

JESMOND

CONFERENCE 2021



GOOD DISAGREEMENT?

MONDAY 8 & TUESDAY 9 MARCH

online conference

Welcome

Welcome to the 7th annual Jesmond Conference!

The *Jesmond Conference* was revived in 2015. Prior to Synodical Government, it had been one of the three Evangelical Anglican Conferences. It was reconvened mainly because the theological requirement for “credibility in our society” rather than “biblical truth” was leading the Church of England to lose its prophetic note in the wider world. And many still want help in resisting the progressive destruction of the Christian social canopy we have enjoyed over the centuries and that comes from a biblical world view.

This year’s conference on “**Good Disagreement**”? is related to the *Living in Love and Faith* project on “Christian teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage”. But we meet assuming the Anglican conviction (see Canon A5) that, as the Bishops said in *Issues in Human Sexuality*:

“there is in Scripture an evolving convergence on the ideal of lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual union as the setting intended by God for the proper development of men and women as sexual beings. Sexual activity of any kind outside marriage comes to be seen as sinful, and homosexual practice as especially dishonourable” (2.29).

With that conviction we aim to examine: one, the seriousness of the present situation sexually both in our wider society as well as in the church; two, what is behind the LLF project; three, what does the Bible have to teach about good disagreement, bad disagreement and, importantly, discipline; and, four, how we should respond.



David Holloway
Vicar of Jesmond



TIMETABLE

Monday 08 March

13:00	Welcome & Bible Reading 1 <i>Ezra 9.1-15</i> (Jonathan Pryke)
13:30	Session 1: <i>The Seriousness of the Present Situation</i>
14:20	Tea break
14:45	Session 2: <i>What is behind the LLF Project?</i>
15:35	Tea break
16:00	Session 3: <i>What does the Bible teach about Good Disagreement, Bad Disagreement and Discipline?</i>
17:00	Finish

Tuesday 09 March

09:30	Welcome & Bible Reading 2 <i>1 Cor 5:1-13</i> (Jonathan Pryke)
10:00	Session 4: <i>How should we Respond?</i>
10:50	Coffee break
11:15	Panel Q&A
12:15	Concluding thoughts and final prayer
12:30	Finish

Each of Sessions 1 to 4 will consist of a 20 minute talk by David Holloway followed by group discussion, feedback and prayer.

BIBLE READING 1: Contending for the Faith - an OT Case Study

Ezra 9-10; Jude 3-4 - Jonathan Pryke

INTRO

- *Contending is not what we want to do but it is what we need to do.*
- *We can contend with confidence because the faith has been revealed by God and is unchanging.*
- *We need to contend because false teaching is deadly.*
- *We must respond to God's call to contend for the faith.*

LEARN FROM AN OLD TESTAMENT CASE STUDY IN CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

- Background:
 - God chose them and called them to be holy so that through them he could bless all the nations of the world.
 - To become a blessing they had to be radically different from the godless, immoral and idolatrous pagan nations around them.
 - Instead, they were unfaithful.
- Only through a painful encounter with the living God and his Word of truth can peace and hope be found in the end.
- 7 Lessons contending for the faith:
 1. Get familiar with the story of God's people.
 - Ezra 9: 7-8
 - *unfaithfulness is disastrous*
 - *revival only comes by the grace of God through repentance and faith.*
 2. Have your eyes open to what is happening in church and society.
 - Ezra 9: 1
 - Ezra 9: 3
 3. Be someone who trembles at the words of the living God.
 - Ezra 9: 3
 - 2 different approaches to the Bible
 - i. look for loopholes
 - ii. tremble at it
 4. Feel the seriousness of the situation.
 - Ezra 9: 5
 - *We have to be appropriately appalled, and prayerfully ashamed*

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5. Contend both collectively and individually.
 - Ezra 10: 1-4
 - We need to stand together
 6. Speak humbly but boldly.
 - Ezra 10: 5
 - We must speak on our knees to God in prayer. And then speak on our feet to church and society.
 7. Act when you can.
 - Ezra 10: 14-17
- Conclusion - Hear the call to contend for the faith with:
 - **Ears** open to God's Word.
 - **Eyes** open to see what's going on around us.
 - **Feet** on which to take our stand.
 - **Heart** to feel.
 - **Mouth** to speak.
 - **Hands** to act.

