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REVIEWS

Enquiries

Enquires to the Revd Dr Michael Hull
Scottish Episcopal Institute
21 Grosvenor Crescent
EdinburghEH12 5EE
Scotland–UK
0131-225-6357
dos@scotland.anglican.org

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From Exception to Norm? Women in Theology: The Smith Lecture 2022

Ann Loades CBE
Professor Emerita of Divinity, Durham University
Honorary Professor, University of St Andrews

This essay arose from my contribution to the lecture series which commemorates the remarkable achievements of the Smith sisters, known in the course of time as Dr Margaret Gibson and Dr Agnes Lewis. My tactics in this essay are to offer a look, both retrospective and prospective, via a narrative with comments which may, I hope, stimulate some discussion. I am hoping that women in this day and age may continue to contribute to Theology and Religious Studies, as they have for some considerable time both without and within an institutional base of some kind. In other words, in engaging with the past I am looking and hoping for stimulus for the present and the future. It is recognised, however, that there will be problems to face in engaging with Theology and Religious Studies, since some of these relate to issues intrinsic to Christian tradition in much need of reform. Since this particular lecture series is the gift of the University of St Andrews, I relate my essay to connections there so far as possible.

The Smith Sisters as Independent Scholars

To begin with, and since some readers may know little or nothing about the Smith sisters whom I have mentioned by referring to their married names and their doctorates, I would urge those of you unfamiliar with their story to track down the book about them published by Janet Martin Soskice, *Sisters of Sinai* (2009) who delivered the first Smith lecture. Her lecture-presentation on her book is available online as delivered in the Mullen Library of the Catholic University in Washington, DC. I will be returning to Professor Martin Soskice at the conclusion of this essay, since she continues to be a redoubtable contributor to constructive discussion of theology internationally in the new situation in which women have found themselves as theology has developed in a variety of locations in the last century.

Let us recall a little about the twin Smith sisters, and by doing so alert ourselves to why and how it was that well into the twentieth century a few women were able to contribute to theology, following in the footsteps of those who had previously put their energies into social reform. To understand the situation in the era of the Smith twins it is, I think, helpful to remember that through the first part of the twentieth century children in

Britain left school to enter the world of work by the ages of eleven or twelve, and even by the middle of the twentieth century the vast majority left school by age fifteen. We recall that households needed every penny their members could contribute if they were to survive. Managing a household required the energies of everyone apart from the very young or the very old, one and all vulnerable to disease or accident. In any event the elderly would have had little or no chance to save for the days when they could no longer work.

So far as women's engagement with theology was concerned, much therefore depended on being born into a family with considerable financial resources, with parents delighted to be able to educate clever daughters. Daughters could and did benefit from what parents themselves could offer by way of instruction, and who might well also employ live-in governesses to teach several languages, other subject areas brought in by tutors. Beyond that, in the nineteenth century there had developed some excellent 'academic' boarding schools in which their daughters might spend just a few years to take them well beyond what they might be offered in their homes. This became especially important if they were to seize the new opportunities for university level education as these became available, even if actually being awarded a degree was not in prospect. It was of course important to avoid being thought to be intellectual, since that could well damage their marriage prospects! In addition, a family might well have sufficient resources to fund holidays in mainland Europe, such expeditions being a welcome opportunity to explore different cultures and religious traditions. What some young women did with such opportunities obviously varied from time to time and place to place, but it was possible that they might find interests in the 'visual' dimension of theology in one form or another. Writing books recording their travels and the attention they gave to 'shrines and cities' could be one important way of exploring theology, not least given the opportunity to survey different forms of worship.

To turn to the Smith sisters: Margaret and Agnes were twins having to grow up without their mother who had died three weeks after their birth (1843). Home territory was Irvine, Presbyterian Ayrshire. Father had inherited a fortune, and organised trips abroad for them all on condition that they had learned the relevant language. Hence their initial visits to France, Germany, Spain and Italy. They inherited his wealth on his death when they were twenty-three, by which time they had become perfectly capable of organising their own expeditions, accompanied of course by a chaperone. Agnes became a travel-writer and novelist; both added Greek to their Latin and other languages as they needed them.

In 1880 Margaret was the first married, to James Young Gibson, a translator of Spanish literature, herself completing some of his work when he died from tuberculosis just four years later. It is noteworthy that women

wrote memoirs of their fathers and husbands in this era — another resource for understanding their perspectives on their own lives. Biographies of the women themselves were yet to be written when they became sufficiently important! Whichever sister married, the other one moved into the household, and their joint projects continued, e.g., learning Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac, and how to photograph manuscripts beyond transcription at the point of discovery.

Then in 1888 Agnes married the Revd Samuel Savage Lewis, Librarian of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, who died unexpectedly of heart failure two years later, having provided initial contact with some of the scholars of the university. The co-operation of such men was essential for some — but by no means all — expeditions to difficult places to negotiate. Equally, without the linguistic skills of the sisters some of the extraordinary discoveries made would have had to wait for later generations, such as the finds in the Cairo Genizah of a hoard of Hebrew manuscripts crucial for the history of the Jewish people.

Cambridge contacts also made possible publication of their work, resulting in an extraordinary list by each of them taken separately, quite apart from joint publications. Together they also produced dozens of articles in newspapers, magazines and journals, the result of the long hours of work they enjoyed as 'independent scholars' — a role which became more familiar in the twentieth century.

The sisters donated land to enable Westminster College to move from London to Cambridge in 1899. The College website includes their portraits, wearing academic dress, not of course that of the University of Cambridge. Apart from being Scots and Presbyterian, Cambridge did not authorise degrees for women until 1948. By contrast, Durham had enabled women to graduate in all faculties by 1895 — save Divinity, associated with ordination. The sisters could in time choose from a range of academic robes, the available options being from a doctorate from Halle to honour Agnes, then Doctor of Theology degrees to both of them from Heidelberg, a D.Litt. from Trinity College Dublin, and in 1904 Doctor of Laws from St Andrews.

The latter degree was awarded during the time when Professor Alan Menzies was Professor of Biblical criticism, to which he had been appointed in 1889, having gained his DD from the University of Glasgow. (1889 is also the birth date of Helen Waddell to whom I will return in due course). Finally, in 1915 the sisters were awarded the Triennial Gold Medal of the Royal Asiatic Society for their 'special eminence in Oriental research'. Margaret died in 1920, Agnes in 1926, so both could have known of the publications of Evelyn Underhill, and possibly some of the achievements of Lucy Menzies, daughter of Professor Alan Menzies. She was to become the first woman to be awarded a DD in St Andrews in 1954, as I will explain.

It is clear from recent evaluation and interest post-*Sisters of Sinai* that a re-assessment of the sisters' work is still to be achieved, not least in the light of more recent discoveries. Such re-assessment of course requires specialist scholarly expertise but continues to be important for 'History of the Bible' projects such as those undertaken by John Barton, and Bart Ehrmann, and the digitalisation of texts by David Parker. All such projects reveal much of the fascinating and complicated history of the Bible in one or other of its forms.[1]

Even without expertise in specialist languages it could be interesting to read Agnes's novels and records of travel, and especially the work she spotted written over the Old Syriac Gospels. She had of course learned that it was common practice to scrape off a text written on expensive vellum (animal skin) in order to write another. It was first and foremost a Syriac Gospels text which was of the primary importance to Agnes, but we might now also enjoy *Select Narratives of Holy Women* (about a dozen of them) published in 1900. For this includes material about Pelagia, a celebrated courtesan who found peace in the desert, and the astonishing Eugenia, who apparently lived as a man and became abbot of a monastery!

We might well follow such reading with Sr Benedicta Ward's *Harlots of the Desert* (1987) as well as her writings on the *Desert Fathers*. Sr Benedicta Ward [was] a member of what is now a very small Church of England religious order, the Sisters of the Love of God, and a very distinguished historian and interpreter of Latin theology and history especially Bede and St Anselm.[2] After a grammar-school education her first degree was from the University of Manchester, and her second, a doctorate from Oxford in her mid-forties. Her interests connect us both to the legacy of the Smith sisters but also beyond them to that of Evelyn Underhill, Lucy Menzies, Helen Waddell and Dorothy L. Sayers.[3]

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[1] See Rebecca J. W. Jefferson, 'Sisters of Semitics: A Fresh Appreciation of the Scholarship of Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson', *Medieval Feminist Forum: Journal for the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship*, 45.1 (2009), 23–49; and https://www.academia.edu for a wealth of references.

[2] Sr Benedicta Ward died on 23 May 2022, after this Lecture was delivered.

[3] See the appreciation of her work in *Prayer and Thought in Monastic Tradition. Essays in Honour of Benedicta Ward SLG*, ed. by Santha Bhattachariji, Rowan Williams and Dominic Mattos (New York/London: Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, 2014).

Grace Warrack and the discovery of theologian Julian of Norwich

Before turning to that group, however, we need to attend to the work of another brilliant linguist, Grace Warrack, (NOT the Grace Warrack commemorated by a window in 'Martyrs' [once a church] nowadays St Andrews University Archive, and who is from a different family).[4] Born in 1855 in Leith, into a well-to-do Presbyterian family of four daughters, Grace's mother died in 1857, but their father saw to their education as well as that of the three sons born to him in his second marriage. Grace became a distinguished linguist in both French and Italian and tracked down surviving copies of Julian of Norwich's *The Showings* in both Paris and London.

Just to explain in case someone is not familiar with Julian's book (written in the fourteenth-fifteenth century), it is commonly described as the first book of theology written in vernacular English. Its author was an anchoress — that is, one who had voluntarily 'side-stepped' into an exceptional form of religious life. This involved being enclosed in a cell with a funeral rite, from which she would never again emerge alive. She was clearly very well educated, able to write as well as to read. She would have a 'squint' into the church by which she could follow the Mass, and a window at which she could be consulted. She would need a servant as go-between herself and the outside world, and someone must have supplied her with the writing materials she needed and collected her book from her cell after her death. (We have no idea whom that might have been).

Those who have spent long hours in unwelcome solitude during the recent 'pandemic' may be best able to appreciate the long period of preparation she must have undertaken — perhaps in a Benedictine house — in order to opt for such a life, given how dependent people are on one another if restricted to one place to live, as we have all recently learned. If you are interested, and visiting Norwich Cathedral, you can see the retable of Christ's crucifixion installed there in 1372, (paid for by the local aristocracy and dedicated by the Bishop, Despenser) and which Julian may possibly have seen before her enclosure the following year aged thirty.[5]

As for Grace Warrack, we know that she settled on the London manuscript copy of Julian's book, transcribed and edited it, and published it in 1901, with a frontispiece by Phoebe Anna Traquair. The latter was Irish, a

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[4] See Jane Shaw, 'Grace Warrack, Julian of Norwich and the early twentieth-century revival of mysticism', *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal*, 5.4 (2021), 11–20.

[5] Ann Loades, 'Reforming Women in England and Scotland: Claiming Authority to Speak of God', in *Contemporary Feminist Theologies. Power, Authority, Love*, ed. by Kerrie Handasyde, Cathryn McKinney, Rebekah Pryor (London/New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 100–16.

contributor to the Scottish Arts and Crafts movement, and married to a Scot who became Keeper of what is now known as the National Museum of Scotland. Much of her work is to be seen in and around Edinburgh. Grace herself was also a patron of the arts, giving much advice (not always welcome) to the stained-glass artist Douglas Strachan when he was working on the windows of what was then the High Kirk of the Free Church of Scotland from 1911. She died in 1932; the windows were completed just two years later, and then in just another two years the building became New College Library where the windows can still be seen. They remain a valuable example of the interplay of 'arts' with theology.

