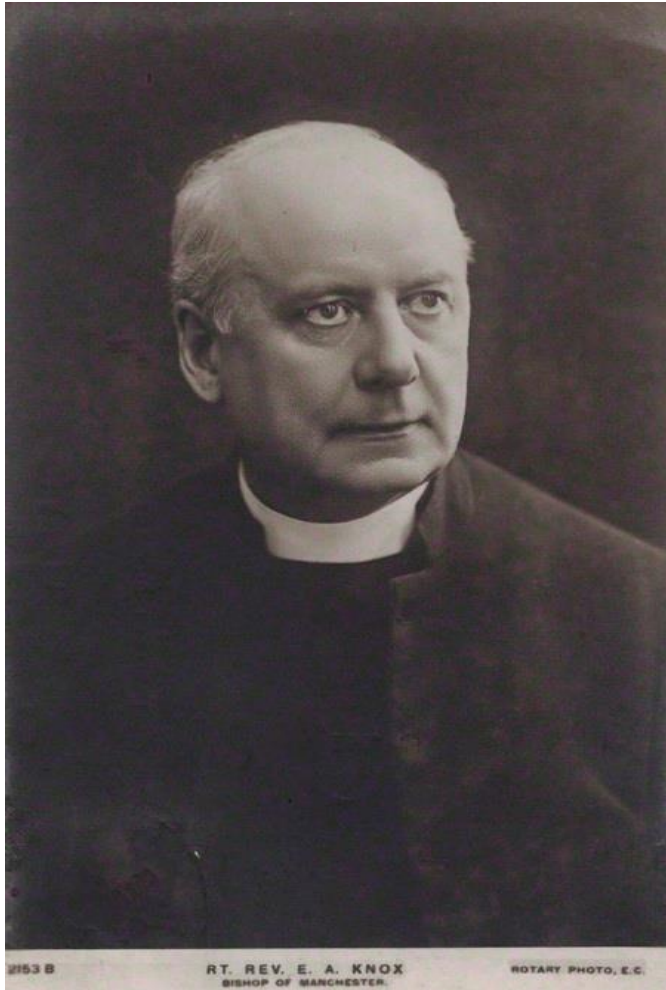


**‘A DISRUPTION
WITHIN’**

The need for doctrinal renewal

D. A. Scales



The Oxford Movement 'has left behind it a disruption within the Church ... the problem which the Oxford Movement has set the Church of England to solve is that of retaining ecclesiastical unity in spite of doctrinal divergences which often amount to contradictions. ... Can a creedless Church be a teacher of a nation and of the world?'

Edmund Arbuthnot Knox

Bishop of Manchester, 1901 – 1920

**‘A DISRUPTION
WITHIN’**

The need for doctrinal renewal

D. A. Scales

THE HARRISON TRUST

2020

A lecture given in Oxford
on August 28th., 2019,
at the Autumn Conference of the
Protestant Reformation Society
on “The Way Forward –
A Manifesto for the Church of England”

© The Harrison Trust, 2020

Published by The Harrison Trust,
15 Grange Court, Cambridge, CB3 9BD

Printed by PLAN-IT Reprographics,
Atlas House, Cambridge Place, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 1NS

ISBN 0 907223 36 2

‘A disruption within’

The need for doctrinal renewal

The urgency of the challenge facing us is not in doubt. Attendance at Church of England services has declined at an average of one per cent per annum over recent decades and, in addition, the age profile of our membership has become significantly older than that of the population ... Renewing and reforming aspects of our institutional life is a necessary but far from sufficient response to the challenges facing the Church of England ... Around 40 per cent of parish clergy are due to retire over the next decade or so.¹

This was the assessment of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 2015. In the Church of England usual Sunday attendance in 2017 was somewhat over 700,000; it is estimated that some thirty church buildings are being made redundant each year.

In looking at the dire situation in which the Church of England finds itself – a situation shared by the Church of Scotland and all the major Protestant denominations – we are not unaware that there are many faithful churches where Biblical truth is preached and where the Lord is adding ‘to the church daily such as should be saved’, and we rejoice in that fact. But our concern in this paper is for the Church of England as a whole, and for the nation as a whole.

It is the contention of this paper that the way forward for the Church of England is to rediscover the true source of authority in Christianity – the supreme authority of Holy Scripture, which is the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God – and in obedience to Scripture to rediscover the Biblical Gospel; to define carefully in the light of Scripture what a true Christian is; and, again by Scripture, to clarify what the Christian Church is. If it is not to continue to wither and die, the Church of England will need to cast out the sacerdotalism that has

¹ From a paper by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in preparation for the General Synod, February 2015

undermined it for nearly two hundred years and the liberalism that has been a malign influence since the eighteenth century, and rediscover its heritage of Biblical doctrine.

The Reformation Settlement

At the end of the Reformation period, the Church of England had a clearly-defined, Biblical, Reformed standard of doctrine in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, which reached their final form in 1571; as a fuller exposition of its doctrine in sermon form, there were also the Homilies. The Church of England had a liturgy that sought to express that doctrine, the Book of Common Prayer, which is thought by many to be an outstanding book of Biblical devotion.

It has been fashionable to speak of the Church of England as a *via media*, a half-way position, between Rome and Geneva – Geneva being seen as the epitome of Reformed teaching. This is one of several misstatements which reveal, not an accurate appraisal of the facts, but an illusory wish on the part of the speaker. There is no half-way position between Rome and Reformed Protestantism; in essence there is a stark choice between Romanism and Protestantism.² If there is a grouping that does not sit perfectly in that division, it is Lutheranism, which has never embraced a Reformed teaching on the sacraments; but the Church of England, like the other Reformed churches, teaches a Reformed doctrine of the sacraments. In his magisterial work, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Philip Schaff rightly placed the Articles of Religion among the creeds of the evangelical Reformed Churches.³ There was a diversity between some of the Church of England and some who are termed ‘puritans’ (an elusive term, as not a few Elizabethan bishops were ‘puritans’); but this was ‘*not* doctrinal, but disciplinary and ecclesiastical’⁴ – both groups were Reformed.

