
A table of contents for *Anvil* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_anvil_01.php

ANDY GRIFFITHS

'Setting forth the name of Jesu unto other': An Anglican Theology of Evangelism?

Andy Griffiths examines some of the very different understandings of evangelism present in the Anglican communion today. He considers different possible ways of constructing an Anglican theology of evangelism: by reference to current opinion; past Anglican writers; the Prayer Book and Articles. He concludes that a spirit of 'generous orthodoxy' should allow for different understandings. Yet there should also be limits set, to avoid approaches which would compromise the imperative of bringing unbelievers to faith in Christ.

'We must preach the word of God truly and purely, and set forth the name of Jesu unto other.'[1]

This is not an article about how to evangelize. It does not even set out to create a theological approach to evangelism. Rather, it seeks to examine a contemporary Anglican controversy about theologies of evangelism. We will see that this argument, like many others, has at its heart the issue of whether almost unlimited diversity is coherent or indeed healthy in contemporary Anglicanism. I go on to outline four ways in which we might proceed to answer the question of what an 'Anglican theology of evangelism' might look like. I will suggest that we might proceed by canvassing present opinion, by gathering testimonies from leading Anglicans through the ages, by returning to the foundation documents, or by a more complex process that attempts to be true to Scripture and creeds, formularies and context. Advocating the last of these methods, I will return to the contemporary controversy with which I started and attempt to draw some lessons.

I acknowledge of course that the terms 'Anglican' and 'evangelism' are wholly anachronistic to many of the periods to which I will be referring! In common with several recent writers I take Abraham's definition of evangelism: 'a polymorphous activity... governed by the aim of initiating people into the Kingdom of God.'[2] In adopting this definition without argumentation I am avoiding a considerable area of controversy; I plead a lack of space. But the choice of definition is also forced

1 Henry VIII, 'The Institution of a Christian Man' (commonly known as The King's Book), in Henry Jenkyns, ed., *The Remains of Thomas Cranmer*, Vol.II, The University Press, Oxford 1833, p 52. First published 1538.

on me by the sheer fact that, for most of what I project back as the life of Anglicanism, most other definitions of evangelism would in any case have been meaningless. If evangelism is a polymorphous activity, it includes at the very least bringing people into full membership of the church and allegiance to Christ; which Anglicans of all ages and theologies of evangelism have always sought to do. Evangelism would thus appear to be a subset of mission; unfortunately there is not space in this article to examine the subject of mission in more detail.

In a 1993 article, Robert Harrison dealt with the issue of Anglican evangelism in the context of a conflict in the contemporary Episcopal Church in the United States. He began by contrasting the 'liberal sacramental' currents represented by the office of the Presiding Bishop of ECUSA with those identified with the Department of Evangelism, which he describes as 'classically conservative.'[3] While the presiding Bishop's office was speaking about evangelism as 'the encounter between the church member and the nonchurch [*sic*] person in which some fresh insight is discovered... The discovery is as likely to occur for the church person as the nonchurch person...', the Department of Evangelism was speaking of 'proclaiming' the necessity of 'a personal commitment to Jesus Christ.'[4] For Harrison, appeals to 'the usual Episcopal strategy of diversity' will not do; the whole concept of Episcopal involvement in the Decade of Evangelism is incoherent while the question of which of these theologies is the right one is unresolved.[5]

However, in a response, Wayne Schwab (Bishop Browning's evangelism officer) attempted to answer the charge of incoherence in three ways. First, he deals with various errata and quotations taken out of context in Harrison's article. Second, he suggests that much in the two approaches is not incompatible. And thirdly, he surmises that 'One suspects that the real problem for Harrison might be living with difference.'[6] He concludes that 'It is critically important to welcome the existence of other approaches rather than to insist on the choice of one over the other.'[7] In the UK context, John Saxbee's *Liberal Evangelism* is relevant not because it outlines a theology of evangelism – it does not attempt this – but because it engages in the same second-order argument as Harrison and Schwab, arguing that diversity always has been a feature of Christianity, and is entirely a desirable one. Saxbee cites Bickersteth's book *Four Faces of God*, a study of the Gospels, to underline that this diversity is found in the Tradition.[8]

