

Glory to the newborn king



“Truly too iron-hearted are all they, who rejoice not in the blessed incarnation and glorious death of this most blessed seed Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom so many and so excellent treasures of heavenly goods have freely been given to us. All things, even to the point of death, did he do for our health and salvation. Yes, and that so consummate and perfect, that there was nothing left behind unaccomplished that might turn into our wealth, commodity, and profit concerning redemption.”

Thomas Becon, *The Jewel of Joy*

CONTENTS

- 1 GAFCON Australasia 2021: More Than a Giant Selfie**
Jodie McNeill
- 3 Corrimal, Covid, and Christ**
Dave Esdale
- 6 Losing Community and Gaining Opportunity**
Michael Figueira
- 9 ‘Anthem for Christmas Day’**
- 10 A Theological Account of Blessing**
David Höhne
- 15 Why Do We Say Things Together in Church?**
Andrew Errington
- 17 Lady Jane Grey: A Firm Faith**
Mark Earngey
- 19 Are We Antinomian?**
Mike Leite
- 26 ‘My Heart is Woe’**
- 27 The Best Advent Devotional I Have Read**
Kirsten McKinlay
- 29 Communicating Christmas**
Kylie Yip
- 32 ‘A Carol for Christmas Day’**
- 34 A Short History of Christian Marriage**
Mark Earngey
- 42 The Sign of the Cross in Baptism**
Broughton Knox



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Gafcon Australasia 2021

More Than a Giant Selfie



Jodie McNeill, Deputy Chair,
Gafcon Australasia 2021 Organising
Committee

The iconic Temple Steps photo from Gafcon Jerusalem 2018 represents far more than a giant selfie. It records the gathering of a diverse group of Anglicans who share a common love of the Lord Jesus and a passion to joyfully embrace the orthodox teachings of his Bible.

It also captures the unity of a fellowship that offers love and support to those who have been shunned by their diocesan colleagues because they have chosen to stand firm upon the unchanging foundation of the Scriptures. The recent

faltering of fidelity to the Scriptures in some quarters of Anglicanism in New Zealand and Australia underscores the importance of such vital fellowship.

As we prepare next July to bring together faithful Anglicans from Australia, New Zealand and our neighbouring Pacific Islands, we are planning a week-long conference that aims to help us enjoy and celebrate our common faith, so that we might be equipped and energised to faithfully proclaim Christ in our region.

Yet, as was the case at the Jerusalem gathering, next year's Australasian event will provide much-needed love and support for our Anglican brothers and sisters who have become increasingly disenfranchised due to decisions that have initiated a conscious drift from orthodoxy towards impaired communion.

So, as we come together to be strengthened to faithfully proclaim Christ to the nations, we will also gather to offer support and resources to those whose conscience leads them to seek the fellowship of Anglican brothers and sisters outside their local context.

Our keynote speaker is Dr Ashley Null, who will be presenting to us an Anglican approach to unity, diversity and



charity. As he reminded us earlier this year at the online Gafcon Australasian Celebration, “unity is a theological unity”, and that where the Scriptures are clear, they are compelling, since “salvation is both faith and morals”.

Furthermore, he highlighted that Cranmer’s principle was that, “where oppression is rightly being opposed, we must love those who disagree with us, and we must love into repentance those who are oppressing, as well as loving into freedom those who are oppressed.”

We look forward to Canon Null teaching us at this event, as he offers a vital framework for the Anglican church in our region as we seek to navigate a ‘new normal’ existence in the increasingly impaired fellowship.

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The recent faltering of fidelity to the Scriptures in some quarters of Anglicanism in New Zealand and Australia underscores the importance of such vital fellowship.”

Gafcon Australasia 2021 Conference will be held at Stanwell Tops Conference Centre, Sydney, from 19-23 July 2021, and details can be found at www.gafconaustralasia.org.

Whilst it will be hard to beat the Temple Steps as a photo location, we’re praying that those who gather for the 2021 Australasian selfie will share in a powerful expression of the unity, diversity and charity that will underpin our passion to proclaim Christ faithfully to our region. **ACR**

Pre-register your place here: <http://www.gafconaustralia.org/conference/>

Corrimal, Covid, and Christ



Dave Esdale, Rector of Corrimal Anglican Church

Heading into 2020 there was a lot of hope for what God might do amongst us. Over a number of years we have been developing our ‘engage ministries’. These were ministries which gave opportunity for our church community to engage with our area and invite people to things we ran through our ‘evangelism ministries’.

At the end of 2019 we were seeing people become Christians and others have their faith in Christ awakened. There was a fresh excitement to what God was doing. Some new families

also joined us at the beginning of 2020.

With all this momentum we moved into 2020 which concerned me because this was the year I planned to take long service leave. There were capable people in place to continue on, but it still had the potential to interrupt the momentum. I couldn’t say Covid was my greatest fear because I would never have dreamed anything like this would have happened while I was away. We had neighbouring churches (especially St Michael’s Wollongong) who were helping with our preaching while I was away. When we shut down, the church decided to tune into St Michael’s service. We closed all ministries except for our Mobile Community Pantry (in partnership with Anglicare) and moved our small groups to meeting on Zoom.

Coming back from LSL we decided it was important to get our Sunday Service online as quickly as possible. We did this well and were surprised, like many others, how many we were reaching through going online. The live aspect of our services were our Zoom meetings. We continued to strengthen and encourage our small group leaders. I meet fortnightly with our small group leaders and it is a chance to make sure everyone is cared for in the church



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It has been wonderful to see how God has transformed lives through this time. It hasn't been ideal and I really feel the brokenness of our world, but I continue to trust God and continue to learn to trust God more.

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community. Each small group has regular members and then has other people, who don't attend the small group, but whom the small group is committed to praying and caring for. We developed our pastoral care team which helped reach people who were not connected in with our small group network. A number of people also had a focus on caring for people in our local nursing homes, delivering videos of our service and helping them get online.

This time has certainly been unset-

ting. There is the 'unknown' of what things will be like when we return. We were having some financial difficulties in retaining our assistant minister coming into this time. He was involved in ministering to youth/children along with our engage areas of ministry. We were praying that in 2020 we would see God grow his church and we would be in a financial position to maintain our assistant minister's role. This of course has not been the case and he has now moved on. Another significant retired couple also moved away to pursue another ministry endeavor. The leadership team are tired from the length of time we have endured these changes and not knowing when restrictions will end or change. Now we are in a place where many of our neighbouring churches are in different places as far as coming back goes. We have been cautious in coming back. While many are thankful for our approach some feel frustrated as they see other churches

already meeting back physically.

However this time has provided us with great opportunity as well. We have been able to use this opportunity to teach how we might live 'beautiful lives' (1 Pet 2:12) in this time. One of our engage ministries is what we call 'play and chat' which is a type of playgroup. It was more of a gathering of all types of people around a play group. One of the people who usually attended (not a member of our church) organised an informal gathering in a local park. They invited the church to join them and now this is a regular meeting where the intention behind our program is still being achieved. The relationships we have with our community are strong through the love of our church community. We are moving back to a hybrid Sunday gathering where we are encouraging people to stay online as we work out how we can gather physically. People who are gathering are those involved in serving in some way in our Sunday gathering. We meet half an hour before our service and work out our roles in anticipation for what God might do as

we gather. Our hope is to slowly invite more and more people onto our serving teams until we reach capacity. Then we will divide and start another service. Our hope is that we don't just come back to the place we were before Covid, but come back better reflecting the church God has called us to be. So we are hoping there will be a new mindset of arriving well before church in order to serve in anticipation for God using us to build his church. We want to move back in a way that challenges our old practices and culture.

Personally this time has been a huge challenge to me. I am reminded that very little is in my control, but God is gracious and will continue to build his church. It has been wonderful to see how God has transformed lives through this time. It hasn't been ideal and I really feel the brokenness of our world, but I continue to trust God and continue to learn to trust God more. It is his church and we serve him in the comfort of his grace. I continue to discover what that means more in practice. **ACR**

Losing Community and Gaining Opportunity



Michael Figueira, Student Minister,
Sadleir Anglican Church

What is happening in the Australian soul? One of my lecturers at Moore Theological College would ask this question of many of those he met in the local community in order to understand our culture.

A common response that he heard from those in the medical profession concerned the alarming loneliness epidemic that has been sweeping through the fabric of our society and fracturing the Australian soul. This year the pandemic has only heightened the intensity of this reality.

One of the contributing factors to this loneliness epidemic is the disintegration of the local community. A local community can be understood as a group of people who are committed to cherish and relationally enrich one another with their time, energy, and resources. However, community is difficult to foster and maintain especially when individualism, consumerism and convenience is king. In a recent interview, philosopher James K.A. Smith identifies this issue, saying, “There is a not accidental correlation between our narrow view of freedom as autonomy and independence and our increased social isolation and loneliness... we get sealed into these cubicles of self-concern and we are walled off from community.”¹ The Western individualist mindset grates against what is needed to build community. Consequently, densely close-knit local community groups have been replaced by multiple, partial, and far-flung social networks. Schools, sporting clubs and churches are perhaps the only places where the relic of a sense of community is preserved.

1 www.publicchristianity.org/the-freedom-paradox/

The loss of community

The effects of the loss of community are profound and varied. With the demise of community there is a decline in honest conversation and meaningful in-person contact. Social media is touted as an ‘online community’ and an effective solution to connect with the hundreds of ‘friends’ one may have. Conveniently, the power rests in the individual who can dictate the level of relationship involvement and commitment on their own superficial terms. It gives a façade of friendship and community, yet only at arms-length. A simple like or a comment acknowledges one’s brief ‘commitment’ to the relationship. This has flow-on effects with the way that we as a society interact with people who share different worldviews. We simply ignore or shun the voices that put forward views that are in opposition to our own camp.

