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EDITORIAL

Form Follows Function: Canterbury Tales, Roman History

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It is highly likely that by the time you read this, we shall already know who the successor to Pope Francis is. His Holiness passed away on April 21st after a short illness. It was Easter Monday. He had occupied the See of Rome for a dozen years, with courage, humour, a light touch and deep public concern for the poor, for refugees, for the stigmatized and for the broken. His pontificate was marked by compassion and care for those outside the church. Inside the church, Pope Francis somehow managed to keep *Pax Romana Ecclesia* intact, despite the divisions on dogmatism and culture wars that have rent asunder most Protestant denominations.

It is equally likely that by the time you read this, the members and methods for choosing a new Archbishop of Canterbury will not be settled. The Crown Nominations Commission (CNC – a body of around a dozen and half people tasked with choosing the next incumbent of Lambeth Palace) is already mired in disputes about membership, which is part of the proxy war on sexuality and women's ministry that continues to cripple the reputation and ministry of the Church of England. As a denomination, English Anglicanism is badly out of step with the ordinary public moral standards enshrined in English law. It's not just on gender issues only either – employment rights, safeguarding and other spheres across the Church of England are also increasingly perceived as alienating and unjust.

Archbishop Welby left office on January 6th in the wake of the public outcry and scandal over the inaction relating to John Smyth QC, one of the Church of England's most prolific serial abusers. The earlier *Makin Review* addressed aspects of the Smyth abuses and led Welby to resign in November 2024. This was a Canterbury Saga worthy of Chaucer – 'The Rueful Tale',[2] perhaps? – though that pilgrim journey seems to have no obvious end destination.

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[2]It cannot be 'The Penitent's Tale' or the 'Repenter's Tale', since Mr. Welby showed regret for his inactions, but not remorse, and there has been no change in structures over the scandal, and the victims of Smyth remain shunned by the safeguarding hierarchies and senior leadership of the Church of England. See

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Current Challenges – Comparing and Contrasting

It is exactly 333 years since both the Papacy and the See of Canterbury have been simultaneously vacant, following the deposition of William Sancroft (Canterbury) and the death of Pope Alexander VIII in 1691. Yet the chances of the next Archbishop of Canterbury being announced by the autumn of 2025 and installed by early 2026 already appear thin. Comparisons are bound to be made.

For some in the media, the recent movie *Conclave*[3] and the slightly older *Two Popes*[4] are what the wider public will draw upon for their frames of reference when it comes to choosing a Pope. A movie on how the next Archbishop of Canterbury is chosen would lack the basic drama for box office success, but score high on farce. But more concerningly, it could be a tale that not even Chaucer could have conceived of. Though it is tempting, I am bound to say, to start drafting 'The Committee Member's Tale' as a kind of *Satirecclesia*. As the playwright David Hare conceded in one revealing press interview prior to the opening of his play *Racing Demon*[5] (a comedy-drama focused on rivalrous clergy in London), he had initially proposed writing a play about the General Synod of the Church of England and had even observed several sessions for background research. However, he quickly concluded that General Synod's machinations were so farcical and convoluted that no audience would ever believe them.

Of course, the Church of England now needs a Desmond Tutu, or perhaps a Richard Holloway. The former needs no introduction. The latter would at least qualify as a public intellectual. Both candidates are quintessential Anglican ambassadors and apologists for the spiritually imaginative (even daring), avuncular orthodoxy, safe risk-takers with tradition, savvy political engagement and come with a welcome pedigree of alterity. Alas, neither is available for the role on account of age and death. A pity, perhaps. Since there are no candidates in the Church of England offering to match these charisms, nor does there appear to be any who are able to provide viable and cogent inspirational alternatives, though Rowan Williams recently occupied the Seat of Saint Augustine of Canterbury on such terms.

To be fair to the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC) – the committee charged with selecting the next occupant of Lambeth Palace – the Church of England needs an incumbent for Canterbury who understands the people of the realm (i.e., the English, and occasionally, more broadly, the British). Whether this is what the wider Anglican Communion needs right now is a moot point. Indeed, in a post-colonial context, the tension between what the former empire and its ecclesial

Anthony Bash and Martyn Percy, *Forgiveness, Reparation, and Remorse: Reckoning with Truthful Apology*, York: Ethics Press International, 2025.

