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AUTISM AND LITURGY

A special request regarding a research project on autism and liturgy

Dr Léon van Ommen needs your help for a research project on autism and liturgy.

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

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

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

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Revised Saturday 19 June 2021

Introduction to the Summer Issue on Scottish Episcopal Theologians

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The importance of Scottish theologians to the wider Church and to Scottish culture was recognized in the three-volume *History of Scottish Theology* published in 2019.[1] Scottish Episcopalian theology and spirituality was considered in each of the three volumes, and Episcopalians contributed to each. However, there was not space to consider the broad range of modern Episcopalian theologians, and contributors were restricted to discussing those dead or retired.[2] This issue is an invitation to learn about and celebrate some more Episcopalian theologians of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

We begin with studies of two scholars whose principal interests lay in the nature of religion itself. Hugh Goddard explores how Montgomery Watt — an Episcopalian convert and priest who took the chair of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Edinburgh University in 1964 — inhabited the Muslim world as a Christian Arabist. Watt's open-minded and warm appraisal of Islamic faith and its environmental context opened it up to other faiths as, at least, the prelude to renewed dialogue between Islam and Christianity. Jane Merdinger writes on William Frend, the historian of early Christianity and the Donatist schism in Roman North Africa. Dr Merdinger was Frend's final PhD student at Glasgow University in the 1980s and she is a specialist in early North African Christianity. Like Montgomery Watt, Frend was sensitive to the way that the social and economic context shaped religious and cultural identities. He revealed how the complex Donatist schism, forged on the anvil of bitter persecution, had a long-lasting impact on the fault-lines of the Christianity of the region.

Wrestling with truth-claims of religions is one task; entering the contested field of ethics and social justice is another that touches not only religious and intellectual nerves but personal lives. Two theologians who knew each other and grappled with the moral crises of the twentieth century were Vigo Demant (a Church of England priest included here as an important comparative theologian in this field) and Donald Mackinnon, a lay

[1] *History of Scottish Theology*, ed. by David Fergusson and Mark W. Elliott, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[2] Of these, Bertrand Brasnett, Donald MacKinnon and John Riches were discussed in Alison Peden, 'Episcopalian Theology in the Twentieth Century' in *History of Scottish Theology* III (2019), pp. 333–46.

Episcopalian. Peter Selby, himself a forthright thinker on prisons, debt and human sexuality, introduces Demant, a priest who later became Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford in 1949. Demant faced the totalitarianism of right and left with an undaunted commitment to Christian grounds of resistance arising from an Anglo-Catholic incarnational theology. Demant and MacKinnon were both present at the Malvern Conference of 1941, where William Temple, then Archbishop of York, gathered Anglican social thinkers to discuss how Christians should exercise influence on social policy and welfare reform.[3] MacKinnon became Regius Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen in 1947. Andrew Bowyer considers how he attempted to hold together realism with regard to human beings with the philosophical and theological demands of moral discernment, especially with regard to the holocaust and nuclear weapons. Like Demant, Oliver O'Donovan held the Regius chair of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford, before his appointment as Professor of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology at Edinburgh. Andrew Errington investigates the role of scriptural authority in the moral thinking of O'Donovan, pointing out his resistance both to a liberal over-confidence in 'moral progress' and to a conservative unwillingness to undergo the discipline of questioning the text.

One of the problems that these moral theologians faced was how to engage with contemporary attitudes to ethical issues once religious principles could no longer be assumed in society. It is a challenge for all modern theology, which has been taken up fruitfully in the theology of the arts. Engaging imagination, encouraging the discovery that creative artists are themselves theologians and attending to the moral potential of all media are revealed as the significant contributions of the theologians of the arts considered by Ann Loades. She describes the energetic practical involvement with creative artists that underlay David Brown's contribution to theology in Oxford, Durham and St Andrews universities. Trevor Hart developed resources to connect faith and the arts through a theology of imagination as Professor of Divinity at St Andrews, while David Jasper opened up fruitful intellectual and 'lived faith' connections as Professor of Literature and Theology at Glasgow. Finally, Loades points to the ground-breaking work of Jolyon Mitchell as Professor at the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at Edinburgh in bringing together the arts and peace-making.

SEC theologians of the arts have demonstrated that different spheres enrich each other, but the frontiers of theology and science are more contested. Jaime Wright begins by defining the subject of her enquiry as 'SEC scholars of science-and-religion'. Two of these are 'scientist priests' at

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[3] I am grateful to Ann Loades for alerting me to this.

Edinburgh University: Mark Harris, who investigates the relationship of the Bible and science, and Michael Fuller, who draws together scientific development and human flourishing, and co-edited *Made in the Image of God. Being Human in the Christian Tradition* this year with David Jasper. Finally, Michael Northcott is an 'ecotheologian', currently Professor of Religion and Ecology in Indonesia, but who illuminated the intersection of ethics, ecology and theology as Professor of Ethics at Edinburgh University.

Richard Holloway not only served the Church and society as pastor, bishop, scholar and agent of social justice, but generously shares his spiritual and theological journey with his readers. His ability to think and re-think faith and religion is traced by the Ian Paton, one of Holloway's successors as Rector of Old St Paul's, who demonstrates how he could hold in tension questions that many are tempted to solve prematurely, and yet sustain a costly hope.

Scottish Episcopal theologians have a presence in the universities, in the public sphere, in the boards and committees of the Church and the reading matter of Christians and non-Christians alike. The contributors have introduced us to the debates and questions raised by these theologians, whose responses, where possible, have been invited in subsequent issues of the SEI Journal. Richard Holloway characterized Montgomery Watt's stance as 'committed openness', and this could describe the theologians considered here, with their committed openness to sources and authorities, to the interplay of different disciplines, and to the theological journey itself.

William Montgomery Watt and Islam

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Unique among the distinguished figures discussed in this special issue of the *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal*, Montgomery Watt was a scholar not primarily of his own, Christian, tradition, but rather of another tradition, the Islamic. The story of how Islam came to become the main focus of his academic interest is an interesting one, and this article will therefore include a substantial biographical section. Once this decision had been made Watt went on to become one of the world's leading scholars of Islam, and this article will suggest that his main contributions to Islamic Studies came in two fields: firstly, Islamic thought, with particular reference to Islamic *kalam* (theology), and secondly the biography of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam.

Sources

In addition to a selection of Professor Watt's own works, listed in the bibliography, this article will make substantial use of two edited volumes, the first a Festschrift which was published in 1979 in honour of his 70th birthday (Welch and Cachia 1979), and the second a volume which was produced to mark the 50th anniversary of his inaugural lecture as the first Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the University of Edinburgh, which was delivered on 21 October 1965 (Hillenbrand 2019). The first of these, entitled *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*, brought together a collection of fine articles from many of the leading Islamic scholars of the day, grouped under four themes of 'Islamic Thought', 'Islam in History and Society', 'Islam in Literature', and 'Islam and Other Faiths', together with a generous tribute by Josef van Ess, of the University of Tübingen, a very perceptive envoi by Fazlur Rahman, of the University of Chicago, under the title 'Islam: challenges and opportunities', and a complete, seventeen-page, bibliography of Watt's writings up to that time, by Michael McDonald, of the University of Edinburgh. The second, entitled *The Life and Work of W. Montgomery Watt*, brings together material about, and by, Watt, including, in Part I, the text of the three lectures which were delivered on 23 October 2015, in the Playfair Library of the University of Edinburgh, to mark the anniversary of his inaugural lecture, 'William Montgomery Watt: the Man and the Scholar' by Carole Hillenbrand, 'The Study of Islam's Origins since William Montgomery Watt's Publications' by Fred Donner of the University of Chicago, and 'Committed Openness: a Glance at William Montgomery

Watt's Religious Life' by Richard Holloway; in Part II, some unpublished writings by Watt, including a short diary, given to Professor Hillenbrand in 2000 and outlining the main events of his life up to 1947, a later, and fuller, account of the same period, under the title 'The Testament of a Search', with some later unpublished writings, and the text of his inaugural lecture, which was entitled 'Islamic Studies in Scotland: Retrospect and Prospect'; and, in Part III, a substantial reflection on his inaugural lecture by David Kerr, the Director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World in New College from 1995 to 2005, followed by a series of Appendices including some reminiscences of Louis Massignon by Watt, Josef van Ess's tribute to Professor Watt from the 1979 Festschrift, the text of a valuable interview with Watt by Bashir Maan and Alistair McIntosh in 1999, two further tributes by Muslim scholars, four obituary tributes to Watt, and a complete bibliographical listing of the 33 books published by Professor Watt, including the eleven published after his retirement, and therefore not included in the Festschrift. For anyone wishing to investigate further the themes of this article, these two books are highly recommended, the first as a tribute to Watt by his contemporaries in the world of Islamic Studies, and the second as a more considered evaluation of his achievements, a third of a century or so after he retired.

Biography

Watt was born in Ceres, Fife, in March 1909 and, like Muhammad, he grew up without a father, as his father, a Presbyterian minister, died when he was just fourteen months old. He attended primary school in Larkhall, Lanarkshire, and then George Watson's College in Edinburgh, and from there he went on in 1927 to study Classics at Edinburgh University. Graduating with a first-class degree in 1930, he won an exhibition to study Greats at Balliol College, Oxford. He did not achieve the top class in this degree, saying in one of his diaries that 'I realized that I was not quite ready for the degree exam, but was urged by my tutors to go ahead' (Hillenbrand 2019: 45). His exhibition had a further year to run, however, so he was able to stay on at Balliol to write a BLitt thesis on 'Kant's View of the Relation between Teleology and Ethics'.

In 1933 he returned to the University of Edinburgh to commence a PhD in Philosophy, working on the relationship between religion and science, under the title 'The Factual and the Problematic'. He also took up a position as teaching assistant in Moral Philosophy, but when he presented his thesis, in 1937, it was rejected, with no opportunity given for revision and resubmission. Watt commented: 'As I look back on this […] now, I consider I was both badly advised and also somewhat unfairly treated', not least because 'the rejection of the thesis also adversely affected my chances of

obtaining a lectureship in philosophy in a British university' (Hillenbrand 2019: 72). He also experienced further personal tragedy at around this time, being rejected by a girlfriend, and with the death of his mother, in March 1937.

As one door closed, however, others opened. Firstly, in his diary Watt described his father's religious sympathies as being 'with what has sometimes been called the 'high church' party in the Church of Scotland — those who favoured more formal types of worship than were prevalent at the time' (Hillenbrand 2019: 57), and although, while in Edinburgh, his custom had been to attend firstly St. Giles (Church of Scotland) Cathedral, and then the new Reid Memorial Church (also Church of Scotland) just opposite where he lived, following his mother's death he decided that 'I felt I was not getting sufficient spiritual sustenance […]' so 'I decided I would join the Scottish Episcopal Church, and in particular to go to Old St Paul's'. 'The basic thought was that the Eucharist should be the central service every Sunday, since sermons often stirred up intellectual questionings', so on this basis Watt was confirmed at Old St. Paul's, in May 1937 (Hillenbrand 2019: 61).

Secondly, in the autumn of 1937, in order to help pay for a housekeeper, Watt took in as a paying guest a friend who was studying veterinary medicine, Khwaja Abdul Mannan, a Muslim student from India who at that time belonged to the Ahmadi school of thought. In one of his diaries Watt describes how 'we tended to have long discussions over breakfast and supper about religion', and 'in the course of these discussions I came to feel that I was confronting not just an individual but a whole tradition of thought' (Hillenbrand 2019: 60).

The combination of these two developments led to Watt hearing that the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, George Francis Graham Brown, was looking for someone to engage with the intellectual tradition in Islam in his diocese. Having met the bishop, Watt agreed to go out to Jerusalem. To fulfil the role, he needed to be ordained, so for the academic year of 1938 to1939 he studied at Cuddesdon College, just outside Oxford, being ordained deacon in September 1939 and then priest in October 1940. He served his curacy in London, the idea being that at the same time he would take up the study of Arabic, at what was then called the School of Oriental Studies. Because of the war, the School had moved to Cambridge, so Watt spent most of the week there. Not long after his ordination to the priesthood, the church at which he served was forced to close, as a result of bomb damage, so Watt returned to Edinburgh in February 1941, taking up a curacy at Old St Paul's. 'After London Edinburgh felt like a haven of peace' (Hillenbrand 2019: 63).

Back in the city, he was able to resume his Arabic studies, under Dr Richard Bell, the university's lecturer in Arabic, and he began to work on a

PhD thesis on the topic of 'Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam', which was completed in 1943, with the degree being successfully obtained in 1944 (Hillenbrand 2019: 63–64). He also married Jean Macdonald Donaldson, whom he had met in the context of the SCM (Student Christian Movement) in Edinburgh in 1934, when they together led a study group on Germany, where both of them had spent some time during the previous academic year. They were married in London in May 1943, and there is a warm tribute to Jean, and their five children, in the longer of his two diaries (Hillenbrand 2019: 77). Jean later decided to become a Roman Catholic, and Richard Holloway records that Watt respected this decision (Hillenbrand 2019: 51).

In November 1943, Watt sailed for Palestine, arriving in Jerusalem on 6 January 1944, and Jean was able to join him there in November of that year. He continued his studies of Arabic, and was involved in leading services, but it is clear from his diaries that the period was somewhat unsatisfactory for him, with the hoped-for engagement with Islam not proving possible. When a friend, Brian Gibbs, was killed in the blowing up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem by the Irgun on 22 July 1946, thoughts began of returning home, and the family arrived back in Edinburgh at the end of August.

There Watt secured a temporary post as lecturer in Ancient Philosophy, and when, in the following year, Richard Bell retired from the lectureship in Arabic, Watt applied for, and was appointed to, the post. Thus, there began the long and productive period in which he was in charge of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the University of Edinburgh, including the awarding of a Personal Chair in the subject in 1964, and this responsibility lasted through until his retirement in 1979.

Carole Hillenbrand describes Professor Watt as 'a shy, withdrawn person, not easy to chat with. Indeed, he had no small talk at all […] He was lofty, and remote, even Olympian, in manner' (7). He warmly expressed his appreciation for the support of his family, however, and Hillenbrand comments 'it was always clear that Jean was an ideal wife for him; she was warm, friendly, and sociable' (6). Richard Holloway also comments on the two welcoming homes which belonged to the Watt family, The Neuk in Dalkeith, and their summer house in Crail, Fife (Hillenbrand 2019: 51).

With regard to his academic style, Watt was definitely, to use Hillenbrand's phrase, among the '*Stubengelehrten*' (armchair scholars), focusing on texts rather than on extended fieldwork in Muslim-majority societies (Hillenbrand 2019: 9). As we will see, his study of texts did not focus simply on the ideas expressed within them, however, but also on the social and economic contexts from which those ideas came; and one thing which is unambiguously clear is that 'He was never afraid of hard work, and he worked as hard in retirement as he had whilst in post […] he was totally

committed to research and publication and he made that his priority […]' (Hillenbrand 2019: 15).

Writings on Islamic theology (*kalam*)

The critical study of Islamic Theology, locating the various individual scholars and the schools associated with them in their respective historical and geographical contexts, had begun with the work of scholars such as Duncan Black Macdonald (d. 1943), originally from the west coast of Scotland, who went on to establish Islamic Studies in North America, based at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, and whose *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory* (1903) was a masterly pioneering overview of the development of Islamic thought. The Hungarian Jewish scholar Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921), whose *Lectures on Islam,* published in 1910 and translated into English under the title *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (1981), provided an alternative overview of the development of different aspects of Islamic thought. A. S. Tritton, under whom Watt pursued his Arabic studies in Cambridge in 1939, for which he was warmly acknowledged in Watt's inaugural lecture (Hillenbrand 2019: 98), produced another substantial contribution to the subject in his *Muslim Theology*, published just before Watt's first book in the field (1947).

Watt's PhD thesis, on Free Will and Predestination, presented a detailed study of this theme in early Islamic thought, and in an article summarizing his conclusions in *The Muslim World,* Watt began by stating:

> It is commonly held that one of the striking differences between Christianity and Islam is that the former insists on the freedom of the will, whereas the latter teaches predestination. Yet a little reflection shows that the matter is not nearly so simple as this. St. Paul believed in predestination in some sense of the word, and the Augustinian and Calvinistic strains in Christianity have elaborated that aspect of his teaching […] The following studies will show that there is almost as much diversity within Islam. (1945: 124).

Watt's thesis was published in its entirety by Luzac in London (1948), and thus there began a whole stream of constructive contributions to the study of Islamic theology, including the first of the invaluable Islamic Surveys series which he established, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (1962), and then his *magnum opus* in the field, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (1973), which surveys all of the debates which stimulated the growth of Islamic theology between its origins and the establishment of the two main schools within it, the Ash'ari and the Maturidi, in the middle of the tenth

century. This study is a huge testimony to Watt's skills in analysing Arabic texts and serves as a kind of parallel for the Islamic tradition to the volume which generations of students of Christian theology have used as their guide to the debates about belief which unfolded in the early centuries of the Christian church, J. N. D. Kelly's *Early Christian Doctrines*. The fact that, after retirement, Watt went on to produce a further volume for the Islamic Surveys series on *Islamic Creeds* (1994), suggests a further parallel with Kelly's work, given his companion volume on *Early Christian Creeds*, but Watt's volume is in fact very different to Kelly's, being rather an anthology of Islamic creeds in translation, rather than a detailed discussion of their genesis and composition.

Josef van Ess's comment on Watt's textual skills is worth quoting at this point:

> His thesis demonstrated an unusual gift for textual interpretation, combined with a certain lucidity of arrangement which made the argumentation immediately clear to the reader. Yet there was more than sound method and persuasive style. There was also a feeling for the individuality of historical situations and ideological decisions which was not so common among philologists. Theology was not treated as an impersonal fight of ideas or, even worse, as a catalogue of notions and values, but as an expression of the way specific persons or groups reacted to the demands of their time. Traditional units […] were broken up into individual thinkers […]; the epochal forces and currents were always kept in mind. Islamic religion itself was put into its environmental context […] (Welch and Cachia 1979: ix–x, reproduced in Hillenbrand 2019: 139).

This was one of Watt's great gifts, which he also demonstrated in his two books on al-Ghazali, perhaps the greatest theologian of classical Islam, and a figure who is often compared with St Augustine in the Christian tradition, particularly because they each produced interesting autobiographical works. Watt's translation of two works by al-Ghazali, his spiritual autobiography (*The Deliverance from Error*), and a short work on the proper practice of Islam, under the title *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali*, (1953), which remains in print, and his study of al-Ghazali, *Muslim Intellectual* (1963), chronicles the different stages of his intellectual journey extremely imaginatively, and succeeds in locating that journey within the context of the newly-developing discipline of the sociology of knowledge.

Research has, of course, been ongoing and developing within the field of Islamic theology since the time of Watt, and a recent synthesis of the

results of this is available through *The Flowering of Muslim Theology* by Professor van Ess, based upon four lectures originally delivered at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris in 1998 (2006); and a more recent study of al-Ghazali is available thanks to the work of Eric Ormsby (2008), but Watt's contributions to the study of this towering figure remain significant.

The Biography of Muhammad

The other area in which Montgomery Watt made a huge contribution to the study of Islam is with regard to the biography of Muhammad. Here, in two studies, *Muhammad at Mecca* (1953), and *Muhammad at Medina* (1956), Watt carried the study of the subject forward through locating the study of the messenger of Islam in its social, political, and economic context, to the extent that one review of the former, by the French Islamicist Georges-Henri Bosquet, was entitled 'A Marxist interpretation of the origins of Islam by an Episcopal clergyman' (Hillenbrand 2019: 21)! Religious ideas, and movements, do not emerge in a vacuum, however, and Watt's clear locating of Muhammad's proclamation of the message of Islam in its Arabian context was a significant contribution to the subject.

The fact that these two volumes remained in print until recently, under the auspices of Oxford University Press in Pakistan, is testimony to the impact which they made, and the warmth with which they were received. A few years later Watt produced, for a wider audience, a single-volume synthesis of the two volumes, under the title *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (1961), and this volume remains in print. The further reflections of the author which are evident in this volume include a more detailed consideration, in the conclusion, of Muhammad as, firstly, exemplar, and, secondly, as prophet, and on these topics his conclusions are certainly significant. With regard to the former Watt points to three significant qualities demonstrated by Muhammad which go some considerable way towards explaining the early expansion of Islam, namely his gift as a seer, his wisdom as a statesman, and his skill and tact as an administrator.

> The more one reflects on the history of Muhammad and of early Islam, the more one is amazed at the vastness of his achievement. Circumstances presented him with an opportunity such as few men have had, but the man was fully matched with the hour (1961: 237).

Watt then goes further, offering a theological judgement on Muhammad's claim to be a prophet, building on the work of Emil Brunner, who concedes that 'had Mohammed been a pre-Christian prophet of Arabia, it would not be so easy to exclude him from the ranks of the messengers who prepared the

way for the revelation' (ibid.). The difficulty, of course, is that Muhammad was a post-Christian figure, which has always made Christian consideration of his claim to prophethood more challenging, but Watt goes on to offer his own consideration of the question, pointing to Muhammad's 'creative imagination': 'In Muhammad, I should hold, there was a welling up of the creative imagination, and the ideas thus produced are to a great extent true and sound' even if 'it does not follow [...] that all the Qur'anic ideas are true and sound' (1961: 239). The final paragraph of the book is therefore worth quoting in full:

> Finally, what of our question? Was Muhammad a prophet? He was a man in whom creative imagination worked at deep levels and produced ideas relevant to the central questions of human existence, so that his religion has had a widespread appeal, not only in his own age but in succeeding centuries. Not all the ideas he proclaimed are true and sound, but by God's grace he has been enabled to provide millions of men with a better religion than they had before they testified that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the messenger of God (1961: 240).

It is on the basis of this conclusion that the complete final chapter of Watt's book is included in the anthology of positive Western evaluations of Muhammad which has been edited by Abdelwahhab El-Affendi (2010), along with the views of George Sale, Thomas Carlyle (whom Watt also discussed in some detail in his inaugural lecture — see Hillenbrand 2019: 91–93), Alphonse de Lamartine, Tor Andrae, Philip Hitti, John Esposito, Annemarie Schimmel, Clinton Bennett, Barnaby Rogerson, and Karen Armstrong. Other Muslim commentary, such as that of Jabal Buaben (1996), is more critical, but on the basis of this paragraph Watt is generally taken to have answered the question affirmatively, suggesting that Christians should indeed recognize Muhammad as a prophet.

Discussion of this difficult question has continued among Christians since the publication of Watt's biographies of Muhammad, with Watt's positive view being broadly supported by scholars such as Hans Küng, Kenneth Cragg, and David Kerr. Other scholars and commentators, however, take a different view, with Islamicists such as Jacques Jomier and Christian Troll arguing that it is actually unhelpful to answer the question in this way, despite the superficial attractiveness of the idea, since a crucial aspect of the question is sometimes left somewhat unclear, namely the precise definition of what a prophet is, since the same word may mean something significantly different in the two traditions. There is, in any case, a very wide difference between the affirmation of Christians such as Watt that Muhammad could

be recognized as *a* prophet, and the Muslim affirmation, in the *shahada* (Declaration of Faith), that Muhammad is *the* prophet. The debate therefore continues, with recent constructive contributions having been made to it by the Roman Catholic scholar Anna Bonta Moreland (2020), and Charles Tieszen, who teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary (2020). The work of the latter is primarily historical, looking at the opinions which Christians, both Eastern and Western, and medieval and modern, have expressed with regard to Muhammad, from John of Damascus to Lamin Sanneh, while Moreland's work is a particularly creative attempt to articulate a way in which Roman Catholic theology might be able, through Thomas Aquinas's concept of analogy, to articulate an acceptance of Muhammad's prophethood.

It is Watt's status as an Arabist and Islamicist, a scholar devoted primarily to the study of Islam, rather than a Christian theologian trying to think about Islam, which gives a particular value to his conclusion, however, and it is for this reason that Watt became so well-known across the Muslim World, and that such a procession of students from there came to study under him in Edinburgh (Hillenbrand 2019: 7 and 8).

Significant though Watt's contributions were to the study of the life of Muhammad, the state-of-play has changed considerably since his work in the field, with the publication of *Hagarism: the Making of the Islamic World*, by Patricia Crone and Michael Cook (1977), causing severe shockwaves across the academic world, and more widely. A masterly summary of these developments was provided by Professor Fred Donner in his lecture on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Watt's Inaugural Lecture, as well as in his own book, *Muhammad and the Believers: at the Origins of Islam*, and both of these are commended to anyone who is looking for further detail on recent developments in the study of Islamic Origins (Hillenbrand 2019: 19–47, and Donner 2010).

Other activities

Throughout his time as the head of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies in the University of Edinburgh, Watt continued to serve as a priest of the Scottish Episcopal Church. In 1958 to 1959 he was asked to look after the church of St Columba's by the Castle, during an interregnum, and the family continued to worship there for four or five years thereafter. In 1960 he joined the Iona Community, giving a series of lectures there in the summer of 1961. Richard Holloway recounts how, for some time, he came under the influence of Charles de Foucauld, the French priest who saw his vocation as being one of Christian presence, living amidst the Muslim desert tribes of Tamanrasset in the south of Algeria; Watt thus came to see his vocation as being 'a willed and deliberate presence' in the intellectual world of Islam, and Holloway suggests that he often took as the basis of his daily meditation a passage from

either the Qur'an or from the writings of one of the Sufi mystics (Hillenbrand 2019: 50). In 1980 he became a non-stipendiary priest attached to St Mary's Dalkeith and St Leonard's Lasswade.

Although these are less well-known than his various books on Islam, Watt also produced several books about Christianity, including his very first, published by SCM Press in 1937, which was a vigorous rebuttal of pacifism, based on his experiences in Germany in the summer of 1934. He went on to produce *The Reality of God* (1957), *The Cure for Human Troubles* (1959), *Truth in the Religions: a Sociological and Psychological Approach* (1963), and *Religious Truth for Our Time* (1995), and his very last book was *A Christian Faith for Today* (2002), which Richard Holloway described as 'a distillation of the sort of generous Christianity to which he had given his life' (Hillenbrand 2019: 51). Carole Hillenbrand records, however, that these books 'earned him very little praise and were indeed on occasion turned down later in his retirement by publishers [...] who had published some of his books in the past' (2019: 13); and that 'he was a highly successful and prolific world-famous scholar of Islam; but he also always wanted to be recognized in matters Christian. And this recognition was simply never accorded to him' (2019: 15). It may be that some of the ideas in these books were simply too individual, even idiosyncratic, to have attracted potential publishers; and the fact that he spent his entire academic career in an Arts environment, in and around George Square in the context of the University of Edinburgh, rather than in a School of Divinity, on The Mound, may be relevant here too.

He was not isolated from trends and developments within Edinburgh's School of Divinity, however, as in the late 1960s, when discussions were taking place about the establishment of a Religious Studies programme within the university, Professor Watt noted in a memorandum to the Senate that 'there is a gap in the present teaching of the Faculty of Arts in respect of the study of religion from a scientific, factual or neutral standpoint', and was absolutely insistent that such a programme should be based within Divinity, rather than in his own Arts Faculty (Cox and Sutcliffe 2006: 14–15). Warm appreciation for his support and guidance for the development of this programme was expressed by the first lecturer in Religious Studies, Frank Whaling, who was appointed in 1973, in a tribute to Professor Watt following his death (Whaling 2007). In his inaugural lecture, Watt also indicated his enthusiastic support for the development of African Studies within the University of Edinburgh (Hillenbrand 2019: 100–01).

Watt did publish three books on the relationship between Islam and Christianity in particular: *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (1972), based on a series of lectures delivered at the Collège de France in 1970, summarized, in the spirit of the Islamic Surveys series, a large body of

material relevant to the different aspects of the influence, in the fields of Commerce and Technology, and Science and Philosophy. There is also an extremely useful eight-page Appendix which lists English words derived from Arabic (1972: 85–92). *Islam and Christianity Today* (1983) was then an attempt to highlight points of similarity and points of difference between the two traditions, suggesting that they share the affirmation of religious truth against scientism, even while making significantly different affirmations concerning the names and attributes of God, Scripture as the word of God, God the Creator, God the lord of history, and Humanity in relation to God. The doctrinal focus of this work was complemented by a more historical approach in *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions* (1991), with two chapters on Christianity in the Qur'an, four on the medieval encounters between the two traditions, two on the modern encounter, and one daring to look ahead towards the future. It is clear from this book that Watt was more at ease when focusing on 'classical', rather than 'modern' Islam, in other words in the encounters between the two communities before 1500, rather than subsequent to that date, but the book contains some valuable insights on Watt's view of the relationship.

Conclusion

In his Festschrift tribute to Watt, Josef van Ess came up with a telling summary of his religious views: 'He found himself in the position of somebody who is, as he says in a revealing autobiographical remark, "intellectually detached from both religions, while continuing to practise one"' (Welch and Cachia 1979: xiii, reproduced in Hillenbrand 2019: 145); and Richard Holloway points to something similar: 'William said of his commitment to the study of Islam that he always had an ability to see the other person's point of view, "indeed almost a tendency to prefer the other's point of view"' (Hillenbrand 2019: 50).

