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PARSON AND PARISH

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THE ENGLISH CLERGY ASSOCIATION

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The English Clergy Association, as the successor to the Parochial Clergy Association, exists to support in fellowship all Clerks in Holy Orders in their Vocation and Ministry within the Church of England as by law Established. The Association seeks to be a Church of England mutual resource for clergy, patrons and churchwardens requiring information or insight. Parsons with Freehold are encouraged to keep that status. We seek to monitor ever-burgeoning bureaucracy and continued legislative and other processes of change; and to promote in every available way the good of English Parish and Cathedral Life and the welfare of the Clergy.

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PARSON & PARISH

*the magazine of the
English Clergy Association*
“*serving the people and their parishes*”

Issue Number 170 Summer 2010

CONTENTS

Editorial Musings	4
<i>Peter Johnson</i>	
‘Render unto Caesar’	6
<i>Peter Mullen</i>	
The Plight of the Laity — a view from the pew	9
<i>Margaret Laird</i>	
In All Things Lawful and Honest: Questions and Answers	13
<i>Alex Quibbler</i>	
Book Reviews	15
Chairpiece	24
<i>John Masding</i>	
Centre insert <i>The ECA Benefit Fund Making a Donation in your Will</i>	

Front cover photograph

Photo taken at meeting in Faith House Westminster on Tuesday 13 October 2009

L to R: Mr. John Wearing, Rev’d Charles Stallard, Dr. Peter Smith, Mrs. Margaret Laird O.B.E., Rev’d John Masding, Rev’d Francis Gardom, Rev’d Richard Hall, Canon Peter Johnson, Rev’d Dr. Anthony Christian, Mr. John Hanks, Rev’d Stephen Seamer, Rev’d Derek Earis, Rev’d Jonathan Redvers Harris, Rev’d Mark Binney.

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Back cover photographs

Dr Paul Kent, D.Sc., FRSC, Emeritus Student of Christ Church, Oxford, and Chairman of the Patrons’ Liaison Group, photographed in Tom Quad.

The Patrons’ Liaison Group at a recent meeting in Christ Church, with Dr Kent presiding.

L to R: Mr. David Morgan (General Synod, Secretary, Guild of All Souls), Mr. Arthur Leggatt (Group Secretary), Mr. Anthony Jennings (Secretary, Save Our Parsonages), Rev’d John Masding (Chairman, ECA), The Rev’d David Phillipps, (Secretary, Church Society), the Chairman, Rev’d Dr. Edmund Newell (Sub-Dean of Christ Church), unknown (partly hidden), Mrs. Margaret Laird (lately Third Church Estates Commissioner), Rev’d Mark Everitt (lately Chaplain of Merton College, Oxford), Mr. Louie Lewis (Warden, Guild of All Souls).

EDITORIAL MUSINGS

As this edition goes to press, the General Synod of the Church of England has voted to move forward to the next stage in the process of accepting the ordination of women as bishops, but without the safeguarding arrangements proposed by the two Archbishops. The ECA has no policy on this matter, and members will have differing views. The concern of the association, as expressed in its aims recently revised, is to assist all clergy in the fulfilment of their vocation within the ministry of the Church of England.

The Editor would like to emphasise that contributions from members, or other persons, on matters of interest and concern in the current life of the Church are always welcome, subject to the usual rights of editorial oversight (if *episcopo* may be allowed of an editor). Some of the articles in this number of *Parson & Parish* express points of view with which others might well disagree. “Letters to the Editor” or further articles can help to make *Parson & Parish* a locus of civilised discussion, free from journalistic sensationalism.

Rifling through some old files, as one does in Ecclesiastes 12.6ff moments, I came across a copy of the April 1971 number of *Theology*. The names of some of the contributors evoked memories of articles or books read when teaching or studying; in addition the atmosphere breathed nearly 40 years ago prompts reflection on how much has changed and what hopes and expectations there were. (The price was 20p a copy.)

One article was a Review of the *New English Bible* by A A Macintosh, Graham Stanton and David L Frost. The whole article is of course well worth reading for its discussion of the approach of the distinguished scholars who headed the project (particularly G.R. Driver and C.H. Dodd), and the subsequent appearance of the *Revised English Bible* attests both the important breakthrough made by the NEB and its perceived limitations.

The concluding paragraph of the review must surely remain of significance today, and is worth reflection, so is quoted in full:

It is surely significant that the new translation generally eschews technical religious terms. The ethos behind the NEB is evangelistic: there is an urgent need to communicate and accommodate the message of scripture to the idioms and thought-patterns of twentieth-century Englishmen. Nevertheless, it might be questioned if an authoritative translation should itself try to effect that accommodation. There is certainly a place for Preachers’ Bibles to help comprehension, for fine Targums such as J. B. Phillips’s *Letters to Young Churches*. But perhaps an actual translation should try to convey scripture neat, and not make it easy and popular, for then there is a danger of selling it short. Bonhoeffer, in *The Cost of Discipleship*, warned that “to try to force the

Word on the world by hook or by crook is to make the living Word of God into a mere idea ...” (p. 166).

The literary parallel to his “Cheap Grace”, the easy salvation which he felt brought the churches into disrepute, might be “Cheap Scripture”, translations which smooth away the foreignness, the “otherness”, the obscurities and awkwardnesses of the original texts. Nevertheless, some of the old translations were Targums, and the achievement of the AV was based on several Renaissance English versions of varying quality and different merits: we might hope that the NEB, with all its virtues and imperfections, will prove to be one foundation of an authoritative modern English version which is yet to come.

Other contents include Alan Richardson on *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, in which he reviews how the last hundred years of German theology had been “engaged in a programme of disengagement from history” (in Liberal Protestantism and then Barth), before the development of Pannenberg’s “new emphasis upon history as the *locus* of revelation [which] has come with the force of novelty.” Related to this was the abandonment by critical philosophers of history of the old positivist view that history is a closed continuum of cause and effect, rather than interpretations of evidence which are always open to discussion and reinterpretation. In addition, there is the line of theologians from Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, William Temple and John Baillie who have insisted that “revelation consists in the divinely inspired interpretation of the divinely controlled course of history.”

Consequently, Richardson writes,

Faith will never be dispensable in any Christian interpretation of the evidence, but then, neither will rationality. Faith is to be distinguished on the one hand from dogmatic assertion and on the other hand from credulity. Christian faith is never “blind faith”; on the contrary, faith makes rational explanation possible.

On this basis, Richardson says that,

I believe that the resurrection of Jesus is an historical fact. I am saying that in my view it is the most rational explanation of the available evidence. This is all we need to claim, but less than this we dare not claim.

It is always good to be made to think about these fundamentals. Can we agree with Richardson when he “repeats and endorses Ebeling’s statement that belief in the resurrection is not a part of the Christian faith but the whole of it”?

Peter Johnson

SERMON

Render unto Caesar...

