

**‘Passionate Patience’: A Review Article of
Rowan Williams, *Anglican Identities* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004)
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Introduction

‘(It is always worth remembering that Herbert was not a Laudian).’ This parenthetical remark – not many reviews begin with a quote in brackets but I could not resist it – reveals much about this perceptive book, its subtle author, the perspectives of Fulcrum and the issues of the Eames Commission on the future of the Anglican Communion.

Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has drawn together various lectures and sermons given to academic audiences over the last ten years and added a ‘binding together’ introduction which hints at the context of publication - the current crisis in the Anglican Communion concerning the consecration of Gene Robinson in the USA,¹ the emergency primates meeting at Lambeth in October 2003 and the consequential Eames commission.

Williams comments that he has ‘foresworn any aim to provide a fresh rallying-point for Anglican identity in these pages’ (p. 7) and we can note that ‘identities’ is in the plural in the title. He does, however, continue by concluding his introduction with a characteristic entreaty, which is worth quoting in full:

But perhaps there is one thing worth drawing out. The writers discussed here in their different ways are apologists for a theologically informed and spiritually sustained *patience*. They do not expect human words to solve their problems rapidly, they do not expect the Bible to yield up its treasures overnight, they do not look for the triumphant march of an ecclesiastical institution. They know that as Christians they live among immensities of meaning, live in the wake of a divine action which defies summary explanation. They take it for granted that the believer is always learning, moving in and out of speech and silence in a continuous wonder and a continuous turning inside-out of mind and feeling. (p. 7)

This plea for ‘theologically informed and spiritually sustained patience’ is succinct and apposite, for pre-emptive strikes are not limited to modern warfare; they are also discernable in rushed consecrations and rushed reactions.²

¹ Robinson is now a bishop in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (hereafter, ECUSA). The whole discussion focuses on the point that he is not only a bishop in ECUSA but also in the Anglican Communion and, more importantly, also in the ‘Church of God’. Anglican ordinations are historically into the ‘Church of God’. Hence strong reactions from the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communions concerning this consecration which has led to Frank Griswold, presiding bishop of ECUSA, having to step down from co-chairing an Anglican-Roman Catholic commission. John Donne (1572-1631) wrote: ‘No man is an Iland, intire of itselfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine...’ John Donne, *Selected Prose* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 126.

² As President Bush is learning in his post-Iraq war re-election process, it may be that we should adopt and anglicize a latin tag and warn: ‘*caveat pre-emptor*’. Not *caveat emptor* ‘let the buyer beware’ but ‘let the

1. Who is included in these studies and why?

‘History, corporate and individual, matters for theology.’ Williams is summarizing, and advocating, the assumption of Richard Hooker (p. 26), but this phrase also relates to his own choice of subjects covered. The choice of theologians studied here is affected by incidental, often anniversary,³ invitations for academic lectures,⁴ as well as by the focus of Anglicanism. Presumably Williams would not have agreed to the assignments if he had not sympathized with the subjects and enjoyed the challenges, but the original choices came from outside. His current choice, I imagine, lay in selecting what was available at short notice for publication.⁵ It would be interesting to discover what also was available but left out...

He begins with William Tyndale (c. 1494-1536), ‘the true theological giant of the English Reformation’ (p. 3). Then there follow two chapters on Richard Hooker (1554-1600), and one on George Herbert (1593-1633). So the first four chapters could be classed (tendentiously?) as central evangelical fathers – all of whom are also included in the chapel windows of Ridley Hall, Cambridge.⁶ Then there are chapters on B.F. Westcott (1825-1901), Michael Ramsey (1904-1988), John A.T. Robinson (1919-1983) and a composite final chapter concerning Anglican Approaches to St John’s Gospel on Westcott, E.C. Hoskyns (1884-1937), William Temple (1881-1944) and John A.T. Robinson. So the last four chapters could be classed (again tendentiously?), as central liberal catholic fathers – all of whom may have felt at home at Westcott House, Cambridge. This ‘book of two halves’ classification is not hinted at in the text and it does, of course, ‘flatten out’ key distinctions within the halves, but there may be something in it, even if the links to Fulcrum and Affirming Catholicism may be too anachronistic...