In terms of the widely used typology of Christian views of other religious traditions, whereby theologians are described as being either 'exclusivist', 'inclusivist' or 'pluralist', Watt was thus probably a 'pluralist' (see Race 1983). His views thus had many similarities to those of John Hick, with whom he shared a background in the study of philosophy, and in his appreciation of the importance of culture and language with regard to religious diversity, for example in his unpublished paper on 'The Multiplicity of Religions' (Hillenbrand 2019: 78–81), Watt seems to share significant common ground with the views of Hick. Richard Holloway's summary, on the occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Montgomery Watt's inaugural lecture is thus eminently fair:

> The title I have given this short chapter is 'Committed Openness: a Glance at William Montgomery Watt's Religious Life'. […] In religion being both committed and open would be considered by many to be a contradiction in terms […] If you are open, you can't be committed. If you are committed, you can't be open. William Montgomery Watt would have smiled quietly at that and replied: 'Maybe so, but I happen to be both' (Hillenbrand 2019: 48).

Holloway's conclusion is therefore: 'William Montgomery Watt was a theologically liberal, socially and politically radical Christian who loved Islam. As I said at the beginning: committed openness' (Hillenbrand 2019: 51).

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W. C. Frend and Donatism

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W. H. C. Frend was one of the foremost ecclesiastical historians of the twentieth century. In 1952, he published *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* with Oxford University Press, a landmark study of the Donatist schism that tore the North African church asunder in the fourth and fifth centuries. Frend's thesis was provocative, and his methodology was novel as well. He posited that the Berbers, the indigenous inhabitants of Numidia (central and eastern Algeria), embraced Donatism in bitter protest against Roman rule. Marginalized and exploited peasants, the fiercely independent Berbers became the schismatic church's most tenacious adherents. The Donatist schism had mainly been the preserve of theologians. As a historian, Frend approached Donatism differently. He broadened debate by including political, social, and economic concepts. Archaeological data played a central role as well; he regarded material evidence as crucial for a broader understanding of ancient Christianity. Before Frend, no one had ever attempted such a comprehensive study of Donatism.

Frend wrote extensively on North African Christianity and other topics, but *The Donatist Church* remains his seminal work. This book, and its scholarly impact, is the focus of this article. I shall review Frend's early years, his views on Berber religiosity and the origins of Donatism, initial criticism of his book, and recent scholarship engaging with important concepts from his book.

Frend's early years proved formative for his life-long interest in North Africa. Born and raised in Surrey, he read History at Oxford and chose the Donatist schism for his DPhil thesis. A dissertation fellowship brought him to Berlin in 1937 to 1938, where he studied under Hans Lietzmann, the renowned ecclesiastical historian whose predecessor had been Adolf von Harnack. Later in 1938, further research brought Frend to North Africa where he participated in several excavations directed by the French archaeologist André Berthier. Stationed in Tunisia later in WW II, Frend found himself sympathetic to Habib Bourguiba's movement for independence from French colonial rule. After the war, Cambridge University beckoned with a lectureship at the Divinity School; from 1969 to 1984, Frend was Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Glasgow

The next chapter in Frend's life was centered on ministry. His father had been the vicar of Shottermill in Surrey, and Frend himself served as

editor of *Modern Churchman* (now *Modern Believing*) from 1963 to 1982. For years, he was a lay reader in England and later in the Scottish Episcopal Church, serving not far from his Loch Lomond village. Ordained deacon in 1982 and priest in 1983 in the Scottish Episcopal Church, Frend served as non-stipendiary priest at Aberfoyle. When he and his wife Mary returned home to England later in 1984, for the next few years he served in the diocese of Peterborough. From 1990 until his death, Frend was honorary assistant priest in the diocese of Ely, helping a parish on the outskirts of Cambridge.

Frend viewed Berber religiosity on a continuum. According to him, pre-historic Berber artifacts reveal a people who were deeply conservative, puritanical, and displayed a tendency toward monotheism. During Carthaginian rule (eighth century BCE to146 BCE), the Berbers worshipped the Carthaginian god Baal-Hammon, an all-powerful, wrathful god. Under Roman rule, they worshipped Saturn, a Romanized version of Baal-Hammon. Jules Toutain's *Les cultes païens dans l'Empire romain* (1920) convinced Frend that Saturn was especially popular with Berbers and that his domination of the African pantheon paved the way for monotheism there. Christianity probably reached Numidia's interior *c*. 250 to 300, and the Berbers converted to it.

According to Frend, Christianity's characteristics appealed to the Berbers, especially its rigorism. This was the Christianity of Tertullian and Cyprian, forged in the crucible of persecution. Tertullian (*c*. 160 to 220) and Cyprian (*c*. 200 to 258) brooked no compromise with a pagan empire saturated in idolatry. Wide-scale apostasy during Emperor Decius's persecution convinced Cyprian to safeguard ecclesial purity by deeming as polluted and Spirit-less any sacraments given by apostates and schismatics. Cyprian ruled that anyone baptized under such circumstances must be rebaptized. Emperor Diocletian's persecution (303 to 305) spawned a new wave of apostasy. Emulating Cyprian, rigorists insisted on rebaptizing anyone baptized by traitorous ministers. The Donatist schism itself began *c*. 307 to 312 with the disputed episcopal election at Carthage. Moderates (Catholics) chose the archdeacon of Carthage, Caecilian. Rigorists soon selected Donatus (hence Donatists).

Social, political, and economic conditions in Roman Africa also play a central role in *The Donatist Church*. The intellectual milieu of Frend's era reflected Marxist influences, appropriating the model of ancient cities' exploitation of the countryside with resultant protest by the peasantry. With a nod to Michael Roztovtzeff's *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire (*1926), Frend viewed the decay of urban life in third-century North Africa and the misery of the peasantry as a breeding ground for Berber revolt. Henri Pirenne's thesis in *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (1937) also

influenced *The Donatist Church*. Pirenne believed that the ancient world remained intact until Islamic armies began conquering eastern and southern Mediterranean lands. Once those areas fell to the invaders (*c*. 650 to 750), trade routes across the Mediterranean and beyond withered, together with Christian culture. Islam became the dominant force in the Mediterranean. Christianity turned toward northern Europe with Charlemagne ushering in the Middle Ages by building a new, agrarian empire. Frend's view of the demise of Christianity in North Africa fits well into Pirenne's thesis. Frend postulated that by resisting Roman rule and its Catholicism, Donatists (many of whom were Berbers) fomented political and religious division within North Africa. Resultant instability made the region ripe for invasion when Islamic raiding parties first appeared there in the mid-seventh century. The disintegration of Christian North Africa contributed to the momentous reconfiguration of the Mediterranean world.

From its publication in 1952, *The Donatist Church* has sparked both controversy and praise. Early on, scholars criticized Frend's main premise. They could not find substantial evidence for un-Romanized Berbers and Numidian peasants embracing Donatism in class struggle against Roman rule. In Italy, Alberto Pincherle found Frend's division between social and religious factors useful but concluded that Frend had not integrated the two well enough to support his overall thesis.[1] Across the English Channel, reaction to Frend's book was mixed. British theologians approached his volume with scepticism. G. W. H. Lampe credited Frend for treating the social, political, and economic aspects of the schism in greater detail than previous scholars but asserted that Frend's evidence did not support some of his overarching suppositions.[2] In similar fashion, Cambridge colleague Henry Chadwick recommended *The Donatist Church* as an excellent study of ancient history but mentioned nothing about its usefulness for theologians.[3]

In 1958, the French scholar Jean-Paul Brisson produced *Autonomisme et christianisme dans l'Afrique romaine* (1958). Brisson was quite favourable to Frend's arguments, though he disagreed with the Berbers' adoption of Donatism as ethnic protest. Brisson broadened the discussion by examining Cyprian's sacramental theology, detecting close ties with Donatist theology. For Brisson, Donatism was a continuation of an older African tradition, not an upstart schism.

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[1] Alberto Pincherle, review of *The Donatist Church*, in *Journal of Roman Studies*, 44 (1954), 138–39.

[2] G. W. H. Lampe, review of *The Donatist Church, Journal of Theological Studies*, 4 (1953), 255–58.

[3] Henry Chadwick, review of *The Donatist Church*, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 5 (1954), 103–05.

In the 1960s and 1970s, British scholars Peter Brown and Robert Markus weighed in on Frend's work. Brown questioned how Donatists could protest against Roman culture when Donatism itself existed in Romanized cities such as Carthage and Donatist leaders themselves were undeniably products of that culture.[4] Building on Brisson's ideas, Brown posited that Donatism indeed represented North Africa's traditional religion and that Catholicism was the usurper, foisted on North Africa by Constantine.[5] In effect, he stirred the embers of a debate smouldering since the Reformation. Robert Markus agreed with Frend that Donatism represented the rigorous Christianity of Tertullian and Cyprian. However, Markus disregarded serious doubts of several of Cyprian's episcopal colleagues concerning rebaptism — doubts also expressed by the Bishop of Rome, Stephen. Nor did Markus acknowledge that half of the African bishops did not attend Cyprian's great council on rebaptism in 256; clearly, some absented themselves in protest.[6] Importantly, Markus called for more research on theological and ecclesiological factors in the Donatist schism.

As for the cult of Saturn, recent research has modified Frend's view that Saturn appealed mainly to Berbers, dominated the African pantheon, and paved the way for monotheism. James Rives has demonstrated that the public cult of Saturn appealed not only to lower classes such as Berbers but to urban elites as well.[7] Analyzing Romano-African cultic practices, David Riggs argues against any trend toward monotheism; he points to the plethora of African cults (Romanized over the centuries) available to devotees.[8]

Concerning the origins of the Donatist Schism, advances in scholarship have rendered parts of Frend's account inaccurate. He relied substantially on the *Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs*, which depicted Caecilian's despicable

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[4] Peter Brown, 'Religious Dissent in the Later Roman Empire: The Case of North Africa,' *History,* 46 (1961), 83–101. Reprinted in *Religion and Society in the Age of St Augustine* (London: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 251.

[5] Peter Brown, 'Religious Dissent,' reprinted in *Religion and Society*, p. 255.

[6] Location and number of sees in Yvette Duval, 'Densité et repartition des évêches dans les provinces africaines au temps de Cyprien', *MEFRA* 96 (1984), 493–521.

[7] James B. Rives, *Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage from Augustus to Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 142–51.

[8] David Riggs, 'The Continuity of Paganism between the Cities and Countryside of late Roman Africa', in *Urban Centers and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Thomas S. Burns and John W. Eadie (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2001), pp. 285–300.

treatment of Christians imprisoned during Diocletian's persecution. Meticulous analysis by François Dolbeau has revealed that it is a Donatist document; no Catholic version exists.[9] Alan Dearn has discovered that the date of composition is much later than the events described; therefore, its inflammatory contents are suspect.[10]

Frend regarded martyrdom as crucial for North African Christianity. Some historians now believe that he overemphasized its role.[11] Others approve the prominence that Frend ascribed to martyrdom.[12] Donatists claimed that they alone were the Church of the Martyrs, the church that never surrendered to the authorities. Denied any support by Constantine, they believed that they were still living in times of persecution. When biblical passages were read aloud at their liturgy, Donatists believed that the Holy Spirit was speaking directly to them in their hour of need. Frend mentioned this phenomenon in passing, but his insight inspired scholars such as James S. Alexander (University of St Andrews) and Maureen Tilley (Fordham University) to produce ground-breaking research in this area.

Recent scholarship reverses much in Frend's social, political, and economic theories. David Mattingly and Bruce Hitchner have demonstrated that North Africa actually prospered during late antiquity. Despite political turbulence, the area's relative geographical isolation preserved it from barbarian invasion for a long time, guaranteeing production and export of grain, olive oil, and pottery.[13] Scholars employing social identity theory view Frend's movement of protest ideology as reductionist. David Wilhite argues that Frend's model discounted the Donatists' religious beliefs and neglected their frequent reliance on the Roman state for legal protection.[14] Rather than

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[9] François Dolbeau, 'La Passion des martyrs d'Abitina: remarques sur l'établissement du texte', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 121 (2003), 273–96.

[10] Alan Dearn, 'The Abitinian martyrs and the outbreak of the Donatist schism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 55 (2004), 1–18.

[11] Éric Rebillard, 'William Hugh Clifford Frend (1916–2005)', *Studia Patristica*, 53 (2013), 55–71 (p. 69).

[12] Candida Moss, 'Martyr Veneration in Late Antique North Africa', in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts*, ed. by Richard Miles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 54–69.

[13] David Mattingly and R. Bruce Hitchner, 'Roman Africa: An Archaeological Review', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 85 (1995), 165–213; Brent D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 829–31.

[14] David Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity* (Routledge: London, 2017), p. 32.

adhering to Frend's strict dichotomy between Romanization and resistance, hybridity (in postcolonial theory) allows us to view Africans' responses 'in any number of ways, such as acceptance, resistance, or some hybrid of the two'.[15]

Significantly improved excavation techniques and re-examination of evidence have rendered some of Frend's archaeological observations outdated. Berthier unearthed thousands of Christian epitaphs in the Numidian high plains. Frend and he believed that they commemorated Berbers martyred during Diocletian's persecution, Donatism's earliest martyrs. However, Yvette Duval has demonstrated that a large number of the inscriptions honoured common Christians, not martyrs.[16] Numerous churches in the high plains bear the inscription *Deo Laudes* ('Praise to God'). Frend posited that the slogan designated Donatist churches exclusively. However, Alan Dearn's investigation of martyr narratives and congregational acclamations demonstrates that both Catholics and Donatists used the slogan.[17] Comparing archaeological evidence from North African provinces, Anna Leone points to the preponderance of *Deo Laudes* inscriptions in Numidia and asks if *Deo Laudes* might essentially be Numidian rather than a watchword claimed by Catholics and Donatists alike.[18] Throughout, Leone emphasizes that no architectural differences existed between Donatist and Catholic churches, making it impossible to distinguish one from another. Scholars agree that much more archaeological work needs to be done, to answer questions raised by Frend, when political conditions become favourable again in Tunisia and Algeria.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in Donatism. I can only mention in passing a few of the myriad projects recently completed or currently under way. In the early 1990s, François Leroy discovered a collection of Donatist sermons in a medieval manuscript at the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Publication of the homilies (also known as the Escorial Collection) has stimulated much scholarly work. In 2012, an international conference on Donatism at Leuven drew participants from

[15] Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, p. 49.

[16] Yvette Duval, *Loca sanctorum Africae: le culte des martyrs en Afrique du IVe au VIIe siècle* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1982), II, p. 716.

[17] Alan Dearn, 'Donatist Stories, Martyrs and Attitudes', in *Donatist Schism*, ed. by Miles, pp. 75–76.

[18] Anna Leone, 'Tracing the Donatist Presence in North Africa: An Archaeological Perspective', in *Donatist Schism*, ed. Miles, pp. 331–32.

eastern and western Europe, Australia, and the United States.[19] At the conference, Maureen Tilley called for new research on Donatist theology, a topic not emphasized in *The Donatist Church*. Coincidentally, another paper given there dealt with Donatist sacramental theology, a subject rarely investigated.[20] In 2019, New City Press published a volume of Augustine's anti-Donatist treatises; a second volume with more of his anti-Donatist treatises will be available soon. Though most of Augustine's writings were translated into English several centuries ago, a few are only now appearing in English, courtesy of New City Press. In Texas, Jesse Hoover is currently translating the *Donatist Compendium*, a fifth-century compilation of texts that illuminate Donatist biblical exegesis. It is worth noting that Augustine borrowed several exegetical rules from the brilliant Donatist theologian Tyconius and bequeathed them to medieval Christianity. At 'La Sapienza' University of Rome, Paola Marone is supervisor of an online bibliography of works on Donatism. More than 3000 books and articles are listed on the site with more added frequently. Meanwhile in Madrid, Enrique Eguiarte (editor of the journal *Augustinus*) is preparing a special edition on Donatism for late 2022. Classic articles and new articles will be translated into Spanish for the edition.

Without doubt, W. H. C. Frend opened the door for much current scholarly work by the questions he raised and the concepts that he welded together in *The Donatist Church*. Almost seventy years after its first appearance, *The Donatist Church* is showing its age, with cracks large and small. Nonetheless, it is a testament to Frend's enduring legacy that it still inspires and challenges us, as every monumental work should.

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[19] The proceedings of the conference are published in *The Uniquely African Controversy: Studies on Donatist Christianity*, ed. by Anthony Dupont, Matthew Alan Gaumer, and Mathijs Lamberigts (Leuven: Peeters, 2015).

[20] See Jane E. Merdinger, 'In League with the Devil? Donatist and Catholic Perspectives on Pre-baptismal Exsufflation', in *Uniquely African Controversy*, ed. by Dupont and others, pp. 153–77.

Liberal Values Under Threat? Vigo Demant's *The Religious Prospect* 80 Years On

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Most do not need persuading that the times through which we are living are dangerous rather than interesting. Liberal values, and even more the institutions and constitutional arrangements that have evolved to protect them, are threatened and we live in the shadow of those threats. When and whence those threats originated is a matter that historians will debate for the decades to come, but certainly the last decade has brought them to the surface with a force that means that the risk of being called alarmist is a better one to take than the risk of being called complacent.

The question mark at the end of the title is about the nature of the threat, the means by which it is being exerted and how it might be resisted, not about the reality of the threats. The usefulness of reflecting on those threats is to be measured by the contribution that makes to energizing us to face those threats and resist them, though we have to face the fact that the likelihood of successful resistance is limited more by the political, economic and military power of those who speak of the 'end of liberalism' than by the force of their arguments.

Academics and clerics — and certainly those who think of themselves as both — are always apt to overestimate the significance of ideas, especially their own. So clear thinking and sound theology are not going to be sufficient conditions for arresting this menacing process; on the other hand, we shall certainly not be empowered to resist if our theology is not sound and our thinking is not clear. What is more, it often only emerges later that a particular piece of clear thinking did in the end have an effect beyond what it was felt to have at the time.

I intend, therefore, to argue that there are resources of abiding importance and of a particular relevance for us in our time in the context of the threats we face in the thought of V. A. Demant, and especially in his robust theological work, *The Religious Prospect*, published in 1939 while he was vicar of St John the Divine, Richmond, in the diocese of Southwark.[1]

Speaking of 'abiding importance' and 'particular relevance to our time' about a book published in 1939 needs qualification: as the seventy-fifth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz is marked, it would be a foolish

[1] This article is an edited version of a lecture given at St John the Divine, Richmond, in February 2020. I am grateful to the parish for the invitation to give a lecture to honour the theological work of a former vicar.

exaggeration and grossly insensitive to the millions of victims of the totalitarianisms of that time to suggest that the challenges of our time come anywhere near to equating with the terrible history of that time, even if in 1939 its full horror had yet to be disclosed. What I shall be commending is the resource contained in *The Religious Prospect*, a work described by its author as 'an essay in theological prophecy', [2] because I believe its importance remains even if what we are experiencing has not attained the terrible wickedness faced in the Europe of the late 1930s and 1940s.

It is impossible, in my view, to hear the welter of commentary on the rise of the right in countries as different as Greece, Hungary and Italy, and the emergence into political power of movements variously described as populism, Trumpism, or Brexitism, without noticing constant references to left-behind communities, the alienation of those previously employed in heavy industries and the dereliction of the towns that had been dependent on them. Certainly, much of this commentary misallocates responsibility by deflecting attention away from the role of those who do not belong to those groups but have the skills and the financial resources to manipulate their grievances; we may be witnessing another example of what Owen Jones subtitles in his book *Chavs* as *The Demonisation of the Working Class.*[3]

But without question something is happening that is not just a media creation but has merited such careful and sympathetic analyses as that of Justin Gest in *The New Minority.*[4] Without question there is a trend among (chiefly) white working-class people to believe that the institutions which they used to rely on to defend their interests — the main political parties, the trades unions, the courts for instance — have betrayed them. They have accepted the arguments with which they have been passionately presented, that their interests lie in moving towards the extremes and allying themselves with those who, despite their power and money, claim not to be part of 'the establishment'.

With that movement has gone a passionate distrust of some of what had been thought of as basic constitutional fabric, but has come to be seen as self-serving, composed of people unwilling to listen to the voices of the left-behind. There is much here that can be debated and analysed, and my

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[2] V. A. Demant, *The Religious Prospect* (London: Frederick Muller, 1939), p. 5.

[3] Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonisation of the Working Class* (London: Verso Books, 2011).

[4] Justin Gest, *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). This is a particularly valuable account based on multiple research methods.

comments are very broad brush. But we cannot avoid the echoes: those who analyse the rise of totalitarian regimes in the Europe of the 1930s often also refer to the presence of a neglected, alienated and subjugated working class in the aftermath of the First World War. However different our time may be in many of its aspects there are enough signals taken together to constitute a wake-up call. We need to seek in whatever traditional groupings and histories we may identify with, as well as acknowledging elsewhere, the wellsprings of clear thought and empowering ideas for the decencies and restraints, the hopes and the energies that are in danger. I hope to show that Demant's thinking makes a significant contribution to that pressing task.

Demant's life and times

There are some other perhaps more domestic motives behind this exploration, and I should briefly declare them. It is good to be reminded of and inspired by the example of a person who combined pastoral office with serious theological writing. Demant was aware of the tension involved in that combination; so he apologizes for the inadequacies of the book attributable to his having the responsibilities of being a parish priest,[5] and then thanks the congregation of St John the Divine for 'putting up with many pastoral deficiencies in their parish priest while the book was in the writing'.[6] He didn't need to be so modest about the book, and whether he was negligent as a parish priest would have been for others to say: I am sure that the preaching and pastoral care offered by a person animated by the thoughts in *The Religious Prospect* would have had a profound effect. There is in *The Religious Prospect* the best kind of erudition, one that is both passionate and urgent, principled and engaged with the issues of the day.

He had, moreover, by the time he became vicar of St John the Divine, Richmond at the age of 40, already established himself as a person of wide-ranging social interests and independent mind, and it is hard to imagine that those characteristics did not affect for the good his style of pastoral care and the content of his preaching and teaching. In 1935, for example, a course of lectures was given in the parish hall of St John the Divine, set off by T. S. Eliot and later published with an introduction as *Faith that Illuminates*. Demant was convinced that bringing such reflection into the life of the parish was of lasting significance. In his preface to that book, he writes:

> The attendance and response on the part of many who had no ascertained connexion with any recognised place of Christian worship was an indication of the need that exists for this kind of

[5] *The Religious Prospect*, p. 7.
[6] *The Religious Prospect*, p. 8.

> religious education. There is also good reason for concluding that this series, and others which followed of a less formal nature, have been effective as a step in Evangelization. They have not produced conversion to the Faith, but they have aroused an interest which has led some to desire faith, and have led some others to inquire after the nature of that Faith which showed itself able in the lecturers to handle confidently some of the most baffling intellectual and practical problems of the day.[7]

Born in Newcastle upon Tyne of part-Danish descent, named Vigo Auguste Demant (Auguste because of his father's interest in the philosophy of Auguste Comte, and also inheriting his father's linguistic ability), he studied engineering at Armstrong College, Durham. His intention was to become a Unitarian minister and so he studied theology at Manchester College, Oxford. While at Oxford he was drawn into the orbit of the Anglo-Catholic stream of the Church of England, particularly through the influence of Charles Gore, the noted Anglo-Catholic thinker who was successively Bishop of Worcester, Birmingham and Oxford and founded the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield.

As a result of that and other Oxford Anglo-Catholic influences Demant was received into the Church of England in 1918 at the age of 25, went pretty quickly to Ely Theological College, and was ordained as a deacon in 1919 and priest in 1920 (a timeline that may cause wonder among those bemoaning the decline in the length of clergy training in recent years, and a bit of jealousy among those present-day Anglican ordinands who spend two or three years on their seminary formation). In the thirteen years before Demant came to Richmond as vicar he served curacies in several well-known Anglo-Catholic parishes. He was already showing the direction and commitment of his theological interest, and while assistant priest at St Silas, Kentish Town he was appointed Director of Research for the Christian Social Council. In that role he researched the plight of miners following the General Strike[8] and the issue of unemployment,[9] writing also about the medieval

[7] V. A. Demant, *Faith that Illuminates* (London: Centenary Press, 1935), p. 5.

[8] *The Miners Distress and the Coal Problem: An Outline for Christian Thought and Action,* submitted to the Christian Social Council by its Research Committee (1929).

[9] This Unemployment: Disaster or Opportunity? An argument in economic philosophy submitted to the Christian Social Council by its Research Committee (1931).

doctrine of 'the just price',[10] and authoring a passionate plea for the actions it would take to prevent another war.[11]

The Anglo-Catholic social movement

The priest who arrived as a parish priest in Richmond in 1933 was already a significant thinker in the area of what we now speak of as 'faith in the public square'. He was passionately concerned about what he called 'Christian sociology', the exploration of the kind of society which Christians should be seeking. Not only that: he was part of a vibrant intellectual community of Anglo-Catholic thinkers. With Maurice Reckitt he founded the Christendom Group, joining the editorial board of its journal, *Christendom*, on which he served for 19 years. He, and the current of thinking he represented, were sufficiently esteemed for him to have been appointed successively Canon Chancellor of St Paul's in 1942, and after seven years there Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology and a Canon of Christ Church Oxford, a post which he held for twenty-five years. He wrote and broadcast frequently, giving the Gifford Lectures on 'The Penumbra of Ethics' in 1957/8.[12] He may be less well known now, but as you can tell was a highly regarded theological commentator on social issues.

This brings me to the second subsidiary motive behind the development of this argument. One of the most welcome of ecumenical developments of recent years has been the much greater awareness of the social teaching of the Catholic Church, a developing body of thought, the substance of several papal encyclicals. All of us who are concerned with a Christian input into social issues can be grateful for the debate and thinking that body of teaching has enabled: for my part I found the encyclical of Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, an immensely stimulating and useful piece of engagement with issues of development and economic life. However, while interest in Catholic social teaching has grown of late, what has not

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[10] V. A Demant, *The Just Price: An Outline of the Mediaeval Doctrine and an Examination of its Possible Equivalent Today* (London: SCM Press, 1930). A fuller biography and bibliography, together with a commentary on Demant's later Gifford Lectures can be found in V. A. Demant, Ian S. Markham and Christine Faulstich, *The Penumbra of Ethics: The Gifford Lectures of V. A. Demant with Critical Commentary and Assessment* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018). See particularly Section 1, 'V. A. Demant in Context'. That Markham and Faulstich have undertaken not just the editing of Demant's incomplete lectures but a critical assessment of them is itself a huge tribute to Demant's intellectual importance.

[11] V. A. Demant, *How to Prevent the Next War* (London, 1937).

[12] See above, note 9.

happened, and in my view needs to, is a provoking of other Christian traditions to examine their own traditions of social thought, with a view to mutual learning and an opening up of further opportunities for common action.[13]

In relation to my argument, and while I am considering principally Demant's *The Religious Prospect*, I do so in part because doing serious theological work about the nature of society was a feature of a vibrant Anglo-Catholicism and of the Church of England more widely throughout the last century. Reckitt's *Maurice to Temple*[14] describes the way in which the social movement in the Church of England had developed from the impetus which F. D. Maurice had given it. Quite rightly, those who are part of the Anglo-Catholic movement today celebrate the remarkable ministries of famous Anglo-Catholic clergy in the poorest parts of our cities; I suggest that without neglecting those examples, more needs to be made of the debates and writings by which members of that movement sought to develop thinking about the nature of society and the potential Christian contribution to it. So although the way in which social teaching has developed in the Church of England is markedly different from the way in which such thinking has developed in the Roman Catholic Church, I hope to be making a small contribution to an Anglican part in the ecumenical conversation in which all Christian traditions need to engage.

The questions are crucial in their own right, but in addition, as Demant correctly remarked in his preface to *Faith that Illuminates*, any concern with evangelization needs to have at its core the encouragement of those who hear about it 'to inquire after the nature of that Faith which showed itself able[...] to handle confidently some of the most baffling intellectual and practical problems of the day'.[15] That can only be done if the connections are rigorously made between the intellectual, political and practical issues of the day with an equally deep engagement with the fundamentals of the Faith. That conviction led Demant, eight decades ago, to the exercise in 'theological prophecy', *The Religious Prospect.*

'The Religious Prospect'

As I have shown already, Demant was a person of wide interests and with a passionate commitment to justice, and that led to his writing on many

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[13] When the lecture behind this article was originally given, a response by Tina Beattie, Professor of Catholic Studies at Roehampton University offered some fascinating insights from a Catholic perspective.

[14] M. B. Reckitt, *Maurice to Temple: A Century of the Social Movement in the Church of England*, The Scott Holland Lectures of 1946 (London, 1946).

[15] Demant, *Faith That Illuminates*, p. 5.

different issues: the miners, the unemployed, the economy generally, sexual ethics, the priesthood. He took part, that is to say, in a range of political and social debates and formed judgements which he expressed with vehemence. It is not necessary to enter into those debates now, except to say that one does not need to agree with his prescriptions on all those topics to value his motives or his commitment to rational enquiry. Some of his views have stood the test of time less well than others: he and Reckitt, for instance, were supporters of Major Douglas's Social Credit proposals, and although proposals like a basic income for all can be seen as deriving from the same concerns as motivated Social Credit, Douglas's proposals themselves have not been found to pass the test of economic plausibility. Demant wrote papers on sexual ethics which would be described as 'traditionalist', as were his views on the essential maleness of the priesthood. Some of us may well agree with some of them, few of us probably with all of them; all of us inhabit a world different from Demant's and might for that reason alone have to start the argument in relation to a different context and therefore with a different audience in mind. That does not invalidate his starting point: I've personally found it useful in engaging with people who strongly disagree with my opinions to accept at the outset that the Church's teaching can only change for conservative reasons, that is to say from renewed and deeper reflection on fundamentals.

