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Editorial: On the move

Anthony Woollard

It is always a delight, in this second issue of the year, to focus on reporting from the annual residential meeting of the Council of Modern Church at the beginning of March. Not only is Hinsley Hall, the Roman Catholic centre of the Diocese of Leeds, a most pleasant venue, but the fellowship at Council is always a renewing experience, even when we have contentious issues to discuss, as we have often had in recent years. But, however rewarding for those who take part, it is no 'jolly'; Council members not only have to work hard, but are asked to contribute to the cost of overnight accommodation! All the more gratifying that most of the thirty or so members of Council - the highly representative body which, itself elected by the full membership of Modern Church, elects the Trustees and advises them in their work - normally give up the best part of two days to the event, joined by some of our distinguished Vice-Presidents. More so still that, on this occasion, a dozen of us risked severe weather to travel to Leeds, and many others fed into discussions via e-mail.

With our new General Secretary, Jonathan Draper, having already served half a year, this was an opportunity to share ideas with him and listen to his reporting back from his activities. Alas, due to the weather he could not be with us physically, but we had a couple of extended Skype sessions with him, and he gave those present (and other Council members by e-mail) much material to discuss. His work on our communications strategy is bearing fruit, and his presentation to Council was warmly welcomed. A version may be made more widely available, revised in the light of discussion. A more dramatic new logo is on the way; and there are many

Modern Church

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Modern Church is an international society promoting liberal theology. Founded in 1898 to defend liberalism in the Church of England, we now work ecumenically to encourage open, enquiring, non-dogmatic approaches to Christianity.

Signs of the Times

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Signs of the Times is published in January, April, July and October.

It provides news and information about Modern Church and offers members an opportunity to communicate with each other in print. We welcome articles, notices, poems, suggestions, comments and suitable accompanying graphics. Articles published do not necessarily reflect a Modern Church perspective - in keeping with our commitment to liberal theology we believe that other views should be heard.

Send material to the editor by 8th December, 8th March, 8th June or 8th September. Articles should not normally exceed 1,000 words.

We prefer email but will process typed or handwritten text (phone for a postal address).

ideas for closer work with other liberal Christian groups, and for developing local groups and meetings, such as the South-West group whose recent day conference is reviewed in this edition.

Following a written proposal from our book reviews editor, Chris Savage, we began to consider ideas to make *Signs of the Times* a more attractive shop-window for all we do, as well as an effective means of communication with members alongside our regular e-newsletters. The fruits of this will become apparent in later issues, and we hope members will find it worthwhile to ask for additional copies to share with friends, and in their churches and elsewhere. These can be printed off from the PDF download on our website, but if you would like extra printed copies, please email our administrator Diane: office@modernchurch.org.uk. We also hope more readers, particularly Council members, will contribute 'liberally' (in more than one sense) by way of one-off or regular articles, photos and so on, and that one or two might agree to work with me on an editorial board. Finally, we wondered about the title. Perhaps the current phrase we use from the Gospels has a lesser significance now. 'Modern Church Matters' has been suggested - deliberately and usefully ambiguous, but too inward-looking? Or 'Faith in the world', the new strapline for the logo, which also has a useful ambiguity, and is based on an old strapline in use until last year: 'Liberal faith in a changing world'. What do you, our readers, think?

We are also working on a strategy for *Modern Believing*, to strengthen the editorial team (our editor Steven Shakespeare is standing down for personal health and family reasons) and ensure that the preoccupations of Modern Church members and the wider Church, as well as those (perhaps increasingly different) of the many academic readers, are more fully reflected in the pages of our flagship journal, that it puts across a crystal-clear message of the relevance of liberal theology, and that deadlines are met and the journal more often published on time! A new, stronger editorial board will certainly be formed, and the Trustees enabled to make a greater contribution to the planning of individual issues and a strategy for the journal over time.

In parallel, we will continue to improve our widely-read and impactful website, and there will be further development of our communication via social media.

Then there are plans for making a bigger impact at the Greenbelt Festival, particularly through sponsoring dialogues with major speakers. The results of that will become apparent as publicity for this year's festival emerges. We have already signed a contract as a

sponsor of the festival for one year, subject to review. This is a major investment which may bear fruit among younger generations, a serious enterprise which, emboldened by recent legacies, the Trustees have considered worthwhile.

Alongside the Greenbelt initiative, Council and Trustees are giving thought to possible new models of associate or affiliate membership which might be more attractive to younger people (and others) who may not be naturally drawn to commit to the full membership package but wish to support and keep in touch with Modern Church. We know that our membership - rather like that of the Church of England itself - is now small and ageing, even though our influence at its best can be out of all proportion to that modest base, and we need to find ways to expand and deepen the involvement of a wider demographic (and increase our baseline income) if that influence is to continue. Some organisations similar to ourselves have eschewed the formal membership model and rely entirely on donations or other sources of funding, but we have significant ongoing staff and other costs to pay, and a more flexible membership model still seems right to us. However, we also benefit from legacies, which enable us to venture into new territory, and we need more! And there may be a case for attracting donations specifically for some of those new projects too.

So we are certainly on the move. All this activity is vitally important, not only to nourish existing members and attract new ones, but because of the need to demonstrate our 'public benefit' to the Charity Commission. New charities applying for registration are facing more stringent requirements here. These do not apply immediately to existing charities such as ours, but we may need increasingly to show that our work in 'education' and 'the advancement of religion' is truly accessible to all the public and not just a few enthusiastic members, or academics with particular interests.

