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Daniel W. Hardy. *Finding the Church: The Dynamic Truth of Anglicanism*. London: SCM, 2001. Pp. ix + 298. £45.00 (hardback), £17.99 (paper).

[1] Hardy's thesis is that Anglican Christianity is distinctive - and perhaps even unique - in the emphasis it places on the Church as "a redeemed society" (3). "A church is a society," he says quite simply, and then defines "society" as "meaning - potentially wisdom - structured in social terms" (238). Tersely stated, this means that "*Anglicanism ideally follows a distinctive pattern in which the gift of God in Jesus Christ is embodied in worship, wisdom and service in an historical continuity of contextually sensitive mission*" (3, emphasis in the original). In the book's introduction, eighteen chapters, and conclusion, Hardy unfolds and articulates the contents of that sentence. His ecclesial vision, while cautiously optimistic of Anglicanism's inherent gifts and potential future, is hardly triumphalistic. "Anyone with a reasoned passion for the Church knows that, where the Church is most fully present, it also falls short of its calling" (ix). "The Church is intrinsic to Christian faith, and indeed important to everything else, and yet not altogether what it should be" (238). Hardy neither celebrates "the Anglican spirit" nor laments "the ruins of the Church" but rather, as the title suggests, seeks to *find* - and be found by - a Church that is not yet fully there.

[2] Daniel W. Hardy is an American Episcopal priest and theologian who has spent the majority of his academic career in England, first as a lecturer in modern theology at Birmingham University, then as Van Mildert Professor of Divinity at the University of Durham. He returned to the United States as the first President and Director of the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton, New Jersey, and on his retirement in 1995 became a Senior Member of the Faculty of Divinity in the University of Cambridge. He thus brings a high level of theological sophistication to a topic - Anglicanism - which is frequently left in the hands of (at best) historians or (at worst) hagiographers. *Finding the Church* is thus more theological and theoretical than most treatments of Anglicanism one is likely to encounter. Hardy's theological sophistication is both a blessing and a bane, however, in that his prose, while relatively jargon-free, is often compressed, abstract, and dense to the point of opacity. But the one who endures to the end will be - if not saved - at least rewarded.

[3] Between the Introduction and the Conclusion are five Parts: "The Reality of the Church," "Basic Dynamics of Christian Life," "Shaping the Practices of Anglicanism," "The Present Situation and its Challenge," and "Life in the Anglican Way." These sections contain several different genres: essay, lecture, sermon, and report. The contents of "The Present Situation and its Challenge" are related to the Anglican Primates' Meetings in 2000 and 2001, and in particular with the crisis in the Anglican Communion represented by the irregular consecration of two "missionary bishops" by the Provinces of Rwanda and Southeast Asia in January 2000. This section is thus dated - but still highly relevant - due to the much greater and on-going crisis precipitated by the July 2003 General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA).

[4] In the introduction, Hardy states that the book "can be read many ways, from start to finish, from the middle...backwards and forwards, or even from the Conclusion backwards" (4). I will be slightly more directive and in the rest of this review offer my own reader's guide to a complex and fascinating and yet difficult and somewhat frustrating volume.

[5] The difficulty and frustration arise in part from the challenge of Hardy's prose, as mentioned above. More substantial questions arise from the theological vision set forth in the first three chapters - "Worship and the Formation of a Holy People," "The Missionary Being of the Church," and "The Grace of God and Wisdom." In a recent collection of essays titled *On Christian Theology* (Blackwell Publishers, 2000), Rowan Williams recounts that after his first lecture in Germany, a German theologian arose and asked, "What is your methodological starting point?" Williams comments, "It may be thought by insular souls to be a particularly Germanic question; British theologians are a good deal more inclined to begin haphazardly and let the methodology look after itself. But the challenge is a serious and necessary one, and, in introducing these essays, I feel some obligation to sketch a response, even if it is unlikely to be much more satisfactory than the stumbling remarks I recall making to my colleague in Bonn" (xii). There is nothing "haphazard" in Hardy's theological method, but it is singular and without many cognate links to theology as commonly practiced in contemporary academia. Thus, to read these first three chapters is to plunge into an unfamiliar world in which Scripture is used freely but "uncritically," deep and decisive claims about God's inner nature and activity in the world are made on apparently intuitive bases, and the destiny of the Church is often understood in charismatic and eschatological terms. It is bracing stuff, but often difficult to grasp, and a brief introduction to Hardy's "methodological starting point" would have been most helpful.<1>

[6] For my money, the heart of the book is found in chapters 4, 5, and 7. I would recommend readers - and particularly readers of this journal - to begin here, as it is in these chapters that Hardy's unique theological vision pays off in valuable and tangible insights to the nature of the Church as "a redeemed society." Chapter 4 - "Goodness and History: Law, Religion, and the Christian Faith" - is alone worth the price of admission, in that it explores "the question of how goodness is achieved through the history of a society, and of this [English] society in particular" (62). Here Hardy articulates and defends "how specifically Christian truth - fulfilled in social form, the Church - contributes to the achievement of the goals of society, in such a way as to inform government and law." He writes:

It seems to me that the realization of goodness in history, as a meeting place of government, law and church, is an especially English concern. . . . Elsewhere, government, law and church are seen differently, and meet - if at all - in other ways. It is over these matters that English law and church differ from American law and churches, for example. As one who has remained here by choice over thirty years, I see (or hope I do) the special value of English law and church as they meet in the task of realizing the good in history. The way pursued in England - what I call the "historical way" - is one that I wish were more widely recognized and affirmed as a way forward. (64)

My only additional comment on this extremely interesting and provocative chapter is to note that Hardy alternates between "religion" and "the Church" as referring to a single reality, and that this could mark a crucial ambiguity.