The loss of community also brings with it the loss of shared spaces where personal and meaningful interaction can be experienced. This has created a problem for those who wish to find a suitable partner in the dating space. Hence, the rise in superficial dating apps such as Tinder where potential partners come up on a screen with their curated profiles. One can examine the possibilities and express an interest by a simple swipe of the finger across the screen.

With the disintegration of community, boredom quickly sets in. Our thirst for entertainment flowing out of our consumerist mindset is an attempt to fill this void. Bingeing on the latest television shows from streaming ser-

vices for hours on end and reclining in the comfort of our own four walls to shield ourselves from any sort of deep-rooted commitment to the lives of those in the community is the new norm. Furthermore, the loss of community has coincided with the breakdown and dysfunction of the family unit. The final battle lines against the onslaught of individualism was the family unit but this is being quickly eroded away. Christmas can often be the most painful season for people as they find themselves alone or are forced to ignore each other from across the room. The dinner table used to be the sacred space where a family is united from the labours of the day as they share in their highs and lows. Now the lounge room is where family members are entertained as they are glued to their screens in silence.

The loss of community is a dehumanising reality. It warps and disorders the way that we were designed to relate to one another and ultimately to God.

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The Christian community is not only inwardly looking but it is also outwardly looking as it brings the message of the gospel out into the world.

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It stems from our sinful nature which seeks to alienate ourselves further from one another and from the life of God. Ephesians 4:18-19 puts it starkly: “They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them

due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.” These individualistic indulgences of impurity and greed drive a wedge between relationships as people are objectified and commodified.

The Christian community

Community is not a word that you will find in your Bible and it can often be an overused buzz word. But Scripture does envisage the notion of a community. This can be seen in both the local church and the wider fellowship that Christians share because of who they belong to (1 John 1:3). We may try and liken it to a community group like Scouts, a Bowling club or the Country Women’s Association. However, it is a community that is unlike any other because it is formed and established by God as he saves people by his grace (Eph 2:4ff). In the book of Acts, Christians are living in close proximity, such that they are regularly, prayerfully interacting with each other, and the word of God is being taught, believed, and obeyed (Acts 2:42-47). The Christian community is not only inwardly looking but it is also outwardly looking as it brings the message

of the gospel out into the world. There is a profound unity among Christians as they are brought near to each other by the blood of Christ (Eph 2:13). They no longer remain foreigners and strangers but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of his household built upon the foundation of the preaching of Christ (Eph 2:19-20). The implications for the Christian life is that it is lived in a transformed community of love and other-person centredness united in Christ (4:1-5:20). This reality should be reflected in the church (that is, the local assembly of God’s people), as well as the community of relationships between God’s people that can persist outside the regular assembly.

The Australian soul may descend further into loneliness, as it abandons the value of community. For Christians, the temptation is to follow suit and neglect meeting together (Heb 10:25). The comforting lures of individualism, consumerism and convenience are enticing, but Christians must no longer live in this way (Eph 4:17). Instead Christians are to foster a community of love centred on Christ as they bear with one another, forgive one another, carry one another’s burdens, pray for each other and encourage one another until the Lord returns (Col 3:13-14; Gal 6:2; Jas 5:16; Heb 10:25). **ACR**

Anthem for Christmas Day

Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1656)

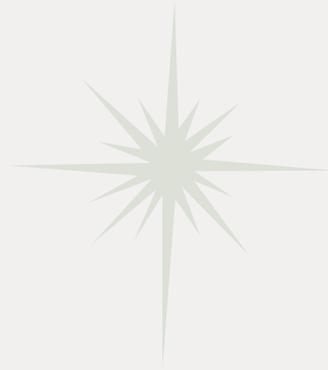
in *The Shaking of the Olive Tree* (London: Cadwel, 1660)

Immortal babe, who this dear day
didst change thine Heaven for our clay,
and didst with flesh thy godhead veil,
Eternal Son of God, all hail!

Shine, happy star; ye angels, sing
Glory on high to Heaven's King:
Run, shepherds, leave your nightly watch,
See Heaven come down to Bethlehem's cratch.

Worship, ye sages of east,
The King of gods in meanness dress'd.
O blessed maid, smile and adore
The God thy womb and arms have bore.

Star, angels, shepherds, and wild sages,
Thou virgin glory of all ages,
Restored frame of Heaven and Earth,
Joy in your Redeemer's birth! **ACR**



A Theological Account of Blessing

At the recent Synod of the Diocese of Wangarratta (Aug 2019) Dr Dorothy Lee mounted a case for the possibility of Australian Anglican churches blessing same-sex unions in keeping with the general practice of blessing civil unions and the local practices of blessing various aspects of daily life. This paper addresses the biblical and theological premises of Dr Lee's address and argues:

- A. The scriptural account of blessing by God is synonymous with the revelation of God's will for the world through Jesus Christ.
 - B. The scriptural account of blessing by God includes the reality of God's curse (or wrath) being prosecuted against creaturely life that does not conform to his will in Christ.
 - C. In the interim between promise and fulfilment, the biblical writers acknowledge a tension between the apparent flourishing of those under curse and the promise of blessing for those who uphold God's covenant.
 - D. It is not possible for an Anglican Church in Australia to uphold the theological nature of blessing and give consent to, affirm, or in any other way condone, same-sex unions.
1. *Blessing and the will of God* – Lee points to the Genesis account claiming that, “To be blessed by God means to receive God's favour in protection of us and provision for us.” In the context of Genesis, this definition is insufficiently exact. In the creation account, to be blessed by God is to be declared fit for purpose and enabled to fulfil that purpose according to divine will.¹ So, as we examine the Creation account in Genesis 1 and 2 the Lord blesses the living things (1:22),



David Höhne, Academic Dean, Lecturer in Christian Doctrine and Philosophy at Moore Theological College

1 W. J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1994), 20-22.

especially the man and woman (1:28), declaring them fit for the purpose of filling the earth. The man and the woman joined together are declared, by God, to be very good and God's will for them in the world is made plain. Later, when the man Noah and his family emerge from the Ark, God's will for humankind is revealed as they are blessed and recommissioned with the creation mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 (*cf.* Gen 9:1)

2. When God calls Abram, he receives promises of blessing and the covenant that is subsequently established by God with him is the inner meaning of those blessings. God reveals both his will for Abram and his will for 'the nations' when he promises to bless Abram and make him a blessing to all nations (Gen 12:1-4; 22:18). When this office of mediator is recognised by the King of Salem (Gen 14:19), the writer describes the act of recognition as a blessing even as Abraham's status in God's intentions is confirmed. Thus, the act of blessing is tightly bound to a revelation of God's will for a person or group.²
3. As Lee acknowledges, "The covenant made with the people of Israel on Mount Sinai brings with it the promise of blessing in response to obedience to the Law of Moses." Yet, Israel is redeemed from slavery on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant (Exod 3:14-15) and, within the covenant relationship, is God's 'special possession' for mediating his will to and for the world as a 'holy nation' and a 'kingdom of priests' (Exod 19:5-6). As they participated in the cultic, moral and judicial elements of the covenant they were blessed by the designated mediators of God's will – Moses and Aaron (Lev 9:22-23). Fidelity on the part of the people to God's promises would result in blessings to every aspect of Israelite life as confirmation that their lives were in accordance with his will (Deut 28:3-6).
4. When, by the power of the Spirit, the eternal Son becomes a creature in his own creation, he enters the line of David and assumes a place as an inheritor of the promises to Abraham (Matt 1:2-15). Without the explicit language of blessing he is publicly recognised as the 'beloved son' of God who perfectly conformed to his Father's will and hence 'with whom [the Father] is well pleased' (Luke 3:22). Subsequently however, both those who see and believe this declaration are blessed (Matt 16:17; Mark 8:28) by God through him as are even those who do not see and yet believe (John 20:29), for this is God's will for people to be saved from their sins (Matt 1:21). Furthermore, the Christ pronounces blessings on any who see in him the purposes of God's coming kingdom and turn aside from the religious aspirations of the world – including the Pharisaic piety of the day (Matt 5:3-10). They are blessed as they acclaim and proclaim the will of God for humanity in the Christ.

2 See Rhys Bezzant, 'To What End? The Blessing of Same-Sex Marriage' in Doctrine Commission of General Synod Report, 2019.

5. *Blessing and cursing in the will of God* – A significant aspect of blessing as a revelation or recognition of divine will in the biblical narrative is its asymmetric complement, divine curse or wrath.³ From the Genesis account of blessing, the rebellion of the man and the woman against God is examined, judged and prosecuted as actions that are not according to God’s will for them. God acts in wrath towards sin, death and evil in creation generated entirely from his holy love for creation and this action is described in the subsequent narrative as curse. So, the man and the woman are restored by God to each other; humanity is restored to a right order with the creatures and humanity is restored to its relationship with the creation according to God’s will. However, and because of their sin, they all experience this as divine curse (Gen 3:14-17).⁴
6. When God chooses Noah to preserve his intentions for humanity in the face of near universal creaturely rebellion, the subsequent blessing he and his family receive must be viewed in the context of God’s curse in the form of the flood (Gen 6).⁵ Later, and more explicitly, when God calls Abram in Genesis 12 and promises the blessings of name, progeny and land, he announces Abram as an agent of *both* blessing and curse: “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3 ESV). The covenant that ensues between God and Abraham delineates human life before God as either blessed or cursed according to conformity with divine will as revealed through God’s gracious choice to bless.
7. As Israel stands on the plains of Moab in anticipation of entering the promised land of blessing, they are reminded by Moses that infidelity towards the covenant will bring curse: “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse.” (Deut 11:26). The life that is blessed by the Lord and therefore acclaimed as according with his will is one in contrast to the life that is cursed by God. To break any part of the Law was to break all of it (Deut 27:26). The tragic fate of the Israelite story is, of course, that subsequent generations of infidelity finally exhausted the Lord’s patience, the curses of Deuteronomy 27 were fulfilled, and Israel was sent into exile. Faithfulness to God’s Law brought blessing and life. Infidelity to God’s will brought curse and death.
8. With the coming of the Christ in fulfilment of God’s intentions to save, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Gal 3:13 ESV). The will of God revealed in the blessing of Abraham is fulfilled in the risen Jesus the Christ and comes through him in the Spirit (Gal 3:14). In fact, ‘every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm’ is graciously made available to those in

3 BDB and NIDOTTE note that certain forms of the Hebrew word to bless (brk) can mean curse. See 1 Kgs 21:10, 13; Job 1:5,11, 2:5, 2:9.