The question of how much diversity is legitimate within contemporary Anglicanism is of course much contested, and in some ways the argument between Harrison and Schwab can be seen as an adaptation of that between, for example, Stephen Sykes and the 1976 Doctrine Commission.[9]

---

2 William Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1989, p 104.
3 C. Robert Harrison, 'Competing Views of Evangelism in the Episcopal Church', *Anglican Theological Review* 75 (1993), pp 218-236.
4 Harrison, 'Competing Views', pp 230, 233.
5 Harrison, 'Competing Views', pp 235f.
6 Wayne Schwab, 'Some light on those competing views of evangelism in the Episcopal Church', *Anglican Theological Review* 75 (1993), p 548.
7 Schwab, 'Some light', p 554.
8 John Saxbee, *Liberal Evangelism*, SPCK, London 1993, p 107.
9 See S.W. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism*, Mowbrays, Oxford 1978.

Constructing a Theology of Evangelism (1): by current opinion.

It is perhaps surprising that only two thoroughgoing and self-consciously Anglican 'theologies of evangelism' have been contributed in recent years. The first is best exemplified by an article by Graham Tomlin, who begins his section 'The Theology of Evangelism' with the rule of God. It takes only a few lines for him to turn to the *missio dei*: 'The theological heart of evangelism is therefore Christology'. Not only will a high Christology lead inescapably to evangelism, but anyone writing a theology in which evangelism does not figure will need to downplay the divine nature of Christ – he cites Keith Ward and John Hick as consciously doing exactly this.[10] A revisionist stance, claims Tomlin, denies the *missio dei*, and we should not be surprised if those who believe God does not reach out to the world fail themselves to be wholeheartedly evangelistic. He seeks to derive evangelism from 'the inner logic of the movement of God in love and judgement towards the world in Christ.'[11] Just as Christology is to be at the heart of theology, evangelism is to be at the heart of the 'Anglican churches'.

Articles by Michael Green and Fitzsimmons Alison strike a remarkably similar note to this.[12] It is also worth noting that the highly successful *Alpha* course explicitly cites Tomlin's views (and quotes him at length) as part of its theological basis.[13] George Carey begins similarly with the *missio dei:* 'My God is an evangelizing, loving God who reaches out into his creation.' But for Carey it is the sending of the Spirit that is our model and warrant for engaging in God's mission – he even provides a diagram in which we are placed between the Holy Spirit and human culture in God's move towards the world.[14]

The other 'heavyweight' contribution to the argument comes from Stephen Sykes, in whose work we see another theology which begins with the *missio dei.* 'God loved the world so much', and though 'the world' is in some ways an ambivalent term, he continues to love it.[15] But Sykes' next move is not Tomlin's (in Christ, God reaches out to the world, so Christians must do the same). Rather, he looks at God's purposes and expresses them as 'eliciting praise' from all creation. Following George Herbert, he suggests that Christians in general, and Anglicans in their particular context, may praise God on behalf of the rest of creation as 'Secretary' of God's praise.[16] He suggests that the Book of Common Prayer bears witness to this understanding of the church's vocation.[17] 'A praising community is an agent of evangelism,' and 'will want to share with others from the motive of

10 Graham Tomlin, 'Evangelicalism and Evangelism,' in R.T. France and A.E. McGrath, eds, *Evangelical Anglicans*, SPCK, London 1993, p 88.

11 Graham Tomlin, 'Evangelicalism and Evangelism,' pp 89f.

12 Michael Green, 'The Scope of the Cosmic Christ' in Timothy Bradshaw, ed., *Grace and Truth in the Secular Age*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998), pp 3-14; Fitzsimmons Allison, 'Evangelism: The Transformation of Trivialisation' in the same collection, pp 119-127.

