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SIMUL JUSTUS ET PECCATOR: THE GENIUS AND TENSIONS OF REFORMATION ECCLESIOLOGY | W. BRADFORD LITTLEJOHN

THE GENIUS OF LUTHER'S ECCLESIOLOGY

It is often remarked that Martin Luther did not set out to make a new church, just to reform the old one. This is true enough, but if it is meant to imply (as it sometimes is) that Luther was not up to anything terribly radical, that the Reformation was just a big misunderstanding, then it is gravely misleading. For Luther did mean to offer a new understanding of *what the church was*—not wholly new, of course, but radically new from the standpoint of the later Middle Ages. He writes in his *Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*:

All Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all one body, yet every member has its own work by which it serves the others. This is because we have one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for baptism, Gospel, and faith make us spiritual and a Christian people.¹

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The church, in short, is all of us, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord. Indeed, so far from the clergy constituting the church, the church constitutes the clergy. This was a profound shift from the irreducibly institutional understanding of the church in medieval Catholicism, for which “the Church” meant above all an authority structure, with the Pope squarely at its head.

From one standpoint, Luther's redefinition appeared to offer a straightforward and empirical account of what the church was: an assembly of people—or rather, the whole sum of assemblies throughout the world of people—who call on the name of Christ. But properly speaking, this was not so much an account of what the church *was* but of where you found it. The Church itself, wrote Luther, “is a high, deep, hidden thing which one may neither perceive nor see but must grasp

only by faith through baptism, sacrament, and word.”² It was not so much an empirical assembly of bodies as “a spiritual assembly of souls in one faith . . . The natural, real, and essential Christendom exists in

1. In *Three Treatises, from the American Edition of Luther's Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1966), 12.

2. *WA* 51:507, quoted in Paul D.L. Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1981), 14.

the Spirit and not in any external thing.”³ After all, if the Church was nothing but the body of Christ, and none could be united to Christ except by faith, and faith was itself a “high, deep, hidden thing,” then how could the true Church not be likewise?

But lest this notion of the Church suggest something static and abstract, a mere logical sum of individual believers, we should note that Luther describes the Church in far more dynamic terms than that. The Church is the creature of the living and active Word of God, and particularly the Word as preached. “The Church is nothing without the word and everything in it exists by virtue of the word alone.”⁴ Indeed, “The Church of God is present wherever the word of God is spoken, whether it be in the middle of the Turks’ land or in the pope’s land or in hell itself. For it is the word of God which builds the Church which is lord over all other spaces.”⁵

The Church, thus, is in itself invisible, but it becomes visible when that which gives it life, the Word, is preached, heard, acknowledged, and obeyed in the world. We may, however—indeed must for practical purposes—speak of the regular organized assembly of professing believers who worship in word and sacrament as the “visible church,” with appropriate caveats. Luther’s concept of the justified sinner, *simul justus et peccator*, sometimes provided him a framework for ecclesiology. The church was perfectly righteous by virtue of its union with Christ, but this union, and this righteous identity, were hidden; as manifest in the world, in history, it was still sinful and failing, a *corpus permixtum* composed of wheat and tares, gradually being sanctified. And yet there remained certain “notes” or “marks” by which the true church could be visibly recognized in history. The Augsburg Confession of 1530 established two marks: “The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.”⁶ But some over the next couple decades sought to emphasize that just as true Christians must be characterized by godly life, so must the true church. Accordingly, they added a third mark, “discipline,” which initially had quite a broad sense, rather than simply designating excommunication and its precursors.⁷

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3. LW 39:69, quoted in Avis 14.
4. LW 40:11, quoted in Avis 20.
5. WA 43:596, quoted in Avis 20.

6. Art. VII (<http://bookofconcord.org/augsburgconfession.php> [accessed May 27, 2014]).

7. See Jordan J. Ballor and W. Bradford Littlejohn, “European Calvinism: Church Discipline,” in Irene Dingel and Johannes Paulmann, eds., *European History Online* (EGO) (Mainz: Institute of European History (IEG), 2013): <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/crossroads/religious-and-denominational-spaces/jordan-ballor-w-bradford-littlejohn-european-calvinism-church-discipline>. Some of the material in the “Attempted Solutions” section below is adapted from that article.

THE TENSIONS OF LUTHER’S ECCLESIOLOGY

Such marks were all fairly useful in giving you a decent idea of roughly where the church *was* (although they obviously could not stand alone; they presupposed a Protestant understanding of what the Gospel and sacraments were): if you saw a minister faithfully expounding the text of Scripture, and administering baptism and the Lord’s Supper, then you could assume that there was a manifestation of Christ’s body; imperfect, perhaps, but in communion with the Head. But they weren’t so good at telling you where the church *wasn’t*.⁸ How false did a church’s preaching have to be before it could no longer count as part of the body of Christ? How distorted or rationalistic or superstitious did its sacramental practice have to be? How lax did its discipline have to be?

Luther’s theology offered no clear answers to such questions. It also opened itself to other dangers. The clarion call of the *Letter to the Christian Nobility* was, after all, a double-edged sword. So long as the Church was dominated by corrupt clergy, it made good sense to remind the

Christian laity that they too were called to be kings and priests to God. They too had responsibility for the welfare of the Church, and they must do all in their power to see it reformed—especially those whom God had placed in positions of authority. But what about once a faithful ministry of godly clergy had been established? Should lay rulers continue to exercise control over the affairs of the Church?

Luther and his colleague Melancthon hesitated, but ultimately acknowledged a substantial ongoing role for civil magistrates in church affairs. Indeed, it was their very emphasis on the hiddenness of the true church that determined this conclusion: since we must be very wary of trying to draw precise boundaries around the truly faithful Christians, they had to accept for practical purposes that all those who professed Christianity belonged to the Church, and this meant nearly the whole body of citizens. In its temporal profile, then, the Church overlapped almost wholly with the body politic, and hence decisions about its temporal well-being were fit subjects for the civil magistrate’s concern. The same basic assumption, with slight differences of emphasis, was to inform Zwingli’s reform in Zurich, Bucer’s reform in Strasbourg, and the various phases of the English Reformation.

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8. Paul D.L. Avis, “The True Church in Reformation Theology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30.4 (1977): 334: “The *notae ecclesiae* is a qualitative concept; theoretically one can say whether a certain ecclesial body possesses the marks or not. But in practice it was found to need supplementing by a quantitative one, such as Calvin’s concept that Rome contained the *vestigia* of the church.”

Still, while coherent enough in principle, the new Protestant ecclesiology was shot through with tensions in practice, and a range of rival models for resolving these tensions soon emerged.

ATTEMPTED SOLUTIONS TO THE TENSIONS OF PROTESTANT ECCLESIOLOGY

The Anabaptist Model

The first model, one with which Luther himself had briefly sympathized, but which was before long rejected by all the leading Reformers, was the Anabaptist option. Although there were several independent and rather different strands of the Anabaptist movement, the most important was probably that which arose in Zurich and its environs under the leadership of Conrad Grebel and Balthasar Hubmaier in the mid-1520s. Zurich had embraced a particularly thoroughgoing model of the partnership between magistracy and ministry, and although the Reformation there was real and resulted in the conversion of many, Grebel and Hubmaier were appalled by the slow pace of reform and the nominalism of so much of the populace. The Church in Zurich was self-evidently not identical with the city's whole population, and leaders like Grebel and Hubmaier did not think that such an ambiguous state of affairs should be tolerated. Anabaptism is best known for its insistence on re-baptism and its critique of civil authority, but both of these positions must be understood against the larger background of the Anabaptist aim to establish a visible congregation of saints that truly was the Church and nothing but the Church. Writes Kenneth Davis,

Contrary to most Magisterial reformers' exegesis, most Anabaptists upheld that while society at large could correspond to the parable of the tares (Matt. 13) and openly include believers and unbelievers, the church could not. Rather, each church, as a corporate entity, was to be visibly and voluntarily (without any civil constraints) holy, an approximation of the heavenly, spiritual kingdom on earthly collective display.⁹

This entailed not only limiting church membership to those who voluntarily committed themselves by baptism, but also carefully policing church membership by rigorous discipline ("the ban") to remove false Christians from the fellowship. Despite the complexity and variety of

9. Kenneth R. Davis, "No Discipline, No Church: An Anabaptist Contribution to the Reformed Tradition," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 13.4 (1982): 44.

the Anabaptist movements, this emphasis on discipline was a consistent theme.