Meanwhile, the articles below continue the dialogue on the Trinity which began at last year's Annual Conference - which I believe is very much for public benefit, given the low level of theological knowledge in our Church, and the undoubted problems of developing a relevant preaching and evangelism from this apparently arcane aspect of our Christian tradition. I detect in these articles a slight tendency towards *odium theologicum* (the rancour of theological debate), which may reflect just how much the central concept of absolute monotheism can come to mean to some, rationally, emotionally and spiritually, and how much the concept of relationality at the heart of

Mystery may mean to others. It may well be, as so often, that each is right in what he affirms and wrong in what he denies. Some may think all this is intellectual game-playing, and that is a common enough reason for opposition to Trinity-talk and the formulations of the early church Fathers. But those who feel this way might do well to remember that for a great many people any concept of God whatsoever is deeply problematic, for a lot of seemingly good reasons. The age-long wrestling to understand the Mystery and (in Milton's words) 'justify the ways of God to man' therefore makes it needful that (in the words of T.S. Eliot) 'we shall not cease from exploration'. So I particularly hope that readers will continue this debate in future editions, and perhaps relate it to other aspects of Christian faith and experience.

Then we have something really different - a very personal and very theological review of a musical! Frances Eccleston is a former member of Council who was in the thick of 'the Philip North affair' in the Diocese of Sheffield but has many other interests and gifts apart from her dedication to women's ministry, and it is particularly good to hear from her. This is followed by the usual (but unusually diverse) crop of book reviews. As we went to press, our Archbishop's new book on social ethics, *Reimagining Britain*, was heralded in the secular and religious press as a potentially important statement - it would be good to have a variety of responses in a future edition.

There is something for everyone here, from basic theology to spirituality and culture. Share it widely! □

God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but not three persons

John Goodchild

There is a world of difference between the one God of the monotheist and the gods of the polytheist. A polytheistic God is usually partial, having favourites, and cannot offer a basis for an overarching morality. When the first Christians experienced Jesus as God they did not want to think of him as a second God. They could use the idea of Jesus as the Word of God - the expression of the mind of God in human life. If we express what is in our mind we do not empty our mind. God was not diminished or changed by the incarnation and Christ as the Word made flesh could be said to have existed from the beginning of time.

However, Word as a title lacked warmth and the preferred way of speaking about the relation of the earthly Jesus to God became that of a son to his own father which was grounded in the intimacy of Christ's

prayer to God. As God's only beloved Son he did his heavenly father's work and shared his royal status.

However, it was thought God could not change, so there was not a point at which he had a son and became a father. Instead it was said that God begot his son before time began. The problem was caused by having a *static* rather than a *dynamic* idea of perfection. With *static* perfection, if God is perfect and then changes he is no longer perfect so God cannot change. But if we thinking of perfection as *dynamic*, i.e. God shows his perfection in the way he responds to different situations, the problem is overcome. God is not *unchangeable* but *constant*. His eternal love and purpose do not change by having a son when the time is ripe and right. When we describe God as a father we do not mean that he is literally a father with a penis, but that he is like a father in his care for us. In the same way, if we describe God as a person we do not mean that he is literally a person but that he is like a person because he has personal qualities.

In Hebrew poetry, the meaning of a sentence is repeated using different words. For example, in Psalm 51:11 we hear:

**Do not take me away from your presence,
do not take your Holy Spirit from me.**

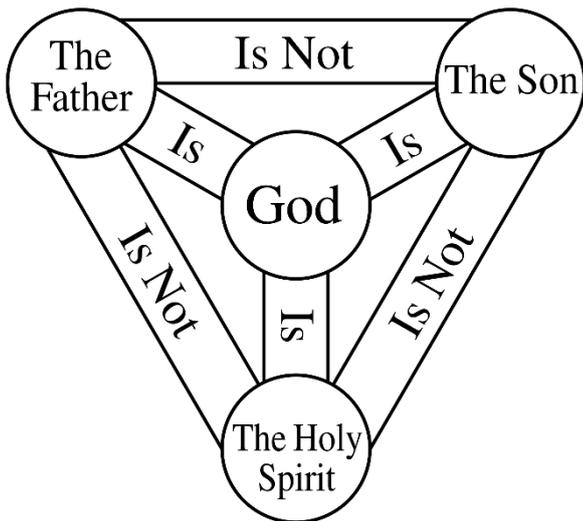
And in Luke 1:35 Mary is told:

**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the
power of the most high will overshadow you.**

So the Holy Spirit is the *presence* and *power* of God. The Spirit is not in addition to the Son but makes the Son present for us. In the Acts, following Christ's ascension, the Spirit is active in the Church. The Spirit gave the disciples the presence and power of Christ.

In the Greek speaking church the word *prosopon* was used to describe the trinity of Father, Son and Spirit. The word meant *face* or *appearance* - a reference to the three ways people had experienced the one God. Tragically the Latin speaking church rendered *prosopon* as *persona*, so presenting a major handicap to our understanding. It is interesting that Augustine of Hippo, though not knowing Greek, resisted this development. In his great book *On the Trinity* he says that man was made in the image of God and so looks for a way of understanding the trinity by looking at the working of a single man's mind rather than through the fellowship of three men.

In the Trinity we have only one person, the man Jesus Christ. The Father and the Spirit are best described as *personal*. □



Three persons, one God

Adrian Thatcher

In response to John Goodchild's reflection on the Trinity, I wonder:

- why, in his title ('...not three persons') he denies, without a single argument, what is central to the Christian doctrine of God?
- why he conflates Trinitarianism with polytheism?
- whether he has considered that, perhaps like any triptych, God might just be One *and* Three? Whether the Athanasian Creed might be right in insisting we think of God in *both* these ways, knowing our language can never capture the fullness of God's being? Whether the 'unity model' and the 'social model' are both necessary in our thinking about God? Whether, without both, our thinking about God falls into disequilibrium?
- whether he cares that his Christology is Arian? If Christ is divine, it is not enough to say he 'existed from the beginning of time'?
- whether he has confused the ancient metaphysical concept of 'person' with the modern 'philosophical' one?
- whether the modern idea of person, while it goes back a long way - to Boethius - emphasizes the individuality and isolation of the single human being, and, as many theologians are now saying, is a disastrous 'modern turn' which the doctrine of the Trinity is able to help us undermine and replace with something better?

