Book Reviews

Philip Harrold and D.H. Williams (eds.), *The Great Tradition – A Great Labour: Studies in Ancient-Future Faith* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2011), pp. 114. ISBN 978 0 7188 9267 8.
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This slim volume grew out of a conference on 'Anglican Wisdom – Anglican Futures' held at the Trinity School for Ministry in Pennsylvania in 2009. Like most conference volumes it is good in parts – although those parts are not very extensive. Good lectures do not always make good book chapters. The seven chapters are preceded by an introduction which seeks to contextualize them in some of the recent controversies in Anglicanism and church history. The main thrust is that the 'Great Tradition' needs to be revitalized and might help bring about a greater degree of unity among Anglicans, or at least between Evangelical Anglicans and others as well as fellow conservatives across the denominations. While not all the contributors are Anglican, all are keen on ensuring that churches stay in touch with the roots of their faith, which is labelled the Great Tradition. In general the method locates the tradition – in a manner not too dissimilar from the Tractarians – in the primitive church through the formulation of the creeds to the Council of Chalcedon. For instance, D.H. Williams, while acknowledging the different contexts and pluralism of the early church, nevertheless seeks to establish a central core to the tradition which will overcome the tendency to establish Christianity solely on practice and worship. In his essay, Tony Clark takes issue with Phyllis Tickle's interpretation of history which sees Christianity as inevitably in transition as it seeks to re-establish its authority structures, particularly in response to the 'gay issue'. Once this is resolved, she argues, traditional patterns of biblical interpretation will be over. Using a method which draws on the notion of indwelling the tradition, Clark suggests that it will be impossible to inhabit a tradition that is predicated on a fundamental discontinuity with the past. After a weaker contribution by Edith Humphrey on worship, Simon Chan seeks rapprochement through liturgical worship with Pentecostals (something that would not be unfamiliar to many English Anglicans).

Stephen Long's essay on community raises the tone, especially in his reflections on Wesley and the need for a lived-out faith. While he is deeply mistaken in his assumption that the Prime Minister and the Queen choose the Archbishop of Canterbury and that the Church of England is a modern form of Caesaro-Papism, he nevertheless makes an important point in suggesting that communion cannot take place when national traditions take precedence over the common tradition. In one of the most focused essays, George Sumner makes a heartfelt plea for what he

calls 'apostolic convergence', an ability to 'reach beyond ourselves, to rediscover our commonality in the Gospel' (p. 85). This is to be done by allowing the 'apostolic' to give real substance to the 'embodiment' of the Gospel. He draws on the examples of the Synod of Whitby, the Church of South India, and the Anglican Church of Canada, his own church. He considers it important to remain within the Church in order to share in apostolic appeal even with those who disagree 'as a disciplined minority community whose primary task is missionary' (p. 90). This is because the 'Canterbury trail' in its 'evangelically Anglican mode' continues to have an evangelistic appeal: 'conciliar life' remains an apostolic practice, and is characterized by endurance.

The final essay by Dominic Erdozain is by far the best in the book. It is in a quite different style, offering an account of the development of Evangelicalism in dialogue with modernity. Instead of a blanket dismissal of the Enlightenment, Erdozain, a historian at King's College London, presents a subtle and convincing reading of how Evangelicalism has related to culture. In many ways Evangelicalism helped create modernity, and indeed to re-Christianize society. Drawing on a wealth of evidence he suggests that 'evangelicalism was quietly disabled by a permanent itch for relevance', which ought to be a lesson for 'emerging churches' (p. 93). Fascinating examples are offered with the YMCA's transition into hostels, the wonderfully named undemanding form of Christianity represented by the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon movement, as well as the fixation on good works in the churches. These examples of the 'middle ground of ethical toil' served to stifle the dogmatic core of earlier versions of Evangelicalism. As P.T. Forsyth once said: 'Sympathy is not adequate to redeem' (p. 111). The strength of Evangelicalism – past and present – was to remain 'unfazed by giddying cultural change; their weakness was to be molded by it. Both legacies are part of that living stream of wisdom and folly, grace and leaden human error, that we term the Great Tradition' (p. 114).

While much in this book is somewhat occasional, it nevertheless reveals that the Great Tradition is still a topic of discussion among Evangelicals who see themselves as struggling with their identity in an ecclesial landscape that, at least in the West, seems dominated by those who appear to have little respect for the tradition. By holding up a mirror to themselves, however, some of the authors reveal that Evangelicals have also been too ready to dismiss the tradition, at least in relation to worship, and even creeds. The ability for self-reflection is a crucial starting point for convergence or reunion in a divided communion.

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Will Adam, *Legal Flexibility and the Mission of the Church: Dispensation and Economy in Ecclesiastical Law* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. xx + 243, ISBN 978-1-4094-2055-2 (hardcover), ISBN 978-14094-20569-9 (ebook).
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This book is an academic study which is nonetheless very readable and provides one of the latest additions to the growing contemporary corpus of literature on the