

Martyn Percy, *Anglicanism Confidence, Commitment and Communion* (Contemporary Ecclesiological Series; Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), ISBN 978-1-4094-7036-6 (pbk)
doi:10.1017/S1740355314000114

The cover of *Anglicanism Confidence, Commitment and Communion* is the inside of the recently completed Edward King Chapel at Cuddesdon, with an open Bible sneaking in at the bottom of the picture. The very building of the chapel, where Martyn Percy has been Principal for ten years, is a statement of commitment to, and confidence in, God's future.

This collection of essays, lectures and articles by Percy, marking his decade at Cuddesdon, is rooted in the history and legacy of the college. The book is divided into three sections: 'Confidence in Formation' considers theological education and the contexts for parish ministry today; 'Commitment and Mission' considers the more public dimensions to mission and ministry; and 'Communion and Polity' is focused on leadership.

Being a collection spanning a decade, some parts of the book inevitably feel a little dated. There are times when themes and comments reappear in different chapters, such as reference to Jeremy Paxman's observation that it appears as if the Church of England is a body that believes that there is no issue that could not be solved over a cup of tea in the Vicar's study. But these are minor criticisms of a work that looks insightfully at Anglicanism, with passion from the inside.

These writings, which sensitively combine hope and realism, might be seen as the equivalent of the pop artist's Greatest Hits CD. If I were to have my favourite of the favourites it would be the chapter 'Old Tricks for New Dogs: A Critique of Fresh Expressions'. In this 2008 essay Percy was doing exactly what it says on the tin, in one of the few pieces at that time analysing the nature of the work coming out of the theology-light *Mission Shaped Church* report and raising many significant ecclesiological questions. Some of Percy's own favourite 'artists', such as Etienne Wenger, James Hopewell, Urban Holmes, Denham Grierson and Stephen Pickard – who might be seen as the soundtrack that has informed his thinking – are woven into his writings.

Throughout the book, Percy's style draws the reader in and offers many quotable quotes and useful summary lists of key points. Always easy to read, at times Percy makes use of gentle humour: 'Anglicanism is born of England, just like its climate, the polity often struggles to cope with extremities. Anglicanism is mostly a temperate ecclesial polity: cloudy, with occasional sunny spells and the odd shower – but no extremes please.' Generally though, it is his more analytical approach that illuminates this study of contemporary Anglicanism. The danger, on such a topic, is that a book can become an extended proclamation of the party line. Aware of this, Percy notes in the section where he looks at how some of the current crises in Anglican identity are in part due to unsurfaced cultural and contextual assumptions that shape American life, that his words are not intended as a rant.

In one place, Percy considers Jesus' saying 'I am the vine, you are the branches' and offers one of his characteristic insights and accompanying lists. For the Church of England, let alone the Anglican Communion, 'branches' offers a better description than most labels on offer, because the implication is 'inter-dependence yet difference; unity and diversity, commonality yet independence; continuity and change; pruning, yet fruitfulness'.

Percy has a keen eye on the world and his reflections bring in such topics as the Obama presidency and the Northern Ireland peace process. Elsewhere, he speaks of 'Balkanisation' (dividing places and people into smaller autonomous self-governing entities, creating third provinces, exclusions and so forth) and how Anglicanism is resistant to this, knowing in its soul that the sum is greater than the parts.

The author's use of language is careful, and at times in itself thought provoking. He talks of the crucial need for the church to distinguish between dilemmas and problems facing Anglican polity – 'A problem is something that can be solved. Dilemmas are, however, arenas where issues and values can only be balanced.' Reference is made to the Anglican value of 'undecideability', seeing this as 'procrastination with purpose', where extreme patience means politics can wrestle with high levels of seemingly unresolvable tension. Process is key, and means matter more than ends.

It is over to the reader to decide whether the chapters offer a starting point to consider specific issues faced by Anglicanism in more depth, or the opportunity to reflect on the common threads raised through the book, or both. Percy himself recognizes one key thread flowing through the volume – that the church is an institution as opposed to an organization. Organizations exist for utilitarian purposes and when fulfilled become expendable, whereas institutions are natural communities with historic roots that are embedded in the fabric of society and need leadership that has sufficient awareness to know what can be changed and what needs to be retained and safeguarded.

He stresses the importance of blessing (of comprehensive praise and thanks that returns all reality to God) and believes this should be the starting place for a theology of leadership in the Anglican communion, which he clearly wants to see as a living organism. Anglican bishops (and leaders in other churches) need a leadership of discernment and poise, a deep appreciation of the actuality of the church and a focus on evangelism rather than the inner workings of the church.

Percy's work will help people do what he endeavours to do – not only to surf the waves, but also to read the cultural tides that buffet our age. For Anglicanism, the seas ahead may be rough, but Percy's insights into the tensions that exist in the Anglican Communion, their root causes and the qualities needed by its leaders, encourage confidence and offer hope. I look forward to the insights offered by Percy's *Greatest Hits Volume 2*, should he choose to offer it, after another decade of his ministry.

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Sidney L. Green, *Beating the Bounds: A Symphonic Approach to Orthodoxy in the Anglican Communion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), pp. xxx+250, ISBN 978-1-62032-651-0

doi:10.1017/S1740355314000126

The former archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams once wrote, 'we have, sadly, come to think of orthodox belief as a set of obligations to sign up to, rather