- whether, in wishing to preserve the dynamism of God, the Trinity, in which the life of God resonates between the Persons, is a better way of emphasizing dynamism ('the divine dance') than the single divine individual of 'monotheism'?
- whether the role of the Spirit, 'active in the Church', places an impossible restriction on the life of God as she/he/it courses through all religions and none, and throughout all creation? And whether this restriction is a consequence of that devaluation and neglect of the Spirit that 'monotheism' has always produced?
- whether the *sociality* of God which supports our fundamental sociality as relational beings, is a much-needed corrective to the analogy he would have us make between a single human individual and a single divine individual (a god made in the image of a 'man')?
- and above all, whether he has overlooked the great contribution which the rich vocabulary of speaking of God as Trinity can make to the vexed question of gender? In speaking of the Persons of the Trinity, and their relations, theologians have found it necessary to speak of their relationality, equality, reciprocity, absence of hierarchy, a veritable 'communion of persons', etc. Here is a heritage of faith shining with contemporary relevance and application.

Why give all this up? And for what? ☐

History as past, present and future: Reflections on *Hamilton*

Frances Eccleston

It was a theatre trip long in the planning. A couple of years ago our lovely and somewhat apolitical daughter Grace became immersed in a heavyweight political biography of Alexander Hamilton, the U.S. founding father whom history had forgotten. The apparently dry volume was covered in her annotations and underlinings. How come? Grace had heard the cast album of the newest Broadway hit musical, *Hamilton*, and was captivated. She became an avid social media follower of everything connected to the show and its writer-director Lin-Manuel Miranda. She insisted we should see it as a family when it opened in London. And so it was we found ourselves in the Victoria Palace Theatre, part of a noticeably young and excited

audience, who burst into screams of delight as Hamilton walked onstage for the first number.

Over the past year we had become aware of the plaudits that Miranda and his hip-hop musical had received - pretty much any award it's possible to win, including the Pulitzer Prize for drama. We'd followed the political shenanigans - when Vice President Mike Pence went to see it on Broadway, one of the almost entirely black and minority-ethnic cast addressed him from the stage after the show, expressing the concern that he and his fellow actors had no place in the vision for America of the Trump administration. (Pence walked out of the theatre, to boos from the audience.) As the show began, foremost in my mind was the question of whether, as someone who came of age in the punk/new wave era but hasn't listened to much pop music for the last decade or three, I wouldn't be too musically staid to enjoy it.

What unfolded was a story told on a broad canvas: an orphan of prodigious talent, Hamilton arrives in New York as a penniless immigrant in the revolutionary 1770s, studies law and becomes George Washington's right-hand man, both during the War of Independence and during Washington's subsequent presidency, as the identity of the new nation of the United States of America is forged. A sex scandal leads to the unravelling of both Hamilton's family life and his political career, and the implacable enmity of his political opponent Aaron Burr leads to his untimely death. It is the story of a brilliant man, told brilliantly, and yes, with a musical subtlety and panache that held even this fifty-something rapt for just under three hours.

Quickly I realized that for a story that speaks the language of politics, rap is a great idiom to choose. Rap is talkative, opinionated and argumentative. Miranda imagines a congressional debate about whether the US should join with France in fighting the British as a 'rap battle' in which Burr and Hamilton are each handed the mike in turn to make their case. The lightning fast speed and wit of rap conjure the febrile post-revolutionary era and the boundless, impulsive energy of Hamilton himself. Miranda's skill is to vary his musical genre: King George III sings slightly off key in a parody of naff 1960s Britpop. In this story, colonialism isn't just out of tune, it's out of date. The songs that deal tenderly with Hamilton's family life are expressed in soul and the music of contemporary musical theatre. But the rap is always there, ratcheting up the tension at key moments.

While Miranda utterly re-imagines the idiom of late 18th century U.S political life, he leaves its Christian worldview intact. The text is rich in biblical imagery.

Washington, for example, as he prepares to leave office he quotes Isaiah:

**I want to sit under my own vine and fig tree
a moment alone in the shade
at home in this nation we've made.**

The musical's Christian ethos is likewise reflected in its thematic material. In Act 2, the theme of reconciliation becomes central when Eliza Hamilton's forgiveness of her husband after their son's death is the pivotal and redemptive act which frees her to become the bearer of Hamilton's story after he dies. And the musical ends with Eliza expressing her hope and confidence of future reunion with Alexander after her own death. What could be a bleak ending is suffused with a religious sense of hope - there are echoes of *Les Miserables* here.

As Hamilton realises his end is close, two questions become ever more urgent. What will be Hamilton's legacy? Who will tell the story? The beauty of the musical is that it is its own answer to these questions. Here is the story of the birth of the USA told as an inclusive celebration of the dynamic role of the immigrant and the outsider, told by its diverse young people to the diverse young people of the world, in the musical idiom they own.