Ezra 10: 4 - "Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do it."

Notes

SESSION 1: THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION, in Society and in the Church

- 3 current Issues:
 - Dinah Rose, QC - defending traditional marriage
 - Nelson McCausland - shared Becket Cook testimony
 - Banning Conversion Therapy - *"... any form of counselling or persuading someone to change their sexual orientation or behaviour so as to conform with a heteronormative lifestyle, or their gender identity should be illegal, no matter the reason, religious or otherwise – whatever the person's age."* (Ban Conversion Therapy, An open letter to the Rt Hon Liz Truss, 9th July 2020)
- Why think about our present situation?
 - **Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn**, 1983 Templeton Address:
"But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous Revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened... And present-day Europe, seemingly so unlike the Russia of 1913, is today on the verge of the same collapse, for all that it has been reached by a different route."
 - **Rod Dreher**, *Live not by Lies: a Manual for Christian Dissidents* - warns of a "soft" totalitarianism
- What is totalitarianism and how does it work?
 - A form of fundamentalism (Peter Berger)
 - 2 versions of the fundamentalist project
 - 1) Fundamentalists attempt to impose their creed on an entire society;
 - 2) Fundamentalists try to establish their creed in a much smaller community.
- Not secularism but pluralism
 - *A Rumour of Angels*, Peter Berger
 - *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Peter Berger
 - Clause 28, 1988: *"a local authority shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship."*

Notes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What needs further discussion?
2. How serious really is the situation in the UK?
3. What are the suggestions for action?

SESSION 2: WHAT IS BEHIND THE LLF PROJECT?

1. A wrong reading of scripture, with an overvaluing of reason and absence of a theology of "tradition".
 - **Jaroslav Pelikan:** "tradition is the living faith of the dead, while traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."
 - The "three-legged stool" of Scripture, Reason and Tradition with Scripture as the final authority.
 - Canon A5 - the doctrinal position of the Church of England at law: "the doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teaching of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church *as are agreeable to the said Scriptures*. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal."
2. Since Freud, an evolving philosophy and at its heart is sex.
 - **Robert P. George**, Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton University: "It was the distinctive claim of late twentieth century secular liberal political philosophy that sound principles of justice require that law and government be neutral as between controversial conceptions of the human good..... Today, little effort is made by secular liberals (or 'progressives' as many prefer to be labelled) to maintain the pretence of neutrality. Having gained the advantage, and in many cases having prevailed (at least for now), on battle front after battle front in the modern culture war, and having achieved hegemony in elite sectors of the culture (for example, in education at every level, in the news and entertainment media, in the professions, in corporate America, and even in much religion – including making inroads into the Catholic Church), there is no longer any need to pretend." (*Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*, May/June 2020, "The Pagan Public Square").
 - **Steven D. Smith**, Professor of Law, University of San Diego "Pagan religion locates the sacred *within* this world. In that way, paganism can consecrate the world from within. It is religiosity relative to an immanent sacred. Judaism and Christianity, by contrast reflect

transcendent religiosity: they place the sacred ultimately, outside the world." (*Pagans & Christians in the City: Culture Wars from the Tiber to the Potomac*)

- **Anthony Kronman**, Professor of Law, Yale Law School, *Confessions of a Born-Again Pagan*:
"In this passionate and searching book, Anthony Kronman offers a third-way - beyond atheism and religion – to the God of the modern world.... Kronman defends an ancient conception of God, deepened and transformed by Christian belief – the born-again paganism on which modern science, art, and politics all vitally depend. Brilliantly surveying centuries of Western thought – from Plato to Augustine, Aquinas and Kant, from Spinoza to Nietzsche, Darwin and Freud – Kronman recovers and reclaims the God we need today."
- Isaiah 57.15 & Philippians 2.9-11: God is transcendent and immanent.
- Hebrews 13.14: "...we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."
- **Steven D. Smith**: "The pagan orientation ... accepts this world as our home, and does so joyously, exuberantly, and worshipfully."
- Matthew 28.18-20: "...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."
- **Kyle Harper**, *From Shame to Sin: the Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity*: "[sexual morality] came to mark the great divide between Christians and the world."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What needs further discussion?
2. If most are "religious", how do we help them realize it and ask, "Is my religion right and true?"?
3. What are the suggestions for action?

