

A review of Phil Groves and Angharad Parry Jones, *Living Reconciliation*

The purpose of the book

For the Archbishop of Canterbury reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel and he therefore hopes that it will become the hallmark of the Anglican Communion.

Archbishop Justin makes this clear in his foreword to *Living Reconciliation*. He begins this foreword, 'Reconciliation is the heart of the gospel,' with the following declaration:

Reconciliation is God's mission to the world in Christ; therefore it is our mission. It is one of the three priorities for my tenure as Archbishop of Canterbury, alongside the renewal of prayer and religious life, and evangelism. Reconciliation is at the heart of our calling to serve God in prayer and in witness. When we call on God out of the division and conflict of our world, God (as Karl Barth reminds us) 'calls us on his side as heralds of reconciliation.' This book shows us how we may live at God's side in that exacting work, as reconciled reconcilers – in an era when it has probably never been harder or more needful.

I believe that living reconciliation can transform our world. Indeed, I dream that it may become the hallmark of Anglicans. Given the cultural diversity of the 165 countries in which the Anglican Communion across 38 provinces exists, I believe that Anglican Christians bear remarkable testimony to the unifying power of the Holy Spirit of God in his Church. It is through our own reconciliation that the Holy Spirit equips us for the ministry of reconciliation and healing to others. Reconciliation is good news in a world of fear and alienation. (p.ix)

The Anglican Communion's Continuing Indaba project is an attempt to encourage the reconciliation talked about by Archbishop Justin across the Anglican Communion. Phil Groves and Angharad Parry Jones have helped to lead this project and *Living Reconciliation* is their account of what they have learned in the process. The purpose of the book is to explain what reconciliation involves and to encourage people to become engaged in it in the context of their own churches and communities.

How the book works

The book, which is accompanied by additional material (including a study guide and a You Tube channel) at www.living-reconciliation.org, is in eight chapters.

Chapter 1, 'Living Reconciliation,' provides an introduction to what is meant by reconciliation.

Chapter 2, 'Journey into uncertainty,' explains that reconciliation involves embarking on a journey with people who are different from us and may see things in a different way to us.

Chapter 3, 'Companions,' looks at how reconciliation involves crossing cultures and how we can learn to see that 'only the whole world knows the whole truth' (p.40).

Chapter 4, 'Encounter with power,' considers how reconciliation involves addressing inequality of status and therefore entails confronting the power structures that holds such inequality in place.

Chapter 5, 'Transforming conflict,' considers how the transformation of conflict in society and the Church involves moving to a 'new drumbeat' (p.83) and what this new drumbeat needs to involve.

Chapter 6, 'Risk,' explores how reconciliation involves both a willingness to move beyond the desire for quick solutions and a willingness to take risks.

Chapter 7, 'New way of being,' looks at how reconciliation involves the sharing of hospitality, an openness to hear others, the use of facilitation, worshipping and praying together and reading Scripture together.

Chapter 8, 'Sharing the vision,' introduces the reader 'to some dioceses and parishes where they are Living Reconciliation in the Church and the World' (p.144) and highlights 'some of the key actions they took in order to turn aspiration into action and the reasons for their enthusiasm' (p.144).

Each of these eight chapters contains stories from around the Anglican Communion that illustrate the point that is being made in the chapter.

For example chapter 2 contains the story of Alice Mogwe, a Botswanan lawyer trained in the Western legal tradition who learned a new approach towards achieving justice when seeking access to water for Bushmen in Botswana. On the basis of having come to understand the Bushmen's situation and how they viewed the world, Alice came to see that a Western legal approach simply did not work for them and that a different approach was therefore needed:

Alice wanted a different approach to the Western-style adversarial legalism. She wanted to use African methods and to engage in consensual conversations. She used her contacts and her influence to engage people in power in direct conversation with a thirsty man. Alice persuaded a government minister to sit in the same room as the elder, with her present to facilitate the conversation. The minister was no longer faced with an issue, but with a human being. Here was Amogelang who was seeking water to live, he was not seeking to be dependent or to have special provision, he was just asking for the water that had been provided for them by the government for several years. The long conversation had to end with a change in heart. (p.28)

The lesson the chapter draws from this story is that:

