

mostly intellectual knowledge he possessed on me. I was very lucky to have him as a teacher and a friend.

Anderson was a teacher who never made me feel as stupid as



NORMAN ANDERSON

James Norman Dalrymple Anderson 1908–1994

A LAWYER AMONG THE THEOLOGIANS. That is not only the title of one of his many books, but goes some way towards providing a description of Norman Anderson, Christian missionary, Islamic lawyer, academic administrator, and churchman.

James Norman Dalrymple Anderson was born at Aldeburgh on 29 September 1908. His father whom he described as ‘quiet, gentle, slow, thrifty and distinctly obstinate’ had been a fellow-pupil at Liverpool College of F. E. Smith, the future Lord Chancellor as Earl of Birkenhead. Anderson’s mother, ‘talkative, dominant, impatient, and somewhat extravagant’ with ‘a positive passion for moving house and visiting ironmongers, in which she would buy countless pots and pans’ had Jewish blood in her veins. Her grandfather was a rabbi, but her father had converted to Christianity. Anderson spent a rather lonely childhood; his sisters were much older, and his only brother died in infancy. He describes himself as having been ‘quite exceptionally slow at learning to read’. Despite his later mastery of Arabic and the remarkable breadth of his reading, he was convinced throughout his life that he was a slow reader and a poor linguist.

The family environment was marked, as was Anderson’s whole life, by Evangelical Christianity. He was sent to attend St Lawrence College, Ramsgate, a small public school with an Evangelical foundation. The school had a notably strong and active Christian Union. Anderson was once moved to attempt to pray all night, fortified by ginger beer: the attempt was unsuccessful. In the school’s Classical Sixth, although he

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already judged himself 'a shockingly bad linguist', he proved an excellent debater, and this may have prompted the advice he was given to read Law.

He had a brilliant academic record at Trinity College, Cambridge. His papers in the Law Qualifying examination were the best of the year. He took a Double First in the Tripos, became a Senior Scholar of his college, and took another First in what was then the LLB in International Law. Modest individuals, and Norman Anderson was certainly that, are never very clear how they should explain such an outstanding academic record. Is it better to hint at days and nights of ceaseless toil, or to admit to the gift of a brilliant mind which needs no such expenditure of energy? The evidence of a lifelong friend, Lord Coggan, provides some evidence of the truth of the matter;

One of the most interesting [inhabitants of] Trinity was a young man, tall and slim, often to be seen with a bag of golf clubs over his shoulders, and the initials were J.N.D.A. In the College next to him [St. John's] there was a very undistinguished chap who lay in bed in the morning and listened to the organ of Trinity College floating through his bedroom . . .

These two young men saw quite a lot of one another, and that was very pleasant, except at one part of the year when the exams were drawing near. Then it was that the young man in St John's college would hear weary steps ascending to his room in First Court, a knock on the door—and not always that—and in came a languid and worn-looking young man carrying an enormous load of legal books, who then sank into one of my chairs and groaning, with groans that continued for the space of an hour, underlined (it seemed to me totally unnecessarily, because I could not think what it would do to him) the main points in the tomes in his hand. But at about 10 o'clock the demand went forth from him to the owner of the rooms, 'Make tea'.

That little incident illustrates, I think, the unfairness of life, that a man who for eleven months apparently did not do a stroke of work then proceeded to carry off three Firsts in Law. Well, what you make about justice at the centre of the universe I do not know in the face of that.

However, life between examinations was not all sport. Norman Anderson became over his four years in Cambridge a leading member and ultimately President of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union. Through the CICCUCU 'missionary breakfasts' he was much attracted by the call to the 'mission field'. He had been destined for a career at the Bar, but became increasingly uncertain whether that was right for him. At one stage he actually switched to reading Theology, but reverted to

Law after three or four days. He had considered seeking ordination, but was not wholly at ease with some aspects of Church of England practice, notably what he regarded as the almost indiscriminate baptism of infants. He had not much enjoyed the Cambridge Union, finding undergraduate attempts at wit distinctly boring. He may have wondered whether his public speaking matched the robust and forceful style of advocacy then fashionable at the Bar.