The Strasbourg Model

It was also a theme that found a sympathetic hearing among several of the Reformers, including Martin Bucer at Strasbourg and his protégé, John Calvin. Of course, the word "discipline" could mean many different things. Although the word easily carries a negative connotation, for Bucer, it primarily meant something like "corporate sanctification." "Discipline" meant a Christian community's determination that its members would live out Christian love toward one another.¹⁰ Of course, this did not happen spontaneously. It required structures, rules, and, where necessary, discipline in the more precise sense of corrective imposition of these rules. As an outward action, discipline in this sense could never guarantee inward renewal (hence there was, for Bucer and Calvin, no question of the Anabaptist notion that the visible church might be brought to match the invisible), but the Strasbourg reformer believed that if administered right-

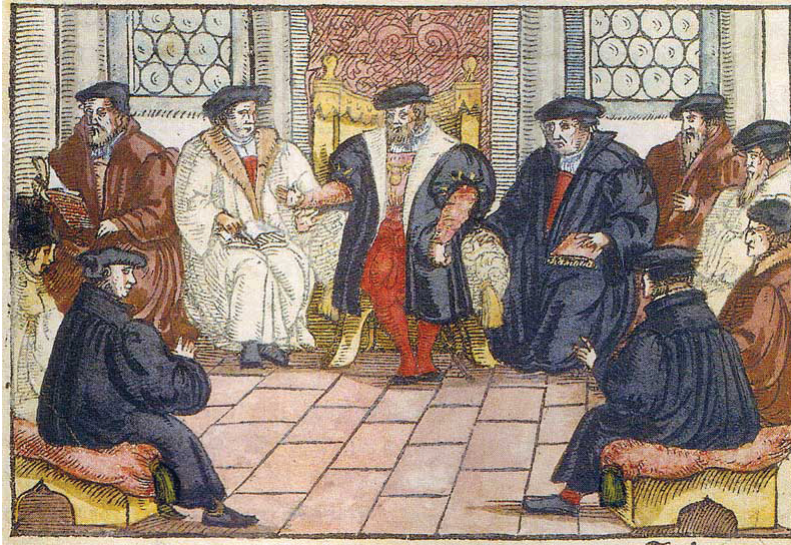
ly by ministers, church discipline could have a much better chance of prompting real repentance than the merely civil discipline practiced at Zwingli's and Bullinger's Zurich (where even excommunication functioned as a civil penalty prescribed by magistrates).

Bucer's interest in a church discipline which could at least reduce the gap between the church visible and invisible proved broadly appealing and inspiring for other reformers, with at least two different models emerging. One, associated with John Calvin, proved best suited to city-states or small polities with relatively sympathetic magistrates. It had considerably less in common with modern Presbyterianism than we generally imagine: Calvin's "deacons" were civil officers charged with overseeing welfare distributions, and the "elders" functioned not merely alongside the ministers on the Consistory, but as leading city councilors of Geneva. Magistrates even had an important role in matters of worship and church order.¹¹ Indeed, Calvin accepted no less than did the Zurich reformers a Christendom model, in which the church of Geneva and the citizenry of Geneva made up one and the same society. However, there were some points of ambiguity and ten-

10. See Jake Meador, "That No One Should Live for Himself, but for Others: Love and the Third Mark of the Church in the Theology of Martin Bucer," in W. Bradford Littlejohn and Jonathan Tomes, ed., *Beyond Calvin: Essays on the Diversity of the Reformed Tradition* (Moscow, ID: The Davenant Press, forthcoming 2017).

11. Matthew Tuininga, "Christ's Two Kingdoms: Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church," unpublished PhD dissertation (Emory University, 2014), 346-47. (Forthcoming from Cambridge University Press as *Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church: Christ's Two Kingdoms*.)

sion. First was the role of the ministers, who for Calvin had a direct divine calling as well as a human ordination. While not denying Luther's notion of the universal priesthood, Calvin did put more emphasis on the distinctiveness of the clerical calling, and wanted to avoid any implication that ministers might be mere officers of state (though he did allow to magistrates an important role in confirming their appointment).¹² Second was the power of excommunication, which for Calvin was a spiritual exercise of discipline necessary to guard the purity of the Lord's Table, not a mere civil penalty for wicked behavior, and, as such, wholly under the authority of ministers and of the elders acting in their ecclesiastical capacity as members of the Consistory. Given the dual role of most of Geneva's elders, it is easy to see why the City Council struggled to see the importance of the neat distinction, but for Calvin, it was essential.¹³



As a contribution to Protestant ecclesiology, Calvin's institutionalization of church discipline at Geneva was both blessing and curse. At its best, it testified to the essential Protestant insight that the only authority in the Church was the authority of the Word: only the internally convicting power of the Word, not any external punishments, was the means to bring repentance and restoration to the Christian and to build up the community of the Church. But it was easy for the emphasis to be displaced from the minister's declaration to the minister's office. This effectively erected another parallel juridical authority within the Christian society with the capacity to administer what amounted—in such a society—to a civil as well as spiritual punishment, and with much greater strictness than any civil court would. The Consistory at Geneva, and its many imitators elsewhere, were certainly not always that bad; but the system was certainly ripe for abuses.

It is important to note, however, that despite his fame, John Calvin was perhaps not the most important contributor to Reformed ecclesiology. After all, Calvin's model of the church assumed close cooperation between magistracy and ministry, and thus required not only a sympathetic magistrate, but a relatively small or decentralized polity. It thus proved influential in the Swiss city-states and in the quasi-autonomous cities of the Netherlands, and was even adopted (though with profound tensions) in the small kingdom of Scotland, but it required extensive adaptation in other settings.

A better model for a more-or-less autonomous church in the midst of an unfriendly society was pioneered by the Polish Reformer Jan Łaski, who spent most of his ministry in the Netherlands and Eng-

12. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV.4.13.

13. For a good survey, see Gillian Lewis, "Calvinism in Geneva in the Time of Calvin and Beza (1541-1605)," in Menna Prestwich, ed., *International Calvinism, 1541-1715* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 39-70.

land. Like Bucer, with whom he had worked closely, he felt the need to respond to Anabaptist pressures, and during his tenure as superintendent of the church at Emden (1542-48) adopted a stricter discipline administered by lay-elders within the congregation. But he first had a free hand to develop his ideas fully as pastor of the London Strangers' Church, a collection of congregations composed of Dutch and French Protestant refugees which Łaski administered from 1548 to 1553.

There Łaski, together with French pastor Valérand Poullain (1509?-1557), pioneered the creation of a form of church discipline (described in his *Forma ac ratio*) that, although retaining the emphasis on discipline as a means of edification and redemption of recalcitrant sinners, was particularly severe even by the standards of the day.¹⁴ Moreover, since the English authorities gave the exiles freedom to govern their own affairs more or less autonomously, Łaski was able to create a church structure remarkably remi-

niscient of the Anabaptist ideal—a gathered, self-governing community of believers who agreed to commit themselves to the biblically-modeled system of discipline, which helped purify the body of the faithful from the "tares" of worldly Christians.¹⁵

By its very presence at the heart of London, Łaski's church exerted a radicalizing influence on many in England, and perhaps even on the Scottish reformer John Knox (c. 1514-1572), who was preaching in London at this time.¹⁶ When Mary I (1516-1558) took the throne in 1553, the members of the Stranger churches, their ranks swelled by fleeing English Protestants, scattered to several continental havens, bringing the model of Łaski's *Forma ac ratio* with them—back to Emden, to Frankfurt, and even to Geneva. Łaski scholar Michael Springer has convincingly argued that the English exile churches in Frankfurt and even Geneva itself (which John Knox pastored) mod-

14. As Michael Springer relates in *Restoring Christ's Church: John à Lasco and the Forma Ac Ratio* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), one striking example of Łaski's disciplinary zeal was his directive in the *Forma ac ratio* for ministers to visit anyone who fell ill in their congregation, in order to "warn the afflicted that God uses illness as a warning and evidence of his divine justice, and that the stricken should endure it with patience and gratitude.... [And] because the illness had been sent as a punishment, the preacher or elder should encourage the parishioner to reconcile with anyone they had offended" (92).

15. Particularly remarkable in this regard was the insistence in the *Forma ac ratio* that the sacraments could be only be administered to individuals who had pledged to abide fully by the discipline of the community. See Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church*, 84, 87. If we define the Anabaptist or "radical" ecclesiology according to the four themes identified by Paul Avis in his *Church in the Theology of the Reformers* (pp. 55-61)—voluntarism, primitivism, exclusivism, and obsession with discipline—it is hard not to see the influence of this model on Łaski's (and to a lesser extent, Bucer's) ecclesiology. A distinctive element in Łaski's system, however, which certainly ran contrary to Anabaptist congregationalism, was the office of superintendent, a quasi-bishop or permanent moderator of sorts for a small group of congregations, who helped oversee their administration and guide their teaching. Unlike Lutheran superintendents or English bishops, however, Łaski's superintendents were chosen by congregants, not magistrates. See Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church*, 62-67.

16. See Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church*, 86-89.

eled themselves chiefly after Łaski's Strangers' Church, and not, as usually assumed, after Calvin's Geneva.¹⁷ The influence of Łaski's model was also to be felt in the Netherlands and in the French Reformed Church, which, although deeply influenced by Calvin and Beza at Geneva, had to adapt their model for use in a setting where churches could not rely on the support of magistrates.

