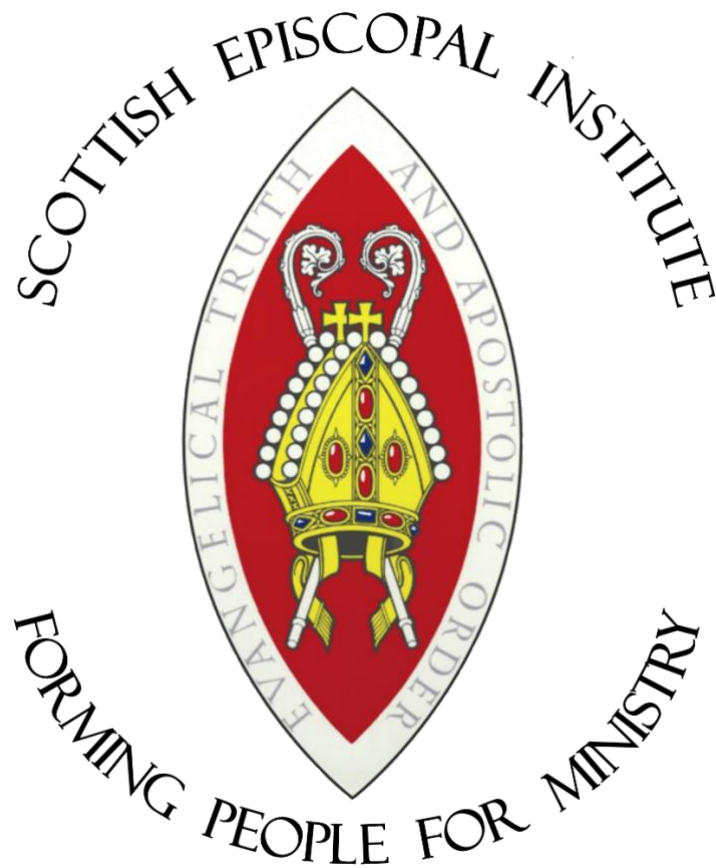


Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal



Summer 2021 — Volume 5.2

*A quarterly journal for debate on current issues
in the Anglican Communion and beyond*

Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal

Volume 5.2 — Summer 2021 — ISSN 2399-8989

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AUTISM AND LITURGY

A special request regarding a research project on autism and liturgy

Dr Léon van Ommen needs your help for a research project on autism and liturgy.

Léon is a lecturer at the University of Aberdeen, a member of St Ninian's Church (Aberdeen) and a member of the Liturgy Committee of the Faith and Order Board.

Léon is conducting a research project on autism and liturgy. He is looking for participants. If you (self-)identify as autistic/on the autism spectrum and are willing to share your experience of worship and liturgy, please get in touch with him at leon.vanommen@abdn.ac.uk. People anywhere on the autism spectrum, including non-verbal, and of all ages, are welcome to join.

The project is based at the Centre for the Study of Autism and Christian Community, at the University of Aberdeen. Ethical permission has been obtained from the University. Please email Léon for more information, he would love to hear from you.

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Revised Saturday 19 June 2021

Finally, in the 'As it will be' section, we start to hear the prophetic voice of hope. We hear words like 'redemption', 'gratitude', 'wonder' and 'hope' intermingled with the more familiar 'suffering', 'loss', 'grief' and 'despair'.

What is evident in all three sections, is that these expressions of lament before God allow the contributors to express the depth of their pain, loss, despair, and grief and to invite other Christians to join with them in calling upon God for help. Their pieces are deeply moving and show their great humility in sharing the grief that arises from the issues of climate change and environmental damage that affect them and the places that they come from. Through their work we get a much clearer picture of how climate change and its consequences are affecting real people in various parts of the global community and show, much like the pandemic, that these issues cannot be managed on a purely nation state basis.

Hannah has brought together writers with a great deal of insight and much creativity in the ways in which they lament change and loss in our climate, our environment, and our planet. It is however important to acknowledge that she was the driving force, providing the means by which we hear these voices, and she also brings significant insight of her own in her Introduction and her Conclusion which bookend the other contributions. In the title of the former she asks the question 'The end of the world?' to which she replies, with another question in the title of the latter, 'World without end?'.

She contends that we need to take this business of grieving for our world, our climate, and the ecological damage that humankind has wrought, seriously and learn how to grieve as a work of love. 'The conviction that Christ's Resurrection marked the death of death also contains the hope that our works of love in the present are not consigned to destruction.' It is the world that love makes that is a world without end and that will ensure that 'our grief will not be wasted'.

James Currall

Priest-in-Charge of the SEC Congregations in East Sutherland and Tain

David Fergusson and Mark W. Elliott, eds. *The History of Scottish Theology. Volume I: Celtic Origins to Reformed Orthodoxy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). xii, 416 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-875933-1. £95 (hardback).

One is impressed by the boldness of the definite article in the title of this landmark work from Oxford University Press: *THE History of Scottish Theology*. But this is as much a work of Church history as historical theology, telling the story of Christianity in Scotland by putting the development of

Scottish theology in its historical context rather than recounting the significant events.

The most welcome aspect of this project is its treatment of the medieval period. For in their Scottish manifestations, medieval theologies seem almost invisible in the modern imagination beyond the parodic representation of 'Celtic Christianity' so ably dispelled in Thomas O'Loughlin's chapter. Here, in the first millennium, we discover theology presented less by formal tracts and more by a diversity of materials that 'invite us to read them theologically'. Among these was Adomnán of Iona's book, *De locis sanctis*, 'The Holy Places', a work that:

combines a description of the Holy Places of the biblical story [...] with an exegetical manual that shows how geographical knowledge can be used to resolve contradictions in the sacred texts, while also establishing that the domain of the incarnate Logos is contiguous with the world of ordinary experience (p. 13).

