

# Deep Church Rising

*Recovering the Roots of  
Christian Orthodoxy*

ANDREW G. WALKER  
*and*  
ROBIN A. PARRY

**SPCK**

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Andrew would like to dedicate this book to  
Richard Chartres, Bishop of London

Robin would like to dedicate this book to  
John Inge, Bishop of Worcester  
and  
Denise Inge (1963–2014),  
an inspirational and extraordinary Christian woman

“May the good teaching of our fathers who met at Nicea shine forth again, so that doxology which is in harmony with saving baptism [i.e., with Matt 28:19] may be duly offered to the Blessed Trinity.”

—BASIL OF CAESAREA (EP. 91, WRITTEN IN 372 AD)

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“It is only when we know something of our roots that we are able to move and explore without the feverish longing to be stimulated – or the anxious fear that we are betraying something, though we don’t actually know what. We don’t become either human or holy without the nurture and wisdom of others; this book helps us to make contact with those others so that we can indeed grow in humanity, sanctity, and discernment as we need to.”

—ROWAN WILLIAMS  
MASTER OF MAGDELENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE  
AND AUTHOR OF *BEING CHRISTIAN* AND OTHER BOOKS

“*Deep Church Rising* is a deep book, intrepidly and winsomely demonstrating the ongoing viability of orthodoxy.”

—RODNEY CLAPP, AUTHOR OF  
*TORTURED WONDERS: CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY  
FOR PEOPLE, NOT ANGELS* AND OTHER BOOKS

“This book, written with punctilious scholarship, vast scope, fidelity to history, and, perhaps above all, with great gracefulness, calls the churches to a sober scrutiny of themselves, and, perhaps thence, to fundamental reflection on what the church is. I am immensely taken with this book.”

—THOMAS HOWARD, AUTHOR OF  
*ON BEING CATHOLIC* AND OTHER BOOKS

# Preface

## Andrew

This book is a reflection of the debates of an informal network of Christians in Greater London that regularly met in St Paul's Church, Hammersmith, and King's College, London, from 2006 to 2008. Four people were responsible for setting up this group: Simon Downham, who generously offered us hospitality at St Paul's, where he was the incumbent vicar; Ian Stackhouse, former leader in the "new church" sector and now pastor of Millmead Baptist Church in Guildford; my former colleague at King's College, Luke Bretherton, who is now Professor of Christian Ethics at Duke University; and myself, now Emeritus Professor of Theology, Culture, and Education at King's College London. Participants were mainly evangelicals who had some involvement in the Charismatic Movement (although we did have church leaders from other constituencies who came from time to time). Luke Bretherton suggested we should refer to the seminars as a "conversation" and after some six months of discussion I raised the issue that the "conversation" was about method but we needed to define the *content*. And so I suggested C. S. Lewis's alternative phrase for "mere Christianity," "deep church."

In 1985, after the publication of the first edition of my sociological study on what were then called house churches, I decided that all my future publications, academic and popular, would reflect my Christian commitments and concerns. So in a sense I turned from poacher (sociologist of religion) to gamekeeper (applied theologian). I did this because I was troubled—and remain so—at the lack of knowledge and confidence that Western Christians have in the Christian tradition. With the backing of my bishop, Metropolitan Anthony, and under the patronage of the then Archbishop of Canterbury (now Lord Carey), I founded and directed The C. S. Lewis Centre for the study of religion and modernity from 1987 to 1995. We were not a Lewis fan club but an international research organization dedicated to "mere Christianity," which we understood to be a

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defense of historical and Trinitarian orthodoxy. This defense reflected a wide spectrum of churchmanship and scholarship. For example, in an early collection of original articles we had a letter of support from the Vatican, a foreword by Dr. Billy Graham (Baptist), and contributors included Professor Colin Gunton (United Reformed Church), Professor Gavin D'Costa (Roman Catholic), Professor Keith Ward (Anglican), Professor Thomas F. Torrance (Presbyterian), Cardinal Suenens (Roman Catholic), and Metropolitan Anthony (Orthodox)

In the early 1990s, after a direct approach from Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, I threw in my lot with the Gospel and Culture movement and our two organizations formally merged for the period between 1995 and 1997. Like myself Lesslie was dismayed at the way in which so many churches had thrown in the towel to modernity, which had thrown down the gauntlet to religious faith (the challenge was an amalgam of secularist ideologies and what sociologists have called secularization—a process of disenchantment with religious faith). Churches were increasingly removed from the “public square” and shunted into a world of leisure and voluntary association where truth was downgraded to private beliefs or mere opinion. Lesslie was particularly attached to the idea that the gospel was public truth and never did accept the separation of fact from value, which has been such a feature of the modern world.