Łaski's model, more than any, seems to lend itself to the use of a disestablished Protestant church, such as those in America and indeed in most of the world today. However, by its zeal to identify and police the boundaries of that church, it runs the sectarian risk of Anabaptism, and of trying to erase too much the gap between the visible and invisible churches. This danger was to become particularly clear in Elizabethan Puritanism, which seems to have drawn as much inspiration from the London Strangers' Church as it did from Geneva. But to understand this movement, we must briefly touch on one other model for Protestant church-polity.

The Nation-State Model

If Bullinger, Bucer, and Calvin had all sketched ways of organizing a church within a small polity governed by sympathetic magistrates, and Łaski had provided a model that could work without the support of any magistrates, what about a Protestant church in a very large polity, and a monarchical one at that, like England? Here the centralization of authority in the monarch and the basically hierarchical structure of society worked against any notion of a democratic, bottom-up church. A totally independent church hierarchy deriving its authority from Christ above, on the other hand, would have perpetuated the intolerable church-state conflicts of the late Middle Ages, and would have tended to reinscribe the clericalism that Luther had fought so hard to overcome.

Accordingly, the most natural solution was to maintain two distinct hierarchies, the bishops and the nobility, which joined at the top—working together in Parliament, under the sole sovereignty of the monarch. Of course, after the early hubris of King Henry VIII, there was no question of the monarch actually exercising or being the source of spiritual authority—the bishops and the presbyters exercised their spiritual calling of Word and Sacrament on behalf of Christ, but their particular appointments, and their position in the hierarchy, were determined by human authority, with the monarch as its locus. And Luther's principle of the universal priesthood was operative enough in England for most of its bishops to recognize that laymen in Parliament, and the monarch as the *praecipuum membrum ecclesiae* ("foremost member of the church," a phrase of Melancthon's), had a legitimate role in making decisions about what Scripture and prudence required for matters of church order.

17. See Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church*, 126–32.

The fact that a rather similar episcopal structure prevailed in Lutheran Denmark and Sweden suggests that the distinctive shape of the Church of England is less the result of a particular "genius of Anglicanism," and more the natural fruit of Protestant ecclesiology adapting itself to a monarchical nation-state. Of course, the adaptation was not without profound tensions, any more than the other models we have seen. In England, at least, three distinct sources of tension may be noted.

The first concerned the relation of Crown and Parliament, and the distinct elements of Parliament to one another. In particular, did the bishops report directly to the monarch, or did the laymen in Parliament also have a role in overseeing them—or did the bishops together with the lay Lords and Commons make up Parliament together, and relate to the monarch in that capacity?

The second concerned the difficulty, within such a large hierarchical church structure, of bishops being sufficiently responsive to the bottom and top simultaneously—to the practical on-the-ground needs of pastors and churchgoers, and to the wishes and demands of the monarch and of national political realities. Some bishops were indeed worldly time-servers, as many of their critics charged, but most were earnest and godly men torn between numerous often-conflicting obligations.¹⁸

The third concerned the same basic tension that bedeviled Protestant ecclesiology from the beginning: how to live with the obvious disconnect between a body calling itself "the Church," the bride of Christ, and a Church made up of men and women who, for the most part, seemed to understand little of the faith they professed on Sundays and to practice even less of it on weekdays.

The first of these issues, being largely one of political theory, will not detain us here, but the latter two proved to be generative of more than a century of profound conflict within the Protestant Church of England, and bequeathed to us in America (whose forefathers were often refugees from these conflicts) much of our distinctive approach to ecclesiology.

THE PURITAN MOVEMENT

The Puritan movement was birthed out of profound dissatisfaction with how the bishops had handled the so-called Second Vestiarian Controversy in the 1560s. In her restoration of Protestant worship to England in 1559, Elizabeth had taken a relatively conservative line to

18. For a sympathetic portrait, see Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559–1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), and Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

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ease the transition for those of her subjects less than thrilled about the new state of affairs. In particular, she required clergy to wear many of the same vestments that their Catholic predecessors had while leading worship. Many ministers felt that, rather than making it easier for them to win more Catholic-minded parishioners, these vestments simply offended the sensibilities of the godly, who could not overcome their popish associations. Many of the bishops sympathized with this concern, but when the Queen proved emphatic, they reasoned that discretion was the better part of valor and enforced conformity, deeming that there was nothing intrinsically ungodly about the vestments.

Feeling betrayed, many young leaders in the church began to question the authority of bishops altogether, as well as the multitude of outward ceremonies and orders in the Church of England that were retained from its pre-Reformation days. Indeed, by appealing to the senses rather than the soul, these outward ornaments helped lull the nominal Christians (who made up the vast majority in England, they charged) into complacency. While for the most part not rejecting the notion of a comprehensive national church, the emerging Puritan party hoped to purify it somehow by learned preaching, stripped-down ceremonies, and rigorous discipline, so that it consisted as much as possible only of those who were truly godly. For many of them, a key part of this process was abolishing bishops and replacing them with a presbyterian or quasi-congregational system in which pastors and elders oversaw a largely autonomous church structure.

Such autonomy either implied a parallel hierarchy and jurisdiction alongside the civil one, which seemed a recipe for civil war, or else a separatist sect dedicated to maintaining a pure fellowship of the godly within its bounds, while the majority of the national church was consigned to perdition.¹⁹ Although Elizabethan authorities understandably feared the former most of all, seeing it as a new popery, it was not until the 1640s that these fears came to partial fruition, and that was the perhaps predictable result of episcopal tyranny in the 1630s. The latter threat, however, that of separatism, was to gain traction in the 1590s and early 1600s, eventually spawning many of the first immigrants to America.

Of course, from our standpoint we would be quick to point out that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with a disestablished, self-governing church; such was the Church before Constantine and such

are all our churches in America today. However, problems do arise when such a church organizes itself within a broader church or society which considers itself genuinely Christian. In such a setting, it is easy for the separating church to think that the reason for its separation is that the broader church *isn't really Christian after all*, and then to suppose that it, the separated church, *really is*. Sometimes, the separating church is right about this; but this move can represent an attempt to carve out a visible church made up only of members of the invisible church, rather than accepting that the church that we see is a mixed multitude of saints and sinners, and its structures more human than divine. Having made this move intellectually, the separated church then tries to reinforce it culturally by fostering an implacable opposition to and withdrawal from the culture and practices of the broader society.

All of this characterized the separatist wing of the Puritan movement in the Church of England, and because they brought to the New World this need to define themselves against a nominal broader church, the Puritans in New England soon found themselves squabbling over purity, drawing boundaries, and separating from one another in a process that was to play out interminably in the centuries that followed.²⁰

CONCLUSION

The genius of Protestant ecclesiology is same as that of Protestant soteriology—as the individual lives by faith alone, so does the Church. The Christian cannot seek his identity in anything that he brings or does, but only by throwing himself on Christ by faith in the Word proclaimed, and trusting that his life is hidden with Christ in God. Likewise, the Christian Church cannot seek its identity in its outward form or practices, but only by receiving its being from Christ by the Word proclaimed in its midst, and trusting that its true life too is hidden with Christ in God.

But the tension and struggle of Protestant ecclesiology is the same as that of Protestant soteriology—how is faith attested, manifested, and recognized by its works of obedience? How does the unseen church of faith make itself visible by rendering corporate obedience to Christ, governing and ordering itself in accordance with his Word and the

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20. The early New England phases of this divisiveness are well chronicled in Michael P. Winship, *Godly Republicanism: Puritans, Pilgrims, and a City on a Hill* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); the later 19th-century phases in John Williamson Nevin, "The Sect System, Article 1," *Mercersburg Review* 1:5 (1849): 482–507.

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19. For a good survey, see Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology, 1570–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

demands of discipleship? If Luther was sometimes too content to leave the sanctification of the church in merely human hands, the Anabaptists, and occasionally some of the Reformed, were too quick to seek for the Spirit's fingerprints in the outward life of the body. The same polarity appeared in the conflicts of the Church of England, and it continues today, for instance in the battle between evangelical megachurches that ask only a minimalist profession of faith and stern Reformed churches that impose strict discipline on their faithful few.