13 Nicky Gumbel, *Telling Others*, Kingsway, Eastbourne 1994.

14 George Carey, 'Mission and Evangelism' in Laura McGeary and James Rosenthal, eds, *A Transforming Vision*, Church House Publishing, London 1993, pp 95f.

15 Stephen Sykes, 'An Anglican Theology of Evangelism', *Theology* XCIV (1991), pp 405f.

16 Sykes, 'Theology of Evangelism', pp 407f.

17 Sykes, 'Theology of Evangelism', pp 408f.

gratitude,' praising God with lives as well as lips and wanting as many as possible to praise God too.[18] This is a point of view echoed by Robin Gill: 'Why do I care about church growth? The answer is surprisingly simple. If worship is the primary object of the church, then it should be a matter of concern to Christians that fewer and fewer people worship.'[19] The doxological basis of a theology of evangelism is also the main emphasis of an article by John Stott written at about the same time as Sykes'.[20]

It seems to me that these two accounts of evangelism may not only be compatible, but need each other to give a satisfying whole. It is surely because of Christ's pre-eminence that God has appointed the Christian Church as Creation's 'Secretary', and because Christ deserves worship that we are 'sent' to call all people to acknowledge him. To continue Saxbee's analogy, these theologies are synoptic. The problem arises when we reflect that these two theologies (as Sykes himself implies) are not in fact representative of most Anglican thought in the contemporary West.[21]

In the UK and US, at least, most non-evangelical Anglicans (and some Evangelicals!) seem to hold to a view which is more ecclesiological than Tomlin and more relativistic than Sykes; it might be called 'slow conversion'.[22] This view does not seem to have been developed in any very systematic way, though glimpses of it appear from time to time above the water-line. Thus for example a booklet by Clive Marsh points to a God 'disclosed in and through the world'[23]. Far from moving from the nature of God to a high Christology, he points out that 'unreserved "Christocentrism"' is not as straightforward a matter as 'ardent charismatic evangelicals' tend to suggest.[24] God is 'Christlike', but it is hard to know what exactly 'Christlike' means. What is clear is that God is in God's very being Trinity, and hence relational; as such God calls forth a relationality [*sic*] among the sisters and brothers who are his children.[25] The two bases of Marsh's theology – the immanence and relationality of God – lead to an understanding of the work of evangelism as an interpretative one: 'the disclosure and interpretation of God's work in the world' in constructive dialogue.[26] Such views are echoed in the US by Edmund Browning, ECUSA Presiding Bishop in the early 1990s, whose comment on 'Anglican evangelism' has become famous: '[Episcopalians] do not take Christ to others. Rather, we listen and hear where Jesus Christ is already at work in them.'[27]

Very different from Marsh, and I suspect more typical, are such comments as Robert Runcie's characterization of evangelism 'in the mould of pastoral care', a

18 Sykes, 'Theology of Evangelism', pp 411-414.
19 Robin Gill, *A Vision for Growth*, SPCK, London 1994, p 15.
20 John Stott, 'Evangelism through the Local Church', in Chris Wright and Chris Sugden, eds, *One Gospel Many Clothes*, Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion, Oxford 1990, pp 13-28.
21 Sykes, 'Theology of Evangelism', pp 410f.
22 Sykes, 'Theology of Evangelism', p 410.
23 Clive Marsh, *Questioning Evangelism*, Grove Books, Nottingham, 1993, p 9. Marsh, a Methodist, was teaching at the time at the Church Army's Wilson Carlile College. His booklet engages with a number of Anglican theologians, including David Jenkins and John Habgood.
24 Marsh, *Questioning Evangelism*, p 10.
25 Marsh, *Questioning Evangelism*, p 11.
26 Marsh, *Questioning Evangelism*, pp 12f.
27 Harrison, 'Competing Views', p 226.

