

READING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN AUSTRALIA:  
AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT, AND INFLUENCE OF  
D. W. B. ROBINSON'S BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP

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## Abbreviations

<i>AAPB</i>	<i>An Australian Prayer Book</i>
ACA	Anglican Church of Australia
<i>ACR</i>	<i>Australian Church Record</i>
AFES	Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students
BCP	Book of Common Prayer
CESA	Church of England in South Africa
CICCU	Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union
EFAC	Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion
IVF	Inter-Varsity Fellowship
MOW	Movement for the Ordination of Women
MTC	Moore Theological College
NT	New Testament
NBD	New Bible Dictionary
NEAC	National Evangelical Anglican Congress
NSW	New South Wales
NPP	The New Perspective on Paul
OT	Old Testament
REPA	Reformed Evangelical Protestant Association
<i>SMH</i>	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
SUEU	Sydney University Evangelical Union
VFG	Vision for Growth



## Synopsis

This thesis explores the origins, development, and influence of the thought of Australian scholar and churchman D. W. B. Robinson (1922–). Much of the historiography in which Robinson appears has struggled to account for the complexity of his ideas. He is sometimes presented as a straight-forward conservative, committed to prohibiting modern developments such as the ordination of women. On the other hand, those who knew his New Testament work are more likely to see him as a radical—someone whose original insights into the scriptures suggested new and innovative patterns of church and ministry. The complexities of grasping Robinson are further shaped by a career in two distinct halves: first as a scholar (1947–1972) and secondly as a bishop (1973–1993).

I will argue that Robinson’s scholarly work was the product of a synthesis between three main sources: classical evangelicalism, engagement with leading post-war biblical scholars at Cambridge, and a deep grasp of the Anglican liturgical inheritance, understood by Robinson as the tradition of Reformed Catholicism. It was these three strands, allowed to flourish and develop in the particular conditions of post-war Sydney, that shaped his distinctive approach to scripture—an approach at once radical and conservative. When a comprehensive account of Robinson’s thought is established, many of the tensions between scholar and bishop are relieved, and a more integrated picture emerges.

The thesis concludes by demonstrating that Donald Robinson’s scholarship has exerted a profound influence on the way scripture is read, taught, preached, and studied by Sydney Anglicans and more widely. I will contend that, alongside D. B. Knox, the approach of D. W. B. Robinson to scripture has been the essential shaping influence on modern Sydney Anglican theology, decisively contributing to a complex and dynamic theological tradition.

## Statement by the Candidate

I certify that this thesis entitled:

*Reading the New Testament in Australia: An Historical Account of the Origins, Development, and Influence of D. W. B. Robinson's Biblical Scholarship*

and submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is the result of my own research, except as otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis or any part of the same has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other institution.

Ethics Committee approval has been granted for this research project, Reference number 5201200711.

Number of words: 89,931

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a series of loops and a final vertical stroke.

Date: 11 December 2017

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Rory J. W. Shiner

Feast of the Epiphany of Christ to the Gentiles, 2017.

Dedicated to Susan, Miles, Theo, Oscar, and Baxter.  
My joy and my delight

# 1. Introduction

*'I'll get you to the moon, I just can't promise to get you home again.'*

*Donald Robinson to his exegesis students at Moore College.*

Australia's theological ecosystem, like its botanical counterpart, has grown up in relative isolation, allowing for the flourishing of both innovative and idiosyncratic traditions. One of the most impressive and intriguing products of this distinctive theological environment has been the scholarship of the evangelical Anglican churchman, Archbishop Donald William Bradley Robinson.<sup>1</sup>

Robinson's contribution to interpreting the NT was original, productive, and prescient. It was original in suggesting daring solutions to exegetical puzzles and novel routes through theological impasses. He taught, for example, that 'the saints' was a technical term for Jewish Christians, that the church *qua* church has no role in evangelism, and that the NT canon was, in principle, open to revision. It was productive in that Robinson's work was valued by another generation of biblical scholars and preachers who developed his ideas and in many cases brought them to a wider audience. And it was prescient in that many of Robinson's interests and lines of enquiry turned out to be early contributions to large-scale debates within the biblical studies guild. The New Perspective on Paul, the subjective genitive of *πίστεως Χριστοῦ*,<sup>2</sup> the place of 'Israel' in the New Testament, biblical theology, ecclesiology, and a narrative approach to biblical studies are just some of the areas in which Robinson's work was ahead of its time.

Much of this work, however, was done in the Australian context through minor journals and denominational publications. Like his teacher, C. F. D. Moule, Robinson's own influence has been felt mostly through the work of his students rather than via his own writing. It has been through scholars such as Graeme Goldsworthy, Paul Barnett, Peter O'Brien, William Dumbrell, Bruce Winter, David Peterson, and Bruce Kaye that Robinson's work has had its most conspicuous influence in the academy. Robinson's story would be worth telling if for no other reason than to provide some of the context for the extraordinary output of Australian biblical scholarship in the last five decades.

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<sup>1</sup> Robinson himself saw the isolation of Sydney as a shaping influence on his theological development. See Donald Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions', in *Interpreting God's Plan: Biblical Theology & the Pastor* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 1–17. Other secondary sources that note the relevance of Sydney's isolation for Robinson's development include William Dumbrell, 'An Appreciation of the Theological Work of Archbishop Donald Robinson', in *In the Fullness of Time: Biblical Studies in Honour of Archbishop Donald Robinson*, ed. David Peterson and John Pryor (Sydney: Lancer Books, 1992), xvii–xxxviii; Paul Barnett, 'Mark: Story and History', in Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*, 29; Mark Thompson, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', in *Donald Robinson Selected Works: Appreciation*, ed. Peter G. Bolt and Mark D. Thompson (Camperdown: Australian Church Record, 2008), 5.

<sup>2</sup> 'The faith of/in Christ.' The debate is on whether the 'faith' in that phrase refers to the faith believers are to have in Christ, or whether it is a reference to the faith which Christ himself possesses.