It is a tension that defies any conclusive, once-for-all resolution, but the approach of English theologian Richard Hooker in the 1590s may still offer us some valuable light. "Signs must resemble the things they signify," he declares, and we might legitimately speak of the visible church, in his theology, as a sign which signifies the presence of the invisible. Accordingly, it must strive to manifest outwardly the qualities which it has antecedently in Christ:


That which inwardly each man should be, the Church outwardly ought to testify. And therefore the duties of our religion which are seen must be such as that affection which is unseen ought to be. Signs must resemble the things they signify. If religion bear the greatest sway in our hearts, our outward religious duties must show it, as far as the Church hath outward ability. . . . Yea then are the public duties of religion best ordered, when the militant Church doth resemble by sensible means, as it may in such cases, the hidden dignity and glory wherewith the Church triumphant in heaven is beautified.²¹

21. Richard Hooker, *Larwes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V.6.1-2.

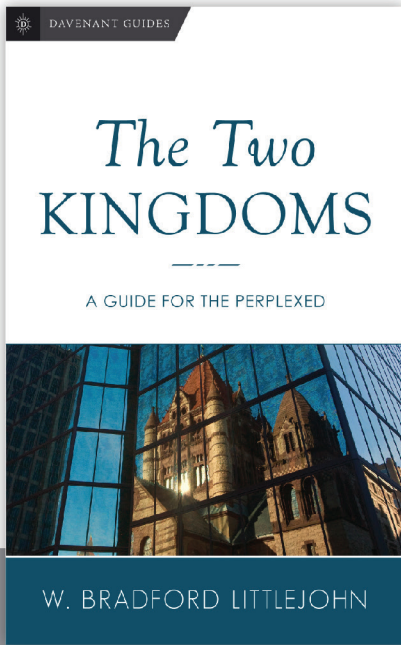
This hidden glory includes both unity and purity. But like all outward manifestations, such unity and purity are to be treated under the heading of the doctrine of sanctification. But just because sanctification must be distinguished from justification does not mean it should be separated: the sanctification of the church is the process of it becoming more conformed to its hidden reality, as righteous in Christ. Hooker, accordingly, is well-prepared to argue at length for the importance of historical structures of authority, visible forms of unity, liturgical aids to holiness, diligent observance of the sacraments, and submission to creedal and confessional norms as the signs and seals of the church's hidden life, crucial to its sanctification and well-being.²² But these things do not constitute the church's being, the basis of its recognition before God. That is hidden with Christ in God, and our first task is ensure that we, and those in our own churches, are sharing in this life, not to obsess over the criteria for other churches to share in it. Meanwhile, we extend them whatever fellowship we can, and exhort them to grow in truth, unity, and holiness.

Dr. Bradford Littlejohn is the President of the Davenant Trust and teaches philosophy at Moody Bible Institute. He is the author of two books on Richard Hooker as well as numerous articles and book chapters on Reformation theology and Christian ethics.

22. For more on these elements in Hooker's ecclesiology, and their relationship to his key distinctions of the visible and invisible church, see my *Richard Hooker: A Companion to His Life and Work* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), chs. 10-11.



DAVENANT GUIDES



DAVENANT GUIDES

The Two KINGDOMS

A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

W. BRADFORD LITTLEJOHN

Making sense of the TWO KINGDOMS

IN RECENT YEARS, fresh controversy has erupted over the age-old question of how Christians are to live as subjects of God and of Caesar, with debate focusing on the meaning and relevance of the Reformation's "two-kingdoms" doctrine.

In this concise guide, Reformation scholar and Christian ethicist Bradford Littlejohn clears away common misunderstandings and shows that the two-kingdoms doctrine can offer a valuable framework for thinking about much more than Christian politics.

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THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION: A COMPLICATED STORY OF PROVINCIAL ECCLESIASTICAL AUTONOMY

DANIEL F. GRAVES

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship of thirty-eight autonomous provinces in communion with the see of Canterbury.¹ The Archbishop of Canterbury is the Primate of all England and, while his ecclesiastical jurisdiction is restricted to the Church of England, he does hold a position of spiritual leadership as a focus of unity across the Communion. How Anglicanism arrived at this state of autocephaly and decentralized authority is a complicated story. The decentralized nature of Anglicanism is currently under attack and seen as a weakness of its polity, especially with respect to the current conflicts facing Anglicanism and the attempts to discern whether any degree of theological uniformity might be achieved, and, perhaps, even enforced.

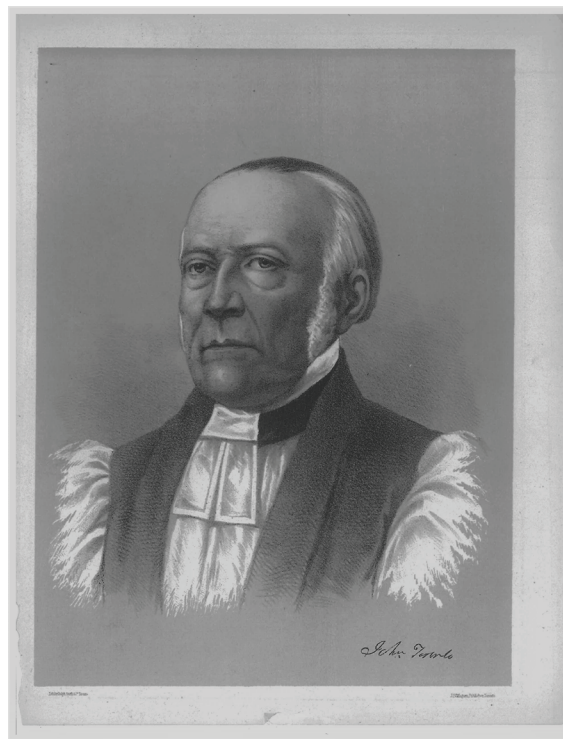
At the time of the Reformation, the Church of England declared its independence from Rome through a series of statutes that forbade any appeal to foreign power (i.e. the papacy) in matters both temporal and spiritual, and consequently asserted the spiritual as well as temporal supremacy of the Crown.² Thus, at the time of the Reformation, what would later become known as the Anglican Church charted an independent national identity, firmly rooted in Reformed principles. What was not anticipated at the time was the rise of what we now call global Anglicanism in the form of independent ecclesiastical provinces that emerged as the result of colonial expansion and, ultimately, from colonial independence. Just as the first independence of the English Church from Rome was defined by statute and legal wrangling, so too the ensuing history of Anglican provincial autonomy is equally one of legal wrangling.

Diarmaid MacCulloch has suggested that while Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was highly wary of papal jurisdiction (as the pope was

deemed to be Antichrist), he was at least an ideological conciliarist. He held the belief (at least aspirationally) that a General Council was the ultimate decision-maker in the Catholic Church, and harbored a hope for a General Council to rival Trent that would deal with doctrinal matters.³ Of course, there is an obvious tension here with Cranmer's commitment to the supremacy of the Crown, and this tension constitutes an interesting historical "what if" had his plans for an international Reformed General Council had come to fruition.⁴ This tension between international catholicity and local autonomy has been a struggle that has characterized Anglican identity since the Reformation.

Anglicanism's attachment to autonomy has persisted. Perhaps overstating the case slightly (and ignoring Cranmer's initial conciliar longing), Mark Chapman has suggested that the idea of an international conciliarism is essentially a foreign one to Anglicanism.⁵ There was no room in the national church, as established at the Reformation, for international appeal (although significant interplay with the Reformed churches of the Continent existed). Indeed, he reminds us that Laud claimed (invoking that great conciliarist, Gerson!) "that...the church may be reformed in parts; and that this is necessary, and that to effect it, Provincial Councils may suffice; and in some things,

Diocesan."⁶ Presciently, this is how the Anglican Communion would come to be organized. Chapman notes, "...it would be fair to characterize the development of Anglicanism as the planting of this national church ideal in the many varied parts of the world where the



JOHN STRACHAN (1778-1867), FIRST BISHOP OF TORONTO (1839-1867), COURTESY OF THE ARCHIVES OF THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF TORONTO. USED WITH PERMISSION.

1. A thorough description of the Anglican Communion with short history of each province can be found in Kevin Ward, *A History of Global Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

2. See especially *The Act in Restraint of Appeals*, 1533 (24 Henr. VIII, c.12), *Act for the Submission of the Clergy*, 1534 (25 Henr. VIII, c.19), and *The Act of Supremacy*, 1534 (26 Henr. VIII, c.1).

3. For Cranmer's desired hopes for such a General Council, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (New Haven, 1996), 394, and also 586 for his own plan to appeal his own case to a General Council.

4. One might look to the outcome of the Synod of Dort for a tangible example. See W. Brown Patterson, "The Synod of Dort," chap. 8 in *James VI and I and the reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 260-292.

5. Mark D. Chapman, "The Dull Bits of History: Cautionary Tales for Anglicanism," in *The Anglican Covenant: Unity and Diversity in the Anglican Communion*, ed. Mark D. Chapman (London: Mowbray, 2008), 92.