SESSION 3: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH about Good Disagreement, Bad Disagreement and Discipline?

1. What the Bible teaches about unity in the church
 - **Richard Hooker:** "For lack of diligent observing the difference, first between the Church of God mystical and visible, then between the visible sound and corrupted, sometimes more sometimes less, the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed."
 - John 17: 20-23
 - **John Stott:** "In other words Jesus' prayer was first and foremost ... that the church's faith might not change with the changing years but remain recognizably the same, and that the church of every generation might merit the epithet 'apostolic' because of its loyalty to the message and mission of the apostles. Christian unity begins then as unity with the apostles (through the New Testament which makes their teaching available to us); without this, the church's unity would not be distinctively Christian."
 - Philippians 1: 27
 - Philippians 2: 2-3
 - Philippians 4: 2

2. Distinctions have to be made, for it is never unity at any price.
 - **Peter Meiderlin:** "If we would but observe 'unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials, charity in all things', our affairs would certainly be in the best possible situation."
 - in *Good Disagreement? Grace and Truth in a Divided Church*, Tom Wright's contribution:
 - Jewish side: "any practices that functioned as symbols dividing different ethnic groups could not be maintained as *absolutes* within this new single family."
 - Greek/Gentile side: "any practices that belonged to the dehumanizing, anti-creation world of sin and death could likewise not be maintained within this new-creation family."
 - "The first principle explains why certain things are now 'indifferent'; the second, why certain other things are not. This is the difference between the two kinds of difference."
 - "... there is in Scripture an evolving convergence on the ideal of lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual union as the setting intended by God for the proper development of men and women as sexual

beings; sexual activity of any kind outside marriage comes to be seen as sinful, and homosexual practice as especially dishonourable." (*Issues in Human Sexuality*)

3. Note, how the risen Lord speaks in Revelation 1&2
 - Revelation 1: 17-18
 - Revelation 1: 20
 - Revelation 2: 19
 - The Church of Ephesus Revelation 2: 2-4
 - The Church of Thyatira Revelation 2: 20-24

4. We need "unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials, and, charity in all things", humility, and an established Christian anthropology and sociology.

Notes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What needs further discussion?
2. How do we decide what belongs to the "anti-creation world of sin and death"?
3. What are the suggestions for action?

BIBLE READING 2: Discipline in the life of the Church

1 Corinthians 5.1-13 - Jonathan Pryke

1. WHAT IS CHURCH DISCIPLINE?
 - The action that the church takes in response to continuing and unrepented sin in the life of its members.
 - The discipline that the church should exercise will start private and informal, and ultimately, if necessary, become public and formal. The ultimate sanction that the church has is to exclude someone from the fellowship.
 - 1 Corinthians 5: 1-2.

2. WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH EXERCISE DISCIPLINE?
 - God requires it in his Word.
 - For the sake of the sinner: 1 Corinthians 5: 5.
 - For the sake of the church: 1 Corinthians 5: 6-7.
 - For the sake of God.

3. WHO SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO CHURCH DISCIPLINE?
 - All believers in general; and in particular those whose sin is public, persistent, scandalous, unapologetic and unrepentant.
 - Church discipline is for those who profess faith: 1 Corinthians 5: 9.
 - It is not for Christians to condemn unbelievers: 1 Corinthians 5: 12-13.
 - The Corinthians were both remote from the world and also lax about sin.
 - Public and private sin: 1 Tim 5: 24.
 - Sexual immorality is not the only sin that should be subject to discipline: 1 Corinthians 5: 11.