[7] Chapter 5 - "The Sociality of Evangelical Catholicity" - also defends the thesis (which he here identifies with Michael Ramsey's in *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*) that "Christianity is manifest in the world as a society; Christianity is embodied in social form" (80). Hardy proposes the image of "the world with a thin skin covering its entire surface," where "the 'skin' is comprised of all human beings related in different ways; each individual is a dot of skin - unsustainable apart from the rest. . . . When then we speak of 'society,' we speak of the manifold relations of these 'dots'; 'society' occurs when the skin is nourished through the relations of these 'dots' in effective configurations which maintain the skin and will fulfil its best possibilities (its well-being)" (84). While this social skin is of course supposed to be healthy and life-giving, it is "often leprous, with all sorts of lesions: a tissue of lost people who have also lost the meaning of the world" (85). Having proposed this image, Hardy then asks "whether the gospel of Christ is seen to connect with the social 'skin' of the world" (86), and in the remainder of the essay explores ways in which it can and does.

[8] Chapter 7 - "Theology of Money" - is equally interesting and noteworthy for its attempt to provide a truly theological understanding of what many Christians dismiss as "filthy lucre." He states, "The significance of money and its use is vastly underestimated in modern church life and theology. Although there is constant agonizing about it, and whether there is enough to meet needs, in practice it is often seen by Christians as a 'necessary evil' no more than incidental to more important things." On the contrary, Hardy claims, "money has become a primary issue - if not the primary one - for our social life. One way to show this is to see it as a language, a form of discourse, through which social life is carried on, and which shapes the reality of social life." To that end, he says, "there is good reason for paying close attention to the 'theology of money,' to develop the right kind of relation between the discourse of money and Christian life" (114).

[9] Again, I view these three chapters as the core of the book from which one may most effectively gain access to the more abstractly theological chapters in the beginning and the more practical chapters toward the end. Those more practical chapters are grouped in Parts Three and Four: "Shaping the Practices of Anglicanism" and "The Present Situation and its Challenge." The six chapters in these two sections consist of reports prepared for, or presented to, or remarking on the Anglican Primates' Meetings of 2000 and 2001. They cover Anglican polity, theological education, and the controversy over the "missionary

bishops" and the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA). As such, these chapters do an excellent job of providing a summary overview and analysis of these issues that is both objective and sympathetic to the various parties involved. What Hardy says here continues to be relevant (if not more so) after ECUSA's 2003 General Convention. For instance, in Chapter 13 - "The Situation Today: March 2001" - he claims:

Perhaps the most fundamental debate in Anglicanism is about the *form in which the truth of God is known*. Evident in current discussions are two views,

1. It is made known by God in the revelation of God's word in Scripture when faithfully and obediently received.
2. It is known in the human spirit by the grace of the Spirit of Christ by which Scripture is continuously read in the historical tradition of the Church.

At its best, Anglicanism has brought these into mutual complementarity as Christ the Word of God present through the Holy Spirit in human life in the Church.

In present circumstances, however, the two are severed from each other, with the second as the prevailing, if not preferred, discourse of conversation in official circles of ECUSA, and the first as the primary discourse of AMiA. It can be argued that each without the other is deficient as an expression of Anglicanism. (202)

As important as such insights are, however, description is always easier than prescription. While Hardy's proposed solutions are helpful, they are - of necessity - vague and generalized, and some could be basically expressed as, "We must do better!"

[10] Part Five - "Life in the Anglican Way" - consists of four sermons, and the substantial Conclusion - "Finding the Church" - draws the complex argument of the book into a meditation on the Eucharist as "the in-folding of human social meaning with God's, whereby human social meaning does not lose its character as fragile, incomplete and forward-moving even as it is drawn by God toward the eschatological finality of God's work" (246). Or, more simply, "the Eucharist is the *enactment of meaning in its closest approximation to the truth and goodness of God*" (246, emphasis in the original).

[11] As stated above, *Finding the Church: The Dynamic Truth of Anglicanism* is a complex and fascinating and yet difficult and somewhat frustrating volume. It is impossible to pigeon-hole or facilely summarize. For these reasons it is unlikely to gain a wide readership, even within the theological circles of the Anglican Communion. Such neglect, however, would be a great loss, because if Anglicanism is to have a future it must both wrestle with the issues this book presents and it must do so at the level of theological sophistication Hardy exemplifies. <2>

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