

THE ANGLICAN CATHOLIC



The Journal of Affirming Anglican Catholicism in North America



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To Thaxted and Back: The Fate of Sacramental Socialism

John Richard Orens



IN THE EVENING OF 10 APRIL 1918, as battles raged across the scarred landscape of Europe, a handful of hardy souls made their way to the vicarage of the tiny English village of Thaxted in Essex. They had been summoned by their vicar, Conrad Noel, to establish a society they hoped would inspire the Church of England to carry the Catholic faith to a troubled age. Had Thaxted been a conventional Anglo-Catholic parish, the little group might have created a guild to pray for the souls of fallen soldiers. But although Noel and his friends were defiantly sacramental, they were also defiantly socialist. And so, instead of organizing a devotional confraternity, they founded a crusade: the Catholic Crusade of the Servants of the Most Precious Blood “to break up the present world and make a new, in the power of the outlaw of Galilee.”¹ For decades to come, Thaxted church would be a shrine for radical Anglicans, especially radical Anglo-Catholics, who were drawn to its heady mix of graceful liturgy, beautiful music, medieval architecture, and revolutionary politics.

In 1974, when my wife and I first visited Thaxted, Noel’s son-in-law, Jack Putterill, was still the vicar. On the Sunday we attended Mass, he began his sermon by announcing that his topic would be “the Blessed Virgin Mary, prophet of anti-imperialism.” No one in the congregation seemed the least bit surprised. But when we returned in 1992 for a conference marking the fiftieth anniversary of Conrad Noel’s death, the Catholic radicalism that had made Thaxted famous was nowhere to be found. The saints’ banners that had once graced the chancel had been removed, the liturgy had been reformed, and the revolutionary preaching had vanished. This is not a unique story. It could be told in a hundred different ways of Catholic parishes across the Anglican communion. Indeed, Thaxted is emblematic of the fate of what has aptly been called sacramental socialism, a movement that was once an important strand in the fabric of Anglo-Catholicism and then faded until today it is a mere shadow of its former self.² At first glance, its rise and fall might seem no

more than an ecclesiastical curiosity. But given the Tractarians' conservatism, the presence of socialists among their offspring is less an oddity than it is an illuminating paradox. And given the social and political challenges that now threaten the Anglican communion, recovering a legacy that is both radical and orthodox may prove to be a theological necessity.

From 14 July 1833 when, from the pulpit of the Oxford University church of St. Mary the Virgin, John Keble accused the English state of apostasy, Anglo-Catholicism has been torn between reaction and radicalism. On the one hand, Keble and his Oxford friends opposed the political and ecclesiastical reforms that threatened the hierarchical society of which they were a part. Their enemy, John Henry Newman insisted, was liberalism and what he and they saw as its evil fruit: "latitudinarianism, indifferentism, republicanism, and schism."³ But although the Tractarians longed for an age when faith and obedience were unquestioned virtues, they understood what many old-fashioned Tory Anglicans did not; that the Church could not minister to the nation unless it freed itself from dependence on the crown and the squirearchy. "Mere political religion," Newman observed, ". . . like a broken reed, has pierced through the hand that leaned upon it."⁴

This was not, as some have argued, simply a lament for lost privilege.⁵ However uneasy they may have been about the erosion of the clergy's social status, the Tractarians realized that it was the identification of status with sanctity that had led the Church astray. Hurrell Froude was especially outspoken, pouring contempt on the "gentleman heresy," the notion that the priest's vocation was to be respectable and to control his unruly flock. "We will have a vocabulary apostolicum," Froude wrote, "and I will start with four words: 'pampered aristocrats,' 'resident gentleman,' 'smug parsons,' and '*pauperes Christi*.'"⁶ This identification of the Church with the poor was spiritual, not political. Nevertheless, it had radical implications, for it undermined the foundation of ecclesiastical condescension by challenging the conventional understanding of both the priesthood and the poor.

Wealth and education, Henry Manning observed, did not give priests the right so much as to enter the homes of the poor. That authority came from God alone.⁷ And, argued Edward Bouverie Pusey, the poor had a sacramental dignity every bit as profound as that of the priests who visited them. They were, he exclaimed, "the visible representatives to the rich of [God's] only begotten Son; who in their earthly lot exalted our human nature to union with his divine Woe to that man whom the poor shall implead before the Judgement-seat of Christ. Woe to him for whom they

shall not plead”⁸ Thus, when Newman asked, “Are we content to be accounted mere creatures of the State . . . ? Did the State make us?” more was at stake than the Church’s apostolic order.⁹ Given how the Tractarians were re-envisioning the relations between Christ, the Church, and the poor, such questions challenged the social order as well. This, of course, was not the Tractarians’ intent. But when the Catholic movement left the universities and entered the slums, the radicalism so often implied would be boldly proclaimed.

Contrary to pious mythology, Anglo-Catholic clergy did not always go to the slums because they wanted to.¹⁰ Some were indeed drawn by the Spirit to minister to the outcast. Others had no choice. Their bishops did not trust them, parishes did not want them, and so they were forced to serve where no one else would. But whatever their motives, once they were confronted with the appalling conditions in which their parishioners lived, most could no longer content themselves with the promise of otherworldly consolation. They transformed their churches into centers of what could truly be called “social mission.” In London and New York, in Toronto, and Omaha, they established schools, employment centers, and mutual aid societies. The more daring among them went further, denouncing the sweatshop owners, slumlords, and brothel keepers whose pockets were lined with their parishioners’ blood. Anglo-Catholics were not alone in helping the poor, nor were they alone in denouncing exploitation and vice. But they were unique among Anglicans in grounding their social witness in elaborate sacramental worship.

Ritualism was not a Tractarian invention. Although the Oxford fathers had developed a rich sacramental theology, they adhered to the simple ceremonial of their day. As long as he served the Church of England, Newman celebrated the eucharist in cassock and surplice from the north side of the altar. It was the next generation of Anglo-Catholics that created from medieval precedent and Roman example the ceremonial that shocked Protestant opinion. The ritualists thought such worship was more beautiful, more reverent, more truly Catholic. How else, they asked, could they honor Jesus in the blessed sacrament? Their arguments were aesthetic, theological, and faintly antiquarian. Sometimes they even appealed to the law.¹¹ But in the slums, as they reached out to their people, their arguments took on a radical cast. Ours, they said, is a religion of the senses, a religion of music and symbol, of light and hope, a religion of the oppressed. Among the most vociferous of these clerical populists was A. H. Mackonochie, the vicar of St. Alban’s, Holborn, who dismissed his Protestant critics as “the Bishops and the Upper Middle classes, in fact the Chief Priests with the

Scribes and Pharisees.” His curate, Arthur Stanton, went further still, describing himself as “politically socialistic, in faith papistical, in Church policy a thoroughgoing Nonconformist.”¹² And at least some poor folk saw ritualism in the same way. When Mackonochie was suspended from his duties by the Bishop of London because of his advanced ceremonial, angry parishioners warned the Archbishop of Canterbury that “when the working classes . . . become aware of the way in which their heritage in Church matters is being attacked, they will rise up, and the Church of England, as an established Church, will fall.”¹³

The slum ritualists had forged a powerful, if eccentric, bond between compassion and combativeness, between worship and resistance. What they did not possess was the social theology to sustain their labors. They had learned their faith from the Tractarians, and the Tractarians never grasped how radical their own insights were. So determined were they to defend the Church’s sacraments, that despite their romantic sensibility, the Tractarians often lost sight of God’s sacramental presence in the world. And so awestruck were they by the mystery of the incarnation, that they lost sight of how God’s enfleshment redeems the common life of his creatures of flesh and blood. Before Anglo-Catholics could dare promise to liberate the poor “in the power of the outlaw of Galilee,” Anglo-Catholicism itself would have to be liberated, and the man who began that liberation was Stewart Headlam.¹⁴

Unlike most other ritualists, Headlam was disciple not of the Tractarians, but of the Christian Socialist theologian Frederick Denison Maurice, from whom he took three fundamental convictions. The first was that in assuming our humanity, God redeemed both the whole human race and the whole of human nature. Christ did not die, Maurice explained, “to give a few proud Philosophers or ascetical Pharisees some high notions about the powers of the soul and the meanness of the body.” No, Christ “entered into the state of the lowest beggar, of the poorest, stupidest, wickedest wretch whom that Philosopher or Pharisee can trample upon in order that He might redeem the humanity which Philosophers, Pharisees, beggars, and harlots share together.”¹⁵ Maurice further insisted that salvation is a social reality. We are not redeemed one by one, he argued, nor are we redeemed for the sake of our individual souls. On the contrary, it is from just this self-centeredness that Christ frees us in order that we may live for one another. Thus, Maurice concluded, the Kingdom of God is not a ghostly sanctuary for the righteous dead. It is as earthly as it is heavenly, and it is to this kingdom of mutual love and service that the kingdoms of this world must ultimately yield.

From these principles, Headlam fashioned a theology at once social and sacramental. Like more traditional Anglo-Catholics, Headlam championed the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Every child brought to the font, he insisted, is there proclaimed a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. But, he continued, this was more than a promise of otherworldly reward. It is the foundation of a just society. “The Catholic Churchman,” wrote Headlam, “is bound by his doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, by his practice of Infant Baptism, to be inclusive, democratic.” Indeed, “an old-fashioned clergyman, whatever his politics . . . , was by the mere fact of baptizing the labourer’s little baby, bearing witness to the truths of equality in a more far-reaching way than any French Revolution did.”¹⁶ And, Headlam argued, it is these same revolutionary truths that are set forth in the holy eucharist.

Christ is really present in the blessed sacrament: of this Headlam was as certain as any ritualist. But, he complained, many Anglo-Catholics did not understand that the Christ whose presence they adored is Jesus of Nazareth, the poor Jewish carpenter who befriended the outcast, castigated the rich, and proclaimed the dawn of the age to come. Thus, these pietists treated the eucharist as a purely ethereal communion, when, in fact, it is the universal Passover, the banquet of human liberation. It was no accident, Headlam believed, that Christ chose “the simple elements of strength and joy” to share his presence, for the substantiality of bread and the exuberant power of wine remind us that in taking our flesh upon himself, God sanctified our earthly needs, our earthly comradeship, and our earthly delights.¹⁷ It was this sacramental vision, rather than a political agenda, that led Headlam to embrace Christian Socialism and to summon Christians to build a world based on the principles of democracy, cooperation, and equality.