2. Who is missing?

With such a range of detailed studies of Anglican worthies, it may seem churlish to consider who is overlooked, but it may be significant. Firstly, the admitted omissions of Williams. He is conscious of a lost period ‘between the execution of Charles I and the High Victorian age’ and continues:

Given more time, I should have liked to include some study of Thomas Browne, physician and philosopher, Dr Johnson, one of the most serious and in some ways

person leading a preemptive strike beware’. The irony is that ECUSA’s consecration of Gene Robinson is not seen by ECUSA’s leadership as a preemptive strike on the Anglican Communion since it appears to them that it only really effects ECUSA.

³ E.g. fourth centenary of Hooker’s death, fourth centenary of Herbert’s birth, centenary of Westcott’s death, fortieth anniversary edition of John Robinson’s *Honest to God*.

⁴ c.p. C.S. Lewis, *They Asked for a Paper: Papers and Addresses* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962).

⁵ For his earlier, more specialized, collection of essays from academic journals see *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

⁶ See Christopher Cocksworth, ‘Windows of Grace and Truth: Envisaging Anglican-Evangelical Methodology through the Iconography of a Chapel’ (Inaugural Lecture, Cambridge, 6 November 2001), *Theology* Mar/Apr 2003.

surprising Anglicans of his age, and Bishop Butler, whose philosophical apologetic distilled in very intense form some of the intuitions of an earlier period.’⁷ (p.2)

Secondly, it seems strange that Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626) is not mentioned as an omission. Williams introduced and edited selections of his works in the excellent anthology *Love’s Redeeming Work*.⁸ Andrewes was a polymath, multi-linguist, translator, spiritual scholar and bishop, a subtle and sometimes difficult-to-follow preacher, who was thrown into controversies. Now, where have we heard that before?⁹

Thirdly, and more importantly, there are no studies of people who are not English nor of women.¹⁰ This could have been mentioned in the introduction and explained, perhaps, by the fact of ‘particular invitations to reflect on particular people’ or of a publisher’s request to cover English historical shapers of Anglican tradition. However, in the context of the Eames commission with African and Asian voices, in particular, being increasingly heard it is crucial, in the near future, that further short historical studies are requested and written e.g. of Samuel Ajayi Crowther (c. 1806-1891) translator, ethnographer and first African bishop in the Anglican Communion in what is now Nigeria; Nehemiah Goreh (1825-1885), Brahmin convert, and lecturer at Bishop’s College Calcutta; Bishop Azariah (1874-1945), Indian bishop and ecumenist;¹¹ and Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati (1858-1922), Brahmin convert, translator and social activist amongst women.

3. What does ‘Anglican’ refer to?

Williams, in an earlier, unsigned, essay, ‘The Anglican Quest for Holiness’¹² has already provided a subtly-distilled description of an Anglican ethos. In his introduction to his current book, he builds on this, and again it is worthy of a long quotation:

The word ‘Anglican’ begs a question at once. I have simply taken it as referring to the sort of Reformed Christian thinking that was done by those (in Britain at first, then far more widely) who were content to settle with a church order grounded in the historic ministry of bishops, priests¹³ and deacons, and with the classical early Christian formulations of doctrine about God and Jesus Christ – the Nicene Creed

⁷ Since anniversaries are key stimuli, perhaps someone will issue an invitation to Dr Williams to lecture on Dr Johnson in 2005, for the 250th anniversary of the publication of Johnson’s dictionary?

⁸ Geoffrey Rowell, Kenneth Stevenson and Rowan Williams (eds), *Love’s Redeeming Work: The Anglican Quest for Holiness* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), pp. 111-119.

⁹ Perhaps, again, 2005 will come to our aid with an invitation to celebrate the 450th anniversary of Andrewes’ birth? Or 2011, the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible, over which Andrewes was a presiding genius.

¹⁰ In his key chapters on Hooker and Herbert, he draws significantly on the work of two contemporary women scholars: D. Shuger and Elizabeth Clarke respectively.