Both Lesslie and I were convinced ecumenists but traditional in our beliefs. Lesslie used to say we should start at the center of Christian faith—that Jesus is Lord—and stick to the central tenants of the gospel to find true unity. My conviction is that we have fallen foul of false divisions in the churches and have separated or broken things that should stay together. This is not to deny the very real divisions that have occurred among Christians but it is a stance that refuses to opt for a faith that pits Bible against tradition, enthusiasm against contemplation, catholicity against gathered remnants, individual believer against church. In Part One of this book we have not shied away from the great schisms of Christendom but we do insist that they are somewhat relativized by what we call the third schism. The third schism—unlike the split between the Orthodox East and the Catholic West and between Protestants and Catholics in the Reformation in the West—undermines the very basis of Christian faith in its denial of the Trinity, incarnation, and the resurrection, and in its treating Scripture as an object of scientific inquiry rather than as a sacred text.



Above all this is a book about recovering the gospel. This recovery is essential for the future of the church and the world: we are not going to be saved by a purpose-driven church or any gnostic substitute—the power of positive thinking *a la* Norman Vincent Peale looms ever larger in our consumer-driven society. In order to recover the gospel we have to find the church. Ecclesiology is the Achilles heel of Evangelicalism. When we have put missiology back where it belongs—in the church—we will discover the true source of mission and truth. But our confidence in the gospel as the foundation of faith and the source of conversion is not a model of success. We are the bearers and keepers of the flame: in short we are called to be faithful disciples, not conquerors.

## Robin

I, along with many others, was introduced to the notion of “deep church” through Andrew Walker. Andrew is one of the Orthodox thinkers that evangelicals, especially in the UK, gravitate toward. Indeed, for many years he has made it something of his mission to help evangelicals to draw deeply from the Great Tradition while remaining true to their evangelical and charismatic instincts. As a charismatic evangelical I was already well aware that we should not set the Word against the Spirit, the evangelical against the charismatic. What Andrew taught me was that the big mistake of many evangelicals is to set *tradition* up in conflict with the Word or with the Spirit. Tradition is too often seen by evangelicals as “the dead words of men” to be opposed in the name of the inspired words of Scripture and the living activity of the Spirit. “Tradition kills,” we say, “but the Word and the Spirit bring life.” This conflict approach is a very unhelpful way to think about the relationship between the Spirit, tradition, and Scripture. For Andrew—who is committed to the authority of the Bible and still testifies unflinchingly to his own powerful charismatic encounter—tradition, Scripture, and the Spirit form a threefold cord that should not be untwisted. That insight has been transformative for me and for many other British evangelicals I know. It also underlies the approach of this book.

Over the years Andrew has published various articles and books that have circled around the challenges posed by modernity and postmodernity for the church and its mission. Increasingly he has been emphasizing the central role of recovering deep church. For about ten years I have been encouraging Andrew to offer a more sustained exploration of deep church,

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beginning with the notion of the third schism and moving on to explore deep church as the authentic Christian mode of response to it. Andrew, however, has been suffering for the past few years with Parkinson's disease and it has become increasingly clear that such a project was simply not realistic. Yet my belief in a deep church vision and my gut instinct that such a book ought to be out there did not wane. Thus it was that Andrew and I decided to write the book together.

What we offer here are a set of reflections that represent a deep church approach to contemporary Christian belief, worship, and living. But notice that I say "*a* deep church approach," not *the* deep church approach. We speak on our own behalf and not on behalf of others committed to ancient-future faith (whether they be individuals or denominations). We do not even speak on behalf of the Deep Church network that existed in London. Those who share with us the basic commitment to the importance of holding fast to classical orthodoxy may well disagree with us on some issues. That's fair enough. We offer these thoughts for consideration and discussion and not as a final word. Nevertheless, what you find here is the most thorough and sustained attempt made so far by Andrew or myself to spell out what we mean by "a deep church vision." We offer it to the church as it struggles to navigate that fine and difficult route between the Scylla of cultural irrelevance and the Charybdis of compromising the "faith once for all delivered to the saints." To chart that perilous course we need Spirit, Scripture, and tradition, as well as great discernment in understanding the cultural contexts in which we find ourselves. This is a task that needs all the diverse skills of the crew and all hands on deck. Our book does not map the path but rather gestures, perhaps a little wildly at times, in the general direction of travel. It also points out a few whirlpools, hidden rocks, and sea monsters on the way. Our prayer is that we may inspire some of our readers, and others through them, to sail with wisdom, courage, and eyes fixed on the horizon, on the author and perfecter of our faith, Christ Jesus.