6. Chapman, "Dull Bits," 93.

influence of England reached. For instance, political realities forced this on the American Church after the Revolution. It became wholly independent from the mother Church – indeed it could not be said to have been ‘in full communion’ with the Church of England until 1840 when American clergy were first allowed to minister in England.⁷ There was always the anomaly of the Scottish Episcopal Church⁸ and how it related to the Established English Church (the Scots were less than amused when Laud attempted to impose a liturgy upon them), as well as the subsequent independence of the American Church, mentioned above.⁹ Since the time of Laud and until the time when provincial autonomy began to emerge, oversight for the colonial churches was vested in the bishop of London.¹⁰

It was really in the 1840s, though, that the anomalies and exceptions began to become the norm with the rise of self-governing colonial legislatures and questions about the “established” status of churches in colonies with such legislatures, in concert with the need to establish sees and bishoprics in those colonies. Questions of authority began to abound. Who had the authority to appoint such bishops, and to establish new sees. And indeed, what authority could colonial bishops exert, especially if the church was not deemed to be established by law?

Rowan Strong has recently argued that a fundamental shift in thinking with respect to colonial ecclesiastical governance occurred in 1840-1 with the establishment of the Colonial Bishoprics Fund and the subsequent Colonial Bishoprics Act. The fund, a brainchild of Bishop Blomfield of London, sought to endow colonial bishoprics as “a new imperial paradigm of engagement with the British Empire.”¹¹ Implicit (and sometimes explicit) in the conversations around the creation of the fund was a criticism of the government for not taking an active role in establishing episcopal ecclesiastical governance in the colonies, and as such not only losing moral ground but also forfeiting social cohesion. To that point, the establishment of Canadian bishoprics by Letters Patent had been reactionary to the situation in the United States.¹² The missionary societies (especially Venn and the CMS) likewise preferred to see the establishment of bishops as a consolidating measure in mission rather than as part of the evangelistic initiative. In distinction to this reactionary and consolidating approach, the establishment of the fund, followed by the subsequent act, established episcopacy as the identi-

7. Chapman, “Dull Bits,” 94.

8. See Ward, *Global Anglicanism*, 29-32.

9. See William Jacob, “The Development of the Anglican Communion,” in *Anglicanism and the Western Christian Tradition: Continuity, Change and the Search for Communion*, ed. Stephen Platten (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2003), 196-197 for a brief description of the introduction of episcopacy and independence for the American Church.

10. Jacob, “Development,” 195.

11. Rowan Strong, “A New Anglican Imperial Paradigm: The Colonial Bishoprics Fund, 1840-1,” in *Anglicanism and the British Empire, c. 1700-1850* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 199.

12. Strong, “Imperial Paradigm,” 213.

fying mark of the church in the Empire. At this stage, bishops were still appointed by Letters Patent, but this would soon change.

One of the chief problems for colonial bishops was their limited authority. In many cases, they did not have the right to appoint their own clergy (the missionary societies or lieutenant governors often held this right) nor the ability to discipline clergy. The first colonial bishop, Charles Inglis of Nova Scotia, was severely limited in his ecclesiastical authority, having only the power to ordain and supervise his clergy and confirm the laity.¹³ As early as the 1840s, colonial bishops had begun to try to find a way toward self-governance. One of the important issues was a bishop’s ability to enact canons that would govern clerical discipline. In 1844 and 1847, Bishop Selwyn of New Zealand held two so-called “synods”, although legally they were technically only diocesan conferences.¹⁴ Bishop Selwyn not only involved clergy in his gatherings but also included “a generous representation of the laity.”¹⁵ In 1847, upon the suggestion of Selwyn, Australasia, the first new province since the Reformation, was created.¹⁶

In Canada, Bishop Strachan (the first bishop of Toronto) was initially skeptical about the legality of calling a synod, as such an act was reserved to the crown.¹⁷ He soon changed his mind as a series of British parliamentary attempts to enable synodical governance in the colonies failed. The first synod was held in 1854. Indeed, the British

Government was anxious for colonial churches to obtain some measure of autonomy so that bishops could more easily discipline their clergy and have a freer hand raising funds for the administration of their dioceses (thus also releasing the government and missionary societies from that responsibility!). In the 1850s there were four attempts at legislature to allow self-governance in the colonial churches, but all four bills failed. Legal advice given to Strachan led him to believe that no impediment existed to prevent him from proceeding, and, while the government bills had failed for a variety of reasons, it was clear that there was no will on the part of the government to prohibit synodical governance in colonies with responsible government.¹⁸ Ultimately, a series of 1860s judicial decisions deemed such synods legal,¹⁹ and soon a variety of mechanisms for the election of colonial bishops by synods began to emerge and the old Letters Patent system

13. Judith Fingard, “Charles Inglis and his ‘Primitive Bishoprick’ in Nova Scotia,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 49, no. 3 (Sept 1968): 483.

14. Jacob, “Development,” 201.

15. George Herbert Curteis, *Bishop Selwyn of New Zealand, and Lichfield: A Sketch of His Life and Work* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1899), 114-5.

16. Jacob, “Development,” 201.

17. Like Selwyn, he held several unofficial clergy gatherings.

18. See especially Harry Huskins, “John Strachan Changes His Mind: The Calling of the First Synod of the Diocese of Toronto,” *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 53, no. 1/2 (2015): 5-16, and Harry Huskin, “A Very Different Communion: Failed Attempts in the 1850s to Regulate the Colonial Church by Imperial Statute,” *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 53, no.2 (Fall 2014): 51-82.

19. Huskins, “John Strachan Changes His Mind,” 15. The pertinent cases were *Long v. Gray*, and for the Colenso case, see below.

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of appointments faded away. Ironically, the colonial churches now experienced a level of self-governance, free from state control, that did not exist in the mother church (the reintroduction of synods in the Church of England being a much more recent development). Conciliarism, something absent from much of Anglicanism's earlier history, became very much the norm in the worldwide Anglican Communion from the 1850s onward as diocesan synods and eventually provincial General Synods came into being.

Crucial to the development of provincial autonomy in provinces with responsible and self-governing legislatures is the somewhat complicated story of John William Colenso, the nineteenth century bishop of Natal. Colenso, having engaged in a historical-critical reading of the Pentateuch, having published a controversial commentary on Romans, and employing a pastoral but unorthodox approach to Zulu polygamy, was tried in absentia for heresy by the Metropolitan of Cape Town, Bishop Gray.²⁰ Colenso's conviction was appealed to the Privy Council, and was overturned on the basis of questions concerning natural justice (did Gray conduct the trial as an impartial judge and according to the principles of natural justice?) and concerning whether, in fact, Gray held a legal jurisdiction over Colenso and the diocese of Natal. As had been the judgement in a previous case in which Gray had been involved (the Long Case), it was deemed that Gray's Letters Patent were invalid as the Crown had no power to confer legal or coercive jurisdiction on the Metropolitan in a colony with its own legislature and that "Gray had no coercive jurisdiction over the Church of England in South Africa ... beyond that of the leader of a voluntary society."²¹ Nonetheless, Gray held extraordinary moral authority as the son of the prince-bishop of Bristol and a member of the gentry, and Colenso was essentially ruined by Gray's influence over the SPG, which had the power to withhold funding from Colenso and the clergy who remained loyal to him. As Stephen Neill has pointed out, "The loss of coercive jurisdiction based on Letters Patent issued by the Crown was in fact the charter of emancipation of the overseas churches. The Church could now be regarded as being, from the human standpoint, a voluntary society, dependent on common faith and a common loyalty; clergymen in all independent Anglican provinces are bound only by the engagements into which they have themselves, personally and with full knowledge, entered."²²

The problem of what bound that common faith and loyalty together was a serious one. With the outcome of the Colenso affair as the impetus, it was actually the Canadians that pressed the matter, and Bishop Lewis of the Diocese of Ontario led the charge for an international meeting of bishops to discuss what actually bound this international communion together and how it might be adminis-

tered.²³ The Archbishop of Canterbury, Longley, was reticent to call such a meeting. In truth, he had no power to call a synod of bishops together (that prerogative rested with the Crown), and furthermore, as was becoming increasingly clear, he had no coercive jurisdiction over churches in provinces with their own legislatures. Indeed, the Crown had no such power over prelates in non-established churches (essentially "voluntary societies") in self-governing dominions. Eventually, Longley did acquiesce and called together a conference (which has continued to meet at roughly ten year intervals) to discuss issues before the common life of the church. Its resolutions, while having moral force, have not (at least until recently) been taken as legally coercive.

The Lambeth Conference of 1888 adopted a version of the Chicago Quadrilateral, adherence to which is largely seen as a marker of membership in the Anglican Communion and a means toward Christian reunification.²⁴ By the mid- to late-twentieth century, other struc-

tures emerged as a means for global Anglicanism to express its common life and remain in conversation. The Anglican congresses and in particular the Anglican Congress of 1963 held in Toronto were pivotal in drawing together both clergy and lay people to worship together and explore what it means to be part of a world-

wide communion. Subsequently the Anglican Consultative Council, which meets regularly around the world, has continued this work, and it remains the only international body that includes lay people. The regular meetings of the Primates of all the provinces has taken on an increasing importance and is seen suspiciously by many as attempting to assume a quasi-curial role which is thought to be foreign to Anglican polity.