His eventual decision to serve as a missionary in Egypt was clearly prompted by a sense of vocation. Anderson often recalled, perhaps wistfully, that he could point to no moment of 'conversion'. His Christian faith was a matter of dawning realisation rather than any sudden crisis. So it was with his decision to offer himself for missionary service. He did not attribute that decision to any instance of direct divine guidance; it was 'a question of much thought, hesitation and prayer leading to a growing conviction'. He had spent a long vacation in Egypt visiting his father and working with the Nile Mission Press. He visited the Givan family, now based in Alexandria, whom he had first met through beach missions in Criccieth, and soon became engaged to their daughter Patricia.

Anderson was accepted by the Egypt General Mission, as was his fiancée. She was initially sent to Ismailia, he to Cairo to study Arabic at the School of Oriental Studies, a branch of the American University in Cairo. He found the language very difficult, and became ill. The mission had the good sense to make an exception to the rule forbidding trainee missionaries from marrying. Norman Anderson and Pat Givan were married in 1933 in Alexandria. It was to prove a remarkable marriage. Each at different stages supported the other selflessly in their work, in ill-health, and in their shared experience of grief at the early deaths of all their three children.

Egypt had its indigenous Coptic Christians and an expatriate Christian community, but the focus of the missionary endeavour was on the Muslim inhabitants. It was in a sense unpromising work: essentially the missionary was 'there for the Lord to use', seeking whatever opportunities might present themselves for serious conversation on religious matters. With this in mind, Anderson became what might now be called 'an occasional student' at the University of Cairo, attending two sets of lectures. One set was on Arabic literature, the other on the Islamic law

of personal status and family relations, lectures delivered to a mixed audience including Copts and other Christians. In his autobiography, Anderson recalled one especially interesting lecture on 'the evil effects of polygamy'. Many years later, he was to choose the reform of the law of polygamy as the subject of his presidential address to the Society of Public Teachers of Law.

Already Anderson felt the urge to write, and did so in Arabic. His first book, published in 1939, *Al-'Aql w'al-Iman* ('Faith and Reason') was designed to strengthen the faith of Christian students living in a non-Christian environment. It was shortly afterwards that he first lectured on 'The Evidence for the Resurrection', published as a booklet which remained in print for over forty years. It was the first of many pieces in which Anderson spoke or wrote as a lawyer, claiming to apply the lawyer's approach to the historical evidence as to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As the fortunes of war moved against the Allies, Anderson sent his family to safety in Kenya and volunteered for service with the British Army. Because of his knowledge of Arabic he was asked to serve with a group of Arab guerrilla fighters, refugees from Libya, and was commissioned as a captain in the Intelligence Corps. For the next six years his work was largely concerned with the future of the territories of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania which were eventually to be incorporated in the new kingdom of Libya. While serving as Secretary for Sanusi Affairs at GHQ Middle East Forces he worked closely with the future King Idris, whose claims the British were at that stage reluctant to recognise. As the Allies advanced he became Political Secretary in Tripolitania, rose to lieutenant-colonel and full colonel, and received first the MBE and then the OBE, both in the Military Division of the Order.

After the end of the War, he visited Jeddah with Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, Chief of Imperial General Staff, and met both King Ibn Sa'ud and his future successor Prince Sa'ud. He continued to prepare influential papers on the future of the Libyan territories and accompanied the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, to the Conference in Paris at which these matters were discussed. Much later, in 1960, he visited King Idris in Tripoli and received the Libyan Order of *Istiqlal* (independence).

When he left the Army in 1946, Anderson was thirty eight and, like many ex-servicemen, had to consider his future. He received an appointment that was to lay the foundations for much of his future work. This was a three-year post as Warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge, a new venture sponsored by the evangelical Inter-Varsity Fellowship to provide a residential library for advanced biblical research. The Andersons were provided with a house, and Norman with a place in which he could reflect and write; he retained a study there for the rest of his life. Collecting the library was a task in which he worked with such scholars as Henry Chadwick, and it was an experience which foreshadowed Anderson's responsibilities in the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies.

