

## 2015 Synod Dinner –

### **‘A Tale of Two Archbishops: Christian Unity in the ministry of Archbishops Temple and Mowll’**

I want to begin by thanking the council of the ACL for the invitation to speak this evening. I count it a great privilege, and hope what I say is edifying for all of us who have gathered.

I have given my address the title... ‘A Tale of Two Archbishops: Christian Unity in the Ministries of Archbishops Temple and Mowll’

Archbishop Mowll is probably familiar to all of us. If not, then that is his portrait up there behind me. Also you can read more in a very fine biography – which, just as a disclaimer, the author’s family get no royalties for... unfortunately.

Archbishop Temple is probably a little less familiar. I am hopeful there will be a new biography on him coming out in the next year or so – and it would be great the author’s family got bountiful royalties for it... but it’s unlikely.

For those who have never heard of William Temple, who was he? William Temple dominated the Church of England and the emerging Anglican communion in the period between the wars. Indeed, in Matthew Grimley’s recent historical assessment, Temple was ‘the pre-eminent Anglican leader of the inter-war period, and indeed of the whole twentieth century’.<sup>1</sup> Historian Kenneth Hylson-Smith goes even further, declaring him ‘One of the most outstanding churchmen not only of the twentieth, but of any century.’<sup>2</sup>

An interesting piece of trivia is that Temple is the only son of an Archbishop of Canterbury to himself become Archbishop of Canterbury. (I sometimes call his era ‘Second Temple Anglicanism’). One of the things that interested me in studying Temple was how widely admired he was by evangelicals. Evangelicals could be cheeky: Once he became archbishop one evangelical newspaper pondered which Old Testament incident the occasion recalled... it was the old men in Ezra 3 who had seen the first temple and wept when they saw the second! But generally, Temple was widely respected.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England: Liberal Anglican Theories of the State Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 5.

<sup>2</sup> K. Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II: 1833–1998* (London: SCM, 1996), 179.

Even here in Sydney! I picked up this copy of his biography on a give-away table (who would do such a thing!) only to open it up and find this inscription... 'For the Right Rev C.V. Pilcher. In great appreciation of his care of the Diocese of Sydney Dec 1947 to Oct 1948' (Pilcher was the assistant bishop whose plaque in the cathedral, if I remember rightly, notes his ability as a scholar, master of church music, friend of the refugee and translator of Icelandic Poetry!! they don't make bishops like that anymore... Along with all that, he also lectured Church History at Moore College – the guy is a legend). But I find this inscription fascinating. I presume this book was given for looking after the diocese while Mowll was away. I presume, with the sea travel he was at the 1948 Lambeth Conference. But who gave it to Pilcher? Did Mowll himself bring it back from England as a gift? (Maybe this is the book Mowll is holding in that portrait up there?). William Temple was admired even here in Sydney.

William was born in the bishop's palace in Exeter in 1881 and as his father, Frederick, received preferment, he moved with the family to Fulham Palace, home of the bishop of London, and then Lambeth and Canterbury Palaces, the homes of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In other words, Temple's childhood was coloured purple. Not only was he born into ecclesiastical royalty, he was a precocious talent wrapped up in a humble and amiable character... which meant it was little wonder he had been consecrated bishop before he had reached the age of 40.

Howard Mowll, on the other hand, was born into a non-clerical family in Dover in 1890. It was a devout Christian family, but he was not brought up amongst the ecclesiastical establishment like William Temple. As such, we should consider his consecration as bishop at the ripe old age of 32 as remarkable. (He only just met the canonically required age!)

It's not just that both Temple and Mowll were young when they were made bishops that makes for an interesting comparison. There are lots of other things they have in common.

- Both were ordained by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randell Davidson.
  - Mowll was 8 ½ years younger than Temple and he was personally present at Temple's ordination as a school boy at King's School Canterbury and he remembered the occasion for the rest of his life.
- Mowll's other ordination was by the evangelical Bishop of Manchester Edmund Knox.
  - It was Knox who Temple succeeded as bishop of Manchester.