² All the Protestant churches taught the Biblical doctrine of predestination and election; the Arminian heresy did not appear in England until late in the sixteenth century, and did not gain any substantial following till well into the seventeenth century.

³ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (sixth edition, 1931), I, xiii – xv, 354 - 359

⁴ W.H.G. Thomas, *The Principles of Theology* (1930), li, n. 1

This settlement remained unbroken for over 250 years. There were indeed times of spiritual deadness, but the foundations remained. When the leaders of the eighteenth century revival were accused of novelty in their teaching, they replied with justice that they were simply being faithful to the foundation teachings of the Church of England. Thus George Whitefield wrote: “The principles which I maintain, are purely scriptural, and every way agreeable to the church of *England* articles.”⁵

The breaking of doctrinal unity: the Oxford Movement

The beginning of the Oxford Movement in 1833 marked the beginning of an attempt to undermine the Reformation Settlement and to facilitate a rapprochement between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. This was no *via media*, but an attempt to coalesce two antithetical theological systems: there is no midway position between the Reformation doctrine of the Church of England and Roman Catholicism or Rome’s younger sister, Anglo-Catholicism. E.A. Litton wrote:

Romanism (including its mutilated counter part, Anglo-Catholicism) is a religion of the incarnation, the virtue of which is communicated by the sacraments; Protestantism is a religion of the atonement, the virtue of which is appropriated by direct faith in Christ, His word and His work, not, however, to the exclusion of sacraments in their proper place. Broadly, this is the difference. On neither side are the cardinal facts of revelation, or their connexion, denied; there could have been no atonement if there had not been an incarnation; but the stress laid on the one or the other, and particularly differences of view as regards the instrument of appropriation, may affect our whole conception of Christianity and lead to widely different theological systems.⁶

The Oxford Movement may be said to have begun in April 1833, when John Henry Newman and Richard Hurrell Froude visited Rome, and sought an interview with Nicholas Wiseman, the head of the

⁵ George Whitefield, *Letters* (1971) [= *Works*, I], 111

⁶ E.A. Litton, *Introduction to Dogmatic Theology* (edited by P.E. Hughes; 1960), xiv

English College in Rome. Froude recorded that their purpose was to find out

whether they would take us in on any terms to which we could twist our consciences, and we found to our dismay that not one step could be gained without swallowing the Council of Trent as a whole.⁷

Thus the goal of the Oxford Movement was set from the very beginning.

The Protestant and Reformed Church of England acknowledged the supreme authority of Holy Scripture: the Articles recognised that

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation⁸

and the Articles constantly acknowledged this in practice by their undeviating appeal to Scripture as the supreme authority. It was clear, however, that the Oxford Movement from the very beginning was looking to a different final authority: Tract 1 was concerned with the bishops as ‘the successors of the Apostles’; it pointed out to the clergy ‘the real ground on which our authority is built, – our apostolical descent’; and it commended ‘the doctrine of the apostolical succession’. The clergy were exhorted:

Exalt our Holy Fathers the Bishops, as the Representatives of the Apostles, and the Angels of the Churches; and magnify your office, as being ordained by them to take part in their Ministry.

Newman was seeking a certainty which he failed to find in Holy Scripture, and which twelve years later he was convinced that he had found by surrendering to Rome.

⁷ R.H. Froude, *Remains* (1838), I, 306-307.

⁸ Article VI

‘How then can man be justified with God?’⁹ – What is a Christian?

Article XI answers this question by stating that:

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings

and by referring to the Homily on Justification for a fuller statement of this teaching. We are justified efficiently by the grace of God – the grace of God is the ultimate cause of our justification; we are justified meritoriously by the righteousness of Christ – Christ’s sacrifice and perfect fulfilling of the law are the meritorious cause of our justification; and we are justified instrumentally by faith – faith is the instrument or means by which we apprehend justification. Thomas Cranmer wrote the Homily of Salvation.¹⁰ In that Homily we find this teaching set out:

the apostle toucheth specially three things, which must concur and go together, in our justification:
upon God’s part, his great mercy and grace;
upon Christ’s part, justice [righteousness], that is, the satisfaction of God’s justice, or price of our redemption, by the offering of his body and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly and thoroughly;
and upon our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesu Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God’s working in us.¹¹

This statement of how a man is justified with God, of what makes him a Christian, is at one with Litton’s description quoted earlier:

Protestantism is a religion of the atonement, the virtue of which is appropriated by direct faith in Christ, His word and his work, not, however, to the exclusion of sacraments in their proper place.¹²

⁹ Job 25: 4

¹⁰ J. Woolton, *The Christian Manual* (Parker Society; 1851), 31

¹¹ (Ed.) J.E. Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer* (Parker Society; 1846), 129. Cf. ‘And this justification or righteousness, which we so receive by God’s mercy and Christ’s merits, embraced by faith, is taken and accepted, and allowed of God for our perfect and full justification.’ *Op. cit.*, 128

Baptism

The Articles give clear teaching on baptism. With regard to the two sacraments generally, we learn that

they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him.¹³

The Catechism further states that a sacrament is:

an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.

Of baptism, in particular, Article XXVII declares:

it is also a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.

Baptism is a sign, that is, a pledge or seal, of new birth (regeneration); it is like an instrument, a legal instrument or deed of conveyance, which conveys the promise of possession; if it is to convey what it signifies, it must be rightly (*recte*) received. They that receive this sign become members of the visible church of Christ; and, when it is rightly received, it promises that the recipient is grafted into the invisible church of Christ. The focus is on what God promises: baptism's primary purpose is not to give man an opportunity to pledge his confidence in God, but to pronounce in visible words God's promises of grace – new birth, forgiveness of sin, and adoption to be sons of God.