But Headlam’s vision was about more than justice. It was also a vision of joy. Headlam believed that the incarnation hallowed earthly pleasure, and so he campaigned to vindicate the people’s right to art, music, and even to drink. To the amazement of respectable churchgoers, he rhapsodized the delights of the ballet and scoffed at critics who complained about the ballerinas’ flesh-colored tights. Asked by an angry interlocutor if St. Paul would have gone to a music hall, Headlam was unfazed. “I do not know if St. Paul would have gone,” he replied. “But I know that our Lord would have gone and taken his blessed mother with him.”¹⁸ Headlam was defending sacramental sensuality, not sexual license. But although he was not advocating a new morality, he was appalled by the way the rich and powerful persecuted those who succumbed to sexual temptation. He stood

bail for Oscar Wilde, and when the Irish nationalist leader, Charles Parnell, was hounded from public life for an adulterous affair, Headlam responded with words that have lost neither their sting nor their relevance. "The question," he wrote, "is not shall Mr. Parnell go, but how long shall these crude, narrow moralists stay and mislead the people with their immoral teaching."¹⁹

Headlam gathered round him in the Guild of St. Matthew a small but enthusiastic circle of clergy and laypeople, some of whom would make significant contributions of their own to the development of sacramental socialism. Conrad Noel was one. Another was Percy Dearmer, who would later earn fame as a hymn writer and a liturgical reformer. But not every Anglo-Catholic with a social conscience was willing to go as far as Headlam and his friends. Those with a sharper understanding of the power of sin and of the need for individual regeneration doubted that economic socialism could accomplish all that Headlam and his comrades hoped for. And although they appreciated Headlam's anti-puritanism, they had even graver doubts about his balletomania. But they too believed that Catholic faith demands social mission and collective action.

The most influential advocates of this tempered radicalism were Charles Gore and Henry Scott Holland. In 1889 they had shaken the Anglo-Catholic world with their contributions to *Lux Mundi*, a collection of essays that not only acknowledged the results of biblical criticism and evolutionary biology, but called on Anglo-Catholics to take up the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Later that year Gore and Holland turned from theory to practice, founding the Christian Social Union. It was in some ways an organization very different from the Guild of St. Matthew. The guild was outspoken in its Catholic faith and socialist politics. The Christian Social Union, on the other hand, like the Church Association for the Advancement of the Interests of Labor in the United States, pursued a policy of comprehension, welcoming Anglicans of all political persuasions and all theological opinions.²⁰ Yet much like the guild, albeit more soberly, the union denounced spiritual and economic individualism as inconsistent with Scripture and the sacraments. And underlying its work was a vision of life that was unmistakably incarnational, sacramental, and communal. Whatever one's politics, wrote Gore, the incarnation demands that life be guided by socialist principles. "To be called into the body of Christ, is to be called to social service . . ." That the Father chose that Christ be born of humble parents, declared Gore, made it "the chief test of the vitality of the church of Christ . . . that it should represent the poor, the wage-earners, those who live by manual labor; that it should be a community in which

religion works upward from below.”²¹

Thus, from the marriage of prayer and passion, of theological reflection and eschatological dreams, radical Anglo-Catholics created a transfigured social theology; i.e., a theology that shone new light on old principles. At its heart was a transfigured orthodoxy. Catholics like Gore and Headlam stood on the creeds not merely as metaphysical propositions, but as verbal icons of the intertwined mysteries of God and our humanity. The creeds, they argued, reveal a way of life rooted in the loving, embodied, and suffering God who assumed our nature and redeemed it, making us brothers and sisters, and sanctifying our quest for a just society.²² Seen in the light of this faith, the Scriptures too were transfigured, even as they themselves bore witness to the light. Sacramental socialists rejected both the otherworldly reading of Scripture beloved by so-called biblical literalists and the moral platitudes distilled by liberal sceptics. Instead, they held up the Bible as the charter of redemption, as a story whose master narrative, from creation to exodus, from exile to incarnation, from crucifixion to resurrection and ascension, points to the triumph of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Indeed, in their hands the hope of the world to come was itself transfigured, as the treacly paradise of popular religion gave way to the vision of the heavenly city. Emblematic of this change were the stirring lines from William Blake that Headlam emblazoned on the masthead of his newspaper, the *Church Reformer*:

I will not cease from mental fight;
nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Til we have built Jerusalem
in England's green and pleasant land.

Blake's vision, of course, was yet to be fulfilled. But radical Anglo-Catholics believed that the new Jerusalem was already present in the sacraments through which, as Frances Paget explained in *Lux Mundi*, men and women “are taken out of the narrowness and isolation of their own lives . . . into the ample air, the generous gladness, the unselfish hope of the City of God.”²³ And so the sacraments were transfigured. No longer supernatural singularities of the sort that identified Jesus in the reserved sacrament as “the Prisoner of the Tabernacle,” they become windows into the gracious kingdom into which we have already been knit.

Those who forged this theology often quarreled about what the political

consequences of their faith should be. But they were of one voice about the sacramental necessity of radical mission. One of its most eloquent advocates was the fiery Bishop of Zanzibar, Frank Weston, a veteran of the Guild of St. Matthew. Speaking to the Anglo-Catholic Congress in 1923, he excoriated those who hid from the world behind a veil of smells and bells. "I say to you with all the earnestness that I have," he pleaded, "that if you are prepared to fight for Jesus in his Blessed Sacrament, then you have to get out from before your Tabernacle and walk . . . out into the streets . . . and find the same Jesus in your cities and villages. Go out into the highways and hedges," he cried. "Go out and look for Jesus in the ragged, in the naked, and in the oppressed, in those who have lost hope, in those who struggling to make good. Look for Jesus. And, when you see him, gird yourselves with his towel and try to wash his feet in the person of His brethren."²⁴ Percy Widdrington, a gifted theologian who had also served in the guild, was equally forthright and more openly political. "The Church," he wrote, "must challenge the Industrial World as it challenged the forces of Roman Imperialism in the days of persecution."²⁵

The prophetic urgency of these summonses reflected the spirit of the age. The first two decades of the twentieth century were awash with aspiration. Radicals of all sorts believed that a new world was about to be born, and Anglo-Catholics like Weston and Widdrington were convinced that the Church had been called to usher it in. Although some socialists, both Christian and secular, had been chastened by the carnage of the First World War, most took heart from the growing strength of socialist parties and trade unions. A few even welcomed the Bolshevik Revolution as God's handiwork. Speaking for radicals in the Episcopal Church, the Church League for Industrial Democracy could barely contain its excitement. "We face a world in revolution," it declared. "The Church is called to act, and the contemporary situation furnishes her with a challenge and an opportunity unsurpassed since Pentecost."²⁶ It is not surprising, then, that the fourteen men and women who gathered in April 1918 in Conrad Noel's vicarage believed that they could "shatter the British Empire and all Empires to bits. . . ."²⁷

But, of course, they did not succeed in doing so, nor was the industrial world overturned as Widdrington had prophesied. Instead, it was the sacramental movement that had promised to renew the Church and transform the world that fractured and then faded with extraordinary suddenness. Sacramental radicals did not disappear. They continued to write and to preach. Some rose to positions of great eminence; some still do. Trevor Huddleston, Paul Moore, and Michael Ramsey were children of

this movement, as are Desmond Tutu and Rowan Williams. But the tradition from which they sprang, a tradition encompassing Oxford dons and Thaxted rebels, is today only a dim memory, leaving us to wonder how a cause brimming with such confidence could collapse, and what we are to make of a legacy so precious and yet so fragile. To answer these questions, we must begin with a paradox: Anglo-Catholic radicalism was undone by its successes and by its excesses.

When Mackonochie and other ritualists denounced the “Bishops and the Upper Middle classes” for neglecting the poor, theirs were voices crying in the wilderness. Critics accused those, like Headlam, who embraced socialism of little less than heresy. “The scheme of the Anglican Church is quite clear,” snorted the editors of the *Saturday Review*. “It denies that Christianity means democracy, means enforced partition of goods, means equality, means anything of the kind.”²⁸ But the Church could not ignore the plight of the working classes and the pleas of their pastors forever. By the end of the nineteenth century, synods, conventions, and episcopal conclaves across the Anglican communion, faced with the discontent in the Church and the challenge of secular socialism, began to heed demands for political and economic justice. Reports were issued and resolutions adopted that decried greed, denounced competition, and called upon the State to protect the destitute and the outcast. In 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, the bishops of the Episcopal Church sounded a call that was startling in its rigor. “No mere re-establishment of an old economic order will suffice,” they wrote. “Christianity demands a new order . . . which will substitute the motive of service for the motive of gain.”²⁹ But the more such declarations were issued—and today they fall down from General Convention like the rain from heaven—the less need there seemed to be for a distinctive Anglo-Catholic witness.

Not only did the Church speak; the State began to act. Even before the First World War, the age of *laissez-faire* was passing away. The depression and the agony of the war that followed delivered the deathblow. In the place of unrestricted competition and the accumulation of private wealth, western societies celebrated the virtues of the welfare state: an extensive system of social insurance that became so ingrained that neither Margaret Thatcher nor Ronald Reagan nor George W. Bush dared to utterly undo it. Poverty did not disappear, but the success of the welfare state deprived Anglo-Catholic social criticism of much of its urgency. And as the State assumed greater responsibility for protecting the public welfare, the Church and other religious institutions that had once assumed that burden found their labors marginalized. Indeed, secular liberals proved just as

determined to confine Christianity to the personal and the ethereal as were conservative evangelicals.