# Acknowledgments

Chapter 1 contains modified versions of long extracts from:

Andrew G. Walker, “The Third Schism: The Great Divide in Christianity Today.” In *In Search of Christianity*, edited by Tony Moss, 202–17. London: Firethorn, 1986.

Andrew G. Walker, “Recovering Deep Church: Theological and Spiritual Renewal.” In *Remembering Our Future: Explorations in Deep Church*, edited by Andrew G. Walker and Luke Bretherton, 1–29. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007.

Chapter 3 is a modified version of:

Andrew G. Walker, “Deep Church as *Paradosis*: On Relating Scripture and Tradition.” In *Remembering Our Future: Explorations in Deep Church*, edited by Andrew G. Walker and Luke Bretherton, 59–80. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007.

# Abbreviations

1 <i>Apol.</i>	Justin Martyr, <i>Apologia</i> 1 ( <i>First Apology</i> )
<i>Bap.</i>	Theodore of Mopsuestia, <i>Liber ad Baptizandos</i> ( <i>Baptismal Homilies</i> )
<i>Cat.</i>	Cyril of Jerusalem, <i>Catechetical Lectures</i>
<i>Comm.</i>	Vincent of Lérins, <i>Commonitorium</i> ( <i>Commonitory</i> )
<i>Conf.</i>	Augustine, <i>Confessionum libri XIII</i> ( <i>Confessions</i> )
<i>Dem.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus hearesus</i> ( <i>Against Heresies</i> )
<i>de Sp. sanct.</i>	Basil, <i>Liber de Spiritu sancto</i> ( <i>On the Holy Spirit</i> )
<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
<i>Diogn.</i>	<i>Epistle to Diognetus</i>
<i>ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i> ( <i>Letters</i> )
<i>Fund.</i>	Augustine, <i>Contra epistulam Manichaei quam vocant Fundamenti</i> ( <i>Against the Letter of the Manichaeans That They Call the “Basics”</i> )
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haeresus</i> ( <i>Against Heresies</i> )
<i>Hom. in Heb.</i>	John Chrysostom, <i>Homiliae in epistulam ad Hebraeos</i> ( <i>Homily on the Epistle to the Hebrews</i> )
<i>Hom. Jo.</i>	John Chrysostom, <i>Homiliae in Joannem</i> ( <i>Homily on John</i> )
<i>Ign. Eph.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Ephesians</i>
<i>Ign. Smyrn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Smyrnaeans</i>
<i>Ign. Trall.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Trallians</i>
<i>Myst.</i>	Cyril of Jerusalem, <i>Mystagōgikai</i> ( <i>Mystagogic Catecheses</i> )
<i>Pan.</i>	Epiphanius, <i>Panarion</i> ( <i>Adversus hearesus</i> ) ( <i>Refutation of All Heresies</i> )
<i>m. Pesah̄</i>	<i>Pesah̄im</i> (in the Mishnah)
<i>Praescr.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De praescriptione haereticorum</i> ( <i>Prescription against Heretics</i> )
<i>Princ.</i>	Origen, <i>De principiis</i> ( <i>Peri archōn</i> ) ( <i>First Principles</i> )
<i>Ortho.</i>	John of Damascus, <i>Ekdisis akribes tēs Orthodoxou Pisteos</i> ( <i>An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith</i> )
<i>Vit. Ant.</i>	Athanasius, <i>Vita Antonii</i> ( <i>Life of Anthony</i> )

## PART ONE

# The Third Schism: On Losing the Gospel



## INTRODUCTION

## The Third Schism and Deep Church

CHRISTIANITY IS NOW ON sale in multiform shapes and sizes. Competing in the open market with other religions, there is a bewildering yet broad choice of “real” and “best” Christianities for anyone who wants to buy. No doubt someone will soon publish *The Consumer Guide to God* so that people can pop in and out of churches with the same ease and comfort as they visit their favorite restaurants.