It is with such a fundamental question, that of the nature of the human person, that Demant invites us to be concerned. We should bear in mind that the context in which *The Religious Prospect* was written was not that of particular debates about specific controversies of the kind to which we are accustomed, but rather of threats certainly to the nation and to a continent and perhaps to the whole world. Whatever doubts might exist about some of Demant's particular conclusions in his writings on ethics and social theology, nobody would doubt now that the world situation faced by the person who became vicar of St John the Divine, Richmond in the same year as Hitler came to power in Germany posed threats which were fundamental.

So it was to the fundamentals that he directed his mind, and in his context the fundamentals were by no means abstractions. As he observed at the start of the book:

> The forces that are making history in Europe today are not merely political, economic or moral: they are involved in conflicting assumptions about the nature of reality and human existence in particular.[16]

[16] *The Religious Prospect*, p. 5.

The argument mounted in this book is that as well as the proximate causes of the rise of totalitarian regimes and the imminence of war, there is a struggle between opposing views of the human person, and what is at the centre of her being and nature. Basic to that argument are two important distinctions, which are important to elucidate:

- The first is between dogma and doctrine, and the second between being and becoming, and as we shall see these interlocking distinctions are a great deal less abstract than they may seem. *Doctrines* are the stated affirmations and values, the conscious affirmations that their adherents make. Dogmas, on the other hand, are the basic assumptions, so deeply held as not to need to be stated.
- The second, interlocking distinction is that between *being* and *becoming*, is that which is, the essential nature of something or someone, or of reality as a whole; while becoming is that which emerges from the flow of events, the movement of history.

These two distinctions are not between what is important and what is unimportant, let alone what is good and what is bad. It is natural for the basic assumptions, the dogmas, one holds to lead to the affirming of doctrines; it is part of the being of all things, human beings in particular, to be involved in and engaged with the process of becoming. Yet the distinction is for Demant vitally important when it comes to evaluating responses to the rise of totalitarian regimes.

The double meaning of liberalism

Demant's contention is that Liberalism is in fact two things: the stated beliefs and attitudes which have given rise to the institutions and constitutional and legal arrangements on which it then relies to promote and protect its values, its *doctrine*, and also a *dogma*, a set of fundamental assumptions. The *doctrine* of Liberalism 'was a conscious affirmation that the human person was a more ultimate reality than any institution or association and a set of polemic principles for embodying that truth in practical affairs'. The *dogma* on the other hand was 'a body of assumptions about the nature of man that in one way or another denied him real being or essence and sought to interpret his existence in terms of becoming, or progress, or evolution.'[17]

This distinction between doctrine and dogma, and the further distinction between being and becoming represent together Demant's core argument. The liberal values and the institutions that embody them have historically, Demant argued, depended on a dogma of human being which is

[17] *The Religious Prospect*, p. 22.

to be found within Christianity, the conviction that human beings have an essence, a being, that is not derived from or dependent upon the flux of events but is intrinsic to them. However, Liberalism as he saw it in his time, while maintaining the doctrine — the values and the institutions and other practical arrangements that embody them — had sought to sever that link and accept instead the dogma — the fundamental assumption — of the emergence of those values, institutions and practical arrangements from the realm of *becoming*, that is from the movement of history. What engages Demant's passion so strongly is his view that that 'slope of liberalism' (the title of the third chapter of the book) had led to a point where the dogma of Liberalism had so invaded much theology — his particular *bête-noir* being liberal Protestantism — as to deprive it of any power of resistance to the dogmas which were at the root of totalitarian thinking; it had reduced the preaching of the Church to a pallid moralism and changed the Gospel from good news to good advice — something better available from the world anyway.

The totalitarian options, East and West

The dogma and the doctrine of liberalism are in fundamental conflict. Relying upon the movement of history as the source of liberal values and institutions leaves supporters of the liberal doctrine vulnerable to those who grasp the wheel of history in order to steer it in an entirely different direction, that is to say the agents of totalitarian philosophies.

It is not easy to read some of the illustrations which Demant quotes without experiencing, in the hindsight with which we look at the events of Demant's time and what followed, a feeling of terror. Although a few quotations are needed to show the force of Demant's argument, as I read them in the ambience of a church, we need to remember that among those who resisted the Nazi regime were some such as Bonhoeffer, in the Confessing Church, who gave their lives for the conviction that such ideas were contrary to the fundamentals of their Christian faith. With that health warning here are three of those quoted in *The Religious Prospect*:

> Signor Mussolini wrote in *Il Fascismo*: 'The State becomes the conscience and will of the people. […] The State spreads the triumph of intellect throughout the domain of science, of art, of law and humanity.'

Or as a former Commissar of Justice in the USSR put it:

> Every judge must remember that his judicial decisions in particular cases are intended to promote first the prevailing policy of the ruling class and nothing else.

Or as one of the architects of the Nazi constitution makes clear, the aspiration is nothing short of total control of every aspect of life, so that everything accords with the spirit of the superior race:

> It must be the ideal of the constitution to set forth as the central law of the Nationalist Socialist philosophy of life the racial ideal […] these must be the guiding principles of the entire life of the people, in politics, in education and in culture […] as the moral law which lives in every true German.[18]

What might it take to resist such a characterization of human being? Demant's answer is that what is required is a profound reconstruction, at the level of dogma, a recommitment to the fundamentals of Christian faith, and its most basic assumptions. For:

> If we are to find meaning in becoming and at the same time to avoid giving absolute pretensions to some element in the process of becoming, then we must find the source of meaning in being, and the source of being in the relation of temporal things to a super-temporal reality.[19]

That is to say that a religious faith equal to the moment will require a recovery from within its roots of a resource equal to the task of opposing the dogma of becoming and its fruit in a view of the human person which came as we now know, to justify the ultimate dehumanizing of whole sections of the population.

There are varieties of totalitarianism, and they are not identical. Some do rely on the belief that the political arrangements they espouse are the result of the inexorable movement of history. They see themselves as the exponents of that movement of history, entitled to enact policies, arrangements and, the most sinister, powers of coercion, sanction and punishment, including the power of life and death, to enforce their rule and thus, through them, give firm direction to what they believe to be the ultimately irresistible march of history.

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[18] *The Religious Prospect*, p. 38 ff.

[19] *The Religious Prospect*, p. 146.

Such was the totalitarianism of the left. The totalitarianism of the right, specifically National Socialism, reckoned itself to be serving 'the moral law which lives in every German'. This is in fact a dogma — an appalling one — of human being, of the fundamental nature of what a person is.

Different though these totalitarianisms may be, both needed to be confronted not with references to the process of becoming that has created institutions and arrangements to establish and protect liberal values — the liberal *doctrine* — but with the:

> recognition of the supernatural ground of existence [which] is indispensable for man if he is to understand and achieve the right priorities even in the natural sphere of his life.[20]

For what brings about totalitarian political systems is not simply the rejection of liberal values but a failure by the Church in its preaching to be clear about those values derived from a dogma of being that gave to humanity its proper place in the flux of history. For:

> If there is nothing in man which is not derived from his temporal existence, then he has no claim on the collective life. The collective life on earth is of the temporal order. If the human person is likewise only of the temporal order he is but a fragmentary part of the collective whole; he is something less than the community and therefore has no end other than its enhancement and power to survive. Because modern Liberalism has accepted a dogma of becoming only, the doctrine for which it wished to stand has been defeated by more deliberate and thorough embodiments of its dogma. [21]

Catholic religion and the recovery of the tension

Demant's argument is not for an 'other-worldly' orientation to avoid the demands of the temporal flux. The need for the conviction — the dogma — that there are two worlds and not one, the world of being as well as the world

[20] Quoted (source not given) on the title page of M. H. Taylor, *The Social Thought of V. A. Demant*, thesis presented to Union Theological Seminary (New York, 1960). It is interesting to note that Demant provoked interest outside his own theological circle. Taylor is a Baptist minister who later served as Principal of the Northern Baptist College and Director of Christian Aid.

[21] *The Religious Prospect*, pp. 56 ff.

of becoming, arises precisely so that our participation in the world of becoming can be that which is demanded by a dogma of being:

> We need, therefore, a dogma to live by which will do justice to both the general and the particular. Without the first, life will be merely violent; without the second, our concern will be for an abstract individual or an equally abstract humanity, while the workaday world in which men really live will be a scramble for power.[22]

The conviction of Demant and many of his Anglo-Catholic contemporaries was that only their brand of orthodox, catholic Christianity had the possibility of holding together in tension the dogma of a transcendent God and the reality of human beings' involvement in the flow of history:

> I am not arguing that recovery of the two world outlook will deliver mankind from the dialectical movements from one pole to another in the quest for abiding satisfaction. The process has been with man always, and has made its impression on Christian theology too. And it will be part of human existence to the end. But I am contending that only by recognition of the dependence and contingency of the process of becoming in relation to Eternal Being will mankind be able to face the contrasts which emerge upon the historic stage and take an active part in history without giving unconditional loyalty to one side of the contrast. […] For he will see each movement as a tug of true being and be ready to learn from it; he will also know that it will be under judgement if it assumes that it fulfils the whole of man's being, and that it will provoke a new opposition. He will then be saved both from the despair which comes from a sense of meaninglessness and from the megalomania which can find meaning only by absolute claims and the resulting violence.[23]

That attitude of mind avoids the danger on the one hand of a rigid Protestantism which in its exclusive reliance on a dogma of being identifies redemption as happening exclusively in relation to the transcendent and holy God without engaging with the movements of history, and on the other a liberalism that sees meaning entirely within the flow of history without

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[22] *The Religious Prospect*, p. 160.
[23] *The Religious Prospect*, p. 152.

dependence on a transcendent being because of its exclusive reliance on a dogma of becoming.

Demant is aware that he, like many Anglo-Catholics before and since, has been charged with nostalgia for a form of medieval Catholicism, indeed with nostalgia for the Middle Ages. He is also aware that there can be no return to such a theological framework not least because the universe with which the medieval thinkers were dealing was too small compared with the expanded universe of which we are conscious today:

> There can be no return to the synthesis attempted by the theology of the Middle Ages, which proved so fragile owing to its envisaging too narrow a universe. […] What is clearly required is not a repetition of the medieval solution but […] an analogue for our own day.[24]

Is there a liberal prospect?

In *The Religious Prospect* Demant has with immense erudition made the case that resistance to the totalitarianisms of his day required an energetic reassertion of catholic Christian faith, rooted in the conviction that the world of transcendent being and the world of the flux of history are eternally intertwined through the incarnation of the Son of God, whereby the Creator of all things becomes part of the created order by becoming fully part of human history. Only such a faith can take part fully in the conflicts and opportunities of history without the unconditional loyalty to one or other part of it as totalitarian thinking demands.

The celebration of the Eucharist in this church was, in Demant's mind, formative: it made the most powerful statement possible of that conviction; the Eucharist was an act of resistance and, rightly understood, empowered resistance. His 'theological prophecy', spoken out of that Anglo-Catholic inheritance, had a considerable intellectual power.

Without belittling that, however, it is a contribution requiring some questioning. It is natural enough in that period for Anglo-Catholicism to see itself as the exclusive guardian of orthodox faith. *The Religious Prospect* certainly manifests traces of that mindset in some of his rhetorical attacks on other Christian traditions. For the record of the first half of the twentieth century does not entirely support the thesis that only Christians, and specifically only Christians of his tradition, had the necessary force of conviction to mount effective resistance to the threat to liberal values, even if the picture is always mixed. In the Soviet Union Orthodox Christians did not simply and universally surrender their beliefs in favour of the state

[24] *The Religious Prospect*, p. 200.

ideology, nor did the largest other grouping, Baptist Christians. And faced with Nazi power in Europe we must surely honour the resistance mounted by heroic Protestants as well as Catholics and even, when it came to it, by members of the Church of England. Their theologies may have differed enormously but clearly contained within them an impetus not to surrender to the flow of history but to resist.

Nor was it only Christian faith that gave rise to resistance. Many of the Jews of Europe, largely powerless and victimized as they were, retained at least in their inner space the resolve that the history of the God of their ancestors would not be terminated. There were many others whose resistance was nurtured by their associations with trade unions the solidarity of friends and associates or their political activities.

Even if he asserts strongly the need for catholic Christianity as the basis for mounting a resistance his real reason for saying that is not because he thinks it works but because he believes that faith to be true. He offers his theological prophecy on that basis, and not because of some calculus of virtue in which those individuals who believe in that way were shown to be better at resistance.

That means in turn that the basis on which any individual or group is able to resist surrender to the flux of history cannot be presumed from the particular place they occupy within or outside the Christian inheritance. There may be very different defences which prevent them from being overwhelmed by the attacks on liberal values; as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of fascism's most courageous and theologically passionate Protestant resisters, astutely observed, we may need a new language, perhaps not even recognizably religious, to describe what empowers our friends and neighbours in their resistance to attacks on liberal values and institutions.[25]

Two things need to be registered if we are to value the insights of *The Religious Prospect* today. First, the debate about which is to be the dominant Christian tradition seems far off in the past, to an extent which Demant would not have foreseen at the time, though he lived to see the mainstream churches decline after the Second World War. That means that the exploration of Demant's argument is taking place against the background, in this country, of a virtual vacuum of religious understanding. In that context knowing what the available forms of resistance are, of commitment to a

[25] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, the enlarged edition (London, 1953), p. 300. Theological resistance was also mounted by Paul Tillich, who was as a result barred from teaching in Germany by the Nazis. See for instance *Die sozialistische Entscheidung* (Potsdam, 1933), available as *The Socialist Decision* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2012).

world of being that might affect the world of becoming, is vital, and it will require all Christian traditions, and indeed all faiths, to engage.

Secondly, the totalitarian threats to liberalism have mutated. We can be hugely grateful that they are not, in this country, threats of military subjugation in the name of 'the will of the people', such as were faced in Demant's time. But the dominance of globalized commerce is such that 'the will of the people' is subject to manipulation or purchase by those with the resources to buy democracy. Submission to the world of market-driven becoming may not have produced in this country immediate threats to life; but it involves just as pressing a need to discover the resources of conviction and resistance that can be deployed against the threat to liberal values and institutions which we face. If we are inspired by Vigo Demant's call to identify a world of being that will command our primary loyalty in the face of threats to liberal values, it will require of all of us that we affirm our different sources of conviction, be they Anglo-Catholic, be they Christian, be they religious, or not. While we quite properly debate our respective truth-claims let us most of all, in the face of threats to liberal values and institutions, locate our fundamental convictions and take from them the strength and wisdom to resist.

Donald MacKinnon's Moral Philosophy in Context

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Paul DeHart describes Donald MacKinnon (1913 to 1994) as a:

> […] towering, eccentric Scotsman (no Presbyterian but rather member of the Episcopal Church of Scotland [*sic*], and a catholic in ecclesial and theological outlook) […who] threaded his life's path of agonizingly self-aware dissent over the course of the blood-soaked twentieth century. He launched one attempt after another toward a contemporary retrieval of the implicit ontology of Nicaea and Chalcedon, always faithful to a creatively Kantian ethics of the limits of cognition, and deeply colored by his bruisingly intimate feel for the irredeemability of historical suffering. This (for its time) highly atypical theological stance challenged and intrigued any number of independent thinkers, especially at Cambridge, as did his tireless recommendations of Barth and Balthasar in a period of Anglican theology when the first was far from popular and the second hardly known.[1]

MacKinnon's writings are the idiosyncratic product of a collision between his own imaginative powers, and the overlapping philosophical, theological and historical forces that he experienced or observed. His academic career began at Keble College, Oxford in 1937, continued at the University of Aberdeen from 1947 to 1960, and ended in Cambridge where he held the position of Norris Hulse Professor of Divinity between 1960 and 1978.[2] In his philosophical engagements, MacKinnon noted the discrediting of the most ambitious expressions of nineteenth century idealism by new waves of empiricism and positivism, together with the 'linguistic turn', and sought to learn the lessons of the purgation they wrought. Kant had achieved a great agnostic and deconstructive transformation of inherited metaphysical and theological doctrines but intended to leave space for faith. And yet, MacKinnon's philosophical contemporaries were plunging the scalpel of scepticism far more deeply. Their influence had swept through Oxford and

[1] Paul DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Enquiry* (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), p. 38.

[2] Muller has written the definitive intellectual biography of MacKinnon. André Muller, 'Donald M. MacKinnon: The True Service of the Particular, 1913–1959' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 2010).

Cambridge, uprooting complacency in divinity faculties, and dislodging previously secure methods of grounding theological and moral epistemology.[3]

MacKinnon came away from his early philosophical reading convinced that those who had explicated notions of God and Christendom in tandem with the rise of idealism were doomed, but also, that any panicked retreat into nostalgic dogmatism and reactionary metaphysics would be intellectually dishonest. Forsyth, Barth and Balthasar pointed to a radical and attractive alternative, as they sought a metaphysically minimalist post-Kantian orthodoxy that also took seriously the profound moral crisis of European disintegration into war.[4] On both philosophical and theological questions, MacKinnon's engagement is unintelligible without reference to the great historical ruptures of the age: the carnage of the two World Wars, the dawning comprehension of the sheer horror of the holocaust, the apocalyptic potential of atomic weapons, the perpetuation of Marxist revolutionary hopes, and the restive dynamism of the 1960s counter-culture. If any Christian theology worth the name was to survive in the wake of sceptical attack, it would not only interrogate its own claims to truth but meet historical crises with an authentic moral witness.[5]

One way to summarize MacKinnon's distinctive stance is to say that he was a modernist theologian who rejected the extremes of 'theological modernism'. By this I mean that MacKinnon wrote in the aftermath of the technological, political and scientific advances that marked the transition to the twentieth century, and associated philosophical developments, such as existentialism and logical positivism, but distanced himself from theologians who concluded that the Christological affirmations articulated at Nicaea and Chalcedon were no longer viable as a result. Cleo McNelly Kearns quotes Robert Jenson's wry observation that modernity's great theological project was to suppress apocalyptic and 'to make messianism into [mere] guru

[3] Donald MacKinnon, *Themes in Theology: The Three-Fold Cord; Essays in Philosophy, Politics and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), pp. 20–68.

[4] Donald MacKinnon, *Explorations in Theology* (London: SCM, 1979), pp. 99–128; 'Hans Urs von Balthasar's Christology', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by John C. McDowell (London: T & T Clark, 2011), pp. 281–88.

[5] Donald MacKinnon, *Borderlands of Theology and Other Essays by Donald M. MacKinnon*, ed. by George W. Roberts and Donovan E. Smucker (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011 [1968]), pp. 33–38.

worship'.[6] She argues that theological modernism began in nineteenth century Germany as Schleiermacher and Troeltsch found that Kant's philosophy of religion opened a way beyond 'scholastic and Calvinist aporias,' as well as providing a reason for enlightenment sceptics to tolerate religion as a useful means of moral enforcement and improvement.[7] Such modernists embraced Kant's insistence that, in the absence of rational proofs for God's existence, intuitive moral knowledge provided a justifiable means to secure the intelligibility of religious doctrine. At the same time, they tended to reject Kant's scepticism toward religious experience. The claims of faith could be articulated on the basis of immanence, religious feeling, and rational ethical imperative.[8] Christ became a universalized moral ideal. Some theological modernists also embraced local adaptations of the Hegelian legacy; in the United Kingdom, they embraced 'British idealists' such as Green, Bradley and Joachim, in the hope of articulating a metaphysical framework within which Christianity might fulfil its role as the midwife to moral progress and social change, guiding an emerging, progressive European civilization.[9]

MacKinnon grew up in the wake of the First World War and inherited a pessimistic realism that was sceptical of the modernism's progressivist narrative. His reaction to the politics of his time was to reject any form of idealism that prioritized the universal over the particular and resisted any attempts at rolling particular experiences of contradiction or suffering into sacred (or secular) 'theodicies' or 'syntheses'. Such scepticism would be further reinforced as another war loomed, then erupted, inflicting extraordinary suffering and trauma across Europe. It also meant that when a second wave of progressivist optimism broke out in the 1960s and infused many quarters of the Church, with attendant utopian hope grounded in the theological modernisms of the previous century, he offered a dissenting voice, focusing on the 'tragic' as a literary, historical and theological

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[6] Cleo McNelly Kearns, 'Modernism', in *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) [accessed 28 March 2021], citing an unpublished paper given by Jenson in 2004.

[7] McNelly Kearns, 'Modernism', ibid.

[8] McNelly Kearns, 'Modernism', ibid.

[9] W. J. Mander, *British Idealism: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), [accessed 2 March 2021]. See also André Muller, *True Service*, pp. 69–70. Muller narrates the way in which MacKinnon's distaste for certain expressions of idealism and modernism were forged debates within the Christendom Group; an organization of Anglo-Catholics who sought to advance a 'Christian sociology' in the inter-war period, pp. 113–21.

ascription.[10] For MacKinnon, the theological modernists were right to see Kant as offering a much needed purgation and challenge to theological complacency, but they were wrong in abandoning the apocalyptic, wrong in downgrading the patristic Christological inheritance, and wrong to seek a new foundation for theological knowledge in unmoored religious experience and moral optimism.[11]

MacKinnon affirmed that any commitment to moral seriousness amid historical situations that defied moral certainty and plunged individuals into the inarticulacy of concrete suffering, may give rise to a search for foundations, to transcendental longing, and may even pose the question of God's existence.[12] It would be a mistake, however, to insist that our moral intuitions give rise to a proof of God's existence, and neither the advent of the holocaust nor the atomic bomb provided reassurance about the inevitability of moral progress. When modernist history took on an apocalyptic character, MacKinnon joined those theologians pointing to the apocalyptic rupture of the Crucifixion as a source for theological (and ecclesial) purgation and renewal. For him, an alternative to 'modernist theology' was to be located in an approach grounded in the tragic particularity of the life and death of Jesus. The meaning of which was to be found in Israel's exodus and exile, and the witness of the Early Church to the Resurrection, and also to patristic debates establishing a metaphysical language to explicate the Christocentric worship of the Early Church.[13]

MacKinnon as moral realist

With the publication of *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach made the argument, soon embraced by Freud, that God was the projection of human desire; a construction that reflected the power of collective imagination to console, inspire and threaten. [14] In MacKinnon's context, analogous

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[10] MacKinnon, *Borderlands,* pp. 19–54. For an account of modernist progressivism and optimism in the Church of England see Sam Brewitt-Taylor, *Christian Radicalism in the Church of England and the Invention of the British Sixties, 1957–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 1 April 2021].

[11] MacKinnon, 'Revelation and Social Justice', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, p. 153.

[12] Donald MacKinnon, *The Problem of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 122–135.

[13] MacKinnon, *Borderlands,* pp. 97–104.

[14] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. by George Eliot, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012 [1841]) [Accessed 3 March 2021].

scepticism was applied to moral knowledge, and this was supercharged with the analytical turn in philosophy, mentioned above. Insole has characterized this 'turn' with reference to three phases. The first is the empiricism of Locke, Berkeley and Hume. The second is the logical positivism of Ayer, Wittgenstein's early writings and the logical atomism of Moore and Russell.[15] And third is the 'post-positivist analytical period', characterized by a cautious re-engagement with the questions that gave rise to the language of metaphysics, and in some cases, heavily qualified openness to notions of transcendence. A conviction sustained through each phase was that 'correspondence' notions of truth did not, generally speaking, apply to moral claims. Given that it was impossible to verify the truth or falsity of such claims using methods analogous to those of the mathematical or empirical sciences, efforts to establish philosophical foundations, or to establish moral 'facts', were judged as doomed from the outset.[16] Moral sentiments arising by intuition, regulated by practical reason, and expressed in everyday speech and conventions, were to be admitted, however. These could be the focus of sciences like sociology, anthropology, psychology, and linguistics, applying their different methodologies to understand and perhaps improve the human condition, without recourse to metaphysics.[17] Such approaches to moral philosophy had taken to heart Hume's lesson regarding the impossibility of establishing a necessary connection between descriptions of how things are to claims of how things ought to be.[18] For some, this meant a deflationary account of moral claims, even nihilism, while others, looking back to Mill and Bentham of the previous century, saw utilitarianism as the way forward.[19] For the latter, objective and rational criteria for moral claims could be obtained from empirical observations as to what produced measurable improvement in human welfare.

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[15] Christopher Insole, 'Political Liberalism, Analytical Philosophy of Religion and the Forgetting of History,' in *Faith and Philosophical Analysis: The Impact of Analytical Philosophy on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by Harriet A. Harris and Christopher J. Insole (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), p. 164.

[16] Donald MacKinnon, 'Ayer's Attack on Metaphysics,' *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 30, no. 1 (1991), p. 49.

[17] See for instance, J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

[18] Kevin Jung, *Christian Ethics and Commonsense Morality: An Intuitionist Account* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 83–85.

[19] Donald MacKinnon, *A Study in Ethical Theory* (London: A& C Black, 1957), pp. 22–50.

With the publication of his influential book *Principia Ethica*, G. E. Moore resisted both nihilistic and utilitarian conclusions. Under Kant's influence he argued that a moral intuition of 'the good' could provide an objective and rational basis for 'ought' claims.[20] He agreed with most utilitarians that the metaphysics of old should be jettisoned but defended a rational *a priori* that informed human endeavours to define obligations, freedoms and restraints. Moral intuitions were to be viewed as analogous to other forms of basic sense data. MacKinnon's 1957 *A Study in Ethical Theory* was an early attempt to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Kantian and utilitarian inheritances as they had developed in the early twentieth century, and to wrestle with Moore's ontology. He aimed to clarify what the Christian moralist needed to learn from advocates of these two approaches, while not becoming captive to the increasing sterility of the debate between them. MacKinnon valued the intuitionist's Kantian defence of the possibility of freedom in a world determined by scientific laws, giving an account of an inner dialogue that can encompass a consideration of multiple courses of action, but also the weight of an 'ought' apprehended by the conscience.[21] At the same time, the utilitarian provided an essential witness against inflexible and fanatical applications of inherited moral norms, with an insistence that ethics serve the end of human flourishing as far as possible.

In these ways, MacKinnon saw the contributions of the Kantian and the utilitarian as indispensable. Both schools were committed to forms of moral realism, affirming that the moral 'ought' is something to be apprehended and applied, rather than to be invented or constructed in every new situation. The problem, however, was that practitioners of these schools laboured under the temptation to fly free from the historical and the particular. The utilitarian faced the problem of how the 'good' was to be defined, and how much suffering was an acceptable price to pay to achieve it. MacKinnon argued that 'the utilitarian who says that benevolence is the whole of virtue, is ironing out the actual complexity of human nature in the interest of the principle for which he claims an almost metaphysical universality and necessity.'[22] The Kantian, on the other hand, could become wedded to a static, hyper-rational set of universal moral precepts to be imposed from above onto every concrete moral dilemma. In this vein, he reflected that:

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[20] G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903).

[21] MacKinnon, *Study in Ethical Theory*, pp. 79–81.

[22] MacKinnon, 'Ethical Intuition', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, pp. 99–114.

> In my own work in moral philosophy I have found myself increasingly dissatisfied with a deontological view of ethics, and I will not deny that more and more I have found myself compelled to adopt some such conception of a norm of manhood [sic] as the basis of ethical judgement. Kant's attempt to construct ethics as an a priori science altogether apart from psychology seems to me to fail miserably. Moral imperatives cannot be vindicated as self-evident apart altogether from their relation to actual human desires.[23]

MacKinnon, with G. E. Moore, liked to quote Butler's dictum that 'everything is what it is and not another thing' when seeking to defend the uniqueness of moral claims and the need for a unique philosophical apparatus for determining their truth value. That such claims could not be verified on the basis of scientific experiment or mathematical proof, did not mean that language of truth or falsity had no role to play in ethics, so MacKinnon argued, going further still to defend the qualified use of 'correspondence' notions of truth in this regard.[24] Constant effort of description and re-description of moral dispositions and decisions, appreciated in their full historical and psychological complexity, was needed to achieve realism. In this vein, MacKinnon insisted that law-like approaches must be grounded in, and open to, the particular case, constantly being adapted to new historical data the particularities of each new situation. Where a moral law exists, antinomian disruption should be expected, and where moral law is applied, there is always the possibility that tragedy may result.[25] Even the most internally consistent moral theory may be undone in

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[23] MacKinnon, 'Revelation and Social Justice', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, p. 145.

[24] MacKinnon, *Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 37–45, and Paul Murray, 'Theology in the Borderlands: Donald MacKinnon and Contemporary Theology', *Modern Theology*, 14:3 (1998), 361–63.

[25] In the wake of more upbeat assessment of the future in the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, MacKinnon wrote that: 'we may well find ourselves driven to a more tragic appraisal of the human scene, but let us be sure that the appraisal is tragic — something very different from the mood of tired impatience which finds nothing new under the sun, which thinks quite wrongly that one only grasps *la misère de l'homme* by depreciating *la grandeur*; whereas it is only against the background of a true estimate of human creativity and genius that we see human weakness, frailty and sin for

its application by hubris, confused motives, competing and conflicting goods, complexity giving rise to unintended consequences, or the fact that the best that may be hoped for in a particular instance is the lesser of two or more evils.[26]

As well as a close reading of the moral dilemmas as they emerged within historical accounts and public debate, MacKinnon found that such a focus on the particular could profitably draw on the imaginative resources of literature. He argued that 'we need the tools of literary study, above all the discipline of close reading, to enable us to reach through the apparent flight from fact to fantasy, back towards the coldly factual basis.'[27] MacKinnon could see the imagination as an ally for realism because the notion of 'cold factuality' with which he worked was rather more expansive than that embraced by many positivists and empiricists. With Marcel, 'cold factuality' is not seen as antithetical to notions of transcendence; with Barth, it is not antithetical to a Divine act, and with Kant, it is not antithetical to moral realism. MacKinnon's literary interests were not indiscriminate and the distinction Coleridge made between 'imagination' and 'fancy' looms large in his essays.[28] The kind of literature that he considered most helpful included works exploring the complexity of realistically imagined scenarios, necessitating webs of moral decision making that allowed readers to appreciate the emotional depths of interpersonal relationships, conflicting allegiances, and the way individual agency may be tragically and fatally compromised.[29]

Further influences on MacKinnon's idiosyncratic approach included Collingwood's forays into the borderland between philosophy, history, and morality, and Maritain's 'integral humanism' as it sought a moral theology immersed in 'the actual passage of historical events.'[30] MacKinnon was particularly captivated by Collingwood's insistence on apprehending moments of 'absolute' moral obligation in the context of suffering and

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what they are' (Donald MacKinnon, *Explorations in Theology* (London, SCM Press, 1979) p. 6).