[3]*Conclave* is a 2024 political thriller film directed by Edward Berger and written by Peter Straughan, based on the 2016 novel by Robert Harris.

[4]*The Two Popes* is a 2019 biographical drama film directed by Fernando Meirelles and written by Anthony McCarten, adapted from McCarten's play *The Pope* which premiered at the Royal and Derngate Theatre in 2019.

[5]*Racing Demon* (Faber & Co.) is a 1990 play by English playwright David Hare. Part of a trio of plays about British institutions (*Murmuring Judges* and *The Absence of War*, it focuses on the Church of England, and tackles issues such as gay ordination and the role of evangelism in inner-city communities. The play debuted at the National Theatre. Through comedy-drama, Hare's play follows clergymen struggling to make sense of their purpose, mission and ultimate vocation.

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imperialism represent, and what the English outside the church might want, and what the Church of England currently needs, has never been greater.

This structural problem for the Church of England is wholly Protestant in the making, and the absolute antithesis of Roman Catholic ecclesiology. The next Pope will live in the Vatican in Rome, Italy, but he need not be Italian. Furthermore, even if the next occupant of the See of Rome were an Italian, he would not lead the Italian Catholic Church. That role falls to Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, appointed in 2022. Certainly, Canterbury is not the Vatican, although Lambeth Palace shows worrying Curia-like inclinations and is increasingly shaped by ultramontanism in outlook.

Some have already suggested that the Archbishop of York takes on a more executive function as Primate of All England (one of his/her titles), and that the holder of this role leads the Church of England. That would leave the See of Canterbury open to international primatial competition, to lead the wider Anglican Communion. At first glance, this looks promising, but it leaves a set of unresolvable constitutional questions.

For example, could a foreign prelate sit in the House of Lords and also act as a very senior member of the Privy Council? What if that bishop came from a country that was a republic, and the candidate were not supportive of monarchical polity in modern democracies? How could such a person take the loyal oath or vote in parliament on domestic affairs or foreign policy, when this was not their country? What would happen in the event of international conflicts of interest arising? Could a pro-Beijing candidate be considered, or one from a country more aligned with Russia, Israel, the USA, Palestine, Rwanda, Argentina or Europe following Brexit? What would a foreign leader of the Church of England say or do in such eventualities, and on behalf of whom? The list of questions is lengthy, and the answers unresolved.

The rigour, drama and seriousness of a conclave (around 135 cardinals meet until a candidate is identified and has accepted the nomination) could hardly pose a sharper contrast to the work of the CNC. The latter is secular-Protestant to its core. The same DNA is wired into choosing Church of England bishops, and despite the recent (though entirely predictable) stasis that has developed over several unresolved or delayed selections for appointing current candidates to diocesan bishoprics, the system is unlikely to change.

In contrast, Roman Catholicism has developed a serious history of conclaves, and its substantive historical annals testify to that. The modern *Canterbury Tale*, however, takes us to a very small committee that meets a few times in London. This is a very *English* way of choosing a candidate to run some aspect or arm of the UK government. Except in the case of the Archbishop of Canterbury, this committee is also choosing a kind of world leader, albeit one that bears little comparison to the See of Rome.

Glancing at the *Roman Catholic Cycle of Prayer* and comparing it with the *Anglican Cycle of Prayer* is instructive. Roman Catholics have 3200 dioceses and 650 archdioceses, 225,000 parishes, over 400,000 priests, 50,000 permanent deacons, 650,000 monks and nuns and nearly 3,000,000 catechists for their 1.3 billion followers. But it manages to get by with only 5,340 bishops. Believers who use the *Roman Catholic Cycle of Prayer* will pray for nine dioceses daily. Pope Francis opposed increasing the number of bishops, yet continually encouraged his episcopal

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colleagues to spend all their time with their parishes, priests and people, and 'as shepherds, should smell of the sheep'.