## 1.1. D. W. B. Robinson and Australian Historiography

Why write a thesis focussed on Archbishop Robinson's biblical scholarship?

If Donald Robinson had made no contribution to NT scholarship, he would still be a figure of interest for Australian historiography: involved in active service in World War II, a student at Sydney University during one of that institution's most fertile and remarkable phases, a leader in the influential Sydney University Evangelical Union (SUEU), a long-serving lecturer and Vice-Principal at Moore College, Bishop in Parramatta during a period of great suburban expansion, and Archbishop of Sydney from 1982 to 1993, in which time he was, among other things, a key participant in the historic debate over the ordination of women. A biography focussed on Robinson's various leadership roles apart from his biblical scholarship would be a coherent historical project. Such a biography does not yet exist, though Robinson's role as a senior churchman has appeared in various historiographical contexts, including histories of Christianity in Australia,<sup>3</sup> specific historical treatments of the Anglican Church in Australia,<sup>4</sup> accounts of the history of the ordination of women in Australia,<sup>5</sup> and several biographical sketches.<sup>6</sup>

However, despite holding senior office and participating in historic debates, the literature on Robinson consistently gives disproportionate attention to his contribution as a scholar of the NT. Though his publishing record was modest, and despite having spent at least as much of his career away from academia as he did within it, it is Robinson the exegete and biblical theologian who continues to emerge from the existing biographical accounts. There have been two *Festschriften* (the second interacting directly with Robinson's work), two volumes of *Selected Works*,<sup>8</sup> a volume from Graeme Goldsworthy largely given over to Robinson's influence on his

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<sup>3</sup> See for example, Ian Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 207–208; Stuart Piggins, *Spirit, Word and World: Evangelical Christianity in Australia*, (Melbourne: Acorn Press, 2012), Kindle edition, chap 9.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Stephen Judd and Kenneth Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, (Sydney: Mountain Street Media, 2014), Kindle edition; Michael P. Jensen, *Sydney Anglicanism: An Apology*, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012), Kindle edition; Marcia Cameron, *Phenomenal Sydney: Anglicans in a Time of Change, 1945 - 2013* (Eugene.: Wipf & Stock, 2016); Bruce Ballantine-Jones, *Inside Sydney: An Insider's View of the Changes and Politics in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, 1966-2013* (Sydney: BBJ, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Elaine Lindsay and Janet Scarfe, eds., *Preachers, Prophets & Heretics: Anglican Women's Ministry* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Donald Cameron, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', xi–xvi; Dumbrell, 'An Appreciation of the Theological Work of Archbishop Donald Robinson', xvii–xxxviii; Thompson, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', 3–7; Rory Shiner, 'An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson's New Testament Theology', in *Appreciation*, 9–62; Andrew Judd, 'When Grandpa Met the Queen', *The Anglican Historical Society Journal, Diocese of Sydney* 58 (2013): 32–40.

<sup>7</sup> Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*; Bolt and Thompson, *Appreciation*.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Robinson, *Donald Robinson, Selected Works*, eds. Peter G. Bolt and Mark D. Thompson, Vol. 1, *Assembling God's People* (Camperdown: Australian Church Record, 2008); Donald Robinson, *Donald Robinson, Selected Works*, eds. Peter G. Bolt and Mark D. Thompson, Vol. 2, *Preaching God's Word* (Camperdown: Australian Church Record, 2008).



work,<sup>9</sup> two preliminary accounts of his NT scholarship,<sup>10</sup> and several postgraduate theses which have included substantial interaction with Robinson's NT scholarship.<sup>11</sup> The impression formed by such literature, and confirmed in over 20 interviews conducted for this project with his students and colleagues, is that Robinson's approach to the NT was of profound significance to many who encountered it. The remembered Robinson is very much the scholarly Robinson.

The originality and influence of his biblical thought are well documented.<sup>12</sup> What the current research lacks is a full, detailed, and persuasive account of *why* Robinson's scholarship had the effect it did. What was it about his approach to the NT that so impressed people? From where did his approach and ideas come? Who influenced and shaped him? How were his ideas, which were so often radical and original, allowed and encouraged to flourish in the very conservative evangelical milieu in which he operated? How did the project of reading the NT in Australia shape that exercise? Did his ideas develop over time? Where can their influence be seen most clearly today? What light might a study of Robinson's thought cast on the shape of modern Sydney Anglicanism? Or on evangelicalism more broadly? A comprehensive historical and intellectual account of the origins, development, and influence of Robinson's biblical ideas does not exist. My purpose in this thesis is to address this gap. First, it will provide an account of the origins of Robinson's approach to the NT. Second, it will trace the development of his ideas over time. And third, it will comprehend how his legacy has shaped the work of particular scholars and how it has more generally influenced the project of reading the NT in Australia.

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<sup>9</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Nottingham: IVP, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Dumbrell, 'An Appreciation of the Theological Work of Archbishop Donald Robinson', xvii-xxxviii; Shiner, 'An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson's New Testament Theology', 62.

<sup>11</sup> See Trevor Edwards, 'Developments in the Evangelical Anglican Doctrine of the Church in the Diocese of Sydney, 1935-1985, with Special Reference to the Writing and Teaching of T. C. Hammond, D. W. Robinson and D. B. Knox' (Master of Theology Long Essay, University of Sydney, 1996); Andrew Reid, 'Evangelical Hermeneutics and Old Testament Preaching: A Critical Analysis of Graeme Goldsworthy's Theory and Practice' (Doctor of Theology thesis, Australian College of Theology, 2011); Chase R. Kuhn, 'The Ecclesiology of Donald Robinson & David Broughton Knox: A Presentation, Analysis and Theological Evaluation of Their Thought on the Nature of the Church' (PhD Thesis, University of Western Sydney, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> For comments on Robinson's originality and influence see Cameron, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', xi-xvi; John Pryor, 'Jesus as Lord: A Neglected Factor in Johannine Christology', in Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*, 57; Anthony Nichols, 'The Fate of "Israel" in Recent Versions of the Bible', *ibid*, 111; Allan Chapple, 'The Lord Is Near (Phil 4:5b)', *ibid*, 161; Shiner, 'An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson's New Testament Theology', 9; Martin Pakula, 'A Biblical Theology of Israel in the New Testament', in Bolt and Thompson, *Appreciation*, 105; Thompson, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', 5; Robert Doyle, 'Suppressed Truth: Donald Robinson's Contribution to Understanding Baptism', in Bolt and Thompson, *Appreciation*, 218; Jeff Read, '"That You May Not Be Conceited"', *ibid*, 123; George Athas, 'Reflections on Scripture Using the Distinction Between Jews and Gentiles as an Exegetical Key', *ibid*, 143.

