

Managerialism, Gregory and Walking Together

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Baptizing the pagan places

The early years of the Roman mission to Kent were anxious times for the missionaries: they were faced with a deeply heathen society, rather than the more familiar Arian heretics of northern Italy. How were they to deal with the culture, rituals and practices they found? A reverse mission was sent back to Rome carrying a package of questions. One of Pope Gregory's replies set the seal on a particular Anglican form of pragmatism. On no account, says Gregory, are the pagan temples to be destroyed. They are to be emptied of their idols, asperged, and altars set up in them. In this way, the people might be 'changed from the worship of devils to the service of the true God'. When the people 'see that their shrines are not destroyed they will be able to banish error from their hearts and be more ready to come to the places they are familiar with, but now recognizing and worshipping the true God'.¹

Gregory's pragmatism would have appealed to Augustine, for, as Henry Mayr-Harting describes him, we see in the first Archbishop of Canterbury:

the man of affairs, organizing bishops' sees, framing questions on law and administration to put to the pope, persuading and helping Ethelbert to draw up in writing a code of laws ...making arrangements for the protection of church property, and conferring with British churchmen ...it is impossible to mistake the air of a man intent on doing a brisk and efficient piece of business.²

Thus, we see Augustine's expediency, a man who appreciated and acted upon the 'insights of administration ...creatively adopted and adapted for fruitful and competent administration by and in the church'.³ This attitude has continued in the Church of England to the present day. In the *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy* we

¹ Gregory to Abbot Mellitus, AD 601, in *Bede, Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), i.30 (here at p. 107); For a discussion on Gregory's motives see George Demacopoulos, 'Gregory the Great and the Pagan Shrines of Kent', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, no. 2 (2008): 353-69, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jla.0.0018>.

² Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 73.

³ Robert Bacher and Michael Cooper-White, *Church Administration: Programs/Process/Purpose* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2007), 1.

are told ‘Good administration enables good pastoral care.’⁴ Francis Bridger’s ‘Theological Reflection’ in the same document denies that such guidelines are ‘a concession to managerialism’. Utilizing the insights of professionalism and management is better seen as ‘an attempt to work out in concrete terms the practice of vocation in a contemporary setting’.⁵ We need not be wary of ‘an unthinking acceptance of the cult of managerialism’.⁶

Management begat managerialism

Management as a discipline, with theoreticians and practical exemplars, was a result of the growth of Complex Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the West from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.⁷ CIOs required complex negotiations between the allocation of resources and the assessment of profit. Those who led the negotiations and made the decisions, the manager, became the centre and summit of the organization: ‘The manager’s desk should be the Alpha and Omega of every transaction. It should also be the information bureau of the establishment. No work should be done without the manager’s authority and sanction.’⁸ Because the CIO became the source of great wealth in the West during the twentieth century, it was thought that the structure of the CIO, management as the means of balancing resources and allocating profits, was the cause of their success. Management controlled the ‘flow of internal impersonal statistics’ by means of ‘a large number of specially, often technically trained managers’ who were ‘a new type of decision-making unit and ...a new class of decision makers’.⁹ Quickly, the assumption grew that business management could be and should be applied to other areas of human endeavour. This assumption, the universal applicability of business administration, is what we might call ‘managerialism’.¹⁰ As John Quiggen succinctly puts it:

The central doctrine of managerialism is that the differences between such organisations as, for example, a university and a motor-vehicle company, are less important than the similarities, and that the performance of all organisations can be optimised by the application of generic management skills and theory. It follows that the crucial

⁴ Convocations of Canterbury and York, *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), para. 10.3.

⁵ Francis Bridger, ‘A Theological Reflection’, in *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy*, by Convocations of Canterbury and York (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), 15.

⁶ Bridger, 13.

⁷ See the clear discussion of the history of management in Alfred D. Chandler and Fritz Redlich, ‘Recent Developments in American Business Administration and Their Conceptualization’, *The Business History Review* 35, no. 1 (April 1961): 5–6, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3111631>.

⁸ H. M. Norris, ‘A Simple and Effective System of Shop Cost-Keeping’, *Engineering Magazine*, 1898, 385; quoted in Joseph A. Litterer, ‘Systematic Management: The Search for Order and Integration’, *The Business History Review* 35, no. 4 (Winter) (1961): 470, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3111754>.

⁹ Alfred D. Chandler, ‘Decision Making and Modern Institutional Change’, *The Journal of Economic History* 33, no. 1 (1973): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050700076397>.