4 Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15, Word Biblical Commentary 1* (Waco, Tex: Word Bks, 1987), 86-91.

5 John Goldingay, *Israel’s Gospel*, vol. 1, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2003), 177.

Christ (Eph 1:3), those sealed with the Spirit (Eph 1:13). In the New Covenant, the mindset of the Spirit brings life while the desires of the flesh bring death (Rom 8:13). In fact, our bodies are ‘a Temple of the Holy Spirit,’ such that we ‘honour God with our bodies’ (1 Cor 6:17). Thus, those in Christ, and by the power of the Spirit, renounce their former embodied activities as under the curse or the wrath of God (1 Cor 6:9-11, *cf.* Rom 1:18-31).

9. *Flourishing and the curse of God* – In the first instance, when God blesses a person, or a person recognises and declares another as blessed by God, it is a moment of revelation. A particular creaturely existence is declared to be in accordance with the will of God and his intentions for created life – especially human life. The alternative in the greater Scriptural narrative is the curse of God towards creaturely life that defies or is otherwise recalcitrant towards divine intention. In fact, the former is invariably revealed to be present in the context of, and in contrast to, the latter. Hence, the revelation that a certain individual or group is blessed also invariably requires divine intervention in the form of illumination. Otherwise the circumstances of flourishing may well be mistaken for creaturely life that accords with divine intention.
10. In Genesis 4 the descendants of Cain are recorded as patriarchs of human culture and flourishing akin to the creation mandate (Gen 1:28), ‘building cities,’ (4:17) ‘the father of nomadic herdsmen,’ (4:20) ‘the father of all who play lyre and flute,’ (4:21) ‘maker of all kinds of bronze and iron tools’ (4:22). From a superficial perspective these individuals and their families appeared blessed until we recall God’s curse on Cain (4:11). Conversely, though blessed by God with various promises of progeny and place, Abraham and Sarah and their descendants wander through the land enduring periods of barrenness, and therefore apparent curse, as they await the fulfilment of God’s covenantal intentions (Gen 15:2, 25:21, 29:31).
11. As the story of Israel in the land progresses, the question of YHWH’s justice according to the Deuteronomic charter – blessings for life and cursing for death – becomes a point of contention for poet and prophet alike. The psalmist laments, “Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence” (Psa 73:12,13; *cf.* Job 21:7; Eccles 7:15, 8:14 ESV). The prophet Jeremiah remonstrates before the Lord, “Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?” (Jer 12:1 ESV). In the providence of God, those under curse are permitted to flourish even as their response to God’s general grace towards creation serves to condemn their actions.⁶

6 See Calvin’s observation in commentary on Genesis 4 (John Calvin, *Genesis, Biblical Commentaries* (Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1997).

12. Lee calls repeatedly for ‘a deeper understanding of biblical principles to lead us’ and cites a previous bishop of Gippsland in affirmation of same-sex relationships, especially where such unions exhibit fruit that might otherwise be attributed to the Spirit of God. Against the broader Scriptural narrative and in accordance with the, seemingly, paradoxical nature of God’s activities, it would be more accurate to say that such instances of flourishing do not automatically accord with divine intention for humanity. Instead we ought to heed the warning of Paul against a failure to acknowledge ‘the riches of [God’s] kindness, restraint, and patience,’ a failure to recognise ‘that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance’ (Rom 2:4).
13. *Blessing same-sex unions in Anglican Churches* – the *Book of Common Prayer* exhorts the gathered congregation to consider whether the proposed union between the man and the woman is in accordance with God’s Word – according to God’s will for human beings. It is only once the relationship has been deemed to be in accordance with God’s will that any blessing over the couple can be pronounced. As has been shown, the biblical principle for blessing is that a person or persons are recognised to be living in accordance with God’s intentions for human beings in the world. Same-sex relationships, though they may have the appearance of flourishing, cannot be considered to be unions in accordance with God’s will for humanity. Therefore, it is not possible for Anglican Churches to recognise, consent to or otherwise ‘bless’ such unions.
14. Further Reading

Calvin, John. *Genesis Biblical Commentaries*. Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1997.

Dumbrell, W. J. *The Search for Order*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1994.

Goldingay, John. *Israel’s Gospel*. Vol. 1. *Old Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2003.

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Why do we say things together in church?



Andrew Errington,
Incoming rector of
Newtown and Erskineville
Anglican Church

As a teenager, I was deeply impacted by a youth ministry that made a lot of hay out of throwing out traditional, churchy practices. We started a church service on couches and bean bags in the hall where we didn't do anything like liturgy or set prayers.

I remain deeply grateful for this low-church experience, for I heard the gospel there with a freshness that was God's gift. But in hindsight, I have mixed feelings about the excitement we felt at doing things differently. For while this stance did grab my attention, it also distanced me from good things. By defining itself in opposition to traditional church, it took me away from, and taught me a scepticism about, practices that I now believe are helpful and valuable. One of these is the liturgical practice of saying things together, like common prayer. We threw this out without knowing what we

were doing, and without taking the time to try to appreciate its logic, and what it might be good for. It was a practice that felt too old fashioned, too lifeless. But it need not have done. What I needed was for someone to help me see what this practice was about, and how it was connected to the Christian life. The following is an attempt to say something about that, in the kind of short, sharp way that might have made sense to me.

In church, we often say things together: sentences from the Bible, psalms, creeds, and other prayers. Sometimes we do this in a call-and-response form, sometimes as one. Christians have done this for hundreds of years; and this tradition is a precious gift, because this practice teaches us and trains us in the Christian faith. How does it do this? In three ways, at least.

1. First, speaking and praying together reminds us that we are members of a body. Churches are not just bunches of individuals, merely the sum of their parts.

The church of Christ is a body, and particular churches are communities or fellowships, joined and knit together in a range of ways; wholes that are in a real sense more than the sum of their individual members. That is why churches can have a distinct identity or character, as we see, for example, in the letters to the angels of the seven churches at the beginning of the book of Revelation. Saying things together – common prayer – is one of the ways we express this. We pray *as one*, giving voice to the identity of this community.

2. In the second place, this practice teaches us to pray. Sometimes people worry that set prayers are inauthentic, that they don't express what's in our hearts. This is a common objection to liturgy, that it feels somehow awkward. But this is actually part of the point! Being a Christian is about learning your way into a new kind of life, and learning your way out of the things that just come naturally to us. Putting off the old self and putting on the new, as Paul puts it (Col 3:9-10). We long to be better than the ways of life that come easily to us. We need to learn to pray in new ways, ways that don't always feel comfortable at first, in the same way a new habit can feel awkward and difficult when we begin it. When we say things together, we are learning to pray in new ways. We are learning the habits of new hearts.
3. Thirdly, this practice gives us words to live by. Many of the words Christians say together in church are words of the Bible, and the others are prayers shaped by the deep patterns of Holy Scripture. When we say them together, they sink into our consciousness and memory. It is a way of doing like the psalmist: "I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways" (Psa 119:15). We say these words together because these are words to keep with us as our guide through our lives, and that will serve us well when we are old, when what will matter will be what has been most sustaining and familiar to us. (Those who have cared for and walked alongside people with dementia will know that familiar, precious words can be like an anchor, holding us in place even in the stormiest of seas.)

Finally, it's also worth noting that the restriction on singing during the pandemic in 2020 has shown us another valuable thing about liturgy. It gives the congregation another kind of voice and adds diversity to services. Churches that say things together have had an interesting range of possibilities available to them in the time of livestreaming and social distancing that those without this practice do not have. **ACR**

Lady Jane Grey

A Firm Faith

The following is an excerpt from a short biography written by Mark Earngey. Complementary copies are to be delivered to Sydney Anglican rectors as a Christmas gift from the ACR. If others would like to order copies please email editor@australianchurchrecord.net



Mark Earngey, Head of Church History and Lecturer in Christian Thought, Moore Theological College

Post tenebras spero lucem. After darkness, I hope for light. This phrase was reportedly etched with a pin onto a wall within the Tower of London shortly before 12 February 1554. The significance of these words arises, in part, because of their author: Jane Dudley, otherwise known as Lady Jane Grey, the so-called “Queen of Nine Days.” She was England’s first female monarch, and her execution at age seventeen remains one of the most moving and mysterious episodes of English political and religious history.

These words are also significant because they were etched within the broader context of that great movement of God five hundred years ago, which we know as the Reformation. The fearless Martin Luther in Wittenberg, the determined Huldrych Zwingli in Zürich, and the patient and meticulous Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in England – all these men, many women, and countless children, took their stand upon the Scriptures against the erroneous teachings of the Church of Rome. They defiantly declared that salvation was by “faith alone” and in “Christ alone.” When John Calvin first arrived in Geneva, this Latin phrase was still the ancient motto of the city, but it was not long before new coins were minted with the simpler version: *post tenebras lux* (after darkness, light). The expectation, desire, and hope of the light had come. The return of the gospel was as light after a long darkness.

Most of all, these words are significant because they are etched into the Holy

Scriptures. Job 17:12 in the Vulgate edition of the Bible supplies this famous phrase and our English Bibles translate it in various ways, such as “in the face of the darkness, light is near.” This expression captures the confident expectation of Job during his prolonged period of pain in which he felt the darkness of death and yearned for the light of life. The innocent man had suffered severely and now, despite the mediocre efforts of his counsellors, he held onto the hope of heaven. “I



She was England’s first female monarch, and her execution at age seventeen remains one of the most moving and mysterious episodes of English political and religious history.



know that my redeemer lives,” Job later declared, “and that in the end he will stand on the earth.” (Job 19:25).