The importance of Grace Warrack's publication of Julian's text which had survived the upheavals of the centuries has of course been confirmed by different kinds of readers. There has been much interest in them from that first publication up to our own day, despite long-standing suspicion of those who claim to have 'direct personal experience' of the 'divine', let alone if such experience is combined with that of a woman writing theology.

Thanks to Grace Warrack, Julian's book has become one of the most widely read texts in western Christian religious history and appropriated in various ways by an extraordinary range of writers. These include medieval historian Professor Margaret Spufford (who endured an agonising experience of illness in that of her own person as well as that of her daughter)[6]; Iris Murdoch in two of her novels, *The Bell* and *Nuns and Soldiers* (with its extraordinary 'Christ figure'); the poet Denise Levertov, and author Annie Dillard.[7] 'All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well' is one of the great texts from Julian's *Showings* we may or may not want to trust, however, so it is worth looking at two different reactions to Julian's work.

Julian's book has long familiarised her readers with the metaphor of divine 'mothering', which she integrates into her exploration of central Christian doctrines. The scriptural origins of the metaphor are to be found in the last chapter of the book of Isaiah, and in the lament of Jesus in Matthew 23.37, Jesus's longing to gather people together 'even as a hen gathers her children under her wings'. It became familiar in monastic spirituality in the

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[6] Some extracts from Professor Spufford's reflections on her own experience (which resulted in a television documentary), some writing published for the first time by both herself and her daughter is to be found in Ann Loades, *Spiritual Classics from the Late Twentieth Century* (London: National Society and Church House, 1995), pp. 68–103.

[7] For a discussion of all three together see Susan Yore, *The Mystic Way in Postmodernity: Transcending Theological Boundaries in the Writings of Iris Murdoch, Denise Levertov, and Annie Dillard* (Oxford: Lang, 2009).

Middle Ages, and one easily accessible example is to be found in Anselm's Prayer to St Paul, in Sr Benedicta Ward's edition of *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm*, where both the Lord and amazingly St Paul are addressed as 'mother'.[8] Two examples from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries provide instances of how theology which has originated in a context far different from our own can nonetheless be taken to heart in our own time.

The metaphor of 'mother' may for all sorts of reasons have seemed too startling for some readers as indeed it seems to me in a prayer to St Paul, but one person integrated the metaphor into her theology, that is, Professor Grace Jantzen (London and Manchester). She was a member of the Society of Friends, a tradition not commonly associated with formal theology (Professor Rachel Muers now Professor at Edinburgh is another exception of course). An expert in the philosophy of Foucault prompted Professor Jantzen to ask a question about what it might mean to live as 'anchoress' in modernity in her book on Julian (1987). That in turn was one way of asking the question of what it could mean to be a feminist and a theologian in a modern university. Taking seriously Hannah Arendt's focus on the importance of 'natality' — the capacity to start anew, and true to the fundamental commitment of the Friends to 'peacemaking', she developed a profound critique of what she identified as the violence and 'necrophilia' of much Christian theology, arguing rather for delight in the world in which we find ourselves, for flourishing and fulfilment.[9]

Not everyone can appropriate Julian in that constructive way, however, as Karen O'Donnell of Sarum College explains in her ground-breaking books on feminist 'trauma' theology', on which she gave a seminar in St Andrews last February. 'Trauma theology' in her case is concerned with 'reproductive loss', interrupting the silence surrounding pregnancy loss, one example of women's experience completely ignored in theology. Like Professor Jantzen, Dr O'Donnell both requires a critique of much theology (including that of Julian), but also the exploration of traditions of prayer to be found in some other mystics whose writings succeed in enabling believers to pray in and from some profoundly dark and empty places.[10]

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[8] *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm with the Proslogion,* trans. and ed. by Sister Benedicta Ward (London: Penguin, 1973), pp. 152–56.

[9] See Morna Joy, 'Grace Jantzen and the Power of Love' in *Grace Jantzen: Redeeming the Present*, ed. by Elaine Graham (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 23–39.

[10] Karen 0'Donnell, *The Dark Womb: Re-Conceiving Theology through Reproductive Loss* (London: SCM, 2022).

I note however, that so far there has been very little attention given in trauma' theology in relation to male experience of grief in response to reproductive and pregnancy loss, and the loss of born children. In addition, we may note the lives of living children are almost completely ignored in theology with the exception of some Lutheran theologians in the USA so far as I can see. Children are attended to, not as 'persons but as objects of abuse'. I note also that the British Academy has a project about the wellbeing of children in our time which as far as I can tell has no theologian involved and unsurprisingly no reference to theology.

I am ashamed to have to admit that it has been only very recently that I have put together the connections between the virtual absence of children from most worshipping congregations and the culture of indifference to their well-being so widespread in our culture more generally, despite the central importance of children in the lives of human communities.[11] So both Dr O'Donnell and Professor Jantzen may be seen as important examples of how women may re-assess theology when they become members of an institution (university or college). Following in the footsteps of one's predecessors may prompt much needed radical re-assessment and reform of theology.

Some other possibilities

We could of course examine the lives of a number of women, each of whom, so to speak, embodied the longstanding problem for women derived from 1 Timothy 2.12, 'I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence'. One from Julian's era is Margery Kempe, born in 1343, of the parish of St Margaret's, King's Lynn (which still exists and in which she is now commemorated). She was probably able to read but required the help of those who took her seriously to write down for her a kind of autobiography. This may well have been copied by a Carthusian of Mount Grace — the remains of which are available to visit if travelling down through Yorkshire on the A1. That copy seems to have been the only one which survived the period of reformations, which turned up in a library in 1934, completely by accident.

Margery for years suffered from comparison with Julian, whom she visited for advice, the only person she could trust with her own 'revelations'. It has at last been realised that the spirituality of a married woman who had given birth to a dozen or more children and who helped her husband run their brewery was bound to be different from that of a celibate anchoress.

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[11] Ann Loades, 'Children are Church' in *Lively Oracles of God: Perspectives on the Bible and Liturgy*, ed. by Gordon Jeanes and Bridget Nichols (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press Academic, 2022), pp. 206–26.

Thanks to the work of recent historians, we now know far more about her context. Margery arranged with her husband to leave him for a time to improve her status in the culture in which virginity and celibacy was most highly valued, widowhood and marriage the least (one interpretation of the Parable of the Sower).

Margery became a traveller to pilgrimage sites in England to begin with and then joined groups of pilgrims to the Holy Land (a predecessor of the Smith sisters) and is sometimes referred to as the patron saint of travel agents. She happens to exemplify the longstanding problem derived from 1 Timothy 2.12, because wherever Margery went, she spoke of the Gospel, and so was repeatedly threatened with imprisonment or being burnt alive. Julian was safe in her enclosure and probably died in 1416 by which time teaching in what was to become the University of St Andrews had just begun. Margery was anything but safe until she returned home, probably dying in 1438, and would have known of the death of her parish priest, executed in London by being burnt at the stake in 1401 as a 'Loller', a 'mumbler'. This was a term of contempt for someone who read Scripture in the vernacular, as we all now do thanks to some of those who even lost their lives for making the translations.[12]

We could also trace the problem of women teaching and preaching in the astonishing progress of the remarkable entrepreneur, Mary Ward, a Yorkshire woman born in 1585, a pioneer of women's ministry, also widely travelled in both England and mainland Europe, who founded a major teaching order focussed on the education of girls world-wide, the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At last, from 2002, there is a branch of her foundation able to identify themselves as the 'Congregation of Jesus' (C.J.). Women, she said, 'in time to come will do much'. Mary Ward died in 1645, in the century which saw the birth of many virtually unmanageable female preachers and prophets, one of whom was Margaret Fell, (of the Society of Friends) who in 1666 published her claim for 'Women's speaking justified, proved and allowed of by the Scriptures'.

Returning to the modern era and significant changes

Instructive though each of their predecessors is, I now want to return to the era of the Smith sisters, first to Evelyn Underhill, some thirty years younger than they, and to Lucy Menzies, a little younger again. In both cases, a familiar pattern re-emerges. Evelyn Underhill was the only child born in the household of a lawyer, who moved from Birmingham and developed a distinguished career in London. She had an uncle who was a parish priest in

[12] See Loades, 'Reforming Women', in *Contemporary Feminist Theologies*, ed. by Handasyde, McKinney and Pryor, pp. 100–16.

Liverpool, and a cousin who was an Anglo-Catholic Modernist in Birmingham, (subsequently a bishop). Her own immediate family seem to have been no more than conventionally Christian — hence the later importance of Baron Friedrich von Hügel in her life.

Languages learned and tested in expeditions to pre-war Europe and three years away at school led to attendance at the 'Ladies Department' of King's College, London, making possible university-level education for women. Moreover, the university recognised her distinction, making her first an Honorary Fellow, and then its first woman Fellow in 1927, acknowledging thereby her poetry and her three novels, as well as her book on *Christian Mysticism* of 1911. This latter was the first of her publications on mysticism for a vast reading public and much emended during her lifetime. Eventually, and under the tutelage of Baron von Hügel, in 1921 she recommitted herself to public identification with the Church of England and developed a reputation for giving talks to audiences of both women and men, including the clergy. She was the first woman to lecture in Oxford under the aegis of Manchester College, in 1921. She did not threaten the clergy by arguing for the ordination of women, however!

She began to visit Pleshey, the retreat house of the Diocese of Chelmsford in 1922, and two years later began to direct retreats there (and in many other places). She soon roped Lucy Menzies into Pleshey, who eventually took over the retreats herself between 1928 and 1938 when Evelyn Underhill became too exhausted to do so, and with another major book to finish. (So much for 1 Timothy 2.12).

A major interpreter of Evelyn Underhill and her relationship with Lucy Menzies is now Robyn Wrigley-Carr, having gained a doctorate in St Andrews. On a visit to Pleshey Dr Wrigley-Carr recognised first one and then the second of the prayer books written up by Evelyn Underhill for the conduct of retreats, books long assumed to have been lost. She combined them into one with helpful notes, published it in 2018, and found herself with an international best-seller on her hands. From there she has published a series of books and articles both on Evelyn Underhill and on her relationship with Lucy Menzies. She was a contributor to the international conference on Evelyn Underhill's work based at Pleshey in 2021, the centenary of the latter's own re-identification as a member of the Church of England.

Dr Wrigley-Carr has most recently attended especially to Evelyn Underhill's exceptional understanding of worship, a matter of course which is of central importance in the life of Christian churches, in all its ecclesial dimensions, another area largely ignored in theology, except by liturgists,

not commonly to be found in academic departments in the UK.[13] Evelyn Underhill's 1936 book on worship yet awaits re-evaluation and development, and that apart, is in my view very possibly reliant on Lucy Menzies's insight into both the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church as they then were. Lucy Menzies had joined the Scottish Episcopal Church in 1925, and her entry into the SEC Calendar is the result of the effort made by her grandson, Mr John Hunter.