¹¹ Azariah was also, strangely, omitted from Geoffrey Rowell’s section of *Love’s Redeeming Work*. See the major study of him by Susan Billington Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V. S. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India* (London: Curzon; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

¹² ‘General Introduction: An Anglican Quest for Holiness’, Rowell et.al. (eds), *Love’s Redeeming Work*, pp. xxiii-xxxiii.

¹³ There is a misprint here in the text, which has the singular ‘priest’. p. 2

and the Definition of Chalcedon. It is certainly *Reformed* thinking, and we should not let the deep and pervasive echoes of the Middle Ages mislead us: it assumes the governing authority of the Bible, made available in the vernacular, and repudiates the necessity of a central executive authority in the Church's hierarchy. It is committed to a radical criticism of any theology that sanctions the hope that human activity can contribute to the winning of God's favour, and so is suspicious of organized asceticism (as opposed to the free expression of devotion to God which may indeed be profoundly ascetic in its form) and of a theology of the sacraments which appears to bind God too closely to material transactions (as opposed to seeing the free activity of God sustaining and transforming certain human actions done in Christ's name). (pp. 2-3)

He continues that he hopes that this is a 'reasonably generous definition'. Indeed it is, in both senses of the word 'reasonable', and in the Fulcrum sense of 'nourishing, generous orthodoxy.'¹⁴ Later Williams intriguingly comments: '[Tyndale] sends us back to the foundations of our faith - especially those of us who, whatever our qualifications and queries, still stand in the reformed tradition' (p. 22).

Williams summarises his suggested, distinctive constellation in Anglican history and then concludes:

The result is a mixture of poetry, reticence, humility before mystery, local loyalties and painful self-scrutinies. It is not a formula for being Anglican; simply a description of how and where some kind of recognisable historical identity came to exist.' (p. 7)

This is both typical and topical. It is typical of an Anglican ethos and also of Williams's insight. It is topical in that 'local loyalties' are surfacing in response to Gene Robinson's consecration. Some ECUSA leaders are saying: 'This is our current story, part of our inculturated mission to our gay communities: let us now get on with it.' Some Church of Uganda leaders are saying: 'Our church was founded in blood in the 1880s, in defiant rejection of homosexual practices.' On the Eames Commission and elsewhere (not least in Lambeth Palace), 'painful self-scrutinies' are being experienced and being summoned.

4. William Tyndale and Social Justice

Williams does not do the obvious. In his chapters on Tyndale, Hooker and Herbert, he focuses on unusual aspects of them and draws on particularly detailed, contemporary, academic scholarship. Tyndale, Hooker and Herbert – but not as we know them...

When invited to lecture on William Tyndale, he only mentions his translation of the New Testament near the end: maybe because the specialized original audience knew all about this. He elucidates instead Tyndale's 'Parable of the Wicked Husbandman',¹⁵ and comments:

¹⁴ See the Fulcrum ethos statement earlier on this web page, www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk

¹⁵ Williams refers to the Parker Society edition, Cambridge, 1848.

[It encompasses] a fresh and profound statement of the doctrine of justification as well as a scathing moral critique of the current practices of ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical society in respect of the use of money and possessions. It is perhaps the most powerful treatment of social morality to come from the Reformation era in Britain – more systematic and theologically acute than Latimer’s sermons, for instance, and with some strong affinities with the radicalism of Winstanley’s Diggers more than a century later. It builds on Luther, above all his *Freedom of the Christian*, but goes well beyond the German Reformer in specific social application. It deserves a far wider readership than it has ever yet gained. (p. 11-12)

Williams thus underlines the links between spiritual justification and social justice. He also, typically, sets the broad context and compares Tyndale with continental and English reformers. He later sharply focuses Tyndale’s point: ‘Wealth is there for the purpose of making friends, and those friends are, without any qualification, the poor on your doorstep.’ (p. 13) He concludes:

Those concerned with Tyndale’s language do well to remember what it serves; and those inspired by Tyndale’s social vision need to learn how to speak with vigour and honesty about it, in a world of easy and glib speeches. (p. 23)

He thereby issues a double challenge both to the Tyndale Society (to whom the original lecture was given in 1998) and to us.