Taking up the challenge to Live Reconciliation is a lonely task and one where you can be in conflict with your own people. For Alice it involved identification with a people who were not her own people and the courage to step back from advocacy to empower them to speak for themselves in their own way. (p.29)

For another example, chapter 3 uses the story of Kevin to illustrate the message that living reconciliation involves recognising that you are 'on a common journey, with people who disagree with you, but who are still part of the same community.' (p.50)

Kevin, we are told, was a gay member of the Hong Kong team in part of the Continuing Indaba process who:

...was not able to come out easily in his home context. He reflected back at the end of the Indaba that his mind set had been 'rather narrow' and he would befriend those who shared similar values to him, and those with whom he could feel safe being himself. It was around the meal table of Hong Kong that he began to reach out and it was in Jamaica, and with Jamaican Christians who hold very different understandings of sexuality, that he was able to come out. He could do so because he was among friends who accepted him, even if they had not changed their minds. Reflecting on his experience, Kevin wrote that it was after they had 'built up good relationships during Indaba' that they were able to 'truly acknowledge and respect the differences among us without seeking to 'change' the other.' (p.49)

Alongside these stories the chapters also contain reflections on relevant passages from the Bible.

For example, in chapter 4 there is reference to the story in John 13 of Jesus' washing his disciples feet as an example of the way he challenged existing structures of power:

In this meal Jesus is the host and the disciples the guests. Usually a Gentile slave would have washed all the guests' feet as it was a low task. Since the group were on their own each guest would have washed their own feet – it would not have occurred to the disciples to wash one another's feet. So when Jesus removes his outer garment, wraps a towel around his waist and kneels down to wash his friend's feet, he is performing a task seen as beneath him, a direct challenge to his disciples. This is Living Reconciliation; Jesus was redefining the power structures of his society in a very threatening manner. (p.69)

For another example, in chapter 5 the book draws on the work of the Church historian Andrew Walls and refers to St. Paul's teaching about the unity of the body of Christ in Ephesians 4:

The familiar motif of the body of Christ is used in a specific manner in Ephesians 4. In 1 Corinthians it is about the differing ministries and callings of the people. In Ephesians this is echoed, but the focus is on the unification of diverse people into a living organic unit. In Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul tells them that in order to do this they need to display humility, gentleness and patience. They are to bear with one another in love so they can maintain the unity of the body in their diversity. They are many, but there is only one body because there is only 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God.' It is absolutely clear that such unity is not easy and requires 'speaking the truth in love,' but it is the consequence of the saving act of Christ in our world. There cannot be two churches in one place divided by cultural differences, there is only one Church. According to Walls, 'The very height of Christ's full stature is reached only by the coming together of the different cultural entities into the body of Christ. Only 'together,' not on our own, can we reach his full stature.' (p.91)

The lesson the book derives from this passage is that the Church requires the patience and courage to stay united in the face of diversity:

Today we have new opportunities. The Church is growing throughout the world and face-to-face contact with Christians from a multitude of cultures is possible for all of us. We are confronted with two dangers. The first is the drive to establish our version of Christianity as the only normative version and force conformity on all others. The second is to decide that all are equally valid and authentic so long as they are kept in isolation. Both ways are a denial of the way of Christ.

The way of Living Reconciliation is the difficult process of being 'built together spiritually' across differences that were unimaginable to Paul as he considered the ends of the earth. We require patience to stick with people who are living in a manner that at times is deeply shocking to us. We need the courage to speak the truth in love and to risk being misunderstood or even rejected. (p.92)

Each chapter also ends with a prayer, questions for discussion and a link to further resources available on the Living Reconciliation website.

Evaluating the book

What is helpful in the book.

There is much in this book that provides a useful reminder of things that all Christians need to bear in mind. It is useful to be reminded that:

- The Church is meant to be a body that brings together people from different races, cultures and sexes and acknowledges that they all have equal value before God.
- Conflict is something that is an inevitable part of the life of the Church and we have to recognise this fact and learn to handle conflict in a constructive rather than a destructive manner.
- Building a united Church across cultural differences means learning to accept, and work with, the fact that people will see things differently and behave differently from ourselves in a whole variety of different ways.
- Working to overcome division and to build unity will necessitate taking risks and being willing to move out of our 'comfort zones.'
- People spending time with each other is a vital part of overcoming differences, as is the giving and receiving of hospitality.
- Christians need to be willing challenge power structures that exclude or disenfranchise people.
- Processes of decision making should include as many people as possible on the basis of the principle that that which effects all should be decided by all.
- We need to be willing to acknowledge that we do not possess the whole truth and be open to new insights and new ideas.