Anglicans have around 55 million followers (80 million is often claimed, but that includes 25 million in the Church of England, where attendance is down to just over 0.5 million, and two-thirds of the laity are now retirees). Global Anglicanism has 855 dioceses, meaning believers pray for around two each day if using the *Anglican Cycle of Prayer*.

Globally, Roman Catholics outnumber Anglicans by over 25:1. In percentages, Anglicans constitute about 3.5% of what Roman Catholicism represents. Anglicanism is 96.5% smaller. Yet the Anglican Communion had amassed almost 900 bishops by 2025, despite its relatively small size. There is one bishop for every 0.25 million Roman Catholics, in contrast to one Anglican bishop for every one of its 60,000 followers. Not for nothing is the denomination referred to as 'Episcopalian' outside England. It seems that when it comes to bishops, Anglicans cannot get enough of them.

The Anatomy of a Crisis

The last serious attempt to break the deadlock around the office and role of the Archbishop of Canterbury was the review led by Lord Hurd, and published in 2001. *To Lead and To Serve* (Hurd Report)[6] was far-reaching, though its assumptions and presumptions would not be shared now. It is something of an English conceit to assume that one of their numbers is the natural option to represent the rest of the world – that (of course) someone from the English nation is innately suited to lead foreigners. *To Lead and To Serve* assumed precisely that, and focused its attention on making the global-CEO-type *primus inter pares* role of the Archbishop more manageable in England. Naturally, it is another conceit of upper-class entitlement not to ask the English what they might want.

Hurd's review[7] recommended that the Archbishop's ordinary diocesan duties be devolved permanently onto a Bishop in Canterbury. The report recommended "a strategic distancing from the current degree of his [sic day-to-day involvement in the detailed administrative affairs or management of the Church of England in England". It further recommended developing the role of the Archbishop of York in the overall governance of the Church of England in England, such that 'leadership of the Anglican Communion will remain one of the principal modern roles of the Archbishop of Canterbury'. To do that, it would be necessary to establish a post at episcopal level at Lambeth funded by the Anglican Communion to act as the Archbishop of Canterbury's right hand in Anglican Communion affairs, with a view to its holder deputising wherever practicable for the Archbishop in the Anglican Communion.[8]

[6]https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2001/09/to-lead-and-to-serve-the-report-of-the-review-of-the-see-of-canterbury.aspx; https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2001/09/hurd-review-major-recommendations-for-the-see-of-canterbury.aspx;

[7]On Lord Hurd's Report, *To Lead and to Serve* (published September 2001) see: https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2001/09/to-lead-and-to-serve-the-report-of-the-review-of-the-see-of-canterbury.aspx; https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2001/09/hurd-review-major-recommendations-for-the-see-of-canterbury.aspx;

[8]https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2001/09/review-of-the-see-of-canterbury.aspx

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It is another conceit of upper-class English elitism that such reports are welcomed and promised 'to be considered' but then quietly filed away and forgotten. In fairness, this is a general trait found in institutions and traceable in other denominations. As Garrison Keillor notes, when Lutherans respond to a request from their local Pastor or Vestry with 'Well let me think about that, and if I decide to [go ahead] I'll give you a call' ... in Lake Wobegon [that] means 'No'.[9] English Anglicanism is no different:[10] 'Let me think about that and then form a working group' is coded episcopal-speak for 'No'.

If one were re-running Lord Hurd's review today, attention would need to focus on the fires burning at home. English Anglicanism is in a parlous state. Leaving aside the intractable debates and divisions on sexuality, gender, equal marriage and the like, the structures and finances of the Church of England are broken. Trust and confidence in episcopacy – from within the church and abroad in the wider public – is at a crisis-level low, and there are no signs of that changing.

Some have clung (out of desperation?) to the news that there are some small and encouraging signs of younger people returning to church, though it is far from clear that this will be of lasting benefit to the Church of England.[11] But one swallow does not make a summer, and talk of growth and resurgence feels more like a single sunny day interlude in the midst of an interminable, bitter winter that shows no sign of ending. Though the population of England grows in the 21st century, vocations for ministry have continued to decline. Clergy have few rights, too much responsibility, little support and pitiful stipends and pensions to look forward to. Volunteers for roles in parishes are also declining. The elite English ecclesiocracy and episcocrats have created a church where the 'bosses' are essentially secure, unaccountable, unregulated and generally well-paid. But the clergy and volunteers are heavily over-regulated, held accountable for virtually anything and everything, and have reportedly never felt more undervalued and vulnerable. Evidence shows many are leaving.