5. Richard Hooker and the Significance of the Sacraments

It may be helpful to set the scene, which Williams presumes his readers know. Hooker was ‘Reformed’ but drew on ‘natural law’. He answered serious, polemical controversy with massive ‘hinterland’ learning. Walter Travers, the Puritan preacher, attacked Richard Hooker in 1585 in his own church (The Temple) and the Elizabethan Settlement, as backtracking on the Reformation – or not taking the Reformation far enough. Rather than respond with a tract, Hooker wrote his magisterial, multi-volume *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.¹⁶ Grit, oyster and pearl come to mind.

Williams, himself, in the past has produced a pearl in reaction to grit. In terms of response to ultimate challenge, it takes one to know one. It seems to me, that Maurice Wiles’s patristic questioning of the divinity of Christ from the 1970s onwards¹⁷ irritated Williams into his massive project, which produced his major book of academic research, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*.¹⁸ Since his appointment as Archbishop, Williams has had to

¹⁶ See Richard Hooker, *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr. Richard Hooker* (Oxford: OUP, 1845).

¹⁷ See Maurice Wiles, ‘Christianity Without Incarnation’ in John Hick (ed.), *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977).

¹⁸ Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London: SCM, 2001), first published (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1987).

respond to other gritty irritants: not now the radical revisioning of Wiles, but the puritan challenge of ecclesiological limits and the ultra-liberal provocative stretching of Anglican Communion boundaries.

Williams has a provocative parenthesis concerning Hooker. He is summarizing his views:

Episcopacy is not straightforwardly of divine institution (a conviction which always made his Tractarian admirers uneasy), but it is a reasonable and defensible self-disposition of the Church, originating in the immediate wake of the apostles. (p. 37)

So we see that Hooker was neither a middling-to-high Anglican, nor a fully signed up Calvinist.¹⁹ In the first chapter on Hooker,²⁰ Williams claims he is:

...one of the inventors of that distinctive Anglican mood which I have elsewhere called 'contemplative pragmatism'²¹ – a mood that embraces a fair degree of clarity about the final goal of human beings and the theological conditions for getting there, but allows room for a good deal of reticence as to how this ought to work itself out and scepticism as to claims that we have found comprehensive formulations. (p.26)

This, and the following quotation about the sacraments, may relate positively to Fulcrum's ethos:

...[Hooker] emphasises that the purpose of sacramental action is not simply to be a kind of 'teaching aid', supplementary to the proclamation of the Word. If sacraments are indeed a form of visual teaching, it is, he says, all too easy to slip into the assumption that they are a bit of an afterthought, less deserving of reverence and attention than verbal instruction. (p. 29)

Williams continues interpreting Hooker: 'Straight ideological instruction is not and cannot be the primary point of worship or the means of growth in holiness.' (p. 30) The perceptive point Hooker and Williams stress is the link between the full humanity of Christ and full worship:

¹⁹ Nigel Voak, in his *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will and Grace* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), questions both Nigel Atkinson's Calvinist view of Hooker in his *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997) and Peter Lake's proto-Laudian view of Hooker in his *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterian and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988). The Fulcrum website has commissioned a review of Voak's book.

²⁰ The essay 'Hooker the Theologian', entitled in this book 'Richard Hooker (1554-1600) Contemplative Pragmatist', is published in the *Journal of Anglican Studies* 1.1, August 2003, pp.104-16. It has a link, and may be viewed, on the Fulcrum web site. Is it a coincidence that it is published in Australia, where some strident puritan theology, not too dissimilar from that of Walter Travers, is emanating from the diocese of Sydney?

²¹ Williams, 'An Anglican Quest for Holiness'.

In other words, public worship deals with the whole of that humanity assumed by Christ, its frailty and physicality. We are to be concerned about something more than ideas in worship because the act of God in Christ is more than the conveying of information to us; it is the renewal from within of what is possible for human experience. (p. 31)

The instruction-focused liturgy assumes all too readily, in Hooker's eyes, that accurate information can be satisfactorily conveyed to those in need of it by an ideological specialist; and so it naturally works with a model of the church community which presupposes that you can identify adequate and inadequate levels of understanding and draw your boundaries accordingly. (p. 31)

It seems to me that in conservative evangelical circles, although stress is made on worship being part of the whole of a Christian's life, corporate worship is seen as, essentially, for 'teaching': we come to church to be taught by God through expository preaching. Hooker provides a challenging corrective to this, as well as a positive exposition of the significance of the sacraments. He gives extended emphasis on Christology and the full humanity of Christ, in the context of his discussion of the sacraments. Perhaps, we could suggest that seeing worship as essentially for 'teaching' reflects a truncated, docetic Christology where Christ only seems to be human. In response we could say: we really do need fleshly, physical things like sacraments because the Word became – fully – flesh, and dwelt among us.