The Anglo-Catholic (and Roman Catholic) teaching about baptism is radically different; it declares that the outward sign and the thing signified are inextricably linked; so that, if the sacrament is

¹² Litton, *op. cit.*, xiv

¹³ Article XXV

administered, the blessing signified by it – regeneration – is automatically given. This inextricable link is often referred to by the Latin phrase *ex opere operato* – from the performance of the deed / by the very act of administration – that is, regeneration is given by the very act of administering baptism; this doctrine is referred to as one of baptismal regeneration. Canon W. Hay M.H. Aitken contrasted the Anglo-Catholic and Reformed positions as follows:

According to the former theory, no baptized member of our congregations needs to be born again, or, indeed, can be, although his life may be a discredit to our common humanity, and it would seem that the only hope for him lay in the possibility of so radical a change; according to the other, all who have never consciously exercised faith in the special promise of God made in Baptism need to be told, “Ye must be born again”.¹⁴

Anglo-Catholic teaching undermined the scriptural teaching of the Reformation, and was in conformity with the teaching of the Council of Trent: ‘If any one shall say, that by the said sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred *ex opere operato*, but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices for obtaining grace; let him be anathema.’¹⁵

The Lord’s Supper

The Articles give clear teaching on the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper: it is

a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ’s death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.¹⁶

It is essential, if one is to benefit from the sacrament, to receive it with faith. The purpose of the Supper is to remind us of Christ, and to encourage us to participate in the benefits of his sacrificial and atoning

¹⁴ C.S. Carter and G.E.A. Weekes, *The Protestant Dictionary* (2nd 1933), 78; cf. W.H.M.H. Aitken, *The Doctrine of Baptism: mechanical or spiritual?* (1901)

¹⁵ Session VII, Canon 8

¹⁶ Article XXVIII

death: the Article quotes St. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 10, telling us that our eating and drinking is a spiritual partaking, or communion, or fellowship in the death of Christ. 'The Holy Supper is not designed to effect a Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ peculiar in kind';¹⁷ in his manhood, he is in heaven; spiritually he dwells in the heart of all believers. Richard Hooker wrote:

The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament.¹⁸

There is no sacrifice in the Lord's Supper. In it, as in Scripture, and as in Baptism, God speaks to man. There is only one mediatorial sacrifice under the New Covenant:

The Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone.¹⁹

The Lord's Supper proclaims that sacrifice to us and invites us to share its benefits. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are "certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us".²⁰

The Tractarians and their successors have taught a different doctrine. Though its manner is often undefined, they teach a presence of Christ in or with the bread and wine (a Roman or Lutheran view) and all the concomitants of such a view follow: most obviously, that all who receive the bread and the wine are partakers of Christ;²¹ and that reservation of the sacrament should be allowed for the adoration of Christ said to be present in the elements. In their teaching the manward direction is lost, and the emphasis is on a Godward act, in which a priest is offering again the sacrifice of Calvary – the Roman doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass.

¹⁷ H.C.G. Moule, *The Supper of the Lord* [1899], 47

¹⁸ Richard Hooker, *Works* (arranged J. Keble) (c³1845), ii, 352

¹⁹ Article XXXI

²⁰ Article XXV

²¹ cf. Article XXIX

We see in the details of modern liturgies of the Church of England such erroneous teaching – the suggestion that we have something to offer to God in the sacrament, and the provision for reservation. This is no small matter. Thomas Cranmer wrote:

the very body of the tree, or rather the roots of the weeds, is the popish doctrine of transubstantiation, of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament of the altar (as they call it), and the sacrifice and oblation of Christ made by the priest, for the salvation of the quick and the dead. Which roots if they be suffered in the Lord's vineyard they will overspread all the ground again with the old errors and superstitions. These injuries to Christ be so intolerable, that no christian heart can willingly bear them.²²

Protestantism values and esteems the two sacraments, as instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ for our benefit; but it recognises them as ancillary to the ministry of the Word; the sacraments are, in a favourite phrase of the Reformers, 'visible words.'

The first 46 Tracts, published between September 1833 and October 1834, were issued as a single volume in November 1834, with a Preface (an 'Advertisement') written by Newman. In this he extolled the 'Apostolic succession' and lamented the increase of 'schism', by which he meant Dissent. In this he made a fundamental distinction between Christianity founded on the preaching of God's Word and an Apostolical Ministry founded on the sacraments:

Experience has shewn the inefficacy of the mere injunctions of Church order ... in restraining from schism the awakened and anxious sinner; who goes to a dissenting preacher "because (as he expresses it) he gets good from him:" and though he does not stand excused in God's sight for yielding to the temptation, surely the Ministers of the Church are not blameless if, by keeping back the more gracious and consoling truths provided for the little ones of Christ, they indirectly lead him into it. Had he been taught as a child, that the Sacraments, not preaching, are the sources of Divine Grace; that the Apostolical ministry had a virtue in it which went out over the whole Church, when sought by the prayer of faith; that fellowship with it was a gift and privilege, as well as a

²² (Ed.) J.E. Cox, *Writings and Disputations of Thomas Cranmer relative to the Lord's Supper* (Parker Society; 1844), 6

duty, we could not have had so many wanderers from our fold²³

There we have Tractarianism, Anglo-Catholicism, and Roman Catholicism epitomised: “the Sacraments, not preaching, are the sources of Divine Grace”. Anglo-Catholicism is an alien religion, foreign to the teaching and beliefs of the Reformed Church of England.

What is the Church?

To view the last two hundred years in a correct perspective, we need to understand the importance of the doctrine of the Church. The Reformers recognised the distinction between the visible and the invisible church. Article XIX in particular sets this out:

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

Baptism makes the person baptized a member of the visible church of Christ, but it does not *ex opere operato* make that person a member of the invisible church; that is a work of the Holy Spirit, as Article XVII teaches: they

be called according to God’s purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ.