## 1.2. *Origins, Development, and Influence*

### 1.2.1. *Origins*

Readers of Robinson's work are immediately impressed by its originality. How does one account for this feature of his work? What streams contributed to his distinctive approach? How was it that such ideas could be explored in a theological environment as conservative as Robinson's proved to be?

I will argue in chapter 2 that the distinctive nature of Robinson's reading of the NT originated in the synthesis of three major streams: Anglicanism, evangelicalism, and the Cambridge tradition of New Testament scholarship. It was principally these three streams, in a fertile mind, that account for the origins of Robinson's thought. However, these alone would not account for originality—after all, 'Anglican', 'evangelical', and 'Cambridge' are hardly a unique trifecta. They need to be further defined.

Robinson's Anglicanism was conditioned by its Protestant and low-church Sydney expression. It was an Anglicanism deeply informed by the liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer* and by the doctrinal expression of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. Indeed, for someone who by his own frequent admission was little read in Reformation theology, I will argue it was the Anglican liturgy itself, with which he was deeply and creatively engaged from 1962 to 1978, that shaped much of his dogmatic theology. His own engagement with the production of *An Australian Prayer Book* (*AAPB*) has been, until recently, somewhat hidden from historical view, resulting in a distorted account of Robinson more generally.<sup>13</sup> Whilst Robinson was certainly a son of the diocese, he was a son of Anglicanism in a wider sense, and not least in its liturgical traditions.

Likewise, Robinson's evangelicalism will be more precisely located in the conservative evangelicalism represented institutionally by the Sydney University Evangelical Union (SUEU), the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU) and its umbrella organisation, the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). It was that branch of evangelicalism associated with the renaissance of evangelical scholarship represented by institutions such as Tyndale House in Cambridge and Wycliffe Hall in Oxford—a movement that self-consciously rejected an anti-intellectual future in order to embrace scholarship, learning, and a principled engagement with the wider church. It was an Anglican evangelicalism, represented by the Keele Congress of 1967, which rejected the more separatist possibilities then being raised by non-

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<sup>13</sup> Andrew Judd's recent essay has served to fill this gap. See Andrew Judd, 'Donald Robinson and the Imperfect Unity of An Australian Prayer Book', *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review*, 2, 6 (2013): 113–44.

conformists like Martyn Lloyd-Jones.<sup>14</sup> It was a British and what I will refer to as a ‘commonwealth evangelicalism’, more shaped by the CICCUs historic stance for the substitutionary and penal nature of the atonement than it was by the ‘Battle for the Bible’ and the inerrancy debates which so shaped American evangelicalism. And it was a non-charismatic evangelicalism, one that had become wary of the Keswick spirituality and rejected outright the Christian Perfectionism of the first half of the twentieth century, and would come also to reject the charismatic renewal and neo-Pentecostalism of the second half.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, there is Robinson’s connection with Cambridge. For him, studies at the University in the 1940s embedded his own sense of belonging to the Cambridge tradition of New Testament scholarship represented by Westcott, Lightfoot, and Hort. It would be shaped by particular teachers such as C. F. D. Moule and C. H. Dodd, both of whom held convictions at odds with mainstream evangelicalism. Indeed C. H. Dodd’s presence in evangelical historiography is often seen as the liberal counterpart to Leon Morris’s argument for the propitiatory nature of Christ’s atonement in the New Testament.<sup>16</sup> However, for Robinson, Dodd was an almost wholly positive and creative figure, suggesting lines of investigation on which Robinson would build and occasionally develop in even more radical directions. Many of the more daring features of Robinson’s proposals can be traced back to the warm reception his mind gave to figures like Dodd whilst at Cambridge. At a time when many British Anglican evangelicals went to Cambridge in spite of figures like Dodd, Robinson went because of them.

It is these three traditions, so defined, that do much to account for the origins and nature of Robinson’s approach. However, as I will stress, it is not simply those three traditions alone, but those traditions as they developed in the isolated circumstances and historical particularities of the Australian and especially, Sydney Anglican environment.<sup>17</sup>

### **1.2.2. Development**

Robinson was not given to radical changes of mind once his position had been established. Just as loyalty was a feature of his personal and church life, Robinson remained loyal to ideas and themes in his NT work throughout his career. Many of the convictions he picked up in the 1940s and early 1950s—on issues such as the place of Israel in the NT, the nature of the canon, and the New Testament’s teaching on ἐκκλησία, would remain constants. To look at his work

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<sup>14</sup> For an account of the Keele Congress and its significance, see Andrew Atherstone, ‘The Keele Congress of 1967: A Paradigm Shift in Anglican Evangelical Attitudes,’ *Journal of Anglican Studies* 9, no. 2 (2011): 175–97.

<sup>15</sup> For use of the term ‘neo-Pentecostalism’ see section 5.2.1 of this thesis.

<sup>16</sup> See esp. chap. 6 and 7 of Neil Bach, *Leon Morris: One Man’s Fight For Love And Truth*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2016), Kindle edition.

<sup>17</sup> Robinson himself was acutely aware of the isolation of Australia from the wider theological discourse and of that isolation being a factor in the way his work developed. See comments in Robinson, ‘Origins and Unresolved Tensions’, 1.

chronologically is often to see synthesis and expansion of these ideas but rarely major revision or abandonment.