But if the Catholic social movement was undone by its successes, it was also weakened by its excesses. The most obvious of these were political. Many Anglo-Catholic radicals, especially the clergy, were insulated from the rough and tumble of democratic politics. They did not understand economic theory and sometimes had only the vaguest understanding of economic facts. And so they were given to making pronouncements that ranged from the irrelevant to the ludicrous. Some, for example, clung to the dream of a Leninist revolution long after the reality of Soviet tyranny was well known. Conrad Noel was one of these. Another was the American poet Florence Converse, who penned a lyric diatribe which concludes, "My name is revolution. . . ,"

Yea, though I sin, yet do I make my boast
I take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence.
Red I am, as the wine of the sacred Host.
Red as the signal fires of the Holy Ghost.³⁰

Yet disheartening though this political and poetic excess proved to be, far graver and more intractable was the theological excess that underlay it.

Anglo-Catholicism was born in controversy and grew up amidst persecution and misunderstanding. In response to their travails, Anglo-Catholics developed a pose at once defiant and flamboyant. They taunted their bishops, lambasted their critics, and from time to time fired salvos at one another. In so doing, they fashioned a distinctive polemical theology: combative, cocksure, and divorced from reality. Today it is self-styled traditionalists who excel at hurling anathemas. But sacramental socialists could be just as implacable and unrealistic, their political blunders rooted in a culture of dogmatic certainty. They were prone to leap from Scripture and the creeds to hastily conceived dicta that they announced with a flourish of infallibility. Often what they predicted did not happen, and what they proposed did not work. Yet the more their nostrums failed, the more they clung to them. It is not surprising, then, that even sympathetic prelates dismissed them, politicians ignored them, and ordinary people passed them by.

But we dare not do so, for however misguided their politics may have been, their sacramental vision of life in community is gospel truth. It is a truth that our age sorely needs, torn as it is between authoritarian regimes

that subjugate individuals, and liberal market systems that depersonalize them. Thus, if we are to help set the world aright, we must make our way back to Thaxted and to the slum parishes where the prophetic vision was born. To be sure, we shall be returning as chastened pilgrims. We can no longer seek ready-made solutions for our problems, for we now understand how far the quest for panacea misled our spiritual forbears. And we also know that for our deepest concerns—the unraveling of community, the loss of personal identity, and the shattering of our moral compass—no mere economic or political remedy will suffice. What we must seek instead is something more precious and more enduring: the vision of the sacramental society that is the Kingdom of God.

This may seem too weak a thing with which to build a new world, but this is because we confuse spiritual vision with wishful thinking. To look beyond appearances, to see into the heart of things and to share God's desire for them, is a demanding and often subversive vocation. This may explain why George Bush the elder, among others, has been so discomfited by what he once called "the vision thing." Yet as Conrad Noel understood, the vision of the heavenly city lies at the heart of our faith and of our longing. "The life of this world," he wrote, "was a dream in the mind of God, just as the City of God is a dream in His mind and in the mind of man."³¹ Our calling as Anglo-Catholics is to dream that dream again, to plumb its depths, to embody it in our common life, and to share it with a dark and broken world. God has summoned us to a sacred hope. All he asks is that we once more allow ourselves to be transfigured.

Our obedience will not be easy. We shall have to put aside the doctrinal nitpicking we confuse with faith and the faddish debunking we confuse with thought, for only then can we manifest the living orthodoxy our radical ancestors proclaimed. We need to remember that orthodoxy does not mean right belief so much as it means right doxa, right glory. Thus, to be orthodox is not only to assent to the creeds; it is to glorify God in his threefold mystery. And because the God who is community has assumed our nature and stamped us with his image, to be orthodox is also to glorify the human family in all its diversity.³² How powerful our witness would be if preachers and catechists would draw on this rich strain of trinitarian theology. According to the Talmud, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi remarked that before every human being there goes a host of angels crying, "Make way for the image of God!"³³ If we are true to the Catholic faith, we must say yet more, for universal reverence—reverence for rich and poor, male and female, gay and straight—is hallowed by the incarnation, set forth in the creeds, and demanded by our baptismal covenant.

It also lies at the heart of the salvation history recounted in Holy Scripture. Indeed, we cannot rightly envision the future for which we long unless we immerse ourselves in the biblical saga whence we came. Blessed as we are with a comprehensive lectionary and a Prayer Book steeped in Scripture, we may imagine that we are already sufficiently biblical. But we who deem ourselves progressives often hold the Bible at a distance, savoring the texts we like while snickering at conservatives who savor the texts we do not like. We need instead to embrace the whole untidy epic of God's people, searching even its dark places for the truth that will make us free. Scripture, of course, is not an infallible oracle and it is not all equally inspired. But if we read it with care and reverence, we shall find it to be the story our age needs: the counter-narrative to the shabby fictions concocted by the hucksters of commerce and politics. The theologian is not only, as Evagrius of Pontus observed, "one whose prayer is true."³⁴ The theologian is also one whose story is true.

The inseparability of story and prayer, the sacramental socialists would remind us, is rooted in the twofold mystery of the Kingdom of God: its coming triumph and its present advent. The world we await is being born among us, molding communities into heaven's likeness. How we participate in this new world was best explained by Willie Nichols, an eight-year-old crippled boy who was one of Conrad Noel's parishioners. "We cannot all be graceful in body," he wrote in an essay for his catechism class, "but God wants us all to be graceful in soul. God wants Thaxted to be a town of people living beautiful and graceful lives, and being generous to each other, in honour preferring one another. Through the gates of baptism," he continued, "we are born into the Church which God puts in Thaxted to show people how to live a graceful life. God gives some people grace of mind, but all of us he will give grace of soul if we humbly and heartily desire it."³⁵ This is the beginning of heaven on earth. And were heaven found in our parishes and the Kingdom again made the center of Christian faith, what would follow, Percy Widdrington asserted, would be "a Reformation in comparison to which the Reformation of the sixteenth century will seem a small thing."³⁶

Given the disputes that threaten the Anglican communion, and the perilous state of Anglo-Catholicism, we might dismiss this as yet another failed prophecy. But the future Widdrington sought is already woven into the fabric of our sacramental life. Every baptism extends the reach of God's kingdom, overturning social distinctions and declaring us equal heirs of the age to come. The eucharist not only re-presents Christ's sacrifice, it fore-

presents the messianic banquet. Gathered around God's board, we become what we receive: the seed of new life, joined to one another in the body of Christ, and joined to the human family in the Kingdom of Heaven. Community, equality, and human dignity, ideals that would otherwise be mere abstractions, are at our fonts and altars made tangible and eternal. If we do not discern this when we worship, perhaps it is because we have made ceremonial an end in itself. Catholics in thrall to rubrics, be they ancient or modern, put heaven at a distance and thus sever the bond between sacraments and society.³⁷ But when liturgy is gracious as well as graceful, when it reaches beyond itself to the God we adore and to the men and women he loves, we enter the new Jerusalem for which the world yearns.

That we should bear this vision to the oppressed and brokenhearted is not an implication of the Catholic faith. It is a spiritual and theological imperative. But the Church is not the Kingdom, nor is our vision a road map through the thicket of economic, political, and social ills that assail us. As we struggle to build a new world, we are bound to disagree with one another. Our efforts will take myriad forms, some of them contradictory. But whatever our differences, everything we do will bear the stamp of radical transfiguration. Our mission will be sacramental, embodied in works of compassion, rather than dissipated in words of spiritual uplift. We shall seek the Kingdom of God, not contenting ourselves with the relief of suffering, but demanding an end to the injustice that creates it. Our witness will be scriptural. To an age so beset by personal and social fragmentation that many cannot feel their own pain, let alone imagine its healing, we shall bring the story that gives their lives dignity and hope. And our mission will be orthodox, cherishing in our relationships, and struggling to honor in our laws, the divine image that springs from the heart of God.

The society we envision will emerge more slowly and imperfectly than many sacramental socialists believed. Even the most radical among us understand that although the Kingdom is ours to build, it is not ours to complete. But renouncing our forebears' impatience does not mean abandoning their dream. Indeed, it is only insofar as we allow that dream to inspire our worship, our fellowship, and our service to humanity, that we can awaken men and women to their hidden sanctity and so draw the world closer to its divine consummation.³⁸ And if the age to come takes flesh in our life and ministry, the ardent, the hopeful, and the dispossessed will, as Stewart Headlam believed, seek us out. Sceptics who have confused faith with dogmatism, he wrote, will find at our altars "warmth and light."

Those “doing the special work praised by Jesus of feeding, clothing, housing God’s children,” having learned from us who Jesus is, “will crowd into His sanctuary.” And, Headlam predicted, at Christ’s table “the young at heart, rejoicing in their beauty will find their natural place in the worship of a beautiful God. . . .”³⁹

Worldly wisdom teaches that if something seems too good to be true, it is too good to be true. But this timeworn adage does not apply to God. In his world, creatures of flesh and blood have an eternal destiny; water makes the poorest infant God’s heir; and bread and wine bear divinity to our lips. In God’s world, the hungry are filled, the proud are scattered, the mighty are cast down, and dreams come true. When Jack Putterill first visited Thaxted in 1914, he stopped at the Moot Hall and reached out to one of the upright posts, expecting it to be merely ornamental. But when he touched it, his doubt gave way to amazement. “My God,” he exclaimed, “it’s real!”⁴⁰ The Kingdom of God is real: its companionship, its justice, and its joy. Let us then put our fears aside and dare to dream again. Before us lies a great adventure. We have a world to win and heaven to gain. ©

- ¹ The Crusade manifesto is reprinted in *The Catholic Crusade 1918-1936* (London: Archive, 1970). The best biography of Noel remains Reg Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968). See also Mark Chapman, *Liturgy, Socialism, and Life: the Legacy of Conrad Noel* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2001); Kenneth Leech, ed., *Conrad Noel and the Catholic Crusade: A Critical Evaluation* (London: Jubilee Group, 1993); and Robert Woodfield, “Conrad Noel, Catholic Crusader,” in *For Christ and the People*, ed. Maurice B. Reckitt (London: SPCK, 1968).
- ² The term sacramental socialism was first used by Peter d’A. Jones in *The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).
- ³ *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, ed. Ian Ker and Thomas Gornall, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 130.
- ⁴ John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church*, 2d ed. (London: J. G. & F. Rivington; Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1838), 13.
- ⁵ See, e.g., Frank M. Turner’s misguided *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