He became a student again, attending lectures in Arabic and in Hebrew. He soon found himself also giving lectures, first on Islam (principally to Colonial Office trainees) and then a full course on Islamic Law in the Cambridge Law Faculty. Islamic Law affects one seventh of the world's population, and he was one of the very few in England with both a legal background and a working knowledge of Arabic. Before the end of his wardenship at Tyndale House, he was offered and accepted a lectureship in Islamic Law at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London.

So began Anderson's scholarly career in Islamic Law. It also marked the start of a heavy programme of foreign travel. He was anxious to shift the emphasis in Western studies of Islamic law from the principles worked out in the Indian sub-continent to the law of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, of which he had some personal knowledge. Newly independent governments in many of those countries were intent on codification and, where possible, modernisation of their laws, and Anderson was fascinated to observe the interaction of Islamic principles and what were perceived to be the needs of a modern society. So he spent six months in 1949 and 1950 studying in Cairo, and later two periods of three months in each of West and East Africa. He also visited Sudan, becoming external examiner for the students of Islamic Law taking the London LL B there; he described, with some pain, the difficulty of reading scripts written in Arabic script under the stress of examination conditions.

This research led to articles on Islamic law reform in journals such

as the *Muslim World* and to his first major work *Islamic Law in Africa*, a study published by HMSO in 1954. It made his reputation as a leading scholar in the field, and he was awarded the Cambridge LLD and appointed to a Chair at SOAS (having already been made a Reader in 1951, and Head of the Department of Law in 1953). In September 1955 he argued in *The Times* for a more thorough study of the way in which the principles of English law were being developed in the British colonies in Africa alongside customary law and in some places Islamic law. As he observed, 'Some of these territories are progressing so rapidly along the road to independence that it is scarcely possible that multiple law, and multiple courts, can long be tolerated, except, perhaps, in regard to family law.'

He was a natural choice to serve in 1956–7 on an international panel of jurists to advise, in just such a context, on the future form of the criminal law of Northern Nigeria, that part of Nigeria most influenced by Islam. The panel recommended the adoption of a code based on the Sudanese Criminal Code, and this recommendation was accepted. Anderson wrote articles in the *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* in 1959 and 1963 on successive phases of the work.

In 1958, Anderson travelled to North America in his dual role as Islamic and legal scholar. He lectured in Princeton on aspects of Islam and in the New York University's School of Law on Islamic law in the modern world. The text of the latter lectures was published in 1959. His achievement, through that and other publications, was to rescue Islamic law for jurists; he demonstrated its vital importance, too great for it to be the sole preserve of orientalists.

In the years that followed, the time Anderson could devote to scholarship was always limited by the many other burdens he so willingly accepted. His finest scholarly work was undoubtedly his study of *Law Reform in the Muslim World* published in 1976, a development of ideas and insights earlier expounded in his 1959 book. It was at once a survey of the history of Islamic law over the previous century and a profound reflection on the task of law reform, though limited to the countries of which the author had some first-hand experience. Lawyers will always seek to protect their own body of learning, the tradition of their profession and their discipline; the urge becomes a holy duty when the law has a divine source. The task for the judge and the law reformer, faced with changes in the social and economic context in which the legal rules are set, is to seek to respond creatively while preserving the essentials. As Anderson well understood, a similar task faces the moral

theologian: to take account of the new possibilities offered by scientific advance and changes in the structure of society, while neither being locked into a fundamentalist ghetto nor surrendering principle to passing fashion. Anderson could not have expected the revival, or re-emergence, of Islamic fundamentalism; the story of Islamic law reform in recent years would make very different reading.

In 1959, Anderson's career took a new turn as he was appointed Director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in the University of London in succession to Sir David Hughes Parry. He served with enormous distinction for the next fifteen years, leaving the Institute with splendid new premises, one of the finest law libraries in the country, and a growing reputation as a centre of creative legal thought.