way of shepherding the flock not preaching to supposed 'outsiders'.[28] This is rather different in tone from Sykes and Tomlin, and may be seen as a moderate form of the more extreme *The Way, the Truth and the Life.* This report states that the Church 'is in the business of producing human beings after the likeness of Christ.'[29] This she begins to do by the sacrament of baptism, whereby children are made Christians; they should then learn, and grow more fully into their vocation as baptized people.[30] In marriage, in sickness, and even in dying, the unspectacular process continues; through the church the creator recreates the baptized into the likeness of his Son. 'Evangelism' finds its place within this gentle framework: it is not to aim at 'church growth' but be grounded in 'the interior life' of the congregation of the baptized.[31] An appeal to individuals to have some sort of 'experience' leading to a 'personal relationship with Jesus' is highly suspect; indeed 'individualistic' evangelism is 'the spirit of antichrist condemned long ago by St. John.'[32]

A procedure that sought to define 'the Anglican theology of evangelism' by canvassing all contemporary opinions is also open to serious procedural objections. Anglicanism has not historically come to its decisions by democratic means, so that it is at least logically intelligible for Tomlin to argue that though the majority of Anglicans disagree with it, his view is the authentically Anglican one.[33] Even if it were somehow to be decided that Anglicanism will from now on take its decisions democratically, intractable procedural questions would remain: is each Province to take its own view? If not, is the whole Communion to vote via Lambeth Conferences on issues of doctrine? (Presumably this would give rise to a view of evangelism more like Tomlin's and less like Runcie's). In this event, who is to determine whether the Bishops do in fact faithfully represent the views of their flock? Who in fact constitutes the flock? Clearly our quest for a theology will have to take us on another route.

Constructing a Theology of Evangelism (2): By the testimony of past Anglicans

As long ago as 1840 we see an attempt to reconcile various Anglican understandings of regeneration Faber's irenic *Primitive Doctrine.* The procedure is simple: Faber simply spends page after page quoting first the Fathers, and then great Anglican figures of the past on the subject in question. The inference appears to be that if Ussher, Andrewes, Traherne and Butler all had the same view, this is *ipso facto* 'the Anglican view'.[34] The procedure of the judges in the Gorham and Denison cases was somewhat similar, though there the issue was not whether a

28 Quoted by Philip King, *Making Christ Known,* Church House Publishing, London, 1992, p 5.

29 The Prayer Book Societies, *The Way, the Truth and the Life,* St Peter Publications, Charlottetown, Canada 1998, p 22. This a report by 'The Prayer Book Societies of the Anglican Communion' prepared 'for the Bishops of the Anglican Communion of Churches' in 1998. No author is named.

30 *The Way, the Truth and the Life,* pp 26f.

31 *The Way, the Truth and the Life,* pp 28-30, 98-100.

32 *The Way, the Truth and the Life,* p 103.

33 Tomlin, 'Evangelicalism and Evangelism,' pp 92-94.

34 George Stanley Faber, *The Primitive Doctrine of Regeneration,* R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, London 1840.

certain view was *the* Anglican one, but whether it had been held by respected Anglicans of the past and was hence *a* legitimate Anglican one.[35]