- ° *Remains of the Late Reverend Richard Hurrell Froude*, 2 vols. (Derby: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1839), 1:xxxii
- 7 David Newsome, *The Wilberforces and Henry Manning: The Parting of Friends* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 203.
- 8 Edward Bouverie Pusey, *University Sermons*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Joseph Parker, 1872-1879), 2:28.
- 9 *Tracts for the Times*, 5 vols. (London: F. & J. Rivington, 1840-1842), 1:no. 2, "The Catholic Church," 2.
- 10 See John Shelton Reed, *Glorious Battle: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996).
- 11 Ritualists claimed that their practices were required by the Prayer Book ornaments rubric.
- 12 S. C. Carpenter, *Church and People, 1789-1889* (London: SPCK, 1933), 244; Desmond Bowen, *The Idea of the Victorian Church* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1968), 300.
- 13 Michael Reynolds, *Martyr of Ritualism: Father Mackonochie of St. Alban's, Holborn* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 190-91.
- 14 On Headlam see John Richard Orens, *Stewart Headlam's Radical Anglicanism: The Mass, the Masses, and the Music Hall* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).
- 15 Frederick Denison Maurice, *The Prayer Book* (London: James Clarke and Co, 1866), 200.
- 16 Stewart D. Headlam, *The Laws of Eternal Life* (London: Frederick Verinder, 1888), 4; idem, *The Meaning of the Mass* (London: S. C. Brown, Langham and Co., 1905), 115.
- 17 Headlam, *Laws*, 50.
- 18 See R. Blackwell to John Jackson, 7 July 1879, Fulham Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.
- 19 *Church Reformer*, December 1890, 267-68.
- 20 There was an American branch of the Christian Social Union, but it was much smaller than CAIL.

- ⁴¹ Charles Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 228; idem, *The New Theology and the Old Religion* (London: John Murray, 1907), 275, 281-282
- ²² This is not to say that radical Anglo-Catholic radicals were indifferent to the propositional truths the creeds teach. Indeed, as a bishop, Gore insisted that his clergy subscribe *ex animo* to everything in the creeds. See, e.g., Mark D. Chapman, "Why Do We Still Recite the Nicene Creed as the Eucharist?" *Anglican Theological Review* 87 (Spring 2005): 221-222.
- ²³ Frances Paget, "Sacraments," in *Lux Mundi*, ed. Charles Gore, 10th ed. (London: John Murray, 1904), 307.
- ²⁴ Frank Weston, "Our Present Duty," in *Report of the Anglo-Catholic Congress of 1923* (London: Society of SS Peter and Paul, 1923), 85-86. See also Mark D. Chapman, "Christ and the Gethsemane of the Mind: Frank Weston Then and Now," *Anglican Theological Review*, 85 (Spring 2003): 281-307.
- ²⁵ P. E. T. Widdrington, "The Return of the Kingdom of God," in *The Return of Christendom* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 107.
- ²⁶ James Thayer Addison, *The Episcopal Church in the United States, 1789-1931* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 329.
- ²⁷ *Catholic Crusade*, 13.
- ²⁸ *Saturday Review*, 8 March 1887, 322.
- ²⁹ Robert E. Hood, *Social Teachings of the Episcopal Church* (Harrisonburg, Penn., 1990), 167.
- ³⁰ Vida D. Scudder, *On Journey* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1937), 304.
- ³¹ Conrad Noel, "The City of God," in *Churchmanship and Labour*, ed. W. Henry Hunt (London: Skeffington & Son, 1906), 124-125.
- ³² I develop this idea in "Orthodoxy and the Contemporary Crisis," *Fellowship Papers* (Summer 1989), 18-25. On orthodoxy as glorification, see Kenneth Leech, *True Prayer* (London: Sheldon Press, 1980), 11.
- ³³ Deuteronomy Rabbah 4:4.
- ³⁴ Leech, 9.


- ³⁵ Groves, 74.
- ³⁶ Widdrington, 102.
- ³⁷ See Kenneth Leech, *The Sky Is Red* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997), 163-186. See also Tobias S. Haller, "People, Look East," *The Anglican Catholic* 15 (Summer 2003): 1-12.
- ³⁸ See Michael Ramsey, *Jesus and the Living Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 76-77.
- ³⁹ Stewart D. Headlam, *The Laws of Eternal Life* (London: Frederick Verinder, 1888), 51-52.
- ⁴⁰ Groves, 162.

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Aestheticism and Professionalism: Some Thoughts on Musical Stewardship

Robert W. Lehman

HRIST CHURCH, NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT — a beautiful gem of gothic architecture where I am fortunate to serve — was a center for liturgical and theological thought when the ideals of the English Tractarians crossed the ocean and planted roots in North America. It still is today, almost 150 years after New Haven's Trinity Church-on-the-Green first founded its little mission church in this part of town then known as Poverty Square. Today, Christ Church prides itself for leading the historical impetus of the Oxford Movement in the United States as well as for practicing a forward-looking, contemporary and inclusive Anglo-Catholicism. As an Episcopalian with deep Protestant roots — I grew up in what was then known as the United Presbyterian Church — I like to poke fun at our ceremonial practices; we all know well that God likes the incense puffing out from behind the rood screen while the choir (seated Decani and Cantoris, of course) sings the Propers of the Mass in Latin. But, I must confess, now that I have been serving at Christ Church for ten years, I am really quite a convert to Anglo-Catholicism — and converts are the most zealous apologists. So allow me to explore briefly our heritage of beauty and identify, from a musical perspective, what it is that sets an Anglo-Catholic community at worship apart and how musical stewardship is good for the souls of the *Populus Dei*.

The genius of Anglo-Catholic worship is its idiosyncratic centrality of aesthetics. The evocation of mystery and the juxtaposition of the beauty of high art with the constant striving for social justice are cornerstones peculiar to this tradition. The Anglo-Catholics have always asserted that beauty in worship is intended to sustain and spiritually feed the poor, sick, oppressed, and marginalized by bringing them — and all God's children — closer to, and giving them a foretaste of, the heavenly kingdom.¹

In the Psalms, the most ancient collection of the Church's song, God admonishes us, in the midst of roaring seas, earthquakes, and tumults to “Be still, and know that I am God.”² God is calling us to know Him in the

quietness and the beauty of holiness. Christ Church, as an Anglo-Catholic parish situated on the campus of one of the world's great universities,³ is in a unique position to answer this call, to minister to all through the beauty of holiness; indeed, through the "holiness of beauty." Christ Church, like so many of our sister Anglo-Catholic parishes, is blessed with individuals of innumerable talents, and God's admonition from the Psalms is best fulfilled, I believe, by recognizing and supporting those among the parish who are gifted in the fine arts; those who possess the gift of creating a "beauty" and a "holiness".

The concept of accepting and financially supporting the gifts of individuals for the worship of God is widely accepted in other cultures and seems difficult only for Western society. "As noble and admirable as it is, the egalitarian ideal has presented... church music with an immense challenge... egalitarian, self-conscious societies are inherently suspicious and ill-at-ease with [notions of giftedness]."⁴ The Orthodox tradition, for example, recognizes the importance of "giftedness" in its artists and incarnational gifts: the music, icons, tapestries, and vestments produced by these gifted persons are central to the Eastern liturgy.

When music is employed in the context of Christian worship, it contains a specific theological dimension and meaning that is (or should be) related to the reality of the liturgical assembly.⁵ The Anglo-Catholic liturgy is full of ritual and beauty far beyond what we as common people can offer. Ritual is a corporate symbolic activity that serves as a medium for the communication in faith between God and us, and we among ourselves, in order to actualize again and again the everlasting covenant between God and the human family.⁶ To know what aids and hinders the flow of communication through ritual action allows the ritual to do its proper task.⁷ Professional music, that is music offered by those who have been musically trained and whose God-given gifts are employed to their fullest, facilitates ritual acts. When offered with devotion amidst architectural splendor, glorious vestments, and rising incense, music leads the worshipper to the everlasting truths of the redeeming promise of God in Christ Jesus. In an Anglo-Catholic community where the worship is a beautiful and majestic building, where the majority of worshippers are highly educated, where the preaching is creative, academic, exegetical, thought provoking, and engaging, and where the liturgy is carefully planned and celebrated in all the resplendence of its ceremony and pageantry, anything less than a fully-professional music ministry would be anomalous.

One of our responsibilities as Christian people is to exercise our gifts to the greater glory of God, from whom these gifts proceed. As Saint Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, “There are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one.”⁸ Saint Paul has also written: “His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”⁹ In his familiar hymn text, “King of Glory, King of Peace,” poet George Herbert affirms that only the very finest is acceptable as an offering to God and that the church must offer only its most lavish gifts, its “utmost art” and “the cream of all [its] heart.”¹⁰ If we are to live out these exhortations, we must, with sincerity of heart, recognize that only the best is worthy to be offered in God’s presence and acknowledge that our financial resources are well spent in support of those who can offer music on our behalf with a gift that exceeds our own.

Yale University professor Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that the Western understanding of art that exists solely for aesthetic pleasure is insufficient for a thoroughly Christian view of the arts.¹¹ Dr. Wolterstorff asserts that music, which is offered within the context of worship, demands more of a listener than does music heard in a concert hall. At the same time, as Leo Sowerby, the Dean of American church musicians once wrote, “...it is not too much to expect that [church music] shall be of the same standard of excellence as that of music heard in the concert hall.”¹² The centrality of the Incarnation in Anglo-Catholic worship requires the marriage of aestheticism and professionalism and, therefore, places them in a central role in living out our Anglo-Catholic heritage.