What is problematic about the book.

The existence of these helpful aspects of the book needs to be acknowledged. However, the book as a whole is deeply problematic. This is because its approach to reconciliation fails to reflect the teaching contained in the key New Testament passages that use the Greek term *katallasso* and its cognates, translated into English by the terms 'reconcile' and 'reconciliation.'

These passages are as follows:

Romans 5:8-11

But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on

behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Ephesians 2:11-16

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called the un-circumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands - remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.

Colossians 1:19-23

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Living Reconciliation refers to 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 and Colossians 1:19-20 on pages 6 and 9, but it does not draw upon what these passages teach or refer at all to the two passages from Romans and Ephesians. This causes a serious problem because its failure to root its argument in these four passages means that *Living Reconciliation* offers an inadequate explanation of what lies at the heart of the Christian understanding of reconciliation.

If we look at the four passages we find that they contain the following elements

Reconciliation is an act of God.

2 Corinthians 5: 18-19 tells us that 'All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.' Likewise Colossians 1:19-20 tells us that 'in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things.'

In these verses we learn that reconciliation is a unilateral act of God and it is a completed act of God. It is something that God has done that is prior to any response to His action.

Reconciliation is cosmic in scope.

Colossians 1:20 tells us that the 'all things' that God has reconciled to himself includes all things 'whether on heaven or on earth.' In other words, there has been a complete reconciliation of the whole of creation. Angelic spirits, human beings and all the rest of the non-human creation have all been reconciled. We find similar teaching in Ephesians 1:9-10 where St. Paul declares 'For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.'

Reconciliation was achieved through Christ

The fact that reconciliation was achieved through Christ is made clear in all four passages.

Romans 5:11 states 'we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.' 2 Corinthians 5:18 and 19 declare that it was 'through Christ' that God reconciled us to himself and 'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself.' Ephesians 2:13-14 tells us that 'in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility.' Finally, Colossians 1:19 teaches us that it was in Christ that 'all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things.'

Reconciliation was needed because we were at enmity with God.

The reason that the human part of God's creation needs reconciliation is that our sins cut us off from God and made us His 'enemies' and therefore people without God and without hope.

Romans 5: 8 and 10 tell us that 'while we were yet sinners Christ died for us' and that 'while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.' Ephesians 2:12 declares that the Gentile Ephesians were people 'having no hope and without God in the world' and Colossians 1: 21 says that prior to their reconciliation that Colossians were 'estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds.'

Reconciliation involved an act of re-creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us 'if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come' and likewise Ephesians 2:15 states that Christ has created a 'new man.'

The sinfulness of humanity was so deeply ingrained that the only thing that God could do was an act of re-creation. Just as God created humanity in the first place so also in Christ, the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45-49), humanity is re-created, free from sin and death, and is thereby reconciled to God.

If we ask how this happened, the answer that is given to us in the passages we have been looking at is that it was through the death of Christ. Romans 5: 8 and 10 tell us that 'Christ died for us' and that 'we are now justified by his blood.' Ephesians 2:13 and 16 declare that we have been brought near to God by the 'blood of Christ' and that we were reconciled to God 'through the cross.' Colossians 1:19 likewise states that in Christ God was 'making peace by the blood of his cross.'

If we enquire further and ask how the death of Christ achieved our re-creation and reconciliation the answer we are given in the wider New Testament is that it is because the death of Christ was the first part of a two part act of salvation involving both Christ's death and resurrection.

Romans 4:25 tells us that Christ was 'put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification.' Romans 6:6-11 declares that 'our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.' 2 Corinthians 5:15 teaches that Christ 'died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.' Peter 2:24 states 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.'

The meaning of these verses is well expressed by John Calvin and Karl Barth. Calvin declares in his commentary on Romans:

...our old man is destroyed by the death of Christ, so that His resurrection may restore our righteousness, and make us new creatures. And since Christ has been given to us for life, why should we die with Him, if not to rise to a better life? Christ, therefore, puts to death what is mortal in us in order that He may truly restore us to life.