This is a denomination where morale has collapsed to the point of becoming dire, yet the Church of England leadership is essentially in denial and shows no sign of engaging with the mood on the ground, let alone of resolving the problems. The suspicion is that the leadership does not know what to do, so it avoids conversation on the key issues that concern parishes and clergy. This accelerates the decline, which increasingly feels more like an ecclesial vortex.

There is also a heavy element of cognitive dissonance at work in English Anglicanism. Its leaders believe the church is in recovery and can reverse decline. The same leaders refuse to take any lessons from other declining denominations, because they believe that the Church of England is a special case. The ecclesial polity finds itself inhabiting two parallel, conflicting universes. One knows it is declining. The other has to believe it isn't, and the recession is only some blip. Even more risibly, the leadership of the Church of England believes and promotes the idea that

[9]Garrison Keillor, *Life Among the Lutherans*, Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Books, 2010, p. 92.

[10]See Martyn Percy, 'Passionate Coolness; Exploring Mood and Character in Ecclesial Polity', in ed., Derrick Lemons, *Theologically-Engaged Anthropology*, Oxford: OUP, 2018, pp. 296-314.

[11]https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/church-christianity-gen-z-young-people-faith-god-easter-b2734957.html

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it is on some kind of par with Roman Catholicism, despite the chasmic differences in scale: 1.3 billion versus 55 million. Likewise, the Vatican is an independent state with a diplomatic corps (the Pope appoints an Apostolic Nuncio to each nation). Canterbury does not have diplomats, and the British Apostolic Nuncio relates to the UK government, not Lambeth Palace. Reality is dawning and, as cognitive dissonance leads to bifurcation or implosion morale, trust and confidence collapses.[12]

The next Archbishop of Canterbury has all this on their agenda before they turn their attention to global Anglican affairs, and with the north–south developed–developing splits on sexuality and gender remaining unresolved, this does seem like a moment to recalibrate the role of the occupant of Lambeth Palace. As I have argued before,[13] were the Church of England to accept its core Protestant identity (since the denomination began in 1534 after the legal split with Rome), then it would be freer to see that its pan-Anglican international organization, operation and identity are considerably closer to that of arrangements for other larger Protestant denominations such as the Lutheran, Presbyterian and Methodist.

Stated bluntly, global Anglicanism does not need its 'head honcho' to reside in England. There is no theological or deep ecclesiological rationale for the head of the Anglican Communion to lead from Canterbury or Lambeth Palace in the way the Pope must be at Rome. Some 'titular' headship could still preside (i.e., holding or constituting a purely formal position or title without any real authority, in much the way that the reigning British monarch is titular head of the Church of England). But as for leadership, there is no reason why the head of the worldwide Anglican Communion (NB: not the Church of England, which remains 'by law established') cannot be determined with election by the Primates, and the office holder running for a limited term. Anglicanism could be led from Hong Kong or Cape Town, for example.

Here, we note that 'form follows function' as one of the core principles of design, which states that the appearance and structure of a building, machine, structure or object (i.e., its architectural and built form) should primarily relate to its intended function or purpose. Global Anglicanism, and the fudgy process to choose a new Canterbury Archbishop, is the opposite of this: far too many functions are looking for some form. It cannot work and is doomed to failure.

The history is clear enough. There was no Anglican Communion in 1534. There was barely one in 1784 when Samuel Seabury was consecrated, and only the nascent outline of an ecclesial imperial network in 1834 when Newman was writing *Tracts for the Times*. The functions of the Archbishop of Canterbury hardly changed from 1534 to 1834.

Today, there are far too many functions operating ineffectively without any form; they are homeless. Arguably, it was the architect Louis Sullivan who first coined the modern maxim, 'form follows function', in the way we now understand the phrase and its meaning. Sullivan drew on the theory of his friend and mentor, John

[12]See Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957.