It is, therefore, possible for a person to be a member of the visible church and not be a member of the invisible church; indeed, the parable of the wheat and the tares teaches this clearly.²⁴ The Roman claim that there is no salvation outside the church is true only in a sense other than that which Rome teaches – there is no salvation outside the invisible church, because the invisible church is the congregation of the saved; but the faith taught by the Church of Rome is not conducive to

²³ *Tracts for the Times*, I, for 1833-4 (1838 edition), iv

²⁴ Matthew 13: 24-30 & 36-40

salvation. It would be foolish to apply that dictum to an organisation in which the pure Word of God is not preached, and in which the Sacraments be not duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance.

The Roman and Anglo-Catholic doctrine of the Church does not acknowledge the distinction between the visible and the invisible church. Litton wrote

According to the teaching of Rome, a man is a member of Christ who has received baptism and acknowledges the supremacy of the Pope, whatever he may be inwardly; and the Church itself is defined to be in essence a visible body²⁵

Bible-believing Protestant churches may recognise their essential unity, even if they have differences as to some doctrines or as to church order; Rome can only think in terms of union, the joining together of outward organisations, because it thinks only in terms of the visible church.

The knowledge that there is a visible and invisible church will affect our judgement of certain current ideas. We are often pressed to accept as Christian all who would call themselves Christian, regardless of whether their beliefs are in accord with Scripture, and regardless of whether their lives indicate obedience to Biblical teaching; but, as Thomas Rogers wrote, commenting on Article XIX: 'The members of the visible Church are some of them for God, and some against God'.²⁶

So, 'the distinction between the Church visible and the Church invisible is a legitimate one, and deserving of the prominent place which it holds in all the Protestant Confessions.'²⁷ We must constantly keep this distinction in view: as Hooker wrote,

For lack of diligent observing the difference between the Church of God mystical and visible, the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed.²⁸

²⁵ Litton, *op. cit.*, 381-382

²⁶ (Ed.) J.J.S. Perowne, *The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England ... by Thomas Rogers* (Parker Society; 1854), 164-165

²⁷ Litton, *op. cit.*, 380

²⁸ Richard Hooker, *Works* (arranged J. Keble)³ (1845), *Ecclesiastical Polity*, iii, 2, 9

One further point: the Reformed Church of England has never taught that episcopacy is an essential mark of the Church. The Article requires the pure preaching of the Word of God and the due administration of the sacraments; in one of the Homilies discipline is added. Bishops are mentioned twice in the Articles: in Article XXXII we are told that Bishops, Priests, and Deacons may marry; and Article XXXVI declares that the Ordinal has nothing in it that is of itself superstitious and ungodly. There is no statement that bishops are required for a Biblical and legitimate church order. P.E. Hughes wrote:

It is noteworthy that Whitgift, in common with the other divines of the sixteenth century, though a defender of the episcopal form of government which the Church of England had retained, refuses to make episcopacy a mark of the true Church.²⁹

In 1888, at the second Lambeth Conference, a gathering of many Anglican bishops from around the world, a list of four criteria for reunion (the Lambeth Quadrilateral) was agreed. These were: Holy Scripture; the historic creeds; the two sacraments; and the historic episcopate. But this was a grave error, a fruit of Newman's obsession with apostolical succession, seeking to include an unbiblical criterion as a requirement for reunion. John Whitgift argued that "there is no one certain kind of government in the church which must of necessity be perpetually observed."³⁰

The ordained ministry

The general state of the medieval priesthood was scandalous. Morally there was a great deal of concubinage, for which a priest could pay his bishop to be excused. Doctrinally the offering of the mass was the great central activity of the church. Saying mass did not require any understanding in the priest; many priests had no understanding of Latin, in which the mass was conducted.

The Reformers' view of ministry was radically different from the medieval one. The minister was a messenger from God to men, not a

²⁹ Philip E. Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers* (second edition, 1980), 234

³⁰ John Ayre, *The Works of John Whitgift*, III (Parker Society; 1853), 214

representative of men before God. If he was to be able to preach and teach, he must be learned in the Scriptures: improving the knowledge and understanding of the clergy was a slow task, but many efforts were made. In 1586 Archbishop Whitgift issued “Orders for the better increase of learning in the inferior ministers, and for more diligent preaching and catechising”, which required clergy who did not have a licence to preach to obtain a copy of the *Decades* of Heinrich Bullinger of Zürich; the clergyman was to make notes on one chapter of Scripture each day, and on one sermon of Bullinger each week, and produce his notebook for inspection once in every quarter.³¹

The Ordinal makes the character of Christian ministry clear: ministers are

to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord’s family; to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad ... that they may be saved through Christ for ever.

As a symbol of his authority to preach and as his essential equipment for his office, a deacon was given a New Testament, a priest or presbyter was given a Bible, and a bishop was given a Bible.

This was in marked contrast to the Roman Ordinal, which clothes the man about to be made priest with sacerdotal vesture, in particular the chasuble (a large poncho-like garment), and gives him a chalice and paten, as symbols of his calling to offer the mass.

Distinctive dress for the clergy was retained in the Church of England at the Reformation; this was of no doctrinal significance. In particular, clergy were to wear a surplice and scarf whenever they officiated at a service. These distinctive garments became a cause of controversy, because many, often now termed puritans, considered them as vestiges of Rome, ‘the relics of the Amorites’. The same dress was required of clergy in all services; no distinction was made between sacraments and other services. All were a ministry of the Word; the sacraments were adjuncts of that ministry, ‘visible words’.

³¹ Henry Bullinger, *The Decades*, IV (P.S., 1852), xxviii-xxix

The phrase ‘apostolic succession’ is used to suggest that special grace is given through the imposition of a bishop’s hands at ordination; that such transmission of grace has come down from the apostles, without any lacuna; and that without such grace, the sacraments are not valid. The laying on of hands is used in ordination as a Biblical practice and as a symbol of the need to continue ‘stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship’,³² which is the true and only apostolic succession. In answer to the question, ‘Whether in the new Testament be required any consecration of a bishop and priest, or only appointing the office be sufficient?’, Thomas Cranmer wrote:

In the new Testament, he that is appointed to be a bishop or a priest, needeth no consecration by scripture; for election and appointing thereto is sufficient.³³

Whereas Greek has two words, *ἱερεύς* for a priest who offers sacrifice, and *πρεσβύτερος* for an elder, and similarly Latin has *sacerdos* and *senior*, at root English has one word – the word *priest* is etymologically a contraction of *presbyter*. The only priest who offers propitiatory sacrifice under the New Covenant is the Lord Jesus Christ: Jesus ‘needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.’³⁴ The word priest is used in this sense of Christ alone in the New Testament; the ministers of the church are presbyters or deacons.