In 1938 Evelyn Underhill was offered a DD degree by the University of Aberdeen, although too frail to make the journey. She died in 1941, leaving Lucy Menzies as her literary executor who collected and edited her work, and embarked on a biography of her which was to be finished by Margaret Cropper in 1958. The accidental rediscovery of Margaret Cropper, Lakeland poet, hymn writer, and friend of both Evelyn Underhill and Lucy Menzies, we owe this time to Professor Sabine Hyland.[14]

We find in Lucy Menzies's case another formidable education, in that she and her sister were born into the household of Professor Alan Menzies, at the time a Church of Scotland minister in Abernyte. He sent his daughters to Heidelberg where there were some family connections, acquiring German in addition to any other language they learned. As an adult, Lucy established herself as a translator and writer, with perhaps a sense of light relief producing *The First Friend: An anthology of the friendships of man and dog compiled from the literature of all ages, 1400 BC–1921 AD* (1929).

In my view, she had a more secure and extensive education than that of Evelyn Underhill. In particular, as Dr William Hyland has shown, her two major books of the 1920s on St Columba and then on St Margaret reveal her profound sympathy with medieval sanctity.[15] It was Evelyn Underhill's review of the former which introduced them to one another. For these and a formidable range of publications Lucy Menzies herself was awarded the degree of DD in St Andrews in 1954 (the year of her death). It is as the result of Professor Judith Wolfe's initiative that we have a portrait of Lucy Menzies now hanging in College Hall in the School of Divinity in St Andrews; and the Revd Giles Dove has seen to the restoration of her family gravestone. This particular group of women — Evelyn Underhill, Lucy Menzies and Margaret

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[13] Robyn Wrigley-Carr, '"Essentials" for Worship: Evelyn Underhill's Prayer Book', *Studia Liturgica*, 5.2 (2021), 187–202.

[14] Sabine Hyland, 'To Reveal the Eternal: The Spiritual Friendship of Margaret Cropper and Evelyn Underhill', *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal*, 5:4 (2021), 55–66.

[15] William Hyland, 'Lucy Menzies (1882–1954) and the Christian Ideal of Sanctity in Medieval Scotland', *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal* (2021) 5:4, 39–55.

Cropper must surely have been delighted by the Honorary D.Litt. degree awarded to Helen Waddell by the University of St Andrews in 1936, one of many such honours, and to that extent comparable to the recognition of the work of the Smith sisters.

Unexpected and unpredictable changes up to the present day

It is with Helen Waddell and Dorothy Sayers that we can identify a significant shift important for my narrative, notwithstanding that their lives began in profoundly different circumstances.

Helen Waddell was the youngest in a family of ten children born in Tokyo where her father was a Presbyterian missionary, returning to Ireland when Helen was aged eleven, whereas Dorothy was the single child of a Church of England clergyman. Both were able to gain BA degrees, Helen Waddell in English Language and Literature, from Queen's, Belfast in 1911, Dorothy Sayers in Medieval Languages from Oxford in 1920 — the first year in which that was possible for women. Both had to earn their own livings without any institutional base; both published plays which were performed on stage. In Dorothy Sayers case she also responded to invitations to write plays for performance in cathedrals, never losing an opportunity to bring doctrine alive for those who attended, and she also became very widely appreciated for the 'religious drama' she wrote for the BBC — a new institution available in every home, and a wholly new medium for the transmission of 'theology'.

Like Lucy Menzies both Waddell and Sayers turned to the medieval world for their theology, in Helen Waddell's case the period in which learning in the western Latin-speaking world was shifting from monastery and cathedral to cities and universities — as in the case of St Andrews. She above all brought the literature and life of that world to the imagination and sympathy of readers of her own time.[16] Both reached back to the world which fascinated Sr Benedicta Ward. Helen Waddell produced *Beasts and Saints* (1934), a rare instance of a work springing from that 'desert' and the Celtic world, illustrated by Robert Gibbings enchanting woodcuts. Dorothy Sayers turned to the Council of Nicea for her last play, *The Emperor Constantine* (1951) written for Colchester with a shortened version performed in London on stage. Both produced best sellers, Helen Waddell with a brilliant novel on Peter Abelard, (1933; three editions in six months, translated into nine languages), familarising readers with Heloise; Dorothy Sayers with the first volume of her translation of *The Divine Comedy* in 1949 relating it to the horrors of the recently concluded war, Dante another writer

[16] See Gabriel Daly, 'Helen Waddel', *The Furrow*, 16:8 (1965), 479–83, as he writes not an obituary but gratitude for the sheer enjoyment as well as profit she brought to her readers.

in the vernacular pitched into the politics of a Europe unknown to the later Julian and Margery in the era of reformations.

If anyone needed an example of how a past could illuminate a present, Dorothy Sayers indicated the way in her 'Introduction', for instead of the 'Lady with a Lamp' (the Florence Nightingale image), she wrote of the 'embodied damnation' as in the case of 'The-Lady-with-the-Lampshade-made-of-Human-Skin'.[17] Of crucial importance for the popularity of this and subsequent volumes was the recent invention of Penguin paperback publishing, as well as knowledge of the horrors of the mid-twentieth century. In addition, Dorothy Sayers wrote for Lichfield Cathedral, *The Just Vengeance*, its title a phrase from Dante, related to the controversial issue of aerial bombing (which remains of importance, to state the obvious). She accepted an honorary D.Litt. degree from Durham in 1950.

Both Helen Waddell and Dorothy Sayers were to be honoured with biographies. Dame Felicitas Corrigan OSB was awarded a major prize for hers on Helen Waddell; [18] the distinguished Italian Scholar Barbara Reynolds received a D.Litt. degree from Durham in the centenary year, 1995, as the major biographer of Dorothy Sayers, editor of her letters and of much else. (1995 was the centenary of the Durham university decision by which degrees had been made possible for women in all faculties except Divinity.) In addition, both writers also worked well outside the limits of theology, Helen Waddell on the eighteenth century Abbé Prévost and Manon Lescaut, Dorothy Sayers inventing detective fiction about her own era. In many different ways, both were sources of theology for their readers, well beyond the curricula in theology characteristic of their era.

One might possibly have thought that given time from this point on as it were, women might be able to identify institutional positions for which they could apply or to which they might be invited. Take for instance, Helen Oppenheimer as an example (born in 1926, died on 6 April 2022). Her education began at home with a governess, and then in a nearby day school. Once her family moved from London to Cheltenham to escape wartime London, she completed an excellent education as a boarder at Cheltenham Ladies College, from which she had thought to proceed to read English in Oxford. Her headmistress and her mother put their heads together to help her change her mind, however, and she embarked on the BA in Philosophy,

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[17] 'Introduction', *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine,* trans. by Dorothy L. Sayers (London: Penguin, 1949), pp. 16, 18.

[18] In addition, see Jennifer FitzGerald, *Helen Waddell and Maude Clarke* (Oxford/New York, Lang, 2012); *Helen Waddell Reassessed*, ed. by Jennifer FitzGerald (Oxford/New York, Lang, 2013).

Politics and Economics. She graduated with an excellent degree and also married in 1947, then completed a B.Phil.

She joined a very distinguished Oxford group known as the 'Metaphysicals' (resisting the dominance of logical positivism). To them she dedicated her first book *Incarnation and Immanence* (1973). She was roped into a sequence of Church of England commissions to consider a variety of reports important for legislative changes, given that she made a significant contribution to questions about the integration of theology with ethics. in 1960 Robert Runcie became Principal of Cuddesdon College (preparing candidates for ordination) and invited her to give a course of lectures on theology and ethics, at the time a significant innovation in such establishments. She became a most distinguished preacher.[19] When Runcie became Archbishop, he awarded her a Lambeth DD in 1993, her first formal qualification in theology. However, she remained an 'independent scholar' for her social position was such that she was the last person to need a post in university, and could be influential in many other contexts instead, like some of her predecessors.

Helen Oppenheimer was thus well placed to aid the establishment of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics, its first President being Peter Baelz, by then Dean of Durham, with herself becoming the second, presiding at the first conference in 1985, and probably the first woman to become a 'President' of a society concerned with theology in the Church of England. The theme for that first conference was 'Power and Authority', and a major paper on that occasion was devoted to revealing some of the crisis in theology so far as women were concerned.

A new and challenging world for some theology

The point here is that access to institutions (rather than working as 'independent scholars') occurred in the era in which the critique of Christian tradition became possible not as 'reform' but as 'rejection' (with more to surface in our own time in connection with the varied phenomenon of 'abuse'). For just three years after the death of Helen Waddell, Mary Daly had published the first of her critiques of the Christian tradition as she had received it — and more was to come from many other writers. 'We do not wish to be redeemed by a god, to be adopted as sons, or to have the spirit of a god's son poured into our hearts, crying "Father."'[20] The controversial

[19] See Loades, *Spiritual Classics*, pp. 1–43, for some examples of her writing.

[20] For an introduction to Mary Daly's importance, see 'Practical Consequences' in *Feminist Theology: A Reader*, ed. by Ann Loades (London:

paper at the first Christian Ethics conference in 1985 was delivered by Daphne Hampson on 'Power and Gender'.[21] Dr Hampson by this stage in her career indeed had a permanent position in the School of Divinity at St Andrews, but by this time had concluded both that Christianity was false and that it was detrimental to women. Nevertheless, she was given a personal chair in St Andrews in 2002 in 'post-Christian thought' which no doubt made for an interesting time in the School of Divinity!

Thus, it occurred that by the time women gained access to positions in theology (and religious studies) — this is just one example — there had developed sustained critique of Christian tradition. Yet some also negotiated the critique, and my example here is Janet Martin Soskice with whose work we began. Professor Martin Soskice (born in 1951) came to study Biblical Studies in Sheffield when she could not gain entry to the universities which most interested her in the USA, because they did not take women. She subsequently completed a doctorate in Oxford and married. In 1979 Cuddesdon admitted women in training for ordination, and she applied for her first teaching appointment there (given that there had to be at least one woman on the staff). Once appointed, she became an acute analyst and critic of both Cuddesdon and Oxford, publishing essays on the subject in the early 1990s, which is where I first encountered her writing.[22] She was President of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain in 1992 to 1994 — an indication that she was never convinced by the arguments of some of the Christian tradition's most perceptive critics.

During her time at Cuddesdon she finished her first book and read the proofs whilst caring for her for a young daughter. *Metaphor and Religious Language* (1985) was her first major publication. When I was in a College in the USA working with a colleague on a book of pieces in philosophy of religion (generously construed), I had an unforgettable experience. It was my task to try out pieces proposed for the book with a final year class, and for one seminar allocated a chapter from Professor Martin Soskice's book to one young man for him to introduce to the others. At the end of his presentation, he blurted out: 'This stuff is so difficult, I can't believe it's written by a woman.' I leave you with your own reflections on what assumptions about women might be revealed by his observation, and what

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SPCK, 1990) pp. 181–94; the quotation is from Mary Daly, *Pure Lust* (Women's Press, 1984), p. 9.

[21] Daphne Hampson, 'On Power and Gender', *Modern Theology*, 4:3 (1988), 234–50.

[22] Her work from this period is selected in Loades, *Spiritual Classics*, pp. 46–67.

their implication might be for women in institutions concerned with theology and religious studies!

Developing a Critical Realist Methodology for a Vocational Discernment Process Perspective

Ian Barcroft
Provincial Director of Ordinands, Scottish Episcopal Church

What is discernment? An important question as we embark on a new Scottish Episcopal Church's Process for Discernment, especially for those involved in discerning the vocational call of an individual enquiring about fulfilling lay or ordained ministry. Whilst the SEC must be structured and organised to validate all ministries, the Church is always being created and developed by a negotiation between its people and the guidance of God's Grace.