Let us leave Hooker with some words of C. S. Lewis in his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* who has a wonderful passage with a contemporary ring:

In the first place the *Polity* marks a revolution in the art of controversy. Hitherto, in England, that art had involved only tactics; Hooker added strategy. Long before the close fighting in Book III begins, the puritan position has been rendered desperate by the great flanking movements in Books I and II. Hooker has already asked and answered questions which Cartwright and Travers had never considered and which are fatal to their narrow scripturalism. He also provided a model for all who in any age have to answer similar ready-made recipes for setting the world right in five weeks. (Travers is dead: the type is perennial).²²

In the light of the Eames Commission, we may note the importance of patience and long-term solutions in dealing with disillusion and potential dissolution.

6. George Herbert and the Afflicted Heart

Too many also see George Herbert as a middling-to-high Anglican: Elizabeth Clarke, whose Oxford D.Phil²³ was co-supervised by Rowan Williams, has shown clearly his subtle and questioning Reformed position. Williams, acknowledges his debt to Clarke (p.

²² C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: OUP, 1954) p. 459.

²³ Elizabeth Clarke, *Theory and Theology in George Herbert's Poetry: 'Divinitie, and Poesie, Met'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

140) in a majestic lecture, originally given in 1994 in Trinity College, Cambridge. I had learnt of this lecture from a scholar of Herbert, who referred to it as the best short treatment of Herbert he had heard. So far unpublished, it is the centrepiece of this new collection.

Instead of giving biographical details at the beginning of the chapter 'Inside Herbert's *Afflictions*', Williams dives straight into one of the most difficult and agonizing lines of Herbert's poetry. Again, it takes one to know one.²⁴

Williams writes in his introduction:

Herbert stands close to Hooker – but, as we might expect from a poet, presses still further, implicitly refusing even Hooker's subtle resolution, or at any rate transposing it into a higher and more risky key.²⁵ (p. 4)

This is deftly probed in the chapter on Herbert. In his poem *Afflictions (1)*, the poet drops 'technical' theological terms into colloquial settings. These would have been easily recognizable in Calvinist thought, e.g. 'just' and 'perseverance.' Herbert's worry about his own assurance of salvation²⁶ is drawn in a raw manner, with irony and anger, at the end of the poem:

Ah my deare God! Though I am clean forgot,
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not. (p. 63)

This has perplexed commentators down the years, and is drawn out perceptively in Williams's observations, who detects here a harsh protest and an open answer. 'All comfort must be refused until the ending simultaneously brings the self's rebellion to a culmination and quells it.' (p. 65)

Where is Herbert's thought to be situated? In Elizabeth Clarke's contribution to Geoffrey Rowell's *The English Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism*²⁷ she 'tried to problematize a simple equation of George Herbert's beliefs and practice with what has come to be known as High-Anglicanism.'²⁸ In her book on Herbert, she summarizes a key chapter in a work edited by Kenneth Fincham:²⁹

²⁴ See Rowan Williams, *The Poems of Rowan Williams* (Oxford: The Perpetua Press, 2002).

²⁵ Hooker's subtle resolution is set out by Williams on p. 61. 'The counsel ironically cited, is in this case, not so much that of a Reformed theology, but rather that of the pastorally moderate critics of Calvinist rigorism on the subject of assurance. To turn again to Hooker: his sermon on "The Certainty and Perpetuity of Faith", preached in 1585 or 1586 ...presents a severe and thoroughgoing critique of the idea that assurance is exclusive of doubt or depression, or even the conviction of unfruitfulness; it reads at times almost like a pastoral gloss on many of Herbert's poems, and Herbert's knowledge of this text is overwhelmingly probable.' It may be worth asking if Herbert felt that Hooker, in this sermon, was playing Job's counselor to his Job?