Under his leadership, Howard Drake and Willi Steiner built up the library, and began to publish the *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals*. Anderson himself began a whole series of initiatives which reflected the breadth of his own interests in crossing the boundaries of nations and disciplines. There were collaborative ventures with Harvard (where he was offered but declined a Chair), Yale and other American Law Schools. There was the series of annual workshops, one of a number of projects supported by the Ford Foundation. Most notable were the inter-disciplinary discussion groups: lawyers joining economists, sociologists, penologists, or theologians. It was the work of the last-named group which led to a study for the Archbishop of Canterbury, published under the title *Putting Asunder*, which in turn made possible the reform of divorce law in England by the Divorce Law Reform Act of 1969. Anderson himself became chairman of the Hamlyn Trust, responsible for one of the best-known series of lectures on legal topics; two years after his retirement as a trustee he gave the 1978 lectures under the title 'Liberty, Law and Justice'.

But the greatest task was to rehouse the Institute. A handsome building, largely financed by a gift from Sir Charles Clore (and bearing his name), was eventually to rise on the north side of Russell Square. It gave several floors of library space, with working areas for visiting scholars, and also housed the British Institute of International and Comparative Law. For academic lawyers from all over Great Britain and from many overseas countries, Charles Clore House is their London base. It houses many specialist seminars, many of the postgraduate

classes for the University of London LLM, and many conferences. The University of London extended Anderson's tenure of directorship by one year so that he could not only complete the move into the new building but be in office at the time of its official opening by the Queen Mother as Chancellor of the University. It is entirely appropriate that in the handsome Council chamber hangs a portrait of Norman Anderson in his Cambridge LLD robes.

A reproduction of that same portrait hangs in the Church House in Dean's Yard. It marks another major sphere of Anderson's life: his service in the central councils of the Church of England.

Until 1970, the Church's central government was divided between the clerical Convocations of Canterbury and York and the National Assembly of the Church of England (more usually known as the Church Assembly) in which the laity joined the bishops and the elected proctors for the clergy. Anderson was elected a lay representative in the Assembly, initially for Rochester diocese and from 1965 for the diocese of London. He became recognised as a leader of the Evangelical group, but as someone who was always willing to seek a full understanding of others' positions.

So, he played an important part in working, with Anglo-Catholics, on controversial issues such as prayers for the dead. Within the Evangelical constituency, he made a powerful contribution to the National Evangelical Assembly at Keele in 1967. His address, subsequently printed under the title *Into the World*, was a call to his fellow Evangelicals to take a much keener interest in social issues than had been the case in recent decades.

In 1970, the year in which Anderson was elected a Fellow of the British Academy, the Church acquired a new system of 'synodical government', with the General Synod taking over most of the functions of the Convocations and the Church Assembly. Anderson was elected Chairman of the House of Laity, to his surprise since Oswald Clark, a leading High Churchman and Anderson's eventual successor in office, was widely regarded as the front-runner. The office carried with it *ex officio* membership of all the major central committees of the Church, and Anderson's skills were greatly used and admired. He was a natural choice to be one of the English representatives on another new body,

the Anglican Consultative Council, which draws together leaders from all the member churches of the Anglican Communion.

His most notable achievement in the General Synod was in the matter of the appointment of bishops. Since the time of the Reformation, bishops of the Church of England have been appointed by the Crown exercising a power of nominating the sole candidate for formal election by the Greater Chapter of the cathedral church of the relevant diocese. A process of consultation had developed, Downing Street consulting the archbishops and many others, but there were insistent calls that the Church alone should have the decisive voice in the choice of its leaders. It was a matter which, badly handled, could have put an intolerable strain on the constitutional Establishment of the Church.

Anderson played a leading part in securing a satisfactory outcome. He negotiated with Prime Ministers Wilson and Callaghan and with the leaders of the other main parties, and secured agreement, with the State and in the General Synod, to the establishment of a Crown Appointments Commission. The choice of future archbishops and bishops was limited to the names submitted by this (Church) body; so the Church gained, if not *the* decisive voice, at least *a* decisive voice. The new system came into operation in 1977, two years before Anderson retired from Church office.