The Grace that underpins this negotiation is realised by the people's expectation of God, especially as the Church and its faithful claim some knowledge of a *God of Grace* by their experience, understanding and effective judgement. This process of negotiation is called discernment. Within the Church continual discernment seeks coherent theology, ecclesiology, and epistemology (how we know what we know).

This paper introduces some preliminary thoughts by Jeremy Worthen, before involving an examination of the theories of Bernard Lonergan as interpreted by Philip Berryman, and John Henry Newman as understood by Lynn McChlery. I will attempt to explain how I relate these initial insights into my own developing understanding for a *critical realist* methodology in a vocational discernment process.

Discernment: Self-evident or observed

How a Vocational Discernment Team begin to identify the important components of discerning an individual's call to vocational ministry is a continuing exploration. It will involve the elements of what we consider to be self-evident (*a priori*) or explained by what we observe (*a posteriori*). We will have to give thought to these distinctions and in coming to 'know what we know' we may become better at observing, listening and reflecting on our thoughts and feelings about vocation with both Enquirers and Candidates.

Discernment cannot be replaced by the idea that the Church can define itself from within as any other human organisation. Discernment for the Church includes the reflective tradition of an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God (*fides quaerens intellectum*). Discernment never ends, neither for the Church, nor the individuals within it. Both intentional and relational discipleship and the idea of vocational calling are understood

together by the individual and the Church because of the scriptural authority of the people of God sharing the priestly ministry of Christ as a 'royal priesthood' (1 Peter 2.4–5, 9; Exodus 19.6). Individuals are called, first to become disciples hallmarked by baptism, and then to serve Christ who calls each one to the ministry of his Church.

The English word 'vocation' comes from the Latin *vocare* meaning 'to call', therefore vocation and call are etymologically synonymous. Paul's instruction to the Corinthians to 'remain in the calling [*klesei*] to which you were called [*eklethe*]' (1 Cor. 7.20) is generally understood to mean 'call' is God's primary and universal call to discipleship, and 'calling' or vocation is the focus of that general call as an individual relates their own faith to experience. 'Vocational call' can be interpreted then, as distinguishing the latter from the former.

Already, we can see that some of the above would be understood or interpreted as self-evident by those seeking to serve in the Church, but we also need to be aware of how a vocational calling can be expressed and observed, especially for someone seeking ordained ministry.

Jeremy Worthen's *Responding to God's Call* maps the territory and the processes involved in formation for ordained ministry.[1] In a chapter entitled 'Understanding',[2] I found myself drawn into reflecting a little more seriously about discernment. What is happening, what are we doing when we discern?

Worthen does not tackle this subject per se but there are understandable overlaps because the process of ministerial formation is built upon the foundation discernment has already laid. As Worthen describes the fabric, he cannot escape from revealing some of the foundations.

From within my own reflection, the land being built upon is called Vocation. It is, of course, a rich, textured and varied land. Dug out by the hard work of individual and collaborative thinking about the sense of vocation, discernment offers the opportunity to understand and grow in knowledge of the God who calls each one of us into being, to work in the Kingdom, and delight in Divine Love.

Whilst we converse and listen to the experience of faith as individuals, and together as the Church, discernment continues. Foundations continue to be laid for further ministry — *like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house* (1 Peter 2.5). Discernment throughout ministry extends us, to stretch the building metaphor, in our theological reflective practice. Our understanding grows and our knowledge deepens through a lifetime of

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[1] Jeremy Worthen, *Responding to God's Call* (London: Canterbury Press, 2012).

[2] Worthen, *Responding*, pp. 126–47.

ministry. Indeed, discernment never comes to an actual end in life or in ministry. It is as though the well of faith is being deepened by discernment. The Church's combined lay and ordained ministry, formed and shaped by understanding and knowledge of God, will contain within it the living water of faith, hope and love. And all who come to drink from the well of discernment are welcome to know of its potential healing and renewing properties. As we drink and are refreshed together, the opportunity for truth is revealed: we become more aware of our self and the God who is leading us into all truth.

The crucial questions Worthen helped me to consider were: *what [do] we think we are doing when we seek to grow in knowledge and understanding,* and *who [do] we think we are when we do this?*[3] Those who find ourselves working within a vocational discernment process have to be aware of the theological, ecclesiological, and epistemological assumptions and whether they are continually valid. Within the SEC we are likely to be more aware of the theological and ecclesiological breadth of the Church, but in the exercise of discerning a vocational call, perhaps, care and investigation is required about how knowledge and understanding of God's call to the individual and the Church arises.

First, we have to consider whether the expression of a vocational call is objectively independent or separate from those reflecting on the issue. Is vocation simply self-evidential? For some candidates, a vocational call could be considered 'real' to the individual but to the observer it may seem unlikely and require verification. As all of us try to construct meaning from what is 'there' and essential to us and our experience; any sense of appropriate meaning follows over time from what can be shared. This is tested for its validity, by sharing and learning. Unfortunately, dismissing the *a priori* sense a candidate often describes may reduce the ability of a discernment process to consider fully what we know about the vocational call. If ontology is the study of what exists, and epistemology is the study of our knowledge of what is experienced, then both must be considered in the discernment process. I hope I can explain the validity and importance of this approach, in what follows.

Critical realism

Although we seek evidence of a possible vocational call via the Criteria for Selection, we cannot isolate the variables or look at the relationships between variables or develop hypotheses about them. We cannot emulate the methods of science, but neither should we ignore the evidence base for our mutual knowledge of what is happening. In other words, we are not

[3] Worthen, *Responding*, p. 137.

disinterested observers. Those discerning a vocational call are accepting its reality but at the same time accepting our part in its discovery. The key is understanding. What understandings do the people we are talking to have about their vocational call and how can we, in turn, understand these for the betterment of our overall knowledge of discernment, and in particular within the SEC?

Involvement in the process of discernment raises the question of whether our knowledge and understanding of God, and God's call to the individual and Church, arises collaboratively and inductively (theory construction) from human experience or whether such discernment comes about deductively (ontological) from an authoritative source of revelation. The latter would be a realist position and there are those in some traditions of the Church who would consider this as a valid position: a vocation is revealing the God who is calling the individual and the validity of such a call would be ultimately revealed in its outworking. Today, the Church may be more cautious. I would like to think that the SEC may suggest, to those discerning a vocational call within the tradition of our faith and its theology, an approach to discernment that explores its reality as multiple layers of understanding containing structures and mechanisms that influence the observable and what can be experienced. In philosophical and practical terms, this is a critical realist approach.

I would like to examine this approach further, because I think it gathers within it useful thinking from the tradition of the Church that takes the ontological (the self-evident) and the epistemological (how we know) pathways for understanding seriously.

Critical realism contains ontological assumptions which are spread across three domains: the empirical, the actual, and the real. The empirical domain refers to aspects of reality that exist and can be observed or experienced directly or indirectly, the actual refers to aspects of reality that exist but might not be observed or experienced in some way, and the real refers to the structures and mechanisms that cause or influence what is observed or experienced. These structures and mechanisms are beyond the realm of human observation and experiences; they cannot be detected, known, or perceived, but can be inferred through a research design consisting of both deductive (empirical investigation) and inductive (theory construction) processes.[4]

The SEC Discernment Team, I suggest, is beginning an exciting project on how we may improve our 'research design'. Where critical realism differs

[4] As defined by Phil McVoy and David Richards, 'A Critical Realist Rationale for using a Combination of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods', *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 11.1 (2006), 66–78.

from all the other middle ground philosophies, and what acts as the central reasoning for adoption in mixed-methods research, is that it places a focus on further understanding and explanations of these structures and mechanisms. The opportunity is there to take the self-evident seriously and critically, whilst continuing a conversation about how we know what we know.

Two examples of Christian epistemology

It may be possible to look further into the practical methods of qualitative research, and thematic analysis, in the future.[5] At this stage our thinking about discernment may benefit from reviewing two examples of Christian influenced epistemology (Bernard Lonergan and John Henry Newman) and how both may inform our study on the process of discernment.

Bernard Lonergan. Worthen introduces Lonergan, a Canadian Jesuit who taught at the Gregorian University in Rome.[6] Lonergan's key proposal is that human knowing is not a single operation (neither is doing) but a pattern of interrelated operations which form a structure. It is an inductive approach inferring conclusions from data or specific instances. Lonergan shares the same Catholic tradition and assumptions about nature and grace, reason and revelation as John Henry Newman, but Newman gives a stronger insight into the intuitive aspect of discernment; neither a completely inductive nor totally deductive (confirming a hypothesis from theory) approach to understanding and knowledge. Both are critical realists as Philip A. Egan states 'Newman and Lonergan actually inhabit genetically related horizons ("what Newman describes, Lonergan explains"). Their theologies of divine revelation are complementary, and they make a common commitment, each in their own way, to critical realism.'[7]

To illustrate the interrelated operations of the empirical, actual and real, described by the critical realist, Lonergan offers his own outline and

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[5] Roy Bhaskar's *A Realist Theory of Science* (London: Routledge, 2008), first published in 1975. In knowing what we know we cannot deny our own agency, pretending to be impersonal, disconnected, distanced and inhuman. The integration of the researcher-as-intentional-agent with the object of research as a 'real' thing is what critical realism has been working on for 44 years since this seminal 1975 book. (Bhaskar used the term transcendental realism).

[6] Worthen, *Responding*, p. 138.

[7] Phillip A. Egan, 'John Henry Newman and Bernard Lonergan: A Note on the Development of Christian Doctrine', *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*/The Realms of Insight: Bernard Lonergan and Philosophy, 63.4 (October–December 2007), 1103–23.

Philip Berryman gives several examples using everyday scenarios which are worth exploring.[8] In the examples an individual or a group is seeking an answer to the presenting issue, and Lonergan, as outlined by Berryman, finds a common pattern: experience (data/empirical) leads to understanding (insight/actual) and then to judgment (real). According to Berryman, Lonergan asserts that understanding or insight is found from the data or experience – a light bulb moment. But this understanding requires testing, evaluation, and weighing and the possibility of other explanations given credence. Previous knowledge also impinges on any discoveries. Judgment can only be made with this in mind. However, eventually, all pertinent questions will have been addressed and a judgment must be made. If done well, it will have been executed neither in haste nor with indecision.

But the question remains: what is knowing? Experience (seeing, hearing etc.), understanding and judgment are not entire in themselves, they require the others to make a whole (knowing). Lonergan describes human inquiry as dynamic. Questions arise with each new insight/decision, building up the picture to result in knowing.[9] If Lonergan's claim about the structure of human understanding is correct is it applicable to our discernment process, to help us know about a person's sense of vocation? Do I have confidence in what I and others are seeking to do because of their and our understanding?

Fortunately, the discernment process is only considering the Criteria for Selection as its 'data' so, when we hear an enquirer or candidate's experience, we are seeking to understand only in the light of that experience informing the data. We cannot become too enmeshed in an individual's psychology or spiritual welfare. We are not psychologists, counsellors or spiritual directors! However, in the future those different aspects could be considered via the discernment of those with the necessary acceptable skills.

The description Lonergan provides, I feel, has parallels with our discernment process and I offer it to encourage reflection on what is happening when we discern. All of us, from time to time, who have had the experience of discerning an issue with someone come to the 'light bulb moment' after seeking understanding of the experience, or a series of experiences and understandings on questioning them. The Criteria for Selection are allowing various experiences to be positioned, asking the questions of an enquirer or candidate's experience. Their reply or narrative is their own understanding, and they are likely to have made their own judgement to give themselves their own knowledge. Conversation with them

[8] Phillip Berryman, *The Unrestricted Desire to Know* (2007).