[13]Martyn Percy, *The Crisis of Colonial Anglicanism: Empire, Slavery and Revolt in the Church of England*, London: Hurst Publishing with OUP/USA, 2025; and see also Martyn Percy *Church, Communion and Culture*: *Samuel Seabury and the Birth of Global Anglicanism*, Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2025.

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H. Edelmann, to assert that a rationally designed structure may not necessarily be beautiful, but that no building can be beautiful that does not have a rationally designed structure.[14]

Newman – Aids on Theological Language

In our previous editorial,[15] we noted that 1534 is the date of inception for the Church of England as a distinct ecclesial polity that was divorced from Rome; that 1784 (the consecration of Samuel Seabury as Bishop of Connecticut) marked the breakup of global Anglicanism as an entity that could be ruled from England; and that 1834 (John Henry Newman's *Tract for the Times*) marked the moment when English Anglicanism tried to reinvent the *via media* not as a hybrid of Lutheran and Calvinist theologies (which it had adopted since Tudor times), but should now rather be understood as a Protestant–Catholic synthesis. As we have also noted, Newman came to see this confection as a conceit, concluding in 1845 that one could not be (so to speak) 'half-Protestant and half-Catholic' any more than one could be half-baptised or half-ordained. Newman duly turned to Rome and was received into the Church in 1845.[16] That date also marked the end of the Tractarians as a theological movement. Anglo-Catholicism continued as a movement of nostalgia and imagination, blending Gothic revivalism and ritualism. But as a theological movement, it quickly became a spent force – effectively a body politic amputee left mourning for its lost limbs.

Newman was, without doubt, the most brilliant Anglican theologian of all time, and possibly only matched by the likes of Richard Hooker.[17] His *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* was published in 1870,[18] and took two decades to write. It still stands tall today as one of the greatest contributions in English theological writing.[19] In barely twenty years' time, 2045 will be marking the bicentennial of Saint John Henry Newman's reception into the Roman Catholic Church. As we approach that date, is there any help, support or comfort that Newman might offer to the crises currently engulfing the Church of England and global Anglican polity? Three pointers come to mind.

First, Newman's championing of the legitimate development of doctrine is the obvious place to start. The faithful transmission of tradition innately assumes a degree of adaptation in response to new challenges and circumstances, provided the original deposit of faith remains intact. Coherence and continuity must engage with

[14]See Charles E. Gregersen, *Louis Sullivan and his Mentor, John Herman Edelmann, Architect*. Bloomington, IN: Author-House, 2013, p. ix.

[15]Martyn Percy, 'The Next Archbishop of Canterbury', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-anglican-studies

[16]See Martyn Percy, *The Crisis of Colonial Anglicanism: Empire, Slavery and Revolt in the Church of England*, London: Hurst Publishing with OUP/USA, 2025, pp. 251-252.

[17]There is no better text on Newman at the moment than Stephen Morgan, *John Henry Newman and the Development of Doctrine: Encountering Change, Looking for Continuity*, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2021.

[18]J. H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, London: Burns & Oates, 1870.

[19]One of the best introductions to Newman's treatise remains Thomas J Norris, *Newman and His Theological Method: A Guide for the Theologian Today,* Leiden: Brill, 1977.

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change. Here, Anglicans have a complex history of faithful adjustment. The remarriage of divorcees and even adapting to cultures that permit polygamy (i.e., Colenso controversy) show that Anglicans can adapt their teaching on marriage without losing its fundamental essence. There are Anglicans of a more dogmatic ilk who will talk of the inviolable 'doctrine of marriage'. However, it is essential to note that baptism and the Eucharist are the only two sacraments in historic Anglican polity. Marriage is not featured as a sacrament in the Thirty-Nine Articles. It is not a matter of doctrine, which is not to say that it cannot be dismissed as a non-theological matter. However, it clearly falls within the sphere of adaptation in Anglican polity, as the historic accommodations on the remarriage of divorcees testify.