So, at one level, these words reflect the reality of what Lady Jane Grey was facing: a confrontation of mortality with the firm hope of immortality. At another level, these words reflect the robust convictions of the Reformation: a rejection of Roman Catholicism and an embrace of evangelicalism. At the

most basic and biblical level, these words reflect reliance upon the Redeemer, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Thus, the aim of this short biography is to tell something of these intertwined stories of Lady Jane Grey, the Reformation, and above all, the Lord Jesus Christ. **ACR**

*In 2021, Mark Thompson and Mark Earngey from Moore Theological College will be offering the MA unit **CT528 After Darkness, Light: Doing Theology with the Reformers**. If you would like to enrol for the subject, visit moore.edu.au for more information.*

Also in 2021, Mark Earngey will be delivering a paper on Lady Jane Grey at the Priscilla and Aquila Centre conference on 1 February. Details here: <https://paa.moore.edu.au/conference/2021-conference/>

Are we antinomian?

Final salvation and good works



Mike Leite, Assistant Minister,
St. George North Anglican Church

Introduction

In the preface of the book *A Faith that is Never Alone*, Andrew Sandlin asks the question, ‘does the Protestant idea of justification negate the necessity of good works?’¹ This indeed has been a common accusation against the reformational teaching of justification by faith alone. If I can caricature the position a little: if good works play no role whatsoever in the believer’s justification, then let us eat, drink, and be merry because what we do as Christians matters little! Given the resurgence of this charge against the reformation dictum

of justification by faith alone, some recent scholarship has begun to revisit this understanding of justification. In an attempt to find a ‘real’ place for good works in the Christian life, some have posited if it might be more appropriate to speak of a ‘present justification’ by faith *alone* followed by some type of ‘future justification’ by faith *and* good works.

Now, before we jump up and down too quickly and pick up our pitchforks in defence of the reformational teaching, we need to understand *why* some are questioning the old dictum.

In holding unswervingly to *justification by faith alone*, are we flying the flag for antinomian behaviour? This seems to be one of the great concerns for those who want to revisit the old dictum – does teaching justification by faith alone lead to license and lawlessness (antinomianism)? Indeed, when was the last time you heard a local preacher speak about the place of good works in the Christian life? Or

1 P. Andrew Sandlin, ‘The Polemics of Articulated Rationality’, in P. Andrew Sandlin (ed.), *A Faith That Is Never Alone: A Response to Westminster Seminary in California* (La Grange, Calif.: Kerygma Press, 2007), ix.

the necessity of obedience? Or the place of holiness and holy living in those who belong to Christ? There is a fear in some preachers of sounding like a legalist in their teaching that they never talk about the place of good works in the Christian life or teach their people about holy living.

However, does this mean that we need to revisit the doctrine of justification by faith alone? Is the old dictum responsible for antinomian behaviour? I say no. Rather, what is needed is a return to the Bible's teaching on the place of good works in the Christian life. In particular, we need to understand afresh how the reformers spoke of good works as 'ordinarily necessary' to final salvation. This is something that is often missed in the modern debates. The reformers were very aware of the antinomian charge against them and careful in how they spoke about the place of good works. For the reformers, any 'cheap' kind of following of Christ void of any good works was an abomination!

Nevertheless, to properly understand how careful reformation theology was in speaking about good works, it would be good for us to firstly re-engage its teaching on justification and its relation to modern discussions concerning 'present' and 'future' justification.

'Present' and 'future' justification

Rich Lusk states the biblical doctrine of justification accordingly: 'Initial justification is by faith alone. But it is faith that will prove itself in works. Final justification is by faith and works together'.² For Lusk, initial justification by faith alone begins the process of how one will *finally* be justified on the last day by faith *and* works. Justification is thus a two-stage process.

One of the key texts that is often put forward to argue this viewpoint is Romans 2:13. Here Paul clearly states that it is the 'doers of the law who will [future tense] be justified'. The reason this verse is so instrumental to the notion of *future justification* is due to Paul's use of *righteous/justification* (δικαιοω) language in the future tense. Paul here does not use his usual *salvation* (σωζω) language in speaking of a future event, but *justification* language. For some, like N. T. Wright, they take this passage as referring to the believer's judgement.³ Thus, Wright would claim that 'Paul means what he says'.⁴ Paul, in 'referring to the future justification', makes it clear that only the doers of the law will be [future tense] justified, and thus

2 Rich Lusk, 'Future Justification: Some Theological and Exegetical Proposals', in P. Andrew Sandlin (ed.), *A Faith That Is Never Alone: A Response to Westminster Seminary in California* (La Grange, Calif.: Kerygma Press, 2007), 354.

3 N. T. Wright, 'New Perspective on Paul', in Bruce L. McCormack (ed.), *Justification in Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998).

4 Wright, 'New Perspective on Paul', 253.

‘for Paul, future justification will be in accordance with the life that has been lived’.⁵

However, there are two points to make at this stage about this notion of *future justification*. Firstly, Romans 2:6-16 need not be read in regard to the believer’s judgement. Douglas Moo makes a very clear case (and in my mind a convincing case) of how Romans 2 is speaking in regard to God’s impartial judgement of all people, not of believers.⁶ For Moo, Paul’s point in Romans 2 is not to speak of a *believer’s* judgement in accordance with the doing of the law, but to put forward the notion that *if one were indeed to fulfil God’s law*, then that person would indeed be ‘justified’ in the sight of God. The problem is, *nobody* (except the Lord Jesus of course!) is capable of fulfilling God’s law. As Paul concludes in the flow of his argument through Romans 1-3, ‘no one, not even one is righteous’ (3:9), ‘no one will be justified in God’s sight by the works of the law’ (3:20).

Secondly, even if one were to hold to a ‘judgement of believers’ understanding of Romans 2, doctrinally the reformers were very careful in holding to one, unified, and single moment of justification through faith alone in Christ alone. While the doctrines of justification and sanctification do go hand-in-hand, the reformers were careful in keeping the distinct nature of each and denying any two-stage justification process. Famously, this can be seen in Calvin’s refutation of Osiander’s doctrine in his *Institutes*.⁷ This was not because the reformers rejected the notion of a future *judgement* of believers. The New Testament clearly has things to say on this matter. However, they were very careful to make a distinction between our justification and the ongoing process of our sanctification that *follows* our justification by faith alone. To mix the two together was to make a categorical error. Good works play absolutely no role in one of these doctrines (justification) while good works were necessary and part of the other (sanctification).

All this is to say that the reformers wanted to uphold very clearly the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. Works, when it came to our status and justified state before God, played absolutely no role. One is declared righteous before God on the basis of faith alone (which faith itself is a gift and not a work) in the work of Christ alone. To insist anything other would be to undermine the suffi-



... does this mean that we need to revisit the doctrine of justification by faith alone? Is the old dictum responsible for antinomian behaviour? I say no. Rather, what is needed is a return to the Bible’s teaching on the place of good works in the Christian life.



5 N. T. Wright, ‘Justification: Yesterday, Today, and Forever’, *J. Evang. Theol. Soc.* 54/1 (2011): 61. Remembering that ‘that life’ is ‘in Christ’ and a result of the ‘indwelling of the Spirit’.

6 Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996).

7 John T. McNeill, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), III.XI.5-12.

ciency of Christ's work on behalf of the believer. If we are declared right with God *now*, and have peace with God *now*, through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1), then nothing additional need be demanded of the believer in the future. In this sense, we should not speak of any two-stage process or any *future* notion of justification which is grounded – even partly – upon our efforts. Justification is a present reality for those who belong to Jesus. We are now declared righteous *in Him*. Praise God!

Good works as ordinarily necessary to final salvation

How then does early Reformed theology speak of the place of good works? For the reformers themselves, they spoke of the place of good works in a variety of ways. For example, Calvin speaks of three uses of the moral law, with the third use showing the ongoing place of the law in the believer's life.⁸ However, for our purposes we will focus in on the necessity of good works *in final salvation*, for this is important in light of the modern debates.

What must be made clear from the outset is that the conversation here takes place within the broader category of 'salvation'. This often seems to be the error for those who quote New Testament passages regarding the final judgement as proof for some kind of future justification by works.⁹ In quoting those passages they begin to speak in terms of our *justification*,



where in fact it is the broader doctrine of *salvation* that is in view.¹⁰ It will be important for us to have this distinction in mind as we now proceed to hear the reformers speak about good works.

Thus, on the place of good works in final salvation, Calvin writes, '[t]hose whom the Lord has destined by his mercy for the inheritance of eternal life he leads in possession of it, according to his ordinary dispensation, by means of good works'.¹¹ Calvin continues, '[i]n this way he sometimes derives eternal life from works, not intending it to be ascribed to them; but because he justifies those whom he has

8 McNeill, *Calvin*, II.VII.12-13.

9 This seems to be a big weakness in Matthew Bates' recent book. For one, he doesn't clarify his terms. And for two, he often fails to distinguish between salvation and justification. See: Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2017).

10 As detailed above, the only possible exception would be Romans 2:13 (cf. James 2:14-26). However, we must understand those verses correctly in their own context and within the flow of the argument that is being made.

11 McNeill, *Calvin*, III.XIV.21.

chosen in order at last to glorify them'.¹² Before we misunderstand what Calvin is saying here, we must be clear on what he *is not* saying. Calvin in no way is describing works as meritorious in obtaining eternal life. For the past twenty sections of his *Institutes*, Calvin has been at pains to describe (using Aristotelian causality!) the efficient and material cause of our salvation as the Father and the Son respectively. In section 21 he goes on to describe works as 'inferior causes' and that 'whenever the true cause [of eternal life] is to be assigned, he [the Lord] does not enjoin us to take refuge in works but keeps us solely to the contemplation of his mercy'.¹³ What Calvin *is* saying is that good works are the way into possession of eternal life. They are the way to salvation. Not that works are co-operative or co-instrumental in obtaining eternal life and salvation, but that they are co-incidental.¹⁴ Good works are the normal path for the believer on the way to final salvation. Eating, drinking, and being merry (in the hedonistic sense) is *not* the path of the believer!