What is notable, however, is the historical situation in which these ideas were developed. On the church scene, the 1950s and early 1960s saw the Church of England in Australia hammering out its Constitution, whilst the 1960s and 1970s saw the Roman Catholic Church grapple with Vatican II, while Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches worked toward becoming the Uniting Church in Australia in 1977. Theologically, dispensationalism was still a significant influence on the evangelical scene.<sup>18</sup> The ‘Sinless Perfectionists’ at the (SUEU), a hyper-holiness movement, forced a generation of students to grapple with the doctrines of sanctification. And, in the 1970s, the rise of neo-Pentecostalism would stimulate an evangelical response. These were all challenges against which Robinson’s own thinking was shaped and formed.<sup>19</sup>

Then, as Archbishop in the 1980s the debate over the ordination of women, engagements with the Jewish community, and struggles with a younger generation of clergy eager to throw off the shackles of traditional Anglican forms in order to reach the lost, exercised his thinking and writing. On a broader historical backdrop, Robinson’s career happened to span the period from the post-war evangelical renaissance, through the religious boom years of the 1950s, and then across the extraordinary challenge of ‘the long 1960s’ in which modern Australia began rapidly and dramatically abandoning its ancestral religion. It is easy to assume a figure like Robinson was something of a non-combatant in the Battle for Relevance of Australian churches from the 1960s on. I will argue, however, that Robinson’s own work can and should be assessed as, in its own way, a subtle response to the challenges of secularisation and the question of Christianity’s continued place or otherwise in Australian society. This was the context in which Robinson was forced (with greater or lesser degrees of success) to attempt to bring his scholarly opinions to bear on the actual life and decisions of Christian believers in Australia in the twentieth century.

### **1.2.3. Influence**

In chapters 9 and 10, I will assess the influence of Donald Robinson’s work. I will do so in three main areas: First, I will explore ‘the remembered Robinson’, analysing the testimony of those who knew him and had something explicit to say about his influence. Secondly, I will go through

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<sup>18</sup> Dispensationalism is the understanding that God has acted in different dispensations toward humanity over time. As a system, it divides salvation history into different epochs or dispensations, understanding us currently to be in the Age of the Church, with the Age of a Restored Israel still to come. It is associated with the Scofield Reference Bible and has held significant influence in various evangelical and fundamentalist circles to this day. It will be discussed in more detail as it is relevant to Donald Robinson’s work in chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>19</sup> The Sinless Perfection movement will be discussed in the next chapter. Neo-Pentecostalism and Robinson’s response is explored in chapter 5.

the major themes of Robinson's scholarship, exploring where their influence can be felt in both Church and Academy. Thirdly, I will ask the more precarious but no less important question, namely: to what extent can the distinctive approach of Sydney Anglicans to the Bible at the scholarly, homiletic, and devotional level, be traced back to Robinson? I will conclude in chapter 10 by asking the more evaluative question: What did Donald Robinson achieve?

### **1.3. Method and Approach**

The approach of this thesis, while concerned with the New Testament scholarship of Robinson, will be historical and biographical in form. It is essentially an intellectual biography and a contribution to the history of ideas. It will trace Robinson's development chronologically through five major periods of his life: Formation (1922-1951), Early Scholarship (1952-1960), Development (1960-1972), Bishop and Scholar (1973-1981), Archbishop of Sydney (1982-1993), and his Post-Episcopate years (1993-). Across Robinson's corpus his major interests were sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper), church, the Bible (canon, apostleship, inspiration, and inerrancy), biblical theology, eschatology, and 'Israel' in the NT. The proposed periodisation allows for study of the chronological questions: when did he adopt his ideas and under what circumstances? Consideration of major interest areas allows for the study of diachronic and synthetic questions: how did he develop his ideas and to what extent did they form a whole? His work on liturgy will be considered within its own section in chapter 5, coinciding with the publication of *An Australian Prayer Book* (AAPB) in 1978. Of course, any such categorisations are always heuristic and provisional, and throughout this study I will recognise that work in one area has a bearing on work in another.

This approach is historical and biographical in shape, whilst thematic and synthetic in assessing ideas. This is justified because of the nature of the questions being pursued. It is only by tracing the development of Robinson's NT scholarship chronologically and in its historical context that the issues of origins, development, and influence can be properly addressed. And it is only by allowing the themes to collect material together that we can form a fair and sympathetic vision of Robinson's overall project.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Theoretically, this thesis could be seen as an attempt at the sort of sympathetic intellectual history advocated by the 'Cambridge School' associated with Quentin Skinner, and applied powerfully to religious intellectual history by historians such as Alister Chapman, John Coffey and Brad S. Gregory. For discussion see Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad S. Gregory, eds., *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2009).

## **1.4. Sources**

There are five main sources for this thesis: Robinson's published scholarship, his unpublished scholarship, archival material related to his thought, interviews conducted by myself and others with relevant persons, and secondary sources shedding light on the historical and religious context in which Robinson operated. The primary sources of Robinson's writing are the backbone; the interviews and secondary sources provide the flesh and blood.

## **1.5. Conclusion**

As the Customs Department is quick to remind anyone flying into Australia, an isolated ecosystem is highly vulnerable to exotic imports overwhelming the delicately balanced local systems.

Low cost travel, modern communications, international conferences, and the cultural turning of Australia to the United States of America have all conspired largely to end the isolation of the Australian theological scene. This of course is a welcome development as new ideas are introduced and provincial eccentricities ironed out.

However, as with any delicate ecosystem, such a move comes at the cost of losing local species to more virulent imported forms. Perhaps as an attempt at theological conservation I offer this thesis in homage to a distinct set of biblical and theological possibilities offered by the work of D. W. B. Robinson.

