



# Editorial

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I

The terms 'holiness' and 'reformation' are mutually descriptive, and thus essentially related. Reformation in the Church – whether *the* Reformation or any one of the epochal reformations of church practice and proclamation – is always in some way a function of holiness. What this means, first of all, is that reformation is always primarily a work of the Church's holy Lord. As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of one monk's particular stand for holiness in one particular historical moment in one stream of the worldwide Church's life, we must not forget that in all the human grapplings of reformation – and, for that matter, counter-reformation – our holy God was not 'taking sides', but rather at work by his holy Spirit, to make good on the promise of the Apostles' Creed that there will be 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church'. *The* Reformation – *all* our reformations past, present and future – are only stages of the wilderness wanderings of the Church as it detours its way through history towards God's eschatological kingdom. This is in no way to detract from the importance of the Reformation, or reformations in general. God gives them to the Church in order to make her holy. They nudge – or sometimes even throw! – the Church back to her true formation, as the people of God, called to witness by their faith to God's narrative of grace, to the death and resurrection of Jesus as the first fruits of the transformation of all creation.

The Church is reformed for, and by, God's holiness. In turn, holiness is provided with context-appropriate content by reformation, so that the Church's proclamation can be faithful and intelligible. The oft-quoted maxim that the Church is *semper reformanda* (always reforming) would be helpfully expanded:

*semper sanctorum, semper reformanda*. Always holy, always reforming. The one because of the other. The other because of the one. Both reformation and holiness are God's gifts to a Church which must learn, through the vicissitudes of history, to hear God's promises afresh, and so remain faithful to the Church's foundation: she is God's, not ours.

A word of caution, however: while 'holiness' and 'reformation' are mutually descriptive, they are not therefore synonymous. Not all reformation (understood, now, as the human endeavour rather than as a divine gift) is holy; not all holiness (understood as the holy thought and practice of God's people) requires reformation. Discerning and differentiating between wheat and weeds is ever the concern of God's servants.<sup>1</sup> That God refuses to 'sort it out' for us until the end is a matter of both frustration and grace.

## II

This issue of *Holiness* gives us an opportunity to reflect on some of the frustrations and gifts of the Reformation that carved up the ecclesial landscape of Europe, and thereafter the world, in the sixteenth century. Eamon Duffy's masterful presentation, 'Reformation and the end of Christendom', seeks to make more complex our understanding of the Reformation and its legacy. Luther's message, for example, was 'entirely positive', but also had 'a very strong negative charge' (p. 165). In the end, Duffy suggests that the Reformation was 'one of the great fractures of history', leading to the sobering prospect that 'the rivers flow in directions which are not likely to flow together at any foreseeable point in the future' (p. 180). Overall, this may well be the case, pending the new heavens and earth, but the second article in this issue does celebrate the way in which Methodist and Roman Catholic rivers have run together in fifty years of dialogue. David Chapman writes from his considerable experience as co-chair of the Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church, and the article helpfully complements the review of the most recent report from that commission, *The Call to Holiness*, which was published in a previous issue of this journal.<sup>2</sup> By speaking of holiness alongside reformation, the sensitive issue of unity – the one holy Church – and disunity is unavoidable.

Three articles comprise the next section, which explores holiness and reformation from a theological perspective. From the beginning, the heart-warming conversion of John Wesley – interestingly after hearing a reading from