²⁶ The depressive William Cowper is a more extreme example of a poet who had this fear that he may not, after all, experience being a member of the elect.

²⁷ Geoffrey Rowell, *The English Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism* (Oxford: OUP, 1992).

²⁸ Clarke, *Herbert's Poetry*, p.10, n.34.

²⁹ Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church 1603-1642* (London, 1993).

[Fincham] posits four categories within the early Stuart Church of England, defined by beliefs and practice: radical Puritans, moderate Puritans, conformist Calvinists and anti-Calvinists. This book [i.e. Clarke's] will situate Herbert firmly in the third category. Herbert's attitude to Church authority as expressed in *The Country Parson* is deeply conformist, which is why Barnabas Olney published it in 1652 as an example of ideal Anglican practice... Conformist he certainly was, and I shall argue in this book that he is unambiguously Calvinist in his doctrine and spirituality.³⁰

So, Herbert is the conformist (concerning church authority) Calvinist. Clarke also goes on to quote from an intriguing article by Gene Edward Veith:

the...*via media* was not in Herbert's day a mere compromise, a golden mean. Rather, it was a balance and an integration, an affirmation of the best of both traditions. In the sense that it was Catholic – in its sacramentalism, its liturgical worship, and in its continuity with the past – it was very Catholic. In the sense that it was Reformed – in its focus on the grace of God, in its Biblicism, in its evangelical liberty – it was very Reformed.³¹

Clarke comments: 'This conception of Herbert's *via media* is a complex synthesis of various elements in the European Christian tradition, rather than a narrow theological position.'³² Perhaps we could add that Fulcrum's position is closer to Herbert's *via media* than to John Henry Newman's *via media*?³³

7. Westcott on Scripture, Ramsey on Church, and Robinson on Modern Culture

Now, more briefly, we move to Westcott, Ramsey and Robinson. Williams outlines Brooke Foss Westcott's involvement in the textual research and translating of *The Revised Version* of the Bible and underlines his 'endlessly patient attention to the detail

³⁰ Clarke, *Herbert's Poetry*, p. 10.

³¹ G.E. Veith Jr., 'The Religious Wars in George Herbert Criticism: Reinterpreting Seventeenth Century Anglicanism', *George Herbert Journal*, 11 (1988), p. 18. Clarke summarizes Veith's humorous suggestion: '...modern critics have almost reenacted the Civil War in their opposing convictions about Herbert's theology. He gives a list of modern-day "Roundheads" (those who claim that Herbert has Puritan tendencies) and "Cavaliers" (those who read his poetry in the light of Catholic devotional practice). Clarke, *Herbert's Poetry*, p. 10-11.

³² Clarke, *Herbert's Poetry*, p. 11. Chapter 13 of George Herbert's *The Country Parson* sets out a variety of external fittings considered necessary 'to keep the middle way between superstition and slovenliness'. Clarke comments: '[Herbert's] 1620 epigrams *Musae Responsariae* are dedicated to a king who had promoted Calvinist doctrine at Dort, and their author aligns himself with famous Calvinist theologians: however, they include vehement attacks on Puritans who reject ceremonies such as infant baptism and churching, and defences of the wearing of vestments and using the sign of the Cross.' Clarke, *Herbert's Poetry*, p. 183.

³³ See Frank M. Turner, *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) for a magisterial, and controversial, consideration of Newman, drawing on key letters from his early period: '...the later Tractarianism that Newman associated with the term *Via Media* had, as he himself admitted, failed as a religious experiment, with some of its adherents converting to Roman Catholicism and others to religious skepticism.' p. 163. See also Turner's comments on Newman's *Tract 38* and *Tract 41* on the *Via Media* on p. 203.

of Scripture' which makes for human and spiritual maturity. (p.76) He summarises Westcott's view in a fine, evocative phrase: 'the fundamental conviction is that Scripture is a field in which to exercise and to grow spiritually.' (p.76)³⁴ Williams continues with his own elucidation: 'To confront the Bible in its entirety is to confront a reality which will continue to surprise us if it is really of God; to systematize it and to idolize the text as a finished set of solutions is to reject the true gift.' (p.77) This key concept of 'gift', or grace, concerning the Bible is emphasized again: 'the Bible itself is the narrative of the fundamental paradox that we search because we have already been found.' (p. 81)