Barth likewise explains in his exposition of the *Heidelberg Catechism*:

In the death of Jesus Christ, God took man's place in order to suffer in his place the destruction of sinful man and, at the same time, to realise the existence of the new obedient man. The way is therefore open to restore the lost right of man, his right to live as the creature of God. The grace of God against which man sins triumphs in Jesus Christ.

Reconciliation therefore means being destroyed and brought back to life in Christ so that we can be people who are no longer at enmity with God. Furthermore, those who have been reconciled to God in this way have a new identity. Who they are is now determined by the fact that they are united with Christ in his death and resurrection. We can see this in Galatians 2:20 where St. Paul declares 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me' and in Colossians 3:1-3 where he tells the Colossians 'If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.'

This new identity possessed by those who are reconciled is their primary identity. That is why St. Paul can say in Galatians 3:28 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' He is not saying that people are no longer in fact Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. What he is saying is that these differences between them are transcended by their common unity with Christ. Similarly in Ephesians the unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians on the basis of the reconciling work of Christ means that they can no longer be divided by the issue of observance or non-observance of the Jewish law. It no longer functions as an identity marker of the people of God (that is what is meant when Ephesians 2:15 talks about the law being 'abolished' by Christ).

Reconciliation involves our acceptance of the gospel message

If reconciliation is a unilateral act of God and was achieved through the death and resurrection of Christ it follows that what human beings have to do is to accept what God has done for them. The Church's calling is to proclaim what Christ has done so that people may accept it. As St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:19-20: in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.'

James Denney helpfully expounds the meaning of these verses in his commentary on 2 Corinthians. He writes that in them St. Paul:

...presents the appeal of the Gospel in its simplest form: wherever he stands before men on Christ's behalf his prayer is 'Be ye reconciled unto God.' And once more we must insist on the apostolic import of these words. It is the misleading *nuance* of 'reconcile' in English that makes so many take them as if they meant, 'Lay aside your enmity to God; cease to regard Him with distrust, hatred and fear;' in other words 'Show yourself His friends.' In St Paul's lips they cannot mean anything but, 'Accept *His* offered friendship; enter into that peace

which He has made for the world through the death of His son; believe that He has at infinite cost put away all that on His part stood between you and peace; *receive* the reconciliation.

It is important to note that, according to the New Testament, while receiving reconciliation does involve belief in the message that reconciliation has taken place it does not simply involve intellectual assent.

First of all, it also involves baptism. This is because, as we have seen, reconciliation involves being united with the dying and rising of Christ and baptism is the sacramental means by which this happens. St Paul tells us this in Romans 6:4 where we read 'We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life' and also in Colossians 2:12 where we are told 'and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.'

Secondly, it involves a continuing commitment. In the words of Colossians 1:23, being reconciled means 'that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard.'

Thirdly, it involves a transformation of behavior. We can see this in Colossians 3:5-10 where the corollary of the fact that the Colossians have been given a new life in Christ is that they have to live out this new life in the way they behave:

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

If we compare the account of reconciliation given in *Living Reconciliation* with this New Testament account of what reconciliation involves we find that it is sadly lacking.

Living Reconciliation focusses its account of reconciliation on reconciliation between groups and individuals in the Church and in the wider world who are for some reason in conflict with each other. The model it offers for reconciliation is children fighting in a school playground:

Imagine a school playground fight. When the playground erupts to the shout of 'Fight! Fight!' the teachers' primary goal is to break up the spat, disperse the crowd and find out who started it. They assert their authority to separate the children and then seek to gain a common account of the dispute. They then issue punishments to those who were the ring leaders. They may also use rewards to ensure the children behave well in the future. Power is deferred to the adult in authority and the immediate problem is solved. However, if the teacher does not address the reason for the fight, lingering tensions and divisions remain. Reconciliation occurs when the children say sorry and forgive one another and the whole group of children return to playing with one another. The immediate conflict might be resolved by punishment, but it is not an end in itself. Reconciliation here is marked by the children laughing together, not by the cold administration of justice. Conflict transformation happens when the teacher acts as a facilitator of reconciliation rather than an arbiter of justice.