the Reformer Martin Luther's *Preface to Romans* – set Methodism up for a positive engagement with religious experience. To 'know and feel' one's sins forgiven was undoubtedly one of the hallmarks of authentic Methodist discipleship. However, otherwise known as Pietism within the Christian tradition, the place of religious experience usually sits uneasily with the Reformation stress on justification by faith alone. Our articles, though, reveal a more complex relationship. David Gilland's article, 'What has Basel to do with Epworth?', usefully surveys the thinking of arguably the twentieth century's greatest Reformed theologian, Karl Barth. For Barth, Pietism's problem was that it negated the paradoxical dialectic essential to Luther's theology: God is simultaneously known and hidden, which means there is no straightforward trajectory from divine grace to human experience, prompting Luther's classic description of the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator* (at the same time, justified and a sinner). In later life, Barth did moderate his reaction to Pietism, and this article offers a challenge for Wesleyan scholars to pick up a conversation with Barth on this point, perhaps to the benefit of both. Hiddenness is also highlighted by George Bailey's article, which begins with Wesley's intriguing comment on John 8:59, 'But Jesus concealed himself – probably by becoming invisible.'<sup>3</sup> Bailey interrogates Wesley's Christology through the work of Karl Barth's student John Deschner, leading to some constructive proposals for correcting what Deschner sees as Wesley's christological deficiencies, without losing the experience of Christian perfection – Christ's visibility rather than hiddenness – which Wesley 'fought so hard to protect' (p. 217). Finally, 'Calvin's only prayer' by Nathan Paylor draws our attention to the often overlooked fact that the Reformers were almost always pastors, and not merely scholars, so that the concerns of piety and pastoral care were at least as important for them as theological disputes were.

The Reformers' pastoral practice offers a connection to the new series of articles begun by Alan Palmer, exploring acedia and pastoral resilience. Offering a historical survey of acedia (lack of care), Palmer's article demonstrates the danger of exhaustion and burnout in the pietist endeavour, while highlighting some initial practical habits to confound it.

John Swarbrick's lecture to the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship during this year's Methodist Conference in Birmingham, UK, launches a section considering liturgical aspects of the Reformation. 'Martin Luther: music and mission' is best read alongside the playlist of music that accompanied its delivery, which introduces us to Luther's 'musical Reformation', which has 'become the common property of nearly all Christian traditions today' (p. 254).

Music is just one way to unite the various 'rivers' in this anniversary year; the second article offers a specially commissioned translation of an order of worship used to mark a joint statement on the Reformation by the Council of Christian Churches in Germany. The service, along with the joint statement on which it is based, make for encouraging reading and inspiring worship.

The Reviews section contains a wealth of resources to engage more deeply with the figures and themes of the Reformation. Martin Luther unavoidably features prominently, with a number of biographies and monographs considering his life and thought selected from the wealth of recent publications. Other books reviewed offer perspectives on the Reformation as a movement, or set of movements. That the sixteenth-century Reformation remains such a productive source for authors and publishers is sure testimony to its legacy as both frustration and grace.

Finally, no compilation of articles on the Reformation would be complete without a consideration of the Reformation's most distinctive doctrinal proposal: justification by faith. This issue's contribution to our series on Wesley's sermons explores how 'Justification by Faith', first preached in 1739, can inform our presentation of the good news today. Wesley's careful exposition can provide us with 'a framework within which to reacquaint ourselves with the theological richness of justification by faith' (p. 302). Wesley was convinced that Methodism had a particular clarity on the matter to offer to the wider Church, and as we mark the Reformation's anniversary, with all the frustrations and gifts it gave rise to, perhaps we can also rediscover a role for the Wesleyan voice at the theological table.

### III

Reflecting on holiness and reformation is, as we have noted above, a matter of frustration and of grace: frustration, because there is no infallible method for identifying the wheat from the weeds in the smorgasbord of preaching, practice and prayer served up by the reformers and counter-reformers of the past; grace, because what we do find is the gift of another's perspective and passion, from which we ourselves can learn and grow. Confession of 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church' means that, like it or not, we are all rooted together in God's field, experiencing the paradoxical dialectic of faith both secret and embodied, God both present and hidden. The frustration and gift of church history is that, as Rowan Williams points out, 'I do not know,

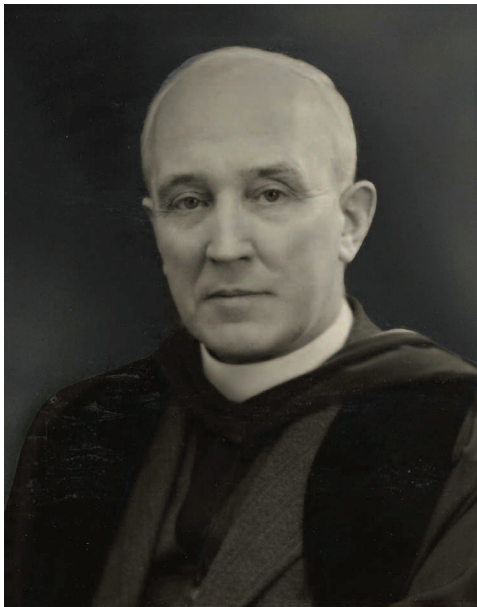
theologically speaking, where my *debts* begin and end.' Christian identity should be thought of 'in terms of a whole immeasurable exchange of gifts, known and unknown, by which particular Christian lives are built up, an exchange no less vital and important for being frequently an exchange between living and dead'.<sup>4</sup>