Throughout his years in the General Synod he was to be seen sitting bolt upright in his front-bench seat to the left of the Chair. His office gave him an almost automatic right to speak in debate whenever he wished but he resisted the temptation to speak too often. When he did speak it was in a direct style, unfussy and often drawing directly on his personal experience or professional expertise. Despite his deep knowledge of Islam, he always opposed the handing over of redundant Christian buildings for use by other faiths, and he was anxious lest respect for the cultural and religious traditions of immigrant groups should lead to too easy an acceptance of institutions such as polygamy. He prided himself on never having made a 'party' speech. He was, oddly, not always a great success as a chairman of meetings, where he could be uneasy in large gatherings and over-forceful in smaller groups, but the genuine warmth of the tributes when he relinquished office was clear evidence of the affection in which he was held.

No memoir of Norman Anderson would be complete which did not refer to the pain he and his wife had to bear in the death of all three of their children.

Hugh, their only son, read History at Trinity College, Cambridge. Unlike his father, he greatly enjoyed Union debates and at the end of his first year was elected Secretary. The cancer which was to prove fatal prevented his then serving in that office, but in 1968 he was to fill three of the Union's offices, emerging as President in Michaelmas Term of that year. His abilities pointed to a brilliant public career, but he died in August 1970. A memorial appeal was launched by a group of remarkable distinction, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Prime Minister, and Lord Butler. Norman Anderson had been booked to give a five-minute religious radio talk in the week following that of his son's death. He gave a moving account of his feelings, delivered with that directness which characterised much of his Christian testimony.

There was worse to come. In 1975, Anderson was perhaps close to the peak of his career. He had received many honours: an honorary Doctorate of Divinity from the University of St Andrews on the installation in 1974 of Lord Ballantrae as Chancellor; the award of 'silk'; and in the New Year Honours List for 1975 a knighthood for his services to the Church (though it could equally have been for his work for legal education). In July of that year, within three weeks of one another, the Andersons' daughters, Hazel and Janet, died suddenly and without warning. Anderson was able to draw deeply on his reserves of faith, and the support of his friends; but it was a cruel time.

Increasingly, Anderson's writing was on religious rather than purely legal topics. He had been much in demand as a speaker to Christian groups, but was scrupulous in keeping a distinction between that activity and his professional work.

It was something of a relief to him when he began to receive invitations from universities to deliver theological lectures; he did not have to treat them as 'extra-curricular activities'. One of the first such came from Trent University, Ontario. The resulting lectures were published in 1969 as *Christianity: The Witness of History—A Lawyer's Approach*. Anderson returned to the theme he had addressed repeatedly,

the proper assessment of the evidence about Jesus Christ. It may be doubted whether a lawyer, despite his familiarity with some concepts of 'evidence', has any particular skills in dealing with historical material, and this book had a mixed reception. Its approach was much influenced by that of C. F. D. Moule's *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* which had appeared a couple of years earlier, but, as a Jesuit reviewer observed, 'Anderson reads the New Testament literally, . . . from the dogmatic view point of a believer' (Quesnell in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*).

In 1972 Anderson travelled to Saskatchewan to give the Bishop John McLean lectures, an extended version of which was published in the following year under the title *A Lawyer among the Theologians* (London, 1973). It covers some familiar ground, for example as to the historicity of the Resurrection, but there is a strong theme of criticism of Bultmann in arguing that what we have evidence for is *belief* in the Resurrection rather than the event itself and of Bishop John Robinson's view that to be a Christian is neither more nor less than to be authentically human.

Anderson's interest in social issues, plain from his work at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies and his role at the Keele Assembly, was to become prominent in the 1970s. He was, for example, a member of Lord Longford's group on pornography, and at the end of the decade was one of a group which helped prepare a Church response to a Law Commission paper on blasphemy.