- Both Temple and Mowll married in their mid-thirties
- Neither had any children
- They were consecrated as bishops 1 year apart
- and they were appointed as archbishops 4 years apart.

Their ministries ran parallel, even though Mowll lived 14 years after Temple died – but even in this there were similarities

- both were the last Archbishops of their dioceses to die in office
- and both died relatively young... in their sixties.

But while both Mowll and Temple shared a lot in common... there were also some significant differences.

- Mowll never had a ministry post in England, serving in Canada, China and Australia,
  - Temple's ministry was bound to England,
- Mowll went to Cambridge,
  - Temple went to Oxford,
- Mowll was president of CICCUC for 5 terms,
  - Temple threw himself into the Student Christian Movement (his only trip to Australia was on behalf of the SCM in 1910)<sup>3</sup>
- Mowll was evangelical,
  - Temple was not!!!

It is this last point that makes our topic this evening of Christian unity so interesting. **Both Archbishops were deeply passionate about Christian unity.** Both were heavily involved in efforts to promote it. Both had ecumenical hearts, if you want to use that terminology, but each employed different priorities and practices in their ecumenical quests.

So, it's a tale of two Archbishops... It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness ... it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair...The spring of Ecumenical hope in the midst of the winter of World War despair.

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<sup>3</sup> The SCM was known as the BCCU until 1905

What lessons can we draw from these leaders for the situation we face today?

Well, the first thing I want to point out is what Temple considered to be authentic Anglicanism. But more than just what he thought, I want to show how successful he was in embedding this understanding into significant statements of Anglican self-identity.

In 1928 Temple wrote his most systematic account of what he believed was the heart of Anglicanism in a pamphlet called: *The Genius of the Church of England*. He argued that it was the very lack of theological dogmatism that was the compelling feature of Anglicanism, stating: 'Nowhere was the Reformation accomplished with so little assertion of abstract principles as in England.'<sup>4</sup> (As I lecture on the English Reformation I find this an extraordinary claim... I can only imagine what Bishop Pilcher would have said... probably something in Icelandic!) Furthermore, Temple went on to claim that it had been 'a deliberate policy' of the Church of England to combine strong elements of both Catholic and Evangelical traditions.<sup>5</sup> And Temple helped popularise this position into the mainstream. He believed the way Anglican unity would flourish was by the different parties of the Church of England, while not compromising their own convictions, cherishing and enjoying the emphases of other parties. One reason he argued for this was so important was because the English church had a 'unique vocation' in the broader ecumenical movement because within her, the two traditions, Catholic and Evangelical, were united. As such, Temple argued that, while it was desirable for there to be parties in the church, partisanship was detrimental because 'the whole Church needs us all'.<sup>6</sup> The defining feature of Anglicanism, according to Temple, was not just that it embraces and endorses all positions, but that these positions mutually complement each other

I'm not sure if you've ever heard that definition used, but it can trace its origins to the early twentieth century and it achieved some institutional credence through the efforts of William Temple. He was chairman of the Church of England Doctrine Commission which published an influential report in 1938 and he was the chairman of the Committee on Unity at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, in both of which his influence on the final reports is obvious and these reports are still quoted as 'useful' definitions of Anglicanism by

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<sup>4</sup> Temple, 'Genius', 89.

<sup>5</sup> Temple, 'Genius', 91.

<sup>6</sup> Temple, *His Church*, 48-49.

Anglican commentators.<sup>7</sup> Paul Avis has suggested that Temple's drafting of the statement describing liberality as a 'special character' of Anglicanism became a defining mark of Anglican identity receiving 'the imprimatur of the whole Anglican Communion' at the 1930 Lambeth Conference.<sup>8</sup> In these formal ways, Temple was able to validate a theological movement which was historically a recent addition to the options for understanding Anglicanism.