In modern Anglicanism, disputes about how various provinces and even individual dioceses deal with the ordination of women, same-sex marriage, the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy, and issues of lay presidency at the Holy Eucharist, are increasingly causing a strain on the common life of the Anglican Communion. Provincial independence can also be a cause of great anxiety when different national churches hold very different theological views on these important issues. The temptation has been to seek centralized solutions with possible judicial oversight. The Windsor Report (2004) and the subsequent proposed Anglican Covenant (final draft, 2009) is an attempt to describe Anglican common life in covenantal terms, but also (controversially) proposes sanctions, administered centrally, on those who might break the covenant. It has yet to be universally endorsed, and it is likely that the enforcement piece will prove an obstacle to universal adoption.

"ANGLICANS ARE FAILING TO
RECOGNIZE PATTERNS OF OBEDIENCE
TO CHRIST IN ONE ANOTHER."
- ARCHBISHOP ROWAN WILLIAMS

23. Ward, *Anglican Communion*, 42.

24. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral has its origins in William Reed Huntingdon's *The Church Idea*, and it its adopted form upholds 1) The Holy Scriptures, containing all things necessary to salvation, as the standard of faith; 2) The Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol, and Nicene Creed as the sufficient standard of the Christian faith; 3) The Two sacraments (Baptism and Supper of the Lord); and 4) The historic episcopate as locally adapted. Lambeth Conference 1888:11; Roger Coleman, ed. *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences, 1867-1988* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1992), 13.

20. For a full account of the Colenso trial (and the Long trial, which preceded it), see Jonathan A. Draper, "The Trial of Bishop John William Colenso," in *The Eye of the Storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2003), 306-325.

21. Draper, "Trial," 309.

22. Stephen Neill, *Anglicanism* (Hammondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1958), 306.

As we consider the challenges faced by the Anglican Communion today, it seems to me that the issue at the heart of these challenges is the problem of trust. Diverse and diffuse patterns of faith, forms of worship, and structures of polity characterize the Communion. This reality is not unrelated to the historical and constitutional circumstances and the unique social *milieux* in which each national church or province has developed. It is only natural that each province should value its own norms as the lens through which the rest of the Communion ought to be viewed. Rowan Williams has thoughtfully noted, “Anglicans are failing to recognize patterns of obedience to Christ in one another.”²⁵ This really is the heart of the matter. It is often difficult for constituent parts of the Anglican Communion to trust each other when patterns of Christian life, forms of local polity, modes of worship, and cultural norms seem so different. In response the instinct is to try to establish, if not some centralized magisterium, at least structures that coerce obedience and conformity (both of which are strongly rooted in the Tudor concept of the Church). The current push to accept an Anglican Covenant, which would give judicial authority to the various instruments of communion (the Lambeth Conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates’ Meeting), is not the first time this instinct has been triggered, nor, I expect, will it be the last. At the same time, going back to the earliest days and the *Act in Restraint of Appeals*, there has been an equally powerful instinct to resist appealing beyond the local polity for judicial intervention.²⁶ The question therefore, it seems to me, is not so much how to settle disputes as how to build trust.

In 2008, the Lambeth Conference took a different approach to its deliberations, feeling that its parliamentary approach to meeting was a dominantly western mode of meeting. The conference engaged in a process called “Indaba”, a Zulu word that describes purposeful meeting. *Indaba* was intended as a model through which relationship, understanding, reconciliation, and consensus might be built.²⁷ There are differing opinions as to the success of the approach used at the Lambeth Conference, but it was decided to continue the conversation throughout the Communion through gathering groupings of bishops, priests, and laypeople from around the Communion into smaller groupings for extended periods of encounter. I was privileged to have been involved in the *Continuing Indaba* pilot conversations

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25. Quoted in Gregory Cameron, “Baby’s First Steps: Can the Covenant Proposal Ever Walk?,” in *The Anglican Covenant*, ed. Chapman, 38.

26. Although we must ever remain mindful of Cranmer’s trust in the authority of a General Council.

27. For a full description of *Indaba*, see Phil Groves and Jonathan Draper, eds., *Creating Space* (Anglican Communion, n.d.).

that took place in 2010 through 2012.²⁸ It seems to me that the only way to build trust is to build relationships. *Indaba* may be an imperfect process and it may not provide immediate answers to difficult problems, but it does address the issue of trust. It further provides an additional tool through which conversation can occur and problems can be solved, apart from the traditional judicial and parliamentary models favored by Western Anglicanism. In a truly global Anglican Communion, in which information about the activities of other member churches can be relayed (and commented on and misunderstood!) at lightning speed, it can be easy for the walls of division to go up quickly. It is much more difficult to build meaningful relationships grounded in shared study, discernment, and prayer.

The late Bishop Henry Hill (former co-chair of the Anglican-Orthodox dialogue, and a leader in ecumenical dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox) believed that all ecumenical dialogue started not in discussions of doctrine but in deep prayer together, especially in silence before God. Likewise, the *Indaba* process is a process of building understanding and relationships. It is not the only process, but its underlying conviction that relationships are built on prayer, study, conversation, and cultural immersion seems to me to be a more fruitful way of moving forward in Communion, rather than the judicial option. Throughout Anglicanism’s history, legislative and judicial settlements have been the primary tools through which Anglican provincial autonomy has been established and upheld, and through which uniformity in Anglicanism has

been enforced. One must wonder, though, if these are the most life-giving tools through which our common life might grow and flourish. Gregory Cameron has suggested that a *koinonia* ecclesiology offers an egalitarian rather than hierarchical model, and is a “more porous model of the Church rather than one that is strictly demarcated.”²⁹ If an Anglican covenant can be viewed in this sense, it seems to me it will be a way forward. If the Communion succumbs to the ongoing temptation to adopt an overarching judicial magisterium through Instruments of the Communion that exercise a universal jurisdiction, then I believe true and meaningful *koinonia* in the Anglican Community is very much in jeopardy.

The Rev. Daniel F. Graves is the incumbent of St. Paul’s Anglican Church in Newmarket, ON and the editor of the Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society.

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28. The results of the conversations were compiled and presented in Phil Groves and Angharad Parry, eds., *Living Reconciliation*, (Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 2014).

29. Cameron, “Baby’s First Steps,” 36.



JOHN WILLIAM COLENSO (1814–1883), BISHOP OF NATAL (1853–1883)

“THE FIRST FAIR TRIAL”: THE GENEALOGY OF THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

STEVEN WEDGEWORTH

Triumphalism is a perennial danger to Christian communities, and it shows up in a wide variety of places, sometimes in the most curious ways. For Protestant traditions, one particularly ironic location of triumphalism is their taking credit for the development of civil liberty and particularly religious liberty. An obvious example is the 2003 film *Luther*, an otherwise fine movie which strangely concludes with a claim that the peace of Augsburg led to the 1st Amendment.¹ The Calvinist scratches his head at this, however, since he was very much excluded from that peace.

But Calvinists are guilty of this as well. The famous, and often praiseworthy, Francis Schaeffer once made the claim that John Locke was influenced by and continuing the doctrine of Christian liberty as advocated by Samuel Rutherford.² From this, John Whitehead could create a non-profit called “The Rutherford Institute” which describes itself as “one of the nation’s leading advocates of free speech, religious freedom and civil liberties.” But the historical Samuel Rutherford opposed religious liberty, writing a book called *A Free Disputation Against pretended Liberty of Conscience Tending To Resolve Doubts moved by Mr. John Goodwin, John Baptist, Dr. Jer. Taylor, the Belgic Arminians, Socinians, and other Authors contending for lawless Liberty or licentious Toleration of Sects and Heresies*. This intolerance extended to other Reformed Protestants, and it earned Rutherford an infamous place in John Milton’s poem “On the New Forcers of Conscience Under the Long Parliament.”³ Is it really this Rutherford whom 20th century Americans wish to credit for their modern civil liberties?

This desire to trace a consistent genealogy from Reformation figures to the American founding also shows up in more sophisticated works.

1. This is a simplified presentation of the claim, I admit, but one that captures its intended point.

2. This argument permeates Schaeffer’s *A Christian Manifesto* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982) and be seen explicitly on 31-33. A recent work on the Covenanters has exposed the impossibility of Schaeffer’s historical argument. See, Joseph S. Moore, *Founding Sins: How a Group of Antislavery Radicals Fought to Put Christ into the Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 155-156.

3. Milton wrote: Because you have thrown off your Prelate Lord,/ And with stiff vows renounced his liturgy/ To seize the widowed whore Plurality/ From them whose sin ye envied, not abhorred,/ Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword/ To force our consciences that Christ set free,/ And ride us with a classic hierarchy/ Taught ye by mere A. S. and Rutherford?