If we proceed in this manner we can easily demonstrate that the dominant model of evangelism (defined as actions aiming at the initiation of others into the Kingdom of God) in the history of Anglicanism is undoubtedly that of 'slow conversion'. The Christian community is entered at baptism, and this is followed by steady growth in holiness within the church. Indeed, in a culture where church attendance is all but compulsory, this is perhaps inevitable. Examples of 'gradually evangelistic' sermons of the seventeenth century are not hard to find. They range from Jeremy Taylor's calls to 'living faith' and 'perfectness'[36] to Thomas Wilson's threat to the baptized that if they do not apply themselves to the Christian life they will show that their baptism did not in fact regenerate them.[37] This 'evangelism' is performed by the clergy – see for example Wilson's recipe for bringing about the final salvation of the elect: 'And yet [the unsanctified] say they believe the Gospel and hope to be saved. This is a strange delusion indeed! Now, to hinder this delusion from taking place, God has appointed an order of men which He has been pleased to call His Ambassadors; whom he has appointed to pronounce forgiveness, to bless the people in His name; to exhort and to rebuke gainsayers; and if they continue obstinate, to reject them.'[38] The clergy (and only the clergy, according to Andrewes) have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, and 'this serves to make them Christian-makers' – both in the sense of baptizers, and of 'forming' the community by preaching and the sacraments.[39] God seems to be minimally invasive, and has in some way chosen to restrict his work to this ministry.

Nor is this 'slow conversion' model merely a 'Broad' or 'High' Church one. Packer shows that for the Puritan preachers of the seventeenth century (unlike some of their spiritual descendants), conversion was part of a long 'pastoral procedure' by which their 'captive audiences' were after a great deal of 'preparation' brought to saving faith.[40] In the eighteenth century it is exactly the argument that God wished to save through a regular preaching ministry to the baptized, rather than through a (partly lay-led) outreach calling for a sudden 'conversion' that led many clergy, even those of evangelical persuasion, to distrust Wesley.[41] It also seems to underlie the Anglo-Catholic doctrine of 'reserve'; 'for the layman, talking of spiritual things is weakening to the spiritual life, it is the dissipation of the soul.'[42] In the

35 See Bernard Palmer, *Reverend Rebels*, DLT, London 1993, pp 35-45.

36 See for example Jeremy Taylor, 'Fides Formata' in Reginald Heber and Charles Page Eden, eds, *The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor, D.D.* Vol. 8, Longman, London 1861, pp 284-302.

37 Thomas Wilson, 'The shame and danger of being Christians without Christ', in *The Works of Thomas Wilson, D.D.* Vol. II, John Henry Parker, Oxford 1847, pp 104-110.

38 Wilson, 'Shame and danger', pp 104f.

39 Lancelot Andrewes, 'Ninth Sermon on the Sending of the Holy Spirit', in *The Works of Lancelot Andrewes*, Vol I (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1854), pp 261f, 278.

40 J. I. Packer, 'Puritan Evangelism' in *Among God's Giants*, Kingsway, Eastbourne 1991, pp 383-407.

41 A. Brown-Lawson, *John Wesley and the Anglican Evangelicals of the Eighteenth Century*, Pentland Press, Durham 1994, pp 66-79, 340-342.

42 Alfred G. Mortimer, *Helps to Meditation* Vol. I, Longmans, Green & Co., London 1896, p 51.

work of the Oxford Movement we see a particular distrust of 'sudden conversion' and lay preaching.[43]

Thus far, then, 'historical Anglicanism' seems to look a little like *The Way, the Truth and the Life*. But our findings need to be amended or challenged in at least four ways. First, the 'initiation into the Kingdom of God' that 'classical Anglican preachers' were looking for was not *always* gradual. Again, we take Lancelot Andrewes as representative. In a 1619 sermon he says that while gradual growth in grace may indeed be the ideal, it is seldom the reality: 'From God then we are never to turn our steps, or our eyes, but with Enoch (as of him it is said) "still to walk with God" all our life long. Then should we never need to hear this "*convertite*". But we are not so happy; we step out of the way, and full many times we serve our own turns... And so without conversion thousands would perish.'[44] This 'conversion' is spoken of in terms that are anything but gentle; after a very lengthy description of the fires of hell, Andrewes says: 'You have seen the terror; shall I open you a door of hope?... See you, hear you of any that perish? Unless you repent, and scape this way, so shall you too, and that is flat. There is no iron, no adamantine, that binds so hard as Christ's *nisi*. If any but Christ had said it, I might have sought same evasion for you; now it is He that telleth, there are but two ways. 1, Repent; 2, perish, choose you whether.'[45]