¹⁰ The suffix denotes the extension of the concept from a collection of techniques into a belief system.

element of institutional reform is the removal of obstacles to 'the right to manage'.¹¹

The manager should be known as 'a moral agent working to achieve the greatest good, not only for their organizations, but for society as a whole'.¹²

MAPping the pagan places

We can see an example of the ideology at work when we look at the sub-set of managerialism which is strategic planning. This is the latest manifestation of management within the Church of England, seen in the burgeoning popularity of MAPs (Mission Action Plans), a melding of secular strategic planning and the Church's mission. Thus, a MAP is simply, according to its advocates Chew and Ireland, 'a document which outlines the mission activities that a local church is going to do in the coming months and years' produced because 'research is needed, reviews have to be conducted, opinions must be explored, priorities have to be assessed, resource plans must be made and decisions have to be taken'.¹³

Chew and Ireland deny that MAP might be 'just another management fad'. They distinguish between 'key processes' and 'management tools'. The latter are subject to change, decay, fashion and faddishness.¹⁴ Processes remain constant and necessary, and MAP is an example of process.¹⁵ Furthermore, MAP has strong biblical and ecclesial roots, in such things as the stewardship of the Pastoral Epistles, planning in Romans and the Lukan parables, the biblical image of growth, the work of the Natural Church Development movement, and the Great Commission.

Chew and Ireland might have cited, but did not, the modest pragmatism of Pope Gregory's advice to Mellitus: '[I]t is doubtless impossible to cut out everything at once from their stubborn minds: just as the man who is attempting to climb to the highest place, rises by steps and degrees and not by leaps.'¹⁶ Step by step does it, and not just a random series of steps. We need to know where we are going, and then examine our progress in a reflective and critical manner.

¹¹ John Quiggin, 'Word for Wednesday: Managerialism (Definition)', *John Quiggin: Commentary on Australian & World Events from a Social-Democratic Perspective* (blog), 2 July 2003, <<http://johnquiggin.com/2003/07/02/word-for-wednesday-managerialism-definition/>>. Quiggin is Professor of Economics at the University of Queensland.

¹² J. David Edwards, 'Managerial Influences in Public Administration', *International Journal of Organization Theory & Behavior* 1, no. 4 (November 1998): 560.

¹³ Mike Chew and Mark Ireland, *How to Do Mission Action Planning: A Vision-Centred Approach* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2009), 1. Note the imperative.

¹⁴ Chew and Ireland cite 'Benchmarking', 'Customer Surveys' and 'Management by Objectives' (MBO) as examples of transience. Chew and Ireland, 11.

¹⁵ The contrast set up between process and tool by Chew and Ireland is not especially watertight, especially as 'process' is also defined as 'method'. What is the ontological and essential difference between a tool and a method? (Chew and Ireland, 11.)

¹⁶ Gregory to Abbot Mellitus, AD 601, in Bede, *H. E.*, i.30 (here p. 109).

From within the Church Percy has warned against the ‘inexorable rise’ of MAPs. He identifies the confusion in much MAP material between ‘growth’ and ‘multiplication’.

The church is not a body that is supposed to be ever-more productive, like a factory or industry that simply improves its output year on year. It is an organic body of wisdom, in which pruning, seasons, life and death, course through its very veins. It is about renewal and resurrection—so also about letting go, and death. It is about love and loss, and the hope of things to come.

MAPs, by their very nature (concentrating on the things that can be measured – the fallacy of predetermination), confuse ‘extensity for intensity, popularity for depth, and acquisition for wisdom’. The Church is required to follow Christ, and to give up all in that following, even its own life: ‘The church is not called to success, but to faithfulness.’¹⁷

MAPs are an expression of the greatest fiction of the ideology of managerialism, namely, moral neutrality. Managerialism [with its four mythic components of economic efficiency, universal applicability, caste conformity and moral neutrality] is ultimately, profoundly, anti-democratic.

Managerialism is, at root, a response to fearfulness. Augustine could write to Gregory, to receive direction and encouragement from the Holy Father, and thus be enabled to stick to his mission. Today’s managers, in the face of a barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving economic environment, write to the teachers of business schools and the gurus of business journals for confidence in their calling. What happens when the church, when the people of God, lose confidence in their calling, and seek encouragement from the society around them, with all its idols and cultic practices?

The present Archbishop of Canterbury gave a speech to the Trades Union Congress in Manchester, in which he noted, among other things:

...when vast companies like Amazon, and other online traders, the new industries, can get away with paying almost nothing in tax, there is something wrong with the tax system. They don’t pay a real living wage, so the tax payer must support their workers with benefits. And having leached off the tax payer once they don’t pay for our defence, for security, for stability, for justice, for health, for equality, for education.¹⁸

The Archbishop is qualified to give such a speech for, as he noted, he was in business himself. Before his ordination he worked for 11 years in the oil industry. This experience, noted by *The Daily Telegraph* when his appointment was announced,

¹⁷ Martyn Percy, *The Ecclesial Canopy: Faith, Hope, and Charity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 20.