The pattern of fight, forced reconciliation, judgement and reconciliation is played out in every community across the world. Talking of children fighting in the playground might sound very simplistic in the light of the conflicts blighting our world today, but it highlights the issues at the heart of conflict resolution and transformation. (pp.7-8)

Building on this picture of children who have been engaged in fighting and who need to be reconciled with each other and not just kept apart, *Living Reconciliation* goes on to say that reconciliation occurs when we remove the barriers that separate us from one another:

In the world in which we live, societies construct barriers that separate us from one another. We live behind walls of language, culture, economics, personality, age and gender. The destruction of these barriers enables us to form friendships and to live as a community of diversity while retaining our distinct identities in the body of Christ. This means reconciliation does not end: it is a journey of exploration and learning, and requires listening and speaking, it requires us to trust one another and God.

But we keep on erecting barriers. We sometimes do so for the best of motives. Just like the teacher separating children on a playground, barriers are erected to contain people and ensure they do not fight one another. Peace-keeping can be the act of erecting barriers, so that a vulnerable group feels safe. Mediation may be the way to negotiate across these barriers. Reconciliation happens when the barriers are removed and people can speak to one another, encounter difference and live with conflict. It requires repentance and forgiveness on a life long journey in community. (pp.10-11)

For *Living Reconciliation*, therefore, reconciliation is about what human beings do to handle difference and conflict in a constructive way. From a New Testament perspective there are multiple problems with this account of reconciliation.

First, it is too limited in its scope. *Living Reconciliation* talks about learning to handle difference and conflict between human beings. The New Testament talks about cosmic reconciliation, about the creation of the 'new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells' (2 Peter 3:13).

Secondly, it is insufficiently clear about the fact that before we can be reconciled to each other we need to be reconciled to God. In the New Testament the reconciliation within God's people of those who have been previously divided from each other is dependent on their first having been reconciled to God. In *Living Reconciliation* there are two short references to the barrier between God and human beings being broken down (pages 9 and 10), but it does not explain the nature of this barrier, why it needed to be removed and why its removal is the basis for reconciliation between human beings.

Thirdly, it fails to properly acknowledge that reconciliation is an act of God. In a highly problematic passage on pages 9 and 10 *Living Reconciliation* declares:

For Paul, reconciliation is breaking the barriers that separate us from God and from one another, and living in community once those barriers are removed. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul celebrates Jesus reconciling humanity to God not through exploiting his divinity but through humility and death...

The first sentence reads as if it was us we who break down the barriers between us and God and the second talks about Jesus reconciling us *to God* whereas St. Paul talk about God in Christ *reconciling us to himself* (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Furthermore, it is precisely through 'exploiting his divinity' in the sense of making use of it that Christ achieved our reconciliation. It was because he was God incarnate that Jesus' death and resurrection were an act of re-creation that reconciled us to God.

Fourthly, *Living Reconciliation* is silent about the teaching of the New Testament that reconciliation involves dying and rising with Christ through faith and baptism and thereby receiving a new identity which needs to be expressed in the way we live our lives. This is the heart of St. Paul's teaching about reconciliation and *Living Reconciliation* totally ignores it.

Fifthly, *Living Reconciliation* does not reflect the fact that according to St Paul the 'message of reconciliation' (2 Corinthians 5:19) that the Church is called on to proclaim is not primarily 'be reconciled to each other,' but 'be reconciled to God' (2 Corinthians 5:20).

This means that the Church's primary ministry of reconciliation is not conflict resolution or helping people to live with difference, which is the message that comes across in *Living Reconciliation*, but evangelism. It is first and foremost through bearing witness to Christ (Acts 1:4) and being obedient to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) that the Church is called to make the reconciliation achieved by Christ effective in the lives of men and women today. Teaching people about conflict resolution and living with difference does not enable people to receive a new identity free from sin and death. Proclaiming the gospel so that people believe and are baptized does.

The Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission reflect the priority of evangelism. The five marks are:

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

To respond to human need by loving service

To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The last three marks do not stand alone. They are the outworking of the first two. They are ways of proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom, or in other words the reconciliation wrought by Christ, and they are ways in which we live out our baptism.

Seeing things in this way also means recognising that the Church's vision for the future of particular nations or the world as whole cannot be confined to seeking to create diverse and peaceful societies in which conflicts between people of different faiths, different ethnicities, or different classes, are resolved. These things are good in themselves, but they don't go far enough. The Christian vision has to be for a vision for the existence of societies which are united by a common faith in Jesus Christ and a common commitment to live in obedience to Him.