Today's Gospel reading gives us one of those great moments of theatrical confrontation between Jesus and his enemies. In the public square, the Pharisees and the Herodians demand of Jesus, Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? In other words, did Jesus think it was right for devout Jews to pay taxes to the Romans, the occupying power. This was a trap which, had Jesus fallen into it, could easily have led at once to his arrest. If he had answered that it was right to pay taxes to Caesar, he would have been resented by the Jewish multitude as being sycophantic towards the Romans. If he had said, Don't pay your taxes! the Herodians – who supported the Roman occupation – would have accused him before the Roman authorities and Jesus would have been condemned for inciting civil disobedience and sedition.

Coins of that period were usually issued by rulers and they bore the image of the ruler on them. The coin they showed to Jesus bore the image of Caesar. This was much more significant than the Queen's head on our coinage. First of all, there was the Jewish commandment which prohibited images. More seriously, Caesar had proclaimed that he should be worshipped as a god. And thus paying tribute to Caesar in the wider sense meant disobeying the first commandment: Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Jesus answers their trick question with a masterpiece of systematic vagueness: Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

This dramatic incident has always been seen as the very centre of the discussion about a Christian man's duty in society; the subject of Church and State. Where should we turn for guidance beyond the latest political pamphlet? St Paul is helpfully explicit. He says:

Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil... For he is the minister of God to thee for good.

We belong to the Church of England and all Incumbents at their appointment by the Bishop are obliged to assent to our Thirty-nine Articles. Article 37 says

The King's majesty hath the chief power in this Realm of England... to rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal...The bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England.

This is to say that the Queen is Head of both Church and State and therefore no other power internal or external has any greater authority over us. For three centuries after Henry VIII, the encroaching foreign power was perceived by most Englishmen

to be the papacy. Most people are not much fussed by ecclesiastical politics these days and so some might perceive that the threat to national sovereignty nowadays comes from that other international bureaucracy, the EU. C.H. Sisson referred to both the papacy and EU as international gangs of opinion.

But isn't the authority of the Christian faith above the authority of the State? God is surely greater than the Queen? Of course. But, at her Coronation, the Queen was anointed with holy oil and accepted a copy of the Bible. She dedicated herself to serve the nation under God. So our Christian faith does not provoke a conflict of loyalties. This does not mean we have to agree with every policy produced by the government of the day. But it does mean that any disagreement with government policies must be conducted within the law. For all our laws are constitutionally and really the expressed will of the Queen in Parliament.

But you might say, surely the supreme law of God – that we love him with all our heart, soul mind and strength and our neighbours as ourselves – goes beyond a merely national framework. Yes, of course it does. And we should behave like Christian ladies and gentlemen even when we are in France – even when we are in Rome. The meaning of our Church of England is that our duty to God is set out for us in The King James Bible and The Book of Common Prayer and in the teaching consistently derived from these texts by the great theologians and expositors of the Anglican tradition: such as Hooker, Law, Donne, Lancelot Andrewes, George Herbert. And the neighbour we are commanded to love is not some abstraction – humanity in general – but literally our near neighbour, our fellow countryman.

In other words traditional, historical English Christianity is not an abstract theory or code but a local, actual and incarnated relationship. And the English Settlement of the 16th century was an attempt to make one and the same thing out of that which is rendered both to God and to Caesar. This works in the Person of the Queen as head of both Church and State. This Settlement of genius has given us a decent set of political liberties in this country for 400 years and, with the Acts of Toleration of Dissenters in 1828 and Roman Catholics in 1829, it has improved upon even its own fine beginning.

Unfortunately, what we now see is that the people appointed to uphold the Church of England, who promised on their appointment that they would uphold it – bishops and the like – have destroyed it. They hate this entity called the Realm of England and they are doing all in their power to denigrate it, preferring instead their own internationalist fantasies and despising our history as a nation under God.

First they sidelined The King James Bible and The Book of Common Prayer. Then they invented their own prayer books in which they set themselves in order of precedence above the Queen. If you will hold your nose and dare to look into those new and inferior titles The Alternative Service Book and Common Worship, you will see that in the prayers for the church and for the world, the bishops put themselves first.

Parson & Parish

And then they began to abandon Christian teaching and first acquiesce in and then actually promote the antichristian values of secular society: that series of universalised abstractions – theoretical human rights, anti-racism, feminism, anti-sexism, non-discrimination, diversity, environmentalism, the pagan fantasy of global warming and moral relativism. Anything goes. Whenever the bishops and the Synod were faced with a choice between Christian teaching and secular ideology, fads and fashions, they chose the secular. The victory of these traitors and iconoclasts was assured once they achieved majorities among the bench of bishops and in the Synod and so promoted themselves and their cronies relentlessly these last forty years, until now there is barely even an opposition to them and their doings.

W.H. Auden referred to the English Christian Settlement as our luck. And he asked, Why should we spit on our luck? But we have spat upon it. The degraded, faithless hierarchy has not even sold our inheritance for a mess of pottage: in a prolonged spasm of ignorant and destructive self-interest, they have thrown it away. In the face of this there is only one thing for faithful Anglicans, English Christians who understand the disaster that has overtaken us, to do. We must, as we promised, stay and fight our corner.

And there is one more thing, one eruption so profound that it is of the nature of last resort. C.H. Sisson wrote:

The Queen rules through her ministers and she does not rule any the less for that. The minister does not attend to the details of his department's administration. The minister has one inalienable function which is to secure the coherence of his department. The Queen has one inalienable function which is to secure the coherence of her country.

The final safeguard of our unity is a single Person present on the throne by hereditary right and form of law. If we depart from that, we admit the legitimacy of faction. No doubt it is only in the most desperate troubles, such as we pray we shall be preserved from, that that Person would present herself to us so directly. But it is well that we should not allow sloppy ideas to obscure what would be our duty in such an emergency.

These most desperate troubles now beset us. As the precise character and acuteness of this emergency become clearer, we must pray that we do not fail in our duty.

*A sermon preached by the Rev'd Peter Mullen
at S. Michael's Cornhill, on Trinity XXIII 2009*

The Plight of the Laity—a view from the pew

Bishop William Stubbs claimed that ‘a brief reflection solved the mystery’ which confronted him. It is unlikely however that even a prolonged period of reflection will provide the laity with a solution for the healing of divisions which threaten the Church of England today. It is possible, however, that a reconsideration of the writings of Anglicans whose works were composed in an earlier period of turmoil might at least help towards a deeper understanding of the present situation, and be of some benefit to those who are prepared to learn from the wisdom of past ages.

In *The Golden Grove*, published in 1655 when the Book of Common Prayer was banned, Jeremy Taylor speaks of those who, in his lifetime, had ‘discountenanced an excellent liturgy, taken off the hinges of unity’ and ‘disgraced the articles of religion’. While many may think it is inappropriate to see this extract as applicable to the contemporary Church, which is familiar mainly with ‘Common Worship’, many traditional Anglicans and devotees of the Book of Common Prayer may think it is not irrelevant. It certainly cannot be denied that, according to Canon Law, the doctrine of the Church of England is still to be found in ‘the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal’.

George Herbert, the 17th century priest poet, expressed his concern about the troubled church of his day in the poem *Church - Rents and Schisms*, published in 1633. Traditionally, the Church identified herself with ‘the Rose of Sharon’ in the Song of Solomon (2.1) and Herbert explained how the rose was once given colour by ‘Christ’s precious blood’:

.... But when debates and fretting jealousies
Did worm and work within you more and more,
Your colour faded, and calamities
Turned your ruddy into pale and bleak
Your health and beauty both began to break.