Second, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at least, there was, in parallel to the 'ministry by clergy only in church only' model I have pointed to above, a rich tradition of 'lay evangelism'. This goes back at least to Henry VIII (though admittedly the realm in which one could 'evangelize' was rather small): 'We must preach the word of God truly and purely, and set forth the name of Jesu unto other, and reprove all false and erroneous doctrine and heresies. For although priests and bishops be specially called and deputed as public ministers of God's word, yet every Christian man is bound particularly to teach his family and such as be in his house, when time and place requireth.'[46]

The tradition gets a voice in the person of William (later Bishop) Beveridge in around 1680. If we have 'unbelieving or careleśs neighbours', we are to go to them and tell them the Good News (the wrath of God, substitutionary atonement and the need for repentance and faith).[47]

A third challenge would be to my selection of texts. I have chosen to present the 'mainline' Anglican view as 'slow conversion' through ordained preachers, but shown that there are persistent streams of thought which look for sudden conversion and legitimize lay preaching. But it might be argued that I could just as easily have quoted Henry VIII and Beveridge as the mainline and seen more 'gradual' and clerical approaches as aberrations. My decision to include discussion

43 See Yngve Brilioth, *The Anglican Revival*, Longmans, Green & Co., London 1933, pp 229, 311f.

44 Lancelot Andrewes, 'Fourth Sermon on Repentance and Fasting', in *Works* Vol I, p 361.

45 Lancelot Andrewes, 'Seventh Sermon on Repentance and Fasting', in *Works* Vol I, pp 427-429. Preached 1623.

46 Henry VIII, 'Institution', p 52.

47 William Beveridge, 'Sermon LXXXII: The Profession of Faith of a Christian ought to be Public', in *Theological Works* Vol. IV, John Henry Parker, Oxford 1844, pp 79-92.

of the Puritans but treat Wesley's opponents as the 'true' Anglicans was unjustified and unjustifiable, as was my characterization of the Oxford Movement as suspicious of sudden conversions because Pusey and Newman held this view, ignoring the evangelistic self-understanding of Dolling (which is much more like Tomlin's view).[48] And if someone were to ask me why I 'take Lancelot Andrewes as representative' and fail to mention Richard Hooker at all, I would be unable to give a sensible reply. Faber seems honestly to have believed that he was 'unbiased' in his selection of texts; postmodernism allows us no such naivety.

Finally, how valid is this whole procedure? It seems very like a democracy of the dead, and might perhaps be legitimate if I were a Roman Catholic collecting the *ex cathedra* statements of past Popes. But in Anglicanism, to quote John Selden (1584-1654), authority lies 'not in any private man's writing... Go to the Common-Prayer-Book, consult not this or that man.'[49]

To the Common-Prayer-Book we therefore turn.

Constructing a Theology of Evangelism (3): By the foundation documents.

It is famously easy to read the Prayer Book and Articles as supporting almost any possible position. This may usually be due merely to human perversity, but in the case of evangelism two views may perhaps be legitimately discerned. On the one hand, there is a stream that sees baptismal regeneration (Article XXVII) and slow growth. Thus the *Publick Baptism of Infants* contains both prayers for a lifetime of 'stedfastness' and confident assertions that 'this child is regenerate'. 'Grant that this child, now to be baptized [in this water] may receive the fulness of thy grace and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children.'[50] 'Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ and to be made like unto him.'