¹⁸ Justin Welby, ‘Archbishop of Canterbury’s Speech at the TUC’, The Archbishop of Canterbury, 12 September 2018, <www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-and-writing/speeches/archbishop-canterburys-speech-tuc>.

... is viewed as bringing the Church of England greater credibility in public debate about ethics in the worlds of finance and the City.¹⁹

So perhaps, the Archbishop felt secure, through his experience and his credentials, to criticise aspects of the modern British economy in the strongest possible language

Today there are some who view that kind of oppression of the employed as a virtue. The gig economy, zero hours contracts, is nothing new, it is simply the reincarnation of an ancient evil. And God says, “let justice flow down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream”.²⁰

“Church involved in modern day slavery” was an easy headline to write. Peter Stanford, the former editor of the *Catholic Herald*, and a presumed ally of Welby’s progressive political actions, criticised him in the strongest possible language.

If you live by management, then you die by management, or, at least, are judged by the successes, or otherwise, of your managerialism: and the worst kind of manager is the incompetent one. As Andrew Rawnsley, a political commentator for the (liberal) *Observer* newspaper put it: the church manager’s prayer must be “Lord, make me pure— but not yet.”²¹

Active and contemplative

It is often forgotten, in the rush to congratulate ourselves on our Anglican pragmatism, that Pope Gregory sent another letter at the time of his advice to Mellitus. This letter was to King Ethelbert, in which the flatteringly and inaccurately named ‘King of the English’ was admonished to:

hasten to extend the Christian faith among the races subject to you, redouble your righteous enthusiasm in their conversion, hunt down the worship of idols, and overturn the building of temples, by encouraging the morality of your subjects with your great purity of life, by terrifying them, by flattering them, by correcting them and by showing them the example of good deeds.²²

In other words, paganism was to be eradicated, through both physical and exemplary means. Buildings were to be demolished, good deeds erected in their place. Feel the fear, Augustine, then do it anyway. But what you do, make sure it is the Gospel.

¹⁹ ‘New Archbishop of Canterbury: Justin Welby, the Oil Executive Who Heard God Calling’, 8 November 2012, sec. News, <www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9663422/Justin-Welby-the-oil-executive-who-heard-God-calling.html>.

²⁰ Welby, ‘Archbishop of Canterbury’s Speech at the TUC’.

²¹ Andrew Rawnsley, ‘The Great Crash Changed Politics More than It Reformed Finance’, *The Observer*, 16 September 2018, <www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/16/the-great-crash-changed-politics-more-than-it-reformed-finance>.

²² Bede, *H. E.*, i.32 (here at p. 113).

The business-like Augustine was able to achieve Gregory's advice, but not by being business-like. The life of the Roman missionaries in Canterbury emulated the life of the early Church:

They were constantly engaged in prayers, in vigils and fasts ...they despised all worldly things as foreign to them; they accepted only the necessities of life from those they taught; in all things they practised what they preached and kept themselves prepared to endure adversities, even to the point of dying for the truths they proclaimed.²³

Walking Together Today

The search of Christian unity is not limited to what we believe in common: it's not just doctrine. The expression of Christian unity comes from what we do together. In October 2016 the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Holy Father commissioned nineteen pairs of bishops, Anglican and Catholic, as part of the week-long summit meeting of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission ('IARCCUM'). The purpose of these pairings is to celebrate and reflect upon the deepening relationship between the two traditions and to find practical ways to give expression to their unity in ecumenical mission to the world. As the Common Declaration said:

The world must see us witnessing to this common faith in Jesus by acting together. We can, and must, work together to protect and preserve our common home: living, teaching and acting in ways that favour a speedy end to the environmental destruction that offends the Creator and degrades his creatures, and building individual and collective patterns of behaviour that foster a sustainable and integral development for the good of all. We can, and must, be united in a common cause to uphold and defend the dignity of all people. ...Today we rejoice to commission them and send them forth in pairs as the Lord sent out the seventy-two disciples. Let their ecumenical mission to those on the margins of society be a witness to all of us, and let the message go out from this holy place, as the Good News was sent out so many centuries ago, that Catholics and Anglicans will work together to give voice to our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring relief to the suffering, to bring peace where there is conflict, to bring dignity where it is denied and trampled upon.²⁴

The Common Declaration contained fine words, but as my mother, and Saint Gregory, would have said 'fine words butter no parsnips'. What difference has the Common Declaration made?

One development is the St Timothy Scholarship Programme in Malawi. Bishop Montfort Stirna of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Mangochi and Bishop Brighton Malasa of the Anglican Diocese of Upper Shire, have agreed to set up a joint scholarship programme in

²³ Bede, i.26 (here at p. 77).

