

BOOK REVIEW

Gary Dorrien, *Anglican Identities: Logos Idealism, Imperial Whiteness, Commonwealth Ecumenism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2024).

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As I understand the title of this study, Gary Dorrien maintains that incarnational theology, ecumenical openness and racism are the defining characteristics of Anglicanism. If there are other contestants for that distinction, he does not identify them. On my reading, he makes a sound case for the first: the religion of the Incarnation is a consistent theme running through the book. As for ecumenical relations, only Michael Ramsey's efforts are explored in any depth (though many other cases might have been acknowledged). Dorrien does however take the unusual step of associating an ecumenical spirit with Hooker's understanding of a Christian commonwealth, where the identity between Church and State opens the door to a recognition that 'all Christian communions are part of the true visible church' (145). In general, though, the Anglican claim to be a *via media* between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism did not necessarily result in a friendly openness in either direction.

On the third point, Dorrien establishes that many prominent Anglicans, among them Queen Elizabeth I, John Locke, George Whitefield and Hastings Rashdall, said deeply racist things. The sin of the slave trade and ownership of enslaved persons was firmly entrenched in the British establishment and economic life. But he does not make the case that racism was somehow inherent in Anglicanism, or that their racism distinguished Anglicans from any other denomination of Christians or from European 'civilisation' in general. Indeed, 'Whiteness' can hardly be an adequate description of the callous and hypocritical prejudices held by many Anglicans (and others) when immigrants to Britain in the 1950s encountered signs in boarding house windows reading, 'No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs' (paraphrased). The continuing deep dependence of Western economies on modern-day slavery provides us with no vantage point to stand in judgment on our predecessors.

The publishers claim that this book offers 'a comprehensive . . . account of the story of Anglicanism'. This is far from the case. There is no account of how Anglicanism has been lived out in parishes or dioceses or how it came to be a global communion of churches. Surprising to say, given the author's sensitivity to the issue of race, this is fundamentally an account of the lives and thoughts of 'Great White Men' from Britain and the United States. The only women treated in any depth are

Queen Elizabeth I and Vida Scudder, the only Black man, Desmond Tutu. At the beginning, Dorrien buttresses the book with significant sections of narrative history, to ground the development of Anglican thought within its historical context. The whole is marked, however, by an inconsistency of emphases and approaches. There is a significant section on the maritime conflict between England and Spain during the reign of Elizabeth which, even if it is the foundation for England's participation in slaving, is difficult to connect to theology. The English Civil War, a war of religion, is on the other hand treated cursorily, and the historical narrative runs out entirely by the eighteenth century.

The book reads like several university lecture courses stitched into a single whole, which might account for the inconsistency of approach and significant chronological gaps. Dorrien's text has the broad-brush sweep and gossipy tone so effective in engaging audiences, even when it is clearly based on extensive and intensive research and reading. Such a genesis might also account for the number of historical and rhetorical lapses: among them, 'peon' for 'paean' (240); the 'Authorised Version' of the Bible prescribed for use in 1583 (102); Admiral Nelson defeating the combined armies of France and Spain at Trafalgar (248); 'King's College, Oxford' (419); Lord Peter 'Whimsey' (440).

Despite all these drawbacks, however, this book does have an overwhelming strength as an account of philosophical theology within Anglicanism. The 'Anglican Identities' are best understood as the theological personalities that are the most consistent focus of this book, philosophers and theologians that Dorrien knows intimately and understands deeply. For each of the figures he provides a memorable warts-and-all personal portrait; perceptive summaries of the most important works; an assessment of the standing of each in relation to his predecessors, contemporaries and successors; and, sometimes, a glance at the scholarly state-of-play. He provides an insightful analysis of the relationships between Henry VIII, Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell, of Elizabeth I's decisive breaking of the Puritan ascendancy, and of Richard Hooker as the theologian of proto-Anglicanism. He admires the legacy of the Caroline Divines, particularly Lancelot Andrewes and Jeremy Taylor. John Locke's deep religious commitment receives its due, as well as his contradictory attitudes towards slavery. The bishop-philosophers, George Berkeley and Joseph Butler, distinguish the eighteenth century, while Samuel Taylor Coleridge forces his contemporaries to engage with the legacy of Immanuel Kant. Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Gore's Christian Socialism set the moral compass for an Anglo-Catholicism that, through the influence of William Temple and historian R. H. Tawney, come to frame the development of the Welfare State.

Although Dorrien is frank about his sympathies for the theological tendencies that informed the development of Anglo-Catholicism and Liberalism, he is even-handed in presenting Puritan and Evangelical perspectives. It is fitting that this study of Anglican Identities should reach its effective conclusion in Michael Ramsey's wholehearted determination to reconcile the Evangelical and Catholic tendencies within Anglicanism. That effort, like his ecumenical overtures to the Roman Catholics and Orthodox and his effort to heal the schism between Methodists and the Church of England, have all run into the sands of time.

Nevertheless, as Ramsey wrote in *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, the Anglican Church continues 'by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died'. Gary Dorrien effectively reminds us why its story is still worth knowing and understanding.

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