Yet there is also another stream in the documents. Faber is surely right to argue that Articles XXV and XXVII point to a very realistic conditional understanding: in fact, this regeneration and steady growth only occurs for those who 'receive [the sacraments] rightly' – those who receive them wrongly get no such benefit, and need to hear the preaching of the Gospel.[51] To provide a baptism service for 'natives in our plantations' was a brave and profoundly humanizing act; but the service makes it very clear that baptism in itself does not save.[52] In the case of infants also, whatever Cranmer believed about baptismal regeneration, the need for justification by faith (Article XI and *passim*) was clearly paramount; if the wicked are not true partakers in communion (Article XXIX) it is fair to assume that they get no benefit from baptism. And also in the Prayer Book is the service of

48 Palmer, *Reverend Rebels*, pp 175f.

49 Quoted by Alister McGrath, 'Evangelical Anglicanism: A Contradiction in Terms?' in R. T. France and A.E. McGrath, eds, *Evangelical Anglicans*, SPCK, London 1993, p 14. McGrath seems unaware of the irony of a claim that this obscure Caroline Parish Priest has somehow the authority to decide the issue!

50 I will not be giving page numbers for the Book of Common Prayer, due to the multiplicity of editions.

51 Faber, *The Primitive Doctrine of Regeneration*, pp 337-339, 376f.

52 Rowan Williams, 'Sacraments of the New Society' in David Brown and Ann Loades, *Christ: the Sacramental Word*, SPCK, London 1996, p 93.

Commination, which could not make it clearer that there are some in the community (all of whom would of course be baptized) who were on their way to 'utter darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.' *Commination* is of itself an attempt to confront such people with the gospel in its baldest form, and so bring them to repentance.

However, to construct a theology in this way is to fossilize forever the sixteenth century. The context has changed; we simply cannot rely on everyone in our society being 'living members' of our churches. This is why Neill, who defines evangelization as the bringing of the Christian message and presence to those outside the church, comments that in the Reformation context '"Evangelization" has almost no meaning', but nevertheless feels that it must now be at the centre of our concerns.[53] It is hard to withstand Sykes' view that in view of the changed context, 'slow conversion' is likely to be the experience of only a tiny minority;[54] the rest, in Andrewes' words, need to hear '*convertite*'. In other words what in classical Anglicanism was the dominant model (slow conversion from baptism to grave) now needs to be secondary (though even the most evangelistic Anglican still prays for the child to be an 'Enoch' at every infant baptism she attends). Meanwhile, the '*convertite*' model (which, though secondary in classical Anglicanism, was as we saw in Andrewes not normally seen as contradictory to it) needs to move centre stage. But is there a way of doing theology that will be true both to Anglican roots and to contemporary context?

Constructing a Theology of Evangelism (4): Another Way?

If such a way of doing theology exists, it is only now developing. It would need to plot a development that has at least four fixed points, and stretches between them not so much a line as a band of possible theologies. (In so doing, it would of course pick up as a theological 'method' the 'declaration of assent' helpfully placed at the front of the printed version of *Common Worship*). The first fixed point would be Scripture: all the formularies of Anglicanism give this prime authority, and indeed it is interesting to note that documents such as the Church of England Doctrine Commission Reports have for the last twenty years been replete with reflection on Scripture. In this case we would want to canvas as much of the New Testament evidence for evangelism as we can, from the Ethiopian eunuch to the Philippian gaoler (and his children?). Our second 'fixed point' would need to be the Creeds – 'for us and for our salvation...' needs exposition, and so does 'one baptism for the forgiveness of sins'. Under this heading, presumably, would be an understanding of the *missio dei* – the incarnation as itself evangelism. Then thirdly there is the 'witness' born by the foundation documents of the Provinces (in practice these tend in fact to be adaptations of the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer, Ordinal* and *Thirty Nine Articles*). In the English context we would want to note the two complementary understandings, baptismal regeneration (probably conditional) and justification by faith, referred to above. Our fourth point is a contemporary context in which most people are not 'growing up in the church'. The theological task is to

53 Stephen Neill, *The Church and Christian Union*, Oxford University Press 1968, p 75.
54 Sykes, 'Theology of Evangelism', p 410.

be true to the 'band of theologies' from the three earlier 'fixed points' while being relevant to the contemporary situation. The developments between the points (Andrewes, Wilson and the rest) are not authorities in themselves, but may bear a helpful secondary witness to the right understanding of the authoritative documents; often they do so not so much by what they state as by what can be seen to be implicit in their theological understandings. The contemporary views (such as those of Sykes and Tomlin) would need to stand or fall on their own merits as true or untrue to the previous 'fixed points' and the contemporary context.