Sixthly, unlike in *Living Reconciliation*, the central emphasis in the New Testament is not about living with difference. It is about how difference has been overcome. To quote Galatians 3:28 once more, the emphasis of the New Testament is on the fact that the differences between Jews and Greeks, slaves and those who are free and men and women has been transcended by the fact that they are 'all one in Christ Jesus.' As has been noted already, this does not mean that these differences cease to exist. Jews stay Jews. Greeks stay Greeks, slaves are still slaves, free people are still free people. Men are still men and women are still women. However, these secondary identities are to be lived out in a way that reflects the fact that people's primary identity is their new identity in Jesus Christ.

Thus Jews and Greeks are no longer to be at enmity with each other, but rather welcome each other (Romans 14:7-12) and in the 'household tables' in the Epistles husbands and wives, slaves and masters and parents and children are called to live out their roles in life in a way that properly reflects their Christian identity (Ephesians 5:21-6:9, Colossians 3:18:4-1, 1 Peter 2:18-3:7).

This means that the New Testament's emphasis is not on people learning to live with what divides them, but on learning to live out what unites them. We see this, for example in Ephesians 4:1-16, the passage referred to in chapter 5 of *Living Reconciliation*, where it is stressed that even the diversities of forms of ministry that exist in the Church are gifts given by the risen Christ for the purpose of building up the unity of the body of Christ:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.' (In saying, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things). And 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, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.

As Tom Wright says in his commentary on Ephesians, it follows that 'unless we are working to maintain, defend and develop the unity we already enjoy, and to overcome, demolish and put behind us the disunity we still find ourselves in, we can scarcely claim to be following Paul's teaching.' We cannot do this, however, simply by being willing to accept and live with a diversity of belief and practice, which is the approach that *Living Reconciliation* seeks to derive from Ephesians 4.

It is true that St Paul teaches that Christians need to be willing to accept a diversity of opinion and behaviour over secondary matters. Thus in Romans 14:1- 15:6, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:25-33 he argues that Christians should accept differences of belief and practice with regard to the question of what food to consume or whether to observe the Jewish Sabbath, rather than cause someone to sin by acting against their conscience. However, it needs to be noted that his teaching in these passages is based on his view of reconciliation.

That is to say, it was because he believed that the reconciliation achieved by Christ means that observance of the Jewish law is no longer determinative for marking out the people of God that he thought it was possible to live with diversity over food laws and the observance of the Sabbath. On the other hand, his belief in the reconciliation achieved by Christ also meant that he was not willing to accept forms of teaching and behavior that were incompatible with it.

That is why he is so angry about the situation in Galatia in Galatians 1:6-9:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

The issue in Galatians was that there were people coming into the churches that St. Paul had founded and teaching that Gentiles had to become law observant Jews in order to be saved. For St. Paul this teaching undermined the gospel message of the reconciling work of Christ because 'if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose' (Galatians 2:21). Faced with this sort of false teaching he was clear that living with difference was not an option. This kind of teaching had no place in the Church of God, even if St. Paul himself, or an angel from heaven, were to teach it. The false teachers and their teaching needed to be rejected by the Christians in Galatia.

St Paul is equally clear that the Christians in Ephesus must avoid both ungodly forms of behavior incompatible with their reconciliation by Christ and the people who advocate such behavior. He writes in Ephesians 5:3-10:

But fornication and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them, for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

St. Paul's vision for the churches for which he was responsible was that they would be united bodies in which the kind of false teaching and ungodly practice opposed in Galatians and Ephesians would have no place. That is why he writes in Ephesians 4:14 about his desire that the Ephesians would no longer be 'tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.'

He therefore opposed those who advocated such teaching and practice and called upon those to whom he was writing to do the same. This was not because he was, in the words of *Living Reconciliation*, seeking to establish his version of Christianity as the only normative version and force conformity on all others. It was because he was concerned that his churches should remain faithful to the only true version of Christianity, the message of reconciliation entrusted by Christ to the Apostles, of whom he was one.

This brings us to the seventh and final problem with *Living Reconciliation* which is that unlike the New Testament it appears to advocate a Church without any clear limits in relation to either faith or practice. Its key idea of learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity seems to mean being willing to tolerate whatever beliefs and practices are to be found among other churches and individuals within the Anglican Communion, even if we personally don't agree with them.