Here is history as memory, recreated as good news in the present, a source of future hope and action. As Christians, we have an interest in the sacramental re-making of memory, of finding fresh ways to tell God's life-giving story which both honour our inheritance and connect with the now. We need to draw inspiration from Miranda's bold vision which holds tradition and innovation in such creative tension. □

Response to crisis: Restoring our covenant with Creation

Report on the South West Regional Day Conference, Saturday 3rd February, by David James

In the late 1960s, Charles Napier, a lecturer at the old London College of Divinity, was leading a Doctrine Seminar. During it, he proclaimed that in future years it would be Creation, not Salvation that should engage the mind of the Church as it communicated its message to the world. Most were, in that context, dismissive of his words, but they often came to mind at Manvers Street Baptist Church in Bath on Saturday 3rd February as we listened to Margaret Barker and Bishop Nick Holtham.

Margaret, an Old Testament scholar, is an exponent of Temple Theology as the basis for a theology of the environment. In the morning she explored the shape

of the Temple as it related to the days of Creation, and led us through the consequent significance of the Holy of Holies and other Temple features such as the Veil (of matter which separates human beings from the throne of God).

Such an understanding of the Temple also required an exploration of the Covenant as one of Peace, or *shalom*, with Creation, with clear implications for its well-being. We have a role as high priests of Creation, in turn involving our understanding of atonement. This was best described by Mary Douglas, quoted in Margaret's *Introduction to Temple Theology*:

Atonement does not mean a covering of sin so as to hide it from the sight of God - it means making good an outer layer which has been rotted or pierced.

Even Melchizedek, the priestly figure who refreshed Abraham and his companions as they returned from battle, takes on a new meaning. So many Christian concepts have been informed by Greek culture. Their real root is in Jewish tradition and a proper understanding of the role of the Temple, and how it represented Creation.

Questions followed, which Margaret answered in a generous and scholarly way. For one who has always struggled with the nuances of various atonement theories, this was a breath of fresh air.

We enjoyed lunch, graciously provided by Manvers Street Baptist Church who involve folk with obvious special needs in this ministry. The thirty who attended this gathering were well looked after.

In the afternoon, Paul Brett interviewed Bishop Nick Holtham about his role as Church of England's Lead Bishop for the Environment. Bishop Nick faced a tough task, due to the breadth of Paul's brief and the incisive interviewing.

Bishop Nick, a former parish priest on the Isle of Dogs and in Central London, admitted to having had little experience in environmental concerns, but his new role as Bishop of Salisbury required a certain shift. Bishops only have authority in their own diocese, but the brief as Lead Bishop for the Environment required an awareness of political developments in environmental policy, the necessity of a sound and comprehensive theological approach, ecumenical developments, and the possibility of involvement by individual congregations and individuals. We were treated to a wide-ranging and authoritative overview from issues of international importance such as the Paris Agreement and subsequent Conference of Parties through to the

importance of churchyards as green spaces and the *Church Times* Green Awards.

Bishop Nick fielded Paul Brett's direct questioning with humour and thoroughness, especially as his 'innings' ended with a 'googly' about the badger cull in Dorset and Wiltshire - his own 'patch'. Margaret joined Bishop Nick for the final part of the afternoon as we returned to a more theological discussion about this very extensive and comprehensive subject.

The following Monday was 'bin day' back home in Bristol, and, if I am honest, the sorting was done with rather more grace than usual.

O ye tins and bottles, Bless ye the Lord

may not contain any depth of theological insight, but at least it made a start. Thank you, Margaret Barker and Bishop Nick. □

BOOK REVIEWS:

The books of John Bunyan

Chris Savage

Don't be fooled by the title! This is not what you think. I am not about to write on the sixty-odd works of the 17th century writer and preacher best known for the *Pilgrim's Progress*. There is a modern-day John Bunyan, a retired Anglican priest living in Australia who is also a faithful member of Modern Church and, thanks to our editor Anthony Woollard, he got in touch with me and sent three slim books he compiled:

- *Conservation, Common Prayer and Communion*;
- *Four Score Deodatus*, an autobiographical anthology of prose and verse; and
- *Sing Heart and Mind*, a Coverdale Daily Psalm book.

In his ministry John served in the Anglican Churches in England and Australia. His last post before his retirement in 2001 was in the Diocese of Sydney. A Lucas-Tooth Scholar, he holds post graduate qualifications from Sydney, London, Durham, Lambeth and San Francisco.

What interests me in John's three books is that they feel like a prophetic testimony against the present state of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Sydney. The latter is well known, and we had experience of this when we visited Sydney Cathedral three years ago. Gone was the High Altar, and the choir pews had been replaced by chairs. I now learn that under the new Dean there have been improvements. The Communion table is back in place permanently with the choir stalls in a normal position.

While there have been some improvements in parishes, it is still common to hear sermons in funeral services warning the congregation about missing 'salvation and heaven'.

In my last post before retirement I worked with an excellent Anglo-Catholic Australian priest who had fled, like many of his brother clergy, from the Diocese of Sydney. In October of this year the Sydney Anglican diocese donated \$1 million to aid the 'no' vote on the Australian same-sex marriage campaign.

How do you live with all that! John counters the negative actions of the church by proclaiming the worth of the love God has for his valued people. In a hymn in the section 'Women and Men in the Scriptures and in Life' from *Four Score Deodatus*, John writes (p40):

**Celebrate women sometimes forgotten,
those of the Bible, heavenly choir:
they share the kingdom, widen our vision,
pray for us sinners, teach and inspire.**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is inclusive for all, and in the next two verses John names the women who are clearly his heroes.