Clearly there is no room here to develop such a theology of evangelism, though I think the outlines will be plain. Even this small sketch may provide some small glimpse of what might be developed, and perhaps this glimpse will illuminate the conversation between Schwab and Harrison with which I started. We would want to start by saying that Schwab is surely right to insist that there is no one 'Anglican theology of evangelism'; to that extent we are all going to have to 'live with difference.' A 'band of theologies' big enough to live with both Andrewes and Beveridge must surely be generous enough to find a place for both Sykes and Stott. An agreement to let the Declaration of Assent inform our theological method must not lead to the sort of dogmatism that Schwab fears.

But Harrison is also right to state that diversity must have limits. We can apply this idea of limits in two ways. Firstly, we could suggest (to return to Saxbee's analogy) that while Sykes and Tomlin, like *Publick Baptism* and *Commination,* are entirely synoptic with each other and in keeping with the 'band' of tradition, some understandings are more like the *Gospel of Thomas* and must be judged to be outside the legitimate development of the tradition. Theologies 'apocryphal' to Anglicanism might for example have no place for baptism, or no understanding of revelation. But a second way in which we could apply the idea of 'limit' could be to question theologies which, while they are in a rigid way true to the foundation documents, have no apparent contact at all with contemporary reality.

We cannot of course 'decide' whether Harrison or Schwab will win their very complex argument. However, I would note that in the English context at least, developments in other areas of theology and ecclesiology would lead us to expect that Harrison would get a far warmer reception now than twenty years ago. Notable is the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Canterbury in 1999, where in his opening remarks James Rosenthal identifies 'comprehensiveness' as the 'identity' of Anglicanism. George Carey felt the need gently to dissent from this, even going to the length of quoting Rosenthal and substituting for the word 'comprehensiveness' the phrase 'generous orthodoxy' – a happy phrase that allows for legitimate diversity while retaining the concept of limit.[55] It is surely time to transfer this general trend to the specific issue of theologies of evangelism.

My own view will I think already be clear: I think Harrison is right to call on us to 'leave fuzzy thinking behind' and develop an unambiguous (but generous) band of theologies which centre on the *missio dei* and the human need to worship, and

---

55 Documentation available through http:/ www.anglican.org.: click onto the ACC site.

which lead us to call those presently outside the church to respond to God's initiative in Christ by adoring him. I think a combination of Sykes' and Tomlin's approaches would meet the needs of the hour admirably, though I would mildly question why they are lacking in the note of eschatological urgency so typical of Scripture, creeds and Articles alike. If you will forgive the presumption of sweeping statements, I think that the theologies of 'slow conversion' (whether from Runcie, the Prayer Book Societies or Marsh) are relevant to our new context only if they recognize that the enormous majority of our fellow humanity are *not* in some essential sense 'in our flock', have not in fact begun the often slow and gradual process of responding and starting to adore, and need urgently to be contacted with the invitation to encounter and worship Christ.

But more important than evaluating the work of individuals is stating that a band of Anglican theologies of evangelism does in fact exist, and is key to the generous orthodoxy which is our identity. Only when we approach the theology of evangelism in this way will we create an environment in which to 'set forth the name of Jesu unto other' was seen not as something 'un-Anglican', but as an integral part of the *missio* and worship at the heart of Scripture, the creeds, the witness of the formularies, and the many secondary witnesses who make up our history.

The Revd Andy Griffiths is Assistant Chaplain / Pasteur Adjoint at St Michael's Church, Paris