The Reformers retained the word priest in their statements and liturgy, though its significance was clearly that of presbyter. William Tyndale wrote:

By a priest, then, in the New Testament, understand nothing but an elder to teach the younger, and to bring them unto the full knowledge and understanding of Christ, and to minister the sacraments which Christ ordained, which is also nothing but to teach Christ’s promises.³⁵

³² Acts 2: 42

³³ (Ed.) J.E. Cox, *Miscellaneous Writings ... of Thomas Cranmer* (Parker Society; 1846), 117

³⁴ Hebrews 7: 27

³⁵ (Ed.) H. Walter, *Doctrinal Treatises ... by William Tyndale* (Parker Society; 1848), 256-257

The word *priest* has caused much confusion, especially when a movement arose that wished to see a sacerdotal priesthood in the Church of England. The Diocese of Sydney has led the way in getting rid of this lack of clarity, by adopting the word *presbyter* in its formal usage. Hugh Latimer commented: “A minister is a more fit name for that office; for the name of a priest importeth a sacrifice”.³⁶

The Oxford Movement was an alien movement, seeking to introduce teachings that had been dismissed from the English Church at the Reformation. Newman taught that ‘the Sacraments ... are the sources of Divine Grace’, and that grace might only be received through one in the Apostolic Succession. The Oxford Movement sought to establish in the English Church a sacerdotal order – ‘an order of priests charged with sacrificial functions and invested with supernatural power in ordination.’³⁷

The triumph of the Oxford Movement

To further its ends many practices redolent of Rome were gradually, and illegally, introduced into many English churches. The character of the service was altered, and often included parts of the Roman mass; priests began to wear illegal vestments, significant of a sacrificing priesthood, in particular the chasuble and the stole. Various other practices appeared, including: elevation of the consecrated host; reservation of the sacrament; benediction (with the reserved sacrament); use of the eastward position; prayers for the dead; stone altars; confession to a priest; incense; and Mariolatry. This illegal activity, a rejection of the teaching of the Articles, was met with episcopal inaction; the bishops dithered, and before long many of them sympathised with the new religion. The Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline that reported in 1906 declared that various illegal Romish practices ‘unite to change the outward character of the traditional service of the Reformed English Church to that of the traditional service of the Church of Rome.’³⁸

³⁶ (Ed.) G.E. Corrie, *Sermons and Remains of Hugh Latimer* (Parker Society; 1845), 264

³⁷ *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1959), II, s.v. Sacerdotal.

³⁸ *Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline* (1906), 53

Generally the bishops resolutely ignored the recommendations of the Commission; but the mild requirements of one recommendation were used as an excuse to introduce an alternative liturgy, which would authorise many of the changes which Anglo-Catholics desired. The new liturgy came before Parliament, and was rejected twice by the House of Commons, in 1927 and in 1928, chiefly because of objections to reservation and to the idea of allowing doctrinally inconsistent alternatives.

The rejection of the Deposited Book, however, did not halt the onward progress of Anglo-Catholicism: new Canons of the Church of England were promulgated in 1969, which made provision for sacerdotal vesture, though with the clause that

the vesture worn by the minister in accordance with the provisions of this Canon is not to be understood as implying any doctrines other than those contained in the formularies of the Church of England.³⁹

Soon after, the form of clerical assent to the Articles was made ambivalent. New liturgies that included unreformed doctrine appeared: experimental services in the 1960s; the *Alternative Service Book* in 1980; and *Common Worship* in 2000. There is enormous pressure placed on ordinands at their ordination to wear a stole, a vestment that speaks of sacerdotal priesthood; and the ordination service in *Common Worship* allows for the presentation of chalice and paten to the ordinand – a practice signifying ordination to a sacrificing priesthood, and aligned to the Roman ordinal. Thus the Church of England has assimilated teaching and practice that is alien to its Reformation doctrine and worship.

Solving the problem

In 1933 Bishop E.A. Knox wrote a careful and scholarly assessment of the Tractarian Movement on the occasion of its centenary. He summarised incisively the effect of that movement on the Church of England:

³⁹ Canon B 8, 5.

It has left behind it a disruption within the Church, making that Church almost a collection of Sects held together by Endowments and by a precarious connection with the State. Consequently the problem which the Oxford Movement has set the Church of England to solve is that of retaining ecclesiastical unity in spite of doctrinal divergences which often amount to contradictions. Must not the attempt end in such a minimizing of the value of doctrine as will react injuriously on the whole of religious life? Would not external unity be dearly bought at the cost of shipwreck of Faith? Can a creedless Church be a teacher of a nation and of the world?⁴⁰

The problem remains: there are ‘doctrinal divergences which often amount to contradictions’; as Knox suggested, a minimizing of the value of doctrine is reacting injuriously on the whole of religious life; external unity is indeed being dearly bought at the cost of shipwreck of Faith; a creedless Church has no Gospel to proclaim.

It is essential, therefore, that the Church of England returns to its classical doctrine – the Articles of Religion; it has no other. That is the way, and the only way, to the recovery of any true unity; that is the way, and the only way, to its having a Gospel to proclaim. Doctrine is often eschewed and played down as divisive; but the only way forward is one of doctrinal renewal. Doctrine and practice are inextricably combined: we will preach and live as we believe. We must restate the Biblical truths which were recovered at the Reformation. We must follow through the implications of doctrinal renewal: the doctrine of the Oxford Movement, epitomised in its sacerdotalism, and its practice of unbiblical ritual and ceremony, has no place in the Reformed Church of England. The disruption has gone on too long and must be resolved.