John Bunyan's *Sing Heart and Mind* is described as a Coverdale Daily Psalm Book. The author has compiled 112 of the Coverdale Psalms of the Book of Common Prayer, unaltered, but with unobtrusive aids and annotations, together with linguistic, biographical, musical and other notes. Reading these psalms reminded me how the language directly and unapologetically illustrated the majesty of God and the judgement he metes out. For example, Psalm 66vs 1-11:

**O be joyful in God all ye lands:
sing praises unto the honour of his name,
make his praise to be glorious.
Say unto God, O how wonderful art thou
in thy works: through the greatness of thy
power shall thine enemies be found liars
unto (humbled before) thee.**

In his introduction to *Conservation Common Prayer and Communion* the author states that this is

first, a handbook for providing, for personal use, very flexible orders of Daily Morning and Evening Prayer... In my broad Church, probably most church-goers happily accept those orders of service that we may recognise as containing poetry and metaphor, and as significant links with our heritage.

He goes on to state that that this book is for some of the others, represented for example, by the great

biologist and student of religious experience who wrote (in *The Divine Flame*) that

My heart is in the Church of England with all its beauty and deep sense of holiness, but not my mind. I go there to pray in private...

John subtly and sometimes pointedly reminds us that there is not one single narrative that defines God, the Church and Christian Commitment. And this needs to be heard and understood. The media dwell on the negative stories surrounding the churches today and this becomes instilled in the minds of so many. But it has always been thus. In the mid 1960s I found a plaque on a wall in a South London church that read

**Do not despise the wisdom of the church;
it is the only tyranny that has lasted 2000 years.**

However, the true picture of Christian commitment has been the evolution of movements that have presented new ways of understanding God and the Christian Gospel. The 16th century Reformation that swept Europe and what we now know as the British Isles. The Evangelical Revival in this country in the 18th century, the rise of the Oxford Movement in the 19th century and its continuing impact on the Anglican Communion. Then there is the 20th / 21st century Urban Mission, Industrial Mission and even Modern Church. I could go on.

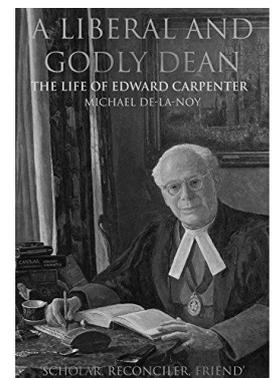
We are indebted to John Bunyan and others like him who faithfully proclaim a more holistic understanding of the Christian Gospel that is relevant to today's world and vital to understanding that world and our own identity in it. I hope we might support him by contacting him for copies of his sometimes provocative and often moving books. Email me: chrimsavage@gmail.com or call 01722 741026, and I will pass on John's details.

Michael De-la-Noy, A liberal and godly Dean: A life of Edward Carpenter (Gloriette Publications 2017)

Marcus Braybrooke

There was, as he wished, no Memorial Service for Edward Carpenter, who was Dean of Westminster from 1974-1985.

This biography is a fitting memorial. It was written by the distinguished biographer Michael De-la-Noy in 2000, but was unpublished at the time of Michael's death in 2002. It



has now been published by the family who have made minor corrections. There are three appendices: an obituary by Trevor Beeson, former Dean of Winchester; some quotations from *The Old Boys' Network* by John Rae, who was Headmaster of Westminster School while Edward was Dean; and a very interesting glimpse of Lilian Carpenter's childhood as a member of a family that, she says, neighbours described as 'very poor'.

The book gives a good account of Edward's childhood, his curacy and his first parish in Stanmore, where the Attlee family lived. It was Prime Minister Attlee who recommended his appointment as a Canon at Westminster Abbey. Edward, at the age of forty, brought with him 15 years' experience of parish work and, with several books already published, his great scholarship.

A Liberal and Godly Dean concentrates on Edward's long ministry at the Abbey. De-la-Noy does not hide the tensions there or Edward's bitter disappointment that he was not offered the Deanery of St Paul's Cathedral, when Walter Matthews retired. Eventually, in 1974, Edward did become Dean at Westminster Abbey. (The first one, as some dignitaries commented, not to have been educated at a public school or at Oxbridge). Trevor Beeson says:

Most of the old formalities that gave the impression of stuffiness were dispensed with, and visitors were warmly welcomed.

I remember myself, when I was asked to preach there, being surprised by how relaxed and friendly all the staff were – much more so than in many parish churches. Edward had a gift for friendship and showed real care for all the Abbey family.

De-la-Noy brings to life Edward's individuality. He could be very forgetful. He and Lilian married in 1941, almost in secret. Edward, a keen sportsman, dashed off to referee a football match and then to conduct a study group on whether 'Eternal damnation is compatible with an all-loving God.' Meanwhile Lilian was left to make her own way to the house in Harrow where Edward was living. The housekeeper asked who she was. 'I am Mrs. Carpenter,' Lilian said. 'But he's not married,' the housekeeper replied – Edward had forgotten to inform her about his wedding! He quickly discovered how his life was enriched by Lilian's love and unfailing support.

Edward's interests were so wide-ranging that to do justice to them would have required a book as long as Edward's biography of Archbishop Fisher - 876 pages - but as I first got to know him when, in 1966, he became President of the World Congress of Faiths, of

which I had just become a secretary, I was disappointed that WCF only gets two pages, although there is some mention of the multi-faith Commonwealth Day Service. Likewise, the Modern Churchmen's Union (as Modern Church was then known), of which Edward also became President in 1966, and his concern for animal welfare also get two pages. The Week of Prayer for World Peace, the United Nations Religious Advisory Committee and many other good causes which Edward and Lilian actively supported are not mentioned. The titles of his book are given, but there is little discussion of their content.

This very readable biography of a 'liberal and godly Dean' needs a sequel about 'Edward, a campaigning visionary.'

The Revd Dr Marcus Braybrooke is joint President of the World Congress of Faiths.