While this year's Reformation commemoration may draw our attention primarily to the likes of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, we are no less in debt to countless others, often unknown and unnamed, who nonetheless have shaped our ability to have faith by theirs. Reading this journal is an exercise in uncovering our debts, whether old or new, to fellow believers, past or present. One such debt is acknowledged here with gratitude.

Some older alumni of Wesley House, Cambridge will have cause to remember the name of John Newton Davies, having at the end of their first year received a prize in his name for their achievements in Greek in the Preliminary Examination to Part II of the Theological Tripos. Few will have known much about him beyond a large photo of him displayed in the College. To many others his name will be familiar only as one among many in the list of benefactors annually commemorated. However, with the aid of archivists at Drew University and in the central archives of the United Methodist Church in the USA, a rather fuller picture can be drawn.<sup>5</sup>

John Newton Davies was born on 25 February 1881 in Denbigh, North Wales, and graduated with a BA from the University of Wales in 1902. He offered for the Wesleyan ministry, probably in the same year, and was sent to Didsbury College, then in its original location in Manchester. He graduated with a BD in 1905 and served in circuits in Llandrindod Wells, Cardiff, Launceston and Rock Ferry near Birkenhead, all short-term appointments as was the rule at the time. In 1909, after ordination, he married Sarah Ann Parry. She also was Welsh and had trained as a teacher.

In 1919 he was invited to become a Visiting Professor in New Testament Greek Exegesis at Drew Theological Seminary in Madison, New Jersey. What brought this about is not known. Obviously he had talent. Whether he was recommended for the post by his former tutors at Didsbury or felt frustrated by the limitations of his circuit appointments and put in an application, we shall probably never know. He continued at Drew, however, for the rest of his working life. In 1926 he was made a full professor and in the same year Syracuse University conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology.



John Newton Davies



Sarah Davies

At first the Wesleyan Conference in Britain listed him as 'permitted to serve', but in 1927 he transferred to what was then the Methodist Episcopal Church in the USA. He retained membership of the New York Annual Conference until his death, although he returned to Britain after retirement in 1949 and lived in Bournemouth, where he died on 31 January 1957.

From the surviving records he was clearly a much loved and respected New Testament teacher. Tributes to him speak warmly of his meticulous scholarship and his ability as an interpreter to make the text come alive. There are tributes too to his preaching and to the hospitality he and Sarah offered in their home. He published little by modern standards. *Rightly Dividing the Word* in 1929 was his only book, although he contributed to the *Abingdon Bible Commentary* and various religious periodicals.

At the end of 1959 Mrs Sarah Davies set up a trust fund of £6,000 in his name for the benefit of Wesley House, to be used at the Trustees' discretion. Originally used for prizes and other awards, it is now, with changing values and needs, to be devoted to the support for one year of the *Holiness* journal. His name will live on in the annual commemoration of the College's benefactors.

This is only one very tangible way in which we, as readers of this journal, are indebted to those who have gone before us in the faith. The anniversary of the Reformation on 31 October is followed the next day by the celebration of All

Saints. Our debts multiply: 'since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.'<sup>6</sup> *Soli Deo gloria*.

Andrew Stobart, Commissioning Editor  
October 2017

## Notes

1. Matthew 13:24–30.
2. *Holiness* 2(3), *Holiness & Contemporary Culture* (2016), pp. 438–439.
3. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, John 8:59.
4. Rowan Williams, *Why Study the Past?* London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005, p. 27.
5. With thanks to Brian Beck for the following biographical sketch.
6. Hebrews 12:1.