Second, Newman was wary of using terms like 'dogma', 'doctrine', 'heresy', 'deposit of faith', 'authority' and 'tradition' without due care and attention. Catholic theologians, generally, follow this line. However, in the overheated debates that swamp Anglican polity, such rhetorical currency is frequently used to the point where it can often cease to have much meaning or value. Newman's ideas on the development of Christian doctrine[20] remain seminal for our time and provide essential pointers on how global Anglicanism and the Church of England might resolve its perpetually simmering tensions and disputes within its Protestant polity. It was G.K. Chesterton who characterized Newman's essay on the *Development of Doctrine* as:

> 'When we say that a puppy develops into a dog, we do not mean that his growth is a gradual compromise with a cat; we mean that he becomes more doggy and not less. Development is the expansion of all the possibilities and implications of a doctrine, as there is time to distinguish them and draw them out . . . '[21]

Third, real and not just notional assent to truth is essential for Anglican polity going forward. That does not rule out internal diversity and difference, or some degree of divergence within the denomination. However, it requires all parties to engage with the essential truths that maintain the unity of faith. This is core to the inner life of a denomination and its polity. It is a given ecumenically. That said, development *is* possible precisely because Christianity is a living tradition. At the same time, the faith is built upon core principles, concrete beliefs and clear ideas that make up the annals and corpus of tradition. I would expect – more in hope than expectation – that conservative and liberal Anglicans, and those claiming labels such as 'traditionalist' or 'progressive', could at least gather round Newman's articulation of our common faith. It cannot be changed. But it does develop, and it can be adapted. The annals of the New Testament bear witness to that.

[20]J. H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, London: James Toovey, 1845.
[21]G.K. Chesterton, *St Thomas Aquinas,* London: Macmillan, 1933, p. 23.

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Conclusion

The Church of England seems intent on constantly adding to its portfolio of tasks, as it has lost its core sense of purpose (i.e., basic function). That creates an extensive culture of frenetic exhaustion, with too much to do within poor and incomplete structures. This is what happens when the core function of the church is lost – the ecclesiology becomes an endless buffet of thin functionality. This is echoed in a recent essay from Mark Clavier,[22] looking back at the comprehensive review of the Church in Wales in 2012 led by Lord Harries. Clavier notes vocations and ministry, 'formation' has been replaced with 'training', and in ministry the church is at the mercy of short-term goal-orientated objectives.

The Church of England has fallen into a similar trap. It erects increasing amounts of scaffolding, but without any clear sense of the core form it is supporting, maintaining, repairing or perhaps even seeking to extend. It neither understands the structures it occupies nor what needs to be done to conserve, improve or extend it. Understanding the functions of the church, and thereby, guarding its core form are lost in haphazard initiatives that erect more scaffolding, but with no obvious outcomes. Efforts in safeguarding serve as prime example. But many initiatives in mission reflect the same problems.

It was Newman who once quipped that the problem facing the Church of England was the absence of a soul. By this he meant, I think, the lack of a rich and dense capacity for theological and spiritual critical reflection. This leaves it at the mercy of short-termism and pragmatism. The roots of the current crises always lie in the past. For example, it would be hard to find any recent holder of the See of Canterbury who brought a track record of fiscal prudence and wisdom to the table. The most recent incumbent left successive deficits in Coventry, Liverpool and Durham, mostly through financially speculative initiatives that failed. This was despite the much vaunted reputation for business experience and financial leadership. (A Treasurer at the French oil company Elf would not give the postholder a position of fiscal leadership or entrepreneurial business experience.) The expenditure at Lambeth Palace will probably never be properly audited, but the financial holes left behind are huge, and once again the cupboard left bare for his successors to struggle with.

Welby somehow cast an aura of fiscal and missional assurance that few questioned, yet was hugely deficient in both spheres. Those that had the temerity to question this were denigrated and demonized. Yet, all the evidence shows that clergy pensions and stipends are currently in a parlous state. At the same time, he removed statutory grants from dioceses and replaced those with competitive bids, rebranding the process as a 'Strategic Initiative' geared to reversing the decline of the church, and promoting numerical growth.