Herbert recognised that the deepening divisions between the supporters of the historic Church of England, whose essential outlook was defined by the Prayer Book, and the Puritans and Independents, who preferred their own ideas, were weakening the Church. Likewise, present controversies between traditionalists, both catholic and evangelical, who firmly uphold the faith delivered to the saints and biblical standards of morality, and liberals, who are prepared to adapt the faith to meet changing conditions and contemporary perspectives, have caused divisions. However, unlike that of the earlier period, it seems unlikely that this rift will be healed — for reasons which will be explained later in this article.

It is not surprising that the laity, seriously disturbed by the disunity within the Anglican Church as a whole and within their own congregations, are asking ‘why?’. Many are still puzzled for example why the ordination of women in particular has caused such problems. For many, this decision seemed a matter of common sense.

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Arguments based on ‘a leap of faith’ and ‘the spirit of the age’ are very convincing. Others in our congregations feel instinctively opposed to women priests and bishops but often lack the specialist knowledge which appears necessary to support their case.

Further difficulties arise for the laity because arguments put forward by the opponents and those of the proponents do not relate to each other. Then, when both sides substantiate their claims with support from the Scriptures, it is not surprising that many in our congregations feel like one member of the General Synod, who declared in 1992 that ‘he had not been given the wisdom to decide’ which way to vote.

What however so many of our laity did not realise and still do not understand is that the synod’s acceptance of the ordination of women as priests undermined two principles of Anglicanism. For example, no longer can members of the Church of England claim that they are required to receive ‘nothing as of faith save that which is upheld by Scripture and the tradition of the early Church’, nor that they are held together by a commonly accepted ministry — a ministry in which all its priests recognise the orders of each other.

The Act of Synod which stated that those who refused to accept women priests would be recognised as ‘valued and loyal Anglicans’, with pastoral provision being made for them, caused further confusion amongst the laity. If the matter is so unclear, many felt it would have been wiser to have postponed the vote until theological and ecclesiological questions, which were highlighted by the debates, had been probed more deeply.

With the proposed legislation under discussion for women in the episcopate, it seems unlikely at the moment that there will be any proper statutory provision for those who object. If this is not forthcoming, traditionalists, both catholic and evangelical, find themselves once more faced with a dilemma, which requires more than ‘a brief reflection’. Again, they have to ask whether the General Synod really has the authority to make decisions about the nature of the priesthood and even the episcopate? Is this issue merely a matter of ‘order’ or of ‘doctrine’? Does ‘order’ reflect ‘doctrine’?

It soon becomes clear that to consider such questions, it is necessary to have some knowledge of church history and doctrine. Again many of the laity are at a disadvantage. Even those who turn to their history text books to read about the English Reformation find that historians differ widely in their interpretation of it and in their definitions of the Church of England. Most lay people however are dependent on the interpretation they are given — usually by their parish priest. That the Church of England is both Catholic and Reformed is generally accepted; but what exactly does this mean?

One interpretation is that, at the Reformation, there was no desire to sever the Church of England from her Catholic roots but only to reform and to return to the faith as revealed in Scripture and in the received traditions of the early Church. Another interpretation, much favoured by the proponents of women as priests and bishops, was

one promoted by certain 17th century and 18th century historians who, unlike Bishop Jewel and Archbishop Laud, claimed that the Church of England was an innovation with unrestricted authority to determine her own faith and order.

Unable to evaluate the historical merits of these interpretations, many of our congregations, who have inherited the Englishman's deep seated mistrust of Rome, tend to favour the latter. This, together with Rome's failure to recognise Anglican orders, means that the 'Catholic' claims of Archbishop Fisher that 'we have no doctrine of our own; we only possess the Catholic doctrine enshrined in the Catholic creeds, and those creeds we hold with no addition or diminution. On this rock we stand,' goes unheard. The comment attributed to Bishop Hensley Henson that 'the only doctrine peculiar to the Church of England is that there is no doctrine peculiar to the Church of England' still fails to carry weight in General Synod debates. Many do not realise that forgetful of the rock from which she is hewn, the Church of England is in grave danger of becoming a church uncertain of her authority, unclear about her doctrine and unsure about her claim to possess the historic ministry.

There is further perplexity on the part of the people in the pew about what is meant by the Church of England's comprehensiveness. Should she not extend her boundaries even further and develop a priesthood and episcopate which contains women? In any case, many would point out that the Church of England has no common understanding of priesthood. Evangelicals do not refer to their incumbents as 'priests' but as 'ministers' and their concept of priesthood is totally different from that of the Anglo-Catholics in the next parish. Until 1992, these two extremes were contained within and held together throughout the history of the Church of England by her commonly accepted ministry. Only after the ordination of women did many of our congregations wake up to the implications of belonging to a church in which the orders of some of her priests and the validity of the Eucharists they celebrated are no longer recognised by some of her members. The sacramental rift that this has created is impossible to heal. The proposal for the consecration of women to the episcopate will give rise to further complications, for once this happens, the orders of male priests ordained by women bishops will not be recognised by many members of the Church of England; and so the rift widens.

The religious battles of the 17th century led ultimately to a more enlightened attitude to religious toleration, and from the 1660s the Church of England was held together by the Prayer Book and her commonly accepted ministry. The fact that the latter is no longer possible in the 21st century means that, even if some compromise is reached, learning to live together in a church where her priests and bishops are not recognised by all will require great sensitivity and much Christian charity.

This article will not make comfortable reading but it is hoped that it will clarify the situation for members of the laity who are still perplexed and enable them to make, after prolonged and careful reflection, an 'informed' decision about where they stand and why.

Parson & Parish

There will be those amongst the Anglo-Catholics who will respond to Pope Benedict's generous offer to disaffected Anglicans, while perhaps some Conservative Evangelicals will follow their consciences and seek refuge elsewhere. Whatever path people choose to follow, all who have a deeply rooted affection for the Church of England will feel a terrible sense of loss, as they watch (from within or from without) what they perceive to be the very essence of that church in danger of destruction. Bishop Gore once commented that 'the Church of England is an ingeniously devised organisation for defeating the objects it is supposed to promote'. Certainly, recent events have proved that this is true.

Those members of the laity who remain within the Church of England — and it will be the majority — must be prepared to face up to the anomalies of the present and the ambiguities of the future. They must acclimatise themselves to the prospect of living within a divided church, with the realisation that harmony can only be achieved if both sides are prepared to show a sympathetic understanding of the issues at stake and by calling to mind the words of Jeremy Taylor: 'It is also part of the Christian religion that the liberty of men's consciences should be preserved in all things where God hath not set a limit and made a restraint.'

The General Synod needs to learn from the wisdom of past ages and to extend greater tolerance towards their fellow Anglicans who firmly believe in the teaching and historic traditions of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and to listen to those Conservative Evangelicals who wish to remain faithful to the Bible and gospel truths.