## **2. Formation: 1922–1951**

### **From Son of the Diocese to Cambridge Scholar**

In 2002, Donald Robinson gave his last lecture to students at Moore College. That lecture was to mark exactly five decades of association with the College, and fifty years of almost continuous teaching in that institution.<sup>21</sup> Remarkably, when Robinson arrived on the faculty of the College at the age of 30, many of the theological and exegetical positions for which he was to become known were already formed in his mind. By 1952, this son of the diocese was also a minor player in the post-war evangelical resurgence<sup>22</sup> and a self-conscious bearer of the Cambridge New Testament tradition. These three crucial tributaries—Anglican, evangelical, and Cambridge scholarship—had now met in Robinson’s mind. Moore College was to be the theatre in which they played out their productive alliance. This chapter will trace the sources of the three tributaries that were to shape the teaching and scholarship of the man who, in 1952, was to begin his teaching career as a senior lecturer.

#### **2.1. *Robinson In Context, 1922-1950***

Donald William Bradley Robinson was born in Lithgow, NSW on 9 November 1922, into a devout Anglican home, the son of prominent Sydney Anglican clergyman R. B. Robinson. Richard Bradley Robinson had been converted under the ministry of D. J. Knox, the father of the influential Moore College principal D. B. Knox (1916-1994). The family moved from Lithgow to the inner-city Sydney suburb of Leichhardt in 1923 where they remained until moving to St Paul’s, Chatswood in 1933. In 1935, he began secondary school, first at North Sydney Boys High School before moving, with the aid of the Archbishop of Sydney’s Exhibition for sons of the clergy, to Shore (the Sydney Church of England Grammar School), a prominent private school on Sydney’s North Shore. He studied Greek at both schools. At Sydney University he studied Arts (Latin, English, and Greek).

His student days were interrupted by war service mainly in Brisbane and Papua New Guinea. Though originally with the Artillery in Newcastle, he was recommended by his Greek professor to the Central Bureau of Military Intelligence to work with the code-breakers in Brisbane. His role was as a ‘traffic analyst’ which he described as ‘studying everything about the

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<sup>21</sup> The only time Robinson didn’t teach at the College was in the 1980s when he was Archbishop of Sydney.

<sup>22</sup> I am here using Bebbington’s phrase ‘evangelical resurgence’ for the period of growth in the latter half of the twentieth century in Britain characterised (in the conservative evangelical case) by the Keele Congress (1967), the work of IVF and the scholarship around places such as Tyndale House. See David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 1989), 249–70.

message without being able to read it.<sup>23</sup> These abilities at pattern-recognition, already noted at Sydney University, would become critical to his approach to the NT.

He returned to Sydney University after the war to complete his studies. In 1946, he was elected President of the SUEU. In October of that year, he and the Vice-President of the SUEU, Marie Taubman, ‘mutually agreed’ to marry one another.<sup>24</sup> It was 4 October 1946 at 4 o’clock in the afternoon, on the lawn outside the University Tower.<sup>25</sup> They were formally engaged in December of that year, though the engagement would stretch over the best part of three years as Robinson set sail for Cambridge where he had been accepted at Queens’ College to read for the Theology Tripos.

Donald and Marie married back in Australia on 30 July 1949. He returned with her to Cambridge where Robinson completed his studies. They came back to Australia in 1950, with their son Martin who had been born in England. Donald was ordained a deacon in November 1950 by Archbishop Mowll, with Marcus Loane preaching. Martin was baptised in the same service. And so Donald’s service as an Anglican clergyman in the Diocese of Sydney began.

## **2.2. Anglican**

Robinson, as the son of a prominent rector, was born into the mainstream of Sydney Anglicanism. Robinson claimed his birthright with gusto, becoming an active participant in Sydney Anglicanism’s key institutions: its parishes, its schools, and its theological college.<sup>26</sup>

### **2.2.1. A Sydney Anglican**

By the time of Robinson’s childhood, the Anglican diocese of Sydney was established in an overwhelmingly conservative evangelical ethos. The quarter-century episcopate of Bishop Frederic Barker (1808–1882) had, from the mid 1850s, inserted a Simeonite-style evangelicalism into the theological DNA of the diocese.<sup>27</sup> Interactions with other Australian dioceses over a new Constitution in the 1920s and 1930s had served both to highlight and reinforce the differences between Sydney and the rest. This, coupled with fear at the rise of Anglo-Catholic influence in the Church in England, pushed Sydney into an increasingly isolationist position.<sup>28</sup> The election in 1933 of the prominent evangelical hero Howard Mowll, coupled with his appointment in 1936 of

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<sup>23</sup> Marcia Cameron, Interview 4 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 24 October 2006, 10.

<sup>24</sup> Marcia Cameron, Interview 3 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 10 February 2006, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> In his childhood and youth, D. W. B. Robinson was in the parishes of St Paul’s Lithgow (1922–23), All Souls, Leichhardt (1923–1933), and St Paul’s Chatswood (1933–1935).

<sup>27</sup> Marcia Cameron, Interview 4 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 24 October 2006, 10. ‘Simeonite’ is a reference to Charles Simeon (1759–1836), an evangelical clergyman and noted Cambridge University preacher.

<sup>28</sup> Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, chap. 13.



the brilliant and polemical Irishman T. C. Hammond (1877-1961) as principal of Moore College, ensured the shape of Sydney as a conservative evangelical diocese.<sup>29</sup>

In 1938 a group of 50 clergy, moderates unhappy with the apparent conservative evangelical take-over of the diocese, submitted a letter (known as ‘The Memorial’) to Archbishop Mowll. With T. C. Hammond’s advice, Mowll delayed, then replied with a sharp letter of his own, and then refused to see them until several questions were answered.<sup>30</sup> The situation ended in a stalemate, and the affair came to stand as a symbol of a diocese that had turned in a decisively conservative evangelical direction. Sydney was not to become a liberal evangelical, or even a coalition, but a conservative evangelical diocese.<sup>31</sup> According to Anglican theologian Bruce Kaye, this close alignment between college and diocese was (and is) unusual in the Anglican world.<sup>32</sup> Its power structures would serve to protect its conservative theology, as the Memorialists discovered.