Commenting on this notion within reformation teaching, Mark Jones summarises by saying 'in short, good works are not only the believer's way of giving thanks to God, but also his duty on the way to salvation'.¹⁵ What Jones is attempting to combat here is the idea that good works are *purely* evidential on the last day. He wants to say that they are more than simply evidential, but also necessary. This is why Jones uses the language of 'duty' and 'obligation'. This is helpful commentary in regard to reformation teaching as the reformers never shied away by talking about the *necessity* of good works. Works do have an evidential role, but they are also ordinarily necessary.

However, we must be careful of pushing Jones' language of 'duty' and 'obligation' too far. This is where English theologian and Bishop of Salisbury, John Davenant (1572-1641), is helpful in his careful language. In his debates against Roman Catholic theologian and cardinal, Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), Davenant carefully writes that 'good works are necessary in all the faithful and justified, who have the use of reason, and are of an age to practise them'.¹⁶ His qualification of those who have the 'use of reason' and being 'of an age to practice them' is an important one. Davenant wants to insist on the place of good works but is cautious not to go beyond what the Scripture says. For example, what about those who experience serious mental health issues



Davenant wants to insist on the place of good works but is cautious not to go beyond what the Scripture says.



12 McNeill, *Calvin*, III.XIV.21.

13 McNeill, *Calvin*, III.XIV.21.

14 R. Scott Clark, *Through Good Works? (2)*, <https://heidblog.net/2015/10/through-good-works-2/>, cited June 8 2018.

15 Mark Jones, *Antinomianism: Reformed Theology's Unwelcome Guest?* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2013), 66.

16 John Davenant, *A Treatise On Justification; Volume 1* (Andesite Press, 2017), 290.

or the chronically sick? Or at what age are the young ‘obliged’ or ‘duty’ bound to perform good works (I’ve got four young children and they don’t come naturally!)? Qualifying the language helps us remain within the bounds of what Scripture itself says. This also becomes a question of the definition of ‘good works’ (which we do not have the space to unpack here). For some, their ‘good work’ of remaining faithful to Christ amidst severe illness or suffering is a great work indeed. We couldn’t accuse these faithful brothers and sisters, impacted as they are by the sinful effects of our fallen world, of antinomian behaviour or a kind of ‘cheap’ following of Christ.

Just as helpful is Calvin’s language above of God’s ‘ordinary dispensation’. The *ordinary* means by which the believer enters into eternal life is via the path of good works. In this way, good works are the *ordinarily necessary* way to salvation. A classic example of the helpfulness of this distinction is the thief on the cross. He



... yet to insist on the necessity of good works for salvation, or for eternal life, even if speaking under the broader category of ‘salvation’, may be to go beyond the witness of the Scriptures.



obviously was restricted in his ability to perform good works. His time was very short! Or, perhaps another example is that of the church leader mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:15. Obviously his ‘work’ was shown for what it was and was burned up. It wasn’t very good (though we must assume his motives were)! In this example this man has very little to show in regard to ‘good works’, and yet he himself is still saved.

One final important distinction is to speak of works as a ‘way to life’ rather than a ‘way for life’. To speak of the necessity of works *for* salvation may not be the most helpful language. For example, Davenant, as he speaks of the necessity of works, is careful in speaking of them as ‘a necessity of order’ to salvation, not ‘of causality’.¹⁷ He speaks of them as ‘the way appointed to eternal life, not as the meritorious cause of eternal life’.¹⁸ For Davenant, if the believer were to cease in their good works for a time or in moments of temptation, they are not excluded from salvation.¹⁹ What is important is the pursuit of good works, for ‘it is plain, that a certain sure way is laid down to the Kingdom of heaven by God himself [...] namely, that of virtue and holiness’.²⁰ Thus, keeping this language of ‘the way appointed to’ or ‘ordinary dispensation’ helps clarify the right place of good works in final salvation. They are indeed ordinarily necessary (Jesus’ warning in Matthew 7:17-23 is real – false faith will be seen for what it is, and the believer will be held to account

17 Davenant, *A Treatise On Justification; Volume 1*, 302.

18 Davenant, *A Treatise On Justification; Volume 1*, 302.

19 Davenant, *A Treatise On Justification; Volume 1*, 302. He does go on to say that those who persist on the path of temptation ‘will never arrive at the heavenly city’ (303). However it is not clear if he means that this person was never in Christ, or that they had fallen from Christ.

20 Davenant, *A Treatise On Justification; Volume 1*, 302.

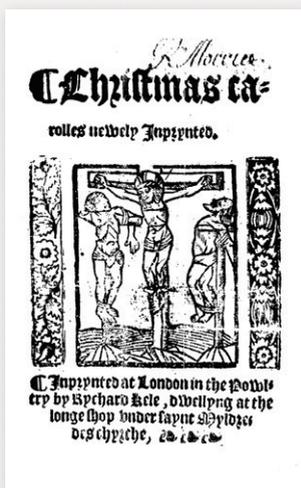
(2 Cor 5:10)), and yet to insist on the necessity of good works *for* salvation, or *for* eternal life, even if speaking under the broader category of ‘salvation’, may be to go beyond the witness of the Scriptures.

Thus, we can see that the Reformed tradition speaks very clearly on the *real* place of good works in the Christian life. And not only does it speak clearly on the matter, but it also speaks very carefully, knowing how quickly the human heart tends towards works-based salvation.

Rightly upholding and preaching good works

While only so much can be said and explored in a piece of this length, hopefully we have seen that any charge of antinomianism against the reformers is unfair. There is no doubt that those like Calvin, and Davenant after him, held strongly to the place of good works in the life of the believer, especially when speaking of final salvation. Furthermore, they did this in a way that upheld the doctrine of justification by faith alone. There is no need to do away with the old reformation dictum – it is a biblical one! Rather, as hearers of God’s word (and for those of us who are teaches and preachers of God’s word) we need to come once more to the Scriptures and see how well the Bible holds together our justification by faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone and the *real* place of good works. One might even say that due to our justification won for us in Christ, we are now truly free to serve and walk in the path of good works. Our job now as believers and as those who are created in Christ Jesus is to do those good works which God has prepared for us to do (Eph 2:10). And for the preachers and teachers amongst us, we need to learn anew how to preach rightly the place of good works in the Christian life. To do so does not undermine the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. Indeed, to do so is our great responsibility and privilege in exhorting those under our care to the life of holiness we’ve all been called to live. **ACR**

My Heart is Woe



Printed in *Christmas Carols*,
Newly Imprinted (London: Kele, 1545)

My heart is woe
Mary did say so
For to see my dear son die
Seeing I have no more

When that my sweet son
was thirty winters old
than the traitor Judas
he became wondrously bold
for thirty plates of money
his master had he sold
but when I heard of that
Lord, my heart was cold
My heart is woe ...

On sheer Thursday
truly than thus it was
on my son's death
that Judas did compass.
Many were the Jews
that followed him by trace
and before them all
he kissed my son's face
O my heart is woe ...

Be seen before Pilate
then brought was he
and Peter said three times
he knew him not surely.
Pilate said to the Jews
now what say ye?
they cried all with one voice
crucifige, crucifige
O my heart is woe ...

On Good Friday
at the mount of Calvary
my son was on the cross
and nailed with nails three.
Of all the friends that he had
never one could he see
but gentle John the Evangelist
that still did stand him by.
O my heart is woe ...

Though I sorrowful were
no man have no wonder
for how it was the earth quaked
and horrible was the thunder.
I looked upon my sweet son
the cross that he stood under
Longinus came with a long speer
and clave his heart asunder.
O my heart is woe ... **ACR**

The Best Advent Devotional I Have Read



Kirsten McKinlay, Editor
of the ACR Online

Last year I used the best advent devotional book I have ever read. To be fair, my reading in this category to date hasn't been extensive. Nevertheless, I thoroughly recommend to you Christopher Ash's *Repeat the Sounding Joy*.

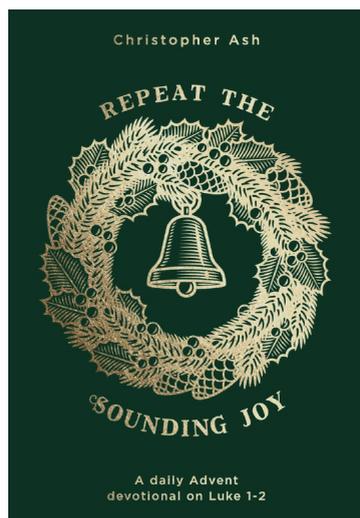
This book is a daily advent devotional on Luke 1-2. Each day takes a few verses from those chapters and gives a short yet profound reflection, followed by the lyrics of related song and a prayer. There's also space for writing your own thoughts at the end of each day's reflection.

I used this book last Christmas with a newborn and found the size of each reflection not only manageable, but deeply edifying, even with little sleep and what felt like limited time.

To say they were manageable is not to say they were simplistic or even predictable given how familiar many of us

are with these chapters of Luke's Gospel. Far from it. Christopher Ash demonstrates a slow and careful reading of Scripture and he drew my attention to many astounding details I'd never noticed let alone considered and reflected upon in Luke 1-2. Every day's reading gave me something profound to mull over in an otherwise distracting season.

Day 23's devotion, for example, focuses on a single verse from Luke 2. I had never noticed that as the elderly prophet Anna gave thanks to God for the baby Jesus in the temple, she also spoke "to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). I had never before considered that there was a little community of



nameless believers, also gathered in the temple, who were waiting for the Messiah.