Margaret Laird

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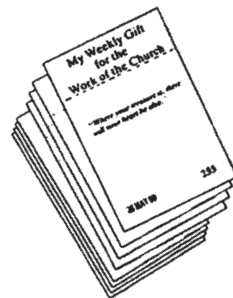
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IN ALL THINGS LAWFUL AND HONEST

*Alex Quibbler, Parson & Parish's legal agony uncle,
responds to recent questions arising in parish life*

QUESTION: *I'm a lay representative for our parish, elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting to serve on the Deanery Synod, and since then I've also been elected by the Deanery to sit in the Diocesan Synod. Unfortunately the Diocesan Synod always meets on the other side of the diocese, and it costs a small fortune to get over there by public transport (I don't have a car, or anyone near me who could give me a lift) — not to mention all the travelling to the Deanery Pastoral Committee to which I also belong, having taken early retirement and with time to spend on these bodies. I'm reluctant to starting handing in receipts to our PCC Treasurer, but I'm just wondering whether these expenses should be borne by me personally, or whether there is some way I can get reimbursed?*

None of these reasonable travelling expenses should be borne by you, and you should have no embarrassment whatsoever in handing over receipts for necessary costs incurred to enable you to serve the Church in this way. If you are attending Deanery Synod then you are doing so, first and foremost, to represent your parish, so that's a parochial expense and I would suggest you approach your PCC Treasurer. If you are attending a Deanery Synod Committee – such as Pastoral or Standing Committee – then you are doing so for the Deanery Synod, so the Deanery Synod Treasurer should reimburse you. Similarly, with Diocesan Synod, you are there to represent the Deanery which elected you, and your travelling costs should be a matter for the Deanery Synod. It's worth raising this matter and getting the reimbursement of expenses on a sensible footing, if it isn't already, and not least to help your successors. If it hasn't been the practice for the Deanery to meet expenditure in this way in the past, then the Synod will need to address this, even if it means the parish "precept", as they often call the contributions from the Deanery's parishes, needs to be increased. No one is asking you personally to subsidise the synodical system of the Church of England!

QUESTION: *Recently I attended a diocesan training day (the usual thing, "If you are unable to attend... I expect you to notify me with your reasons," wrote the Bishop – no "please"!) on the Clergy Terms of Service legislation, which we were told is almost definitely going to come into force on 31st January 2011. What slightly worries me is the pressure that is beginning to be put on existing freeholders like me to opt to go under common tenure. Our "diocesan human resources adviser" says that we "will be invited to opt in to the provisions," while the Archdeacon told us that he's got no problem about standing alongside his fellow clerics and sharing common tenure along with them, and the Cathedral Dean urges that we give up our freehold "as a matter of justice". Alex, am I just being selfish in wanting to hang on to freehold tenure?*

Of course you're not! And I suspected all along that just these sorts of pressures

Parson & Parish

would be brought to bear on the parochial clergy. I assume that your Archdeacon and Dean won't, quite so readily, give up their stipend differentials (and consequent higher pension entitlement) in the name of solidarity with the workers and as an issue of justice! And your HR person is not strictly correct, as a matter of law, to claim that freeholders will be "invited" to opt in. The Measure, in fact, is perfectly neutral in the sense that each diocesan bishop will be required to "notify" each existing incumbent "requesting him or her to indicate whether or not that person agrees to the application of this Measure to him or her." That's a bit different from an invitation. In fact, I can't see any reason why someone with the choice should elect to come within common tenure and all that comes with it (compulsory ministerial development review and continuing ministerial education, curtailment of time spent on duties beyond those of the office, potential restrictions on the use of the parsonage by other family members, and having to report one day's sickness to a diocesan official as though clerics are in their employ, and so on and so forth). Some of the "entitlements", like the "uninterrupted rest period of not less than 24 hours" each week, and the thirty days annual leave, may sound tempting, but in fact you'd still be an office-holder, and will still have to organise your own cover to enable the entitlement to happen, just as you would at the moment if you were take advantage of the existing statutory basis for being absent from your benefice for up to three months in a year (something that people sometimes forget). Let's hope, too, that the sick in need of anointing and final prayers of the Church will be able to hang on for a day or two so as not to interrupt any common tenure office-holder's oasis of calm. Don't be taken in, good friend, and I may even see you at the party when the last freeholder of the Church of England finally retires!

Readers are invited to continue sending in their questions about parish law and practice to the Quibbler in forthcoming issues of the magazine. All names and addresses are, of course, withheld. Whilst every effort is made by Alex to ensure the accuracy of his responses, advice should be taken before action is implemented or refrained from in specific cases.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Back Parts of War: the YMCA Memoirs and Letters of Barclay Baron, 1915-1919

Ed. Michael Snape 2009

The Boydale Press 277pp (illustrations 16pp) ISBN 978-1-84383-519-6

Though the Young Men's Christian Association dates back to the 1880s, the distinctive and ubiquitous red triangle of its badge was actually designed in August 1915 as the symbol of war work by that Association. That work is the theme of this book. It is a remarkable story, told through the experiences of Barclay Baron, a dedicated Anglican lay preacher, who devoted his life to Christian social work. No less than a third of the book is taken up by what is modestly called an introduction, but in fact deals in depth with the links between the British Army and the YMCA both before, but particularly during, the First World War. There is a mass of information to absorb here, including the fact that by 1918 the Association had spent more than £1,000,000 on huts at home and abroad, incurring a running cost of over £1,800 per day. On the Western Front alone the YMCA was at one time employing 1,700 workers, of whom between a quarter and a third were clergymen.

The introduction leads us to Baron's own account of his war work in the base of Le Havre, where he arrived in August 1915. It is a surprise to learn that, until the Spring of 1917, the efforts of the YMCA on the Continent were confined by the authorities to army bases, to the Channel ports and to the scattered territory of the Lines of Communication. Here, in Le Havre itself, quite apart from providing facilities for the huge base depots outside the town, including nineteen Infantry Base Depots holding around 70,000 men, throughout the war the docks of that town dealt with an endless stream of troops moving up to the fighting front or returning back to the coast. In distressing scenes very well described by Baron, the quays saw literally tens of thousands of wounded soldiers arriving in overcrowded and hopelessly ill-equipped hospital trains, particularly during the Somme offensive of 1916. The YMCA workers, men and women, ministered as best they could to the masses of troops moving through the port, offering comfort and counsel, writing letters and cards for the wounded to send home, and handing out what became the stock-in-trade of the Association - hot drinks, chocolates, sandwiches, cigarettes and so on, thus maintaining three concepts embraced by the red triangle of the Association: Spirit, Mind and Body.

As an interesting aside that seems not to appear in any other account of the war as far as this reviewer is aware, in the early stages of the war when all British soldiers were still volunteers, the Association also found itself running a camp for teenage British Army lads who had given a false age on attestation, and who had been sent back from the fighting areas by their units when they were detected. Yet another camp was set up to cater for French unmarried girls, some little more than children themselves, the fathers being British soldiers. The existence of this particular camp

Parson & Parish

was kept secret even from most of the YMCA staff for fear it would be closed down by the Army authorities if its activities became known.