It is crucial, however, to understand this ‘conservatism’ more precisely. Sydney’s mood might have been defensive and T. C. Hammond’s methodology in debate was certainly polemical. But it was far from anti-intellectual. Mapped onto wider debates in world evangelicalism, Hammond represented a theologically ‘centrist’ position, neither liberal nor fundamentalist. For example, in terms of a doctrine of Scripture, most fundamentalists advocated inerrancy and a dictation theory of scripture. Liberal evangelicals, on the other hand, rejected inerrancy and tended to locate ‘inspiration’ in the spiritual experience and power of scripture’s authors. Centrists, of whom Hammond was a prominent example, located ‘inspiration’ in the words of scripture itself but rejected inerrancy as necessarily a quality of scripture. Hammond believed that the alleged errors in scripture ‘scarcely dim its lustre and do not at all impair its life-giving quality’.<sup>33</sup> D. B. Knox and Donald Robinson would re-shape Sydney theology yet again in the 1950s and 1960s. Their vision, and especially their theological method, would be radically different from Hammond’s. But they would inherit from Hammond and share with him a non-fundamentalist evangelicalism. The point here is that, even under Hammond’s principalship, assumptions about the content of Sydney’s conservative theology can be misleading. It is only by grasping the nuances that a figure like Robinson makes sense. It was this Anglicanism—

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., chap. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce Kaye, ‘The Protestant Ascendancy: Anglicanism’, in *Creeds and Conflict: Doing Theology in Sydney 1916-2016* (Heretics Centenary Conference, Sydney, 2016), 3.

<sup>33</sup> T. C. Hammond, ‘The Fiat of Authority’, in *Evangelicalism*, ed. Howden, 183, quoted in Geoffrey R. Treloar, ‘The Word Disputed: The Crisis of Evangelical Biblicism in the 1920s and 1930s’, *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review*, 2, 7 (2014): 113. See also McIntosh’s description of Hammond as a ‘centrist Reformation Evangelical’, John McIntosh, ‘Anglican Evangelicalism in Sydney 1897–1953: The Thought and Influence of Three Moore College Principals: Nathaniel Jones, D. J. Davies and T. C. Hammond’ (PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, 2013), 467.

conservative, Protestant, isolated and pugnacious but also intellectually confident and theologically centrist—into which Robinson was born and which he was to embrace deeply as his own.

### **2.2.2. An Anglican in Sydney**

In locating Robinson as a Sydney Anglican, it is possible to overstate the distinctive nature of Sydney's Anglicanism. For all its exceptional features, the Anglican Church in which Robinson was formed was decidedly *Anglican*. While the legal links holding Australian Anglicans together were loose, the liturgical, cultural, and social bonds were relatively strong.<sup>34</sup> Certainly, in the period of Robinson's youth, common liturgical worship, a developed sacramental practice, and a British and quasi-establishment identity were all factors that united Anglicans across Australia. Until well into the 1960s, evangelicals saw themselves as Prayer Book people. To attend Sunday Evening Prayer would be to go to a service 'which was recognisably the same everywhere and churchgoing Anglicans usually knew the words by heart.'<sup>35</sup>

Robinson was profoundly shaped by this common liturgical inheritance, and he would in turn play a crucial role in shaping authorised liturgy for the Anglican Church of Australia in the 1960s and 1970s. The experience of Anglican worship in the 1920s and 1930s left an indelible impression on him, shaping a vision of what Sunday worship ought to be—a vision that surfaced many times in his scholarship and his episcopate, sometimes to the surprise, and even disappointment, of many who understood his NT work to imply a loosening of liturgical forms. Similarly, the developed sacramental theology of Anglicanism, even in its most deeply Protestant and low-church guise, gave Robinson a lifelong interest in the sacraments, both as a question of New Testament theology and as a churchman. Membership of the Anglican fraternity also brought Robinson into productive conversation with Anglo-Catholics such as biblical scholar Father Gabriel Hebert SSM and liturgist Brother Gilbert Sinden SSM—conversations that were to prove formative in Robinson's own thought. In these ways, Robinson's evangelicalism and his scholarship, both in terms of topics, approach, and conversation partners, were deeply conditioned by his Anglicanism.

If the experience of Sunday worship in Sydney in the 1920s and 1930s was not remarkable, at least in its liturgical content, the experience of the sermon was. Sydney Anglicanism was and is

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<sup>34</sup> David Hilliard, 'Diocese, Tribes and Factions: Disunity and Unity in Australian Anglicanism', in *Agendas for Australian Anglicanism: Essays in Honour of Bruce Kaye*, ed. Tom Frame and Geoffrey R. Treloar (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2006), 67.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

‘a sermonic society.’<sup>36</sup> If elsewhere the evangelical sermon in the first decades of the twentieth century ‘risked being reduced to little more than moralism or a form of counselling,’<sup>37</sup> this was not the case in Sydney. Rather, a high view of the Bible as the word of God meant that a ‘focus on preaching during the weekly time of public worship was already widespread in the parishes.’<sup>38</sup> The ‘expositional sermon’ as sustained teaching on a passage of scripture was yet to be the main diet. Robinson was rather raised on ‘the textual sermon.’ This is a form of sermon shaped by a single text of scripture. The text was expounded, and biblical, reformed, and evangelical truths were discovered and taught.<sup>39</sup> It was a style of preaching exemplified by Marcus Loane. It is no doubt the sort of preaching he would have heard from his own father, whom Loane described as ‘a clear preacher, not profound, but always on the level of his hearers.’<sup>40</sup>