It has often been suggested that it is true of the Church of England, and even that it is a glory of the Church of England, that it recognises a triple authority of Scripture, tradition, and reason: it is amazing that an aphorism so demonstrably untrue and so facile is so often repeated. It is untrue doctrinally: the Articles make clear that Scripture is the supreme authority by which all other authorities, such as the church and human reason, must be judged:

⁴⁰ E.A. Knox, *The Tractarian Movement 1833 – 1845* (1933), 383

it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written⁴¹

The Articles declare that churches have erred, and indeed that the Church of Rome 'hath erred ... in matters of faith', and that General Councils

(forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God,) ... may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God.⁴²

The aphorism is untrue in practice: as Bishop Knox suggested 'doctrinal divergences which often amount to contradictions' have left the Church in a state of incoherence, impotence, and shame, not of glory, with no Gospel to present to a dying world.

The call to doctrinal renewal is not to be deflected by subjective considerations of personality or of human attributes. We judge no man: 'to his own master he standeth or falleth.'⁴³ The issues are: what is our authority? what is the Gospel? how do I become a Christian? what is the Church? We may only work with those with whom we are at one on these matters, because they are essentials. The Church of Rome is clear that it will only work with those who agree with its answers to those questions; at the moment the Church of England is divided on the answers and therefore, as a body, incoherent.

The call to doctrinal renewal may be met with the objection that it will cause division and disturb the peace and unity of the Church; but the Christian Gospel will always divide, and such division will sometimes occur within the visible Church, as well as between the Church and the world. A peace that is without truth is no peace, and not worth having. The word 'schism' is used as though separation were always an evil, as though, indeed, it were an unforgiveable sin: but where would we be if our Reformers had not stood firm for Holy Scripture and the Gospel proclaimed in it, resulting in a break with Rome, or, more exactly, resulting in Rome breaking with them? In any

⁴¹ Article XX

⁴² Article XXI

⁴³ Romans 14: 4

event, the Church of England is already divided: it is not at peace; unlike Jerusalem, it is not ‘at unity in itself’.⁴⁴ In any separation one must judge why that separation came about, and ask who was seeking to be faithful to the revealed will of God in Scripture. J.C. Ryle expressed this important point with robust clarity:

Yes! peace without truth is a false peace; it is the very peace of the devil. Unity without the Gospel is a worthless unity; it is the very unity of hell. Let us never be ensnared by those who speak kindly of it. Let us remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: “Think not that I came to send peace upon the earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword.” (Matt. x. 34) False doctrine and heresy are even worse than schism. If people separate themselves from teaching which is positively false and unscriptural, they ought to be praised rather than reproved.⁴⁵

Evangelicalism old and new

Traditionally evangelicals regarded Anglo-Catholics as usurpers, men who had intruded themselves into the Church of England by giving an assent to the Articles which could not have been *ex animo*. During the years of Anglo-Catholic ascendancy, evangelical clergy ministered faithfully in their parishes, maintaining loyalty to the Articles and the Book of Common Prayer. They were leaders, though not alone, in the campaign against the revision of the Prayer Book, which led to the rejection of the Deposited Book in Parliament in 1927 and again in 1928.

In the 1960s, however, a significant number, chiefly of younger evangelical clergy, adopted a new stance, a new evangelicalism. They saw no possibility of maintaining the traditional position that evangelical churchmen were the true sons of the Church of England; changes that were coming about (in the canons and experimental services) and general lawlessness were undermining their position. Policy and expediency were becoming the guiding principles, though

⁴⁴ Psalm 122: 3

⁴⁵ J.C. Ryle, *Knots Untied* (1874), 450 & 454; James Clarke edition (1964), 293 & 295; Banner of Truth edition (2016), 416 & 419

formal statements of doctrine remained. This movement was responsible for the congresses at Keele (1967), Nottingham (1977), Caister (1988), and Blackpool (2003). This involved a profession that evangelicals needed to repent and change. It was not difficult to see the outworking of this policy among many in a weakening of their doctrine of Scripture, a doctrine of baptism that confused the sacrament with regeneration, and a greater focus on the visible church to the detriment of a proper understanding of the invisible church. Dr. Samuel summarised the situation:

This new policy for evangelicals was variously described as one of co-operation with all traditions within the Church of England, involvement in ecumenism, serious commitment to dialogue, evangelicals coming of age, and full participation in the life of the Church of England. In effect it meant taking the same path as other churchmen had trodden before, of coming to terms with an alien element within the church.⁴⁶

A mark of the theological confusion was the publication in 1970 of the book *Growing into Union* by four authors, two Anglo-Catholic (Professor E.L. Mascall and G.D. Leonard, Bishop of Willesden) and two evangelicals (C.O. Buchanan and Dr. J.I. Packer). making proposals for a united Church in England following the collapse of the Anglican–Methodist reunion scheme. It seemed to many to be a fudge – not a clear exposition of Christian truth, but, as with ecumenical documents that seek to show agreement where there is none, an exercise in verbal dexterity. Here is a quotation from Chapter 1 (‘Scripture and Tradition’):

The supreme importance of Holy Scripture as the normative element in the Church’s tradition arises from its character as, so to speak, the verbal precipitate of the Church’s primordial life and, therefore, as keeping the Church true to its historical roots as nothing else, except perhaps the Eucharist, can.⁴⁷

Thus a large and influential section of evangelicalism sought to minimize, or even to deny, the ‘doctrinal divergences which often

⁴⁶ (Ed.) David N. Samuel, *The Evangelical Succession* (1979), 98

⁴⁷ C.O. Buchanan, E.L. Mascall, J.I. Packer, the Bishop of Willesden, *Growing into Union* (1970), 36

amount to contradictions’ and, in the search for external unity, become involved in ‘a minimizing of the value of doctrine’. Instead of clearly proclaiming with one voice the supreme authority of Scripture, the nature of the Gospel, the character of a Christian, and the nature of the Church, the evangelical body contributed to the incoherence. Indeed, the question ‘What is an evangelical?’ was frequently addressed with the pen and at meetings. Iain H. Murray analysed the crucial changes that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century in his excellent book, *Evangelicalism Divided*.⁴⁸