[9] Berryman, *Unrestricted Desire.*

enables their own judgement to be shared, or to be challenged so that knowledge is increased.

An individual's narrative or story about their experiences is important. Narratives can dominate collective thought, and once ingrained can be very hard to challenge. Moreover, narratives can be formed by imagination, myth and stories rather than fact, especially over time. The concept of the narrative can play a significant role in understanding; understanding the nuances that have contributed to a personal judgement is important in discerning further understanding.

Similarly, the judgement the enquirer/candidate makes will have been informed by the knowledge they have gleaned over time, within the context of their experience, and currently informed beliefs.

The Vocational Advisor and a Director of Ordinands are asked to do the testing against the Criteria for Selection. Testing what the individual has come up with, and then deciding when it is time to present the results, as evidence based.

Lonergan considers humanity must reflect on our own knowing. If this is achieved, we will carry out these operations well and learn to believe and act on our own judgement. This of course brings into the picture the ethics of discernment which cannot be considered further, here.

By reflecting upon our knowing, we will, in turn and cumulatively, experience, understand and judge our experiences, understanding and judgement, creating a cycle of continued thought.

Whether knowing is subject to these operations, it may be useful to engage in these operations and become practised in them. By naming this process, Berryman considers Lonergan is setting up pedagogical exercises to reflect on the mechanism of knowing.[10] It may be worthwhile thinking of our own examples to practise the listening and observation of experience, understanding, judgement. In this way, we become better at discernment.

Discernment then as Lonergan indicates is most concerned with knowing. In subsequent writings he considered more explicitly the relationship between knowing and doing and added a fourth stage called decision. All these processes, Lonergan considers, inform our belief and action within the love of Christ.[11]

These he came to see as imperatives built into human knowing and doing, essential for authentic Christian living, which can be as summarised by Berryman:

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[10] Berryman, *Unrestricted Desire.*

[11] See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, v. 3 of *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

1. Be attentive! => experience. 2. Be intelligent! => understanding
3. Be critical! => judgment. 4. Be responsible! => decision
5. Be loving! =>action[12]

Should this be a vocational discernment team's mantra?

Presenting in encapsulated form Lonergan's proposal that human knowing is not a single operation (neither doing) but a pattern of operations, I think, may help us to reflect on the process of discernment and our part in it. Lonergan insists that only the reader can decide whether the account is true, and only by reflecting on his or her own knowing. This should not, however, prevent further examination of their conclusion or its validity by the reader, or others offering their critique for further reflection.

Lonergan presents a way of acknowledging how our understanding changes: but the change is *directional*. That is, as we pray, study, and read, we do not necessarily just go in circles, repeating the hermeneutical circle, but we come closer to an understanding of the text. It is for Lonergan, a hermeneutical spiral.

This understanding has been sometimes described like an asymptote. That is, as an asymptote describes a line approaching a curve closer and closer without ever quite reaching it, so too our knowledge grows and we get closer and closer to a full understanding of the Truth expressed by God himself, without ever having a complete knowledge and understanding of God.

Personally, I have found Lonergan's method helpful[13] but I do wonder whether additional examination is required to assess the value of other human sources of insight: intuitive notions of moral, aesthetic, and spiritual insight, for example, which we all appear to hold to varying degrees that often wrap around the empirical, actual and real. These sources present themselves to us as 'there' or 'real'; again, the ontological dimension is not lost on us. The concern, here, is that human agency, perception, and empirical experience are predominant, in Lonergan's analysis. This may limit the value of other insightful or intuitive, even imaginative and creative aspects an individual can draw upon to make their judgements.

John Henry Newman. As mentioned, Newman may offer some perspective to consider during the process of discernment. At this point, I offer a précis of a cogent description of Newman's approach by Lynn

[12] Berryman, *Unrestricted Desire*.

[13] For more on Lonergan's philosophical method, see Jeffrey Centeno, *Learning-To-Be: Reflections on Bernard Lonergan's Transcendental Philosophy of Education Towards An Integral Human Existence* (2007).

McChlery in relation to the discernment process.[14] McChlery challenges the perception that intuition needs to be marginalised and removed from discernment conversations.

Newman represents with Lonergan the Catholic continuity between grace and nature as opposed to more reformed traditions of the Church which would refute the view that revelation is accessible by unaided human reason. Newman regards spiritual certainty as 'the fragile fruit of dialectical interplay between the forces and factors represented by the three corners of a triangle'[15]: personal experience (Religion or spirituality); intellectual enquiry (Theology); and fellowship with others in the institution (Church).[16] This describes the negotiation required in the Church, mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Only by God's Grace, rather than human endeavour can the stability, balance, and integrity between the three be attained. How religious knowledge is formed and how a believer gains certitude in matters of faith was the focal theme of Newman's life-long work on faith and reason.[17]

In her introduction to the chapter on Discernment in Newman, McChlery asserts that Newman's stated aim in the *Grammar of Assent* is to 'prove that a person has real rational grounds for belief in God as for belief in anything else'.[18] Newman was counter-cultural in maintaining that in human experience lies the seed of epistemological insight. It is not necessary to be able to explain something in order to believe in it. Newman does not reason deductively, instead, he observes *a posteriori* how faith develops out of real human experience and using inductive reasoning speculates on the mechanism. However, such reasoning is not allowed to be more reliable than knowledge which comes from intuitive sources.

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[14] Lynn McChlery, 'Discernment in Newman', in *How do you know it's God? Discerning a Vocation to Ministry in Churches* (London: SCM Press, 2021), pp. 127–48.

[15] Nicholas Lash, as quoted by McChlery in *How do you know it's God?*, p. 146.

[16] McChlery, *How do you know it's God?*, p. 147.

[17] John Henry Newman (1801–1890) was a prominent Anglican clergyman and leader in the Oxford Movement. He famously converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845 and was created cardinal in 1879. See, Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870; London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979); *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford Between A.D. 1826–1843*, ed. by Paul A. Boer Sr (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012). 1909.

[18] McChlery, *How do you know it's God?*, p. 127.

An important aspect of his observation is his description of imagination, conscience and an 'illative sense'. The latter encompasses the former two to create a recognisable spiritual and practical wisdom that offers the basis for mutual recognition and understanding, 'accumulating evidence into a cable of sufficient strength to support certitude'.[19] This mutual recognition is described by Newman as the *phronema*, a communal illative sense.

For McChlery the importance of Newman's approach offers insight for the Church's discernment processes, especially when sensing the vocational call of those being considered for future ordained ministry:

> Newman adds an invaluable dimension to this study. He seriously challenges any assumption that seemingly objective or criterion-based referencing is epistemologically more reliable than knowledge which comes from affective or intuitive sources. He demonstrates that though both are constructed similarly, they require different modes of proof.
>
> Newman would offer robust support for the idea that intuitive knowledge (or real apprehension) is verifiable, in terms appropriate to its context. Mature spiritual judgment, however, relies on the faculty of the illative sense which is the gradual product of a maturing Christian character by worship, prayer and the sacraments. Spirituality, theology and church cohere to enable the mature Christian community to be certain of their faith, and to know God's leading in discernment.[20]

Newman's thinking is offering a valuable resource to critical realism by offering the illative sense for: 'it invites a fundamental reconsideration of the ontological nature and status of values […] substantial ontological realities exist regardless of our abilities to know or comprehend them.'[21] Newman helps us to understand that our epistemological enquiry should be grounded by his idea of a phenomenological given-ness to our knowledge. Newman is preventing us reducing what we say as real or exists (ontological statements) to what we know or understand about the real (epistemological statements). The real are the unobservable mechanisms that cause the events that are observed or experienced. Here, I think, is the link between

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[19] McChlery, *How do you know it's God?*, p. 148.

[20] McChlery, *How do you know it's God?*, p. 148.

[21] Andrew Wright, *Religious Education and Critical Realism* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 57.

Newman's thinking and Lonergan's later operations of knowledge, as described above.

Developing Discernment Praxis

Lonergan and Newman, therefore, are aiding our appreciation of a critical realist methodology, and assisting our approach to better discernment. It would be useful, at a later stage, to further develop our design of the discernment process using the expertise being discovered in modern qualitative research and analysis influenced by critical realism. As aptly put by Sue Patterson:

> Critical realism's strength is that it incorporates aspects of both modernity and postmodernity. It is a strength that is expressed in its being still concerned with truth while grasping the nettle of reality's 'language-riddeness' […] our intuitions as to the nature and shape of reality is so far as they are correct are recognised as participatory in a divine creativity transcendent yet inclusive of our own.[22]

Although Worthen relates Lonergan's terms to the place of formation in theological and ministerial learning[23] several points overlap, I think:

- discernment takes time and requires patience: we must work through experience, understanding and judgement slowly before coming to a decision on our partial knowledge
- we must accept that knowledge is always partial, but nevertheless of value
- the fullness of knowledge and thereby truth belongs to God alone
- discernment requires us to welcome companionship and collaboration which requires an open mind to the understanding of the whole Church, past, present and future intended, and thereby together validate or not the value of the knowledge gained in discernment.

McChlery relates Newman's terms to the place of discernment and again, points of convergence appear:

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[22] Sue Patterson, *Realist Christian Theology in a Postmodern Age* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 29.

[23] Worthen, *Responding*, p. 139–40.

- knowledge of God is predicated upon the belief generated by natural religion, and fed by attentiveness to it
- the locus of faith through the ages, with authoritative creeds, traditions and structures, which check and balance individual spiritual experiences
- cognitive processes can be used to apprehend a numinous reality
- the necessity of a communal context to develop a discerning spirit.

Further, none of the above escapes our attention when it comes to shaping our theological knowledge, belief and action or our discernment praxis. Our experience (image) of God has a direct bearing on how we understand our intention and how we go about seeking to follow the leading of God (following our vocation). If we think of God's primary role as one of judgment rather than the one who understands us totally or who reveals different experiences to us, we may inform our knowledge of God with the requirement that we satisfy God's judgment alone, trying to avoid disappointment and rejection. This knowledge has been acquired by not seeking proper understanding or reviewing experience well.

This can happen, often unknowingly, not only when we limit the ability of proper discernment, but when formation to an individual's theology has begun without the foundation of good discernment.

This is worth noting on our part when we hear the narrative of enquirers and candidates, but all of us are capable of making similar errors. Discernment is ongoing. The foundations to our ministerial thinking and approach should be checked periodically.

Finally, I would like to briefly attend to Worthen's second question, mentioned earlier in this paper, as our praxis may depend on it: Who do we think we are when discerning? Above all we are 'listeners' and 'observers'. Foundations are being laid as we discern for future formation on the rich, varied and textured land called Vocation. The land beckons us to look at the landscape and begin to explore it. Experience tells us to take care, for as we listen to and observe we must not make the mistake of judging too quickly. There is a huge amount of ground to cover, to experience and understand, and therefore the discerner soon realises that there are a whole range of possibilities ahead. We cannot assume anything. The place where the foundations are to be laid is determined by the Criteria for Selection. The Criteria for Selection are the data, or map, and describe the best place within the landscape and upon the land of Vocation where formation can begin to shape and uphold effective lay or ordained ministry.