Membership of the Anglican Church also marked Robinson out from other non-Anglican evangelicals of his generation in sociological ways. Despite beginning from a modest middle class background, as an Anglican from a clerical home, Robinson was positioned for an unbroken run through the identifiably establishment institutions of the Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore), Sydney University, and Cambridge University. Access to such institutions would have been unusual for many fellow evangelicals of non-conformist backgrounds.<sup>41</sup> At North Sydney Boys High and then Shore, Robinson was able to learn Greek (such a singular advantage to the student of theology).<sup>42</sup> At Sydney University, he sat under the tutelage of the noted linguist G. P. Shipp, and was able to develop the skills of linguistic analysis that were to prove so central to his work. Access to the tuition of Cambridge scholars (discussed below) would likewise prove crucial for his development. This sort of traffic between Anglicans and establishment educational institutions was not as common for evangelicals from traditions such as the Baptist or Congregational Churches.<sup>43</sup> This historically ensured that a thorough-going fundamentalism has

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<sup>36</sup> Stuart Piggins, ‘Sydney Episcopal Preaching: The Sermons of Four Australian Archbishops 1966–2013’ (Preaching Australia Conference: Religion, Public Conversation and the Sermon (19–20 September), St Mark’s National Theological Centre, Canberra, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Holt, ‘The Emergence of Expository Preaching in Sydney Anglican Churches’, *St Mark’s Review* 230 (2014): 76.

<sup>38</sup> Holt, ‘The Emergence of Expository Preaching’, 75.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid..

<sup>40</sup> Marcus Loane, *Mark These Men: A Brief Account of Some Evangelical Clergy in the Diocese of Sydney Who Were Associated with Howard Mowll* (Canberra: Acorn Press, 1985), 52.

<sup>41</sup> Robinson was only able to go the grammar school through the scholarship. The cost would be otherwise prohibitive. His advantages were more sociological than economic.

<sup>42</sup> Robinson himself noted in 1962, ‘The study of Greek and Hebrew is indispensable if independent judgement in exegesis is to be cultivated; but the capacity of a student to acquire or use these languages in the course of a given length will probably depend on the standard of language study he has reached at time of entry. A student with little or no language attainment will probably find two new languages more than he can assimilate ...’. Donald Robinson, ‘Colleges for Theological Knowledge’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 157.

<sup>43</sup> Chapman makes a similar point regarding John Stott. Stott was from a significantly more privileged background than Robinson, so the analogy is far from exact. But, in distinguishing English Anglican and American evangelicalism from each other, an important connection holds. Chapman says of Stott: ‘As significant as anything, however, was the fact that Stott was at Cambridge in the first place. In the United States, keen conservative

been less common for Anglican evangelicals in Australia or Britain. The contact with mainstream educational institutions and mainstream society has just been too strong.<sup>44</sup>

Being an Anglican meant that Robinson shared his tradition with a majority of the dominant figures in the coming post-war evangelical resurgence in Britain. But being an *Australian* Anglican also distinguished him from them in important ways. Whereas Anglican evangelicals in England such as John Stott (1921-2011) and J. I. Packer (1926-) were generally content to work within the existing structures to evangelical ends, the evangelical character of the Sydney diocese *as a whole* meant that figures like Robinson were engaged in the shaping, expression, and governance of the Anglican church itself. Whilst UK evangelicals were, on the whole, quietly engaged in parish and student ministry, and beginning to produce scholarly work, figures like Robinson were exercised by the production of a Constitution for the Anglican Church of Australia and by producing a revision of the Prayer Book in *An Australian Prayer Book*. Whilst UK evangelicals were working *in* the Church, figures like Donald Robinson were also working *on* the Church.

Sociologist James Davison Hunter, drawing on Italian social theorist Vilfredo Pareto, explains the dynamic of elites in terms of Foxes and Lions:

... elites were either foxes or lions. Foxes, as he [Pareto] put it, were those who innovated, experimented, and took risks. Lions, by contrast, were those who defended the status quo in the name of social stability. Foxes and lions were in tension over power. When lions were ascendant, foxes challenged their authority and would seek to infiltrate their ranks in order to replace them. Yet because it is difficult for foxes to maintain a

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Protestants were more likely to go to evangelical and fundamentalist institutions for both undergraduate and ministerial training ... For a public school education Anglican evangelical like Stott, however, the route to ordination lay through a place like Cambridge. Two things followed. The first was that intellectual isolation was impossible ... The second was that social isolation was impossible.' Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical Movement*, Reprint ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 24. Chapman goes on to argue that this dynamic in England as opposed to the USA meant that genuine fundamentalism was always unpopular with Anglican evangelicals in England (p. 24). I submit that precisely the same dynamic was at work with Australian Anglicans such as Robinson. For reflections on some of the differences between evangelicalism in the USA and UK, including the nature of the universities, see Mark A. Noll. *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship and the Bible in America*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 85-90.

<sup>44</sup> Robinson did accept the label 'fundamentalist' in relationship to the IVF doctrinal basis's claim that some truths are 'fundamental.' However, a close reading of the piece in which Robinson discusses this makes clear that Robinson was not a fundamentalist in the modern sense of the word. See pages 22-29 in Donald Robinson, 'What Shall We Do with the Bible?', in *Donald Robinson Selected Works II*, 42-52. For a classic discussion of the slippery word 'fundamentalism' see George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1-6. For a comparison of fundamentalism in the USA and the UK, see G. Marsden, 'Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon: A Comparison with English Evangelicalism,' *Church History* 46, no. 2 (1977): 215-32. In this thesis, the term 'fundamentalist' is used in a non-technical sense to refer to Christian movements whose basic posture to the wider society is isolationist and who in principle reject any engagement with critical scholarship.

stable social order, the lions would eventually replace them or—more interestingly, the foxes would become lions.<sup>45</sup>

English evangelicalism in the first half of the twentieth century required one to be a Fox; in the Anglican Church of Australia, it was always, at least in theory, possible to be a Lion. In Robinson's NT scholarship and in his efforts to influence church affairs through more partisan avenues such as *The Australian Church Record*, Robinson played the role of a Fox. But the situation in Australian Anglicanism meant that it was always possible to one day exert legitimate power on the Anglican Church rather than simply work within it. Toward the end of this study, we shall consider how much explanatory power there might be in understanding Robinson's career as a Fox who became a Lion.