All too often, music is viewed as an “extra” or something of only secondary importance to the liturgy. We all too frequently choose to take advantage of good-intentioned volunteers when it comes to making music in the church. “To reduce everything that is made for human public and communal use to the cheapest and shoddiest is no service to poor people...we pay for plumbing, heating, lighting without a murmur, but when it comes to paying for music or other arts we need in order to celebrate fittingly and well, we prefer to do without or to accept only that which is freely volunteered.¹³ But we must be mindful of our mission, for offering our best does not come without great responsibility – both intellectual and financial.

In addition to its theological dimension, music in liturgy performs a specific evangelical function: to offer praises to almighty God through the edification of the worshipper. This is achieved by drawing the listener into deeper contemplation of a particular text or concept central to the nature of the day. Music instills new heights of consciousness and understanding in the mind of the worshipper. The *active* participation of the congregation through [attentive] and prayerful consideration of the musical offering is essential to effective liturgical music.¹⁴

The assembled congregation also has a responsibility to make music overtly with one corporate voice through the singing of congregational hymns and, in most parishes, the singing of a congregational Mass Ordinary. And so it *should* be. The Old Testament abounds with instruction for the corporate musical praise of God:

Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous;
it is good for the just to sing praises.
Praise the Lord with the harp;
play to him upon the psaltery and lyre.
Sing for him a new song;
sound a fanfare with all your skill upon the trumpet.

— Psalm 33:1–3

or

Come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving
and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.

— Psalm 95:1–2

or

Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the whole earth.
Sing to the Lord and bless his Name;
proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day.

— Psalm 96:1–2

and

It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord,
and to sing praises to your Name, O Most High.

— Psalm 92:1

This timeless theme is echoed in the pages of the New Testament. Saint Paul, once again, addresses the Church at Ephesus in these words, “Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.”¹⁵ Saint Paul’s words are critical for our feel-good society today and to deny this is to cut ourselves off from an important gift of God in creation.¹⁶

But all of this ideology comes with a very real price tag. To advance the cause of Anglo-Catholic evangelism, the solution to the budgetary challenges that confront many of our churches today is not to diminish a professional music program. Rather we must further educate the worshippers in our ways and our mission, further evangelize through the common tongue of music, and continue to lead our communities to the “holiness of beauty” through the support of a program that represents our “utmost art.” There are many talented individuals for whom music is an avocation and some believe that well-intentioned volunteers alone can adequately fulfill the church’s musical mission. But to truly offer the best we can we must surmount personal interests, agendas, desires, and pleasures to ensure that the “cream of all our heart” – a corporate heart – is indeed what we do offer in worship. Bishop David Stancliffe of Salisbury, himself a professional musician, has said that unless we feel the pinch and teeter on the edge of financial collapse, we are not living dangerously enough when it comes to our church budgets.¹⁷

Let us heed Saint Paul’s exhortations to the early church and take seriously the call of the psalmists. “Art is not for the kingdom, it is for this world that is in travail, that hasn’t yet learned to share its wealth, that needs art’s touch of beauty and goodness and truth.”¹⁸

Our charge as Christians is to support, uplift, and uphold the highest ideals in the worship of the God who has created and redeemed us. We, as Anglo-Catholics should do nothing less than this and should lead the way by supporting music programs which fully exploit the “giftedness” which God has graciously bestowed upon his Church.

Praise ye the Lord; 'tis good to raise
our hearts and voices in his praise:
His nature and his works invite
to make this duty our delight.¹⁹
Amen.



- ¹ Whenever I stand before the rood screen at Christ Church, New Haven I think of the passage from Genesis read on the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Genesis 28:17b)
- ² Psalm 46:11
- ³ Christ Church is situated on the campus of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.
- ⁴ Quentin Faulkner, *Wiser Than Despair: the Evolution of Ideas in the Relationship of Music and the Christian Church*, London: Greenwood Press, 1996, p. 199.
- ⁵ Robert Lehman, *A Question of Idiom in Church Music*, One Voice: The National Church Music Magazine of RSCM Australia, Volume II Number 2, Advent 1996, p. 10.
- ⁶ Charles Pottie, *A More Profound Alleluia*, Washington: The Pastoral Press, 1984.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ I Corinthians 12:4–6
- ⁹ Ephesians 4:11–12
- ¹⁰ The Church Hymnal Corporation, *The Hymnal 1982*, New York, 1985, Hymn no. 382.
- ¹¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980.
- ¹² Leo Sowerby, *Ideals in Church Music*, Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1956.

- ¹³ Robert Hovda, *Strong, Loving and Wise*, Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1976, p. 26.
- ¹⁴ Poulson Reed, *The Way to Heaven's Door: Professional Church Music and the Modern Congregation*, Yale University, unpublished manuscript, 1997.
- ¹⁵ Ephesians 5:18b–20
- ¹⁶ Jerald Miner, *The Church at Worship*, New Haven, unpublished manuscript, 1988.
- ¹⁷ The Rt. Rev. David Stancliffe, in a sermon at Christ Church, New Haven, October 27, 2002.
- ¹⁸ Robert Hovda, *Strong, Loving and Wise*, Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1976, p. 26.
- ¹⁹ Isaac Watts (1674–1748): from his paraphrase of Psalm 147.
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The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: Scripture, Liturgy, and Experience

Catherine Powell

IMAGINE AN URBAN CHURCH: dark wood, the glint of gold and candles from the altar. A little girl, barely 4 years old, stands up in a pew so she can see what the priest is doing. She watches his hands moving downward as he says “send your holy spirit upon these gifts.” She hears him repeat the words of Jesus, “This is my body...This is my blood.” She turns to her mother with a radiant look. “Now, Mommy, now! Jesus is with us.”

Several weeks before, this little girl had sat in another room and watched as an adult moved thirteen figures— Jesus and his disciples— into a model of the Upper Room. On the table around which the figures gathered had been a white cloth, a tiny plate, and a tiny goblet. The children had listened with rapt attention to the words of Jesus to his followers. They had sat in silence as the figures were moved from the room and put away. The adult had spoken, “We know the story...He was arrested that night and he died on the cross.” The adult attached a small crucifix to the wall of the model room, above the table. “And we know that he rose again from death.” She lit birthday-cake-sized candles, one at each end of the last supper table. The children gazed at the Upper Room which had become an image of their own church. “Yes, he rose from the dead, and we still gather and say the words he taught us. And then he is with us in a very special way.”

The child was participating in a program of catechesis called The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Begun in Rome over fifty years ago by scripture scholar Sofia Cavalletti and Montessori educator Giana Gobbi, both devout Roman Catholics, this program has now spread around the world. It is in India and Mexico, Australia and Tanzania, Canada and Italy. Though its initial spread was among Roman Catholics, after it came into the United States many Episcopalians were drawn to its unique approach. It can now be found in Episcopal churches scattered throughout the United States. Bishop Frank Griswold strongly supported its spread in the diocese of Chicago and, after being elected Presiding Bishop, participated in an

international conference on it in Assisi, Italy. The Rev. Dr. Jerome Berryman, developer of the popular Godly Play curriculum, studied with Dr. Cavalletti in Rome and continues to be in consultation with her. One of the reasons this approach to children in parishes has spread so widely is that it speaks simply and movingly to many styles of faith. Evangelicals appreciate its unabashed use of scripture and its Christocentrism. Anglo-Catholics appreciate its orthodox theology and liturgical basis. Parents of all kinds appreciate its hands-on appeal to children as well as the seriousness with which it approaches children's faith.

The program interweaves scripture, liturgy, and experience. Dr. Cavalletti makes it clear from the beginning of her first book, *The Religious Potential of the Child*,¹ that the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd begins with the proclamation of Christ's self-giving love. She believes that even very young children respond deeply to the message at the heart of our faith, and that adults are wrong to wait until children are "old enough to understand." Moreover, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd facilitates, from the beginning of a child's religious education, an experienced unity between this basic Biblical proclamation and the liturgy of the church. Cavalletti writes:

[In the Church] today there is great insistence on the unity of life, Bible, and liturgy. There does not exist a Bible that we read and the Liturgy that we live; there is the Bible we live with the whole of our life and especially so in the Liturgy. (*Religious Potential of the Child*, p. 79)

Children as young as two and a half are welcomed into a specially prepared room called an atrium—a space linking the everyday life of the street and the inner sanctuary of worship. This room includes child-sized materials designed to introduce Christ and the Church as well as to satisfy the child's need for movement and skill development. After the children have become used to the peaceful tone and slow pace of the atrium, they are ready to receive the proclamation of the Christian message. The key presentation for these very young children is the Good Shepherd (John 10). Using a model of a circular sheep fold mounted on a wooden disk along with a group of wooden sheep and a Good Shepherd figure, children listen to Jesus' words: "I am the Good Shepherd . . . I know my own and they know me . . . My sheep hear my voice and I lead them out." In pauses

between the sentences, the adult catechist slowly moves the Good Shepherd figure out of the fold, and then moves the sheep, one at a time, to follow him. The Shepherd leads them around the fold and back into the gate, which is then safely closed. The catechist makes a few brief statements and asks some open-ended questions. “He knows all his sheep . . . He knows their names” . . . silence . . . “I wonder how they like that, having him always there . . . how he knows all their names. . . .”

Many young children are deeply attracted to this presentation and ask to work with it again and again. When they come into the atrium they go directly to this wooden material and reenact the “story.” They name the sheep, often starting with names like Woolly and Lamby and ending with names like Peter and Jessie and, finally, with their own names. They make heartfelt statements about the Good Shepherd and his flock, “He loves them,” “They can hear his voice everywhere!” A little boy of about 5 who came to class each week clutching the latest superhero figure once stood almost at attention beside the sheepfold and proclaimed seriously, “He would do anything for them. He does everything for them.”

Six-year-old Sarah was working alone in the atrium. She had moved all of the sheep figures off their green disk and placed them in a long line behind the Good Shepherd. “I wonder where he will take them,” the catechist mused aloud. Sarah, intent on her work, replied without turning around, “He is taking them on a picnic.” She moved them out onto the carpet and gathered them around the shepherd figure. She paused. The catechist again interrupted, “I wonder what he will feed them.” Sarah looked up, somewhat annoyed, “Bread and wine of course!”

