

# Deciding and dividing

Paul Avis examines the thinking behind GAFCON's stances

**The Truth Shall Set You Free: Global Anglicans in the 21st century**  
Charles Raven, editor  
The Latimer Trust £7.99  
(978-1-906327-16-3)  
Church Times Bookshop £7.20

**How the Anglican Communion Came to be and Where it is Going**  
Michael Nazir-Ali  
The Latimer Trust £3.99  
(978-1-906327-18-7)  
Church Times Bookshop £3.60

*The Truth Shall Set You Free* is a manifesto for an alternative Anglican Communion. It consists of material produced for the leaders' conference of the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (Gfca), preparatory to the second GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference) in Nairobi, 2013.

Most readers of the *Church Times* would probably not naturally gravitate to this milieu. But we need to acquaint ourselves with what this movement of dissent and regrouping stands for, and to assess its implications for the Anglican Communion.

Some writers are avowedly "dis-affiliated" clergy, who have either left or been expelled from what they see as persecuting liberal Churches. On the other hand, the Jerusalem Statement, the foundation document of the movement, is generally unexceptionable. There is, however, a strange short piece, "What is the Gospel?". It deals in a biblical way with atonement and conversion. But its understanding of salvation is confined to the individual. The Church is mentioned only as a witness to the gospel; the sacraments are ignored.

The presenting issues are policies regarding human sexuality and "liberal theology" in the Episcopal Church in the United States and parts of the Anglican Church of Canada which are accused of preaching a "different" or "false" gospel. But, as these documents point out, the underlying issue is the authority of scripture. What they do not explicitly admit is that behind the question of the authority of scripture is the question of the interpretation of scripture (hermeneutics). This question is not addressed, except for one unfortunate remark by the editor which takes a swipe at "biblical criticism", as though "criticism" were meant in a negative, destructive way rather than by analogy with the disciplines of "literary criticism" and "musical criticism" — that is to say, understanding, explanation, and appreciation.

A rigidly conservative stance on the Bible is here equated with "orthodoxy", implying that those who do not share it are unorthodox, heterodox. Some of these writers talk about "God's just and holy wrath" and "the awful reality of hell" — for others, of course.

The authors sit in judgement on their fellow members of the Anglican Communion. The US Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada are the prime culprits, but the Church of England is not unscathed, and the office of

Archbishop of Canterbury is castigated. There is a rather paranoid conspiracy theory about the Anglican Communion Office (ACO), which is characterised mistakenly as an arm of the Lambeth Palace "bureaucracy" that has "marginalised the Primates and sought to supplant their decision-making role" (did they ever have one?).

The report also shamelessly plays the "colonialist" card, as though Lord Williams could be seen as an imperialist adventurer, or the ACO, whose senior staff is mainly non-British, as a colonialist threat. But the central accusation is that "the troubles of the Anglican Communion flow from a rejection of the uniqueness and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ." This accusation, that Anglican Christians in the West generally do not accept Christ as their one Saviour and Lord, is completely unjustified.

The authors repeatedly affirm that they have no intention of departing from the Anglican Communion, but simply want to restructure its conciliar polity. They argue that the Instruments of Communion (the Lambeth Conference, the Primates' Meeting, the Anglican Consultative Council [ACC], and the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury) have failed and remain dysfunctional.

In his otherwise balanced and useful booklet on the Anglican Communion, Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali says the same. In his chapter in the report itself, he calls the Instruments what they have never been: "instruments of decision-making". The report tends to reify, objectify, the Instruments of Communion as things "out there" that can function irrespective of who is taking part. But the Instruments are made up of people: they are organic and relational entities. They have no existence without their members. Like musical or surgical instruments, they need skill, dedication, practice, and wisdom to enable them to do their job effectively.

As the significant boycott of the Lambeth Conference 2008 showed, the Gfca constituency feels so strongly in conscience about the views of some Western Churches with regard to sex that they are not willing even to talk to them. In that

case, how can the Instruments be expected to work well?

Except for the constitutional part played by the ACC, the Instruments are not decision-making bodies. They are instruments of consultation with the capacity to offer guidance and make recommendations to the member Churches of the Communion, who must then consider that advice through their own synodical-episcopal channels. The Gfca will discover for itself the limits of central, global "decision-making" if it attempts to legislate for its member Churches and groups. It will, it says, construct alternative structures of consultation and oversight, beginning with the Primates' Council. The claim to wish to remain within the Communion is a smokescreen: what seems to be intended is an alternative Communion, the real Anglican Communion.

The lack of momentum of the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant is not regretted, and the Covenant itself is assimilated to "managerial and organisational strategies". It is dismissed as "institutional" rather than "spiritual". In fact, the Covenant is intended as an instrument of mediation and reconciliation, requiring ongoing spiritual conversion of the participants if it is to realise its potential.