After the Spring of 1917, the YMCA was at last given approval to move its efforts much closer to the fighting front, and Baron well describes the Somme sector and the appalling devastation in which he and the other volunteers were working. Most of the scenes he describes here in Albert, Amiens, Peronne and so on, will be familiar ground to readers of the numerous military histories, but what is remarkable and unique is the story of the selfless dedication of these non-combatants often in the face of mortal danger. In some parts of the Somme sector it was possible for the YMCA to erect semi-permanent huts, but in many places all that could be done was to erect a small marquee, or a shed or even a lean-to in a disused trench, cobbled together from local wreckage. As the front became relatively static, better facilities became possible and soon there were more than eighty huts set up at regular intervals about three or four miles behind the trenches.

For a short spell Baron next finds himself for a time in a relatively quiet sector on the coast near Dunkirk alongside the re-forming Second Division, before a return to the fighting area this time in front of Ypres, where he arrives just before the horrific fighting in late 1917 for the Passendale Ridge. It was not long before the YMCA had built a presence at eighty or so points around the salient, and one of them, for example, was even in a tunnel, right by the eighteenth century Lille Gate. Life immediately behind the salient at this time, when the front had been more or less stable for months, is well described, and we learn among other things of Baron's contacts with the, later very well-known, 'Tubby' Clayton and of the origins of ToCh in Poperinghe.

In March 1918, all was thrown once more into disarray by the German Spring offensive, and Baron was caught up in the chaos. At one point during the confusion of the retreat he was about to run into the firing line itself, when he was turned back by a party of British soldiers who had just taken up firing positions! But the German offensive turned out to be the final fling by an exhausted army, and the Autumn sees Baron moving forward with the Second Division across the old battlefields and thence through Lille, Brussels, Aachen and so on into Cologne. In this last city he gives a description of the long columns of victorious occupying troops marching in the rain across the Hohenzollern Bridge, before giving his account of the deprived state of the local population, and of the frustrating work involved in setting up the still essential welfare facilities, often grudgingly exacted from the locals, for the British troops.

The twenty-two letters home that make up the last section of the book are of great interest because, unlike the main narrative account, they are contemporaneous and they bring to life penetrating glimpses of day-to-day conditions on the Western Front, though because of wartime censorship he is very careful about dates and the names of places. But here we see the man himself as he wrestles, for example, with inadequacies of staff both in numbers and in quality and with the difficulties of obtaining practical assistance from the military when the Army priorities were bound to lie elsewhere.

Footnotes in a book of this kind can be an irritation at best and a diversion at worst. Throughout this book, however, Michael Snape has researched in detail virtually all the names, events and references given by Baron, and these notes are an enlightening and indeed an essential contribution to the whole.

The book forms an appropriate tribute to the men and women of the YMCA, and the often unsung services, physical, mental and spiritual, that they brought to so many in that uniquely horrific conflict. The women were of course usually found only in the base areas, but the men in particular were a remarkable body of altruistic Christians, many of them physically unfit and a large proportion of them seriously over-age both for the work they were doing and for the conditions in which they were doing it. It is a most valuable contribution to our understanding of the kind of people who were so personally touched by the war. It is amusing to see that at one point Baron refers to the members of his organization as ‘camp followers’; they were certainly much more than that! A more telling comment is that by a Canadian on the scene who remarks that YMCA meant ‘You Make Christianity Attractive!’

Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Armitage

Understanding Islam

Revd David Shrisunder

Christoph Books, Dewsbury, 2008

This 75 page booklet is an urgent call to British Christians to face up to the different challenges presented by the growth of Islam in this country. Its eleven chapters cover subjects like the history, beliefs and practices of Islam, the spread of Islam in the West, mixed marriages and a Christian approach to Islam.

The author is an Indian priest who has ministered in many different contexts both in India and the UK since he was ordained in India in 1957. It is salutary for British Christians to listen attentively to the frank observations of someone who brings a fresh and different perspective to what is happening around us.

There are unfortunately some inaccuracies (e.g. about the date of the fall of Byzantium and the Muslim Parliament in Britain), and some exaggerations (e.g. the number of Muslims in Britain is given as 3 million, and we are told that ‘Muslim parents in Britain withdraw their children from Christian religious assemblies’). While it is true that most Christians are fearful about the growth in the numbers and influence of Muslims in this country, is it really true to say that ‘Muslim presence and impact is dominant in political, social and economic fields in Britain and Europe’?

We always need to be reminded that ‘The Christian approach to any religion should be sympathetic and respectful’. But perhaps it’s a dangerous half-truth to repeat the simple sentence ‘Islam is a religion of the sword’. And if it is fair to say that ‘passion and emotionalism are characteristics of Islam’, it would be helpful to hear more about the particular political grievances which lie behind the anger of many Muslims in

different parts of the world. There are some issues over which Muslims have good reason to be angry.

In spite of these comments, I am in total sympathy with the motivation behind the writing of this booklet. I for one want to respond positively to his final plea to face up to the challenges of Islam: ‘Will you join me in praying for revival and spiritual awakening in Britain and Europe. My message is, “Wake Up.”’

Revd. Colin Chapman

**If You Meet George Herbert on the Road, Kill Him:
Radically Re-thinking Priestly Ministry**

Justin Lewis-Anthony

Mowbray, pbk 978-1-90628-617-0

Catholic priests would look instinctively to St Jean Marie Vianney, the Curé d’Ars or to St Vincent de Paul as their model of priesthood: as instinctively as a Benedictine would look to St Benedict, a Dominican to St Dominic, a Jesuit to St Ignatius Loyola, a Premonstratensian to St Norbert. Anglo-Catholics would add to the Curé and St Vincent from a pantheon of the great slum priests of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Fathers Mackonochie, Lowder, Wainwright, Stanton, Jellicoe, Diamond and many more. That it came as something of a surprise to find that George Herbert, the seventeenth century poet and priest, had a similar iconic status for Anglican clergyman says something about my tangential relationship to the Church of England and, given only three years experience as a curate in a parish, makes me wonder whether I am best placed to review this book. And I was put off by the vulgarity of the title: what had poor George Herbert done to warrant such an incitement to versifercide?

But beyond the provocative title, Justin Lewis-Anthony has written a sprightly, sparky, if slightly cocky, bracing book. Of course, we should have known, George Herbert is not the villain of the piece. He was undoubtedly a good and holy parish priest but, as is pointed out, he had a very short pastoral ministry, some three years and that has been elevated into an icon of Anglican ministry. His biographer created a myth that has been swallowed hook, line and sinker, for generations and Anglican clergy are victims, not of the innocent George Herbert, but of false memory syndrome. Mr Lewis-Anthony gives a very sympathetic of Herbert’s life and an appreciation of his verse. He also follows this with a solid history of the clergy in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He relies on the work of others in these fields and does so with due acknowledgement and indebtedness and weaves this material into his central argument with skill. He considers the professionalisation of the clergy and their changing, if not wavering, status in society. The parish priest that emerges is expected to be a jack of all trades and a master of all: a situation which even the growth of lay involvement and expertise has not eradicated. In the Catholic side of things, there

is still a sense that “Father knows best” and he has to have a range of abilities and management and commercial skills. Mr Lewis-Anthony cites John Pritchard’s book *The Life and Work of a Priest* in which is outlined “an omnicompetent/omnipresent model of ministry”

For his theological reflections he takes Michael Ramsey’s classic text *The Christian Priest Today*, which still stands up well thirty years and more since its publication, and which is clearly and crisply outlined. He uses that and Rowan Williams’ reflection on his predecessor in St Augustine’s Chair which was originally a lecture and which appears in Douglas Dales’ good collection of essays on Ramsey *Glory Descending*. Perhaps the central point of the argument is articulated when Lewis-Anthony quotes Dr Williams:

... the Church is first of all a kind of space cleared by God through Jesus in which people may become what God made them to be (God’s sons and daughters), and that what we have to do about the Church is not first to organise it as a society but to inhabit it as a climate or a landscape. It is a place where we can see properly – God, God’s creation, ourselves. It is a place or dimension in the universe that is in some way growing towards being the universe itself in restored relation to God. It is a place we are invited to enter, the place occupied by Christ, who is himself the climate and atmosphere of a renewed universe.