Current failure to address the problem

The ascendancy of Liberalism in the Church of England has only increased the divergence and incoherence – in theology over many years, and in practice by the ordination of women since 1994, and by the current and increasing pressure to adopt liberal attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

The present Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, was enthroned in 2013. His background for the office was unusual: he had been ordained at the age of 36 after a career in the oil industry. During his time as Dean of Coventry, he had become involved in attempts to resolve violent conflict, which took him to Iraq, Nigeria, Burundi, and Kenya. Later Dr. Rowan Williams used Welby as a special envoy, to assist in ‘facilitated conversations’ (which are a ‘consensus process’ methodology) in an attempt to solve the crisis within the Anglican Communion, especially over sexuality. It may be that the Crown Nominations Commission thought that in Welby they had found a man who could achieve the seemingly impossible and bring together those in the Church of England who accept the Bible’s teaching on sexual ethics and those who reject it. In any event, Welby was appointed to Canterbury, and methods he has followed reflect his background in political reconciliation.

In relation to the consecration of women bishops, the House of Bishops issued in 2014 a Declaration on the Ministry. One of their

⁴⁸ Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided* (2000)

statements was: ‘Mutuality reflects the Church of England’s wider commitment to sustaining diversity. It means that those of differing conviction will be committed to making it possible for each other to flourish.’ Those who are faithful to the Articles do not accept ‘the Church of England’s wider commitment to sustaining diversity’. They are seeking to reform the Church in obedience to the Word of God, to bring the Church back to its Reformation roots and tenets.

The concept of ‘mutual flourishing’ requires at least a degree of mutual acceptance, and the laying aside of measurement by doctrinal truth. It is inclusivism, because it requires that everyone who claims to be Christian is accepted as such, regardless of whether he or she meets Biblical criteria. It is concerned with man’s relations with man; the glory of God and obedience to his Word are not considered. We must be concerned, not with ‘mutual flourishing’, but with the flourishing of the Gospel. Dr. Eliud Wabukala, Archbishop of Kenya until 2016, commented in 2013 that Welby’s experience in war zones had led him into

a confusion of categories in which theological differences about truth claims are treated as if they are like civil, industrial or political conflicts. The essential doctrinal and moral truths of the Christian faith are clearly not matters that can be negotiated in this way.⁴⁹

Welby was keen to apply the methodology of facilitated conversations to disputes about homosexuality. The Pilling report of November 2013⁵⁰ was an extended argument for learning to live with disparate teachings on sexuality. It did not seek to settle the substantive issue, but envisaged ‘a facilitated process of listening to each other so the journey can continue in an atmosphere of respect for difference’. Keith Sinclair, Bishop of Birkenhead, did not sign the report, but submitted a substantial minority report.⁵¹ He argued that the Bible’s teaching on same-sex relationships is clear, and that ‘the proposal for facilitated discussions rests on a false premise, namely that we cannot

⁴⁹ ‘Archbishop Justin Welby: Questions and Concerns’ (briefing to GAFCON primates), April 2013. Quoted at Andrew Atherstone, *Archbishop Justin Welby: Risk-taker and Reconciler* (2014), 239

⁵⁰ *Report of the House of Bishops’ Working Group on human sexuality* (2013)

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, 119-149, 158-176

currently be sure what the Church should believe, teach and practise in the area of human sexuality'.⁵² He declared:

It is in relation to the *teaching of Scripture* that the 'inconclusive' judgement presents the most radical undermining of the Church's traditional teaching by which the Report declares it abides⁵³

the Report thus does not give an adequate account of biblical teaching. As a result, if adopted, it will cut the Church adrift from her Scriptural moorings and, by depriving her of a prophetic vision, allow her to be swept along by the currents of contemporary Western culture.⁵⁴

Facilitated conversations on matters about which Scripture clearly teaches dishonour Holy Scripture and its Author, because they put forward the false premise that there is still something to discuss.

Dr. Wabukala commented incisively on 'facilitated conversations' on homosexuality:

such dialogue only spreads confusion and opens the door to a false gospel because the Scriptures no longer function in any meaningful way as a test of what is true and false.⁵⁵

More generally he wrote that decisions about the Anglican Communion must be taken:

on the basis of a shared commitment to orthodox Anglican doctrinal and moral teaching, not on the basis of unlimited dialogue between those who happen to have a shared ecclesial history.⁵⁶

Archbishop Welby also commends 'good disagreement', which is a concomitant of 'mutual flourishing'. His biographer observed:

Rowan Williams had spent much of his archiepiscopate seeking areas of core theological agreement around which Anglicans could coalesce,

⁵² *Op. cit.*, 141

⁵³ *Op. cit.*, 135

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, 137

⁵⁵ Atherstone, *op. cit.*, 252

⁵⁶ Atherstone, *op. cit.*, 191

most notably in the failed Anglican Covenant. Welby's project was different: not the pursuit of theological agreement but learning to live with theological disagreement.⁵⁷

Welby is recorded as saying: 'What I'm trying to do is not to get everyone to agree – because I don't think we're going to agree – it is to try to transform bad disagreement to good disagreement.'⁵⁸

'Good disagreement' has no reference to any objective truth, but merely to man's relations to man. St. Paul encouraged those to whom he wrote to holiness and unity, but also commanded that they should have no partnership with those who transgressed his teaching on sexual ethics: 'be not ye therefore partakers with them'.⁵⁹ 'Mutual flourishing' and 'good disagreement' do nothing 'to resolve doctrinal divergences which often amount to contradictions'. They are minimizing the value of doctrine. By them external unity is indeed being dearly bought at the cost of shipwreck of Faith.⁶⁰