[26] MacKinnon, *Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 136–45.

[27] MacKinnon, 'The Evangelical Imagination', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, p. 196.

[28] Donald MacKinnon, 'Coleridge and Kant', in *Coleridge's Variety: Bicentenary Studies*, ed. by John Beer (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 188.

[29] Andrew Bowyer, *Donald MacKinnon's Theology; To Perceive Tragedy Without the Loss of Hope* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 126.

[30] MacKinnon, 'Revelation and Social Justice', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, p. 145; *Borderlands*, pp. 169–74.

tragedy in history; situations in which the 'ought' did not necessarily imply 'can', contra Kant's dictum.[31] Additionally he admired Isaiah Berlin's spirited defence of freedom, building on Kant's notion of autonomy, but seeking to radicalize it even further in the wake of twentieth century totalitarianisms.[32] In this vein, driving MacKinnon's commitment to the language of freedom was a recognition of dynamic subjectivity, the battle of the conscience, and the apprehension of moral intuitions, as grounds for a wider defence of the innate dignity of the person.[33] This fed into a defence of the necessity of moral accountability, and the affirmation that 'what is' could have been otherwise, despite the fact that all such language must, in the end, be seen as one 'move in a game' in an unresolvable tussle with various shades of philosophical determinism.[34] In this respect, MacKinnon never lost admiration for the way Kant explored this difficult philosophical terrain, committed, as he was, to a 'simultaneous engagement with the question of the role of the notion of causal connection in knowledge of an objective world, and with that of the causality involved in human freedom'.[35]

MacKinnon's insistence on pragmatic engagement with particular instances of moral discernment led him to a renewed engagement with metaphysics, or at least, to an appreciation of why the metaphysicians of old struggled with the limits of language as they did. This is a project that received particular focus in his 1965 Gifford Lectures, but also in essays before and after, arguing that while moral claims are grounded in discrete 'language games', contingent and relative to circumstance, they are also framed by the objectivity of history, the claim of reason, and the facts of personhood, in ways that give them a quality analogous to 'the factual'.[36] MacKinnon readily acknowledged that any articulation of a moral 'ought' is constructed in each new situation and differently between cultures, but that such claims are realist in the sense that they ultimately framed by, correspond with, and answerable to, 'what is the case'.[37] Indeed, he insisted that there is such a thing as objective moral failure and 'absolute' imperative,

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[31] MacKinnon, *Explorations in Theology*, pp. 55–69.

[32] Muller, *True Service*, p. 106.

[33] MacKinnon, 'Ethical Intuition', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, pp. 111–12.

[34] MacKinnon, 'Ethical Intuition', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, p. 113.

[35] MacKinnon, 'Freedom Defended', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, p. 133.

[36] MacKinnon, *Explorations*, pp. 106–12.

[37] MacKinnon, 'Natural Law', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, pp. 115–18.

just as there are objective measures of personal wellbeing and societal flourishing. There are moments when outrages against a reverence for life are so profound, that recourse to a natural law that restrains, and conserves is rationally demanded. The holocaust and the development of nuclear weapons became the prime examples to which MacKinnon returned again and again.[38]

MacKinnon and theological ethics

MacKinnon's forays into questions of ontology and epistemology intersected and overlapped with forays into theological ethics. Christians have their own versions of competing moral systems that potentially fly free of the concrete and the particular: divine-command ethics and natural law approaches.[39] The latter, associated with Thomistic Roman Catholic moral theology, with its sophisticated tradition of jurisprudence and manuals of case law; the former associated with protestant voluntarist ethics, and a commitment to biblical exegesis as the definitive means to resolve moral dilemmas. As noted above, MacKinnon was heavily influenced by Barth, and this meant that both divine command and natural law approaches were to undergo renewed purgation in contact with the particularity of the revelatory event constituted by the Incarnation.[40] Both needed to be humbled before the particular instance, admitting dynamic agnosticism, open-ended struggle, and controversially, the tragic ascription, into the heart of Christian moral discernment.[41] Further still, both needed to hear the utilitarian critique, in as far as it could be shown that inflexible applications of Christian moral teaching had resulted in suffering and immiseration in all too many instances.[42]

In this way, the potential for theological moralizing to become profoundly unethical was at the forefront of MacKinnon's concern. Drawing moral theology into close contact with Christology was a way of offsetting temptations to abstraction and legalism, which MacKinnon perceived as two ways of insulating the Church from the vagaries of history, concrete suffering and the pragmatic, often tragic, choices of discipleship. His standard of

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[38] MacKinnon, *Borderlands*, p. 186.

[39] See the discussion 'Ethics, Metaphysics and Religion,' in MacKinnon, *Study in Ethical Theory*, pp. 233–77.

[40] See for instance, MacKinnon, *Borderlands*, pp. 55–79.

[41] MacKinnon, *Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 122–35, and *Explorations*, pp. 182–95.

[42] See for instance, MacKinnon, 'Some Reflection on Secular Diakonia', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, pp. 67–76.

judgement was not sought in 'neutral' secular philosophy, but in the witness of Jesus of Nazareth, whose way of affirming divine command and natural law was via antinomian disruption, and by employing provocative open-ended parables.[43] Jesus's witness also involved a choice to plumb the depths of failure and humiliation on the Cross, which MacKinnon insisted on interpreting in tragic terms, as noted above.[44] The Cross was simultaneously the event giving rise to Christian claims for universal redemption, the destiny that Jesus felt bound to choose in obedience to his Father's will, and also a dramatic failure that could have been otherwise. Just as tragic literature focused on individual downfall in ways that raised metaphysical questions, so too, a focus on the particularity of Christ's life and death demanded serious attention be given to the nature of God, freedom, history, and moral personhood; it called for a robust engagement with questions of ontology, most especially in the language of 'substance' that proved important in the development of Trinitarian doctrine.[45] As human bodies and language itself are contorted by suffering and inarticulacy, recourse to notions of transcendence may prove both possible and necessary, or so MacKinnon argued.

MacKinnon's insistence on foregrounding 'the particular' came not only with the call to focus on the life and death of Jesus, but also on the figures Judas and Caiaphas.[46] Both become models for much of the moral logic implicit in the ecclesiastical life and politics which so disturbed MacKinnon: a cold utilitarianism in the Church's forays into power politics, and a refusal to face the questions which the figure of Judas posed to all triumphalist and progressive theologies and theodicies. Whether it was the Catholic hierarchy in Spain capitulating to fascism in the 1920s, or the protestant New Testament scholar Gerhard Kittel's capitulation to Nazi ideology in the 1930s, MacKinnon saw instructive betrayals of Christ that

[43] MacKinnon, *Explorations in Theology*, pp. 170–73.

[44] MacKinnon, *Borderlands*, pp. 97–104.

[45] Donald MacKinnon, '"Substance" in Christology: A Cross-bench View', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, pp. 237–54. MacKinnon saw that Barth's insistence on ensuring that God was not conceived as an extension of anthropology, could only be guaranteed if one also took seriously the priority St Thomas gave to ontology. MacKinnon, 'Revelation and Social Justice', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, pp. 138–40.

[46] MacKinnon, 'Revelation and Social Justice', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, p. 149.

provided warnings and object lessons.[47] He insisted that Christian contributions to moral philosophy should proceed with clear-sighted contemplation of the price paid for the Church's attachment to Christendom models. Furthermore, he called for an honest apprehension of the thread of anti-Semitism, with roots in the New Testament, and flowing into wider historical tides that reached their savage zenith in the Nazi extermination camps.[48] MacKinnon would never let his readers or hearers integrate these disturbing facts into a smooth synthesis or resolution.

As World War Two ended, and the spectre of an atomic arms race loomed, MacKinnon sought to disrupt what he saw as conformity and capitulation to a version of historical idealism shaping the Church's collective attempts to respond. As such, Caiaphas become the particular lens to characterize the temptation of elites of British Christianity, who, being desperate to maintain prestige and relevance, were tempted to embrace a pragmatic and utilitarian determinism, as if the new weapons and the Doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction were both 'facts' dictated by necessity, rather than decisions that raised disturbing questions about means and ends, demanding costly resistance.[49] In this vein, MacKinnon was dismayed by a 1946 report from the British Council of Churches arguing that 'we must learn to live with the dilemma', just as he judged a 1948 response from the Church of England to be failure.[50] He saw the latter as employing theological platitudes while at the same time embracing the principle *necessitas non habet legem*,[51] and would go on to conclude that church establishment in England was inhibiting authentic witness in this, and other respects.[52] Additionally, he wondered whether the energy that various ecclesiastics were devoting to the condemnation of the remarriage of divorced persons was a diversion from confronting harder questions arising

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[47] MacKinnon, 'Revelation and Social Justice', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, p. 148.

[48] MacKinnon, 'The Evangelical Imagination', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, pp. 111–12.

[49] Donald MacKinnon, *Themes in Theology: The Three-Fold Cord; Essays in Philosophy, Politics and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), p. 111.

[50] *The Church and the Atom: A Study of the Moral and Theological Aspects of Peace and War* (London: Press and Publications Board, Church Assembly, 1948).

[51] 'Necessity has no law.' A maxim meaning that the violation of a law may be excused by necessity. MacKinnon, *Borderlands,* pp. 35–36.

[52] See Donald MacKinnon, *The Stripping of the Altars: The Gore Memorial Lecture* (London: Collins, 1969).

from the passive acceptance of nuclear proliferation, the stain of anti-Semitism, and Britain's own conduct in 'total war'.[53]

MacKinnon had his enduring admirers, notably Rowan Williams, as well as detractors, notably John Milbank. While not uncritical of MacKinnon, Williams followed his one-time teacher into the borderlands between philosophy and theology to interrogate the status of theological and moral truth claims. Like MacKinnon, he embraced chalcedonian Christology, explored the relationship between transcendence and the tragic, and maintained a broad commitment to catholic humanism and the cause of nuclear disarmament. By contrast, Milbank honed-in on MacKinnon's weaknesses and was more resistant to his basic intuitions. For Milbank, MacKinnon remained too wedded to Kant, too liberal in politics, too suspicious of Hegel's notions of historically embedded reason and freedom, too dependent on 'a secular groundwork in ethics,' and too enamoured with tragic readings of history and Christianity. He dissents from MacKinnon's stress on agnosticism with regard to transcendence as a counterpart to defending freedom in the face of materialist determinism. In other words, Milbank demands a much stronger articulation and defence of a hierarchical Christian metaphysic in defiance of Kant, and much greater emphasis on the Resurrection as the source and centre of distinctly Christian approaches to politics and ethics.[54]

The debate not only pertains to a difference of opinion as to Kant's enduring relevance, but a fundamental difference of political vision and temperament. Millbank wants a far more assertive, combative, and integrated Christian philosophy, based on a combination of postmodern deconstruction and pre-modern metaphysics. MacKinnon, by contrast, moved restively between philosophical scepticism informed by the Enlightenment and a Christology informed by Barth, while not wanting to ignore the richest insights St Thomas offered in developing the analogy of being. In the end, MacKinnon admits a minimal metaphysical account by way of the tragic, and a muted account of the Resurrection amounting to the persistence of a transcendent hope that renders the lack of historical synthesis tolerable.[55] Milbank helps us to see MacKinnon's weaknesses,

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[53] Donald MacKinnon, *Objections to Christian Belief* (London: Constable, 1963), pp. 30–32.

[54] John Milbank, '"Between Purgation and Illumination": A Critique of the Theology of Right', in *Christ, Ethics and Tragedy: Essays in Honour of Donald MacKinnon*, ed. by Kenneth Surin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 181–82.

[55] MacKinnon, 'Revelation and Social Justice', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, pp. 138–40.

particularly in terms of a potential over reliance on ahistorical and individualistic versions of Kantian reason and intuition. And yet, there is little evidence to support the charge that MacKinnon consistently desired a 'secular groundwork for ethics', as he remained loyal to the conviction that: 'Man [*sic*] is always poised over an abyss. He must be held there by being drawn without himself to the source of his being. Without grace nature disintegrates.'[56]

What connected MacKinnon's philosophical and theological writings was a commitment to moral realism, or what he often labelled as 'moral seriousness'. Such seriousness is not to be the preserve of theists alone, but for MacKinnon as theologian, any notion of a 'human norm', natural law, or moral factuality, was grounded in an apprehension of history that included the Incarnation. As such, he placed himself in the borderlands between disciplines, attempting to probe the nature of truth claims, the possibility of freedom, and the ever-present question regarding what ought to be done, while remaining committed to an ontology of history that included the revelatory 'facts' as affirmed by Nicaea and Chalcedon.

In this paper I have sought to give a brief account of MacKinnon's achievement, which is embodied in a nest of questions, suggestions and purgative resources. I have highlighted the theoretical concerns that most preoccupied him over a long career, as well as the particular issues about which he was most outspoken and passionate. He was not the sort of thinker to accumulate a circle of adoring disciples, but content to set an agenda which others took up and adapted in the proceeding generation. In retrospect, MacKinnon provided a much-needed alternative to the so-called radical theologians of his day. Whereas their movement shined brightly but briefly, MacKinnon's fundamental intuitions, and the questions he posed to the Church, remain incisive and generative still.

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[56] MacKinnon, 'Revelation and Social Justice', in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by McDowell, p. 147.

Oliver O'Donovan as Evangelical Theologian

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This essay considers Oliver O'Donovan as an evangelical theologian. By using this vexed term, I aim only to highlight two points of orientation that are foundational to O'Donovan's thought. These are a commitment to the authority of Scripture, and to the centrality of the Gospel for Christian thinking about ethics and politics.

This is not the only way we might approach O'Donovan or begin to appreciate his many and varied contributions. We might, alternatively, survey his numerous contributions to practical questions as diverse as deterrence, capital punishment, IVF, counter-insurgency armed conflict, and divorce. We might also begin by trying to locate his thought in relation to key influences such as St Augustine, the young Luther, Karl Barth, and Paul Ramsey. It could be fruitful to consider O'Donovan's work under certain other headings: as an ecumenical or Anglican theologian, for example. The latter possibility might seem to be particularly appropriate in this context. However, in my view, it is most illuminating first to consider O'Donovan as an evangelical thinker. The aim of this essay will be to justify this decision by showing how O'Donovan's convictions about Scripture and the Gospel structure his thought in fundamental ways.

It is perhaps unnecessary to note that the goal here is not to provide a comprehensive map of the structure of O'Donovan's thought, nor a bibliographic guide to his writings (though I hope in my use of sources to highlight something of the range of O'Donovan's contributions). Other works have begun to do this in significant ways, most recently Sam Tranter's *Oliver O'Donovan's Moral Theology*.[1] The aim here, rather, is to draw attention to some of the deep currents of O'Donovan's thought that give it its distinctive character. We will consider, first, O'Donovan's careful thought about the

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[1] Samuel Tranter, *Oliver O'Donovan's Moral Theology: Tensions and Triumphs* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2020). See also, recently, chapter 4 of my book — Andrew Errington, *Every Good Path: Wisdom and Practical Reason in Christian Ethics and the Book of Proverbs* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2020). For a bibliography (up to 2015) and numerous critical engagements see the Festschrift edited by Robert Song and Brent Waters, *The Authority of the Gospel: Explorations in Moral and Political Theology in Honour of Oliver O'Donovan* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015). O'Donovan's work has also been the subject of a number of symposia, most recently in *Modern Theology* 36.1 (2020).

authority of Scripture, and second, how a deep consciousness of the Gospel shapes both his general ethics and his political theology.

The time of the Word

'Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation' (Psalm 95. 7–8). These words, central to the Anglican liturgy, assume a critical importance in O'Donovan's magisterial *Ethics as Theology* trilogy.[2] They also encapsulate a core, animating impulse of O'Donovan's thought: an emphasis on the authority of Scripture as definitive of time as it bears upon us as moral agents.

O'Donovan's understanding of the authority of Scripture is worked out in connection with a wider account of authority.[3] Central to this account is the conviction that authority does not limit freedom but creates it. For freedom can only exist where there is conformity to reality, and the essence of authority is to be 'a focused disclosure of reality'.[4] For O'Donovan the authority of Scripture is therefore a very welcome gift, for it meets a deep need human beings have by virtue of their existence in the world. Our life in the world, and especially our *action*, O'Donovan stresses in various ways throughout his works, are beset by a threat of meaninglessness.[5] The central problem is that we have no guarantee that there will be a final harmony between history — the unfolding of events in time — and the natural goodness of the world. The world as we encounter it is full of goods that draw our admiration; but the world as we encounter it is also a world in

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[2] See Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology,* Volume 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 119; and *Finding and Seeking*: *Ethics as Theology,* Volume 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), pp. 114, 145. For a discussion of the structure of these works, see Errington, *Every Good Path*, pp. 153–56.

[3] See especially O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, pp. 53–59; and Oliver O'Donovan, 'The Moral Authority of Scripture', in *Scripture's Doctrine and Theology's Bible: How the New Testament Shapes Christian Dogmatics*, ed. by Markus Bockmuel and Alan J. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), pp. 165–76. For an analysis of O'Donovan's account of authority, see Andrew Errington, 'Authority and Reality in the work of Oliver O'Donovan', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 29.4 (2016), pp. 371–85.

[4] O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, p. 54.

[5] This theme appears in numerous places in O'Donovan's work, for example, *Finding and Seeking*, pp. 114–19; *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd edn (Leicester: Apollos and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 53–75, 183–90. For a discussion, see Errington, *Every Good Path*, pp. 181–91.

motion, unfolding towards an end we cannot know to be hopeful rather than terrifying. We experience this fearfully opaque prospect in our own action, every time we confront an indeterminate future, and have to stake ourselves upon this deed rather than that one. Without some disclosure, practical reason is left at a loss. This is why, writes O'Donovan, 'practical reason looks for a word, a word that makes attention to the world intelligible, a word that will maintain the coherence and intelligence of the world as it finds its way through it, a word of God'.[6] 'Scripture', O'Donovan will say, 'is the divine resource with which we confront the practical indeterminacy of decision'.[7] The authority of Scripture frees us to face the present moment of action with confidence rather than despair.

Correspondingly, O'Donovan is generally suspicious of what we might call genealogical approaches, which seek to derive a meaningful purchase upon the present moment from an overarching historical narrative.[8] Two examples will illustrate. In a review of John Rist's *Augustine Deformed*, O'Donovan comments:

> Is it not a mistake to suppose that understanding where we find ourselves (a very necessary enterprise) and understanding it in the light of the past (a very wise one) require a quasi-historical narrative of steps taken from 'there' to 'here'? Those steps were not rational steps, like the steps of an argument. They were driven by forgetfulness, misunderstanding, loss of interest and sheer reaction, and only sometimes attentive and systematic exploration.[9]

In similar fashion, O'Donovan criticizes John Milbank and Adrian Pabst's *The Politics of Virtue* for its reliance on, 'the difficult, and to me incredible, supposition that ideas emerge in history according to the logic of inference, never thrown off their course by forgetfulness, distractions or sudden changes of focus due to surprising events'.[10] Such genealogical approaches risk what O'Donovan calls 'the substitution of gnosis for action'. For, 'the

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[6] O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, p. 12.

[7] O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, p. 78.

[8] See especially O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking*, pp. 230–37.

[9] Oliver O'Donovan, 'Review of *Augustine Deformed: Love, Sin, and Freedom in the Western Moral Tradition* by John M. Rist', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 29.4 (2016), p. 505.

[10] Oliver O'Donovan, 'Review of *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* by John Milbank and Adrian Pabst', *Modern Theology* 33/3 (2017), (p. 486).

character of the times is yet to be determined, and that will happen precisely as a result of decisions we have now to take. To rely on the times to guide the decisions is to commit ourselves to a circle of self-justifying sophistry'.[11] What we need in order to act is not a tendentious and unreliable historical narrative, but a word of God. 'It is lack of belief in, or hope for, revelation that drains away our confidence in language as a medium of truth, and in time as a medium of discovery'.[12]

How does the word of God reach us through Scripture 'today'? O'Donovan has a strong account of the authority of Scripture, but not a simplistic one. 'Scripture is', he writes, 'God's administration of his self-announcement, the record he has authorized to it and the seal he has set on it to confirm that it is true […] we may speak quite appropriately of a perfection in Holy Scripture. Its perfection is sui generis, a fitness for its assigned task'.[13] O'Donovan resists viewpoints that reserve the right to reject the moral judgments of the New Testament on the basis of our moral progress since then.[14] We cannot treat Scripture as authoritative, he argues, if we will not submit our pre-understanding and assumptions to it, if we will not allow the ways of seeing things we have learnt in our time to become questions for which we seek answers:

> What is at stake in resistance to the liberal hermeneutic paradigm becomes clear: the cause is the cause of *open questions* — questions that need opening and holding open because they are of such importance existentially to those who have to ask them. But to hold a question open with real existential commitment, and not merely to bedazzle the conversation with interrogatives darting round like bats in daylight, one must purposefully look to the source from which an answer is sought, an answer not already contained in the question, which is therefore capable of reforming and refining the question. And that is precisely what is meant by the authority of Scripture in Christian ethics.[15]

This account of the authority of Scripture also, however, distances O'Donovan from some more 'conservative' approaches. There is a distance

[11] O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking*, pp. 233–34.

[12] O'Donovan, 'Review of *The Politics of Virtue*', p. 488.

[13] Oliver O'Donovan, *Church in Crisis: The Gay Controversy and the Anglican Communion* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008), pp. 55–56.

[14] O'Donovan, *Church in Crisis*, p. 61.

[15] O'Donovan, *Church in Crisis*, p. 63.

between Scripture and our situation that cannot be elided. Not merely a historical distance — that may or may not matter very much — but a distance between the closure of the text and the openness of our own situation and action.[16] This distance requires two things of us. On the one hand, it requires that we continually refuse to exchange the text of Scripture for our understanding of it. O'Donovan writes:

> We must not […] in the supposed defense of a 'biblical' ethic, try to close down moral discussion prescriptively, announcing that we already know what the Bible teaches and forbidding further examination. It is the characteristic 'conservative' temptation to erect a moment in scriptural interpretation into an unrevisable norm that will substitute, conveniently and less ambiguously, for Scripture itself.[17]

On the other hand, the distance between Scripture and ourselves means that obedience requires a work, not just of interpretation, but of practical reasoning, which seeks 'a careful correlation' of Scripture with our situation. This task, O'Donovan believes, is often cut short by an unwillingness carefully to think through the complexities of our own situation.[18] 'Moral thinking responds to the authority and Scripture with a deliberated and free action, and in no other way'.[19]

O'Donovan's valedictory sermon at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, at the conclusion of his time as Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology, titled 'No End to the Word', illustrates both O'Donovan's confidence in Scripture, and the way it shapes his sense of the task of the theologian and ethicist.[20] Reflecting on the concluding words of the book of Acts, he writes that,

> The word of God contains not only a story of salvation […] but an ongoing exposition and clarification. Faith receives, and faith seeks understanding. Deeper and deeper the word opens itself

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[16] For this point, see especially O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, pp. 78–80 and *Church in Crisis*, pp. 69–85.

[17] O'Donovan, *Church in Crisis*, p. 79.

[18] O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, pp. 78–80.

[19] O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, p. 79.

[20] Published in Oliver O'Donovan, *The Word in Small Boats: Sermons from Oxford*, ed. by Andy Draycott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 166–72.

> to us; deeper and deeper it penetrates us, shaping the life of the mind, refashioning every idea, motive, and purpose.[21]

What is lacking in the church today, O'Donovan suggests, is a willingness to enter into this discipline. 'Something we are withholding makes us weak, withholding from the service of the word. It is not that we won't speak. Loud and repeated eructations are, today as always, not uncharacteristic of the church. But we won't devote the labour to speaking coherently, consistently, and faithfully'.[22] The theologian's privilege is to serve the word, to give it this labour. For:

> There is a word to be spoken: a descriptive word that tells us of God's presence in the world; a commanding word that directs us to the good works prepared for us; a reconciling word that attunes us to our situation; a word of judgment that displays what is right; a reasonable word, illuminating the logic of our situation and its demands; a word of salvation that delivers us from self-destruction. It is God who speaks this word when others speak it, God who will continue to speak it so long as history itself persists.[23]

'The Word that holds the centre'

Resurrection and Moral Order begins with these words: 'The foundations of Christian ethics must be evangelical foundations; or, to put it more simply, Christian ethics must arise from the gospel of Jesus Christ'.[24] This is a defining conviction of both O'Donovan's works of more general ethics and his political theology and ethics. The word of God that gives form to our time as agents, that discloses to us the reality that must shape our action in this present moment, is the word of what God has done in Christ. The Gospel, as O'Donovan puts it in a critique of the Lutheran approach of Martin Honecker, must not only 'bowl', it must also 'go in to bat',[25] giving form to a genuinely *Christian* ethics, shaped at the foundation by the good news.

How does the Gospel shape O'Donovan's moral theology generally? The most important aspect of O'Donovan's answer is to emphasize the

[21] O'Donovan, *The Word in Small Boats*, p. 169.
[22] O'Donovan, *The Word in Small Boats*, p. 171.
[23] O'Donovan, *The Word in Small Boats*, p. 171.
[24] O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, p. 11.
[25] In the preface to the second edition of *Resurrection and Moral Order*, p. xiv.

resurrection as a vindication of created order.[26] In the resurrection, we have 'God's final and decisive word on the life of his creature',[27] and it is a word of reaffirmation and vindication. The moral life of the Church, and Christian ethics, are indexed particularly to this moment of the Christ event.[28] 'The church's active life', O'Donovan puts it in *The Desire of the Nations*, 'is based on delight at what God has done [...] As the church participates in Christ's resurrection it is authorised to live joyfully in the order God has made, and to recover it from oppressive and exploitative corruptions.'[29]

This account of the significance of the resurrection allows O'Donovan to give a central place to the notion of created order. The revelation of the Gospel, in fact, allows us to 'overcome the epistemological barriers to an ethic that conforms to nature'.[30] For the resurrection assures us of a structure and coherence in creation that is in a real sense 'transhistorical', that 'measures change and so stands beyond it', and that allows us 'to live with confidence rather than terror in the face of history'.[31] Without such knowledge, we cannot speak coherently of *kinds* of moral action, which is what moral reasoning always needs to do.[32]

This well-known emphasis on the resurrection as the vindication of created order is not, however, the only aspect of O'Donovan's answer to the question of how the Gospel shapes Christian ethics. A recurring but more muted theme throughout O'Donovan's work is the way in which the cross shapes the character of the Christian moral life. The cross shows us 'that joyful and obedient participation' in the life of the resurrection 'cannot continue freely in the world but must conflict with disobedience and so be driven out'. 'Discipleship [...] involves us in the suffering of exclusion from various forms of created good'.[33] In *Finding and Seeking*, after noting how 'the resurrection of Jesus Christ [...] vindicates the created order and heals the rift between history and the good', O'Donovan goes on to highlight the

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[26] For this theme, see especially *Resurrection and Moral Order*, pp. 13–45.

[27] O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, p. 13.

[28] See Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 181–83.

[29] O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, p. 183.

[30] O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, p. 20.

[31] O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, pp. 188–89.

[32] See O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, pp. 181–203. For a discussion of this significant point, see Errington, *Every Good Path*, pp. 141–53.

[33] O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, p. 95.

way the disciple's acceptance of this truth 'generates new paradoxes about life in the world'.[34]

> Only by 'following after' the one at the centre of history can we accomplish ourselves effectively. An opposition thus appears between the value-order of the world as perceived ahistorically and the word that holds the center of the world's history […]. Merely to affirm the created world's order of value is to ignore this opposition. To affirm Christ's death and resurrection is to acknowledge it, and to find it resolved in the rebirth of agency.[35]

One of the questions it is profitable to ask of O'Donovan's thought is about the extent to which this recognition of the way the cross shapes the Christian life is integrated with the emphasis on the resurrection as the vindication of what O'Donovan once called a 'natural ethic'.[36]

Before turning to such questions, however, we must note that the Gospel does not only shape O'Donovan's general moral theology; it is decisive for his political theology as well. One of the defining features of Oliver O'Donovan's political theology is the place it gives to salvation history. Political authority, O'Donovan maintains, is radically altered by the advent of Christ, who is the king the Lord has set in Zion (Psalm 2), the desire of all nations (Haggai 2. 7). Christ's triumph establishes, O'Donovan says, a 'frontier in time' that chastens political authority, requiring it to subordinate all its goals to the imperative of giving judgment.[37] At the same time, it calls into existence a new society (the Church), defined by the imperative, 'judge not!', and deeply shaped by the logic of forgiveness.[38]

In his insightful engagement with *The Desire of the Nations* almost two decades ago, Jonathan Chaplin observed that this emphasis on salvation history involved an important shift from O'Donovan's treatment of political authority in his earlier *Resurrection and Moral Order*[39] — an observation

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[34] O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking*, pp. 116–18.