Even placenames (Kilbride, Kilmarnock, etc.) point to the footsteps of Christ and his Church across the country, 'Christening' the landscape.

Peter Damian-Grint brings to light for the general reader and illuminates for the specialist the works and theology of Adam of Dryburgh (c. 1140 to 1212), 'the only medieval theologian of international stature who lived and worked almost entirely in Scotland'. Damian-Grint's close knowledge of the Latin texts (which he has edited) allows us to see that Adam's work was written more to be delivered orally than studied privately. In his early work, we see Adam as 'a convinced Augustinian', in his theology, his style of writing, and in the warmth of his many references to 'the most learned physician of souls, our blessed father Augustine'. Saint Augustine's *Confessions* was the most important influence on Adam's masterpiece, *De triplici genere contemplationis*, 'The Threefold Character of Contemplation', a guide to contemplative prayer. And this indeed was one of Adam's major themes: holiness of life expressed in prayer and contemplation. But Adam also reflected on the sacramental nature of all creation, that all created things are signs pointing towards God, even smells and tastes. The fragrances of plants say, 'We are not your God. We are fragrances; but God is your fragrance, and of great sweetness, a fragrance that no wind can disperse'. Damian-Grint concludes that *De triplici genere contemplationis* 'is not only brilliant Augustinian theology but experiential and personal in a way that recalls Augustine himself' (p. 46). Adam's own influence and reputation increased as time went on, for we learn that most surviving manuscripts of his work date from two or more centuries after his death, not

least in the company of Middle English devotional works. In this way, concludes Damian-Grint, Adam's affective and experiential theological style looks ahead rather than back, leading in the thirteenth century to Franciscan spirituality and onwards in the fourteenth to the *devotio moderna*: 'thus he comes not at the end but rather at an important crux in the development of the Western theological tradition' (p. 51).

The influence of Saint Augustine appears again in Stephen Holmes's chapter on liturgical theology before 1600. Holmes warns against taking 'the polemical dichotomies of the Reformation at face value', as he presents the Scottish Reformation as 'more a dispute between Latin, mainly Augustinian, Christians than a war between light and darkness', the protagonists holding more in common than they would allow. Holmes argues that the Reformed commentators may have been more faithful to the Catholic tradition of liturgical interpretation and its Augustinian roots than was contemporary Roman Catholicism:

In the Tridentine Catholic world, emphasis on the 'res' of the Eucharist against the attacks of the Protestants, especially an emphasis on the presence and sacrifice defined at Trent, collapsed the distance between sign and what is signified to leave no room for the complex and polyvalent web of interpretations found in Durandus or even from the simplified interpretations of the catechetical tradition (pp. 66–67).

In addition to suggesting a new way of understanding the Scottish Reformation, Holmes points to some ecumenical implications for today, in that all the main ecclesiological traditions in Scotland share a common origin in the Catholic Reform movements of late medieval and early modern Scotland. With the late twentieth-century ecumenical consensus on public worship reflected in the *Missale Romanum* (1969), *Scottish Liturgy* 1982, and the *Book of Common Order* (1994), Holmes looks forward to a rediscovered unity rooted in common worship.

There are also chapters on influential figures who came to prominence in medieval Europe: Richard of St Victor, John Duns Scotus, John Ireland, and John Mair. In line with Holmes's argument, we discover that much of what was achieved by these and other theologians between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries was 'inflected rather than abolished' in the Reformation, which is presented here as a gradual process and a series of events that shared much with other reforming movements in the late Middle Ages.

Aaron Clay Denlinger's consideration of the 'Aberdeen Doctors' and Henry Scougal offers us a more direct line to the Episcopal tradition, where they are presented as the most recognized theologians of the first and

second Episcopalian periods, but whose theology nevertheless remained within the boundaries of the 'Reformed orthodoxy' of their day. Henry Scougal, with *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, showed an enthusiasm for the Cambridge Platonists which infused his doctrine with a mystical strain and perhaps outlines another route via Saint Augustine and Adam of Dryburgh, a path which also runs through the Episcopalian spirituality of the brothers George and James Garden (dealt with in a chapter by Marie-Luise Ehrenschtendner), and their interpretation of Reformed theology based in personal experience, which although originally shaped by John Calvin and closely linked to Henry Scougal, was not acceptable to the Presbyterian Kirk. Here we also see the increasing influence of continental mystics, such as Antoinette Bourignon.

Finally, unlike the Scottish philosophical tradition, we discover that there is 'little evidence of a single, distinctive tradition with leading authorities and methods of study' — no 'body of thinkers' referencing discrete authorities and magisterial texts; no set of common problems that sets Scottish theologians apart from other traditions. Yet, from the seventeenth century, we do find Episcopalian theology and spirituality making a distinctive and lasting contribution despite its minority status.

George Guiver CR has described tradition as the grammar governing the language which the Church speaks in its life and worship; and in that sense the Church needs to be a language school of its own tradition. The Church's traditions are also to be understood as a starting point, a trajectory, which give us a sense of our position in time. And this is what this volume does (together with its companion volumes, to be reviewed in subsequent issues of this journal): *The History of Scottish Theology* shows us where we have come from and gives us that perspective which allows us to put our current questions in context. This three-volume series is surely now the best starting place for those training for ordination and other authorized ministries in the Scottish Episcopal Church (and beyond) to gain a broad and necessary knowledge of Scottish theological traditions from their very beginnings.

John Reuben Davies

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