One's ministry, though, is never separate from the *self* that is expressing a shaped and formed ministry. Neither is it separate from those who observe, listen and receive such a ministry. As I said, earlier, through

ministry we become more aware of our self and the God who is leading us into all truth. It is this sense of self: all our desire, gifts, talents, strengths, limits, fears, dreams that are supported by the ground of Vocation. Using the insights of critical realism alongside the continual contemplation of Scripture, our conclusions will surely cohere where truth is to be found.

Catholic Doctrine: The Crux of a Theological Education in the Scottish Episcopal Church

Michael Hull
Director of Studies and Tutor, Scottish Episcopal Institute

The crux of a theological education for priests in the Scottish Episcopal Church is catholic doctrine. Only a solid foundation in doctrine enables one to preach God's Word, to administer the Sacraments and to shepherd God's people. These three services are the *tria munera Christi*, or three-fold ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.[1] They are shared by all the baptised but exercised in a particular way by presbyters, as evidenced in the Scottish Episcopal Church's Scottish Ordinal 1984 for presbyters.[2] Although priests may serve in other roles, the SEC'S priestly-ordination rite and its Code of Canons take incumbency as the norm of priestly ministry.[3] Those of the SEC are typical of contemporary Anglican rites and canon law.[4]

The best practices for training priests are contested. The variegated nomenclature in the SEC (and in Anglicanism) is a by-product of the contention. I speak of 'training' and 'theological education' here because they are established terms, though I am mindful of suitable alternatives like 'formation' or 'ministerial education'. Likewise, 'training' is used in the SEC's canons and rites where candidates are presented by 'those who have taught and prepared [them]' for the order of presbyters. Most of us in churchy circles are agreed that a plethora of things ought to happen in training prior to deaconing, the first formal period of training, which usually goes by the

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[1] The Scottish Prayer Book (1929) in the ordaining bishop's charge, speaks of priests as 'messengers, watchmen and stewards' (p. 488) following The Book of Common Prayer (1549).

[2] According to Canon 12§1, in conformity with Appendices 11 and 12 of the *Code of Canons*, SEC clergy give assent to the Scottish Prayer Book and the SEC's liturgical formularies, as well as due obedience to the *Code of Canons* (p. 488).

[3] See especially Canons 11–14. This is the outlook *mutatis mutandis* across Anglicanism.

[4] See, for example, the Church of England's Common Worship and Canons of the Church of England, and the US Episcopal Church's Book of the Common Prayer (1979) and Constitution and Canons, just to name two. And *mutatis mutandis* the scheme for the training of (potential) incumbents is the paradigm for the training of deacons and authorised ministries.

title 'initial ministerial education phase 1' or IME1. I take IME1 to be succeeded by priesting in a curacy prior to an incumbency or IME2. By my lights, the *telos* of that training, that is IME1 and IME2, is envisaged in the ordination rite, and it suggests knowledge and understanding of catholic doctrine as the heart of the matter in the SEC, especially as other Anglican rites are mostly wont to use (Christian) doctrine without the moniker 'catholic'.

I now set out to answer three questions. First, what does the SEC's rite of presbyteral ordination tell us about catholic doctrine and theological education? Second, what does the rite mean by 'catholic doctrine'? And third, where is catholic doctrine best delivered or handed over, if you will, to ordinands? In good Anglican fashion, of course, my point of departure is *lex orandi, lex credendi*, that is the law of prayer is the law of belief. Doing so is illustrative of 'a method, a use and a direction', as Michael Ramsey would have it,[5] among many in the Church of God who identify themselves by the retronym 'Episcopal' or 'Anglican'.[6]

I pay close attention to the *Scottish Ordinal* to the end that if what the SEC prays is what the SEC believes, then there is much to be gleaned from the *Scottish Ordinal* in terms of discerning what a theological education ought to entail. In the wake of the so-called Liturgical Movement, the liturgical changes introduced by the SEC in the last half-century or so sought to achieve a noble simplicity or soberness, that was thought by the Movement to be characteristic of the early Roman rites.[7] This is not the forum to debate the Movement and its fruit in the SEC or elsewhere, but it is

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[5] 'What Is Anglican Theology?', *Theology*, 48.295 (1945), 2–6 (p. 2) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X4504829502>.

[6] Whilst I am aware of diverse monikers for the 'Church' and their connotations, I purposely use 'Church of God', given us by St Paul in Acts 20.28, in an effort of neutrality in ecclesiological-designation consternation. By 'Episcopal' or 'Anglican', I simply mean those Churches who look to the See of Canterbury as the centre, at least historically, of the reformed and catholic Church of God in the British Isles, cognisant of the fact that for 250 years or so the SEC, having been disestablished by King William III in favour of the Church of Scotland, was not part of the Communion. Likewise, neither 'Episcopal' nor 'Anglicanism' is a protected title. The Communion has fractured in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with many calling themselves 'Anglican' whilst outwith communion with Canterbury. In fact, two-thirds of the world's Anglicans belonging to the Global Anglican Future Conference or GAFCON.

[7] See Edmund Bishop, *The Genius of the Roman Rite* (London: Weekly Register, 1899).

significant that the *Ordinal's* brevity — one might say its spartan character, even its starkness — intentionally lends weight to every one of its words.[8]

What does the SEC's rite of presbyteral ordination tell us about catholic doctrine and theological education?

In the SEC's presbyteral-ordination rite, once the candidate (already a deacon) is presented, the first thing the bishop says to her is:

> 'The Church is the People of God, the Body of Christ and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone' ('Response of the Bishop', para. 8).

Six statements thereafter expound an understanding of the Church and the ministerial priesthood, after which all kneel in silence and pray the 'Come, Holy Ghost'. Immediately thereafter comes the 'Declaration of the Candidate' (para. 9). The first thing she declares is that, by the help of God, she 'will be a diligent minister of the Word of God, proclaiming the Gospel, teaching the Christian faith and upholding catholic doctrine founded on the Scriptures'. Further declarations expand the priest's 'work' — I shall come back to the fourth further on — as it is described in the bishop's conclusion to this part of the rite.

The bishop's response is taken directly from Ephesians 2.20: 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone' (ESV). 'Apostles and prophets' may be a euphemism for the New and Old Testaments as Origen takes it,[9] but it is more likely a euphemism for first-generation Christianity.[10] Here apostles are not limited to twelve, and prophets are those of so-called Apostolic Age (*c.* 30–100). Ephesians 3.5 speaks of 'holy apostles and prophets'; Ephesians 4.11–12 speaks of 'the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and

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[8] For more, see Gianfranco Tellini, *A Single, Holy, Living Sacrifice*, Theological Institute of the Scottish Episcopal Church Occasional Paper No. 7 (Private printing: Dunblane, 1995–98); and a special issue of the *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal*, 3.4 (Winter 2019), which focusses on liturgical revision in the SEC.

[9] See, for example, J. A. F. Gregg, 'The Commentary of Origen upon the Epistle to the Ephesians', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 3.10 (1902), 233–44 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23949650> [accessed 24 April 2022].

[10] Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 17 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), pp. 249–50.

teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ'.

Ephesians was likely written toward the end of the Apostolic Age (*c.* 80–100). Ephesians 2.20 continues an understanding of church order as in St Paul's 1 Corinthians 12.28a: 'And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers'. Likewise, Ephesians 2.20 continues Paul's use of architectural imagery as in 1 Corinthians 3.10–11: 'According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' The same imagery is found in 1 Peter 2.4–6, itself most likely contemporaneous with (if not related) to Ephesians, where 2.6 quotes Isaiah 28.16. The linking of apostles and prophets also turns up in Luke 11.49; 2 Peter 3.2; and Revelation 18.20. And the cornerstone turns up in Mark 12.10 (paralleled by Matthew 21.42 and Luke 20.17) citing Psalm 118.22–23. Apostles and prophets also feature prominently in the Acts of the Apostles.

All of this is to say that the rite's use of Ephesians 2.20 carries quite a punch. It underscores the SEC's bases to be in the Holy Scriptures and the goings-on of the Apostolic Age. It is in the Scriptures that we first find confessions of faith, for instance in Romans 10.9: 'if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved' (cf. 1 Corinthians 12.3; 16.21; Philippians 2.6–11). And whilst some oral traditions and eyewitness accounts (Luke 1.1–4; John 20.30–31; 21.25; Acts 1.21; 10.39; Hebrews 2.3; 1 John 1.1) may well have survived into the second century, by that time that which is properly called catholic doctrine was essentially commentary upon and interpretation of the Scriptures.

It follows that if the Church is founded on the 'apostles and prophets' or the Scriptures, with Christ as the cornerstone of that foundation, the candidate's declaration — to minister the Word of God, to proclaim the Gospel, to teach the Christian faith and to uphold catholic doctrine founded on the Scriptures — makes good sense. Or, to put it another way, the rite confirms St Jerome's observation that 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ'.[11] For the purpose of knowing the Scriptures is to know God. As Jesus himself prays, 'And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (John 17.3). So, then, what does the SEC's rite of presbyteral ordination tell us about catholic doctrine and theological education? It tells us that catholic doctrine founded on the Scriptures is the crux of theological education, for without it, it is

[11] St Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah 18*, prologue.

impossible to be a diligent minister of the Word of God, to proclaim the Gospel and to teach the Christian faith. No one gives what she does not have.

What is 'catholic doctrine founded on the Scriptures'?

I allude above to debate about the nomenclature of theological education. The debate pales in comparison to debates about doctrine among Anglicans and, to be sure, Scottish Episcopalians. What I am after here is what the rite means when it speaks of 'catholic doctrine'. I take 'doctrine' to mean 'teaching', and I take the sound doctrine to be that teaching founded on the Scriptures.

Along with Article VI of the Articles of Religion, I take Scripture to contain all things necessary for salvation, that is what is not read therein or proven thereby is not an article of the faith or a doctrine. In other words, Holy Writ is rule and judge for all Christian teaching or doctrine. I also note that the New Testament is aware of sound and unsound doctrine and the reality of truth as opposed to falsehood. The New Testament reveals that disputes and deliberations thereupon are hardly new among God's people. Take 2 Timothy 4.3–4: 'For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching (*didaskalia*), but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers (*didaskalos*) to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth (*alētheia*) and wander off into myths' (cf. 2 Corinthians 11.13–15; 1 Timothy 6.3; 2 Peter 3.16). It comes as no surprise to find the congregation praying to God to be delivered 'from error and false doctrine' in the rite's Litany III (of the alternative litanies found in the Appendix).

Likewise, it is no surprise that the Scottish Communion Office's intercessions include this prayer:

> Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, [and especially to thy servant N. our Bishop,] that they may both by their life and doctrine set forth thy true and living word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy Sacraments: and to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and especially to this Congregation here present, that they may hear and receive thy holy word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.[12]

[12] Scottish Prayer Book (1929), p. 319. The Scottish Liturgy 1970 breaks it in two: (1) 'Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, and especially to thy servant … our Bishop, that they may both by their life and doctrine set forth thy true and living word, and rightly and

The prayer marks a priest's 'life and doctrine' to be 'set forth by [God's] true and living word' in such wise that the laity 'may hear and receive [God's] holy word'. The Collect in the Ordinal uses similar language:

> Almighty and everliving God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all members of your holy Church; that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your Name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

This language is of course biblical as in Ephesians 4.24 and the Benedictus (Luke 1.75). The timbre of this sort of prayer is allied not only to the first declaration of the ordinand, but also to the fourth, namely when she says she 'will devote [herself] to prayer, to reading the Holy Scriptures and to all studies that will increase [her] faith and deepen [her] understanding of the truth' ('Declaration', para. 9).