“You pays your money and takes your choice” surely exemplifies the “spirit of the age”; for in our culture religion is not seen as the *raison d'être* of our society and life: it is a series of options that we choose—or goods that we buy—if we feel so inclined. This plurality of religious belief and practice is often applauded as evidence of cultural maturity and tolerance. Nobody forces a version on us any more. There are many varieties on sale vying for our attention, but we, the consumers, have the absolute power of either buying one version in preference to another or withholding payment altogether.

In this sense, of course, we have to admit to being just part of the crowd like everybody else. While we accept the inevitability of this, and while we run the logical risk of being hoist by our own petard, we want to assert in this introduction that the Christian gospel has a central core of truth that has an objective character about it. Christian faith is not like a lump of clay that we can reshape however we see fit. While it comes in

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many shapes and sizes they represent variations on a theme, sharing a common root in the apostolic witness to Jesus maintained by the community of the church. It is, in other words, not infinitely malleable but has a “this and not that” character.

The purpose of this assertion, however, is not so that we can demonstrate this objectivity in a logical way, but in order that we can make out a plausible case that the Christianity of the historic church, of the ancient creeds, and sacred scriptural canons needs to be on guard against being swallowed by something else in the name of religious progress; of capitulating to a different gospel.

To say this is to come clean and admit two things. First, that we are traditionalists or primitivists of sorts, and believe that the Christian faith is founded on biblical revelations concerning a loving God and his incarnation in the world through the historical person of Jesus Christ. Such a belief takes some swallowing today, or in any age, and cannot be demonstrated as factual in a scientific or empirical way. After all, God as traditionally conceived by Christians is not simply a being, not even the *Supreme Being*, alongside or on the same plane as other beings. The church has usually sought to maintain that God’s reality is of a *fundamentally different order* from anything in creation. God dwells “in light inaccessible, hid from our eyes,” and simply *cannot* be studied by scientific or other empirical methods. So, for instance, while historians may indeed be able to offer insights on the historical Jesus they will simply be unable to declare *in their capacity as historians* whether Jesus really was God incarnate. How could one empirically assess *that*? This is not to say, however, that such a belief is false, and certainly it is not to say that it is irrational. It is simply to say that there are some aspects of reality that are beyond the limits of scientific rationality and method. (It should go without saying that this is no threat to science, only to *scientism*, the ideology that all truth claims about the world can be assessed by the sciences.)

The second thing to admit is that we are not approaching this introduction from an Empyrean vantage point nor with the logical disinterest of a mathematical calculator. Christianity, the religion of the apostles, tattered and divided as it is by schism and heresy—but still bearing the marks of God’s grace—has very gradually over the past four hundred years entered what is one of the most serious tests of its two-thousand-year history. We passionately want to see that faith both survive and strengthen in the face of modern Christian alternatives.



We have chosen, therefore, polemic rather than a careful historical analysis as the medium to express both passion and conviction. The polemic—that Christendom has entered its third and most serious schism—is, we believe, true, and is based on historical argument that is rational and open to refutation. As to whether the schism is a good or a bad thing, that depends on which side of the present divide you stand.

To say that we are dealing with a protracted crisis in Christendom, which can be characterized as a third schism, necessitates a brief mention of the first two divides, and something about the meaning of schism. “Schism” is a word that we usually associate with a breach in the unity of the visible church. The so-called Great Western Schism of 1378–1417, for example, was a break in the unity of the (Western) Catholic Church due to disputed elections to the papacy in which, until the schism was healed, there were competing popes.

As serious a schism as this was, however, it was not of the magnitude of the really great divides of Christendom. Furthermore, the word “schism” means to divide, cleave, or rend. It is *this* more general sense of major division with which we are concerned rather than the idea of a *visible* split. The first two great schisms of Christianity, between the Eastern and Western churches, and the Western Reformation, were indeed visible divides. The third schism, because it cuts across denominations rather than between them, is not invisible (we can see it happening), but it is not yet denomination against denomination creating visible and separate camps within Christendom. In that sense it differs from the other schisms.

## The First Schism: The Divide between the Western and Eastern Churches

It says a great deal for our parochial worldview that Christianity is seen as a Western religion. Western students of theology take some time to adjust to the fact that the Western Reformation is only part of a far more fundamental divide of the Christian church. This division has its origins in the inability of the Greek East and Latin West to cohere.