Douglas Kelly’s *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World*⁴ gives the credit for 17th and 18th century liberalism to John Calvin, and even David VanDrunen’s *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*⁵, largely a criticism of triumphalistic “Christian America” theories, nevertheless does draw something of a connecting line between John Calvin, Samuel Rutherford, and then American pastors and statesmen like John Witherspoon and John Henry Thornwell.⁶ VanDrunen draws special

attention to Pastor Stuart Robinson, who claims that the “Virginia model” which helped to produce the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights was a part of the inheritance from the Scottish Reformation.⁷ Thus again, we have claims that men who rejected, sometimes vehemently, religious liberty and the toleration of differing sects, nevertheless significantly influenced the American notion of separation of church and state.

What are we to make of these genealogies? Should we accept the more progressive-Enlightenment narrative that our modern establishment is wholly the product of the Unitarians and Deists? Or should we perhaps quit the endeavor altogether, content to believe that history cannot be “explained” so much as observed?

A slightly different approach to the genealogy of religious liberty is taken by Robert L. Dabney. Dabney, a nearly toxic reference in most circles today, was a man of great faults but also of keen insight. He opposed many things. He opposed theological liberalism, and he also opposed social and political liberalism. Indeed, he opposed emancipation, he opposed female suffrage, and he even opposed dancing. Yet for all of these illiberal ideals of his own, he could also be surprisingly progressive in important ways, and this shows up in his view of the history of the American religious landscape.

4. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992.

5. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010.

6. Calvin appears throughout VanDrunen’s work, whereas Rutherford is appealed to in the section on “early Reformed resistance theory,” 145-146.

7. It’s worth pointing out that VanDrunen does put some critical questions to Robinson’s thesis, but mostly by way of promoting more continuity between the “Virginia model” and the “New England model.” He does not seriously challenge the idea that the ideals of the Scottish Reformation influenced the American founding. He admits internal challenges and tensions, but still presents a mostly positive case for Robinson’s claim.

When it comes to the question of religious liberty and the separation of church and state, Dabney is strikingly open about the discontinuity between the American settlement and earlier, even Reformed, precedents.⁸ He criticizes Calvin's position as "theocratic" and even faults the established churches of Scotland and England for this error as well.⁹ Dabney contrasts the American ideal against proximate notions of religious liberty held by Emer de Vattel, William Gladstone, and Thomas Chalmers. Dabney can even say:

The separation and independence of Church and State was not only not the doctrine of the Reformation. No Christian nation holds it to this day, except ours. In 17th and 18th centuries some Independents and others in England, and Seceders in Scotland, advocated such separation, but were branded as outrageous radicals. All the Reformation Churches, Lutheran and Reformed, held it as an axiom, that the State had, under God, the supreme care of religion. "*Cujus Regio, ejus Religio.*" Dissenters of England now usually hold our views (as well as Seceders in Scotland), called there voluntarism. The Free Church, at the head of whom was Dr. Chalmers, held to establishments. Ours is the first fair trial.¹⁰

What Dabney sees as unique to the American experiment is that it has a full separation of church and state. No denomination or sect is favored with government force, and none is given public financial support. Coercion is out of the question. Heresies are not treated as crimes, and the civil magistrate understands its ends as limited to "time and earth."¹¹

Dabney explains this in more detail:

In the state, the good of the governed being the object, (in temporal interests) the governed are the earthly sources of sovereignty. Rulers have only a delegated power, and are the agents of the community, who depute to them, for the general good, so much of power as is necessary.¹²

And:

The only means that can be used to produce religious belief are moral. No man is to be visited with any civil penalty for his belief, as long as he does not directly infringe upon the purpose of the government, which is the protection of the temporal rights of his fellow-citizens. The State is bound to see that every man enjoys his religious freedom untouched, because the right to this religious freedom is a secular, or political right.¹³

This is indeed quite different from the view of Calvin, and it should be noted that Calvin did not merely make a theocratic argument as claimed by Dabney. Calvin did often take ancient Israel as a model

polity, but he did not assume that later polities should follow it exactly, nor did he make his argument for statecraft merely from assumptions about special revelation. He appealed to natural law, and defined the duties of civil magistrates by appealing to the writings of Cicero and Plato.¹⁴ Thus Dabney's arguments are not unassailable. Still, our interest is in the fact that he indeed notes the contrast and argues a more modern view. He, a Calvinist, offers Calvin no quarter on this point.

How does Dabney trace the development of religious liberty, then? He presents a complex history:

The first treatise taking the true ground, as far as I know, was written by Brown (founder of sect [sic] of Brownists). Dr. Jno. Owen [sic] wrote for the same cause. Dr. Jeremy Taylor wrote his plea for liberty of prophesying. Milton and Locke are well known. Roger Williams, of Rhode Island, perhaps deserves the credit of being the first Ruler in the world, who granted absolute freedom to all sects, having power to do otherwise.¹⁵

This list is very interesting, as it crosses denominational lines. The names all come from the 17th century, but some are radicals while others are establishment figures. Some are fringe figures, while others are giants of Western culture. Certain absences are also notable. We do not see the names of Luther, Calvin, or Rutherford. Indeed, we would expect not to, given what else Dabney has said on this subject. But we also do not see Voltaire or Rousseau. All of the names listed are Christians of one sort or another, though Locke's status is certainly up for debate. In fact, all of the names are British Protestants, with only Williams being wholly outside the Church of England's sphere of influence.

The "Brown" named by Dabney is Robert Browne, a separatist from the Church of England who, as Dabney mentions, founded a sect that came to be known as the Brownists. The next name is John Owen. Though the abbreviation may appear corrupted in this place, a parallel passage in Dabney's *The Practical Philosophy* also names Owen as a key originator of the doctrine of religious liberty.¹⁶ Owen was distinguished among English Puritans by his great learning, but also by his support for independency, which seems to be Dabney's interest in naming him. Then comes Jeremy Taylor, a minister in the Church of England who, nevertheless, published a work in defense of religious toleration in 1646, about forty years prior to Locke's more famous works on the topic.¹⁷ Taylor's name, we should note, actually appears in the subtitle of Rutherford's polemic against liberty of conscience. Also present in that subtitle is John Goodwin, associate of John Milton, the same Milton who is next in Dabney's historical list. The last two, John Locke and Roger Williams, are more commonly cited in this sort of history.

8. Dabney's discussion can be found in his *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 873-887.

9. *Ibid.*, 886-887.

10. *Ibid.*, 880.

11. *Ibid.*, 879.

12. *Ibid.*, 875.

13. *Ibid.*, 879.

14. *Institutes*, book 4, chapter 20; see especially sections 9, 14-16.

15. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, 880.

16. *The Practical Philosophy* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1984), 401. Interestingly, in *The Practical Philosophy*, Dabney distinguishes between a theological doctrine of religious liberty and a political separation of church and state. That political separation, he says, was truly founded by Jefferson and Madison. In this same place Dabney writes, "Virginia was the first commonwealth in the world which, having sovereign power to do otherwise, established full religious liberty, instead of toleration, with independence of Church and state...."

17. This work is entitled *A Discourse on the Liberty of Prophesying*.

This list of Christian thinkers would seem to suggest that the view of religious liberty favored by Dabney owes its inspiration to intra-British struggles between competing varieties of Protestantism. Indeed, at the time of the American founding English Protestantism, having become Anglo-American Protestantism, was certainly the religious center of gravity, and the major divisions were largely between a latitudinarian Anglicanism and the various descendents of Puritanism, to include heretical offshoots like Unitarianism and Quakerism. It would be interesting to see Dabney's comments on those less-Orthodox groups, but he does not include representatives from their movements in his genealogy.

What we can also see from Dabney's perspective is that, while America was a unique and even progressive political experiment, it was not a secular experiment, at least not if that word secular means "non-Christian" or "anti-Christian." Indeed, Dabney had said "No *Christian nation* holds it [separation of church and state] to this day, except ours."¹⁸ America, though possessing this true separation of church and state, was still a "Christian nation."

Dabney thought that this was true in fact as well as name, as he also wrote:

The fact is, that this day, notwithstanding our heterogeneous people, and immense growth, we have more gospel, in proportion to our wants, than any except Scotland. ...Our success is the grand argument against State Churches.¹⁹

In an essay on civic ethics in *The Practical Philosophy*, Dabney compares his favored position, what he takes to be the actual American situation, with the version of religious toleration alongside establishment promoted by Thomas Chalmers, Lord Macaulay, and (interestingly enough) Patrick Henry. Dabney cites three points of agreement between the two positions with a final disagreement. The first three positions are as follows:

First, but by reason that [the State] is entitled to exist, it is entitled to use all means essential to its existence and the fulfillment of its natural ends. This is granted. Second, they proceed to say, that popular morality is essential to its existence and the fulfillment of its natural ends. Third, there is no adequate basis for popular morality except the prevalence of some form or forms of reasonably orthodox, evangelical Christianity.²⁰

Of these claims Dabney says, "No experienced man contest either of the first three propositions." It is only the fourth which Dabney rejects, and which he claims America has rejected. This fourth point is "State aid," which includes both the use of coercive force and the spending of public finances to favor one religion or even "some one or more denominations of Christians, reasonably orthodox, evangelical and pure."²¹

Dabney gives several reasons for rejecting this mild form of religious establishment, but one of the main ones is that he believes that it

18. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, 880

19. *Ibid.*, 886.