Sarah had made the connection between the Good Shepherd and the eucharist without being taught. But the program does provide a link for the children. After they have come to know and love the Good Shepherd, the catechist places a second wooden disk beside the one holding the sheep. Saying only that the Good Shepherd wanted a special way to feed his sheep, she has the shepherd figure lead the sheep around a table placed on the second disk. A tiny cup and plate are placed on the table. The Good Shepherd figure is removed and a small Good Shepherd statue is placed on the altar. In a later presentation, each sheep is removed and replaced with a person. One of the sheep is replaced with the figure of a priest—the member of the flock chosen and prepared to say the words that Jesus taught.

Other presentations to the youngest children include the gestures of epiclesis and offering. A model chalice and paten are placed on a table. The catechist stands behind the table and raises her hands, then slowly lowers them in the gesture of epiclesis. The group has already talked about other gestures the children know—an outstretched hand, a shrugged shoulder. Now the catechist invites them to interpret this gesture. Later she says the words as she makes the gesture, “We pray you, gracious God, to send your holy spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant.” She makes a pair of paper hands, attached, side by side. By putting them face down over the elements, the children can muse about how the Holy Spirit comes—this is God’s gift to us. Later they learn the gesture of offering and doxology at the end of the Great Thanksgiving. They place the hands facing up—we offer our best back to God. As Cavalletti observes:

The aspect of the Mass that has been demonstrated to respond to the young child’s capacities is that of the “sacrament of the gift.” That is, the Mass is presented as the most particular concretization of that continuous gift the Father sends us in the person of His Son, incarnate, dead and risen, and of the gift with which man endeavors to respond to the Father. The Mass is this wonderful exchange of gifts between heaven and earth; or, better, it is the culmination of the many gifts the Father gives to mankind and the culmination of the many ways in which man tries to respond as fully as possible to the gift received. (*Religious Potential of the Child*, p. 83)

This aspect of gift, presented through the Good Shepherd material and the gestures to the youngest children, is presented in more depth to older children. Among many presentations, they read a booklet *The Story of Bread* that traces a small seed—brought to life and nurtured in a wonderful way by God—which grows to maturity, is harvested and prepared by human hands. It nourishes people, and is brought, at last, to the altar to be farther transformed in the great partnership between God and human beings. The children muse about their own place in this partnership of

creation. Cavalletti speaks of the basic theme of gift and how its early presentation in the gestures can be expanded:

As with all the other themes, this presentation should be developed and integrated later on; however its content is such that it forms the basis for the successive approaches to the Mass. The younger child will delight especially in the contemplation of the gift the Father gives him; the older child, who is in the moral sensitive period, will place the accent on the hands that are raised from earth to heaven and on the commitment that assures they are not offered in an empty gesture; the adolescent will begin to open himself to the reality of his relationship with God, which consists in an exchange of love that involves him wholly. (*Religious Potential of the Child*, p.84)

The program includes quite practical ways of approaching the eucharist, as well. The youngest children have a model altar in their atrium. They learn the terms for the fair linen, chalice, and paten, later adding the lavabo, sacramentary, and tabernacle. They take great pleasure in making the altar beautiful by smoothing out the fair linen and polishing the wood and silver. Older children learn to locate scripture passages and develop their own personal prayer books, which can include prayers of the eucharist, prayers they have composed themselves, and prayers they have found in other sources. They also learn about the flow of the Eucharistic liturgy in a presentation that uses a long strip of tablecloth on which are placed symbols of the parts of the service—a Bible for the liturgy of the word, a model of the Last Supper, a chalice and paten with paper hands down for the epiclesis and up for our offering, and so on. The oldest children work with a large chart, filling in small squares with colored tiles representing specific prayers and readings of the service. At all ages, art materials are offered as a way for children to express their growing articulation of faith. A young child stamped large red hearts all over her paper, then carefully stamped a sheep into each one. An older child drew an altar with the Good Shepherd above it. Another child drew an altar in

red and a child smiling beside it. She dictated, “The girl is happy because it is Pentecost. The Spirit has come to the altar.”

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is an approach that not only educates a child, but offers words and images which can enrich and form the child’s spiritual life, through the work of the Holy Spirit. A deep understanding of Christ’s love, proclaimed through Jesus’ words in the Bible: “I am the Good Shepherd,” along with experience and understanding of the language of the eucharist, unite to inform a child’s understanding of self and world. Dr. Cavalletti challenges us to offer no less.

A gift is a positive experience at any age, yet there is an age when it can become constitutive of the person. ...We wonder what influence it could have on a child who is placed in the condition of becoming gradually conscious of a gift such as God’s presence, a gift that is unfailing and surpasses the limits proper to every human relationship. ...The sacrament of the gift and the Good Shepherd parable relate to and integrate one another reciprocally, fusing Bible and Liturgy in a nourishing synthesis. The gratifying experience they both offer contributes, in our estimation, to placing the child in harmony with the world and to basing his relationship with God on the essential foundation of trusting faith. (*Religious Potential of the Child*, p. 90)



¹ Sofia Cavaletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child*, trans. Patricia Coulter and Julie Coulter (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).

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A Melanesian Reflection

Terry Brown

Address delivered at the Convocation of Trinity College, University of Toronto, May 11, 2004.



ONOURABLE CHANCELLOR, Madam Provost, Distinguished Guests, Fellow Graduates and Friends: Trinity College, Toronto, and the Church of the Province of Melanesia (established as the Melanesian Mission), founded within three years of each other, share a common Catholic tradition. Their founders, John Strachan, first Bishop of Toronto, and George Augustus Selwyn, first Bishop of New Zealand, also bear many resemblances. Both struggled against narrow evangelicalism and espoused (some would say, established) Anglican synodical government. Selwyn's establishment of the Melanesian Mission in 1849 and Strachan's founding of Trinity College in 1851 both embodied a vision of holistic Catholic Christianity for the frontiers of their societies. Bishop Selwyn's motto for the Melanesian Mission, 'True Religion, Sound Learning, Useful Industry', would have been appreciated by Bishop Strachan. I am greatly honoured to be here this evening as one of a few Trinity graduates who have experienced and been enriched by both these institutions. So I begin by bringing you warm greetings from the Archbishop of Melanesia, from the Church of the Province of Melanesia, from the Diocese of Malaita and from my Trinity College-graduate colleague also working in the Church of Melanesia, Brother John Blyth.

However, I do not intend talking about the two institutions or two founding Bishops this evening. Rather, I want to use imaginatively a social science, anthropology, which has many of its roots, at least for Melanesia, also in the Melanesian Mission. Many of the first Anglican missionaries to Melanesia were also early ethnologists, documenting Melanesian cultures and languages; one has only to mention names such as Robert Codrington, Arthur Hopkins and Charles Fox; even secular anthropologists such as W.H.R. Rivers worked closely with the Mission. But I shall not be talking about these proto-anthropologists.

Rather, I want to recount the humble advice of an imaginary Melanesian sage, perhaps an old man, perhaps an old woman, of about 100 years ago. What would that advice have been to his or her people and, indeed, to us listening in? And is such advice really archaic and out of date; or is it still valid today? My imaginary Melanesian sage has ten short pieces of advice:

'Beware of head-hunters, cannibals and sorcerers.' Melanesia was violent and in many places still is. We are still a place of martyrdom. We have just marked the first anniversary of the martyrdom of seven Melanesian Brothers. But is the rest of the world today much different? In your ministries (I speak to those graduating), beware of and resist militarists, militarism, military solutions, violent nationalisms, support of weapons production, family violence and participation in the destruction of peoples and cultures; beware of the patenting of genetic materials and the destruction of native species for financial gain. Beware of bio-piracy. Rather, seek peace and pursue it.

'Beware of the slave-traders.' During the last half of the nineteenth century, Melanesia was beset by the indentured labour trade (so-called 'black-birding') in which many thousands of Melanesians were taken (often kidnapped) to the sugarcane plantations of Queensland and Fiji, where they laboured for very cheap wages. But is the situation much different today? In your ministries, avoid the transnational corporations which oppress those who labour through seeking ever lower and lower production costs ? the Nestles, Nikes and McDonalds of this world; be aware of and address issues such as migrant labour and human trafficking, offering pastoral support to those far away from home and separated from their families by financial realities. Seek justice and pursue it.

'Beware of the missionaries.' The missionary movement, even in Melanesia, had its underside; one has only to visit the cemetery of St. Barnabas, Norfolk Island, to see the graves of the young Melanesian scholars who died of pneumonia. The Canadian churches are still reaping the havoc of the errors of the missionary movement among Canada's native peoples. But mission is essential for the church and the words of John Coleridge Patteson, first Bishop of Melanesia, can hardly be improved upon: 'The secret of these Islands is to live together as equals. Let the people know that you are not divided from them but united in Christ's love.' But many other missionaries were and are much more problematic. For we the Church, the Body of Christ, do contemporary missionary movements sent from us or to us have that much to offer? One thinks of contemporary Christian fundamentalist groups still hell-bent on the

destruction of traditional cultures and other religions (even other Christian denominations) as demonic; of the scourge of so-called Christian Zionism, looking forward to, indeed encouraging, war in the Middle East; of New Puritanism, the missionary movement of the Diocese of Sydney; of self-righteous renewal movements; of messianic sectarianism (whether evangelical, catholic or charismatic) calling itself orthodoxy. Seek and pursue a Christ-like mission strategy of sensitivity, openness, listening and love.