There are two problems with this proposal

a. It means effectively writing a blank cheque for the acceptance of any and every possible form of deviation from New Testament Christianity. What about people who want to undermine the New Testament teaching about reconciliation by denying that Jesus was and is truly God, or that he was and is truly human, or that he died for our sins, or that he rose from the dead, or that he is the only way to God? Should we be willing to accept such denials as part of learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity? If not, why not? *Living Reconciliation* gives us no answer except to say that we must always be willing to continue on a journey with those we believe 'to be completely wrong on some issue of significance' (p.32).

b. In terms of the current situation within the Anglican Communion it means tolerating the liberal theology that has become pervasive in large parts of The Episcopal Church and through its influence in other parts of the Communion as well and also tolerating the practice of same-sexual relationships. Such toleration is implicit in the stories that *Living Reconciliation* tells about Episcopal Church dioceses taking part in the Continuing Indaba process with dioceses from other part of the Anglican Communion and the acceptance of the sexuality of gay men as part of the same process.

The problem is that both the liberal theology in The Episcopal Church and the practice of same-sex sexual relationships are contrary to what the New Testament teaches about reconciliation.

As Philip Turner explains in his perceptive essay 'ECUSA'S God and the Idols of Liberal Protestantism,' what he calls the 'working theology' of The Episcopal Church begins with the belief that the incarnation:

...is to be understood (in an almost exhaustive sense) as a manifestation of divine love. From this starting point, several conclusions are drawn. The first is that God is love pure and simple. Thus, one is to see in Christ's death no judgment upon the human condition. Rather, one is to see an affirmation of creation and the persons we are. The great news of the Christian Gospel is this. The life and death of Jesus reveal the fact that God accepts and affirms us. From this revelation, we can draw a further conclusion. God wants us to love one another, and such love requires of us both acceptance and affirmation of the other. From this point we can derive yet another. Accepting love requires a form of justice that is inclusive of all people, particularly those who in some way have been marginalized by oppressive social practice. The mission of the church is, therefore, to see that those who have been rejected are included, and that justice as inclusion defines public policy. The result is a practical equivalence between the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and this form of social justice. The statements "It's a matter of the Gospel" and "It's a justice issue" stand on all fours one with another.

The difficulty with this theology is that it fails to do justice to the New Testament's teaching that in our fallen state we are not affirmed by God at all, but are rather God's 'enemies.' That is why reconciliation was required.

Furthermore, according to the New Testament Christ's death was a judgement on the human condition. It was a declaration that so deep is our corruption that nothing less than re-creation through death and resurrection was required to reconcile us to God. This in turn means that while we must love and accept all people this does not mean that we can affirm those aspects of their behaviour which reflect the old nature that was condemned in Christ's death rather than the new nature resulting from his resurrection.

For similar reasons we cannot affirm as legitimate public policy the affirmation of forms of conduct that represent unreconciled rather than reconciled human nature. True justice, as St Augustine saw, is about helping people to live in accordance with God's will.

All this means that we should not accept this form of theology as a part of Anglican diversity.

The acceptance of same-sex sexual relationships (as opposed to people with same-sexual attraction) is at odds with the New Testament message of reconciliation because for Christians such relationships are a manifestation of what we were rather than what we are. St. Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11:

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Like the other forms of sin mentioned in these verses, same-sexual activity is contrary to the washing away of sin, the sanctification and the justification that are the fruit of the reconciling work of Christ. Engaging in such activity, just like engaging in heterosexual adultery, is thus a practical denial of reconciliation, which is why it is a barrier to inheriting the kingdom of God.

It follows that we cannot say that such activity should be accepted as part of Anglican diversity.

The reason that *Living Reconciliation* nevertheless holds that the Anglican diversity needs to include both the liberal theology prevalent in the Episcopal Church and same-sex sexual activity is because of a belief that the alternative to such inclusion would be to exclude people from the Church and that such exclusion is wrong in all circumstances. This point is made by Archbishop Justin in his foreword:

Through all our differences we belong to one another: not through our choice, but God's. Those who follow Christ are relatives – we are related through our Shepherd. You may choose your friends, but you are stuck with your relatives.