There have been instances of separation from Canterbury because of its doctrinal aberrations. The Church of England (Continuing) was established in 1994. The Anglican Church in North America, established in 2009, founded the Anglican Mission in England in 2013, which in 2017 consecrated a missionary bishop to minister to congregations in the United Kingdom. The senior minister of Jesmond Parish Church was consecrated as a bishop in 2017 by bishops of the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa.⁶¹

The Anglican Communion is outside the immediate concern of this paper; and it is not a church, but an affiliation of churches that are in

⁵⁷ Atherstone, *op. cit.*, 227

⁵⁸ Atherstone, *op. cit.*, 226

⁵⁹ Ephesians 5: 7

⁶⁰ 'Some drive at a promiscuous leave and toleration of all opinions and differences, though never so contrary to truth, as if this were the best way to bring things to any peace and quiet. Oh! consider how great a prejudice this is to religion. This is the very way that Julian, the apostate, took to destroy it. Certainly there would be but little security to truth and its followers where there is such a promiscuous toleration.' Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works*, V (1871), 407, 408 (from a sermon on Zechariah 14: 9, preached on June 30th., 1647)

⁶¹ Formerly the Church of England in South Africa

communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. Nonetheless, there are significant indications that might sober the archbishop and challenge his thinking. GAFCON (the Global Anglican Futures Conference) first met in 2008, and has a partner organisation, the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans. The large number of bishops, particularly from the African continent, who attended it in 2008, declined to attend the Lambeth Conference, because bishops who rejected Biblical teaching and rejected Biblical sexual ethics had been invited to it. In some instances, not least where separation has occurred in North America, there appears to be an admixture of Reformed and traditional teaching and practice, rather than simply a Reformed basis. Nonetheless, Archbishop Welby would, like Nelson, have to put his telescope to a blind eye, if he were to wish to ignore the challenge of this large and significant movement.

Conclusion

Our call then must be, and is, for the Church of England to recover its doctrinal identity, the Biblical faith restored at the Reformation. The way forward is not one of abandoning our historic principles and separateness (as with neo-evangelicalism); nor does it lie with tolerating an alien religion (the sacerdotalism of Anglo-Catholicism); nor does it lie in synthesis (which the Archbishop of Canterbury is seeking to bring about), where men deem mutual acceptance and approbation to be a manifestation of Christlikeness. We must focus on one thing, which is the one thing needful, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in Holy Scripture.

The situation in the Church of England has become harder since Bishop Knox propounded his incisive questions in 1933. Anglo-Catholicism has become entrenched in the Church and liberalism has gained the ascendancy, evinced in particular by women's ordination and by an increasing ambivalence in teaching and practice about sexuality. There continue, however, to be many faithful churches, and not a few flourishing faithful churches; and there is encouragement that some of these faithful churches are involved in church planting. Yet, effectively, these faithful churches are often becoming independent.

The task may seem impossible; but we must remember that our God is sovereign. He commanded that Gideon's 32,000 be reduced to 300, so that it might be clear that the victory was gained by the Lord alone. At the time of the Reformation the Lord effected a transformation in Western Europe, when amidst the doctrinal and moral corruption of the medieval church, the truth of his Word was rediscovered. The task may seem impossible; but that is not our concern – it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.⁶² We must assert the paramount importance of doctrine; a proper recognition of what true comprehensiveness is in the National Church; and the distinct character and identity of the Church of England in its Articles and Book of Common Prayer.

We must dispense with sacerdotalism and all unbiblical ritual and ceremony; we must eschew liberalism, which by its rejection of Scripture fashions a false religion and a false morality in its own worldly image. The Articles are the doctrinal statements of the English Church. They may be assented to with a good conscience as agreeable to the Word of God. No other doctrinal confession is required, and it is clear that no other confession could be agreed.

When he addressed this Conference in 1977 our President declared:

True comprehensiveness, such as our Reformers envisaged, is based upon a coherent and recognisable system of doctrine. It may be generous in its interpretation; wide and charitable with regard to things not essential or things indifferent; but it must be one, and consistent with itself. It is a robe woven without seam. It is never a patchwork – a mere toleration, or accommodation, or juxtaposition of contradictory views.⁶³

That assessment remains true.

if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand; and if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.⁶⁴

⁶² 1 Corinthians 4: 2

⁶³ (Ed.) David N. Samuel, *The Evangelical Succession* (1979), 99

⁶⁴ Mark 3: 24-25

‘A Disruption Within’

The need for doctrinal renewal

The Church of England has lost its way. Though it became an evangelical Reformed church at the Reformation, liberalism and the Oxford Movement have broken its doctrinal unity. The Church needs to rediscover the Biblical answers to the questions ‘What is a Christian?’ and ‘What is the Church?’ and the Biblical teaching on the sacraments; and it needs to recognise that under the New Covenant the Lord Jesus Christ is the only sacrificing priest, and that ordained ministers are messengers from God to men.

The only way forward is one of doctrinal renewal. Over the last fifty years evangelicalism has sought a new path by ‘involvement’, but in large part it has accepted inclusivism, thus eroding its obedience to Scripture. The current leadership of the Church of England has failed to address the problem of ‘doctrinal divergences which often amount to contradictions’; instead it has sought refuge in a commitment to ‘diversity’, ‘mutual flourishing’, and ‘good disagreement’, and has hoped to hold contradictory positions together by the pretence that the teaching of Holy Scripture on sexual morality is inconclusive.

‘The way forward for the Church of England,’ Dr. Scales argues, ‘is to rediscover the true source of authority in Christianity – the supreme authority of Holy Scripture, which is the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God – and in obedience to Scripture to rediscover the Biblical Gospel; to define carefully in the light of Scripture what a true Christian is; and, again by Scripture, to clarify what the Christian Church is. If it is not to continue to wither and die, the Church of England will need to cast out the sacerdotalism that has undermined it for nearly two hundred years and the liberalism that has been a malign influence since the eighteenth century, and rediscover its heritage of Biblical doctrine.’

Dr. D.A. Scales is General Secretary of the Protestant Reformation Society