4. HOW SHOULD CHURCH DISCIPLINE BE EXERCISED?
 - *With the right attitude*
 - We must avoid arrogant attitudes: 1 Corinthians 5: 1 & 1 Corinthians 5: 6.
 - We should grieve through our awareness of evil and sin: 1 Corinthians 5: 2 & 1 Corinthians 5: 7.
 - We should have Christ always before our eyes: Galatians 6: 1.

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- *In the right way* - 6 guidelines for the church:
 - Be clear about the facts.
 - Make a judgement: 1 Corinthians 5: 12.
 - Act corporately.
 - As the ultimate sanction and the last resort, put the person involved out of fellowship: 1 Corinthians 5: 2 & 1 Corinthians 5: 13.
 - Apply the sanction consistently: 1 Corinthians 5: 11.
 - Be ready to receive back the person if and when there is penitence: 2 Corinthians 2: 6-8.

Notes

SESSION 4: HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

INTRO

- 1992 US Supreme Court: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."
- Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* - Freudian psychotherapy contributed to "selfism".
- This new religion is archetypally Gnostic - matter and the flesh are nothing but soul and spirit are everything.
- John 8: 44

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

1. We should name it for what it is – devilish.
 - Matthew 4: 8-11
 - 1 Peter 5: 6-11
 - James 4: 7
 - Ephesians 6: 10-13 & 18
2. We should beware of discussions that will just harden prejudices.
 - **Philip Turner:** "what parades as reflection and dialogue on the whole is no more than impassioned repetition, within a politically controlled space of hardened positions...[because]... acquiescence in the co-existence of incompatible views, opinions, and policies chosen because a strategy that tolerates contradictory positions and practices even on matters regarded as essential to a faithful witness to Christ seems a necessary means to life together in a fast unravelling denomination." (*The Fate of Communion: The Agony of Anglicanism and the Future of a Global Church*)
 - **Alexander F.C. Webster:** "What we behold in the appeals of the trailblazing Orthodox scholars discussed ... is a subtle, erudite, but disingenuous public challenge to abandon ancient Christian verities under the guise of a "conversation" or "discussion".... The pattern is unmistakable: first, a call to "transcend" narrow, rigid, archaic dogmas, coupled with an invitation to a "conversation" to share viewpoints based primarily on personal experience and "new" knowledge instead of immersion in the Tradition; that is followed

by a summons for mutual forbearance, tolerance, and, ultimately, full acceptance of diverse moralities. Soon enough, the orthodox frog in the gradually boiling pot is fully cooked and no longer a living frog." (*Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*, May/June 2017, "Three Trojan Horses: Insider Attempts to Disorient the Orthodox").

3. We should follow the example of Abram.
 - Genesis 13: 4
 - The Higton Debate, The General Synod
 - "This Synod affirms that the biblical and traditional teaching on chastity and fidelity in personal relationships is a response to, and an expression of, God's love for each one of us, and in particular affirms:
 - 1) that sexual intercourse is an act of total commitment which belongs properly within a permanent married relationship,
 - 2) that fornication and adultery are sins against this ideal, and are to be met by a call to repentance and the exercise of compassion,
 - 3) that homosexual genital acts also fall short of this ideal, and are likewise to be met by a call to repentance and the exercise of compassion,
 - 4) that all Christians are called to be exemplary in all spheres of morality, including sexual morality, and that holiness of life is particularly required of Christian leaders."
 - The defeated 5th point:

"5) that if a bishop, priest or deacon, is to be 'a wholesome example and pattern to the flock of Christ' (Canon C 4) appropriate discipline among the clergy should be exercised in cases of sexual immorality."
 - The Ordinal: "with all faithful diligence, ... banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word."

CONCLUSION

- Matthew 16: 18 "...the gates of hell shall not prevail against [the Church]."

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- **Robert E. Quinn**, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* - the options:
 - 1) "Peace and Pay"
 - 2) "Active Exit"
 - 3) "Deep Change" - This solution requires someone who faces the facts, is inside the organization, is willing to risk his job and to break some rules [not laws] that are strangling the organization and who "builds the bridge as he walks on it."

Notes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What needs further discussion?
2. Why are there not more "deep change agents"?
3. What are the suggestions for action?

Notes

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