We don't know much about them, but they were likely regarded as eccentric, perhaps even mocked, by the "rich Sadducees, the privileged priests and others as they insisted on praying and waiting and waiting and hoping that God would send his Messiah".¹

But as Anna spoke to them about Jesus, they saw their waiting has not been vain. Ash encourages us in light of this: "Let their fulfilled waiting encour-

age you in your yet-to-be fulfilled longing for Jesus to return". Waiting can be lonely, but we, like those nameless believers of old, can encourage and strengthen one another to keep going in our hope of Jesus' return.

And above all, that's what this book helped me to do. As I looked back to the first coming of our Lord into a world weary with sin, it made me long and pray for his second coming, when all will be made right forever. I hope that this coming advent, the same might be true for you. **ACR**

1 Christopher Ash, *Repeat the Sounding Joy*, The Good Book Company, 2019, pp. 143-145.

Communicating Christmas



Kylie Yip, Contributor to the ACR Online

A good friend has recently become a Christian. As she and her then boyfriend (who has had a mixed experience of Christianity) came home from church one night, she bubbled over with excitement about the sermon: “Wasn’t it so great to be reminded of God’s grace?” “No!” he burst out in frustration. “What does that even mean??”

“Jargon,” she told me later, “is one of the biggest turn-offs to new people at church.”

Christmas is coming, and Christmas often brings people to church who aren’t there each week. Some will be there for the first time; some will be there for their umpteenth

Christmas service. Some will feel like a total fish-out-of-water and others will feel quite at home. Either way, the question is: will any of them have a clue what we are talking about?

I think, broadly speaking, you could divide Christmas church-goers into two groups: The first group are those who are not really familiar with ‘Christian words.’ When people use these special words, and everyone seems to just know what’s being said, it can feel very alienating. Worse, they effectively never hear the Christian message!

As tragic as that scenario is, the second group is in a much worse position: they hear the words, they have a shelf for the words, they can even use the words in a sentence, but they don’t really understand what’s being said. Jesus is risen... like a zombie; God is gracious... he has good manners, like the Queen; Jesus is some sort of shape shifter... he can be both God *and* God’s Son. These people can blend in okay, so they may not feel so alienated, and it seems they have heard the Christian message, so it’s much harder to realise the problem and help them.

In either case, we must be sure to deliver God’s word as clearly as we can. If we let jargon cloud the meaning for people, then how can they understand? We are just not speaking their language.

Unless...

C. S. Lewis once wrote an essay on this very issue (though not limited to Christmas). It is called *Christian Apologetics* and I think it is very worthwhile reading the whole thing—though you will need to adjust to sixty-year-old English. In it, he says that Britain (in his case) has become as much a mission field as China (I suppose one of the foreignest-sounding places he could think of in 1945) and that, like China, if you wanted to have any impact you would need to learn the local lingo and get into the headspace of the locals. This is something he thinks the clergy in his neck of the woods are very bad at. So he gives them some practical tips, like a list of words and what these words mean to ‘normal’ Britons—not the same meaning as most clergy would assume. His conclusion is that “you must translate every bit of your Theology into the vernacular. This is troublesome and



I don't think there is any shortcut; I think we just have to make time for people.



means you can say very little in half an hour, but it is essential.” Actually it reminds me of the times my husband has had to preach in a bilingual context: you have to write the sermon, then translate the sermon, then get a local to check it for meaning, then get told off by the local for missing a giant slab of stuff relevant to the local context, then re-jig the whole thing and get it checked again. Apart from how much time this

takes, the real trick is finding a ‘local’ who loves and trusts you enough to tell you when they have no idea what you are talking about and make you repeat it until it makes sense to them. Most normal Aussies don’t like to make that kind of fuss; they just kind of go with the vibe and hope for the best.

And of course, the problem is actually bigger than messed-up vocabulary: as Lewis points out, and as is taught in all the best missionary schools, it’s not enough to correct vocabulary, you really do have to get into the worldview, the value system, the what-makes-me-and-the-rest-of-the-universe-tick, of the people you are talking to. This means you can’t just talk to them; you have to listen to them. For a long time. A really long time. The danger is in when you find yourself living in parallel to your neighbours, in close proximity but never really communicating. It’s not uncommon in Australia—at least in my part of Sydney—to live in the same street as someone for years and even decades, but to have spent the equivalent of about a week with them. To make it worse, it’s often a week full of “hello” and “goodbye”, and nothing much deeper than that.

I don’t think there is any shortcut; I think we just have to make time for people. I think we have to do it by being less busy—actually letting more things go and doing less. And making the things you *do*, the things they like doing, so you can do it with them. I don’t really want to make time for people—they have such boring hobbies, like going on Facebook and watching movies (not exciting hobbies like mine, I like gardening and reading old books. Ahem.) But then, if I love my neighbour, it would

make sense not to avoid them—including my literal, physical neighbour.

I know different contexts have different challenges, but whatever it is for you, you've got to keep your ear to the ground and take the time to be a person who is open to others. Take every opportunity to find out what people think about God and the world, and how they make up their minds etc. One of the most fruitful conversations my husband has ever had with Jehovah's Witnesses was when he invited them in for tea and genuinely asked what they believed. (I'm not sure if he knew at that time why they were regarded as heretics—there was learning on both sides!).

I thought about including Lewis' vocabulary list, but I think even his modern translations are now out of date. What does *your* neighbour think of Christian jargon? I don't know, you'll have to ask them!! But what if that opens up a whole series of conversations? What if a year of such conversations meant you could explain the Christmas message 'in the vernacular', so that it really shone, piercing the dark in your neighbour's heart?

(It might enlighten your own heart too—Lewis also says, "I have come to the conviction that if you cannot translate your thoughts into uneducated language, then your thoughts were confused." How many of us regulars also don't understand what we are talking about?!)

It would be a lot of work—like preparing the biggest Christmas feast ever! But God's word clearly proclaimed? What a feast! Truly, preparing for Christmas really does take all year! **ACR**

First published in 2019 on the ACR Blog: www.australianchurchrecord.net

A Carol for Christmas Day

Printed in *The Countrie Mans Comfort* (London: M. Dawson, 1637)

We come to sing of Christ our King
according to the time,
therefore prepare and give good ear,
let hearts and all incline.

Divinity our chief story,
which speaks of man's salvation:
shows that the Lord by his pure word,
made all good by creation.

Mankind did bear God's image fair,
the creatures all were blessed:
the Satan's evil made him a devil,
and he gave man small rest.

But tempted him by Eve's sin,
til paradise was gone:
thus they and we were left you see,
in fearful state each one.

Then God above in tender love,
to men that was but dead:
said that indeed the woman's seed,
should break the Serpent's head.

To Abraham to Isaac then,
to Jacob, and the Jews:
a covenant sure aye to endure,
God made of this good news.

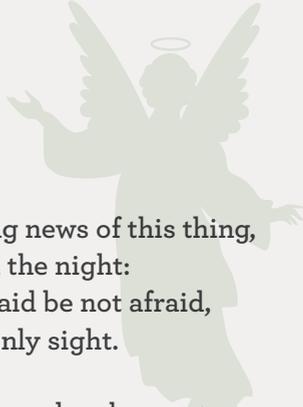
Before their eyes in sacrifice,
our Saviour was displayed:
in figure, types, and other rites:
on altar he was laid.

To priests, to kings were showed these things
to prophets and the rest:
who did assure that Virgin pure,
should bear this heavenly guest.

Realms now in peace all wars did cease
John Baptist came to preach:
and he likewise did some baptise,
that heard when he did teach.

The time full come God sent his son,
in shape of sinful flesh:
thus God and man one Christ became,
our souls for to refresh.





Angels did bring news of this thing,
to shepherds in the night:
to whom they said be not afraid,
at this so heavenly sight.

But go your way and make no stay,
Christ is at Bethlehem:
behold him there born poor and bare,
for sin of mortal man.
Then gloriously from heaven high,
the angels they did sing:
praise to God's name, peace without
blame,
on earth to men living.

Shepherds did go and found it so,
as angels did foretold:
Christ meekly lay swaddled in hay,
within the stable cold.

The child he is our soul's chief bliss,
our tree of life and all.
Our Abel slain our Isaac plain,
our Joseph left in thrall.

Our paschal lamb that hither came,
for his dear spouse to die,
our manna sweet, our rock so deep,
our ark of sanctuary.

Our mercy seat, our altar great,
our lamp and laver fair,
our priest our king our everything,
that we might not despair.

With thanks and praise in all our days,
ought we and ours to give,
unto God's name that wrought the same,
long time 'ere man did live.

This is the day of our great joy,
if we will joy therein,
and no assign this blessed time,
to vanity and sin.

But evermore in virtue's store,
to spend our days aright,
which God grant us through Christ Jesus,
to do with all our might. **ACR**



Marriage has always been ...?

A Short History of Christian Marriage¹

The following was first published as part of the Diocese of Sydney submission to the recent Appellate Tribunal. The purpose of this paper is to provide a short account of the development of marriage within the Christian faith. It is sometimes argued that the presence of incidental changes to the practice of marriage throughout the history of the Christian church legitimises any kind of further change. It will be demonstrated that while aspects of Christian marriage have changed throughout history, the substance of the doctrine of marriage as a union between one man and one woman does not change. The reasons for the persistence of the core doctrine of marriage fundamentally relate to the Church's continual effort to remain faithful to Holy Scripture.



Mark Earngey, Head of Church History and Lecturer in Christian Thought, Moore Theological College

1. Roman and Christian Marriage in “primitive times”.

The Church did not institute marriage in “primitive times”. Rather, the Christian Church recognised God’s institution of marriage between man and woman from creation and implemented the marital commands of the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul. The result of this Christian marriage was a divergence from the norms of marriage in the Roman world (e.g., Paul’s approach to conjugal rights of husband and wife in 1 Cor 7:1-5). Those who were married and then converted to Christianity were not required to remarry, but were recognised as married members of Christ who committed themselves to the particular teaching of Scripture concerning Christian marriage. Those who were Christians and then married

¹ Or, marriage from “primitive times” (excluding the doctrine of marriage in Scripture, the “formularies” of the Church of England, and the principles of the C of E inherited in 1962).

became married through the same processes as their Roman neighbours. The processes to become married in the Roman world largely revolved around the intention to live together as husband and wife, and consummation was not necessary for the commencement of marriage. Thus, we could say that the church in “primitive times” adopted the processes required to be married under Roman law but adapted their marriages to comply with the commands of the Christian Scriptures. What would in time become the Service of Holy Matrimony began as prayers for a couple who had recently been married (i.e. prayers for God’s blessing after the event).