There is some degree of vanity and folly regarding the incoherence of the proposed trajectory. The church cannot afford to pay its clergy or run its existing parish network. Welby's proposals were to add to the burden and debt by siphoning off money to create more loss-making churches and new (so-called) missional congregations (literally cutting off one's nose to spite one's face). Leaving aside the

[22]https://markclavier.substack.com/p/beyond-the-scaffolding

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time, effort and money required for each diocese to craft a bid to pile even more functions on to a deficit-making denomination, the effect has been to create a whole culture of rewarding 'winners' (clergy, churches) for grants, which means 99% of the Church of England become losers by default.

Some dioceses have played the Church of England's version of the National Lottery Grants Applications game very well, and been handsomely rewarded. That makes it very hard for those inside the church to be vocally critical. But when essential grants are all removed from the dioceses and turned into competitive beauty contests and missional bids, the morale of the rest of the Church of England was always bound to suffer and collapse. It surely has.

Put plainly, these are no longer kingdom values running the Church of England. Jesus did not reward winners. Nor did the early church. Welby's ill-conceived revolution was a thin version of Thatcherism.[23] The fruits of it are already tasting bitter. And yes, the children's teeth have been set on edge.[24]

But I end on a note of hope rooted in a practical, grounded ecclesiology. The Church of England and global Anglicanism have suffered their fair share of schism and haemorrhage over 500 years. Methodism might be one of the larger cases. But, the Church of England in South Africa (CESA – a split founded in 1938, now called REACH-SA), the Diocese of the Southern Cross (Sydney-sponsored) or Anglican Church of North America (ACNA) point us to a history of fragmentation where Anglicanism arrived long ago at the point of conceding that such ordinations are 'valid but illicit'.

This is perhaps comparable to the ecclesiological tolerance, pragmatism and forbearance that the Vatican has had to extend to Catholics in China. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) does not accept the primacy of the Roman Pontiff and has its own priests and bishops. On the other hand, the Bishops Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC) is Vatican-approved, and Rome chooses its Bishops. Following the establishment of modern China after the revolution (1949) and under the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong, China broke off diplomatic relations with the Vatican in 1951. In fairness to Beijing, this was precipitated by the Holy See's 1950 statement that participation in certain Chinese Communist Party (CCP) organisations would result in excommunication from the Church. Several hundred Roman Catholic priests, nuns and laity wrote to the Vatican to protest this interference in Chinese governance.

For some time, neither the BCCCC or CCPA could recognize the other as Chinese and authentically Catholic. To the great credit of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis I, much has been done to repair the rifts with China from the last 75 years, restore some degree of mutual trust and work together on common concerns. But it has meant Rome eventually conceding that CCPA ordinations and its bishops are to be regarded as 'valid', albeit 'illicit'. China, has, likewise, made significant contributions and moved towards these developments. The faith is plainly common despite the differences in form and function, with two different kinds of Catholicism

[23]This is extensively discussed in Martyn Percy, *The Future Shapes of Anglicanism: Charts, Currents, Contours*, London: Routledge, 2017.

[24]Cf., Jeremiah 31:29 and Ezekiel 18:2-4.

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operating in China. The Chinese Takeaway (so to speak) for Anglicanism barely needs sketching here.[25]

What we can say by way of conclusion is that Anglicanism needs to recover its theological roots, which are fundamentally Protestant in origin and ethos, as is its polity. And whilst it has many aesthetic and ritualistic-liturgical similarities with Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism is firmly a pan-Protestant polity that needs the institution to be organized around its theological-ecclesial identity. The leadership of the Church of England needs to find some way to escape its interminable searches for the proper forms that follow its ever-growing and increasingly incoherent legion of functions, and in the process, conduct a thorough cleansing audit of those functions that were essential (but no longer), those that are still mandatory, some that are desirable, and those that can now be safely discarded.

Only then will Anglicanism recover some degree of poise. The capacious home that is the Church of England, and the living edifice that is the building of wider global Anglicanism, can only be put in order when form finally follows function. That Chaucerian journey is yet to begin. As things currently stand, it is hard to see the pilgrims' progress.

[25]See Editorial Committee, 'The Catholic Church in China in 2002: An Analysis' and 'Statistics and Major Events of the Catholic Church in China, 2002' in *Tripod*, Issue 202, Spring 2023, pp. 149-190.

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