Now, I'm sure I don't have to convince anyone here of the inadequacies of this understanding of Anglicanism. Temple, tended towards being an ecclesiastical Humpty Dumpty: 'When I use a word, "Anglican" I mean just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less'. On the contrary, Anglicanism is an ecclesiological expression founded upon a scripturally derived doctrinal statement and practice. Howard Mowll, as it turns out, was a long term vice-president of the English National Church League – an organisation that promoted a doctrinal understanding of Anglicanism. When our Anglican Church League was founded, it look to the NCL for guidance and today if you go onto the ACL's website, you will see that the preservation and promotion of doctrinal Anglicanism is what we are about...

*The ACL is an association of evangelical Australian Anglican Christians who desire to maintain the reformed, protestant and evangelical character of the Anglican Church. This character is based on Scripture and is expressed in the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion.*

It is a defining doctrinal position that unifies Anglicans – not the cherishing of diverse doctrinal positions and describing them as 'mutually complementary'.

Needless to say, Temple's attempt to enfranchise the wide spectrum of belief and practice in the Church of England proved to be unsuccessful both corporately and personally. Perhaps the best way to demonstrate this is the way *Prayer Book* revision process unfolded in the 1920s.

Temple saw the revision process as an opportunity to advance his understanding of Anglicanism and he publically declared that this was a chance for people to rethink their

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<sup>7</sup> For example, Avis, *Identity*, 8, 27; J. Hinde, 'Primacy and Unity: An Anglican Contribution to a Patient and Fraternal Dialogue', in J.F. Puglisi (ed.), *Petrine Ministry and the Unity of the Church* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1999), 55.

<sup>8</sup> Avis, 'What is Anglicanism?', 412.

convictions about the Church of England's distinctive character.<sup>9</sup> He was heavily involved in drafting a revised book and in his preface he commended it because the authors had been 'drawn from all "parties" in the Church'.<sup>10</sup> Now there was national drama in the 1920s about the Prayer Book revision, one of the aims was to throw a bone to Anglo-Catholics by providing official sanction for some of their practices in order that they would refrain from others. Protestant sentiment was strongly opposed to any move in the Romeward direction and a well organised campaign was led by Temple's predecessor in Manchester – the aged Edmund Knox. (The movement was described by one bishop as 'an army of illiterates marshalled by octogenarians').<sup>11</sup> In the end even the Anglo-Catholic leader Darwell Stone opposed the compromise book as a breach of Anglo-Catholic principles.

With both sides in opposition to him, perhaps you could argue that Temple achieved his goal of unity through the process!! But he didn't see it that way

The *Prayer Book* measure was rejected twice in the House of Commons in 1927-8. One newspaper described the rejection as 'almost as much of a defeat for the Bishop of Manchester [Temple] as for the aged Primate [Randell Davidson – who had been working on it for over two decades]'.<sup>12</sup> It certainly left the bishops in quite an awkward position.<sup>13</sup> 39 of the 43 bishops had strongly advocated for revisions – how could they then discipline those performing practices that they had themselves championed?

In 1929 Cosmo Lang became Archbishop of Canterbury and Temple took his place as Archbishop of York and they led the Convocations to 'reject the rejection'! They were going to move forward as though the revised book had been passed. But by endorsing an 'illegal' *Prayer Book*, what moral authority did they have to enforce it?

Temple experienced this dilemma first hand in his dealings with priests in his diocese. There are several letters to clergy where Temple demands that 'all practices disallowed by the Book of 1928 shall be discontinued'.<sup>14</sup> When they responded that they would not

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<sup>9</sup> Temple, 'Vocation and Destiny', 191.

<sup>10</sup> W. Temple, *A New Prayer Book* (London: OUP, 1923), i.

<sup>11</sup> Bishop of Durham, Hensley Henson

<sup>12</sup> 'By The Way', *English Churchman* 9/Aug/1928:433.

<sup>13</sup> 'A New Era', *Guardian* 15/Jul/1928:376.