In 1971, Anderson gave the Forwood Lectures on the Philosophy and History of Religion at Liverpool University. He chose the subject *Morality, Law and Grace* (London, 1972). Much of the text is taken up with a criticism of the 'permissive society', with 'situational ethics' contrasted with 'principled ethics'. The supremacy of biblical morality is stressed, with some commentary on the Hart-Devlin debate and a short passage on morality and law in other faiths, a subject Anderson was to return to in a more scholarly fashion some eight years later.

He reviewed some of the current social issues in the 1975 London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity, published in 1977 as *Issues of Life and Death* (London). His stance was that in considering issues such as genetic engineering, abortion and euthanasia, the biblical revelation must be wholeheartedly accepted as authoritative, with Christian tradition accorded a notably lower standing. It was an approach which might be thought to overstate the clarity of the biblical material as applied to such issues, and to undervalue centuries of Christian thought; and

indeed Anderson himself avoids too literal an interpretation of the scriptural texts and devotes a good deal of space to the developing teaching of, for example, successive Lambeth Conferences.

The 1978 Bishop John Prideaux lectures at Exeter University saw Anderson addressing *The Mystery of the Incarnation* (Exeter, 1978). Much of the resulting book is taken up with a critical discussion of writings, such as some of the essays published as *The Myth of God Incarnate*, which took a radical position in the Christological debate. While his book was welcomed as a clear account of the history of that debate, and for stressing the links between christology and soteriology, professional theologians were unimpressed by Anderson's defence of the traditional position. He failed to deal adequately with modern sociological and psychological understandings of the human condition, and so produced no answer to the difficulties of what seemed to remain a docetist position (see in particular Frances Young in *Theology*, 82, 302–4). As a writer in *The Expository Times* (vol. 90, p. 129) concluded, 'In the end devotion has triumphed over reason and [Anderson] has produced a Christ who is less than fully human'.

His last major theological work was *God's Law and God's Love* (London, 1980). Based on the Henry Drummond lectures in Stirling, this drew more fully than any other of his books on Anderson's knowledge of Islam, and indeed of other faiths. It looks at understandings of law in Judaism, Islam, and in the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, and at the problems of suffering and evil. Thereafter he published a study of *The Teaching of Jesus* (1983), largely an updated treatment of themes familiar in his early books, and some theological interludes which sit rather awkwardly in his autobiography, *An Adopted Son: The Story of my Life* (Leicester, 1985). The title of that, his last book, is a reference to Romans 8:15, not to his own personal origins.

Like many of his books, *God's Law and God's Love* demonstrates the breadth of his reading, with over 110 authors cited or quoted. In *A Lawyer among the Theologians*, Anderson apologises for the superabundance of quotations from the writings of theologians and biblical scholars which make up so many of his pages:

These quotations may, admittedly, be regarded as highly selective, and are not nearly so wide-ranging as I should wish. [Over 110 authors are cited.] But I have never, unhappily, learnt to read at more than a snail's pace; so the demands of a busy life inevitably preclude me from reading very widely in a discipline which is not my own. I only wish I had time to deal with the subject more adequately.

The modesty was surely unaffected, but it did remain true that the greater part of Anderson's written output was outwith his academic discipline. He had a sure touch in presenting the heart of an argument, and his writing, like his speaking, has a directness which can be very moving. He never claimed to be an academic theologian, rather to be a faithful defender of the Gospel; he remained in that sense a missionary throughout his life.

Anderson was always at home in Cambridge, and it was natural that he should return there in retirement. His wife's health deteriorated sharply, and he cared for her with simple devotion. They returned to the congregation of the Round Church, which latterly used the larger premises of the Cambridge Union next door before moving again to St Andrew the Great. As those who attended Anderson's funeral realised, the style of worship, which had been classical Low Church, came to have only tenuous connections with the Anglican liturgical tradition.

Owen Chadwick, a near neighbour, and from a rather different strand in Anglicanism, records that he never saw Norman Anderson 'other than wise, sane, solid, balanced, in a way that was rather extraordinary in someone who professed an emotional and in some ways extreme form of Christian faith'. That faith, and a lively sense of assurance in the risen life, sustained him to the end.

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