As Lewis-Anthony says, “this cosmic Church is so far away from the day-to-day experience of the Church (flower rotas, PCC meetings, Gift Days) that it can make one weep.” The Archbishop certainly sets a high and mystic bar that puts into context the routine of parish life, the practicalities that underpin the structure. How much the practicalities and the routines, the business of everyday parish life, become an end in themselves, and an individual’s priesthood becomes defined in these worldly, secular terms, is even more urgent than ever. The Archbishop’s outline of the priest today is Witness, Watchman, Weaver which are explored in some detail and buttressed with the results of wide theological reading.

Of course, in such a trenchant and opinionated book there will be cavils and reservations at aspects of the argument and the analysis: I find his wholesale adoption of Professor MacCulloch’s view of the Reformation disappointing and lacking in discrimination. The book falls away a little and does not quite live up to its radical promise in its prescription but his rule of life, set out in an Appendix, based on the Four Pillars of the Dominican Constitution, Prayer, Study, Community, Ministry is impressive. It appears schematic, exhaustive, and looks exhausting but reminds us that the priesthood is not a job, although there are jobs to be done, but a vocation and a twenty-four hour a day commitment to serve God and his people: a life of doing certainly, but of being even more certainly.

William Davage, Pusey House, Oxford

The Old Rectory

Anthony Jennings 2009

Continuum 296pp ISBN 978-0-82642-658-1

Anthony Jennings tells us that

at Winteringham, Lincolnshire, the seventeenth century parsonage of the Revd. Lorenzo Grainger is in the curtilage of the Victorian parsonage which in turn was replaced by a modern utilitarian building. The three stand in a line.

Winteringham illustrates well that England contains some 13,000 parishes each with three or more parsonages in its long history. Jennings thinks there must be up to 50,000 pre-1939 houses that qualify for the title 'The Old Rectory' or 'The Old Vicarage' in addition to those pre-1939 houses still in use as parsonages and included in his remit.

This book can therefore do no more than scratch the surface but the painstaking industry that has obviously been poured into it ensures that the scratching goes deep. Jennings has clearly travelled the length and breadth of England in his hunt for older parsonages, armed with camera in one hand and the appropriate volume of Pevsner's *The Buildings of England* in the other.

This vast research has resulted in an exhaustive gazetteer of houses Jennings has traced either in print or in person, given in chronological order with their principal architectural features. There is also a gazetteer of architects who have worked on older parsonages "again given chronologically" and a fascinating list of interesting or famous people down the ages who have either lived in or been associated with parsonages. These chapters take up over 100 pages of a total of 250, forming a kind of parsonage encyclopaedia.

There is a little light relief buried deep among the architecture and the history. In the twelfth century Gilbert of Sempringham and his chaplain lived in the village inn but had to move to a room in the church 'to avoid temptation from the landlord's daughter'. In Victorian times the Revd. Thomas Massey built an odd folly in his garden in Hampshire and when asked why he replied it was a tea room with a red globe on top that would turn green when the tea was brewed. One enterprising modern vicar lived in a caravan in order to spend a week in each of his many country parishes – perhaps a pattern for the future? Among the several hundred architects listed is William Railton (1801-77) who for ten years was architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners but in his spare time designed Nelson's Column.

Those three parsonages standing in a line at Winteringham also demonstrate perfectly changing parsonage styles over three centuries. Without doubt the most valuable part of *The Old Rectory* is the chapter on the history of the parsonage from the Saxon monk's cell to the modern box, via the golden Georgian age and all points

between. It is a story of astonishing variety and Jennings's observation that dating a building can be difficult is pertinent. For example, the best features of a medieval house may be the Queen Anne façade and at what point does a much altered Georgian house become Victorian?

This historical chapter is supplemented by 66 plates, the majority in colour, setting out an impressive photographic history of the parsonage. Even given the valuable text the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words has never been more forcibly demonstrated.

At Winteringham in Victorian times the seventeenth century building was deemed 'unsuitable' while in the twentieth century the same sentiment was applied to its Victorian replacement. The process continues in our own day and Jennings laments on every page that the word 'unsuitable' has been constantly stretched to justify the 'Great Parsonage Sell-Off'. He estimates there are now around 700 pre-1939 parsonages left, 5% of the total, with the Diocese of Norwich proudly reporting that it only has 18 remaining. Many of us will be at one with him in supporting their retention, particularly in rural parishes where the parsonage is a powerful tool for Christian ministry. These parsonages are often modest in size, of historical interest and in the long term cheaper to maintain because of the quality of the original fabric.

As your reviewer is a priest he may perhaps be excused for doubting the logic of Jennings's statement that 'The presence of the house in the parish is as important as that of the Rector', a sentiment also a trifle idealistic in an age when the majority of English villages not only have no working parsonage but share a Rector with ten or so other villages. In the context of the 'Great Parsonage Sell-Off' the claim is made on many pages of *The Old Rectory* that the Church of England is in steep decline with bishops and bureaucrats waiting to pounce on and sell older parsonages whenever possible; but it should be remembered that in many cases the initiative to sell has often come from the priest himself, while my own experience has been that not all PCCs have proved as interested as they should be in where their vicar lives and have supported some sales that should not have taken place.

Jennings is right to stress the total failure of the Church to deal with the redundant parsonage situation in a way that makes economic sense. The sale of thousands of parsonages has been nothing less than the sale of the family silver. Instead of selling the Church could have retained these valuable assets and rented them out while enjoying the capital appreciation. Each diocese today could now be receiving rent from hundreds of properties, any one of which could be returned to church use as geography or pastoral needs dictate. Yes, many of the parsonages sold were in poor condition and yes, the diocese may have needed ready instant cash for a replacement parsonage. But these are short term problems and the Church seems constantly to have failed in the long term view. The two simple facts that rents are always been pegged to property value and that you cannot today buy a former parsonage anywhere for less than £1m tell their own story. History will judge the Church harshly.

Parson & Parish

A final comment. Now that the modern parsonage is like any other modern house, often at some distance from the Church, there is value in Jennings's suggestion that a case can be made for a standard parsonage design indicating to the world, as in former days, that this is where the priest lives. Could the Church Commissioners be interested in organising a competition for architects along these lines? Perhaps a standard red globe over the front door that changes to green when the vicar has his 'surgery' hours could appeal to the modern priest?