So we do not have the option, if we love one another in the way that Jesus instructs us, simply to ditch those with whom we disagree. You do not chuck out members of the family: you love them and seek their well-being, even when you argue. (p.xiii)

The Bible (see Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 1 Timothy 1:19-20) and the Christian tradition would both disagree with the Archbishop's argument. They would hold that it is legitimate to exercise the disciplinary power (the 'power of the keys') granted by Christ to his Church (Matthew 16:19, 18:18, John 20:23) by excluding people from the Christian community.

The theological rationale for the exercise of discipline by the Church in New Testament times and subsequently is helpfully explained by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship*. In his chapter on the Church as the community on the saints Bonhoeffer writes that the Church:

...is a community of men and women who have genuinely encountered the grace of God, and who walk worthily of the gospel by not casting that grace recklessly away.

This means, he argues, that:

...the preaching of forgiveness must always go hand-in-hand with the preaching of repentance, the preaching of the gospel with the preaching of the law. Nor can the forgiveness of sin be unconditional – sometimes sin must be retained. It is the will of the Lord himself that the gospel should not be given to dogs. He too held that the only way to

safeguard the gospel was by preaching repentance. If the Church refuses to face the stern reality of sin, it will gain no credence when it talks of forgiveness. Such a Church sins against its sacred trust and walks unworthily of the gospel. It is an unholy Church, squandering the precious treasure of the Lord's forgiveness. Nor is it enough simply to deplore in general terms that the sinfulness of man infects even his good works. It is necessary to point out concrete sins, and to punish and condemn them. This is the proper use of the power of the keys (Matthew 16:19, 18:18, John 20:23), which the Lord bequeathed to his Church. Even the Reformers laid great emphasis on this power. It is essential for the Church to exercise it, for the sake of holiness, for the sake of the sinner and for its own sake. If the Church is to walk worthily of the gospel, part of its duty will be to maintain ecclesiastical discipline. Sanctification means driving out the world from the Church as well as separating the Church from the world.

The purpose of the exercise of discipline, he says:

...is not to establish a community of the perfect, but a community of men who really live under the forgiving mercy of God. Discipline in a congregation is a servant of the precious grace of God. If a member of the Church falls into sin, he must be admonished and punished, lest he forfeit his own salvation and the gospel be discredited.

In his chapter on 'The visible community' Bonhoeffer also makes clear that such discipline must extend not only to sinful behaviour, but also to heretical teaching:

It is not always easy to see where a legitimate school of thought ends and heresy begins. That is why a doctrine may be tolerated in one Church and proscribed as heresy in another (Revelation 2:6, 15ff). But once a heresy has become an open scandal it must of necessity be proscribed. The heretical teacher must be excommunicated and all personal intercourse with him avoided (Galatians 1:8, 1 Corinthians 16:22, Titus 3:10, 2 John 10ff). The word of pure proclamation must visibly bind and loose. The space which the Church claims for its proclamation and order is thus made clear as an ordinance of divine appointment.

The common objection to such discipline is that it is unloving. However, as Stanley Hauerwas observes in his commentary on Matthew, paradoxical though it may seem at first sight:

...excommunication is a form of love. Excommunication is not to throw someone out of the church, but rather to help them to see that they have become stumbling block and are, therefore, already out of the church. Excommunication is a call to come home by undergoing the appropriate penance.

A Church that truly loves will thus be a Church that practices discipline, both for the sake of those who are disciplined and for the sake of the wider Christian community. Of course such discipline can be, and has been, misused, but as the Latin tag has it '*abusus non tollit usum*' (abuse is not an argument against proper use).

Conclusion

In summary therefore, although *Living Reconciliation* provides us with a useful reminder of a number of things that all Christians need to bear in mind, it does not provide us with a useful blueprint for the future of the Anglican Communion. This is because its account of what reconciliation involves does not do justice to what the New Testament teaches about reconciliation and because its emphasis on living with difference and celebrating diversity fails to do justice to the need to reject

forms of theology and practice that are contrary to the message of reconciliation given to the Apostles. A blanket affirmation of difference and diversity simply will not do.

A clear doctrinal framework, such as that provided by GAFCON's Jerusalem Statement and Declaration, or the first part of the Anglican Communion Covenant, plus an agreed way of handling disputes and exercising discipline when required, would provide a better model for the Communion to follow.

M B Davie 7.2.15