Jennifer Kavanagh, *Heart of Oneness: A little book of connection* (John Hunt Publishing 2017)

Alan Race

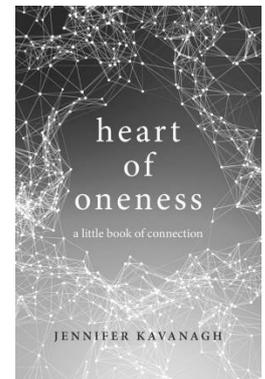
The subtitle 'a little book of connection' is misleading. Although the text is a manageable 66 pages, its thought-world is big. If you are prone to anxiety in the face of what seems like the world's many-layered fragmentations, this will supply balm for your fears, raise your sights and provide some spiritual succour.

There are attractive summary sentences that beam out on almost every page, such is the author's evocative style. Here's one that made me sit up, on p.59:

When you understand it, when you really understand it, not just in your intellect, but in the bones of your being, that there is no separation between you and absolutely everything, which includes the divine, then the game changes.

That was cited from fellow author Christopher Goodchild, but the invitation within it to imagine yourself and the world differently echoes perfectly the author's sentiment. Making a difference in the world begins by seeing aright.

Kavanagh is a Quaker, and every page is saturated with the familiar belief that there is that of God (Spirit, Life-force, Energy) in everyone and every



being. Not that we are always aware of it or even act upon it, but once experienced and grasped its magnetism opens us up to the 'heart of oneness' as in the book's title. Kavanagh does not say so, but the intuition of oneness has its analogues in all the major religions of the world - for example, in Judaism's image of God in everyone, in Mahayana Buddhism's Buddha-nature in all beings, in Hinduism's affirmation of the eternal *atman* as the being and power of Brahman in all of us. God, she says, is the immanent

unifying and connecting principle between and within all creation... God as relationship' (p. 58).

For Kavanagh, the 'many' really does stem from the 'one'. This is not something that is open to proof, of course, but it can be traced, she holds, in the best of scientific endeavour, in the desire for social and political justice, in contemplation of nature's marvels, including our relationship with animals from which / whom we should learn, and in the mystical traditions of the world's great religions. Again, we need to train our eyes, hearts and minds to see.

This is a book for sitting with, as it stimulates spirituality's taste-buds afresh. While Kavanagh delights in a world that teems with multiplicity and variety she remains resolutely against the academic fashion for 'othering'. Given the book's Quaker inspiration, we should not be surprised at the book's appeal to universality and oneness as more foundational, to mutuality and shared responsibility for one another and society, to the leaping over of walls, imagined or real, and all for the sake of uncovering the givenness of 'connection'. In this sense, the book is a welcome antidote to postmodernism's fixation on difference, incommensurability and relativist dystopia. As I said, a *little* book with a *big* message.

Alan Race is the Chair of Trustees of Modern Church. He enjoys researching Christian responses to religious pluralism.

Philip Pegler, *Meeting evil with mercy: an Anglican priest's bold answer to atrocity – Reflections upon the ministry of Martin Israel* (Christian Alternative Books 2017)

Tim Purchase

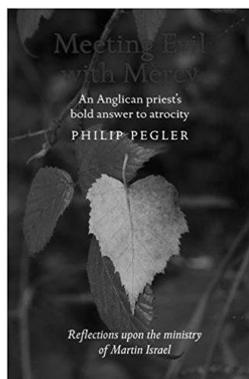
The return to acceptance of meditation as something mainstream, and the availability of information about

alternative religious practices has made this book more readable for many, although one has to say that, if the reader has little or no knowledge of spiritual contemplation, they may find the work difficult to understand. Quite clearly the author, Philip Pegler, holds the subject of his book, the late Rev Dr Martin Israel, in extremely high regard. It does become clear, early in the book, that the lives of both men were very similar, not so much in actual place, but in experience and the desire for ultimate truth.

The author and his subject both start their journey outside of the Christian faith. The book traces both men's journeys to finding eventual solace and support within an Anglican setting. Martin Israel started from a Jewish upbringing, and suffered physical abuse from his father, a subject that is mentioned often in the book. The author took the path of Eastern mysticism before finding Martin Israel by chance and being counselled by him. This ultimately led the author to embrace Christianity and explore his issues with guidance from Israel as his new spiritual director.

Looking at the life of Martin Israel, one sees a very troubled soul, and somebody who was born into the wrong religion. He, like the author, went on a journey both spiritually and physically. He began in South Africa and ended up in England. He trained and qualified as a doctor, which he excelled at. It was where he developed his pastoral skills, and you can quite see how this training was suitable for somebody who would go on to exercise a pastoral ministry within the Church of England. Whether he found being a doctor too unfulfilling, or whether other factors contributed to his change in direction, is not entirely clear. What is rather surprising is that Israel was ordained in the Church of England without undertaking any theological training. Despite this, Israel moved seamlessly into being a parish priest. The author has high praise for his parochial ministry, which is where they finally met. Israel, as parish priest, took it upon himself to extend his ministry to any who would come to him for spiritual direction. This ministry caused the author to experience peace and contentment and be moved to accept Christianity as the meaning in his life.

Israel's theological message was complex, but he was teaching that everything evil could be overcome by love. He taught those who came to him to reflect on their inner being, and once you had achieved that state of grace, nothing else could harm you. Even more surprising is the fact that he was subject to severe bouts of depression. You could see this as the 'thorn in the side' that Saint Paul refers to when writing about himself, but it is a paradox in the book;



that somebody who was so adept at giving other people advice and meaning to their lives, should at times be so unsure of his own purpose.

If you persevere with this book and finish it, you will be left with a desire to learn more about the subject, and indeed perhaps the author. It is also somewhat of a matter of thought as to why Martin Israel did not receive preferment in the church, after his rather rapid path to ordination. It could be an interesting historical study, albeit a bit of an oddity!