*The Very Reverend Dr. Michael Higgins,
Emeritus Dean of Ely and a Patron of Save Our Parsonages*

Guidelines (vol. 26 part 1, January-April 2010)

BRF (The Bible Reading Fellowship) 160pp ISBN 978-1-84101-680-1

This reviewer has not seen a copy of BRF notes for many years, and was most interested and refreshed perusing the notes prepared for the first four months of 2010. There is a variety of contributors. Questions arising from "difficult passages" are not ducked; indeed the reader is invited to draw on disagreement with a contributor to learn more about their own faith or to study the issue further. This is a most welcome stimulus to intelligent faith: after all, the Anglican understanding is that Holy Scripture contains all things "necessary to salvation", which is quite different logically from asserting that "everything in Holy Scripture is necessary to salvation". Study of scripture should be liberating, not enslaving.

There are brief four-line notes on each contributor (one, amusingly, is described as "the ever-chauffeur father" of his two children), which gives a sense of the contributors' varied backgrounds. That variety is to some extent reflected in the styles of the contributions.

The topics covered in this edition of *Guidelines* are as follows: *Prayer in busy lives, Deceit in God's service, Luke 3-6, The leadership challenge, Malachi, The death of Jesus in John's Gospel, The Bible and politics, Hearing the Old Testament.*

It is pleasing that in general critical questions were canvassed in introductory remarks. For instance, John Proctor in *The death of Jesus in John's Gospel* refers to the many layers of the gospel. He mentions the symbolism of night in the Nicodemus passage (3.2), and how throughout the gospel the life and death of Jesus "frame and focus each other", rather than occur in simple chronological sequence, as the gospel story often pauses to explore the meaning of the crucifixion in relation to particular episodes. Thus, positive insights from biblical scholarship are made constructively available.

In *Hearing the Old Testament*, Walter Moberly offers three weeks of notes on Deuteronomy, Genesis and Jeremiah. He observes that Christians should accept a threefold challenge in dealing with the Old Testament—to read it in its own terms

as far as possible, respecting its ancient idioms and contexts, to hear it in a Christian frame of reference, and to respect the way in which these same scriptures “remain scripture in a Jewish frame of reference”. The Old Testament, after all, remains integral to Christian faith.

Moberly observes that in Deuteronomy the speaking voice is Moses, but that the book “appears to come from a time later than Moses”, yet is expounding the Mosaic vision and legacy. He has some interesting comments on 7.1-11 under the heading “Does or did God sponsor ethnic cleansing?”, seeking to emphasise that Israel’s election by and allegiance to the Lord are maintained by avoiding intermarriage and not tolerating idols or any form of allegiance to other gods. The notes are perforce brief, but one might wonder whether passages which reflect situations of non-monotheistic mixed allegiance, not to mention episodes of mass slaughter, should also be mentioned in order to indicate the historical struggles involved in the emergence of Yahwism.

The gift of the land in Deuteronomy 8 evokes reflections on how material prosperity in Western Civilisation has “made it largely heedless of religious truths that used to be central to its self-understanding.” It would be interesting to know at what stage in the developing world financial crisis those reflections were penned, as imposed austerity begins to bite. There could also be references to the geopolitical significance of today’s Canaan, given that claims and understandings in the biblical material underlie, for good or ill, certain contemporary attitudes.

On Genesis, Moberly asks the reader to take the story with full imaginative seriousness. One hopes that every reader who does so will be liberated from sterile controversies based on a pseudo-factual approach and instead be drawn to engage with the great themes addressed in this book. In discussing the Cain and Abel story, Moberly points out how often in life it is necessary to handle being “unfavoured”: struggling with disapproval and resentment is intrinsic to life in God’s world. So, he concludes, “the cards we are dealt” must be used to refine our devotion and obedience to God. In the same way, he sees Genesis 22 as showing Abraham’s trust of God even when God appears to be denying his own promise. These are difficult themes, bordering on the possibility of a capricious deity, but there is certainly great scope for reflection, whatever one’s place in the Christian pilgrimage or in enquiry.

The selections included in *Deceit in God’s service* all raise important questions (“issues” in modern jargon) about moral integrity. But one might wonder whether more should have been made of the cultural backgrounds in which the passages were formed. Is the sense of God’s nature and how he is to be seen working in human life and history to be regarded as uniform in the bible? Or is that sense itself to be seen as developing? The writer of this section certainly, however, indicates the relevance of the questionable activities of some biblical characters in today’s world.

All in all, each section of *Guidelines* provides useful material which would serve well in parish discussion groups, as well as in individual study and reflection.

Peter Johnson

CHAIRPIECE

St. John — an Old Man on an Old Man

At seventy, I've preached in more than seventy Churches, Chapels, Colleges and Cathedrals even since I "retired", and this article does not attempt to be in any way a "learned article" but to offer a possible insight based upon my perspective. When I was an undergraduate in Magdalen — the President has just sent round an e-mail congratulating ourselves on five members now attending Cabinet — I read, as some of them did, for the school of Modern History, which began, as it does, in the Fourth Century. My Special Subject, studied under the great Peter Brown, was St. Augustine of Hippo, with whose thought, integrity and thoroughness I was mightily impressed — and still am. His series of daily Sermons on St. John's Gospel sits still on my shelves, along with many other specimens of his gargantuan output. The theology came to absorb much of my time, let alone the mere history.

So, without any pretence of particular learning, but with the insight of lengthening human experience, I would like to crave your indulgence of a few thoughts about St. John. First, the words of another Magdalen man, C.S. Lewis, from the *Screwtape Letters*, about the way in which many moderns tend to dismiss those who have written before them — particularly in antiquity:

Only the learned read old books and we have now so dealt with the learned that they are of all men the least likely to acquire wisdom by doing so. We have done this by inculcating The Historical Point of View. The Historical Point of View, put briefly, means that when a learned man is presented with any statement in an ancient author, the one question he never asks is whether it is true. He asks who influenced the ancient writer, and how far the statement is consistent with what he said in other books, and what phase in the writer's development, or in the general history of thought, it illustrates, and how it affected later writers, and how often it has been misunderstood (specially by the learned man's own colleagues) and what the general course of criticism on it has been for the last ten years, and what is the "present state of the question". To regard the ancient writer as a possible source of knowledge — to anticipate that what he said could possibly modify your thoughts or your behaviour — this would be rejected as unutterably simple-minded. And since we cannot deceive the whole human race all the time, it is most important thus to cut every generation off from all others; for where learning makes a free commerce between the ages there is always the danger that the characteristic errors of one may be corrected by the characteristic truths of another. But thanks be to our Father and the Historical Point of View, great scholars are now as little nourished by the past as the most ignorant mechanic who holds that "history is bunk".

The late John Robinson's posthumous *The Priority of John* may serve as a starting point. You don't need me to tell you that it is an immensely learned and detailed work, designed in part to accompany his projected Bampton Lectures, which in the end he

prevailed upon Professor C.F.D. Moule to prepare and deliver. That great man after Dr. Robinson's final illness assisted in the preparation of this work for the press. His central affirmation is this: "I prefer to believe that the ancient testimony of the Church is correct that John wrote [the Gospel] 'while still in the body' and that its roughnesses, self-corrections and failures of connection, real or imagined, are the result of its not having been smoothly or finally edited.....who could wish for a better testimony from his friends than that 'his witness is true' (John 21.24)?"

