in the Church of England, (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2015).

In the contemporary Church of England where public worship is overwhelmingly Eucharistic, is there a place for the deacon other than as an apprentice priest? The title of Francis Young's study, Inferior Office? (a phrase taken from the Prayer Book Ordinal), both suggests and questions the perceived role of deacons as the poor relations in the three-fold Anglican ministry.

In a well-written and erudite study, demonstrating detailed knowledge of Anglican history and based on documentary evidence, Young examines the role of deacon in four periods of Anglican history. These periods are 1550-1642, 1660-1832, 1839-1901 and the Twentieth Century. A further chapter 'Deacons in the Church of England Today' examines the current position and future possibilities. A final Conclusion presents the case for and against a distinctive diaconate.

The picture that emerges is of far greater variety than is often imagined. That said, numbers are small. A few years ago Paul Roberts described Alternative Worship as "a microscopic phenomenon that gets far more attention than it actually deserves." Might this observation be equally well applied to the diaconate and the debate that it has engendered? Discounting one-year "transitional" deacons and the temporary "bulge" of women deacons between 1987 and 1994 one cannot help feeling that there may almost have been more reports and debates about the diaconate in the Church of England than actual deacons.

What also emerges is a long standing discussion that seems no nearer to resolution than when it first started. In Young's words: "Even for a church that is renowned for its indecisiveness, for the Church of England to have vacillated on the question of deacons for 175 years is a remarkable, if dubious achievement."

Perceptively, Young quotes Bishop John Hind as asserting that the Church of England's position is one of "not knowing quite what to make of the diaconate." This does not seem to be far from the actuality; after centuries of inconclusive debate the diaconate is increasingly appearing as a historic title looking for a function and role in the contemporary church. Surely the priority is to have a ministry fit for purpose in the 21st century (no matter what name we give it) rather than desperately trying to shoe-horn a named ministry from the first century into the 21st century church. Steven Croft's view of a diaconal component to all ministry rather than a separate "order" seems to have much to commend it.

Young's book leaves the reader much better informed about the history and purpose of the diaconate; it does not, however, bring the debate any closer to a resolution.

John Darch Diocese of Blackburn

5. MISSION

Ida Glaser and Hannah Kay, *Thinking Biblically About Islam: Genesis, Transfiguration, Transformation,* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2016). This is definitely a "Ronseal" book, which does exactly what it says on the tin. Glaser and Kay have written a thoroughly Biblically rooted, stimulating and interesting book, which will enable a Christian reader to reflect further on how best to understand Islam and engage with Muslim friends and neighbours. Thinking Biblically About Islam is divided into four parts. The first, Genesis, contains two chapters, which discuss the creation narratives of Genesis 1-11 and contrast them with the Qur'anic accounts. Having explained how they engage with the Biblical text, the authors set out their understanding of the worldview presented by Genesis. They argue it presents a world in which all sorts of people reach out to God through all sorts of sacrifices; and God speaks with all sorts of people. They suggest religion is linked with power, evil persists in the world and there is a tension between salvation and judgement as ways of dealing with evil, which runs through the whole of the Bible. The comparison with the Qur'an notes similarities but also brings out the significant differences, and explains the implications of those differences.

Part two, Transfiguration, is really the foundation on which the argument of the whole book stands. The essential argument is that the transfiguration reveals Jesus' true nature and that the Qur'an reverses the transfiguration, going back towards Judaism whilst simultaneously neglecting the significance of sacrifice and covenant, both of which are integral to the Jewish faith. Four chapters discuss Biblical and Qur'anic understandings of Elijah; Moses and mountains; Messiah; and Jesus.

Part three, Islam, draws together the discussion of Islam and of Muslims, which have been kept distinct in the first two parts. A series of short chapters tackle the topics of Elijah and Moses in the Qur'an; the Qur'an itself; Muhammad; the Ummah; Shari'ah; and finally Islam. I found this section the most disappointing, not because of the quality of the content, but because of the brevity of each chapter. They are very good introductions, but it is clear that the authors have a wealth of knowledge which they did not utilise in their writing. A greater depth of analysis and discussion would have enhanced this section, and thus the book overall. I was also unconvinced by the attempts to draw parallels between Judaism and Islam. I accept that there are many parallels and believe a strong case can be made, but it was not made that effectively here.

Part four, Transformation, returns to Biblical reflection. A more convincing argument is made for comparison between Muslims and Samaritans and the book closes with an exposition of Romans 12 and 13 as a call to send out disciples into the Lord's harvest field.

Thinking Biblically About Islam is an easy read. The discussion is punctuated with short reflections of real life experience and questions to discuss, both of which help ground the book in daily reality. It was one of those questions which made me think about the audience of the book. The authors ask "What word is used to translate huios [the NT Greek for 'son'] in Luke 1:35 in your language? Are there other words that mean 'son' in that language?" This made me think that this is not simply a book for a UK audience, but rather one designed for global distribution. I think it is particularly suited to that international market. Those who wish to begin thinking biblically about Islam are well served by this book, whatever country they live in. In that sense it has particularly significant missionary value and can be used as a primer or textbook for basic theological education in seminaries the world over.

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