Now, back to doctrine per se. I think it reasonable to cite the Caroline divine Lancelot Andrewes for starters to articulate an Anglican take on doctrine's bottom line:

> One canon [Bible] reduced to writing by God himself, two testaments [New and Old], three creeds [Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian], four general councils [Nicea, 325; Constantinople, 381; Ephesus, 431; Chalcedon, 451], five centuries [first, second, third, fourth, fifth], and the series of Fathers [Patristics] in that period — the centuries that is, before Constantine, and two after, determine the boundary of our faith.'[13]

Within this boundary is the *sine qua non* of the knowledge and understanding of catholic doctrine.

So, to answer my second question — What does the rite mean by 'catholic doctrine founded on the Scriptures'? — it means first of all knowing and understanding the Scriptures and second of all knowing and

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duly administer thy holy Sacraments'; (2) 'And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and especially to this Congregation here present, that they may hear and receive thy holy word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.' It is lost in the Scottish Liturgy 1982, having been replaced with the prayer 'For … our Bishop, and for all who bear Christ's name; that their lives may proclaim your glory.'

[13] Lancelot Andrewes, *The Works of Lancelot Andrewes* (11 vols; Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology; Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1841–1854), 8:90.

understanding that which may be reasonably gleaned from them, for example the three Creeds. The witness of the Church from its origins to the present day is surely to be taken into account as well, but that witness is one best understood through the lens of Articles XX and VI to the effect that institutional churches, like the SEC, may craft their rites and have authority in controversies of faith, but institutional churches are the witnesses and keepers of the Scriptures, which alone establish doctrine (cf. Article VIII with creeds).

The words of another Anglican divine, Richard Hooker, are apt in terms of knowing and understanding:

> Be it in matter of the one kind or of the other, what Scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit [belief] and obedience is due; the next where-unto is whatsoever any [person] can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after these the voice of the Church succeedeth [tradition]. That which the Church by her ecclesiastical authority shall probably think and define to be true or good, must in congruity of reason over all other inferior judgments whatsoever.[14]

To know and understand the Scriptures and the doctrine established thereby one needs to attain proficiency in biblical studies (biblical languages and the art of hermeneutics) and Christian tradition (patristics, theological speculation, church history, liturgy and ethics). To do so perforce requires proficiency in critical thinking and the humanities (especially philosophy and literary studies), that is in using reason, especially in the divine dispensation that offers supernatural revelation to us in writing. This I would say, is also implicit in the 'Declaration' in terms of devotion 'to reading the Holy Scriptures and to all studies that will increase [one's] faith and deepen [one's] understanding of the truth' (para. 9). Without proficient knowledge and understanding, an incumbent's training has not achieved its *telos* according to the rites and canons.

Allow me an example. Some years, not too many years ago, a Reformed minister was offering a seminar at a theological education institution (TEI) on creation care. He spent a bit of time on Genesis 1.26–28 and humanity's relationship with the earth. Noting that some translations read 'dominion', others 'rule over', still others 'subdue' and so forth, in terms of God's charge to humanity, he asked students to read aloud different versions of Genesis in English. 'What translation do you feel says it best?' 'What translation do you like?' He quickly scribbled the diverse translations on a flipchart. Clever chap,

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[14] Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Politie*, Book V, 8.2 (London, 1597).

thought I. He is going to get back to the Hebrew *radah* — maybe to the Greek *archō* — to do a bit of exegesis, get to the literal sense, to work out a *sensus plenior* from the original text. Not so. Not so at all. He went on, much to my chagrin, to try to build a consensus on what the group understood the text to mean. And not one mention of what the text actually says in its original language or ancient translations, only contemporary translations. To be bald, but honest, that minister impoverished the participants by misrepresenting God's Word.

Where is catholic doctrine best delivered or handed over, if you will, to ordinands?

As far back as we can go in the Church's recorded history, we find the handing over of the faith. Paul tells the Corinthians:

> 'For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve' (1 Corinthians 15.3–5).

The locus, then, for theological education is the local church, in our case the SEC. This may seem obvious, but it is not, as many would locate it within the university. The university may be — and I would argue in our contemporary circumstances should be — involved in theological education,[15] but the university is beholden to other gods and answers to its own courts, councils and synods. The ideal academy of the ancient Greeks is, well, but an ideal. Yet the intellectual rigour and regulations it may provide are a good check and balance for theological education in the Church.

By 'locus', I mean not only the physical setting but the metaphorical setting as in the rite. A presbyter and lay person of the local Church (diocese) presents the candidate. They say:

> Primus/Bishop, we present to you N., who is commended by those in this Church who know her/him and by those who have taught and prepared her/him. We therefore ask you to ordain N. to serve in the Order of Presbyters.[16]

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[15] See Michael Hull, 'Theological Proficiency and the Formation of Incumbents', *Theology in Scotland*, 26.2 (2019), 45–55 <https://doi.org/10.15664/tis.v26i2.1920>.

[16] Para. 7. It is the same for deacons (para. 1).

That is church speak, not academic speak. It is the Church presenting/testifying, and it is the Church ordaining a priest for service to the same. It is not a question of an academic qualification per se, yet it remains a question of the knowledge and understanding of catholic doctrine founded on the Scriptures.

Care must be taken here. The SEC's College of Bishops normally requires the study of theology to degree level for an incumbent as part of the determination of whether a priest has learned to proficiency. I reckon that a very good thing. However, even though we use the generic 'theological education', the rites and the canons do not speak of theology (generally speaking) but of doctrine. That may seem a distinction without a difference, but it is not. It is not a generic 'theological education' that an incumbent requires, but rather a rarefied education to achieve knowledge and understanding of catholic doctrine. The adjudicator of which — to paint with the broadest of strokes — is the local church, the Christian community, not the local university, not the academic community. Even if many folk belong to both, that is to a church and a university, the distinction needs to be maintained. A doctorate should get one no farther in the Church than ordination gets one in a university and vice versa.

Let us move from theory to practice for an example. In the UK, the Common Awards (CA) scheme, a joint venture between the Church of England and Durham University, provides a palette of academic awards in 'theology, ministry and mission' from certificate to master's degree. Besides the Church of England, the Church in Wales and the SEC are involved, as well as a number of other denominations. CA speaks of itself as being in partnership with theological education institutions insofar as Common Awards sets the parameters for the academic awards, and the TEIs deliver 'pathways' appropriate to each vocation for which they are preparing ministers. In theory, it is a good set up. The key of course is in practice. The university, Durham, can provide quality assurance for how its modules are delivered. The TEI opts for its choices within certain parameters from the palette. It is like a restaurant wherein the diner (the TEI, hopefully acting within the interest of the church(es) it serves) choosing from a rather expansive menu. The menu is, of course, à la carte, but the devil is in the details of choice. Yes, everything on the menu is edible. CA will even offer matching wines and sides to make the experience superlative. But it is the diner who makes the choices. The restaurant must serve the diner, the university must serve the Church, and not the other way around, when it comes to holy orders.

CA allocates its offerings in four subject areas — biblical studies, Christian tradition, ministry and mission, and theological reflection and reflective practice — a reasonable and not an uncommon way of

apportioning theological studies. But what is easily and often missed is that the latter two (ministry and mission, and theological reflection and reflective practice) are dependent on the former two (biblical studies and Christian tradition). To paint in the broadest of strokes, the former represents theory, and the latter represents practice. It is impossible to practise proficiently without having proficient knowledge and understanding of the theory. To put it in other words, it is impossible to minister in the Church and to participate in the Church's mission, that is to practise, as it were, insofar as an incumbent is meant to do, without knowing the theory behind the Church itself, its ministry and its mission. Or, again there can be no authentic theological reflection and reflective practice without theology.

Now, to be sure, there are lots of things related to praxis, like training in proclamation in terms of public speaking in order to preach, or training in pedagogical skills in order to teach, take something like Godly Play. But in order for those things to be what they are meant to be in the Church, we cannot put the cart before the horse, or practice before theory. It is the SEC's charge, as demonstrated in its prayers, to see to the teaching and preparing of candidates by grounding their training for priesthood, for incumbency, on catholic doctrine founded upon the Scriptures. It is not the CA scheme that tells us that, and the scheme, like any other scheme used in training is only worthwhile to the extent that it allows the SEC to advance the *telos* of proficiency. So, then, to answer my third and final question — How is catholic doctrine best delivered or handed over, if you will, to ordinands? — it is done in the local church, in the Christian community, in our case the SEC, which uses whatever is available to it to achieve the *telos*.

Summing up

In the Scottish Ordinal, with reference to the SEC's Code of Canons, we have seen that the crux of a theological education for incumbency-bound ordinands is catholic doctrine founded on the Scriptures. To achieve that end the ordinand needs to be taught and prepared by attaining proficiency in biblical studies and Christian tradition. And we have also noted that the onus for teaching and preparing priests is on the Christian community, the Church which calls them, ordains them and gives them charge to service.

I have not addressed two things which call for further consideration. First, how such proficiency is assessed. Most local churches, as does the SEC, rely on an academic award from universities or partnerships, like CA, in the UK. Some, like The Episcopal Church in United States, sponsor a General Board of Examining Chaplains and administer annual general ordination examinations. Yet, I am unaware of any quantitative data to substantiate their assessment practices, other than the goals they set for themselves. Second, I have not addressed which physical and temporal circumstances

are more or less conducive to the *telos*? Despite seemingly limitless rhetoric on the subject, there is no data to suggest that one type of TEI is better at delivering catholic doctrine than another. Is it better done at a residential theological college or on a non-residential training course? Online, onsite, hybrid and so forth? The jury is out on those two things. That may be inevitable.

What is crucial in the SEC, though, is that incumbents know and understand catholic doctrine founded on the Holy Scriptures — and know and understand it well — for the sake of the SEC's ministry and mission, today and tomorrow.

REVIEWS

Dale C. Allison, *The Resurrection of Jesus: Apologetics, Polemics, History*
(London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2021). Pp. x, 403. Paperback, ISBN 978-0-567-69756-1. Paperback (£31.49); Hardback (£99.00) Ebook (Epub, PDF & Mobi) (£25.19).

Dale Allison has established a reputation over the decades as an original and rigorous scholar, but one not afraid to take conservative positions if that is where the evidence leads him. This book will enhance that reputation, founded as it is on broad and thorough research, amply annotated, and equally critical of traditional certainties as of reductionist presumptions.

Allison begins by examining the gospel accounts of the empty tomb and early Christian accounts of appearances of the risen Christ. These are examined with care, taking full account of discrepancies, and acknowledging the difficulties in interpreting brief and allusory statements of uncertain provenance. He tentatively concludes that Joseph of Arimathea took charge of Jesus' corpse and arranged its interment, that women disciples subsequently found the tomb open and empty, and that certain of Jesus' followers experienced, over an indeterminate period, phenomena which they interpreted as visions of the risen Christ. These are quite variously described, and cannot be assumed to have been identical, even if Paul was able to locate his own conversion experience in continuity with the other experiences he itemises.

Allison proceeds to consider cross-cultural accounts of analogous phenomena, in particular the dissolution of all or most of the physical matter of the corpses of human beings to whom particular sanctity or religious significance had been accorded during their lifetimes. He examines also visions and auditions, collective as well as individual, which have defied empirical analysis, from contexts as diverse as Tibetan Buddhism, Middle Eastern Christianity and Islam, and contemporary North America. He argues strongly that these be examined by the same standards of critical rigour as are applied to the accounts of Jesus, irrespective of the religious tradition from which they emanate. There is no clear or direct correlation between attested experiences and religious belief, even if the interpretation of the former may be derived from the latter.