Westcott's life and scholarship was vast and varied. Williams focuses on his scriptural and patristic learning but Westcott also had an interesting impact on the wider Anglican Communion. While Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, he co-founded the Cambridge Mission to Delhi, which aimed to set up a school of theologian missionaries who would interact with Hindu culture and learning, somewhat as Cyril of Alexandria did with Hellenistic culture and philosophy.³⁵ As Bishop of Durham, he encouraged missionary vocations amongst his clergy and people of his diocese and four of his sons went out as missionaries to India.³⁶

Michael Ramsey also was Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, before being consecrated bishop and moving to Durham, York and Canterbury. Williams concentrates on his classic book *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*³⁷ and summarises its message about the Church succinctly: 'It is first and foremost the epiphany of God's action...it exists to radiate the glory of God.' (p.93) This helps us to understand Williams's earlier neat phrase: 'Fundamentally, the Church *is* the message' (p. 92) – not in the sense that 'we preach the Church' but that 'the Church's very being is the *language* in which the message is communicable in its fullness.'

It may be worth comparing this heightened view of 'being' over mere 'function' with Williams' earlier stress on Tyndale's theology of Christ: 'His works are the outflowing of what he is.' (p. 12) and with his comments on Hooker's concept of God: '...Hooker shows his anxiety over a doctrine of absolute divine decrees divorced from a theology of the 'natural' will of God "to exercise his goodness of his owne nature, by producing effects wherein the riches of the glorie thereof may appear'. (p. 42, citing Hooker, Dublin Fragments, section 27).

This 'epiphanic' model of the Church, Williams balances with another phrase of Ramsey's, who speaks of what the Catholic Church 'learns and relearns in humiliation.' (p. 99):

³⁴ See 1 Timothy 4:8 and 1 Timothy 4:13.

³⁵ See Kenneth Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love: Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions, 1846-1914* (London: Epworth Press, 1995), pp.60-71.

³⁶ When one of Westcott's sons, Basil, died of cholera after only four years in India, his close friend, who also was deeply influenced by Westcott, offered to replace him. This was Charles F. Andrews, who became the friend and helper of Mahatma Gandhi. Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love*, pp. 174-5.

³⁷ Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (London: Longman, 1936).

Catholicism always stands before the church door at Wittenberg to read the truth by which she is created and by which also she is judged.³⁸

Williams comments aptly: ‘We should be on the watch constantly for the kind of ideological bondage that threatens to take over a Church-based or Church-focused theology.’ (p. 100)

I was struck by Williams’s point about the influence of Karl Barth on Ramsey. This came via Ramsey’s mentor Edwyn Hoskyns, who had translated Barth’s second commentary on Romans. Williams summarizes the challenges of Barth, and Ramsey’s book, as: ‘...forcing upon the rather comfortable world of Anglican philosophical theology the imperative of rediscovering a theology of the cross.’ (p. 89)³⁹

Finally, John Robinson, a third theological bishop, and the author of *Honest to God*.⁴⁰ He was different from Westcott and Ramsey in his radicalism and in that he later returned to the University of Cambridge after being Bishop of Woolwich. Williams is more critical of Robinson than of any other theologian in this book, yet with gentleness and reverence: ‘Robinson’s own transparent goodness and optimism made him a flawed reader of his times – though a brilliant mirror to them.’ (p. 6)

Williams perceptively sketches the Anglican church scene of the 1950s against which Robinson reacted: ‘its renewed institutional confidence, its mildly anti-intellectual leadership, and its half-conscious complicity in the ‘end of ideology’ mood in the wider intellectual climate...’ (p. 110). He suspects that part of the book’s success in terms of sales lies in ‘...its rhetoric of depth, sincerity and intensity. However poorly it was understood, the notion of the moral dignity of religious belief communicated itself somehow to the reading public.’ (p. 119). Williams continues with a key, critical point:

But it was a belief very loosely anchored indeed to either narrative or community – the two most influential contextual issues in about 80 per cent of dogmatic theology written in English since 1980. Dignity was perceived as attached to personal fervour and integrity. But these were not conceived or assessed with reference to a governing narrative (and it is perhaps in ethics that the greatest danger has been done). (p. 119)

The point is well made, as is his earlier comment concerning the rise in Jurgen Moltmann’s influence since 1970 and the wider development of trinitarian theologies:

By the early 1980s, *Honest to God* seemed a museum piece; the philosophical and doctrinal idioms regarded by Robinson and many of his generation as speculative indulgences had become keystones in all kinds of ambitious new constructions.’ (p. 116)

³⁸ Ramsey, *Gospel and Catholic Church*, p. 180.

³⁹ For Williams’ other illuminating references to Barth see p. 18 (comparing Tyndale and Barth) and p. 36 (Hooker and Barth).

⁴⁰ John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM, 1963).

Westcott, and Robinson also appear in the final chapter, together with E.C. Hoskyns and William Temple, concerning Anglican approaches to St John's Gospel. Williams points out that Robinson's posthumously published book *The Priority of John*,⁴¹ sought to establish an early date for the Fourth Gospel and that the teaching of the Johannine Jesus was not totally different from that of the Synoptic Jesus.

Conclusion

This fascinating collection of essays contains many shafts of insight concerning application, 'outsiders' and comparisons. Williams on several occasions applies his theological points to our contemporary world without ignoring the shift in contexts: e.g. Tyndale's social vision (p. 17) and Hooker's possible trajectory towards postmodern perspectives (p. 44). There are interesting hints of the importance of 'outsiders': Hooker believed that Roman Catholics could go to heaven (p. 24) and Tyndale preached about our calling to share our goods even with infidels (muslims?) (p.15). The comparisons include Herbert with Hooker on Holy Communion (p. 29)⁴² and Hooker illuminating Herbert on pride (p. 59).

What of the weaknesses of the book? Since most of the original hearers of these lectures were *cognoscenti*, much is often assumed e.g. 'As in the well-known examination of Tewksbury (p. 17). Perhaps the commissioning editor should have insisted on short introductory, italicized paragraphs, at the beginning of each chapter, which could have given an outline of biography and significance.⁴³ Sometimes the style is too abstruse and the allusions may not be picked up. While granting that this is a collection of particular, previously-written papers, mention has already been made about key people and perspectives that are missing.

Williams writes out of a deep 'hinterland' of research and study. His style is fluid with some light touches of humour e.g. 'Richard Hooker believed (injudiciously, in terms of his reputation and career)... (p. 24)⁴⁴ and 'It is almost that episcopacy is the more desirable the less you think about it theologically...' (p. 37)

Perhaps it may be observed that Williams has echoes within himself of aspects of all the theologians he presents: Tyndale's concern for the poor and for social justice; Hooker's massive, patient learning; Herbert's spiritually sustaining poems; Westcott's painstaking detail in patristics; Ramsey's calling to Canterbury and influence from Orthodoxy; and

⁴¹ John A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*, ed. J.F. Coakley (London: SCM, 1985).

⁴² 'It is, incidentally, worth comparing Hooker here with Herbert's poem on the Holy Communion in the Williams manuscript (a long unpublished manuscript of Herbert's poems), which makes much the same point; the purpose of the Eucharist is the transformation of *us*, not the bread... Herbert argues that Christ died for humanity, not for bread, so that it is the former that needs changing – though again, as for Hooker, without being destroyed in the process.' (p. 29)

⁴³ As in Rowell et.al (eds), *Love's Redeeming Work*.

⁴⁴ By tradition, Hooker has been called the 'judicious divine'.

Robinson's evident desire to connect to culture – though for Williams this is more in terms of lost icons than of iconoclasm.⁴⁵

Can this book save the Anglican Communion from being precipitously fissiparous? No, for that is the prerogative of God. But this first major submission to the Eames Commission – for that, in effect, is what it is - does indeed provide some heartening, historical precedents, summed up in the phrase that concludes the introduction: 'passionate patience'.

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⁴⁵ Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).