Although the official date of the Great Schism is 1054, this is too simplistic. In reality the two halves of Christendom had been pulling apart for centuries. The unilateral addition by the Latin West of the word *filioque* (“and the Son”) to the Nicene creed (which now said of the Holy Spirit, “who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*”) and the decision by

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the Roman See that the Bishop there was to be seen no longer as *Primus inter pares* (the first among equals) but as possessing superior and unique authority in the Christian church, are the main reasons cited by Eastern Catholics (the Orthodox) for the Great Schism (see Appendix 1).

This is not untrue, but it is also the case that the nature of spirituality, liturgy, and theology increasingly developed along separate lines as Eastern and Western cultures evolved and diverged.

Henceforth the Orthodox continued without Pope and without reformation (to this day), and the Catholic Church—cut off from the collegiality of the Eastern sister churches—went it alone in an increasingly centralized and Westernized way. The essential tragedy of the schism was that the universal catholicity of the “one undivided church” was broken.

The council of Florence in 1438–39 looked as if it might heal the rift between East and West. In the event, it was a let down. The political background to the council was that the Eastern churches, Byzantium in particular, were under threat from the Islamic Ottoman Empire. The Byzantine Emperor proposed a union of East and West as the only way to prevent the collapse of Byzantium and the capture of Constantinople. The West were keen for reunification.

The Council discovered that the contentious *filioque* clause (on which, see Appendix 1) was only one of the difficulties between them. Perhaps most serious of all was the bitterness left by the fourth crusade: in 1204 the West had set out to rescue the Holy places from the Saracens in Jerusalem and yet ended up besieging and sacking Byzantium, killing many thousands of men, women, and children, fellow Christians from Constantinople, raping women (even nuns), and sacking churches, convents, and monasteries, stealing the holy relics from the city. All this was rightly seen by the East as an act of unspeakable religious sacrilege. Of course, the East itself was not without sin. Western anger had been stirred by the Massacre of the Latins, a large-scale massacre of Catholics living in Constantinople in 1182. Western hostility following that atrocity lay behind the attack on Constantinople in 1203 and 1204. (It should go without saying that both of these events are utterly incompatible with the calling of the gospel-shaped church.)

However, despite their differences, all the Western and all the Eastern delegates, with the exception of two Eastern bishops (most famously Mark of Ephesus), did sign the Decree of Union on 6 July 1439. So it appeared that the schism was over.

This was not to be. When the general populous in the East, stirred by members of the Eastern Church, heard that their leaders had signed an accord with the West they almost unanimously rejected it. In our opinion this popular resistance was motivated by the bitterness left over from the atrocities committed against Constantinople by the Crusaders. Mark of Ephesus, who had refused to sign (on the grounds that he considered the *filioque* clause heretical) became a saint and those who signed the Decree of Union were reviled. (This raises an important issue—conciliar councils, ecumenical councils, and scriptural canons are all very well but you have to carry people with you.) Constantinople fell in May 1453 and after that any chance of a proper reconciliation was lost.

In recent decades there have been numerous encouraging ecumenical discussions between the Orthodox churches and the Catholic Church exploring the rocky and painful path toward the restoration of communion and unity. Pope John Paul II expressed the deep sorrow of Catholics over the thirteenth-century massacre in Constantinople to the Archbishop of Athens (2001) and to the Patriarch of Constantinople (2004). In 2004 the Patriarch formally accepted the Pope's apology in the "spirit of reconciliation of the resurrection." These are small but encouraging signs. Unity is not immanent, but neither is it unimaginable, unrealistic, or impossible.

## The Second Schism: The Reformation

The second great divide in Christendom shares with the first schism the characteristic of a gradual breaking down of catholicity. While it may be true that the Roman Catholic Church maintained a powerful hegemony throughout the early Middle Ages, its influence began to wane as Renaissance humanism, the emergence of a natural philosophy that owed little to revelation, and the rise of an embryonic capitalism, weakened the omnipresent authority of the Western Church. The fact that Martin Luther nailed his famous principles of the Reformation faith to the door of the church at Wittenburg in 1517 is only an historical landmark in the greater reformation of medieval society.

Protestants like to see the Reformation as a great recovery: a return to New Testament Christianity. Undeniably, Protestantism has shown itself to be full of life and vigor, but it has also demonstrated that by its very nature it is schismatic. The Reformation became reformation *ad nauseum*, and modern denominationalism was born. This was inevitable while the

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