'Beware of the colonial government.' As colonialism goes, Solomon Islands colonialism was fairly benign, one of neglect, whereby the churches were left to develop education and medical work, while the Resident Commissioner classified butterflies; New Hebridean colonialism was the opposite, with two colonial governments, Britain and France, in conflict with the colonized and with each other. In both cases, the Melanesians were considered to be a dying race. In both cases there was violence, racism and the institution of a plantation system that separated families and oppressed labourers. But is there improvement today? In Melanesia today, Indonesia continues its brutal occupation of West Papua, with the support of Canadian mining companies; France and the United States continue as Pacific colonial powers, largely for military purposes. Very broadly, the line from the enclosure movement to imperialism and colonialism to neo-colonialism to the New World Order to globalization to the American occupation of Iraq is a direct one; all speak of the hegemony of the economically powerful over the weak. Stand with the weak rather than with the powerful. Remember the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, 'The use of violence to retain superfluous wealth is none other than the sin of robber'. Live a ministry of *kenosis*, self-emptying of power and wealth, so that the oppressed and broken may be lifted up.

All of those have been warnings. Now a bit of positive advice:

'Remember tribe, totem and tabu'. This evening, we are doing precisely that. In a world of demonic nationalisms and imperialisms, it may seem strange to speak positively of tribe, totem and tabu. Oceanic cultures, like many other tribal cultures, are intensely holistic and communal, where personhood, friendship, marriage, community, identity, morality, faith and ritual are virtually inseparable, even today, despite the incursions of western individualism and attacks of western neo-conservatives. Individualism runs deep in all of us in the west but in the end it is not sustaining. People need a personal identity of communion with God and others beyond their sex, gender, sexual orientation, politics, age and

occupation. (Hence, the considerable growth of Islam, even in the west, while western Christianity remains crippled by its individualism.) Extended family, friendship, marriage, church, community, neighbourhood, workplace, tradition, ritual, play and, indeed, restraint and prudence (tribe, totem and tabu) all play their part. As Catholic Christians we believe this communion is ultimately rooted in and nurtured by our participation in the Holy Eucharist. Shun the lone ranger model, shun the glorification of the individual alienated soul and rediscover and nurture your personhood as essentially relational and participatory, reflective of the Holy Trinity. Let your ministry be one of friendship.

'Marry outside the clan or tribe.' Many Melanesian cultures are exogamous, where there is a tradition of taking a wife or husband from the 'other', perhaps from some place far away, to build relationships with potential or even real enemies. Such arrangements are a kind of check on the potential idolatry of tribe, totem and tabu. They also help tribes and persons to continue to reach out and develop and not to become ingrown. What of our relations of friendship and intimacy? Seek relationships of friendship and intimacy with the stranger, the other, the shadow, the broken, indeed, the enemy, potential or real. Scripture counsels us to love our enemies, not just our friends.

'Touch and be touched.' To risk a generalization, Melanesians establish relationships through touch; North Americans and Europeans often establish relationships through boundaries and private space. The latter's ever-increasing suspicion of touch (indeed of all the senses except sight and sound, which can be exercised at a distance) is almost Manichean. Melanesian patterns of touch, of course, are part of the understanding of the person as essentially relational and corporate. When, as in Melanesia, the individual rather than the community is the anomaly (where 'one is a fraction of two', to quote Maurice Leenhardt's classic study of Melanesian personhood, *Do Kamo*), touching another is not much different from touching oneself. Appropriate boundaries are important and must be observed; no one wants sexual abuse, for example. (Indeed, Oceania contributed the word 'taboo' to the English language.) But when separation, boundaries, establishing space and, indeed, self-consciousness and fear become the primary bases of relationships, intimacy and, indeed, love, become very difficult indeed. As we withhold physical affection from children, we risk producing the miserable adult spirituality of a saintly Henri Nouwen. In spite of the paranoia of western culture, be open to touch. At the centre of the Eucharist is the Kiss of Peace.


‘Remember to tie the rope around your leg when you enter the holy of holies to offer sacrifice.’ I am told that such was the practice in the area of Malaita where I live. There was always the danger that the custom priest’s expiatory sacrifice, usually the immolation of a pig, could go drastically wrong and the priest rather than the pig be immolated. The priest’s family held onto the rope to pull him back, lest he be taken by the spirits and never seen again. If we have lost all sense of the power of the holy, we may be quietly amused. But the advice warns us to recognize that God’s world and power are not our own nor under our control. It also urges us to use some caution in the spiritual life, for example, not to be entirely trusting of spiritual directors, losing our freedom. It warns us against practices of sacrifice (‘self-immolation’) that produce death rather than life. Perhaps the story is an example of Melanesian ‘Reason’. Accept the support of friends, do not lose your freedom and approach God with the greatest fear and humility.

I conclude with two final warnings and a comment:

‘Beware of the camera, it will steal your soul.’ Many years ago, I visited a neo-custom movement on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal with a group of students. Having shed most of our clothes, I proposed taking a camera into the community’s custom house. Eventually, the request was accepted but I paid a small compensation for the camera, as it was seen as disrupting the traditional order of relationships. The camera sees us as others see us, locked in time and space. With digital technologies, pictures now also lie. Perhaps a more modern version of this advice is, ‘Beware of the media, it can steal your soul’. If we always see ourselves primarily as others see us, we lose ourselves. Current controversies in the Anglican Communion are exacerbated, indeed, encouraged, sometimes even invented, by the media. If we speak to the media before we speak to our neighbour, we are in trouble. Live your life as God is calling you, and don’t pay that much attention to the media, though if you can use it for the Gospel, do so.

‘Avoid the “cargo cult”’. This advice is anachronistic, as so-called cargo cults did not appear in Melanesia until after World War II, although the church’s winning of converts through gifts of tobacco and knives presages them. But many would argue that time in Melanesia is qualitative and cyclical rather than quantitative and sequential. Not entirely unreasonably, practitioners of Melanesian cargo cults sought and seek to use their traditional magic to bring prosperity (‘cargo’) to their societies. While the aim is laudable, the efforts fail and people are left disillusioned. Westerners

have made fun of the extremes of cargo cults, such as airfields constructed to receive planeloads of cargo. But is the west much different? Are our expectations of wealth any more reasonable? Many still see wealth as the primary solution to their problems; others seek New Age magical solutions, or the lottery, or the casino, or the astrologer or very magical views of the Holy Spirit and prayer. The ‘Gospel of prosperity’ flourishes. Our culture has not entirely bought out of the capitalist myth, that in accumulation and consumption, we attain salvation. Avoid the magical solution; take on the hard work of helping to bring into this broken world the Commonwealth of God.

What do these bits of advice, I hope, contribute towards? Or, perhaps better, what do they presuppose? I would offer, simply, Catholic Christianity ‘meaningful and intimate inclusion in the Body of Christ, including a loving relationship with all of humanity and all of creation’ striving towards the Beatific Vision. That Vision, ultimately beyond our comprehension, comprehends our lives and ministries and fills us daily with grace, leading us in ever new and unexpected directions. Let me finish with a very challenging comment of St. Hugh of Victor, sometimes quoted by contemporary philosophers: ‘The one who finds his or her homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; the one to whom every soil is as his or her native one is already strong; but the one is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land’. 

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Living Stones, I Presume

Tobias Stanislas Haller, BSG

A Sermon on the Anniversary of the Dedication of The Church of Grace & Saint Peter, Baltimore.

Come to the Lord, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house. — *1 Peter 2:5*

It is a great pleasure to be invited once again to stand in the splendid pulpit of this beautiful church; especially on this day when we give thanks for its dedication as a place set apart for the worship of Almighty God. In giving thanks, we are called to think not only of the spiritual gifts that abound in this place, but about the hard facts of its physicality: the reality of its very stones. And in doing so, we face a mystery revealed both in the creation of the universe, and in the new creation which began with the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

This mystery finds its eloquent metaphor in one of the most contradictory images in all of Scripture: *the living stones* which Saint Peter invites us to become.

Now, in folklore and fiction, from the petrified souls who glimpsed Medusa's writhing hairdo, to poor Han Solo carbonized in *Star Wars*, being turned into stone is a curse, a symbol of death, coldness and finality.

So it may seem odd that Saint Peter should suggest that we be turned into stones. And so he stresses that the stones we are to become are *living* stones. That's another image altogether, equally familiar from legends and tales. My favorite instance is C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. As you may recall, the land of Narnia has been cursed by a wicked witch, so that it is always winter but never Christmas, and she has turned all who oppose her into stone — frozen statues, who only come back to life when the Great Lion Aslan comes to revive them with his breath.

So perhaps it isn't so strange after all that this image of living stone should be in Scripture: for life out of death is the ultimate witness of the sacred story.

The question is, How? How does stone come to life? For that matter, how does *any* matter come to life? I'm reminded of another wise saying from C.S. Lewis in response to the gnostic and dualist heresies: "God likes matter. He created it!" And I would add that not only *does* God like matter, but God likes matter so much that he imbued some of it with life in his image, when he took clay in hand and molded and in-breathed the living spirit of old Adam, our ancient earthy parent; and even went far further, when in the fullness of time he imbued matter with his very own self, taking the flesh of a young woman of Judea and working wonders within the little space of her womb.

Oh, yes, my friends, God *so* loved the world! And people have recognized God's love *of* and hand *in* creation from time immemorial, and have celebrated that reality and sought to commemorate it. From long before the time that Jacob set up his stone pillow to mark the spot on which he saw the heavens open, people have been sanctifying space and matter with markers and signs of God's holy presence. From the temples to the great cathedrals, from the catacombs below to the vaulted arches soaring above, from the humble wood-frame country church to this splendid gothic extravagance: worshipers have held their breaths and said, "How awesome is this place; this is heaven's gate!" and known God's presence there.

But equally for as long, there have been others who have sought to deny or denigrate this impulse: iconoclasts, Puritans, gnostics, dualists and others who shun these outward and visible signs, who deplore them for their physicality, as if to say, "God is far too holy to have anything to do with this fallen world." As builders who reject the stone, they deny the presence of He Who Is with *that which he has made*. They seek instead a purely *spiritual* religion; a *dis*-embodied religion; a "Twilight Zone" religion not of flesh and blood, but of mind; a religion that is always winter and never Christmas.

Such purists miss God's delicate balance: that true worshipers *must* worship, yes, as Jesus told the Samaritan woman, in the power of the Spirit, but also and no less in and with the radical physicality, the material reality of God incarnate, the real presence of Truth: marked out with bended knees, raised hands, with stone, with wood; with bread, and wine. The

Word, after all, became *Flesh*.