20. *The Practical Philosophy*, 398.

21. *Ibid.*

will not actually achieve the stated goal of preserving true religion and morality. Instead, he believes "voluntaryism" is the true way to preserve spirituality in a society. He writes:

Experience shows that free and voluntary effort of the denominations, all wisely and equitably protected by the government, but left independent, will come nearer evangelizing the whole society than any one endowed. The United States is the best example. For when we consider the rapid growth of its population, we see that the voluntary efforts of the denominations have done relatively more than any churches enjoying State aid in other lands.²²

We could simplify this point by saying that, for Dabney, the separation of church and state is the most effective way of securing "popular morality" which is "essential" to the existence of the state and "the fulfillment of its natural ends."

It would be interesting to compare Dabney's optimism about America's spiritual character with Philip Schaff's similar optimism.²³ Both men believed that America was exemplary as a Christian nation, and both credited this success to the separation of church and state. Of course, the factors that made this so were historically contingent, and one might rightly question whether they were ever very stable. As the actual character of the people in America changed, so too did their gospel fidelity.

Dabney also bases much of his argument for the separation of church and state on his rejection of "Erastianism." He uses the term in a rather loose fashion, even calling Calvin's Geneva "Erastian."²⁴ Thus we might also question whether a person who differed with Dabney's ecclesiology on this point, whether they actually are Erastians or simply more sympathetic to the older ecclesiologies of Luther or Calvin, would find Dabney's claims so convincing.

Still, with these questions outstanding, we can conclude a few things about Dabney's view of the ideological heritage of religious liberty. He admits that it was not present in any mature form in Luther and Calvin's day, yet he believes that its development was logical, harmonious, and even necessary, and he believes that it did develop, particularly within British Protestantism. As this theological and philosophical conviction began to exert influence over the English and North American thinkers, it was able to find its first political expression in the American experiment, starting with Virginia. This religious liberty created a true and full separation of church and state, but it did not create a godless society. Rather, according to Dabney, it created the, it created the polity with the largest number of orthodox and evangelical people in the history of the world.

Steven Wedgworth (M.Div., Reformed Theological Seminary) is the pastor of Christ Church in Lakeland, FL. He is the founder of The Calvinist International and a directing board member of The Davenant Trust.

22. *Ibid.*, 399.

23. For an overview of Schaff on this point, see my essay "Views from 19th-Century Europe: How the Separation of Church and State was Seen from Abroad," in *For Law and for Liberty: Essays on the Trans-Atlantic Legacy of Protestant Political Thought*, ed. W. Bradford Littlejohn (Moscow, ID: Davenant Press, 2016), 85-127.

24. *The Practical Philosophy*, 400.

PEARL AND LEAVEN: THE GOSPEL CHURCH

AS INSTITUTE AND ORGANISM

JORDAN J. BALLOR

A hallmark of neo-Calvinist thinking about the church in the nineteenth century and beyond is the distinction between the church understood as an institution and as an organism. The Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) elaborated this doctrine in his opening sermon as pastor in Amsterdam in 1870. The sermon's title, "Rooted & Grounded," is derived from the hope expressed by the Apostle Paul that the church would be "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17).¹ The church is a living body, rooted in its connection with the living Word, Jesus Christ, the true vine and source of life. The church is also grounded in its institutional expression, its confessions, teachings, and practices.

The distinction is intended to articulate the authentic Reformed position over against two errors: the overemphasis on the institution found in Christendom and the overemphasis on the organic life of the church found in radical sects. Only the Reformed view, and only as it increasingly defined itself against older models of church and state, keeps the proper balance and relationship between these two aspects of the church's existence.

The magisterial reformers had articulated a distinction between the visible and the invisible church as a way to explain and understand the difference between membership in a particular earthly community and citizenship in heaven. Kuyper develops a new dimension to this received understanding by exploring the difference between the church in its formal, institutional and its disseminated, organic expressions. The institutional church has to do with what the church does in some kind of formal, ecclesiastical sense. Here the traditional marks of the church are in view: the institutional church is defined by pure preaching of the gospel, right administration of the sacraments, and appropriate exercise of church discipline. The institutional church is visible when the church gathers together in corporate worship.

The organic church, however, comes to expression as the church is spread throughout the world in various arenas and vocations. If the institutional church is found in worship, the organic church manifests itself in work. The church as institution is gathered for worship; the church as organism is scattered for work. Older models of the relationship between the church and the world, such as those found in Christendom, tended to conflate civil and ecclesiastical powers, often with ecclesiastical power absolutizing the authority of institutional church. This was, thought Kuyper, the fundamental error of Rome and one that was largely replicated among early magisterial Protestant

communities. And in contrast to the ecclesialization of all of life under Christendom, various radical responses tended to emphasize the organic and spontaneous aspects of the Christian religion. Here the formal structures of Christian worship and church life could be seen as dispensable, and even as impediments, to true faith.

The institute/organism distinction is thus intended to address an inconsistency in the Reformed embrace of older Christendom models while at the same time guarding against excessive pietistic spiritualization and understandings of faith as merely expressions of individual experience. It is also designed to provide a framework for understanding how the church ought to function within a pluralized and institutionally secularized society. The institutional church, argues Kuyper, has no right to impose its confession on the world through the use

of the civil government's coercive force. "We advocate a rigorously confessional church," says Kuyper, "but not a confessional civil society, not a confessional state."² In this way Kuyper's vision was of a "free church" and a "holy nation."³ Thus, he asserts, "We must be free in order to escape Rome's paralysis, but we must no less be church in order to escape the draining away of our lifeblood as a result of spiritualism."⁴ The true church of Christ, according to Reformed conviction, "envisions through her influence on state and civil society nothing other than

a moral triumph, not the establishing of confessional ties, nor the exercise of authoritarian dominance."⁵

Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), Kuyper's younger antirevolutionary colleague and successor to Kuyper as professor of theology at the Free University of Amsterdam, articulated an analogous distinction in his description of the kingdom of God as both a pearl and a leaven.⁶ For Bavinck, the gospel comes to expression as a pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46) in the institutional church's proclamation of the gospel and administration of the means of grace. Salvation is

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2. Abraham Kuyper, *Common Grace*, vol. 2, ed. Jordan J. Ballor and Stephen J. Grabill (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, forthcoming), 36.3.

3. See John Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001); and John Halsey Wood Jr., *Going Dutch in the Modern Age: Abraham Kuyper's Struggle for a Free Church in the Netherlands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

4. Kuyper, "Rooted and Grounded," 49.

5. Kuyper, *Common Grace*, 2.36.3.

6. See Jessica Driesenga, "A Pearl and a Leaven: The Twofold Call of the Gospel," in *The Church's Social Responsibility: Reflections on the Evangelical Church and Social Justice*, ed. Jordan J. Ballor and Robert Joustra (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2015), 39-45.

1. See Abraham Kuyper, "Rooted and Grounded," in *On the Church*, ed. John Halsey Wood Jr. and Andrew M. McGinnis (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 46.

like a pearl that is worth everything we have. But this salvation is not just a matter of a one-time, individual experience. The regenerated and converted person, increasingly dying to self and living to God, continues to live in the world. As the Belgic Confession puts it, “those who are regenerated have in them a two-fold life, the one corporal and temporal, which they have from the first birth and is common to all men; the other, spiritual and heavenly, which is given them in their second birth” (Art. 35). This second birth creates human beings who still live in the world and encounter it in their daily work, occupations, and social relationships.

The organic church is thus the primary way that the church exercise a reforming influence on the broader society outside the walls of the institutional church. “Although the worth of Christianity is certainly not only, not exclusively, and not even in the first place determined by its influence on civilization,” writes Bavinck, “it nevertheless is undeniable that Christianity indeed exerts such influence. The kingdom of heaven is not only a pearl; it is



a leaven as well.”⁷ For both Kuyper and Bavinck, the organic church is the living foundation for the edifice of the institutional church, which serves to support and instruct the body of Christ.

This dual emphasis on the importance of the church both as an institution and as an organism, akin to the biblical images of a pearl and a leaven, is a significant legacy of Dutch Reformed ecclesiology in the nineteenth century, and one that offers much help for navigating the difficult and perennial challenges of the church’s mission in the world.

Dr. Jordan J. Ballor is a senior research fellow at the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty and a general editor of the Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology (abrahamkuyper.com)

7. Herman Bavinck, “Christian Principles and Social Relationships,” in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 141.

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