[35] O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking*, pp. 118–119.

[36] Oliver O'Donovan, 'The Natural Ethic', in *Essays in Evangelical Social Ethics*, ed. by David F. Wright (Wilton: Morehouse-Barlow, 1979), pp. 19–35.

[37] O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, p. 158, and more broadly, pp. 120–92. See also Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), especially pp. 66, 127–48.

[38] See, e.g. *Desire of the Nations*, pp. 158–92; *The Ways of Judgment*, pp. 84–100, 231–41.

[39] Jonathan Chaplin, 'Political Eschatology and Responsible Government: Oliver O'Donovan's "Christian Liberalism"', in *A Royal*

later noted with gratitude by O'Donovan.[40] In the earlier work, O'Donovan described the shape of political authority ahistorically, as resting upon 'a concurrence of natural authorities of might and tradition' with the ('relatively natural') authority of 'injured right'.[41] In *The Desire of the Nations*, however, O'Donovan had come to think of political authority as decisively impacted by the triumph of Christ, in whom is disclosed the fulfilment of every people, and to whom all authority has been given, so that the authority of secular government now depended principally on the act of judgment. Government, as O'Donovan puts it at the beginning of *The Ways of Judgment*, is 'reauthorized' *as judgment*, which entails 'that political authority in all its forms — lawmaking, war-making, welfare provision, education — is to be re-conceived within this matrix and subject to the discipline of enacting right against wrong'.[42]

For some interpreters, this distinctly evangelical account of politics is problematic. Jonathan Cole, for example, suggests that O'Donovan's shift to a more 'providentialist' account of political authority is a mistake, because it detaches political authority from nature and created order, and so jeopardizes its capacity to 'evoke meaningful, intelligible and free human action'.[43] O'Donovan, though, is well aware of what he is doing in grounding political authority in the work of God in Christ. Cole's critique takes roughly the same line as the Jesuit successors to Vitoria, who, as O'Donovan noted in the first issue of *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 'regarded it as a key point of anti-Protestant polemics to establish that the origins of political society lay in the

Priesthood: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically. A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan, ed. by C. Bartholomew and others, Scripture and Hermeneutics, 3 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), pp. 265–308.

[40] See O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, p. 143; and O'Donovan, 'Response to Jonathan Chaplin', in *A Royal Priesthood,* ed. by C. Bartholomew and others, pp. 309–13. On the development of ideas here see also Errington, 'Authority and Reality', pp. 372–77.

[41] O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, p. 128.

[42] O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, pp. 4–5.

[43] Jonathan Cole, 'Towards a Christian Ontology of Political Authority: The Relationship between Created Order and Providence in Oliver O'Donovan's Theology of Political Authority', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 32.3 (2018), 307–25 (p. 318). Cole's description of O'Donovan's account as 'providentialist' gains support from O'Donovan's discussion of authority in *Self, World, and Time*, pp. 53–59, which does not feature prominently in Cole's argument (see p. 314, n. 38). This discussion also provides O'Donovan's own answer to the issue of freedom raised by Cole.

structures of created nature rather than in historical providence'.[44] O'Donovan simply sides with the Reformation at this point.

In my view, the privileging of the Gospel in his political theology is a virtue, because it allows O'Donovan to develop a deeply *Christian* account that both upholds the legitimacy of political authority and recognizes its dangers. Some of O'Donovan's most interesting political thinking lies here: in the attempt to recognize the ways in which the triumph of Christ chastens political authority and political pretensions, restraining government as it punishes, holding open space for unmanaged sociality.[45] O'Donovan's penetrating reading of the political thought of the Book of Revelation, with its account of the demonic potentialities of politics, arises out of his attention to the impact of Christ's triumph on the shape of political authority.[46] His consistent focus on the Gospel is what allows O'Donovan to be critical of both 'liberal' and 'conservative' politics, and to retain a central place in his political theology for the Church.

Radicality held in check?

But are the radical demands of the Gospel kept too much in check in O'Donovan's thought? This is the suggestion made in a recent response to O'Donovan's *Ethics as Theology* trilogy by Sarah Coakley and reflected in responses of other participants in the colloquium.[47] Coakley argues that O'Donovan is impeded from following paths opened up by his reflections on prayer and the work of the Spirit by an inadequate account of desire. His vision 'consequently remains undisturbed by the more challenging and radical requirements of *Jesus's* teaching on attention to the poor and dispossessed, and his demand for an ecstatic love beyond reason, even for the 'other' who is the political enemy'.[48] Coakley notes O'Donovan's comment, in the preface to the third volume, *Entering into Rest*, that an

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[44] Oliver O'Donovan, 'Moral Disagreement as an Ecumenical Issue', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 1.1 (1988), 5–19 (p. 7).

[45] See especially parts one and two of *The Ways of Judgment*.

[46] Oliver O'Donovan, 'History and Politics in the Book of Revelation', in Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 25–47. A previous version of this essay was published as 'The Political Thought of the Book of Revelation', *Tyndale Bulletin* 37 (1986), 61–94. See also *The Desire of the Nations*, pp. 153–6.

[47] Sarah Coakley, 'A Response to Oliver O'Donovan's *Ethics as Theology* Trilogy', *Modern Theology* 36.1 (2020), 186–92. See also the responses of Jennifer A. Herdt and Charles Mathewes.

[48] Coakley, 'A Response', p. 188, italics original.

alternative starting point might have been found in the teaching of Jesus,[49] and suggests that this would have made a significant difference, problematizing the elements of O'Donovan's thought that 'seem to tame or check its radicality'.[50]

Without necessarily going all the way with Coakley,[51] we may observe that her argument makes contact with other criticisms of O'Donovan's work. In her symposium response, for instance, Jennifer Herdt worries that O'Donovan does not make enough room for the 'disruptive Word of God'.[52] It also resonates with Stanley Hauerwas's influential worries about *Resurrection and Moral Order*,[53] and with Sam Tranter's recent treatment.[54] My own cautious criticism of O'Donovan draws attention to a point noted by Coakley: O'Donovan's treatment of the Lord's Prayer and its requirement that we forgive as God has forgiven.[55] Reflection on the practice of forgiveness is oddly muted in O'Donovan's work, especially given the prominence of the Lord's Prayer.[56] We do need to ask, in my view, whether this radical, disruptive centre of Jesus's teaching — a genuine distinctive in comparison with the Old Testament (though not, *contra* Coakley, in comparison with St Paul) — does enough work in O'Donovan's account of Christian ethics.

To ask this question is in a way to pursue the less prominent theme in O'Donovan's work to do with the cross that we previously noted. Herdt's request for greater attention to 'the conflictual character of the struggle for

[49] Oliver O'Donovan, *Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology,* Volume 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), p. viii.

[50] Coakley, 'A Response', p. 192.

[51] See O'Donovan's response to Coakley, 'Some Reactions from the Ground', *Modern Theology* 36/1 (2020), 199–200. Coakley's argument is made at the (to me unacceptable) cost of dividing the moral teaching of Jesus from that of St Paul.

[52] Jennifer A. Herdt, 'Oliver O'Donovan's *Ethics as Theology* and the Struggle for Communication', *Modern Theology* 36.1 (2020), 149–64 (p. 164). Herdt's article provides a superb summary of the trilogy as a whole.

[53] Stanley Hauerwas, *Dispatches from the Front* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 175.

[54] Tranter, *Oliver O'Donovan's Moral Theology*.

[55] Errington, *Every Good Path*, pp. 189–90. See Coakley, 'A Response', p. 191.

[56] See *Self, World, and Time*, pp. 40–42; *Finding and Seeking*, pp. 147–48. See also Oliver O'Donovan, 'Prayer and Morality in the Sermon on the Mount', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 22.1 (2000), 21–33.

communication'[57] recalls the discussion of 'conflict and compromise' in *Resurrection and Moral Order*.[58] 'The rebirth of agency', as we saw O'Donovan say, in which the 'opposition […] between the value-order of the world as perceived ahistorically and the word that holds the center of the world's history' is resolved comes about through the affirmation of Christ's *death* and resurrection. It is resolved only through the cross-shaped discipleship that corresponds to the command to forgive.

This radical discipleship is meaningful and possible, though, only because the one who was crucified was a human being, a creature like us, and was raised from the dead, and beckons us by the Holy Spirit into the gladness of that life with the Father. In his persistent labour to speak 'coherently, consistently, and faithfully' of this joyful word of God, Oliver O'Donovan has, precisely as an evangelical thinker, given Christian theology and ethics a pearl of great price.

[57] Herdt, 'Oliver O'Donovan's *Ethics as Theology*', p. 163.

[58] O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, pp. 93–97.

Some Scottish Episcopal Theologians and the Arts

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Times and theologies change, and the theologians of the 'arts' whose work is the focus in this article represent a shift in theology and have supplied much-needed thinking about why that should be the case. I am not of course supposing that they are the only theologians who might be considered, but they are certainly at the forefront of this new phase.

Preliminary reflections and introductions

As it happens, and partly reflecting the limitations of my range of contacts, they all have some things in common. To begin with, they all have some 'hands on' experience of the arts, either in their own published work or in responsibility for the work of some very distinguished artists of different kinds — and in principle nothing and no one is excluded from the category of 'artist'. We need to recall that albeit too often ignored and unrecognized as such, human beings share with other creatures indispensable habits of 'making' this and that, with or without the graces of thanks and appreciation. Such 'makings' are, nonetheless, in continuity with the works of 'artists', but equally may be the focus of our interests.

Further, whilst most of them are ordained Anglicans who have moved up to Scotland and are now living and working in what we can all celebrate as a very distinctive culture, they include some distinguished laity. Depending on circumstances, some have held and continue to hold very demanding responsibilities in churches, chapels and cathedrals. They have not and do not continue to live and work in 'ivory towers'.

Durham to St Andrews

David Brown is a Scot brought up on Islay in an SEC family. He gained two undergraduate degrees, first from Edinburgh (Classics) and then from Oxford (Philosophy and Theology), switching to Cambridge for a PhD (Ethics) and training for the Church of England priesthood. He was first appointed Fellow and Chaplain of Oriel College, Oxford, responsible for Theology and Philosophy, and then once established added in a University lectureship in Ethics and Philosophical Theology. For Oriel College Chapel he raised money for the robing of the choir, new lighting, a new organ, the recreation of Newman's oratory and some of its stained glass, and this gave him valuable insight into the processes involved in making such changes

possible. Lectures to clergy, laity and the wider community found him always interested in and alert to a whole range of matters beyond church and university life.

His move in 1990 to Durham as Van Mildert Professor of Divinity in the University and Residentiary Canon of the Cathedral provided an opportunity for some significant shifts in his teaching and publications, in an ecumenical group of colleagues, whilst having major responsibilities for outstanding additions to the Cathedral itself.[1] For the move to Durham made possible a profound shift in the focus of his attention, without losing his expertise in philosophical theology. In the first place, there were major changes to his mode of lecturing in the sense that for instance introducing a compulsory lecture course on Christian doctrine to a miscellany of some 80 plus undergraduates (with the Apostles' Creed as the line of connection) required a complete shift away from solely verbal delivery. Thus, he developed a lecture programme with attention to full-screen size artwork, something which would not have been possible before the advent of lecture theatres with up-to-date equipment, or indeed to the determination to provide the slide collection required. Unsurprisingly, this proved to be a sure-fire means to make it possible to engage the attention of those present, and to send them on searches for material on their own. The key move was to engage their imagination, without scriptural texts being in any way marginalized or disregarded. To the contrary: they required more attention rather than less. Such an academic context apart, there are significant practical and pastoral implications for his approach for questions about how people appropriate religious belief and the resources on which they draw, not least their own experiences. This is a point relevant to the work of the other SEC theologians discussed here.

Optional courses on 'sacramentality and spirituality' for smaller groups involved musical examples as well, and the students' own contributions. The changes he made to his mode of teaching (including 'taught' MA work) made possible a shift in his presentations at conferences

[1] From 1968 St Cuthbert's Seminary, Ushaw College, enjoyed a special relationship with the Durham University, with both academic staff and students taking degrees, and warm friendships developing as a result. The Centre for Catholic Studies developed from 2005 onwards as the Seminary was closed. One of Professor Brown's achievements was to negotiate an Ecumenical Lay Canonry for the Cathedral from a legacy of a distinguished Church of England Reader. The first holder (from 2015) of this Ramsey professorship is Professor Michael Snape, a Roman Catholic layman, responsible for Anglican Studies in what is now known as the Department of Theology and Religion.

and invited lectures and consequently on his written reflections on what he was doing to engage those present with the proposal to think that the work of 'artists' of all kinds were not merely illustrating Scripture and doctrine, (though that continues) but that they were themselves 'theologians'.

Particular opportunities to make his case arose in response to international ecumenical conferences taking place in New York. One sequence of three was on the Trinity, Incarnation and Redemption. Given his former publications on the Trinity, he changed tack, sought out all sorts of non-verbal representations of 'three-in-one', took his pack of slides to New York, and signalled his intention to pursue this mode of theology. The second conference on the 'Incarnation' resulted in a splendid invitation to lecture on 'Christ in twentieth-century art' in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the lecture funded by a Jewish philanthropist in honour of the Cardinal Archbishop of New York, followed by a buffet for seven hundred and fifty guests.[2]

Back in Durham Cathedral, together with his share of attendance at services, preparation of prayers and sermons, (all reinforcing his depth of appreciation of scriptural texts and music) and in addition to a range of other responsibilities, he found himself concerned with some major commissions, three for windows. One is the 1992 'Stella Maris' window in the Galilee Chapel, by Leon Evetts, whose work is to be found in many churches in the North East. The second was the 1997 Millennium window by Joseph Nuttgens, celebrating the mining and manufacturing traditions of the North East as well as the bringing of St Cuthbert's body to Durham.[3] The third was completed in 2010, the Tom Denny window, 'The Transfiguration' in memory of Arthur Michael Ramsey (installed when David Brown had moved

[2] The conferences were held in 1997, 2000 and 2003, were published in the books arising from the conferences. David Brown's lectures appeared also in Chinese translation in one of the journals of the People's Republic, *Humanities and Art* 10 (2010) and 11 (2012).

[3] Photography on the web for the windows in the Cathedral and a good introduction to the Millennium window is at Durham Cathedral's Stained Glass with Malcolm Wilkinson. The legacies and lives of the North East are celebrated annually on the second Saturday in July when communities process with their banners and brass bands into the Cathedral for their celebration in word, magnificent artwork on banners, their voices and instruments. See Wikipedia and the Cathedral's own website. NB in 2019 Durham Cathedral had some 727,367 pilgrims/visitors so both the architecture, liturgy, artworks, music and hospitality are integral to one another.

to St Andrews).[4] The reordering of St Cuthbert's shrine behind the altar at the east end included two huge banners of St Oswald and St Cuthbert by Thetis Blacker, a remarkable artist in 'batik'. [5] And finally, another outstanding commission was the completion of two altars in the Nine Altars chapel (immediately behind and below St Cuthbert's shrine). A large icon-style work on St Hild by Edith Reyntiens required an altar frontal and kneelers completed by the magnificent team of artists-broderers, collaborating with the eminent designer Malcolm Lochhead whose work is to be found in many places in Scotland.[6] Next, a painting of St Margaret of Scotland and her son David by Paula Rego is integral to the altar and kneelers also designed by Malcolm Lochhead and completed by the broderers. This prompts the reminder that Northumbria once stretched to the Forth, and that the architecture of St Magnus's Cathedral in Orkney, Dunfermline Abbey and Dalmeny Church is clearly related to that of Durham Cathedral; and that the kings of Scotland are known to have involved themselves with the cathedral and its monastic community not least given the importance of St Cuthbert's shrine. The altar frontal itself represents the gospel book which St Margaret holds in Paula Rego's painting as she encourages her son David I, towards a religious course of life.[7]

As the result of his own reflections on his teaching and commitments in the cathedral, integrated as it all came to be with his publications, David Brown was made a Fellow of the British Academy in 2002, and his publications were further accepted for the award of a DLitt degree in the University of Edinburgh (his first university) in 2012, the year in which he was also elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.[8] By this time,

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[4] See thomasdenny.co.uk. See also Roger Wagner, 'Durham Cathedral, The Transfiguration Window', in *Glory, Azure and Gold. The Stained-Glass Windows of Thomas Denny*, ed. by Antonia Johnson and Josie Reed, (London: Reed Contemporary Books, 2016) pp. 59–65 with excellent illustrations.

[5] See henrydyson.co.uk.

[6] See Durham Cathedral.

[7] Paula Rego at artandchristianity. For the book itself, see Rebecca Rushforth, *St Margaret's Gospel-book. The favourite book of an eleventh-century Queen of Scots* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2007). More details about the Cathedral and its artworks may be found in *Durham Cathedral: History, Fabric and Culture*, ed. by David Brown (London: Yale University Press, 2015).

[8] David Brown's Wikipedia entry gives an overview of much of his career and publications; and see also Christopher R. Brewer, 'David W. Brown (1948-) in *Twentieth Century Anglican Theologians from Evelyn Underhill to Esther Mombo,* ed. by Stephen Burns, Bryan Cones and James

he had migrated north to Scotland in 2007 to the University of St Andrews, and it is in this final phase of his university career that there have appeared publications which make his perspective on the encouragement of imagination and exploration of religious tradition more widely available, for instance in a published lecture which includes commentary on a sequence of paintings readily accessible on the internet.[9] The particular group in the School of Divinity which he joined had been established and sustained and organized by the Revd Professor Trevor Hart, called the Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts (or ITIA for short). So, at this point further ecumenical and inter-disciplinary opportunity opened for David Brown, as for instance with a book on music jointly authored with Gavin Hopps (the current Director of ITIA).[10] None of this would have been possible without the entrepreneurial courage of Trevor Hart.

Tengatenga (Hoboken NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2021), pp. 185–95. The move to St Andrews and concentration on 'taught' courses at MLitt level and postgraduate supervision made possible carefully prepared student expeditions with him to Scotland's magnificent art galleries enabling direct appreciation of his approach to artworks and their own contributions. He was able to accept the invitation to contribute 'Scotland: religion, culture and national identity' in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 14 (2014), 88–99 in addition to being the Guest Editor for this whole number on *Perspectives on the Church in Scotland*; and 'Theology and Art in Scotland' in *The History of Scottish Theology, III: The Long Twentieth Century* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2019) ed. by David Fergusson and Mark W. Elliott, pp. 132–45.

[9] David Brown,' Supplying Theology's Missing Link', *New Blackfriars*, 101:1092 (2020), 153–62; *God and Mystery in Words. Experience through Metaphor and Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) which includes 'Hymns and Psalms' as well as Liturgy; 'Why Theology needs the Arts', in *Divine Generosity and Human Creativity. Theology Symbol, Painting and Architecture*, ed. by Christopher R. Brewer and Robert MacSwain (London and New York: Routledge, 2020). This includes essays on baptism, the Annunciation, the Ascension, the Trinity and worship, and a host of other possibilities listed on p. xv.

[10] David Brown and Gavin Hopps, *The Extravagance of Music* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). This book was discussed by a panel in the San Diego meeting of the American Academy of Religion 2019. The presentations at the AAR were published in a complete number of the *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 20.1 (2020) with an introduction by David Brown, 'Music, Theology and Religious Experience', 4–7, and a new essay, 'Extravagance defended', 63–78. Christoph Schwoebel (recently

Aberdeen to St Andrews

Trevor Hart's first graduation was in Theology at Durham in1982. Trevor Hart then moved to Aberdeen in 1983 to begin work for a PhD on a theme related to the theology of the early church.[11] Having completed the research, it took time to get his thesis into its finished form, since he was first appointed as a 'Teaching Fellow', then as a Lecturer in Systematic Theology, being awarded his doctorate in 1989. The previous year he was ordained in the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney and combined his work for the university with being an 'Associate Minister' of St Devenick's, Bieldside until his appointment as Professor of Divinity at the age of thirty-four in St Andrews in 1995. There he also joined the clergy team at St Andrew's, St Andrews, becoming full-time Rector in 2013, whilst retaining an Honorary Professorship in the School of Divinity. He is much appreciated as one of the most outstanding preachers of his generation.

A glance at his personal webpage and the interview he gave for 'Transpositions' reveals a range of interests which in part developed from his undergraduate degree.[12] Having established himself in Systematic Theology but given freedom to teach theology in a different way, he introduced students to a range of literature, which enabled him to develop his view 'that theology and literature are both concerned in their distinct own ways with the same territories of human experience, and that a serious conversation between them was worthwhile for both'.

A major shift for him personally and for his students was to connect 'human imagining' both with the arts more generally and with the human capacity for hope, memory, and desire for the 'last things' (eschatology). In terms of theology he argues both that 'imagination lies at the heart of our humanity', and that it is 'by laying hold of our imaginative life […]. God's Spirit regenerates our humanity from the inside out.'[13] Reinforcement for his approach came with support and friendship with Jeremy Begbie, an

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having joined the School of Divinity from Tuebingen University reflected on the book in his article 'Mutual resonance: remarks on the relationship between music and theology', 8–22, and Gavin Hopps on his own perspective in 'Negative capability and religious experience', 79–94.

[11] On his personal website, Hart and his list of articles, there are two items listed for 1989 from his Patristic studies.

[12] See Transpositions. The blog was begun as an online newsletter to bring theology and the arts to a wider audience under the aegis of Trevor Hart; in 2014 it became the official online Journal for ITIA.

[13] A major essay by Trevor Hart is 'Protestantism and the Arts', in *The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism* ed. by Darren C. Marks and Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 268–86.

excellent musician, who had established first 'Theology through the Arts' in Cambridge, and relocated its academic work to St Andrews between 2000 to 2008, with an Honorary Professorship, and as Associate Director of ITIA with Trevor Hart.[14] When Jeremy Begbie moved to the USA, Trevor Hart as sole Director (2000 to 2013) saw the development of ITIA in a way which he could not have predicted as the reputation of the programme on offer attracted postgraduates and made further appointments possible.

For instance, Professor Judith Wolfe (a lay theologian and philosopher with a particular focus on eschatology) has a lecture online in which she integrates text and images together in her case for the study of theology in university and society (implicitly the Church also!).[15] The on-going 'TheoArtistry' project arose from ITIA, the contributors working without any required 'faith commitments' but entirely open to what might result from new encounters with biblical episodes — and astonishing results in both music and poetry. The new MLitt in Sacred Music is co-ordinated with ITIA by George Corbett, with the distinguished composer Sir James MacMillan now also a Professor in Theology, Imagination, and the Arts.[16]

In St Andrew's church itself Trevor Hart has begun to develop arts-related activities, not least perhaps given that the congregation includes a refreshing interchange of (postgraduate) families with young children. In

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[14] Professor Begbie's distinct profile is on Wikipedia. One excellent example of their collaboration is Jeremy Begbie, 'The Ambivalent Rainbow: Forsyth, Art and Creation' in *Justice the True and Only Mercy: Essays on the Life and Theology of Peter Taylor Forsyth*, ed. by Trevor Hart, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995) pp. 197–219.

[15] See judithwolfe.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/theology-in-university-and-society-lecture/. The reference list of images is included at the end of the lecture. Two responses to her lecture are provided by Professor Christoph Schwoebel and Dr Stephen Holmes.

[16] See <theoartistry.org>; https://www.scotsman.com, music interview: James MacMillan and the TheoArtistry Festival. A review by Ann Loades of *Annunciations: Sacred Music for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by George Corbett (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2019) is available at <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2019-34b-SEI-Journal-Winter.pdf> pp. 142–46 with details of associated music/CDs and publications. The book is available 'for free' on the publisher's website and a CD by the University's St Salvator's Chapel Choir online and to purchase. In addition to Sir James MacMillan's involvement with the musicians, the poet Michael Symmons Roberts was mentor for the poets: see *The Song. Poems of Biblical Theophany*, ed. by Caleb Froehlich with the collaboration of StAnza (Tarland: Tapsaltereerie, 2020).

particular, his continued association with ITIA has made possible a close relationship with the ITIA group 'Transept' hosting some of their exhibitions in the church's space. Dan Draga (a former ITIA graduate now studying at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design in Dundee) informally an 'artist in residence' for the church, produced a series of installations in the church for Lent and Advent (2019). Extending the Advent season in 2019 Trevor Hart constructed a series of services co-ordinating and integrating a work of art from the western tradition with music, poetry, scriptural readings and reflection. In the same year he wrote an essay for a publication which encompassed reflections from a group of theologians through his own diocese and beyond intended the connections developed in the SEC.[17] It is first to Glasgow and then finally to Edinburgh that we now turn.

Glasgow and Edinburgh

David Jasper's career has been equally extraordinary. Like David Brown, he has two BA degrees, in his case the first being in English in 1972 (Cambridge), his second degree in Theology in 1976 (Oxford), co-ordinated with training for ordination to the priesthood at St Stephen's House. Ordained first deacon in the same year and then priest in 1977, as a curate in a nearby church, he was attached to Keble College, completed a BD by thesis on '*The Reconstruction of Belief in the Late Victorian Novel'* (1980), and fitted in some part-time tutoring for the nascent University of Buckingham.

His move northwards began with his appointment in 1979 as Chaplain at Hatfield College, University of Durham (with a second curacy in the town). Never one to lose a moment of opportunity, as a member of the university staff, by 1983 he had submitted a doctorate on the poet S. T. Coleridge which became his first published book.[18] He then took steps which resulted in the establishment of a whole new dimension of theological study in the UK. For once settled in, entirely on his own initiative he began an entirely novel academic venture with conferences based in the college on 'Literature and Religion' which started as 'national' and rapidly became 'international'.[19] Five volumes of the conference proceedings were to follow from the Durham and Glasgow conferences. Moreover, the conference 'Newsletter' turned into

[17] Trevor Hart, 'Tangling the Fibres of the Threefold Cord: Truth and the Anglican Tradition', in *Truth and the Church in a Secular Age*, ed. by David Jasper and Jenny Wright (London: SCM, 2019), pp. 67–83.

[18] David Jasper, *Coleridge as Poet and Religious thinker: Inspiration and Revelation*, (London: Macmillan, 1985).

[19] Five conferences ran in Durham from 1982 to 1990, two in Glasgow, three in Oxford, and one each in Nijmegen. York, Uppsala, Stirling and Aarhus.

a Journal, *Literature and Theology*, for which he was Senior Editor from its first publication (1987 to 1996). It became Oxford University Press' bestselling new journal long before he relinquished it to someone else.[20] Establishing his first 'Centre for the Study of Literature in Theology' in Hatfield and taking it with him on becoming Principal of St Chad's College in the same University (1988 to 1991), it moved with him yet again when he was invited to a Senior Lectureship in the University of Glasgow.

By 1998 David Jasper was Professor of Literature and Theology aat Glasgow and fully engaged with a sequence of responsibilities as he recruited postgraduate students from all over the world, himself receiving invitations as 'Visiting' Fellow/ Professor/Scholar as his reputation grew, not least given the range of his interests. He was awarded a DD degree from Oxford in 2002, made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2006, and received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Uppsala in 2007.

David Jasper has become an authoritative figure in his field, but his own range of interests apart, he has always been willing to write particularly helpful introductory entries for newcomers exploring refreshing perspectives on biblical texts.[21] Moreover, he has written specifically to make connections between what might otherwise have seemed to be simply an academic specialism and 'lived' religion, in two books in particular, and in his contribution to the admirable St Aidan's lecture series in the Diocese of Glasgow.[22] In addition, he has actively supported exhibitions of major

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[20] He became General Editor of *Studies in Literature and Religion* (Macmillan) and co-editor/consulting editor for others.

[21] See, for example: David jasper, 'Literature and Theology', *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. by Alistair McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 335–39; 'Literary readings of the Bible', *The Cambridge Companion to Bible Interpretation*, ed. by John Barton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 21–34; 'The Bible in Literature', *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Bible*, ed. by John Rogerson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); 'The Study of Literature and Theology', *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, ed. by Andrew W. Hass, David Jasper and Elisabeth Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) pp. 15–35; 'Narrative Ways of Being Religious', *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 130–45. As an example of his sensitivity to one particular text, see David Jasper, 'The Twenty-third Psalm in English Literature', *Religion and Literature* 30:1 (1998), 1–12.

[22] David Jasper, *The Sacred Community: Art, Sacrament and the People of God* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2012); *Heaven in Ordinary: Poetry and Religion in a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2018). See

artwork. The first of these was 'The Messenger' by the video-artist Bill Viola in the 1996 UK Year of the Visual Arts (in Durham Cathedral).[23] Then, establishing good relationships with distinguished members of the Glasgow School of Art (William Payne and Ken Mitchell) involved him in co-curating multi-site exhibitions in Glasgow and Arbroath on 'Contemplations of the Spiritual' at the turn of the millennium.[24] His continuing commitment to church communities has enabled him to commission an icon by the Spanish artist Guillem Ramos-Poquio for St. Andrew's, Uddingston,[25] and he has engaged with the work of Roland Biermann who had an exhibition of his

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<sites.google.com/site/saintaidans123/lectures> — the first of these given by the poet the Revd Donald Orr. David Jasper, *What a World Thou Art: Reflections on four Poets and Religion* (Glasgow: SEC Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway, 2018), the four poets being Thomas Hardy, Thomas Traherne, Philip Sidney and Geoffrey Hill.