<sup>14</sup> Temple/Hill, 5/Sept/1929 (Bp. C&P. XIII/5).

comply Temple said he could not then visit the church or have any other diocesan officials visit.<sup>15</sup>

This example significant in demonstrating the weaknesses in Temple's approach to church unity. He had long argued for comprehension and yet, when it came to governing his diocese, he insisted on conformity. How could Temple have it both ways? Did not those extreme high churchmen hold to an important truth that should have been cherished and enjoyed by the wider church and particularly its representative, the bishop? It seems somewhat ironic that after his championing of efforts to have a prayer book that embodied his liberality – he then went about enforcing its bounds.

In these events we see the potential problems that arise from pursuing unity above all else. Unity ultimately needs to be *in* something and often if you attempt to please everyone you ultimately end up pleasing no one. But what is the alternative for those who see the biblical importance of Christian unity? What should the unity be *in*? Or to put it another way, is it ever appropriate for those who cherish unity... to divide?

I began by highlighting the two archbishops different university associations. Temple in the SCM and Mowll in the CICCUC. Both of these were pioneering ecumenical ventures – interdenominational Christian unions. But they had very different theologies driving their ecumenical work. This is demonstrated by the different verses each organisation adopted: the SCM focused on John 17:21 'That they may all be one', as though Christian unity was a potentiality to be worked towards. For CICCUC it was Gal 3:28 'all one in Christ Jesus'. Those who belong to Jesus necessarily belong to each other.

For two groups that were both keen on unity, it is interesting that one of the famous events of student ministry in the early twentieth century was the disaffiliation of the CICCUC from the SCM. An event which happened in Mowll's time at Cambridge. The CICCUC, of course, stood in the tradition of Charles Simeon – a man whose ministry was founded on the authority of the Bible and the priority of evangelism. And Mowll cherished being a member of King's College, the same college as Simeon. But tensions came to a head in Mowll's first year at Cambridge when the SCM insisted that the CICCUC soften its Simeonite priorities to be more inclusive of those who, for example, were critical of Scripture. The students in the CICCUC resolved not to comply, resulting in the severing of affiliation. When there was an attempt after the First World War to bring the two groups back together, the

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<sup>15</sup> Hill/Temple, 27/Nov/1929; Temple/Hill, 4/Dec/1929 (Bp. C&P. XIII/5). There are numerous other examples of Temple trying to enforce the order of the 1928 *Prayer Book* in his first year at York, in the Bishopthorpe Papers.

CICCU representatives sought assurances about the Bible and atonement. On both counts the SCM was not prepared to make a firm statement and Norman Grubb was told in no uncertain terms that the atoning blood of Christ was **not** central to the beliefs of the SCM. Needless to say, the reconciliation progressed no further

How are we supposed to understand this stand for gospel truths? Was the division, *by very nature of being a division*, certainly wrong? Well, for those who are convinced of the biblical gospel, the answer has to be no. In 1 Cor 5, Paul gave disassociation as the measure to be used for a serious transgression. And this is the measure we have in cases of serious gospel compromise whether in belief or behaviour. The hope, of course, is that such disassociation will lead to repentance and reconciliation, but the biblical sanction we have is disassociation.

Many of the challenges that we face today are similar to those the CICCU faced. There are still Christians who undermine the authority of Scripture and there are Christians who sideline Penal Substitutionary Atonement, which all but renders the biblical doctrine of sin meaningless. Some challenges are the same. Other challenges we face would not have been conceived of 100 years ago, questions of gay marriage and ordination. But the importance of standing united in the truth, of not compromising confessional foundations and of continual gospel proclamation remain the same.

You see, Mowll's CICCU was still a movement that enjoyed the God given gift of Christian unity. Its emphasis was on *Christian* unity (All one in Christ Jesus)... rather than unity *for the sake of unity*. And this is the way we ought to understand the Gafcon movement. It might be described by the press or institutional authorities as schismatic and divisive, but, on the contrary, the Gafcon movement is actually a unity movement. A movement that is deeply concerned about Christians standing together for the sake of biblical truth.