Underpinning much of Allison's argument is the recognition that the "laws of nature" as defined by Hume cannot determine what may or may not happen in the world. Notwithstanding the achievements of the physical sciences in describing some phenomena and theorising general principles, such conjecture cannot legitimately be translated into rigid or prescriptive rules. As well as conflicting scientific theories, there remain well-attested

phenomena for which neither the physical sciences nor psychology and the social sciences can account, and concerning which there is a great deal more to be learned.

The resurrection of Jesus remains a matter of faith. Critical examination of the evidence can neither demonstrate that Jesus rose from the dead, nor interpret precisely what this would mean. Nor can the apparent diversity of early Christian experiences be fully reconstructed and explained. Neither can the evidence, critically examined, justify the categorical repudiation of these: empiricist reductionism is just as methodologically flawed as is unquestioning historicism, and the mystery remains.

While this book is not intended to end, once and for all, critical historical analysis of the early Christian resurrection traditions, it provides a valuable benchmark, both for its intellectual rigour, the scope of analysis brought to bear upon the issues, and for the intellectual honesty which aspires to impartiality, but acknowledges the influence of background, experience, and convictions.

Nicholas Taylor
Rector, St Aidan's Church, Clarkston
Convener, Liturgy Committee of the Faith and Order Board
Associate Tutor, Scottish Episcopal Institute

Dan D. Cruickshank, *The Theology and Ecclesiology of the Prayer Book Crisis, 1906–1928*, Christianities in the Trans-Atlantic World (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Pivot, 2019). ISBN 978-3-030-27129-9 hardback; 978-3-030-27130-5 eBook. Pp. ix + 127. £54.99 (hardback); £43.99 (eBook).

Dan Cruickshank has set out to occupy and populate the 'place between ignorance and folklore' from where many in the Church of England have been viewing the Prayer Book crisis of 1927–1928. He does so by means of this first book-length work of scholarship on the doctrinal and ecclesiological background to the Church of England's revised Book of Common Prayer, presented to Parliament in 1927.

Cruickshank's first task has been to remind us that the process of Prayer Book revision began two decades before the debacle of 1927–1928. Debates took place in the Convocations of the Church of England, beginning in 1906. The first work of revision was done during the second decade of the twentieth century.

Accompanying the revision was some fundamental thinking about ecclesiology. An important new insight is that Randall Davidson (Canterbury), Cosmo Lang (York), and a new crop of diocesan bishops did not follow the ecclesiology of Richard Hooker. A central role for parliament in the governance of the church was a plank of Hooker's ecclesiastical polity. But Davidson did not agree. The archbishop thought Parliament was a body unsuited to discuss the doctrine and liturgy of the Church. The ecclesiology of the new generation had moved away from Hooker in the direction of the Oxford Movement. A boundary was now desirable around the rights of the Church to govern its own affairs, with no role for Parliament. From the outset, Davidson wanted to avoid a Parliamentary debate about revision. Not only was Parliament an unsuitable body to discuss doctrine and liturgy; Davidson also knew there would be trouble.

As revisions to the liturgy were proposed, we find that changes which modernised archaisms were largely uncontroversial. Such modernisations demonstrated a prevalent desire to ensure the Christian message 'was hearable by modern ears' (p. 24). It was the catholicising proposals that caused debate. One was to allow the Scottish Communion Office of 1637 to be used as an alternative to the English order of 1662. The eventual result was an alternative order for Holy Communion which, in essence, joined the prayer of oblation to the rest of the prayer of consecration, but did not go so far as to add an epiclesis (as found in 1549 or the Scottish Communion Office).

Cruickshank goes on to show that the revision process did not stall in the First World War. In fact, the National Assembly, established during the war, was born out of the process. And the records of the Assembly, which Cruickshank has studied for the first time in this context, show the integral role the laity played in the revision process.

Davidson emerges from this study as a man of wisdom and stature. He made it clear that the proposed book of 1927 was not a Prayer Book constructed to reflect some great new discovery of doctrine: it did not 'mean or involve any marked resetting of the distinctive position of the Church of England'. The new Prayer Book — a composite of the old and the new — was an attempt to produce a new uniformity through legalised diversity. 'Mere discipline' was not enough to meet 'Ritual restlessness'.

A further insight into Davidson's character is disclosed by Cruickshank, who goes so far as to question George Bell, the archbishop's domestic chaplain, and biographer. Going against the received narrative that Davidson was 'the reluctant captain of Prayer Book reform', Cruickshank shows how the archbishop was a careful political operator rather than a man of bold words and action.

After a debate in the Church Assembly, which focused on the need of the worship of the Church to adapt to the current situation of the Church, the time came for the book to be presented to Parliament. But how to get it through?

The parliamentary debate, alas, was set to fail. William Joynson-Hicks MP (Home Secretary) and his fellow opponents of revision had lost the argument in the Church Assembly. Robert Horne, Unionist MP for Glasgow Hillhead, accused him of now relying on the votes of Presbyterians and non-Conformists to override the decision of the Church. The debate proceeded on shifting ground, from doctrinal to ecclesiological questions. MPs who spoke against revision presented increasingly outlandish and conspiratorial arguments: the parish rolls were incomplete because they didn't include people who hadn't registered their names there; votes for lay representative to the National Assembly had been rigged by priests. The Prayer Book Measure fell.

The bishops immediately recognised that the failure of the Prayer Book Measure would have 'massive repercussions' for the Church. But in the end, the crisis of Church–State relations, was resolved through compromise. But it was a radical compromise. The Church of England 'quietly oversaw a major revolution in the relationship between the bishops and Parliament' (p. 104). The bishops unilaterally authorised the use of portions of the 1928 book. Alternative liturgy and prayers to those contained within the Prayer Book of 1662 were permitted without any Parliamentary approval. Parliament did not push back.

In the end, Cruickshank identifies an abiding trauma in the Church of England. The parliamentary process of revising the Prayer Book inflicted deep scars. The Book of Common Prayer 1662 remains in place. There has been a continual round of liturgical revision and accretion of new materials for worship throughout the late twentieth century and early twenty-first. The English Book of Common Prayer, meanwhile, endures as a fixed point of reference, both historical monument and living text.

Cruickshank's careful, thorough, and thoughtful study of a turning-point in Anglican ecclesiastical history is full of insight. Anyone with an interest in the development of Anglican liturgy, ecclesiology, and its attendant issues should read it.

John Reuben Davies
School of Humanities, University of Glasgow
Associate Tutor, Scottish Episcopal Institute

Robert S. Heaney and William L. Sachs, *The Promise of Anglicanism* (London: SCM, 2019). ISBN 978-0-334-05844-3. xxviii, 242 pp. £21.71 (paperback); £18.69 (Kindle).

This book is an important and distinctive contribution to the study of Anglicanism. Published shortly before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the issues it raises have become all the more urgent as the Church and other organisations take cognisance of the existential challenges which face them and seek ways of rebuilding their structures, renewing their lives, and reinvigorating their mission.

Sachs is a noted church historian whose career has straddled academia and the ministry of the Episcopal Church. Heaney is a priest of the Church of Ireland who, after studies in Oxford, served in east Africa before becoming Director of the Center for Anglican Communion Studies at Virginia Theological Seminary. The American perspective is evident in places, which is a salutary corrective to the anglocentric presumptions of much work in this area, and likely to prove a mild foretaste of works on Anglicanism and the Anglican Communion written from the majority world in years to come.

The approach of this work is essentially historical and theological, drawing also on the social sciences, and with a strong commitment to mission. A distinction is drawn between the English version of Western Christianity, termed 'Anglianism', and the denomination which has evolved in continuity and tension therewith in different parts of the world, termed 'Anglicanism'. The emphasis is on the latter, while recognising the formative influence and distinctive character of English Christianity before and after the Reformation. The tension between local and global is experienced in Anglicanism perhaps more keenly on account of this distinct history, and the inextricable links between the spread of the religion of the Book of Common Prayer and the British Empire — in the sense of economic exploitation if not always or immediately of formal political control.

It would be easy to draw attention to lacunae in the scope of this work, when comprehension would have been impossible dealing with what has become a global movement over a period of several centuries, within the parameters of a volume such as this. Nevertheless, while some of the more sordid episodes in the history of Anglicanism are identified, more attention to the consequences of, inter alia, slavery, colonialism and the dispossession or liquidation of indigenous populations, and the theological rationales offered, would have been salutary. Some acknowledgement of the distinctive history of the Scottish church, beyond the consecration of Seabury, would have been appropriate. The controversy surrounding the first Lambeth Conference, boycotted by several bishops including the Archbishop of York, is passed over entirely, notwithstanding the close attention given to the

evolving role of these gatherings and their future potential. Some discussion of the role of the religious orders might have been helpful, particularly given their role in mission and their quite varied interactions with local cultures.

The authors are by no means oblivious to the friction which has been experienced within the Anglican Communion in recent decades, or to fracture in communion, if not schism, which has resulted from divergent interpretations of the Christian heritage and of the locus of authority in the Church. They recognise also that the recent disputes over the ordination of women and homosexuality were not the first to rupture the Communion but are rather symptomatic of enduring issues of authority and governance in an evolving global and cross-cultural movement — but one in which differences of insight are experienced within, and not merely between, member churches. Somewhat surprising is their call for the inclusion of GAFCON (Global Anglican Futures Conference) in the structures of the Communion — not because either author is in sympathy with its position on the presenting issues, but because it represents a form of protest against domination by the churches of the global North, and poses challenges which need to be resolved, with the potential of thereby playing a role in realising the promise of Anglicanism, as well as the peril of realising yet another permanent schism. While this might appear an eirenic gesture, one has to question whether it is at all realistic. Notwithstanding the diversity of views, and practices, within GAFCON on a plethora of issues other than homosexuality (ordination of women, divorce and remarriage, liturgical innovation, nepotism, embezzlement, etc.), the organisation is unambiguously hegemonic and contemptuous of Anglicans who do not subscribe to its position.

Perhaps the questions that need to be asked are whether Anglicanism ought to be an end in itself, and whether or not the Anglican Communion is a good idea in the first place. To suggest a contrary position, for as long as Anglicans seek to maintain a common identity and heritage across a diversity of cultures, in preference to their ecumenical neighbours, anglocentrism will be impossible to eradicate and the Communion will remain a holdover of empire. Perhaps the promise of Anglicanism is to be found rather in the dissolution of the Communion, with member churches seeking closer unity with their ecumenical partners and contributing their distinctive heritage to emergent church orders which will be local and catholic, historic and missional.

These are questions beyond the scope of this book which need to be addressed but cannot be addressed adequately without first taking account of the issues raised by Heaney and Sachs. Theirs is an invaluable contribution to discerning ways in which the Anglican heritage may fruitfully be engaged in the mission of the Church, local and global, into the

future. It will for many years be necessary reading for anyone concerned to address these issues theologically, rather than resorting to theologically illiterate business models and gimmicks derived from the advertising industry in a desperate bid for survival.

Nicholas Taylor
Rector, St Aidan's Church, Clarkston
Convener, Liturgy Committee of the Faith and Order Board
Associate Tutor, Scottish Episcopal Institute