Tim Purchase is a Lay Worship Leader and Pastoral Assistant working in several parishes in Wiltshire. He has a keen interest in liturgy and the working out of the Gospel in rural parishes.

Roger Payne, *The authority of service and love: A recovery of meaning* (Christian Alternative Books 2017)

Alan Jeans

This is the second book by Roger Payne, a Reader in the Church of England. His first, *A different way: A human approach to the Divine*, explored the use of language and the meaning of words. From that book, he believed the word 'authority' needed reassessment, particularly when applied to 'religious authority'. *The authority of service and love* seeks to show that our understanding of authority must change if we are to be true to the message of Jesus.

The early chapters summarize the roots of the word 'authority' and move to a thumbnail sketch of Augustine and Aquinas and early Christian understandings, through to the Reformation and Richard Hooker. Payne uses reflections from contemporary commentators including Paul Avis, N.T. Wright, Martyn Percy and Alister McGrath to punctuate the historical narrative. Payne concludes:

as the Christian Church grew in size and influence, it also claimed increasing authority and wielded greater power.

It is the abuse of power, and the crisis of authority in the Church, including the publication in 1968 of *Humanae Vitae* and the 'Monkey Trial' debates of creationism versus evolutionism in the USA, that leads Payne into exploring responses to religious authority.

Our responses, Payne concludes, are drawn from our psychological foundations, including fear and anxiety, need and dependence, habit and herd instinct; and lead into growth, creativity and being. The rationale

and conclusions are again drawn from a plethora of authors from Jung, Freud, Maslow and Tillich.

I found the concluding section on extremism in religious authority connecting with our concerns around the contemporary debate on radicalization, and fundamentalism in religious teaching and authority. This, together with recent media interest in spiritual abuse by clergy, focused my attention on Payne's coverage of authoritarianism, dogmatism and fundamentalism. Payne draws from Jack Dominian, who I confess I'd not read since studying marriage preparation at theological college thirty years ago! Dominian has some interesting thoughts around authority and personality.

Payne concludes his book by underlining and unpacking the book's title. He suggests authority is a hierarchical top-down approach, whereas service is bottom-up. He quotes Dominian and Jesus Christ to remind us that service is the hallmark of the use of authority in the New Testament:

For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.

The polarization of both extreme religious teaching, and the rise of militant atheism, calls for a solution to this new but not so new, crisis.

The solution, Payne cleverly sets out from his first book *A different way: A human approach to the Divine*, is to explore further what it means to be human. Payne states [p.165],

Progress will not be made in tackling the 'crisis of authority' until our image of God is worthy of the authority we ascribe to him.

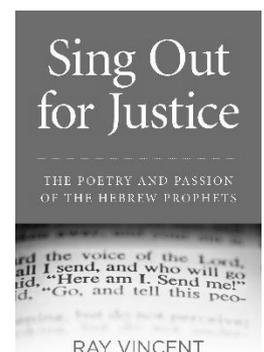
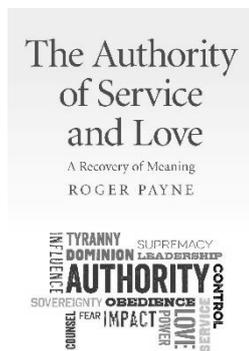
The book is an easy read, and offers a number of questions for the reader, Christian or not. The text challenges us to reflect, as we seek to understand the authority entrusted to us, and how that authority is given and received. It would make a useful tool for a book group, especially for clergy and lay ministers, as they explore this unavoidable topic.

Alan Jeans is Archdeacon of Sarum, in the Diocese of Salisbury

Ray Vincent, *Sing out for justice: The poetry and passion of the Hebrew Prophets* (Christian Alternative, 2017)

Rosemary Walters

The keywords in this book's title, 'justice', 'poetry' and 'passion', reveal the author's



conviction that in discerning the priority of establishing justice in a radically changing world, the biblical prophets can be read from the imaginative perspective of the sensitivity and passion of poetry. As he explains in the preface, these poetic impulses include longing, lamenting and celebrating – this sets the tone for a fascinating, accessible and stimulating journey through the identity, context and mission of the prophets.

The author has constructed the book so it can be dipped into or read sequentially. He grounds it in the belief that approaching the prophetic literature with

an open mind and down-to-earth questions

will challenge the reader to

feel the passions that moved the prophets to speak and to see how relevant they are to our own time.

He effectively demonstrates that the ‘how’ of the prophets’ communication is vital to its content. The key to the methodology of the hermeneutic which Vincent attributes to the prophets, and which sings out from his own voice as author, is the aspiration to encourage the reader to let their imagination work on

the kind of situation that lies behind the words.

This flows into a desire for readers to see the relevance to contemporary situations and

so incorporate them in our big story, our Bible.

This book amply fulfils its objectives. It provides the basic scholarship needed on the factual background, ‘Who were the prophets?’, ‘In their time and after their time’, to enable the reader to begin a confident reflection on a variety of material: Amos, Nathan, Isaiah and Jonah on justice, idolatry and culture in Elijah, the tension between justice and compassion in Hosea, transformation and new beginnings in the later Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. In a series of carefully and clearly titled chapters, information and interpretation from Old Testament, New Testament and current preoccupations blend to illustrate how the accounts of prophetic word and activity stimulate vision and hope for a better world. Vincent argues for the paradox of dreams which can practically change the world, continually taking inspiration from the passion of the prophets to do just that. *Sing out for justice* is, as Vincent claims, a

kind of introduction to the prophets, but not a textbook.