[23] See images at https://www.guggenheim.org. The Messenger/The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, in collaboration with Canon Bill Hall. See Bill Viola, 'Reflections on the Image and David Jasper, 'Theological Reflection' in *Art and the Spiritual*, ed. by Bill Hall and David Jasper (Sunderland: Sunderland University Press, 2003), pp. 1–11; 'Screening Angels: *The Messenger*, Durham Cathedral, 1996', in *The Art of Bill Viola,* ed. by Chris Townsend (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), pp. 180–96. On the central importance of Bill Hall (awarded the Cross of St Augustine in 2005 by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams) see: https://www.the northernecho.co.uk 6 June 2017; and *The Guardian* 27 August 2017; *The Church Times* 22 September 2017. For the importance to him of the Arts and Recreation Chaplaincy which David Jasper chaired 2004 to 2008, see Alan Suggate, 'An Experiment in Creativity' in E*xchanges of Grace*, ed. by Natalie K. Watson and Stephen Burns (London: SCM, 2008), pp. 193–201.

[24] David Jasper, '"Light in the Darkness of the Heart: Art and the Spiritual", An Exemplary Life', (Exhibition catalogue, Bury St Edmunds Art Gallery, March 2000); reprinted in *Contemplations of the Spiritual*, Glasgow School of Art: Exhibition Catalogue, 2001), pp. 39–41; 'The Spiritual in Contemporary Art', in *Contemplations of the Spiritual in Art*, ed. by Rina Arya (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 231–45. With poets and musicians as well as members of GSA he curated a festival in Govan Old Church before its transformation into a cultural centre.

[25] See https://www.ramos-poqui.com, with examples from an exhibition of his work at the Royal Artistic Circle of Barcelona.

work in Glasgow University Chapel.[26] Most startling of all, with artist Jim Harold and others, including Roland Bierman, he curated with artist Ding Fang an exhibition in Beijing.[27]

This latter possibility came about as the result of his appetite for inter-disciplinary work and his concern for the church in China, David Jasper has been invited to a number of distinguished professorships there, notably in Renmin University of China, Beijing. This has opened up for him a new dimension of human experience; in turn he urges on Anglophone readers their own engagement, equally via Chinese authors and his own.[28] His concerns for both the SEC's Doctrine and Liturgy continue, however, and he integrates his perspectives on both with his grasp of the importance of the arts for theology for all members of the SEC.[29] An excellent lecture on the importance he attaches to the significance of the arts for the church is available both online and in print.[30]

We can safely conclude that the relationship between 'theology and the arts' is open to the future since each of the three theologians discussed so far has distinct projects in hand: arts and the world religions; 'embodiedness' and Incarnation; and the language and actions of the liturgy. That apart, however, there is one theologian in mid-career who has identified an area of work which both derives from one of the most fundamental features of the Christian Gospel — peace and peace-making,

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[26] See Images for Roland Bierman, University Chapel, Glasgow University, with a lecture by David Jasper taking place in November 2008.

[27] See his Wikipedia entry and much more, and David Jasper, 'Between Worlds: Ding Fang and Landscape', published in Chinese by Renmin University of China, 2016, pp. 303–10.

[28] NB. Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (Hong Kong: Logos, 2015) in Chinese; David Jasper, Geng Youzhuang and Wang Hai, *A Poetics of Translation: Between Chinese and English Literature* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2016); and 'Finding Theology in Contemporary Chinese Fiction', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 10: 2–3 (2019), 160–74.

[29] See, *Made in the Image of God: Being Human in the Christian Tradition*, ed. by Michael Fuller and David Jasper (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2021).

[30] His lecture for the SEC, 'The Role of the Arts in the Church of Tomorrow' is available on

<http.//pisky.scot/…the role-of-the-arts-in-the church>

and in print in the *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal* at

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2017-14.pdf > pp. 3–19.

and from its central importance in the present and likely future state of human societies across the globe: Jolyon Mitchell.

Cambridge to Edinburgh

Joylon Mitchell BA degree was taken in Cambridge (his hometown); his second — an MA combined with training for ordination — in Durham, and his doctorate in Edinburgh. He has had a remarkable career having worked in journalism and broadcasting, notably for the BBC World Service and Radio 4, before being appointed to his employment in the University of Edinburgh. His experience of broadcasting in some of the world's most troubled regions continues to give him exceptional insight both into the 'media', especially film, and into matters of central importance in many communities as they are affected by violence in its many forms. All this is of crucial importance for everyone, not least because news of disturbance and violence is so readily available in the present age, both for immediate political and social life, and for the interaction of religious bodies with the societies they inhabit.

Having contributed to work on the renaissance of preaching and the relevance of new media in religion, including film, in 2011 he was promoted to Professor in Communications, Arts and Religion, and his inaugural lecture (available online) addressed the question, 'How can weapons be turned into Art? Swords into Ploughshares'.[31] Attention to the levels of violence in Scripture and religion is hardly unique to him personally, [32] but on at least one occasion he has directly addressed a problem which annually confronts liturgists, the significance of 'Holy Innocents' Day, 28 December.[33] One response to this lack of attention in Christian theology has been his collaboration with Linzy Brady (University of Sydney), providing resources for transforming the horror of the extreme violence against children to be found world-wide and hopefully disarming it.[34] His major publication of 2019, however, was the result of co-operation with the University of Notre

[31] See Jolyon Mitchell, 'How can weapons be turned into Art? on YouTube, 14 February 2014 and a sequence of presentations on YouTube until 2017, not least in a series on 'Our Changing World', and various podcasts.

[32] See e.g. Jonathan Sacks, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (New York: Random, 2015) for an important and widely read book.

[33] See Bridget Nichols, 'The Feast of the Holy Innocents and Anglican Remembering', *Anaphora,* 13.1 (2019), 1–38.

[34] Jolyon Mitchell and Linzy Brady, 'Transforming the massacre of the innocents through art, theatre, and film', in *Transformation of Tragedy*, Studies in Religion and the Arts 16, ed. by Erilk Tonning, Fionnula O'Neil Tonning, Jolyon Mitchell, (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 243–94.

Dame in the USA. *Peacebuilding and the Arts* is the work of twenty authors from the world-wide community, each of them artists in their own right, including music and literature as one might expect, and in his case, film, but also theatre and dance.[35] In each case, the contributors are practitioners in their respective fields, that in itself making the case for the importance of the arts in peacebuilding.

There are some points of serious concern and applicability which are relevant to the interests of their three predecessors whose work has been explored in this article, points made by Jolyon Mitchell and Theodora Hawksley in their introductory essay as follows. Conflict is inherently human, but not inherently negative, for it prompts the energy for change, development, growth. We need to know and understand the processes which make this possible. The metaphor of 'building' peace is key to commitment to the long haul of transforming structures and relationships in which violence is rooted. The goal is reconstruction of the relationships in which trust and hope may flourish in communities.[36] Next, they analyse the state of play in our globalized, inter-dependent world, the need for multiple analyses of conflicts — necessarily some of which are religious, and the learning of strategies to renegotiate, not least at 'grassroots' level.

It is also essential to bear in mind that the arts themselves are ambivalent. One of the most valuable features of their discussion has been precisely about the arts themselves — and how the gifts of their practitioners need to be integrated into the work of all theologians. That said, however, we need to acknowledge that the power of the arts does not lie entirely within our control. The arts are a social phenomenon, 'the momentum of which we can hardly understand, let alone foresee.' Furthermore, control of the arts and their effects eludes us 'because we are rather less in control of our *selves* than we like to think', given their capacity 'to tap into and awaken our deepest fears and desires in ways that can, for better or worse, bypass our normal and more reflective ways of thinking and

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[35] *Peacebuilding and the Arts*, ed. by Jolyon Mitchell, Theodora Hawksley, Hal Cuthbertson, Giselle Vincent (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019). Theodora Hawksley has BA and MA degrees from Durham and a doctorate from Edinburgh concerned with ecclesiology and ethnography. She is a specialist in Catholic social teaching – a dimension of theology conspicuous by its absence in Anglicanism more generally, and noticeably so in the SEC. Jolyon Mitchell's essay is on 'Peacebuilding through the Visual Arts' on the irresistibility of the topic of war for artists (pp. 35–70), including 'remembering wisely' and reconciliation.

[36] *Peacebuilding and the Arts*, ed. by Jolyon Mitchell and others, pp. 1–4.

acting.'[37] That would mean that the integration of the arts into worship and liturgy (both art-forms in their distinctive ways across Christianity), our theologies and the legacy of our traditions and habits needs as much care as the arts in peacebuilding, not least given our personal and institutional differences. This, we may think, is a good point at which to conclude but bear in mind its importance for the future!

[37] *Peacebuilding and the Arts*, ed. by Jolyon Mitchell and others, p. 11.

Scottish Episcopal Theologians of Science

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To speak of theologians of science likely conjures an image of someone theologizing about science; asking questions such as, how does our understanding of God within a Judeo-Christian worldview impact our understanding of the human endeavour known as *science*? Such thinking might be considered *theology of science*. However, the relationship between the words *theology* and *science* can be articulated in other ways: not only *theology of science*, but also *science of theology* and *theology and science*. *Science of theology* describes the mirror opposite of *theology of science*: how does our scientific understanding impact our understanding of theological endeavours? The scientific disciplines appealed to could include anthropology, psychology, or behavioural or evolutionary science. The phrase *theology and science* can be wider in application, encompassing all interactions between the broad disciplines of *theology* and *science*, and it is my preferred phrase when considering the intersection of the two.[1]

Current scholarship at the intersection of theology and science within the United Kingdom often refers to *religion* rather than *theology*, which enables scholarship to incorporate study of religious belief and practice through methods beyond theology, such as sociology of religion. In my own writing on the intersection of science and religion,[2] I refer to the intersection of the two disciplines as *science-and-religion*: the hyphenated phrase offering clarity in distinguishing the phrase from references to *religion* and *science* on their own. In a special issue dedicated to Scottish Episcopal

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[1] For another discussion of these different phrases, see Tom McLeish, *Faith and Wisdom in Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 166–212.

[2] Jaime Wright, 'In the Beginning: The Role of Myth in Relating Religion, Brain Science, and Mental Well-Being', *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, 53.2 (2018), 375–91; 'Science-Religion-and-Literature: Literary Approaches to the Field of Science-and-Religion with Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy as a Case Study' (Doctoral Thesis, Edinburgh University, 2019);'Making Space for the Methodological Mosaic: The Future of the Field of Science-and-Religion', *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, 55.3 (2020), 805–11;'Consuming *Westworld*: Facilitating the Robotics and AI Discussion through Science Fiction', in *Theology and Westworld*, ed. by Juli L. Gittinger and Shayna Sheinfeld (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020), pp. 5–18.

theologians, it reasonably follows to include an article on 'theologians of science'. However, in order to reflect the full extent of their impact, the theologians of science included herein might be better thought of as Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) scholars of science-and-religion. In order to maintain an emphasis on their role as theologians, the three scholars considered have each spent time ministering as priests within the SEC, as well as contributing to the thinking of the SEC's Doctrine Committee on the intersection of theology and science. Within this article, we will briefly ground ourselves in the history of science-and-religion scholarship before considering three scholars of science-and-religion: Mark Harris, Michael Fuller, and Michael Northcott.

Science-and-religion

Publications on science-and-religion go back to the nineteenth century, and the issues often discussed within the field of enquiry have been recognized since antiquity and have been repeatedly subject to analysis.[3] The academic field of science-and-religion is often traced back to the work of Ian Barbour in the 1960s and his publication of *Issues in Science and Religion*.[4] Since then the field has expanded and is sustained by journals and book series; associations, research centres, and university chairs; and funding bodies.

The relationship between science and religion is often expressed through models, and the most well-known remains Barbour's fourfold typology: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration.[5] The conflict model represents science and religion at war with one another and can be exemplified by creation science, scientific materialism, and new atheism. The independence model considers science and religion to be enquiries in separate domains or using differing languages. A prominent example of independence is Stephen Jay Gould's model of nonoverlapping magisteria, in which the scope of science extends only to the empirical universe, whilst the

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[3] John Hedley Brooke, 'Science and Religion, History of Field', in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, ed. by J. Wentzel van Huyssteen and others (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2003), pp. 748–55.

[4] Ian Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1966).

[5] Ian Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues: A Revised and Expanded Edition of Religion in an Age of Science* (London: SCM Press, 1998), pp. 77–105;'Science and Religion, Models and Relations', in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, ed. by J. Wentzel van Huyssteen and others, pp. 760–66.

scope of religion covers values and morality.[6] The dialogue model emphasizes similarities between science and religion, such as conceptual parallels or similar driving questions. The integration model brings science and religion together in ways that often call for a reformulation of ideas, including natural theology, theologies of nature, and process philosophy. Some of the most exciting work within the science-and-religion field could be said to fall within Barbour's integration model.

Ian Barbour's thought profoundly influenced two British scientists and priests within the Church of England, Arthur Peacocke and John Polkinghorne. Peacocke and Polkinghorne are often referred to as *scientist-theologians* or *scientist-priests* due to their original training and work as scientists prior to entering ordained ministry.[7] The scientist-priest was the primary scholar of science-and-religion in the twentieth century, and the designation characterizes two of the scholars considered below. The integral work of such scientist-priests has paved the way for a generation of scholars in the twenty-first century to be trained through an interdisciplinary approach at the intersection of science and religion — a generation of which I am a part and which I believe will come to dominate the immediate future of science-and-religion research.

Mark Harris

Mark Harris currently holds the Chair of Natural Science and Theology at Edinburgh University's Divinity School (New College). Harris describes himself as 'a physicist working in a theological environment'.[8] Harris, like Peacocke and Polkinghorne, could be considered a scientist-priest.

Harris initially trained in the earth sciences at Cambridge before moving to research into condensed matter physics for his PhD. During his research in the physics of magnetic materials, Harris and Steven Bramwell discovered spin ice, now a major research area in the physics of magnetism.[9] Shortly after this breakthrough, Harris became interested in theology,

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[6] Stephen Jay Gould, 'Nonoverlapping Magisteria', *Natural History*, 106.2 (1997), 16–22.

[7] Christopher Southgate, 'Science and Religion in the United Kingdom: A Personal View on the Contemporary Scene', *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, 51.2 (2016), 361–86 (pp. 363–64).

[8] The University of Edinburgh, 'Professor Mark Harris (MA MA PhD)', *The University of Edinburgh*, 2021 <https://www.ed.ac.uk/profile/dr-mark-harris> [accessed 23 April 2021].

[9] See Steven T Bramwell and Mark J Harris, 'The History of Spin Ice', *Journal of Physics: Condensed Matter*, 32.37 (2020), 374010–26.

training for ordination as an Anglican priest at Oxford University. After ordination, Harris spent time teaching biblical studies and in chaplaincy and church ministry in both the Church of England and the Scottish Episcopal Church. In 2012, Harris joined the faculty of New College, where he has been able to combine his interests by running the School's Science and Religion programme.[10] The programme now offers multiple degrees at the master's and doctoral levels; has collaborated with Edinburgh University's School of Philosophy, Psychology, and Language Sciences to develop a master's degree in Philosophy, Science and Religion; and has grown to include three core faculty members, supported by multiple other faculty members from New College and the wider University, in order to offer a truly diverse learning experience.[11] The programme has been described by a prominent scholar in the science-and-religion field as 'the most creative and vigorous British training ground for new researchers in the science-religion debate.'[12]

Harris established himself within the science-and-religion field as a scholar interested in the intersection of the Bible and science with his monograph, *The Nature of Creation: Examining the Bible and Science*, in which he uses the theological theme of Creation to focus his examination.[13] Harris is interested in how understandings of science, both modern and ancient, impact our interpretation of biblical texts, as well as in encouraging those within the science-and-religion field to attend to the methods and thinking of biblical scholars when engaging with the texts. Harris has also

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[10] The University of Edinburgh, 'Professor Mark Harris (MA MA PhD)'; ORCID, 'Mark Harris', *ORCID: Connecting Research and Researchers*, 2020 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7386-7743> [accessed 23 April 2021]; Academia, 'Mark Harris', *Academia.Edu*, 2021 <https://edinburgh.academia.edu/MarkHarris> [accessed 23 April 2021].

[11] See The University of Edinburgh, 'Science and Religion', *The University of Edinburgh*, 2016 <https://www.ed.ac.uk/divinity/studying/graduate-school/research-programmes/study-areas/science-religion> [accessed 23 April 2021];

The University of Edinburgh, 'MSc Philosophy, Science and Religion', *The University of Edinburgh*, 2020 <https://www.ed.ac.uk/ppls/philosophy/prospective/postgraduate/msc/philosophy-science-and-religion> [accessed 23 April 2021].

[12] Southgate, 'Science and Religion in the United Kingdom', p. 366.

[13] Mark Harris, *The Nature of Creation: Examining the Bible and Science*, Biblical Challenges in the Contemporary World (London: Routledge, 2014). First published in 2013 by Acumen.

had a longstanding interest in miracles, aiming to develop a theological hermeneutic of biblical miracle texts that takes various perspectives of modernity into account.[14] This particular interest made a showing during the prestigious Boyle Lecture, entitled 'Apocalypses Now: Modern Science and Biblical Miracles', delivered by Harris in St Mary-le-Bow Church in London in February 2018. Looking at the parting of the Red Sea, Harris considered the different and various methodologies of scientists and biblical scholars in considering miracle stories, ultimately suggesting that creating scientific models for the miracle story are examples of the enterprise of natural theology itself — studying the revelations of God.[15]

Within the SEC, Harris offered his ongoing research into miracles at the intersection of the bible and science to the Doctrine Committee in their compilation of *Grosvenor Essay Number 11: Towards an Integration of Science and Theology?*, for which he wrote a chapter entitled, 'Do the Miracles of Jesus Contradict Science?'. It is perhaps not surprising that Harris does not provide a simple yes or no answer to the titular question, insisting that to search for a rationalistic or scientific explanation to miracle stories is just one of many ways in which such stories, with their multiple levels of meaning, can be assessed.[16] Among his various involvements within the wider SEC and the Diocese of Edinburgh, Harris was Vice-Provost, Canon, and Precentor at St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh; doctrine coordinator for the Theological Institute of the Scottish Episcopal Church (TISEC); and a member of the SEC's Doctrine Committee.[17]

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[14] Academia, 'Mark Harris'.

[15] Mark Harris, 'Boyle Lecture 2018 — "Apocalypses Now"', *Science and Religion @ Edinburgh*, 2018 <https://www.blogs.hss.ed.ac.uk/science-and-religion/2018/02/15/boyle-lecture-2018-apocalypses-now/#more-932> [accessed 23 April 2021].

[16] Doctrine Committee of the Scottish Episcopal Church, *Grosvenor Essay No. 11: Towards an Integration of Science and Theology?* (Edinburgh: General Synod Office of the Scottish Episcopal Church, 2015), p. 90.

[17] Mark Harris, 'The Revd Dr Mark Jonathan Harris: Curriculum Vitae' (Academia.edu) <https://edinburgh.academia.edu/MarkHarris/CurriculumVitae> [accessed 24 April 2021].

Michael Fuller

Michael Fuller is a Senior Teaching Fellow with New College, where he is one of the three core faculty members of the Science and Religion programme.[18] Similar to Harris, Fuller first trained as a scientist before pursuing ordination, enabling Fuller to be considered a scientist-priest, as well. However, Fuller moved more quickly from his scientific training to ordained ministry. In contrast to Harris's self-description as 'a physicist working in a theological environment', [19] we might refer to the description of Fuller, provided (presumably by himself) in the first Grosvenor Essay, as 'a teacher in a theological institute with a chemistry doctorate'.[20]

Fuller studied chemistry at Oxford University, earning a doctorate for research in the field of synthetic organic chemistry, before studying theology for ordination at Cambridge University. As an Anglican priest, he served in churches in the Dioceses of Oxford and Edinburgh. Fuller's monograph, *Atoms & Icons: A Discussion of the Relationships Between Science and Theology*, was written during his time in the Church of England but published once he had moved to the SEC and designed to be read by laypeople of the two fields of enquiry.[21] He has since written numerous articles and chapters and edited many books and symposia on the subject. Fuller joined the Science and Religion team at New College in 2014. His research has focussed on contemporary theological apologetics, theological themes in literature and music, and — most recently — on ethical issues raised by new and emerging sciences, such as the phenomenon of Big Data.[22]

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[18] The University of Edinburgh, 'Rev Dr Michael Fuller (MA, DPhil, FHEA)', *The University of Edinburgh*, 2020 <https://www.ed.ac.uk/profile/rev-dr-michael-fuller> [accessed 24 April 2021];

The University of Edinburgh, 'Core Staff', *The University of Edinburgh: Divinity School*, 2021 <https://www.ed.ac.uk/divinity/studying/graduate-school/research-programmes/study-areas/science-religion/core-staff> [accessed 24 April 2021].

[19] The University of Edinburgh, 'Professor Mark Harris (MA MA PhD)'.

[20] Doctrine Committee of the Scottish Episcopal Church, *Grosvenor Essay No. 1: Sketches Towards a Theology of Science* (Edinburgh: General Synod Office of the Scottish Episcopal Church, 2004), p. 4.

[21] Michael Fuller, *Atoms & Icons: A Discussion of the Relationships Between Science and Theology* (London: Mowbray, 1995), pp. xi–xv.

[22] For examples, see Michael Fuller, 'Some Practical and Ethical Challenges Post by Big Data', in *Embracing the Ivory Tower and Stained Glass Windows: A Festschrift in Honor of Archbishop Antje Jackelén*, ed. by Jennifer

Fuller is a former Chair of the Science and Religion Forum, the UK's leading academic community for science-and-religion research; a Fellow of the International Society for Science and Religion; and Vice-President for Publications of the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology.[23]

Beyond his influential presence within the academic science-and-religion field, Fuller has also greatly influenced the SEC. From 2000–2014, Fuller oversaw the training of ministers in the SEC as Pantonian Professor of TISEC.[24] It was within this role that Fuller also oversaw the launch of the Grosvenor Essay Series, initially published annually by the Doctrine Committee of the SEC, with the aim to 'explore issues relevant to Christian discipleship in the modern world'.[25] The first essay, 'Sketches Towards a

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Baldwin, Issues in Science and Religion: Publications of the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), II, 119–27;'Boundless Riches: Big Data, the Bible and Human Distinctiveness', in *Issues in Science and Theology: Are We Special? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology*, ed. by Michael Fuller and others, Issues in Science and Religion: Publications of the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), IV, 181–89.

[23] Michael Fuller, 'Introduction', in *Issues in Science and Theology: Do Emotions Shape the World?*, Issues in Science and Religion: Publications of the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), III, 1–6 (p. 6); The University of Edinburgh, 'Rev Dr Michael Fuller (MA, DPhil, FHEA)'.

[24] This title was first used in 1810, when Miss Kathrein Panton of Fraserburgh endowed the theological college for the SEC. The first Pantonian Professor of Theology was James Walker, who later became Bishop of Edinburgh and Primus of the SEC. The title is still in use today and currently held by Revd Canon Dr Anne Tomlinson, Principal of the Scottish Episcopal Institute (SEI). See D. Moir, *Theological College, Edinburgh: Record of Students under the Pantonian Professor* (Edinburgh: St Giles Printing Company, 1892); Frederick Goldie, *A Short History of the Episcopal Church in Scotland: From the Restoration to the Present Time* (London: SPCK, 1951), p. 112; Gerald Stranraer-Mull, 'Scottish Episcopal Church History: 19th Century', *Scots' Church*, 2020 <https://www.episcopalhistory.org/19th-century> [accessed 25 April 2021]; General Synod of The Scottish Episcopal Church, 'Faith and Order Board', *The Scottish Episcopal Church*, 2021 <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/organisation/boards-and-committees/faith-order-board/> [accessed 25 April 2021].

[25] Doctrine Committee of the Scottish Episcopal Church, *Grosvenor Essay No. 1*, p. 4.

Theology of Science', aims to develop what the editors explicitly call 'a theology of science': 'to theologize about science, to ask how as disciples of Christ we should think about the scientific endeavour'.[26] Ultimately, Fuller and his co-editors of this essay conclude that Christian theology provides tools of wisdom and meaning in the shaping and use of 'a science that plays a positive role in the reconciliation of all things', leading to 'the flourishing of human persons and the proper stewardship of God's creation'.[27] Given Fuller's excellent scholarship within the science-and-religion field, it is unsurprising that the first Grosvenor Essay should articulate a theology of science, and the SEC's theological discourse has thus benefited from such concentrated engagement with science. Fuller remains an Honorary Canon of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Edinburgh and continues to be active in church ministry within the Diocese of Edinburgh alongside his Senior Teaching Fellowship with New College.[28]

Michael Northcott

Michael Northcott is perhaps best known as Emeritus Professor of Ethics at Edinburgh University. He is currently Professor of Religion and Ecology at the Indonesian Consortium of Religious Studies in the Graduate School of Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.[29] Northcott does not fit the scientist-priest mould of Harris and Fuller, and of Peacocke and Polkinghorne before them. However, to not mention Northcott would be to permit a profound gap in this brief survey of highly influential SEC scholars of science-and-religion.

My favourite contributor biography for Northcott states the following: 'Michael S. Northcott is Professor of Ethics in the School of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh, a priest in the Scottish Episcopal Church, and keeps a large vegetable garden in the Scottish Borders.'[30] The note about Northcott

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[26] Doctrine Committee of the Scottish Episcopal Church, *Grosvenor Essay No. 1*, p. 4.

[27] Doctrine Committee of the Scottish Episcopal Church, *Grosvenor Essay No. 1*, p. 26.

[28] The University of Edinburgh, 'Rev Dr Michael Fuller (MA, DPhil, FHEA)'.

[29] Academia, 'Michael Northcott', *Academia.Edu*, 2021 <https://ugm.academia.edu/MichaelNorthcott> [accessed 25 April 2021].

[30] *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives*, ed. by Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott (London: Routledge, 2014), p. viii.

keeping a vegetable garden is a diminutive pointer to the prodigious work he has accomplished at the intersection of ethics, theology, and ecology.

Unlike Harris's and Fuller's training in the sciences prior to entering ordained ministry, Northcott earned a BA, MA, and PhD in theology, completing the final degree around the same time he was priested in the Church of England. Northcott joined Edinburgh University as a lecturer in Christian Ethics and Practical Theology in 1989 and was appointed Professor of Ethics in 2007. He has taught and published extensively on Christian ethics, ecology, environmental ethics and theology, religious ethics, politics, and economics. He taught and supervised within New College's Science and Religion programme at the intersection of ethics, ecology, and theology.[31] Ecotheologians, such as Northcott, have not always been considered among scholars of the intersection of religion and the more 'hard' natural sciences, such as physics and evolutionary biology; however, UK science-and-religion scholarship now acknowledges and incorporates the significant impact of such scholars, especially as the climate crisis deepens, and the science-and-religion programme at New College benefited from Northcott's involvement.[32]

Northcott's influence as a theologian of the SEC could be described as multifaceted. Northcott's scholarship includes reflections upon life in Scotland, emphasizing the role of place; hence, the significance of Northcott keeping a Scottish garden.[33] His scholarship has also influenced many others,

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[31] *Scottish Episcopal Clergy: 1689–2000*, ed. by David Bertie (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), p. 386; Baylor University, 'Michael Northcott', *Ecology & Religion in 19th Century Studies*, 2021 <https://sites.baylor.edu/ecologyreligion/bios/michael-northcott/> [accessed 25 April 2021]; The Montgomery Trust, 'Professor Michael Northcott', *The Montgomery Trust: Speak, Listen, Understand*, 2021 <https://www.montgomerytrust.org.uk/book-a-lecturer/lecturer-profiles/michael-northcott/> [accessed 25 April 2021]; Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, 'Prof. Dr. Michael S. Northcott', *Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven*, 2021 <https://www.etf.edu/medewerkers/michael-northcott/> [accessed 25 April 2021].

[32] For an insightful exploration of why there has been a division between theological engagement of the harder science and that with ecology, see Southgate, 'Science and Religion in the United Kingdom', pp. 374–77.

[33] For example, see Michael S. Northcott, 'Myth, Ritual, and the New Universe Story in the Inner Hebrides', *Journal for the Study of Religion,*

whose writing then appears in Scottish publications, such as *Scottish Journal of Theology*[34] and *The Expository Times*.[35] In his role as a priest within the SEC, he was a member of the Doctrine Committee and shared his expertise as a practical and public theologian from the pulpits of churches, such as Old St Paul's; St James's, Leith; and St Margaret's.[36] Relevant science-and-religion sermons during his time with St James the Less in Leith have been collected and published as *Cuttlefish, Clones and Cluster Bombs: Preaching, Politics and Ecology*.[37]

Conclusion

This brief survey of SEC scholars of science-and-religion has considered the significant impact of only three Scottish Episcopalians who have worked at the intersection of religion and science. Mark Harris, Michael Fuller and Michael Northcott have all influenced the SEC's theological thinking on science; furthermore, each of them has impacted science-and-religion scholarship at an international level. However, there are many others within the SEC who have contributed to the Church's theological engagement with science — too many to list alongside their contributions to any meaningful depth. This list would include lay people working within the sciences, lay academic theologians working at the intersection of religion and science,

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Nature, and Culture, 9.2 (2015), 192–98 <https://doi.org/10.1558/jsrnc.v9i2.27285>;

'Introduction', in *Place, Ecology and the Sacred: The Moral Geography of Sustainable Communities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 1–14;'Wilderness, Religion, and Ecological Restoration in the Scottish Highlands', in *Place, Ecology and the Sacred: The Moral Geography of Sustainable Communities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 103–19.

[34] For examples, see Rachel Muers, 'The Holy Spirit, the Voices of Nature and Environmental Prophecy', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 67.3 (2014), 323–39 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930614000143>; Kris Hiuser and Matthew Barton, 'A Promise Is a Promise: God's Covenantal Relationship with Animals', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 67.3 (2014), 340–56 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930614000155>.