2. The development of Christian marriage from “primitive times”.

Classical Roman jurists, such as Ulpian (c. 170-223) and Modestinus (fl. 250), generally believed that marriage was the union between a man and a woman, for the purposes of procreation and companionship for the duration of life.² The regulations of the early Church found in the *Didache* (c. 100-150?), *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome* (c. 215), and the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (c. 230), not only take a similar position on the general nature of marriage, but prohibit various activities such as adultery, paedophilia, fornication, pederasty, etc. Likewise, the canons of Elvira (c. 305-6), and to lesser extent the canons of Nicaea (325), present marriage as between a man and a woman, and outline a raft of sanctions for sexual activity outside of this relational setting (especially adultery in the case of Elvira). The theologians of the early Church held similar positions. Justin Martyr (c. 100-165) argued against adultery and fornication, and commented on the procreative purposes of marriage, as did Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215), and the great African theologian Tertullian (c. 155-220). St. John Chrysostom (c. 345-407) articulated a *natural* perspective on marriage as a remedy against fornication, a *spiritual* perspective on marriage as a vehicle for sanctification, a *contractual* perspective on marriage which raised it beyond material concerns, and a *social* perspective on marriage which embraced its benefits to the wider family and state.³ Thus, while the early Christian approach to marriage reflected Roman marriage law there was significant development which accompanied the rise of Christendom. Though on occasion the early Christian approach to marriage rejected some aspects of Roman marriage law (e.g., that there could not be any marriage between slave and freemen), the early Church grounded their doctrine upon the Holy Scriptures, and as Christianity expanded so too did the Christianisation of the social structure of marriage.

2 Philip Lyndon Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage During the Patristic & Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 7-43.

3 John Witte Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Westminster John Knox: Louisville Kentucky, 1997), 19-20.

3. The contribution of St. Augustine to Christian marriage.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the contribution of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) for the development of the Christian doctrine of marriage. Augustine, who was previously committed to Manichean asceticism, wrote in the context of ascetic debates over the relative merit of virginity as compared to marriage. The former monk Jovinian (d. 405) argued that virginity and marriage were equal in status, and the theologian and ascetic defender Jerome (c. 347-420) countered that virginity was better than the married state. Thus, Augustine's writings on marriage, and especially his *De bono coniugali* and *De sancta virginitate*, attempt a middle way between Jovinian and the asceticism of Jerome and the Manichees. Augustine described the goodness of marriage as consisting in the benefits of offspring (*proles*), fidelity (*fides*), and its sacramental quality (*connubi sacramentum*). We must beware of anachronistically reading modern sacramental meaning back into Augustine's usage here. Augustine did not perceive marriage to be a sacrament in the same sense as Baptism or Holy Communion. Rather, Augustine described marriage as a sacrament due to his understanding of its indissolubility and its representation of the union between Christ and the Church (cf., 'sacramentum' in the Vulgate's rendering of Eph 5:32). Therefore, the sacramental description of marriage in Augustine's theology reflects his understanding of the permanent quality of marriage between husband and wife. The significance of Augustine's teaching on marriage lies not only in his appreciation of the goodness of marriage, but in the terminology of 'sacrament' which was modified in the medieval doctrine of marriage.

4. The codification of Christian marriage in medieval times.

From Augustine's time onwards, leaders of the church introduced ecclesiastical marriage law. Shortly thereafter, two general realms of legal jurisdiction obtained in the Church: judges handled secular matters through civil law, and bishops handled spiritual matters through ecclesiastical law.⁴ Nevertheless, there was no formalised body of canon law until Gratian's *Decretum* in the twelfth century, which became part of the *Corpus iuris canonici*. During this period of the middle ages – the 'Papal Revolution of Pope Gregory VII' – the Church took over matrimonial cases. Simultaneously, scholastic theologians of the time helpfully produced finely detailed expositions of Christian marriage, such as Hugh of St. Victor's *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith* (c. 1143), Peter Lombard's *Book of Sentences* (1150), and Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (c. 1265-1273). These contributions clarified the meaning of betrothal and marriage. They provided careful analysis of matters such as the role of consent and consummation for the commencement of marriage, and a pastorally driven discussion of annulling impediments to

4 Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 147.

marriage, all of which greatly enabled the application of canon law to everyday life. Additionally significant, was the transformation of Augustine's "sacramental" approach to marriage. Witte Jr. writes:

Augustine called marriage a sacrament in order to demonstrate its symbolic stability. Thirteenth-century writers called marriage a sacrament to demonstrate its spiritual efficacy. Augustine said that marriage as a symbol of Christ's bond to the church *should* not be dissolved. Thirteenth-century writers said that marriage as a permanent channel of sacramental grace *could* not be dissolved. Augustine simply scattered throughout his writings reflections on the natural, contractual, and spiritual dimensions of the marriage without fully integrating them. Thirteenth-century writers wove these three dimensions of marriage into an integrated sacramental framework.⁵

5. The parallel development of Christian prohibitions against homosexual practices.

The development of Christian marriage loosely paralleled the development of the prohibition of homosexual sexual practices. While Roman law viewed homosexual intercourse as a criminal act (*stuprum*) and some in the Roman world mocked it as a "Greek disease", the practice was tolerated in several instances (e.g., with non-citizens, and also between older men and younger boys).⁶ However, the early Christian Church diverged from these principles and condemned all forms of homosexual practice on the basis of Scripture (e.g., 1 Cor 6:9-11) and because it went against nature (as described in Rom 1:24-32). Not only the Apostle Paul, but also the early Church Fathers, such as Tertullian and Clement, opposed homosexual practices as unnatural.⁷ The rise of Christendom expanded the influence of Christian morality, and around the time of Justinian I (c. 482-565) homosexual practice was widely prohibited and severely punished.⁸ By the medieval period the prohibition of homosexual practice was carefully codified. Scholastic theologians such as Anselm of Laon, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas, all disapprovingly discussed homosexuality, and Gratian's *Decretum* addressed the vice of sodomy with reference to four passages (i.e., Ambrose's *Liber de patriachis*, Augustine's *Confessions*, pseudo-Augustinian *Contra Jovinian*, and second century jurist Paulus).⁹

5 Witte Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract*, 29-30. Italics retained.

6 William Loader, *Making Sense of Sex: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Early Jewish and Christian Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 136.

7 Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 322, 355.

8 Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 208-10.

9 Michael Goodrich, "Sodomy in Ecclesiastical Law", *Journal of Homosexuality* 4/1 (1976): 432.

6. Marriage in the European Reformations.

At the time of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church considered marriage one of the seven sacraments. Due to its sacramental status, marriage was regulated through church courts rather than civil courts. Martin Luther (1483-1546) repudiated the sacramental status of marriage in his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520). In this treatise Luther also railed against certain annulling impediments set forth in canon law which he considered without basis in Scripture. By the publication of *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), Luther's position had evolved, and not only did he provide sharper analysis of the canonical impediments to marriage, but he specified various grounds for divorce which he believed to be based upon Scripture. Philip Melancthon (1497-1560), Johannes Bugenhagen (1485-1558), and the various jurists within the University of Wittenberg held reasonably similar views to Luther, and their teaching on marriage filtered down into the civil courts dispersed throughout the northern Germanic and Scandinavian regions. In their implementation of marriage law, virtually none of these civil courts adopted a Scripture only



John Calvin (1509-1564), just as with Swiss reformers Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), viewed marriage as more than a social contract. It was a divinely instituted covenant between man and woman.



approach, but rather held to the supremacy of Scripture while implementing scripturally compatible aspects of marriage and divorce law from the received body of civil and canon law. Similarly to Luther, the reformers of Zürich rejected the sacramental status of marriage and understood it to be a divine institution involving a social contract. Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) wrote the *Marriage Ordinance* which was promulgated by the city magistrates in 1525. This document

outlined the constitution and legislative principles of the matrimonial council for Zürich. The traditional impediments to marriage were discussed, with similar scriptural chastening as Luther applied. John Calvin (1509-1564), just as with Swiss reformers Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), viewed marriage as more than a social contract. It was a divinely instituted covenant between man and woman. However, in Calvin's Geneva, a far more conservative approach was taken to marriage law than in Zürich. In 1545, Calvin and four members from the Small Council of the city drew up the *Marriage Ordinance* which regulated marriage formation and dissolution. The consistory court could provide annulments where a small range of impediments for marriage were proven, and it could provide divorces where properly contracted marriages could be dissolved. The conservative Genevan approach to marriage found its way into Scotland via John Knox, and it also influenced the Dutch civil authorities and the ideas of prominent English Puritans.