At the end there are suggested passages for reading. An index to the content of the book would also have

been useful, especially for browsers. The heritage of the prophets is convincingly linked to the contemporary struggles for a fairer world, based on faith, hope and love. His concern is that they should be seen to speak to now from their various places in biblical history rather than from a closed and traditionally interpreted ‘original meaning’, historical context or even modern variation of theology. The book will be of great value to those who lack confidence in making this link and avoid focusing on Old Testament lectionary readings in preaching or using Old Testament material in discussion groups. The conviction of the author in the final chapter that ‘Prophecy For Today’ is a vital component in the ‘faith that takes risks in the real world’, is infectious. His own writing has the credibility of this conviction - to read the book is to share his energy, enthusiasm and motivation to *Sing out for justice*.

Rosemary Walters is a Reader in the Parish of St Martin and St Paul, Canterbury.

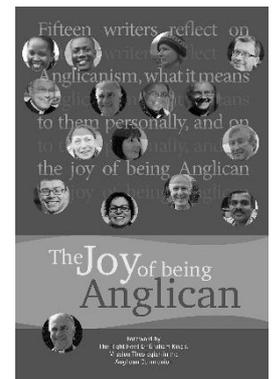
Caroline Hodgson and Heather Smith eds. *The Joy of being Anglican* (Redemptorist Publications 2017)

Lorraine Cavanagh

At a time when Anglicanism is in danger of disintegration, this collection of short essays reminding us of the joys of being Anglican could not be

more welcome. In these fractious and difficult times, we badly need to be reminded of the subtle joys which Anglicanism has always brought to the practice of the Christian faith. Joy is not only of God, but is constituent of Anglican freedom, the essential freedom of belonging together in Christ. Each of the contributors celebrates the freedom which comes to us in the hospitality of God, and in the loving engagement of God’s purposes for world and community, focusing it on the iconic presence of the church in any given context.

We read of the real significance of church buildings not only as sacred spaces, but also as open spaces which permit Godly joy through mirroring God’s hospitality in new and imaginative uses of church buildings. The joy of prayer and liturgy, too often kept separate, are brought together in essays contributed by Simon Cowling, Rachel Mann and Daniel Newman. Rachel Mann’s thoughtful engagement with some of Anglican’s greatest poets takes us into the realm of



the contemplative and is a reminder of how Anglicanism has both inspired and supported the contemplative life and the art which it has produced over centuries. A closing interview with Leigh Nixon, former chorister and longtime music associate of Westminster Abbey, gives special weight to the place of choral music, and music in general, in the life of the church as a worshipping community, from cathedral to small country parish.

As a late convert to Anglicanism, I have always been particularly grateful for its theological breadth and for its down to earth approach to the human condition. It is not by nature either ponderous or doctrinaire, although the lightness of touch and generosity of spirit which, until now, have been the mark of Anglican ecclesial authority are being strained to the limit by misplaced notions of uniformity, too often mistaken for unity. The book serves as a timely reminder of the fragility of the unrelenting strain placed on it by reactive conservatism and anxious managerialism.

In this respect, Paul Kerensa's essay on the joy of laughter is particularly valuable. Not only are we given permission to laugh in church, laughter being, after all, the natural expression of joy, but his piece also suggests that it is high time the Church of England took itself less seriously, especially if it is to retain the particularly English resilience needed to weather the crises and controversies of both church and politics today. Laughter is the most effective antidote to the ills which accompany serious religion.

I would highly recommend this short and readable book as an overview of the salient features which make Anglicanism so attractive and ultimately so compellingly lovable. It would be an excellent introduction for those preparing for adult Confirmation, or for any formal engagement with their own Anglican church, such as agreeing to serve on the PCC or to become a churchwarden. The latter would find John Witcombe's essay on vocation, and Victor and Nolavy Osoro's on service, particularly inspiring. Ultimately, this is a book for all who would like to explore ways of transcending the politics of difference, which all too often dominate church life at every level, with a view to embracing one another in the joy promised to us in Jesus Christ.

Lorraine Cavanagh is a Trustee of Modern Church. □

And finally... A lightbulb moment!

The Editor is assured that a document including the following passage was genuinely found amongst the effects of a deceased member from

the days when we were the Modern Churchpeople's Union (and perhaps a little different from now in some of our theological and liturgical approaches - or not? And perhaps General Synod has changed even less?)



How many [Modern Church] members does it take to change a lightbulb?

This statement was issued:

We choose not to make a statement either in favour of or against the need for a lightbulb. However, if in your own journey you have found that a lightbulb works for you, that is fine. You are invited to write a poem or compose a modern dance about your personal relationship with your lightbulb (or light source, or non-dark source), and present it next month at our annual lightbulb Sunday service, in which we will explore a number of lightbulb traditions, including incandescent, fluorescent, three-way, long-life and tinted - all of which are equally valid paths to luminescence.

How many General Synod members does it take to change a lightbulb?

109: Seven on the Light Bulb Task Force sub-committee, who report to the 12 on the Light Bulb Task Force, appointed by the 15 on Standing Committee. Their recommendation is reviewed by the Finance Committee Executive of 5, who place it on the agenda of the 18-member Finance Committee. If they approve, they bring a motion to the 27-member Policy Committee, who appoint another 12-member review committee. If they recommend that the policy should proceed, a recommendation is brought to Synod, who appoint an 8-member review committee. If their report supports the change, and Synod votes in favour, responsibility is passed to the Secretary-General, who appoints a 7-member committee of Board secretaries to find the best price in new bulbs. Their recommendation must then be reviewed by the 23-strong Ethics Committee to make certain that the hardware store concerned has no connection with the arms trade. They report back to the Secretary General who then asks the relevant Board secretary to instruct the caretaker to make the change. By then the caretaker discovers that one more bulb has burned out - and the process begins again. □