[35] For example, see David Grumett, 'Eat Less Meat: A New Ecological Imperative for Christian Ethics?', *The Expository Times*, 123.2 (2011), 54–62 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524611418577>.

[36] *Scottish Episcopal Clergy*, ed. by Bertie, p. 386.

[37] Michael S. Northcott, *Cuttlefish, Clones and Cluster Bombs: Preaching, Politics and Ecology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2010).

and the many scientists who have also become priests. I have had the privilege of encountering many people, projects, and organizations doing their part, however large or small, to enrich the SEC's theological engagement with science, and all deserve our thanks for enriching our faith at the intersection of religion and science.

Richard Holloway: Expectant Agnostic

IAN PATON
Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane

We are like books. Most people only see our cover, the minority read only the introduction, many people believe the critics. Few will know our content.
(Emile Zola)

Richard Holloway was Bishop of Edinburgh and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church until his retirement in 2000. He has also been Gresham Professor of Divinity, a member of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, chairing its ethics committee, and chair of the Scottish Arts Council. He lives in Edinburgh and is the author of more than twenty books which mark his own theological and spiritual journey, from the apologetic certainty of *Let God Arise* (1972) through the personal reflection of *Leaving Alexandria* (2012), to the compassionate wisdom of *Stories We Tell Ourselves* (2020).[1] They are written with a characteristically clear and attractive tone that invites the reader, though the themes are theologically and philosophically demanding.

Writing this article has already returned its reward, because it meant I had to re-read many of Holloway's books, and read them in quick succession. I knew it would be a pleasure to do this but had not realized the clear impression it would leave with me, of a skilled thinker and writer on a lifetime's theological and spiritual journey. I hope that I have been able to convey at least my own sense of that pilgrimage.

Throughout that journey Holloway has been asking the same questions, questions which many other people ask. He opened his talk to the 'Futures Forum on Death and Dying' (at the Scottish Parliament, 6 November 2018) with the three questions that Paul Gauguin famously slashed into one of his paintings, on hearing the tragic news of his daughter's death: 'What are we?' 'Where do we come from?' and 'Where are we going?' To Holloway they are the inescapable questions we face as reflective beings able to contemplate our own mortality. And they are the questions which stand behind all his writing and thinking, the questions he has been asking throughout his theological and spiritual journey.

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[1] Also, *Let God Arise* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1972); *Leaving Alexandria: A Memoir of Faith and Doubt* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2012); and *Stories We Tell Ourselves: Making Meaning in a Meaningless Universe* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2020).

Holloway's early writing is an apologetic defence of traditional Christianity, all the more effective because it reveals the author's own instinctive sympathies with the criticisms of more liberal Christians. As he later said about his first book:

> It was an attack on the kind of theology I myself now write. All along, I can now see, I was my own enemy, the opponent of the other self within, the person who doubted that theological propositions actually represented metaphysical realities, actually described the situation in the heavenly realm. My anxieties about all of this caused me to engage in a classic projective identification and condemn in others what I secretly believed in my own heart. It is one of the deepest ironies of my life that I ended up in my sixties the kind of bishop that I attacked when I was a priest in my thirties.[2]

It was around about this time that Holloway found himself in conversation, about the ordination of women, with one of the most deeply conservative voices of Anglo-Catholicism, Bishop Graham Leonard. In *Leaving Alexandria*, he describes the impression it made on him:

> What I came to realise in my discussions and debates with Graham Leonard was the role non-theological factors played in the theological debate. In particular, we are all experts at finding intellectual arguments for decisions we have actually taken on temperamental or emotional grounds.[3]

This renewed realization, in the context of one of the most divisive Anglican conflicts of recent times, that theology is always engaged in by human beings with human emotions and human motivations, was to become an important part of Holloway's theological journey.

In the 1980s and early 90s books like *The Killing* (1984) and *Another Country, Another King* (1991)[4] continued to defend and proclaim orthodox Christian faith while openly acknowledging contemporary doubts and questions about religion. Many of them started out as sermons or mission

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[2] *Doubts and Loves: What is Left of Christianity* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001), pp. 177–78. Also *Leaving Alexandria*, p. 335.

[3] Holloway, *Leaving Alexandria*, p. 239.

[4] *The Killing: Meditations on the Death of Christ* (London: DLT, 1984); *Another Country, Another King* (London: Fount, 1991).

addresses and demonstrate Holloway's instinct and skill as a thoughtful and challenging advocate.

Then, in *Dancing on the Edge* (1997), Holloway aimed to rethink Christianity for those who increasingly feel on the margins of religion. It is addressed to the doubting, the wounded, the excluded, those who feel marginalized and disenchanted. Faith, he argues, should be a way of living with questions without being afraid. The central claim of the book is that 'all human systems and theories, secular as well as sacred, were made by us and can be altered or abandoned by us. We do not have to accept any system if we do not like its consequences.'[5] *Dancing on the Edge* remains, I think, one of Holloway's most important books because it presents Christianity without shying away from re-examining tradition in areas such as human sexuality, and because it makes a clear distinction between the reality of religion and the mystery of God: 'At the heart of the mystery of faith there is an inescapable act of trust in the possibility of God, but the secondary prospects of faith — its language, its organisational and ethical systems — are provisional and revisable.'[6]

Two years later Holloway wrote another of his most important books, *Godless Morality* (1999). The book addresses a number of ethical issues: sexual morality; substance use and abuse; abortion and euthanasia; and artificial insemination and genetics. Holloway argues for 'a new moral ecumenism that would unite people on the basis of an agreed human ethic'.[7]

In several places he describes how the catalyst for this book, and for many other changes in his theology, was the 1998 Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops, and the attitudes he encountered there towards LGBT people: 'In reaffirming Christianity's traditional rejection of same-sex relationships they evinced a degree of hatred of homosexuals that many observers found frightening.' But it was not the personal confrontations alone that troubled him. It was the theology which lay behind them. He says: 'The saddest aspect of a very depressing event was the way speaker after speaker quoted the Bible as though it was the final word on a complex subject, so that no further thinking needed to be done.'[8]

Holloway did not merely object to the moral judgements being made by many bishops, but also to their reliance on the Bible as the ultimate source of *moral* truth for other people. In *Godless Morality*, therefore, he tries

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[5] Richard Holloway, *Dancing on the Edge: Making Sense of Faith in a Post-Christian Age* (London: Fount, 1997), p. 176.

[6] Holloway, *Dancing on the Edge,* p. xiv.

[7] Richard Holloway, *Godless Morality: Keeping Religion out of Ethics* (Edinburgh: Canongate,1999), pp. 79–80.

[8] Holloway, *Godless Morality*, p. 34.

to make the case for keeping God out of morality. He argues that dealing with the modern complexities of ethics, and reaching agreement about them in a secular and pluralist world, would require a 'Godless Morality':

> If we reject God as micro-manager of human morality, dictating specific systems that constantly wear out and leave us with theological problems when we want to abandon them, we shall have to develop a more dynamic understanding of God as one who accompanies creation in its evolving story like a pianist in a silent movie. [9]

It seems clear that in a pluralist world an appeal to 'God,' which means something different in each religion and culture and is rejected by some, cannot provide a final authority to resolve contemporary ethical questions for everyone. But it seems more problematic for even liberal believers from Jewish and Christian (and Muslim) traditions to step aside completely from those debates. For them, can removing God from ethics be possible if the God in question is the God of Israel, the God of the Qur'an, and the God of Jesus? Can theology and politics, theology and ethics, be disconnected? Does a more humble and open religious faith have no ethical implications, and nothing to contribute to ethical debate?

Holloway would answer that they can, but only if they are placed on the same level as other approaches to ethical questions and are open to be challenged and sometimes changed. The book's conclusion is optimistic: the moral traditions that no longer work are ones that we have built ourselves, and so we can build new ones for the future. In the final chapter, Holloway argues that the need to develop a common ethic is now urgent: 'It would be difficult to exaggerate the moral confusions of our day and the urgency and importance of finding an agreed basis for our conduct towards one another as sharers of life on this planet.'[10]

Godless Morality was praised outside the Church, but, as Holloway records in *Leaving Alexandria*, inside the Church there was 'condemnation' from the Archbishop of Canterbury and accusations of 'heresy' from others. It became a story of misinterpretation and over-reaction rather than the story of rational disagreement and reasoned debate that Holloway had hoped for.[11]

After his retirement as a serving bishop in 2000, Holloway felt more able to follow his own theological compass rather than the ancient maps

[9] Holloway, *Godless Morality*, p. 33.

[10] Holloway, *Godless Morality*, p. 151.

[11] Holloway, *Leaving Alexandria*, pp. 326–35.

provided by Christian tradition. The following year he published *Doubts and Loves* (2001), a book which reveals a significant personal as well as theological move. He describes a type of person who cannot believe in ‘a set of claims about ancient miracles’ but who is ‘haunted by some of the values of Christianity and would like to be associated with it in a way that did not violate their moral and intellectual integrity’. He was, as he admitted, describing himself:

> I have asked myself repeatedly in recent years whether I can still call myself a Christian, holding the faith in the way I now do. The answer to my question may be No … On the other hand, and this is what I hope, it may offer a lifeline to people who, like me, want to remain members of the Christian community, but only if they can bring their minds, formed by the science and philosophy of the day, along with them.[12]

One of the themes of *Doubts and Loves* is the importance of myth in cultural and religious traditions. The Jewish and Christian myth of The Fall, based on the first chapters of Genesis, is an example:

> Whatever we make of this ancient narrative, it says nothing about the transmission of Adam’s guilt to humanity and it is interpreted by Jewish scholars as an allegory of the human condition, not necessarily as a historic event. It is a myth, not a factual account of a real event.[13]

Holloway’s account of the consequences of this story is rich in analysis and insight, drawing on Biblical scholarship, on Nietzsche, and on traditional Jewish interpretations of Genesis. Arguably to some, but clearly for Holloway, some traditional Christian readings of The Fall have done harm, when they are used to justify the social and sexual subordination of women, to create the sense of guilt built into the treatment of sex, and to foster human exploitation of animals and the natural environment:

> The latest Fall narrative is global warming and consumer greed. Our own insatiable desires have the pyrrhic effect of fouling our own nest. It is the oldest story in the book, because it is the most constant of the human experiences. [14]

[12] Holloway, *Doubts and Loves*, pp. 53–54.
[13] Holloway, *Doubts and Loves*, p. 84.
[14] Holloway, *Doubts and Loves*, p. 84.

Holloway has maintained that theology and religion are here to serve a pastoral purpose, the purpose of helping people to live the best life they can. In 2002 he published a book of pastoral theology, *On Forgiveness*, which takes on a particular poignancy (and authority) from the fact that it was written out of his direct experience of personal and ecclesiastical conflicts — the ordination of women and the rights of LGBT people. The book describes the traditional Christian discipline of forgiveness in a refreshing but challenging way. Holloway considers that forgiveness is a choice so hard that there is room even for the unforgiving. He talks of the power of forgiveness to 'reclaim the future', by breaking the eternal cycle of revenge, challenging the social injustice that tolerates poverty in the midst of plenty, creating a better human society. 'When true forgiveness happens', he writes, 'it is one of the most astonishing and liberating of human experiences'.[15]

In *Looking in the Distance* (2004) Holloway returned to his critique of tradition in a book written to address spirituality in the same way in which *Godless Morality* addressed ethics. He describes the universe as 'mystery enough to be going on with, without hanging on to ancient hypotheses that now create more problems for us than they solve'. [16]

Between the Monster and the Saint (2008) goes further, describing religion as 'certainly a work of the human imagination', while at the same time, 'Its myths and metaphors also provide us with some of the deepest insights into our own condition. Used modestly and understood properly, religion still has much to offer a humanity that is trying to save itself from itself.'[17] He stresses that this does not mean religion should be rejected outright:

> You do not have to believe in the truth of the doctrine to acknowledge that, like a great work of art, the Christian story captures the reality of our experience. Indeed, it could be argued that it was developed over the centuries precisely to account for the human condition. [18]

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[15] Richard Holloway, *On Forgiveness: How Can We Forgive the Unforgivable?* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002), p. 12.

[16] Richard Holloway, *Looking in the Distance: The Human Search for Meaning* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2004), pp. 30–31.

[17] Richard Holloway, *Between the Monster and the Saint: Reflections on the Human Condition* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2008), p. xvi.

[18] Holloway, *Between the Monster and the Saint,* p. xix.

In his 'memoir of faith and doubt', *Leaving Alexandria*, Holloway describes with frankness not only the fundamentalism that had pushed him away from the Church, but the hopes he still has for the role of religion in human life. He asks, 'Was religion a lie? Not necessarily, but it was a mistake. Lies are just lies, but mistakes can be corrected and lessons can be learned from them.'[19] And he concludes:

> Religion is *human,* and like humanity it is both a glory and a scandal … My real dilemma was that I wanted to keep religion around […] purged of the explanations that don't explain, the science that does not prove, the morality that does not improve; purged in fact, of its *prose*, religion's poetry could still touch us, make us weep, make us tender, and take us out of ourselves into the possibility of a courageous pity. [20]

Holloway wrote *A Little History of Religion* (2016) as part of the Yale 'Little Histories' series, describing, in an accessible and personal way, the growth and the decline of religions across centuries, cultures and continents. The book asks what it is in human beings and human cultures that makes them create religions. Holloway believes that it is the human desire to know where we come from, what our place is in the universe, and most of all the fear of being alone. Religion addresses our need for hope — whether it be building communities around shared rituals and beliefs, having an ultimate source of justice, or just desiring for more life after this life has ended. [21]

It was this last form of hope, or the human anticipation of death which often leads to it, that Holloway sought to address with his reflection on death and dying, *Waiting for the Last Bus* (2018). Like *On Forgiveness* it is a pastoral book, urging us to face and accept the unknown. It does not offer consolation or try to deny the certainty of death, but suggests that hope lies in acceptance, rather than transcendence. Acceptance as an aspect of a human approach to dying leads Holloway to reflect on the theological theme of 'predestination,' and to apply it to the everyday challenges of the human condition. We may never be able to undo the damage done by our shortcomings, but we can learn from them if we are prepared to face the truth about who we are — imperfect beings, imperfect by design rather than by fault. In *Waiting for the Last Bus* Holloway is responding to his instincts as a pastor, offering a 'spirituality' of a positive approach to death and dying

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[19] Holloway, *Leaving Alexandria*, p. 188.

[20] Holloway, *Leaving Alexandria*, pp. 343–45.

[21] Richard Holloway, *A Little History of Religion* (London: Yale University Press, 2016).

which can appeal to non-religious as well as religious people, and building on his sense that religion and spirituality, poetry and art, all have something to offer human beings faced with the large questions of living and dying.[22]

Which brings us to Holloway's most recent book, and one of his most theologically significant, *Stories We Tell Ourselves*. It is an important work on the role, the strengths and limitations of myth in human religion and culture, a re-telling (and frequently quoting directly) of both ancient texts and the work of contemporary scholars.

The first 'story' that Holloway discusses is the origin and nature of the universe. He sets out two examples of 'the stories we tell.' The first is the story that the universe was created by God. The second is that there is no need to propose such a creator, because the existence of the universe and the emergence of life and consciousness are the result of natural forces. So, there are at least two, possibly more, 'stories' that can be told, and most people may be thought to adopt one or the other. But for Holloway, as he tells us, the choice is not like this. 'My personal dilemma is that I feel the strength of each of these opposing perspectives […] I find myself able to occupy both positions — theist and atheist — at the same time." [23]

The book goes on to discuss a second group of 'stories,' those which address the problem of suffering. In one 'story' Christians suggest that suffering is an inevitable result of the necessity for free will and the possibility of choosing or rejecting love. But this is a weak argument, Holloway says, and fails to take account of suffering in the natural world. The reality of suffering has always been and remains the greatest challenge to the reality of a loving God. However, despite this, 'from somewhere there comes to some of us a sense of a presence waiting to be discovered or acknowledged though it will not force itself upon us.'[24]

Another section of the book is devoted to mysticism, the human experience of visions and reflection on visions, something which features in all religions. Holloway cites William James, who addressed this in his lectures on mysticism in 1901 (Holloway selected James's book, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1901) for *The Tablet* as his 'lockdown favourite' reading).[25] James tells us that 'No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these forms of consciousness quite disregarded. At any

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[22] Richard Holloway, *Waiting for the Last Bus: Reflections on Life and Death* (Edinburgh, Canongate, 2018).

[23] Holloway, *Stories We Tell Ourselves*, p. 32.

[24] William James as quoted in Holloway, *Stories We Tell Ourselves*, p. 179.

[25] *The Tablet*, 11 June 2020.

rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality.' [26] Holloway's openness to mysticism as an aspect of human experience, culture and religion, and his refusal to 'close our accounts' about its reality, is another expression of that ambiguity which he wants to retain in theology and spirituality. It is one of the things which distinguishes Holloway's thinking from that of some other critics of religion (such as Richard Dawkins, for example).

For Holloway, people position themselves on a continuum ranging from 'strong believers' to 'strong atheists.' Between these two extremes there are 'weak believers' and 'weak atheists' but there are also what he calls 'expectant agnostics:' 'Some of us think that the most honest response to these mysteries (of existence) is a kind of expectant agnosticism that is more comfortable with the cloudy glimmerings of myth than the diamond-sharp clarities of religion or science.'[27]

Stories We Tell Ourselves contains one of the best short summaries I have read of the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, on suffering.[28] Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* (written in 1943–45, published in English in 1953) were written while Bonhoeffer was awaiting trial by the Nazi regime he had opposed as a pastor. The *Letters* are a reflection on the reality of faith in God at a time when religion itself was suffering and compromised, and humanity needed to 'come of age' and be prepared to follow the demands and challenges of faith while not seeking the consolations of religion. Holloway quotes many passages from the *Letters,* and this helps us to see some of the background, context and influence of thinkers like Bonhoeffer on his 'expectant agnosticism'. For example, when Bonhoeffer writes:

> Our coming of age leads us to a true recognition of our situation before God. God would have us know that we must live as men who manage our lives without him. The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us. The God who lets us live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually. Before God and with God we live without God.[29]

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[26] Holloway, *Stories We Tell Ourselves,* pp. 115–17.

[27] Richard Dawkins and Richard Holloway, 'Said the Atheist to the (ex)Bishop' (Edinburgh International Science Festival, 2008), in *Third Way*, 2008, at <https://thirdway.hymnsam.co.uk/editions/no-edition/features/said-the-atheist-to-the-(ex)-bishop.aspx>

[28] Holloway, *Stories We Tell Ourselves*, pp. 181–85.

[29] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM, 1971), p. 369.

Bonhoeffer also says that ‘the world that has come of age is more godless, and perhaps for that very reason nearer to God, than the world before its coming of age’. We should note that Bonhoeffer did not consider himself an atheist, as Holloway does not, though for different reasons (‘too much certainty’). For instance, Bonhoeffer concludes the passage quoted above with: ‘God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us.’ [30] *Stories We Tell Ourselves* reveals how much Holloway’s theology has been influenced by Bonhoeffer, especially Bonhoeffer’s sense that being ‘before God and with God we live without God’.

Bonhoeffer is expressing in this language a theological tradition which has deep roots in Christianity. ‘Apophatic’ or ‘negative’ theology begins with the insight that if God *is*, then all our words about God, including the word ‘god’, must necessarily be inadequate. They can only be symbols of the truth. Whatever it is we think we mean by descriptors such as good, merciful, powerful and so on, they cannot really come close to accurately describing God. Bonhoeffer develops this further, until he finds it becomes necessary not to speak of God at all, in order to be free to live in God’s way.

The origins of this ‘apophatic’ or ‘negative’ theology go back a long way. It was developed by early Christian thinkers such as Pseudo-Dionysius, but one of its most well-known medieval exponents is the mystic and theologian Meister Eckhart (1260 to1328). Eckhart understands the human being as a being-in-the-world, whose faith cannot point toward something other than the world if it is about the God who encompasses all that is. He famously asserts that ‘Man’s highest and dearest leave-taking is to take leave of God for God’s sake.’ And again, ‘Therefore let us pray to God that we may be free of God.’ [31]

In the 1960s John Robinson, in *Honest to God* (1963)[32], also discussed the inadequacy of much traditional religious language for contemporary understanding of God. Other theologians such as William Hamilton began to talk about ‘Christian atheism’ and claimed that they were Christians without having a realist belief in God. A later modern theologian who wrote in a similar way was Don Cupitt. His book *Taking Leave of God* (1980)[33] is not a dismissal of the whole Christian tradition but of inadequate concepts of God

[30] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, pp. 362, 369.

[31] Meister Eckhart, *Qui Audit Me Non Confundetur, Sermon on Ecclesiastes 24.30*;

Beati Pauperes Spiritu, Sermon on Matthew 5.3.

[32] John Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM, 1963).

[33] Don Cupitt, *Taking Leave of God* (London: SCM, 1980).

within it. Cupitt is committed to developing a strong Christian ethic, especially in relation to social and political action, and a theology inspired by the teaching of Jesus. He writes about following the way of Jesus because it is right, not because we will be rewarded for it. Many regard Cupitt as a 'Christian atheist,' but he denies this, claiming to be trying to renew ideas of God rather than dispense with them.

Robinson and Cupitt are labelled 'modernists', but another modern theologian, Herbert McCabe OP, has written in a similar way but from a much more traditional standpoint. In 2001 he wrote, for example:

> 'God', 'Theos', 'Deus,' is of course a name borrowed from paganism; we take it out of its proper context, where it is used for talking about the gods, and use it for our own purposes. […] God is always dressed verbally in second-hand clothes that don't fit him very well. We always have to be on our guard against taking these clothes as revealing who or what he is.[34]

Another contemporary writer, Richard Kearney, suggests that what he terms 'anatheism':

> is a departure, a leaving, a farewell, to the old God of metaphysical power, to the God we thought we knew and possessed, to the God that Nietzsche, Freud and Marx declared dead. But in leaving that God, anatheism opens the option of a God still to come. Or a God still to come back again.

And Kearney then discusses how 're-imaging the sacred after the secular and through the secular can revive faith, in the way that Bonhoeffer talks about being *with* God yet living without God.' [35]

Holloway has also consistently denied being an atheist: 'I'm not an atheist because I don't have certainty. Atheism it seems to me has as much certainty as theism, and I mistrust certainty. Certainties crucify people.'[36] What is different and significant about Holloway is that while he has become critical of traditional religion, and surer of its human nature, he nevertheless sees that there remains something important for human life in religion and

[34] Herbert McCabe, 'God', *New Blackfriars*, 82 (October 2001), 413–21 (p. 413).

[35] Richard Kearney, *God after the loss of God: What comes after atheism?*, ABC Religion and Ethics. See also, Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* (New York: Columbia, 2011).

[36] Dawkins and Holloway, 'Said the atheist to the (ex)bishop'.

spirituality, and the Christian story in particular, which deserves and needs to be known.

Holloway's 'expectant agnosticism' is very like the 'patience with God' described, in contrast to atheism, by the contemporary Czech philosopher and theologian Tomáš Halík. Halík says that the real difference between faith and atheism is patience. Atheists are not wrong, only impatient. They want to resolve doubt instead of enduring it. Their insistence that the natural world doesn't point to God (or to any necessary meaning) is correct. Their experience of God's absence is a truthful experience, shared also by believers. Faith is not a denial of all this: it is a patient endurance of the ambiguity of the world and the experience of God's absence. Patience with God is faith, just as patience with others is love, and patience with self is hope.[37]

It seems to me that Holloway's 'expectant agnosticism' about God and God-language can be understood as a further expression of the development of 'apophatic' theology demonstrated by Bonhoeffer and others such as those cited above. Partly this is because of the relationship which Holloway demonstrates between his personal and theological journeys.

After the painful experience of Lambeth 1998 and his distress at the narrowness of the Church's attitude to LGBT people, Holloway found that he could no longer talk about God:

> I felt glutted with the verbal promiscuity of religion and the absolute confidence with which it talked about what was beyond our knowing. The irony was that in one of Paul's great poems, God chose to empty himself of language and become a life. But along comes Christianity and turns it back into words, trillions of them […] reducing the mystery of what is beyond all utterance to chatter.

And he found that:

> Religious language had ceased to be able to convey the mystery of the possibility of God for me because it confidently claimed to make present that which I experienced as absence though it was an absence that sometimes felt like a presence. [38]

This personal conflict was what led him to that part of his theological journey in which God-language felt like an obstacle in the way: 'The best I

[37] Tomáš Halík, *Patience with God* (New York: Doubleday, 2009).
[38] Holloway, *Leaving Alexandria*, pp. 335, 336.

had been able to do was to persuade myself and others to choose to live as if the absence hid a presence that was unconditional love. It was the absence of God I wanted to wait upon and be faithful to.'[39]

That experience, together with the influence of writers like Bonhoeffer, led Holloway to reflect further on language and its limitations. In 2010 he contributed an introduction to the volume on *Luke* in the *Four Gospels: Pocket Canons* series. In the Introduction he writes, in as good a definition of the basis of 'apophatic' theology as any:

> All theology is a doomed but necessary attempt to express the inexpressible. God is the elusive mystery we try to capture and convey in language, but how can that ever be done? They are metaphors, analogies, figures of speech. This is the anguish that lies at the heart of all religion, because, though our words can describe our thirst for the absolute, they can never satisfy it. [40]

Stories We Tell Ourselves ends with Holloway telling us the story he tells himself. It is a story about Jesus. He is no longer interested in justifying it or persuading others of it, but in living it. He wants to ask of Christianity what he would ask of any 'story:' what difference does it make? In 2008 he had said, 'To me Christianity is not a noun, it's a verb. It's not a faith that you can hold in any abstract way, it's a journey, it's a way of being, a way of travelling.'[41]
And in 2016 he had written:

> Religion may begin with mystical experiences but it always leads to politics. It starts with the voice heard by the prophets who are its chosen instruments. And what they hear always leads to actions that affect the way people live. [42]

It should be said that practical and political action, as well as theological thinking and writing, has always marked Holloway's own life. Active concern for people living in poverty or deprived circumstances has characterized his work as a priest and bishop engaged in working for social justice. In Edinburgh he founded a Housing Association that still provides affordable housing for people on low incomes, and a voluntary organization

[39] Holloway, *Leaving Alexandria*, p. 336.

[40] Richard Holloway, 'Introduction to Luke', in *The Four Gospels: the pocket canons edition* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2010), p. 152.

[41] Dawkins and Holloway, 'Said the atheist to the (ex)bishop'.

[42] Holloway, *Little History of Religion,* p. 196.

that continues to support people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS. He is founder and chair of *Sistema Scotland*, a charity that seeks to change the lives of children through music. As a follower of Jesus, he believes that it is Jesus's message of forgiveness, reconciliation and love that makes a difference. And so, borrowing Bonhoeffer's words, he 'follows Jesus *etsi deus non daretur'* — as if there were no God'. [43]

Like the social action of his work, Holloway's theological writing has constantly sought to relate religion to humanity. He wants to bring together the dilemmas of spiritual and moral life, often seen through the events and emotions of his own life and the insights of modern thought and experience. His books have sometimes helped people to find their way back to a relationship with faith and spirituality, often after they had felt excluded or diminished by their experience of institutional religion.

But the primary quality that comes through in Holloway's theological and spiritual journey is the contemplative persistence of the seeker, content to have more questions than answers, but desiring to trust in the journey for its own sake. We can be certain of nothing, he tells us, but doubt and love, yet, as he says in a lecture given in 2014:

> I am still haunted by the possibility of a presence behind this universe in which I find myself mysteriously awake. To be accurate, I should describe it as the presence of an absence, the sense of something latent never quite encountered. [44]

In *Leaving Alexandria* Holloway reflects on the church he grew to love as its priest and to which he found himself returning in recent years, Old St Paul's. He describes it like this:

> Old Saint Paul's was most itself when it was empty, most alive to me when nothing was going on in it except its own brooding and remembering. The contrast may have something to do with the fact that Old Saint Paul's has always been kept open so that people can drift in, sit awhile with the building and its memories, and drift out again. Churches that stay open unclose themselves to the sorrows of humanity and alchemise them into consolation. And not a cheap consolation. Just as artists reconcile us to our ills by the way they notice and record them, so open churches

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[43] Holloway, *Stories We Tell Ourselves*, p. 226.

[44] Richard Holloway, *Seeing Visions and Hearing Voices* (Graduate Theological Foundation, Annual Strudwick Lecture, Oxford, 2014).

> console us by the way they accept the unreconciled aspects of our natures. [45]

It is a highly evocative description of a place that strikes many people who enter it in a similar way. But, coming to the end of this reflection of the theological and spiritual journey revealed in Richard Holloway's writing, it also seems to me like a description of its author — 'most alive when nothing was going on except brooding and remembering […] always kept open […] to the sorrows of humanity […] consoling us by accepting the unreconciled aspects of our natures.' Richard Holloway is someone who defines 'expectant agnosticism' for many people, and keeps them seeking and hoping. This may be why he remains one of the most influential living figures in Scottish spirituality and culture.

Richard Holloway often quotes the poetry of R. S. Thomas, one of whose main themes is the absence or silence of God and the 'expectant agnosticism' of faith. In one of the poems that he knows very well, let Thomas have the last word:

> It is this great absence
> that is like a presence, that compels
> me to address it without hope
> of a reply. […]
> What resources have I
> other than the emptiness without him of my whole
> being, a vacuum he may not abhor?[46]

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[45] Holloway, *Leaving Alexandria,* p. 252.