Our God is not just the God of the Platonic Ideas, but of the whole real world that *is*. Our God is not just the God even of certain special holy things — for that *would* be idolatry. But God is the Lord of shoes and ships and sealing wax, of cabbages *and* kings — of the whole great world that sings in every corner to the glory of its God and King: everything that has breath, naturally, praising; yet even the trees clapping their metaphorical hands, mountains skipping and hills dancing, and if that were not enough, we are promised that the stones themselves will sing!

This is the miracle to which the Creation and the Incarnation *both* point us. It is not *Spirit* alone — but the Spirit come down and breathed forth upon the breast of the waters, and breathed *into* the yielding clay, to give it life. But nor is it *Matter* alone — but matter imbued with God's vivifying presence, flesh animated and hearts inspired by the power of God's Spirit — it is at the coming together of heaven and earth that we find the locus of true religion; it is at the gate of heaven that we find the ladder upon which the marvelous interchange takes place; and it is there we set up our marker stones. It is at this gracious intersection that God is known, worshiped, and adored. As that gorgeous old hymn has it,

For none can guess its grace,
till he become the place,
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Saint Peter knew well the power of grace to transform, the power of the Spirit to warm even the coldest and most reluctant heart of stone. He took up the image of the stone that the builders rejected, and related it to the story of the Wandering in the Desert. He looked back to the time when his ancient forebears rejected the miraculous Rock which, when stricken, yielded floods of life-giving water.

But he also had a much more personal incident in mind. He could not but recall his Lord reminding him, that *his* name “Peter” meant “the rock.” And as we too were reminded in the gospel just a few weeks ago, that same Lord had called him “a stumbling block” and obstacle to the coming kingdom.

Yet Peter knew as well that by God's grace he had been brought back to life, transformed from a dead-weight stumbling block into a tool for the spread of God's mission. And by that same grace, Peter assured those to

whom he wrote that they have been transformed: those who once were no people have become God's own people.

It is a happy accident that Grace and Saint Peter come together in your church's name: Saint Peter without grace would have remained petrified in fear and doubt. And grace without Saint Peter, grace without any of us, any of the human handiwork of God to do God's work, would be like the greatest poem ever written, but in a lost language that no one could understand.

To help us remain open to that grace, to put that grace to work, Saint Peter reminds us that we too are chosen and precious. Each of us is marked out as special, with our own unique place, just as each stone in this church has its own place, its own shape and size.

Back in the nineteenth century there was a craze as wealthy American businessmen became hungry for some sense of tradition and antiquity in this new land. So they bought crumbling castles and cloisters in Europe, had them disassembled, crated up, and shipped to these shores for reassembly. And as they were taken apart stone by stone, the stones were labeled and marked, so that each could be put back in its place when the time came for reassembly.

We are like those stones, each of us marked as Christ's own forever, marked with a cross on our foreheads in Baptism — and reminded of that mark on Ash Wednesday as the dust on our foreheads reveals God's fingerprint upon us — and each of us has our own place in the new Jerusalem, each one a place which no other stone can fit so well as we. Once we were no people, but now, by the action of God's coming among us as one of us, we are God's people. By the means of grace we have come to the hope of glory.

Like Jacob, our predecessors in this and many places have consecrated and dedicated buildings such as this to lift our hearts and focus our wavering attention, to strengthen our faith; but even more, to remind us that the God whom heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain has yet condescended to come among us as we gather. God has chosen to make use of such finite outward and visible signs as means to share with us his infinite inward and spiritual grace. Could that be why churches always seem so much larger on the inside? For here within, God has chosen to present himself upon this altar, to be with us in his very flesh and blood, a spiritual sacrifice, yet also corporeal, the radical, gracious Truth of *God*

with us: Emmanuel.

Yes, there will be times of doubt in which we say, with Solomon, “But will God indeed dwell on earth?” 1Kg 8:27 There *will* be times when we feel, in moments of distress and depression, facing challenges that seem to overwhelm us, that we are only dust and clay. Yet even the earth and clay receive the dew of heaven; the waters from above pour down, and the fragments are washed down to the deep places of the earth. Pressed with its weight, the fragments are transformed into stone, and sometimes into gems. With the passing of time, further washing of water uncovers the rock and exposes it to the light of day. So by death and rebirth, though Baptism with water and the Holy Spirit, we are broken up and washed down to the very depths, in unity with Christ’s death. And in the depths of God’s heart, the heat and pressure of the Holy Spirit form and reshape us into the image and likeness of Christ, the living Rock.

In moments of doubting God’s presence or grace, in times of grief, frustration or depression, in times of challenge, remember that throughout our lives God is working to mold us, to break us, to form and reshape us. Dust washed to the depths, in time becomes rock that emerges, or gems that are quarried and mined. Brought forth from the darkness into the marvelous light, we stones — we living stones, all of us, you and me and all the saints of ages past and yet to come — are builded up into a new house, an edifice as much grander than this present splendid shadow of the glory that shall be, as *it* is grander than Jacob’s humble pillow. For the frozen statues have been warmed to life by the Lord’s own breath; the stones have risen up as children and sing out for joy — a new temple, a New Jerusalem, a house with many mansions, with firm foundations, built of living stones, with Christ the head and cornerstone, rises and stands and ever shall stand; God with us, and we with God, Emmanuel, in the heavenly place where it is *never* winter, but *always* Christmas.

To God, whose power and grace working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine, to him be glory from generation to generation in the church, and in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen. ☪

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Book Note: The Virtues of Nonconformity

John Richard Orens


Timothy Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Nonconformity*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2004. Pp. viii+234.

AFTER NEARLY A CENTURY of condescension and contempt, the Victorians are once again in good stead. Once derided as pompous patriarchal prigs, they are now celebrated for the energy, moral passion, and insatiable curiosity. Historians have played an important part in shaping this new appreciation, as has the contemporary world's frantic search for values in an age of corrosive doubt. But what for some is a novel insight, has for Anglo-Catholics long been the conventional wisdom. It is to the Tractarians that we have looked for inspiration, and the ceremonial we use and the Gothic revival churches in which we often worship were shaped by a Victorian sensibility. But even the most nostalgic among us may imagine that little good can be said of nineteenth-century Nonconformists. Whatever virtues we ascribe to other Victorians, Protestant Dissenters, especially when viewed through the lens of Anglo-Catholic memory, seem to embody all the religious vices of the age: biblical literalism, puritanism, intellectual narrowness, and intolerance. In this spirited and entertaining collection of essays, however, Timothy Larsen demonstrates that the Nonconformist world was more diverse, more daring, and more eccentric, than we have imagined.

His opening chapter, for example, tells the story of the beleaguered parishioners of the Mill Yard Seventh Day Baptist Church. In 1830 their property was about to be given to another congregation because, the trustees argued, the congregation no longer existed. And it no longer existed because its seven surviving members were all women. But the women successfully appealed the decision to the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers. One of the congregation's trustees had mockingly asked, "How many sisters make a brotherhood?" To which, notes Larsen, the leaders of Protestant Dissent had replied, "exactly the

same number as it would take of brothers, because the nature of the church is not dependent on the gender of its members.” Larsen finds a similar radicalism in the Methodist New Connexion which insisted on the equality of clergy and laity. He also reminds us that Nonconformists were more prominent than Anglicans in protesting Governor Eyre’s bloody repression of the 1865 insurrection in Jamaica. As some Anglo-Catholics, would have ruefully admitted, the title of one Dissenting tract had more than a little truth to it: “Worldliness Engrafted Upon the Episcopal Church, Through Her Connexion with the State.”

Among the most illuminating essays in this volume are those dealing Thomas Cooper and Joseph Barker, writers Larsen calls “plebeian radicals.” Abandoning their childhood faith for infidelity, both men offer us valuable insights into the character of working-class unbelief. And both, Larsen argues, were more astute thinkers than such famous secularists as Charles Bradlaugh. Why then have historians neglected them? Larsen suggests that it is because they made their way back to Protestant orthodoxy, although he does not adequately explain how they did so.

This is not a perfect book. Like all collections it is uneven. In his effort to demonstrate the progressive side of Nonconformity, Larsen passes over much in Victorian Protestantism that was backward looking and stultifying. And, as in the story of Governor Eyre, he gives too negative a view of Anglican attitudes. Nevertheless, Larsen’s engaging account is well worth reading. Not only does it cast new light on the past ; it may encourage a healthy sense of humility among Anglo-Catholics in the present. 

John Richard Orens is the editor of the Anglican Catholic and associate professor of history at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia.

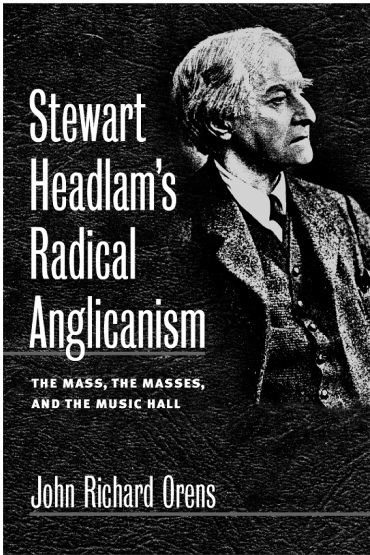


STEWART HEADLAM'S RADICAL ANGLICANISM

The Mass, the Masses, and the Music Hall

by John Richard Orens

Standing in stark contrast to the conservative churchmen of Victorian Britain, the Anglican clergyman Stewart Headlam



was a passionately progressive reformer, a champion of the working poor -- especially women -- a defender of the music hall performers his colleagues attacked as licentious, and, in short, a man of God who remained firmly and controversially engaged with the society in which he lived and worked. With this intellectual biography, the first significant study of Headlam since 1928, Orens places Headlam's life, beliefs,

and actions in the context of the period, contributing to the ongoing debate about the proper relationship between Christianity, on the one hand, and society, sexuality, and the arts, on the other.

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