Ashley Null contributes a helpful exposition of the ecclesiology of the English Reformers and Richard Hooker, while Arthur Middleton puts the cat among the pigeons with an apologia for the High Church 17th-century divines and the Oxford Movement, which gave the visible Church and its tradition a rather different place from any that this report generally does. Middleton suggests in a friendly way that the Anglican Catholic and Anglican Evangelical approaches are "complementary", but the editor seeks to pre-empt this idea. The report leaves us still asking what it means as Anglicans to be "Catholic and reformed".

*The Revd Professor Paul Avis's latest book on Anglicanism, In Search of Authority: Anglican theological method from the Reformation to the Enlightenment, is reviewed on page 29.*

## notice board New Testament

RONALD ALLEN's book **Reading the New Testament for the First Time** has chapters, among others, on the world of the New Testament, its content, Jesus, the Early Church, and using its writings in the Church today (Wm B. Eerdmans/Alban, £12.99 (£11.69); 978-0-8028-6735-3).

W. Gordon Campbell takes a thematic approach in **Reading Revelation: God reveals himself; humanity finds itself; and when God and humanity meet**. Within these themes, he explores divinity, worship, testimony, belonging, and covenant (James Clarke & Co., £30.50; 978-0-227-17383-1).

**The Question of John the Baptist and Jesus' Indictment of the Religious Leaders** starts with John's asking of his cousin: are you the one who is to come? Roberto Martinez takes a predominantly narrative-critical approach to his interpretation, but begins his study with a survey of theologians' think-

ing on this verse and its context (James Clarke & Co., £20.50; 978-0-227-68011-7).

**The Early Text of the New Testament** analyses and assesses the pre-fourth-century transmission of the writings. Essays look at scribal culture, early manuscripts, and how other texts use the NT. The book is edited by Charles Hill and Michael Kruger. Contributors include Larry Hurtado, Stanley Porter, Peter Head, and Christopher Tuckett (OUP, £90 (£81); 978-0-19-956636-5).

David Peterson's **Transformed by God: New covenant life and ministry** is centred on the promise of new covenant in Jeremiah 31.31-34. The first chapter concentrates on these verses, before the author looks at how the ideas therein expressed influenced NT writers (IVP, £9.99 (£9); 978-1-84474-567-8).

**Getting "Saved": what does that mean?** Charles Talbert and Jason Whitlark, with others, approach the NT in four sections: Pauline corpus, Gospels, Catholic Epistles, and Revelation (Eerdmans/Alban, £21.99 (£19.79); 978-0-8028-6648-6).



Deadly sin: anger, exemplified here by two men fighting, incited by a demon, in a wall-painting, c.1475, in St Cadoc's, Llacarfan, Glamorgan. In the Middle Ages, the seven deadly sins, seven contrary virtues, and seven corporal works of mercy were taught through murals. From *Medieval Wall Paintings* by Roger Rosewell. See caption on page 27

## Never beyond hope

John Arnold reads a guide to the healing of relationships

**The Book of Forgiving: The fourfold path for healing ourselves and our world**  
Desmond and Mpho Tutu  
William Collins £14.99  
(978-0-00-751287-4)  
Church Times Bookshop £13.50

I HAVE been fortunate enough in life to have met several saints. One was Heinrich Grüber, the Dean of the Protestant Cathedral in Berlin. He was known for having gone to see Hitler to tell him that what he was doing was wrong. When I met him after the war, he was sitting on a floor answering students' questions. One said, "You actually met Hitler. Wasn't he the very devil?" "Oh no," said Grüber. "He was just like everyone, that is to say, like Jesus." That other saint Desmond Tutu would have agreed.

That no one, however wicked, is a monster but a fellow human being, capable of forgiving and being forgiven, is a common theme of this admirable book, co-written with his daughter Mpho. Much of the theory comes from her and her studies. Much of the wisdom comes from him and his long experience, especially, but not only, of the struggle against apartheid, and of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which dealt with its aftermath.

This is at one level a handbook, useful to all, indispensable to anyone who desperately needs to for-

give or be forgiven. After introductory chapters about forgiveness in general, we are taken along a fourfold path: telling the story, naming the hurt, granting forgiveness, and renewing or releasing the relationship. Each section concludes with a poetic prayer, a summary, an exercise in meditation, a stone ritual, and advice on keeping a journal. There is little that is explicitly and much that is implicitly Christian here.

At another and deeper level, this is a series of stories, sometimes told once, sometimes interwoven into the whole book, always illuminating and profoundly moving. The authors tell their own stories, too. Mpho's friend and helper was brutally murdered in her home. Desmond writes of the petty humiliations, as well as of the larger-scale injustice, of the apartheid regime. Above all, he speaks of his long struggle to forgive his own father for his drunkenness and brutality. The psychologist C. J. Jung says that on the Cross it is not so much man in Christ paying the price of sin to the Father, as God in Christ making reparation to man for a world in which suffering and death are inevitable. He is in agreement with Article II of the Thirty-Nine, which states that Christ "was crucified . . . to reconcile His Father to us", whereas, as every ordinand knows, it should read, "to reconcile us to his Father".

Is it the hard won ability to forgive his father and ours, that underlies Desmond Tutu's astonishingly profound insights into the nature of forgiveness itself?

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