[46] R. S. Thomas, 'The Absence', in *Frequencies* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p 48.

Reviews

Ann Loades. *Grace is Not Faceless: Reflections on Mary* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2021). 160 pp. ISBN 978-0-232-53420-7. £16.99 (paperback and e-book.

In this rich and enjoyable collection of materials written by Professor Ann Loades and introduced by Professor Stephen Burns we have, distilled, several decades of Ann Loades's reflections on the figure of the Virgin Mary of Christian — and especially, Anglican — tradition. The collection represents various different aspects of Ann Loades's life — as academic, Churchwoman and feminist. The theologian and reader of Scripture provides us with the scholarly background with which we can appreciate the ways in which the figure of Mary appears within the various different gospels to different effect. As Churchwoman she leads the reader carefully through debates over Mary's significance within the Anglican Communion (specifically, the Church of England). She also fills us in on important discussions about the Virgin, in the context of both Anglican synodical discussions of doctrine and in conversation with the Roman Catholic Church, leading up to the 2005 Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)'s 'agreed statement' on 'Mary' (p. 63). Finally, Ann Loades's authentic voice as a feminist theologian is unmistakable as she strives throughout this collection to address the damage done through many traditional and even some contemporary interpretations of this gracious female figure. Consistently, she seeks to promote healing, but not through trying to hide the seriousness of the wounds. She is forthright about the harm done by cultural tendencies, underpinning our understanding of her role in God's Incarnation that, for example, associate active giving exclusively with 'the masculine' and passive receiving with 'the feminine'. This, she says 'is a piece of gender construction as intolerable for men, as it is dishonest about women' (p. 27).

Nonetheless, Professor Loades wants to promote the figure of Mary to all, as a focus for spiritual growth and restoration. Her feminist critique notwithstanding, she is highly attentive to Mary's symbolic association with the Christian understanding of Incarnation. She does this, not simply in references to doctrinal debates — for example between Nestorius and Cyril of Alexandria over her disputed title as *theotokos* or God-bearer/birther. She also writes about scriptural poetry that bears on this incarnational role, when gospel writers, portraying her as graced even before Jesus's conception (p. 89), link the Virgin to Hebrew scriptures such as the prophetic discourses of Isaiah. In a chapter on modern poetry, she cites an impressive range of works including from the contemporary poet Andrew

Hudgins, who takes as his theme, the artist Botticelli's 'reading' of the Annunciation (The Cestello Annunciation). His poem focuses on Mary as a human woman, struggling with deep uncertainty. Hudgins, looking at Botticelli's picture, describes 'the angel first crowding her and then responding to her backing away' (pp. 89–90):

> And Botticelli in his great pity,
> Lets her refuse, accept, refuse, and think again.

The title of the book, *Grace is not Faceless*, draws on what Stephen Burns, in his useful introduction, calls 'a pithy idiom of Dominican, Cornelius Ernst' (p. 12) that reflects very well, I think, the author's conviction that if we continue to draw on the resources of Church and Scripture at all — as in the case of Mary — we cannot get away into some neutral safe space. Divine grace comes to us with a range of defining, necessarily limiting, 'faces'. Christians must engage with the needs and changes of our contemporary world but also with their God-infused doctrinal, poetic and metaphorical inheritance. In response to our predicament — often having to deal with representations of Mary that are, at least, double-edged — Ann Loades chooses to emphasize Mary's full humanity. She is a young peasant woman, a mother, struggling with the kinds of issues that continue to affect poor young women who, to protect families and communal bonds in situations subject to unjust, political settlements, are forced to express their courage and mettle.

This is a short book containing several discrete lectures papers and addresses — and also two sermons. It is certainly not exhaustive on the subject. However, for anyone — clergy or lay — who might feel they need at least one book on the subject, and perhaps would like to know what to read next, this would be my strong recommendation. It is rooted in an informed commitment to the Anglican tradition, acute theological, sometimes feminist, scholarship but always also in genuine warmth for and engagement with all her potential listeners and readers, both women and men.

My only reservation, and it is a very small one, is that the present edition has no index. There are references for each chapter, so readers interested in pursuing the issues further can find the books to which Professors Burns and Loades are referring. But it is more difficult to do the work of following through on themes, for which an index is an invaluable tool.

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Hannah Malcolm and Contributors. *Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church* (London: SCM Press, 2020). 160pp. ISBN: 978-0-3340-5986-8. £15.99 (Paperback and Kindle).

The world that we live in is changing and has changed a great deal in our lifetimes. It was of course ever thus, but what is different now compared to when our parents and grandparents grew up, is the increased pace and scope of that change.

In 2019, Hannah Malcolm won the first Theology Slam organized by SCM Press and the *Church Times*. The purpose of the, now annual, Slam is to find the 'most engaging young voices on theology and the contemporary world'. It aims to 'encourage a new generation to think theologically about the world around them — and to encourage the Church to listen to what they have to say'.

What Hannah Malcolm had to say in her 2019 presentation on 'Climate Chaos and Collective Grief' showed that she was well able to think theologically about the world and that it is something which the worldwide Church should listen to.

Over the last four or five decades, prophetic voices have been speaking of the dangers of environmental degradation and climate change. It is however only in the last decade or so that these subjects have become a prominent element in political discourse, as the tangible effects of global warming, changes in rainfall patterns, loss of habitat and changes in species distribution have become only too apparent and are now having an economic impact around the world.

As we are all only too aware, the attention of the world's political leaders has been focussed on the global pandemic caused by a tiny virus which has brought so much disruption to the lives of people everywhere. It is only now that vaccines have been developed and are being produced and administered, that the threat of climate change is coming back onto the agenda. The COP26 event in Glasgow in November is serving as a focus for that agenda.

A great many books and reports have been written on climate change, ecological crisis, and environmental over-exploitation. The majority of these present figures and graphs and many rather dry 'facts' and even though they often offer an analysis of what needs to be done and when, they do not generally make a connection to the lives of ordinary people, let alone engage busy political leaders. These books and reports show us the historical trends, what is currently going on and provide forecasts of the dire consequences if action is not taken soon. However, for most of us the scale of the environmental problems seems far beyond our ability to make a difference.

In the forward to the *Man and Nature* report of a Church of England Working Group chaired by Hugh Montefiore in 1975, Archbishop Michael Ramsey writes, 'Amidst much practical concern and action about the 'environment', and much exhortation on behalf of such concern and action, there has been the need for a presentation of the Christian Understanding of the matter').

In many ways that is what *Words for a Dying World* is. In short, it's a very different approach to thinking about what is often called 'Climate Change' or 'Global Warming' both of which sound relatively benign, but more recently has been referred to as 'Climate Breakdown' or 'Ecological Collapse' which quite rightly sound rather more dramatic and urgent. It is essentially a collection of individual stories written by people of faith from many parts of the world, coming from many different perspectives. You might have guessed as much from the sub-title 'Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church'. The refreshing thing is that Hannah and the other 35 contributors turn to the ancient practice of lament in their thinking and writing about their climate and ecological grief and sense of loss, referred to also as *solastalgia*.

Lament is the exercise of spiritual agency in the face of loss. As a spiritual practice it helps us to incorporate the experience of loss into the broader story of our lives before God. Where grief threatens to close our hearts in despair, lament re-opens our hearts to the possibility of a recovered sense of wholeness. Lament doesn't internalize our pain, sorrow or loss, but helps us to call out to God. So, it's not just an expression of deep emotion resulting from loss, it calls to God for action and ends in praise to God.

The 35 expressions of lament are grouped into three sections: 'As it was then', 'As it is now' and 'As it will be' and so in a sense mirror the 'historical trends', 'what is currently going on' and the 'gloomy forecasts' of scientific tomes, but that is where the similarity ends. There are no graphs and tables, but there are pieces of artwork.

The 'As it was then' section contains eleven contributions that focus on what has already been lost from the traditions of communities and cultures around the world. The contributions contain prose, poetry, prayer, passages of Scripture and are very diverse in style, but they are all laments in which the sense of loss and grief is very real.

The 'As it is now' section, with pieces from thirteen contributors, turns our attention to what is currently being lost in the lives of individuals and in communities and again displays a very rich diversity of lament for what is happening at the present. We start to hear words like 'repentance' in the narratives and there is a clear sense that God has heard the cries of people of faith in the past and will do so again.

Finally, in the 'As it will be' section, we start to hear the prophetic voice of hope. We hear words like 'redemption', 'gratitude', 'wonder' and 'hope' intermingled with the more familiar 'suffering', 'loss', 'grief' and 'despair'.

What is evident in all three sections, is that these expressions of lament before God allow the contributors to express the depth of their pain, loss, despair, and grief and to invite other Christians to join with them in calling upon God for help. Their pieces are deeply moving and show their great humility in sharing the grief that arises from the issues of climate change and environmental damage that affect them and the places that they come from. Through their work we get a much clearer picture of how climate change and its consequences are affecting real people in various parts of the global community and show, much like the pandemic, that these issues cannot be managed on a purely nation state basis.

Hannah has brought together writers with a great deal of insight and much creativity in the ways in which they lament change and loss in our climate, our environment, and our planet. It is however important to acknowledge that she was the driving force, providing the means by which we hear these voices, and she also brings significant insight of her own in her Introduction and her Conclusion which bookend the other contributions. In the title of the former she asks the question 'The end of the world?' to which she replies, with another question in the title of the latter, 'World without end?'.

She contends that we need to take this business of grieving for our world, our climate, and the ecological damage that humankind has wrought, seriously and learn how to grieve as a work of love. 'The conviction that Christ's Resurrection marked the death of death also contains the hope that our works of love in the present are not consigned to destruction.' It is the world that love makes that is a world without end and that will ensure that 'our grief will not be wasted'.

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David Fergusson and Mark W. Elliott, eds. *The History of Scottish Theology, Volume I: Celtic Origins to Reformed Orthodoxy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). xii, 416 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-875933-1. £95 (hardback).

One is impressed by the boldness of the definite article in the title of this landmark work from Oxford University Press: *THE History of Scottish Theology*. But this is as much a work of Church history as historical theology, telling the story of Christianity in Scotland by putting the development of

Scottish theology in its historical context rather than recounting the significant events.

The most welcome aspect of this project is its treatment of the medieval period. For in their Scottish manifestations, medieval theologies seem almost invisible in the modern imagination beyond the parodic representation of 'Celtic Christianity' so ably dispelled in Thomas O'Loughlin's chapter. Here, in the first millennium, we discover theology presented less by formal tracts and more by a diversity of materials that 'invite us to read them theologically'. Among these was Adomnán of Iona's book, *De locis sanctis*, 'The Holy Places', a work that:

> combines a description of the Holy Places of the biblical story […] with an exegetical manual that shows how geographical knowledge can be used to resolve contradictions in the sacred texts, while also establishing that the domain of the incarnate Logos is contiguous with the world of ordinary experience (p. 13).

Even placenames (Kilbride, Kilmarnock, etc.) point to the footsteps of Christ and his Church across the country, 'Christening' the landscape.

Peter Damian-Grint brings to light for the general reader and illuminates for the specialist the works and theology of Adam of Dryburgh (*c.* 1140 to 1212), 'the only medieval theologian of international stature who lived and worked almost entirely in Scotland'. Damian-Grint's close knowledge of the Latin texts (which he has edited) allows us to see that Adam's work was written more to be delivered orally than studied privately. In his early work, we see Adam as 'a convinced Augustinian', in his theology, his style of writing, and in the warmth of his many references to 'the most learned physician of souls, our blessed father Augustine'. Saint Augustine's *Confessions* was the most important influence on Adam's masterpiece, *De triplici genere contemplationis*, 'The Threefold Character of Contemplation', a guide to contemplative prayer. And this indeed was one of Adam's major themes: holiness of life expressed in prayer and contemplation. But Adam also reflected on the sacramental nature of all creation, that all created things are signs pointing towards God, even smells and tastes. The fragrances of plants say, 'We are not your God. We are fragrances; but God is your fragrance, and of great sweetness, a fragrance that no wind can disperse'. Damian-Grint concludes that *De triplici genere contemplationis* 'is not only brilliant Augustinian theology but experiential and personal in a way that recalls Augustine himself' (p. 46). Adam's own influence and reputation increased as time went on, for we learn that most surviving manuscripts of his work date from two or more centuries after his death, not

least in the company of Middle English devotional works. In this way, concludes Damian-Grint, Adam's affective and experiential theological style looks ahead rather than back, leading in the thirteenth century to Franciscan spirituality and onwards in the fourteenth to the *devotio moderna*: 'thus he comes not at the end but rather at an important crux in the development of the Western theological tradition' (p. 51).

The influence of Saint Augustine appears again in Stephen Holmes's chapter on liturgical theology before 1600. Holmes warns against taking 'the polemical dichotomies of the Reformation at face value', as he presents the Scottish Reformation as 'more a dispute between Latin, mainly Augustinian, Christians than a war between light and darkness', the protagonists holding more in common than they would allow. Holmes argues that the Reformed commentators may have been more faithful to the Catholic tradition of liturgical interpretation and its Augustinian roots than was contemporary Roman Catholicism:

> In the Tridentine Catholic world, emphasis on the 'res' of the Eucharist against the attacks of the Protestants, especially an emphasis on the presence and sacrifice defined at Trent, collapsed the distance between sign and what is signified to leave no room for the complex and polyvalent web of interpretations found in Durandus or even from the simplified interpretations of the catechetical tradition (pp. 66–67).

In addition to suggesting a new way of understanding the Scottish Reformation, Holmes points to some ecumenical implications for today, in that all the main ecclesiological traditions in Scotland share a common origin in the Catholic Reform movements of late medieval and early modern Scotland. With the late twentieth-century ecumenical consensus on public worship reflected in the *Missale Romanum* (1969), *Scottish Liturgy 1982*, and the *Book of Common Order* (1994), Holmes looks forward to a rediscovered unity rooted in common worship.

There are also chapters on influential figures who came to prominence in medieval Europe: Richard of St Victor, John Duns Scotus, John Ireland, and John Mair. In line with Holmes's argument, we discover that much of what was achieved by these and other theologians between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries was 'inflected rather than abolished' in the Reformation, which is presented here as a gradual process and a series of events that shared much with other reforming movements in the late Middle Ages.

Aaron Clay Denlinger's consideration of the 'Aberdeen Doctors' and Henry Scougal offers us a more direct line to the Episcopal tradition, where they are presented as the most recognized theologians of the first and

second Episcopalian periods, but whose theology nevertheless remained within the boundaries of the 'Reformed orthodoxy' of their day. Henry Scougal, with *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, showed an enthusiasm for the Cambridge Platonists which infused his doctrine with a mystical strain and perhaps outlines another route via Saint Augustine and Adam of Dryburgh, a path which also runs through the Episcopalian spirituality of the brothers George and James Garden (dealt with in a chapter by Marie-Luise Ehrenschwendtner), and their interpretation of Reformed theology based in personal experience, which although originally shaped by John Calvin and closely linked to Henry Scougal, was not acceptable to the Presbyterian Kirk. Here we also see the increasing influence of continental mystics, such as Antoinette Bourignon.

Finally, unlike the Scottish philosophical tradition, we discover that there is 'little evidence of a single, distinctive tradition with leading authorities and methods of study' — no 'body of thinkers' referencing discrete authorities and magisterial texts; no set of common problems that sets Scottish theologians apart from other traditions. Yet, from the seventeenth century, we do find Episcopalian theology and spirituality making a distinctive and lasting contribution despite its minority status.

George Guiver CR has described tradition as the grammar governing the language which the Church speaks in its life and worship; and in that sense the Church needs to be a language school of its own tradition. The Church's traditions are also to be understood as a starting point, a trajectory, which give us a sense of our position in time. And this is what this volume does (together with its companion volumes, to be reviewed in subsequent issues of this journal): *The History of Scottish Theology* shows us where we have come from and gives us that perspective which allows us to put our current questions in context. This three-volume series is surely now the best starting place for those training for ordination and other authorized ministries in the Scottish Episcopal Church (and beyond) to gain a broad and necessary knowledge of Scottish theological traditions from their very beginnings.

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Stephen Burns, Bryan Cones and James Tengatenga, eds. *Twentieth Century Anglican Theologians: From Evelyn Underhill to Esther Mombo* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2021). xxi, 250 pp. ISBN: 978-11196-11318-9. £38.95 (paperback); £31.00 (e-book).

I must admit that I began reading this book in a bad mood. Do we really need yet another textbook on modern theologians — another excuse for those who lack the application, or more charitably the time, and want to pretend that they understand William Temple's writings without having to bother actually to read them? But as these little essays followed one after another, I became hooked on an overarching narrative about that elusive and complex phenomenon called 'Anglicanism.' Despite its many authors, this book needs to be read as a whole rather than picked at essay by essay and then the picture becomes much larger than one might have imagined.

Certainly, it is a relief to move beyond the usual suspects in twentieth century Anglican theology, although most of them are here also — William Temple, Austin Farrer, Michael Ramsey, John Macquarrie and so on. But these men, all archbishops or professors at one of the ancient universities, are accompanied by others: the women theologians first from Evelyn Underhill to Dorothy Sayers, Ann Loades and Esther Mombo. Then there are two voices from China, T. C. Chao and K. H. Ting (yes — they are Anglicans), with Sadhu Sundar Singh from India, Esther Mombo and Desmond Tutu from Africa, Carter Heyward and William Stringfellow from America. No doubt each reader will say, 'why was not so-and-so included?' The editors are perfectly well aware that any collection like this has to be selective, and even include a further list of people who 'might have been contenders' though the actual list is endless. But this selection as it stands was enough to remind me of two things about 'Anglicanism,' whatever, in the end, that is. In its theology, and indeed its ecclesiology, it remains deeply patriarchal, and it is still, after all this time, profoundly post-colonial. The remarkable women here remain either outsiders, like Evelyn Underhill, who had, as Ann Loades reminds us, 'no qualifications and no institutional position', or pioneers, like Ann Loades herself, who became the first Anglican woman to be made professor of theology in the United Kingdom.

And even as one might celebrate the presence of T. C. Chao (Zhao Zichen) and Bishop Ting as Anglican theologians, the post-denominational church in China and Sino-Christian theology remain on the very outer edge, at best, of the consciousness of most Anglicans who can have no concept of the theology of T. C. Chao or the Christian life and leadership of someone like Bishop Ting in Communist China. Or there is Archbishop Desmond Tutu whose theology was such a powerful political voice in the process of peace-making in post-apartheid South Africa. These people mattered in the world.

Theology, of course, can take many forms. At some level it is, quite properly, a carefully constructed, intellectual and spiritual exercise, often drawing upon a wide range of intellectual and artistic creativity, as in the thought of Donald MacKinnon. In his case theology was a questioning on borderlands, while for others like Farrer it is more institutional or, as is said here, a 're-engagement with classical categories'. Theology may — and certainly should — find itself at the heart of the church as an institution and the presence of two Archbishops of Canterbury here (Rowan Williams is often mentioned but has no chapter to himself) is, or should be, reassuring. But it can also be angry, a voice from the outside or sharply critical of the church, its manner, and its failure to live up to its own theological claims. As a priest myself I can go a long way to understand how Carter Heyward, though ordained, 'seldom goes to church' as she feels simply too 'weary', 'worn down', and 'depressed' by its patriarchal ways.

The essays in this book are at once a reminder of the intellectual and pastoral riches prompting Anglican theology in the twentieth century across a wide spectrum of the church and churches from the Evangelical to Anglo-Catholic. They remind us of the power and potential of such theology in national figures like Temple and Tutu and creativity of such people as Underhill and Sayers as they drew upon the treasures of the past — the mystical tradition or the poetry of Dante. At its best Anglicanism is a tradition rooted not in doctrine and dogma, but in prayer, and as the essay on David Ford reminds us 'the *lex orandi* functions [...] as a constant reminder of theology's vocation, which is to give glory to God' (p. 199). The essays are of a uniformly high quality granting us living insights into figures in the church — at its centre or on the edge — who are complex, difficult characters deserving of closer attention and thought.

But from where we now sit in early 2021, almost a year after lockdown began, and as a member of one church within the Anglican Communion of churches, I am left, above all, with a sense of sadness after reading this book. Here we are shown all this intelligence and faithfulness, this bravery and political acumen, this courage in hope and against the grain — and one is left wondering what this means for 'Anglicanism' now. For this is in one sense a history book. Although many of the people here discussed are still active and playing their parts in the church, or outside it, this is a study of '*twentieth century* Anglican theologians' and we are now in a different century. Some things have changed for the better since Evelyn Underhill's time — but I wonder if the energy and courage remain today for another Bishop Ting or another Archbishop Tutu.

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Nuria Calduch-Benages, Michael W. Duggan and Dalia Marx, eds. *On Wings of Prayer: Sources of Jewish Worship: Essays in Honor of Professor Stefan C. Reif on the Occasion of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*. Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies, 44 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019). xviii, 406 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-062995-8. £72.78 (hardback).

Stefan Reif is an Edinburgh-born Jewish scholar who has spent most of his career as Director of the Taylor-Schechter Institute at St John's College, Cambridge, latterly serving also as Professor of Mediaeval Jewish Studies in the Cambridge University Faculty of Oriental Studies. This houses the Cairo Genizah, the library of mediaeval manuscripts discovered in the Ben Ezra Synagogue in the Fustat area of Old Cairo in 1896 by the renowned Jewish scholar Solomon Schechter. With the assistance of cleric, Hebraist, and Master of St John's College, Charles Taylor, Schechter brought the collection to Cambridge. It was not until relatively recently, and through the sterling efforts of Reif, that it was transformed into an accessible world-class resource for research, enabling the transformation in academic knowledge (and, inevitably, uncertainty) of Judaism from the Talmudic period to the dawn of the modern period.

These 20 substantial studies of Biblical, Second Temple Jewish, and Rabbinic texts explore a range of issues in the development of Jewish worship. These include one study of a New Testament document, the Letter of James, a text which reflects the depths of the Jewish roots of Christianity. The studies echo developments in academic methodology which have impacted also on Christian Biblical, Patristic, and liturgical studies. Most Christians, including scholars of liturgy and church history, are woefully ignorant of the texts discussed and the movements they represent, notwithstanding the relevance of other movements which evolved from Judaism in the Middle East during the Roman period to our understanding of the emergence and growth of Christiantiy. Many of the same cultural influences were encountered and negotiated as Christians and other Jews lived, worked, and worshipped in the circum-Mediterranean world, and also further east, during the first Christian millennium. Nevertheless, these studies are a demanding read, mostly accessible only to readers literate in ancient Hebrew, and in some cases Greek and Aramaic. While not light reading, and therefore unlikely to be in heavy demand among clergy and students for ministry in the present age, this book is a valuable window into

the depths of our collective ignorance and illustrates something of how much the richer we would be if more familiar with the material it explores. Whether we read it or not, we have much for which to thank Professor Reif and the contributors to this volume.

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Al Barrett and Ruth Harley. *Being Interrupted: Reimagining the Church's Mission from the Outside, In* (London: SCM Press, 2020). 262 pp. ISBN 978-0334-05862-5. £19.99 (paperback).

Rector: How can we learn from the way others have joined us online during lockdown and plan for the new future when the church doors re-open?
Ordinand: I've been reading a book that might help. We could start by inviting our new online worshippers to help us reimagine the future together.

This is a book about power and an exercise in reimagining. It asks those of us who consider ourselves to be church to acknowledge the imbalance in the power relationships in which we are enmeshed and to risk letting go of the illusion of control. Instead, it advocates a receptive and listening stance to unveil the gifts of hospitality and understanding already present in our communities. The authors propose that missionary disciples should become 'treasure-seekers', rather than bestowers of gifts, giving up the space for others to speak and enabling them into speech. Largely conceived and written before the COVID pandemic, the text nonetheless speaks directly to the signs of the times we are in. The closing chapters on Cross and Resurrection invite us to be fully touched by the grief of ourselves and others. The argument is interspersed with carefully crafted scenes of church and community life on the Firs and Bromford outer urban estates in the West Midlands where Al Barrett is the vicar of Hodge Hill Church and Ruth Harley was on placement from the Queen's Foundation at the time of writing. In the best traditions of pastoral theology, the text is a product of their reflective dialogue. It draws on the work of Barrett's doctoral dissertation and Harley's experience as a children and family worker.[1] The book is in three distinct parts. The first (chapters 1 to 6) presents an analysis of structural

[1] Barrett's dissertation has been published as *Interrupting the Church's Flow: A Radically Receptive Political Theology in the Urban Margins* (London: SCM Press, 2020).

inequalities in contemporary British society and the entanglement of the Church in privilege. Beginning with the events of Windrush, Grenfell, Me Too and the School Strikes against climate change, it presents evidence for divisions based on race, gender, age, and human exploitation of the non-human world. Cultural as well as social and economic underpinnings of division are drawn out, including the nostalgia for a colonial past playing into the Brexit debate; cultural trauma, it is argued, helps to maintain the status quo by making it harder to let go and move on (p. 50). In chapter 3 the implications of privilege are spelled out: our privilege is the plank in our own eye which prevents us seeing how it shapes our social behaviours and helps us ignore and be disconnected from the consequences of unequal power. Chapters 4 to 6 apply this analysis to the Church which is in danger of being 'on the wrong side of Jesus' (chapter 6), needing to ask hard questions about who is giving what to whom in its exchanges with communities. The authors challenge popular models of discipleship. They argue that church growth theory reflects too strongly the capitalist model of valuing what can be counted, and critique social justice approaches as part of 'lopsided' relationships (p. 79) within an economic model which casts privileged Christians as benefactors, suppressing the Church's capacity to learn from those who become designated as 'in need'. The second section (chapters 7–11) presents scriptural reflections on encounters in which Jesus's own mission is 'interrupted', such as that with the Syro-Phoenician woman who literally stops him in his tracks and occasions a re-examination. The final and longest section (chapters 12 to 16) sets out a path for mission in which community members are at the centre and discipleship consists of a risky and outward-facing engagement. In an exposition that directly responds to the social divides set out in the first part of the book, we are called to dissociate ourselves from a colonizing gaze that, in the name of mission, invites others to play by our rules. Instead, we are asked to de-centre ourselves and our churches and to become guests at the tables of others. In other words, to join those 'at the edge' not as their rescuers, but as listeners, identifying the gifts that they can bring to 'interrupt' and transform us. The prototypes of discipleship include children, whom Jesus himself asks us to be like, 'in their disruptive and radical receptivity' (p. 114). A practical example is how the members of Hodge Hill Church responded to the demolition of their church building and community facility by seeking out and encouraging those in the community who could offer and generate hospitality themselves; the church hall buffet was replaced by local people setting up tables outside their houses at community events. Another compelling illustration of what that humility might mean in practice is to stop speaking for others and give up the space for others to speak: in a cross-led form of leadership, those who are heard for the first time will become the

new hearers who will lead mission. The thinking drawn upon is both practical and theological. The proposed turn away from professional fix and towards community presence has been encouraged by the work of Conrad Russell, the UK proponent of asset-based community development (ABCD) which draws on the influential work of Jody Kretzmann and John McKnight in the US to emphasize the gifts ('assets') that are already present in communities and the responsibility to draw these out, rather than to supplant them by professional dominance.[2] The theological move responds to the painful divides analysed in the first part of the book, and proposes that by learning from those on the edge of society we may allow the torn flesh of Christ to knit together our hurts. The book's proposition most likely to be tested is the adequacy of a listening stance as a basis for mission. Given the emphasis on power relationships, it might have been helpful to expand on how grassroots community activism can be combined with leveraging change in established managerialist power systems to open up the 'space of possibility' for transformative action.[3] The closing arguments could only have been strengthened by reference to Catholic social teaching on integral human development and the methodology of the pastoral cycle which the authors rediscover in their proposal for a 'spiral' of action and reflection. But however wide the coverage, no text can be comprehensive. The authors acknowledge that the prisms of sexuality and disability, which are not tackled, are as important as those they have discussed. I had some questions about whether the book was trying to address too many audiences; those engaged with these questions will already be familiar with the invitation to 'be with' those whom the Church seeks to serve[4]. Others may find analysis of social divides hard going. That said, the text as a whole invites debate about the reimagining of the Church's mission and the mix of different genres, including storytelling, is perhaps fitting for our postmodern, multimode habits of consuming material. The book's strength is the way it brings together the strands of social and economic analysis, practical experience and reflective missiology and seeks to make other work more widely known. The integration of these may not be perfect and leave the reader wanting more or less of each, depending on their own background, but as a single text to stimulate discussion and change within a group of Christians it has great

[2] John McKnight and Peter Block, *Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighbourhoods* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010).
[3] Eileen Conn, *Community Engagement in the Social Eco System Dance* (London: Third Sector Research Centre, 2011).
[4] Samuel Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2015).

value. By making this thinking accessible, the authors shift the questions of who we are as disciples and what we should be doing out of the heads of ministers and professional missiologists and into the hands of congregations; to paraphrase the late Ian Fraser, this is missiology as 'the people's work'.[5] A number of heart-stopping images and metaphors are woven into the argument and workshop-leaders will fall upon these with gratitude. With its reading list and suggestions for its use as the basis for a Lent course, the book would be a useful study tool for a congregation which opts to take a reflective approach to its next steps in mission, rather than embarking on a given programme. As part of the cohort destined to be 'post-COVID clergy', I am encouraged by this book to take an honest look at my own positioning as an older, well-off, university-educated, white, cis woman and to ask how others may continue to disrupt and disciple me in my ministry and call me to step back so that they can come forward.

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[5] Ian M. Fraser, *Reinventing Theology as the People's Work*, 3rd edn (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1988).