7. Marriage in Reformation England.¹⁰

In contrast to the reformations on the European continent, reformation England continued to regulate marriage law within the framework of the ecclesiastical rather than civil courts. Thus, King Henry attempted to revise the traditional canon law with his own native canon law in 1535 (largely a scissors and paste job from the *Corpus iuris canonici*). The work of the committee which drew up the Henrician canons was interrupted for unknown reasons, and the project went little further. However, during the reign of Edward VI, the revision of canon law received another lease of life through an act of parliament in 1549. On 6 October 1551, the Privy Council commissioned thirty-two men to attend to the reformation of canon law. However, when the newly reformed canon law was finally presented to parliament in April the following year, the work of the English reformers came to nothing, for the *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* was vetoed by Lord President Northumberland himself. Notwithstanding its eventual failure within the Church of England, the *Reformatio* provides a unique insight into the collective thought of senior English reformers concerning marriage and divorce. Just as with the marriage courts on the continent, the *Reformatio* plundered the traditional body of canon law according to its compatibility with Scripture. Marriage was defined in the following way:

Matrimony is a legal contract, which by the command of God creates and effects a mutual and perpetual union of a man with a woman, in which each of them surrenders power over his or her body to the other, in order to beget children, to avoid prostitution and to govern life by serving one another. Nor is it our will for matrimony any longer to take place by promises or contracts, however many words they may have or whatever accompaniments there may be, unless it is celebrated according to the form which we have appended here.¹¹

8. Rejection of Martin Bucer's doctrine of marriage in Reformation England.

It is sometimes argued that the matrimonial canons in the *Reformatio* are indebted to the great Alsatian reformer, Martin Bucer (1491-1551). However, while Bucer was highly influential upon various theological matters from his position of Regius Professor of Divinity in Cambridge, this was not the case for the canons concerning marriage and divorce. He had died before the *Reformatio* was drafted,

¹⁰ Because they were treated elsewhere in the Diocese of Sydney submission to the Appellate Tribunal, the traditional "formularies" of the Church of England (*Book of Common Prayer, Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and the Ordinal*) have been largely excluded from the present discussion.

¹¹ Gerald Bray, *Tudor Church Reform: The Henrician Canons of 1535 and the Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2000), 247.

and his views set forth in *De Regno Christi* (1551) not only envisaged civil jurisdiction over matrimonial disputes but contained other views out of step with the *Reformatio*. Bucer held that marriage required cohabitation, deep love and affection, the leadership of the husband and helpfulness of a wife, and conjugal benevolence. If anyone, through stubbornness or inability, could or would not perform these duties, then there was no true marriage and they ought not to be counted man and wife. To Bucer's mind, divorce could even be granted by sheer mutual consent of marriage partners. His liberal views on marriage and divorce were well known, with one evangelical writing to Heinrich Bullinger that "Bucer is more than licentious on the subject of marriage. I heard him once disputing at table upon this question, when he asserted that a divorce should be allowed for any reason, however trifling".¹² Given the controversial nature of Bucer's views, it is not surprising that Archbishop Thomas Cranmer rejected his suggestion to revise the Book of Common Prayer by raising mutual help to the foremost purpose of marriage (before both procreation and sex) in the wedding service.

9. The history of marriage in English canon law.

By the end of King Edward VI's reign the *Reformatio* was a dead letter. It had not passed through Parliament nor Convocation. It was floated again during the reign of Queen Elizabeth but debates over ecclesiastical polity took precedence over ecclesiastical law. Indeed, only in 1604 would the Church of England produce its own body of canon law. The irony of this achievement of a reformation goal was that the 1604 canons set forth parameters for marriage and divorce more restrictive than the pre-reformation situation: impediments were small in number, separation was permitted, but divorce itself was not. The sacramental status of marriage had been rejected but the functional indissolubility of marriage had not. The first move away from the Church of England canon law came with the Clandestine Marriage Act 1753, and civil marriages were permitted with the Marriage Act 1836. The jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts only ceased with the Matrimonial Causes Act 1857 which introduced the possibility of divorce, which possibilities were expanded with the Divorce Reform Act 1969. Therefore, right up until the end of the twentieth century, writes Diarmaid MacCulloch, the Church of England "kept the strictest laws on marriage in all western Christendom, scarcely mitigated by the numerous ingenious reasons for annulment with which the Roman Catholic Church lawyers relieve Catholic canon law on marriage."¹³

12 John Burcher to Heinrich Bullinger, 8 June 1550, in Hastings Robinson (ed.), *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), 2:665-666.

13 Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 660-661.

10. Conclusion: the persistence of Christian marriage from “primitive times”.

Aspects of Christian marriage have been changing since “primitive times.” The Christian adoption and adaptation of Roman marriage law and the expanding body of canon laws concerning marriage demonstrate this principle. However, the core doctrine of marriage – between one man and one woman for life – has remained remarkably and entirely consistent throughout the last two millennia. Similarly, the Christian condemnation of homosexual practice has likewise been substantially stable throughout the same period. The affirmation of marriage and the prohibition against homosexual sexual relations are the main reasons why there has been no period in the first two thousand years of Christianity in which the Christian Church has affirmed and blessed marriages consisting of two persons of the same sex. This, in turn, attests to the strength and clarity of the biblical witness concerning Christian marriage between husband and wife, and the fidelity of the church to the commands of Christ and the teaching of the Apostle Paul in the Bible. **ACR**

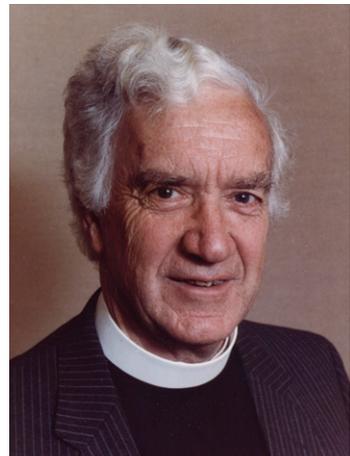
The Sign of the Cross in Baptism

12. The minister makes a sign of the cross on each candidate's forehead and says

I sign you with the sign of the cross
to show that you are to be true to Christ crucified
and that you are not to be ashamed
to confess your faith in him.

**Fight bravely under his banner
against sin, the world and the devil,
and continue as Christ's faithful soldier and servant
to your life's end.¹**

Why do Sydney Anglicans sign the forehead of children with the sign of the cross at their baptism? Similar questions have been asked since the time of the English Reformation. Discussion of this aspect of the service played a part in Archbishop Cranmer's liturgical development from the 1549 to the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer*. Half a century later, when King James I came to the throne of England and Scotland in 1603, the more progressive puritans wanted to have it removed from the services (they also rejected wedding rings, confirmation, and the surplice). However, mainstream puritans and Anglicans prevailed, simply because a practice that was not found explicitly in Scripture did not imply the error of the practice. What would be later called the 'Regulative Principle of Worship' was, and is, not the practice of Anglicans.



Broughton Knox, Principal of Moore Theological College from 1959 until 1985.

1 *Common Prayer: Resources for Gospel-Shaped Gatherings* (Sydney: Anglican Press Australia, 2012), 95.

Thus, we use the sign of the cross in the baptism of children according to church order and for the edification of the congregation.² In so doing, we declare to the congregation that this child is a member of Christ's army, who needs to be unashamed of confessing Christ, and who needs to fight bravely under Christ's mighty banner against sin, the world, and the devil until their life's end. With such a weighty responsibility, we then rightly turn to prayer and ask God to help the child, and its parents and godparents to disciple their children in all wisdom and godliness.

The below articles ('The Sign of the Cross in Baptism' and 'Tokens') were written as a single piece by Broughton Knox in 1992. They were produced to assist the Church of England in South Africa (CESA, now known as REACH-SA) who were in the process of liturgical revision and some had asked about the reason for the practice of signing with the sign of the cross. These pieces represent some of Broughton Knox's mature sacramental and ecclesiological thoughts. For some who consider Knox to be against the practice of water baptism, or against any connection between baptism and the church, these short thoughts may present some stimulation. -Ed.

The Sign of the Cross in Baptism

1. A sign is a visible word, if the meaning of the sign is known. The meaning of the sign of the cross in baptism is explained concurrently with the action in B.C.P. so making clear to all the members of the congregation that this visible word vividly expresses the prayers already offered in the service.
2. Canon 30 of the Canons of 1604 explains the innocuousness of the sign of the cross in baptism and why it is included in the service of baptism. This canon is a canon of the CESA. The canon states that parents make clear that they "dedicate their children by this badge to Christ's service." The words which accompany the sign in the B.C.P. also make this clear.

The Canon goes on to state that the Reformers of Edward VI's reign approved of this use of the sign of the cross in the baptismal service, many of whom were martyred or went into exile during Mary I's reign.

It also states that the child has been admitted into Christ's church "as a perfect member" before the signing with the sign of the cross so that this adds nothing to the baptism. "The sign of the cross in baptism is no part of the substance of the sacrament."

2 For a wider discussion of infant baptism in Anglicanism, see Rev. Peter Blair, <https://www.australianchurchrecord.net/little-ones-to-him-belong/>

3. “The church has power to decree ... ceremonies ... not ... contrary to God’s word written.” Article 20 of the 39 Articles.
4. “The 39 articles and the B.C.P. control the doctrine of CESA according to paragraph” one of the Declaration of the constitution of CESA. Inasmuch as the cross in baptism with the words that accompany it explaining it, is part of the doctrine of the B.C.P., it is part of the fundamental Declaration of the CESA.
5. At their ordination, clergy of CESA promise to use the B.C.P. except as allowed by lawful authority. Consequently they ought not to have any scruples about the baptismal service in B.C.P.
6. The sign of the cross is required to be given to the baptised child in the first form of Public Baptism of children in “Worship ‘85” of the Church of England in South Africa on Page 58.

TOKENS

A word is a token of your thoughts.

Baptism is a token of your repentance towards God and your faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not repentance and faith but is a token of it. It is no substitute for repentance or faith and it is only a token of it if it is there.

The giving of a ring in marriage is a token of the vows the husband has made to his wife. It is not these vows but the token of them.

The cross in baptism is a token that child is a member of Christ’s flock, as the minister has just announced. That this is the meaning of the sign is made clear by the words that accompany the sign. It is not the enrolling in Christ’s army but a token that this has taken place and that the child will be a faithful member.

The tracing of a fish on the forehead would be an equivalent token. Would this be objectionable? The tracing of the cross is a very ancient token.³

3 ‘Papers of D.B. Knox’, Donald Robinson Library, Moore Theological College.

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AUSTRALIAN CHURCH RECORD

CREATING HABITS

Creatures of habit: Getting our habits under control



APRIL 1, 2019 by [Beverly Windsor](#)

In part 1 we looked at why it's so important to harness our habits for good. Now we turn to the nitty-gritty practical stuff about what this might look like. At the risk of stating the complete obvious: we make time for the things we really want...

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