²⁴ Pope Francis and Justin Welby, 'Common Declaration of Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin Welby' (IARCCUM.org, 5 October 2016), <https://iarccum.org/doc/?d=1251>.

their Dioceses to benefit bright students from poor families who cannot afford the fees and expenses associated with giving their children a secondary school education. A year ago, in September 2017, the Scholarship Programme was launched. Forty students, twenty girls, twenty boys, have been awarded a St. Timothy Scholarship to attend one of four residential secondary schools run by the two Dioceses. All expenses are paid for: tuition fees, room and board, school uniforms and shoes, athletic wear and shoes, stationery, toiletries, bed linen, school bag and a travel allowance funding the cost of travelling by public transport from home to school and back at the beginning and end of each school term. The cost, a massive and unimaginable €600 a year, is covered by donors from overseas. From September 2018, another cohort are being supported: there are now 58 children being supported, which means, of course, 58 families.

To make the programme sustainable a charitable foundation has been set up, and will be called the “Walking Together Foundation.” The name of the foundation, reflecting the ethos of the Common Declaration, also echoes the teaching of Pope Francis. He said, in an address to Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity:

I like to say that unity is made by walking, in order to recall that when we walk together, that is, when we meet as brothers, we pray together, we collaborate together in the proclamation of the Gospel, and in the service to the least, we are already united.²⁵

Of course, 58 children and 58 families in Malawi will not change the world tomorrow. There are 7 million children under the age of 15 in Malawi: 40% of the total population of 17.2 million.²⁶ 30.4 percent of “women aged 15-19 years had begun child bearing” in the calendar year of 2014.²⁷ It would be easy, and cynical, to say that Walking Together is more a matter of assuaging Western post-colonial guilt and economic exploitation. It would be easy, cynical, and wrong. For example, in May this year, a group from Walking Together visited Malawi to see what difference the scholarships were actually making to peoples’ lives. They met Judith Idi, the 31-year-old mother of three daughters, and a widow. Her daughter, Regina, is in the first form of secondary school, as a result of receiving a scholarship. Judith addressed the visitors:

In the year 2017, my daughter sat for Primary School Leaving Certificate and selected to continue her Secondary level. Unfortunately for me, it was hard when I heard that my daughter has been selected to continue her education. My concern was where to get money for school

²⁵ Pope Francis, ‘To Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity’ (10 November 2016),

<https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/november/documents/papa-francesco_20161110_plenaria-unita-cristiani.html>.

²⁶ ‘Youth’, *Population Malawi* (blog), 2016, http://populationmalawi.org/wp1/?page_id=312.

²⁷ ‘Harnessing the Demographic Dividend to Accelerate Socio-Economic Transformation and Economic Development in Malawi’ (Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, April 2016), 24, <<https://malawi.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Malawi%20Demographic%20Dividend%20Report%202016.pdf>>. Note the description of girls as “women”.

fees, beddings and school items like exercise books, pens etc. Through the blessings of God, ... she was selected to continue her education with financial support from St. Timothy... The assistance came in time, I was very joyful with the aim that my daughter shall continue her education because I was unable to pay school fees and support her. For the meantime, my source of income is going some piece of work to other people and selling *mandasi*. Last but not one, I would like to thank St. Timothy for the support that are giving to my daughter like school fees and school items including school uniform, exercise books, school bag, school shoes, blankets etc. My God bless you; bless the church of St. Timothy!

The life and witness that Gregory the Great taught Augustine (the fearful!) led to the success of the Roman mission to Kent. In our own day, we need to set aside our own fearfulness that leads to the cul-de-sacs of such things as managerialism, and instead live within the practical witness of the Kentish missionaries, in their day, and the bishops, priests and laity working through IARCCUM in our own: a practical witness that allows people like Judith Idi to celebrate the joy of her daughter's education.

As the Holy Father has said

As a journey, unity requires patient waiting, tenacity, effort and commitment; it does not annul conflicts and does not negate disagreements, but rather, at times it can expose us to the risk of new misunderstandings. Unity can be accepted only by those who decide to set out on a journey toward a destiny that today may seem rather distant. However, those who follow this way are comforted by the continual experience of a communion joyfully perceived, even if not yet fully attained, every time that presumption is set aside and we all recognize ourselves as in need of God's love. And what bond unites all of us Christians more than the experience of being sinners but at the same time the object of God's infinite mercy revealed to us by Jesus Christ? Likewise, unity of love is already a reality when those whom God has chosen and called to form his people proclaim together the wonders that he has done for them, above all by offering a testimony of life full of charity to all.²⁸

May Gregory, Augustine, and Judith Idi pray for us all!

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²⁸ Francis, 'Christian Unity Plenary Address'.