That is my starting point, too. The last chapter of John is self-evidently an addition. Its contextual placing rather says so. The preserved ending of the previous chapter confirms it. (Whether John with a different amanuensis wrote the Epistles is another matter.) That one of the "Sons of Thunder" should have penned the *Revelation* himself while a prisoner is plausible enough - so John's Gospel, with its different style, is to me the amazingly vivid product of an old man's storytelling amongst his disciples, at least one of whom must have written and edited what we have. It is not my purpose to provide in footnotes all the evidences you would expect, were this a learned article - one of the joys of Dr. Robinson's book is its abundant footnotes and thorough indexing. It is the tradition - we all know - that John lived to old age, the only one of the twelve not to die a violent death. Two stories must suffice, the first shewing perhaps that this *Son of Thunder* had not, even in extreme age, quite lost his fire.

Irenæus, in the first book of his work *Against Heresies*, gives some abominable false doctrines of the same man (Cerinthus), and in the third book relates a story which deserves to be recorded. He says, on the authority of Polycarp, that the apostle John once entered the Baths to bathe; but, learning that Cerinthus was within, he sprang from the place and rushed out of the door, for he could not bear to remain under the same roof with him. And he advised those that were with him to do the same, saying, "Let us flee, lest the bath fall; for Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within."

The second is the tradition (recorded again by Irenæus) that in final age, dying around the year 100 A.D., John would say constantly, "Little children, love one another". Old people do repeat themselves.

As C.S. Lewis might have said, the main reason for dismissing either of these statements is that they were made a long time ago.....

Psychologically, as one now past his sell-by date and probably at his reduced-to-clear stage, if not yet remaindered, I believe the traditional view of John's Gospel is consistent with the internal evidence, with the way it is put together.

Old people have, often, curious memory patterns. Those of you who are older than me could confirm this observation.

If I may make a personal contribution from my own self-consciousness, forty-five years from my Ordination on a Trinity Sunday, may I say that my memory of recent events is often sketchy, and I rely heavily on pieces of paper, diaries, and, increasingly, the computer. St. John did not have that kind of help. So what do I remember? Childhood, even, in my case, babyhood - the carry-cot, the cot, the pram and the push-chair, with some naughty episodes over which I draw a veil. Well, it is

Parson & Parish

all very vivid - to give you an example - our early cars (from memory, I promise you) BVO676, WD8068, MOC605, and then (ordained by that stage) a blank. So there is, in my view, no reason why the memory of an elderly St. John for events decades earlier should not have been very good - St. Paul had more trouble (I Cor. i.14 et seq.). I can remember my first funeral, in 1965, Zipporah Warren - and a rare old time we had, finding the grave, at 14 feet too (the plans of the Churchyard burnt with the Church, the Vicar having heroically saved the Registers); but I cannot recall my last. I was telephoned a few years ago at 2 a.m. from Princeton University Library, or was it Yale, and a remembered voice, not heard for forty years, said, "You'll never guess who this is." But, so triggered, I knew: "it is A.....W.....H.....B.....", I said, giving his Christian names in full. But now..... I begin to sympathize with Sir Alec Guinness, the title of whose autobiography is "My Name Escapes Me". Some of us will soon need name badges done in mirror-writing.....

Now, the pattern with which St. John remembers, story-telling and occasionally dictating: it is all very simple, really. There's the first chapter - his distilled preaching heart, honed over the years. You'd expect just such a statement. But then, they say to him, tell us, *how did it all begin?* (Grand-daughter about to arrive always asks me to tell her stories of ordinands' pranks at Ridley.....) We notice that John chapters one and two are full of consecutive time references - the next day, the third day, after this. That's how it is, when one reminisces about how it all began. (I could give you, from memory, the lines, in Latin, of the Oath of admission to my Demyship in October 1958, and tell you about the excellent dry sherry served afterwards!) Then, triggered, the stories begin to get lengthier, and, of course, detailed as they are, they are merely a small selection of all the things he might have remembered - but, "tell us about Nicodemus' first visit to Jesus", they might have said. Chapters which like eight and nine, ten and eleven, tell long stories lack really explicit time references. That begins again with xii.1. There's no particular reason for making up these stories. As A.A. Milne says, "There are others." "About Pooh and Me?" "And Piglet and Rabbit and all of you. Don't you remember?" "I do remember, and then when I try to remember, I forget." The disciple may, at points, have echoed Christopher Robin's thought. Professor Dennis Nineham used to say that there were only three authentic sayings of Jesus in the entire Gospel Canon! Believe that if you will. I think it is easier to believe that what John reminisced about, and was taken down, on the spot, or from memory shortly afterwards, is true. The stories, with all their detached detail, reflect the way the ageing mind works - vividness of detail, sometimes astonishing exactness, but also selectivity from some many other things that he could have remembered at the time, usually with vagueness about precisely when. So we come to Chapter xxi: the Gospel is finished - perhaps it is being shewn to John - "is there more?", they say. "What happened next?" "Well", says St. John, "I remember the time when we went fishing again, some of us, comforting really - 153 fishes we caught; and there He was....."

Dr. Robinson avers, “John’s authorship would not be as impossible as many scholars have made it seem. John’s family seems to be well to do. Zebedee has servants who help him and his two sons in their fishing operations. If John’s family was in actuality part of a Galilean merchant class, many things in the gospels would be explained, not the least of which is John’s ability to write simple Greek (albeit with a noted Aramaic ‘accent’). It would explain how John has contacts with the high priest’s household that enables him and Peter to enter during Jesus’ trial (18.15). It explains why John has a house in the city (19.27), and that he may even have been his father’s agent in Jerusalem on occasion.” While these conjectures are not definitive, Robinson again states that it is “unscientific to invent unknown characters such as the author of this major contribution to New Testament literature and theology” when another *real* character fits the bill.

“I shall be contending that there is no either-or between recognizing John as the omega of the New Testament witness, the end-term, or an end-term, of its theological reflection, and also its alpha, standing as close as any to the source from which it sprang. His theology, I believe, does not take us further from the history but leads us more deeply into it.” He quotes Browning with approval:

What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,

And named them in the Gospel I have writ.

“He is concerned, I suggest, to present the truth of the history. It is not the whole truth. Both that it is a primal vision, a first, though not necessarily the first, statement of the Gospel in writing, from source and not from sources, I should wish strongly to insist.....”

Luke presents us with a thirty-something Jesus: already such maturity? Intellectual gymnastics are required to make his explicit time-ties in chapter three explicable. John, however, in chapter eight may be implying that Jesus was older, maybe even forty-ish, which would fit better with his maturity of thought as well as with the date of his birth rather well before the death of Herod the Great, whatever one may make of the astronomical indicators. Be that as it may be, with Dr. Robinson this old man feels that John may not have been the first Gospel to be written; but it has priority - in the full, detailed, immediacy of his ageing remembrance. It is how the mind works.

Grand-daughter at the door.....

John Masding

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