It is terrible when Christians divide for the wrong reasons. But it is a good thing when Christians are united in the truth and disaffiliate from those in serious error *for the sake of the gospel*. Even if it does upset people. Even if it does make us unpopular. It is good because it shows the world and our brothers and sisters that **Jesus Christ and his way of life comes first**. Of course, how to do this takes wisdom and humility and charity and patience... but when the integrity of the gospel is at stake... it is absolutely essential!



One of the things I find interesting about both archbishops is that operated under the assumption that it was good to work with other Christian bodies to the full extent that it was possible. A good example of this, and something that is not widely known about either Mowll or Temple, is that they both made, what was for their time, pioneering joint statements with the Roman Catholic Church. There is a series of letters and newspaper clippings in Lambeth Palace Library sent by the governor of NSW, Lord Wakehurst, to William Temple showing him what things Mowll and the Roman Catholic Archbishop Gilroy were saying together. It was mainly things to do with arriving at a just peace and ensuring an equitable social policy, but on issues they shared, they saw the benefit of speaking together. Temple was doing similar things in England. He even worked on an audacious secret plan to visit the pope in the Vatican to make a joint statement... while the war was still raging in Italy! For their time, these were ground-breaking ventures indeed.

I think there is something in this... joining together with other bodies *to the extent you can* is a good principle. Our cause on an issue like gay marriage will be better served by working, not only with other Protestants, but with Catholics too. Closer to home, organisations like the Gospel Coalition can provide really helpful resources for evangelical Christian ministry – and we're not compromising our convictions on something like baptism by working with Baptists here – rather it is an outworking of the unity we have in Christ. Even our very own synod is a chance for unity to be expressed and fellowship to be enjoyed by representatives of hundreds of churches. And this is a God given fruit of our fellowship with Christ. If we belong to Jesus – we belong to one another.

And this is well worth cherishing and fostering. Debate is good. Robust debate is healthy. But our unity in Christ should mean our debates are conducted in a spirit of fraternal love.

We are not searching for a unity that we invent. It's not about us. It's not about what we like, or who we like. It is not aimed at elevating us. Our unity is not centred around us. It is centred around Jesus. And it aims at glorifying God by holding fast to the truth of the Bible.

So, back to Temple and Mowll... whose unity was more profound and lasting? Scholars often acknowledge the establishment of the World Council of Churches as one of William Temple's greatest achievements. He was certainly its chief architect. Archbishop Mowll was a keen advocate for the WCC and readily joined up. But I think with all things considered,

Mowll actually orchestrated a far more profound ecumenical activity: the 1959 Billy Graham crusade.

Although Mowll died just months before the crusades took place, it was his invitation that got Graham here. He wanted to see a full-scale evangelistic campaign to revive Christianity in Australia. Furthermore it was his leadership that meant there was almost unanimous support for the crusades by Protestant organisations. Billy Graham said at the last meeting of the Sydney crusade that he had seldom seen 'a city before where one man was so loved by so many from all walks of life as the late Archbishop Mowll'.<sup>16</sup> It was a remarkable event with Almost 1 million attendees and almost 57,000 people filling in response cards. As Bishop Clive Kerle said, the 59 crusade left a memory of what God can do when his people are all fully involved in a campaign of evangelism.

**Christians united in prayerfully proclaiming the gospel.** That was Mowll's ecumenical priority. We inherit Mowll's legacy. We have a diocesan mission. We want to see the revival of Christianity in Australia. We want to see those who are perishing saved by the blood of Christ. And as we share this as our priority, the Lord will bind us together with a profound unity. A unity that is centred around Jesus and is honouring to God.

May God help us be faithful in this task.

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Dr. Ed Loane gave this talk at the Anglican Church League Synod Dinner on Monday 12th October 2015.

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<sup>16</sup> Piggin, *Spirit of a Nation*, 163