### **2.2.3. Moore College**

For the years 1939-1943, the Robinson family lived at the Vice-Principal's house at Moore College, from where R. B. Robinson continued to fulfil the role of General Secretary of the Home Mission Society. Donald was 17 when the family moved to the inner-city suburb of Newtown, the location of both Sydney University and Moore College. Thus his early years at Sydney University coincided with a family home at Moore. According to Marcus Loane, their home was open and hospitable to students and faculty.<sup>46</sup> In this way Robinson, though never a student of the College, was to a significant degree shaped by its faculty and its students. Indeed, both through his father's role in the Home Mission Society, a role that saw him visit every parish in the diocese, and through the family's residence at Moore College, Robinson had early contact with many of the leading figures of the diocese and many of the stars of international evangelicalism: figures such as T. C. Hammond and Howard Mowll.

T. C. Hammond had come out from Ireland to be principal of Moore College in 1936 at the invitation of Archbishop Mowll. He remained in that role until 1953. Despite never being his student, Robinson had significant contact with Hammond from childhood through to being his curate at St Philip's Church at Church Hill, Sydney.<sup>47</sup> Hammond was well known for an outstanding mind shaped in the polemical context of the Protestant mission to Catholic Ireland.

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<sup>45</sup> James Davidson Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 'Essay 1: Christianity and World-Changing'. Kindle edition.

<sup>46</sup> Loane, *Mark These Men*, 50–51.

<sup>47</sup> Robinson recalls first meeting Hammond in 1926 when Robinson would have been three or four years old: 'Now T. C. stayed with us, I remember his visit well, I remember sitting on his knee while he sang, 'Down in the dumps I will not go, that's where the devil keeps me low, I'll sing with all my might and I'll keep my armour bright but down in the dumps I'll never go.' (Marcia Cameron, Interview 2 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 20 September 2006, 7). Later, when the family lived at Moore College in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Robinson would hear Hammond preach most Sundays in chapel before then going to St Barnabas' Broadway with his family. After returning from Cambridge, Robinson was Hammond's curate at St Philip's. For recollections of this time see Donald Robinson, 'Some Rectors and Recollections', in *The Parish of St Philip, Church Hill, Sydney: Three Bicentennial Lectures*, ed. Allan M. Blanch (Sydney: Anglican Church of Australia, 2003), 41–62.

He was regarded as probably the most distinguished conservative evangelical scholar of the Anglican world at the time.<sup>48</sup> Hammond's theological Idealism shaped the theological ethos of the diocese.<sup>49</sup> It was intellectual, robustly Protestant, and steeped in Reformation doctrine and history. The College itself was characterised by Lawton as 'a structured Anglican Evangelical College' rather than what would become in the 1960s 'a more broadly based Reformed College'.<sup>50</sup> The basic texts used by Hammond, W. H. Griffith Thomas's *The Principles of Theology* (1930) and later E. J. Bicknell's *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* (1940), tied students to a close examination of the Anglican Church's theological formularies, understood in their most Protestant terms.

In a period characterised by theological dispute and crisis in the wider evangelical world, T. C. Hammond's influence in Sydney kept Sydney Anglicans in a conservative but theologically centrist position within evangelicalism. T. C. Hammond was a firm believer in the inspiration of Scripture, but did not follow the Princeton theologians like Warfield and Hodge into affirming biblical inerrancy, allowing that the scriptures may contain errors of history and geography, albeit errors 'so slight as to be practically negligible'.<sup>52</sup> According to Treloar, centrists like Hammond in this period '... avoided inerrancy and placed their emphasis on divine preservation [of scripture] which so minimised imperfection that they were neither numerous nor important'.<sup>53</sup> The College had no history, under Hammond or before him, of creationism in the wake of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. T. C. Hammond was certain that 'Modernism' was the greatest threat to Christianity in Australia; but he did not see artefacts such as inerrancy or an opposition to evolutionary theory as a necessary defence against the threat.<sup>54</sup> By bequeathing this centrist legacy, Hammond gave Robinson and his generation theological permission to avail themselves, cautiously but seriously, of the findings and methodology of critical scholarship. In Archbishop Peter Jensen's words to the 2008 Sydney Diocesan Synod, Hammond '... enabled his students to accept the authority of the Bible in the light of scholarship ancient and modern'.<sup>55</sup>

However, while Hammond created the space in which younger scholars like Robinson could operate, in terms of an approach to theology and scripture, Hammond's exegetical and

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<sup>48</sup> Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, chap. 14.

<sup>49</sup> In this context 'theological idealism' refers to theology influenced by Kantian philosophical themes, mediated to theology by figures such as S. T. Coleridge. It contrasts with materialism (the view all of reality is fundamentally matter). For discussion of the sources and shape of Hammond's Idealism, see McIntosh, 'Anglican Evangelicalism in Sydney 1897–1953', 35–39.

<sup>50</sup> William Lawton, "'That Woman Jezebel'"—Moore College after 25 Years' (The Moore College Library Lecture, Sydney, 1981), 3.

<sup>52</sup> W. A. Curtis, 'Infallibility', in Hasting's *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, quoted by Hammond in 'The Fiat of Authority', 179, and *Inspiration and Authority*, 32–33; quoted in McIntosh, 'Anglican Evangelicalism in Sydney', 451. For a full discussion of Hammond on the doctrine of scripture, see McIntosh, pages 446–456.

<sup>53</sup> Treloar, 'The Word Disputed', 113.

<sup>54</sup> McIntosh, 'Anglican Evangelicalism in Sydney,' 491.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Jensen, 'Presidential Address' to the 1st Ordinary Session of the 48th Synod of the Diocese of Sydney, on 17 October, 2008. Cited in McIntosh, 'Anglican Evangelicalism in Sydney', 45.

theological methodology would be roundly abandoned in the coming years. Robinson (with D. B. Knox) would be at the centre of that theological and methodological revolution in the diocese of Sydney. They would exchange Hammond's Idealism for a much more empirical, biblical-theological approach to scripture and doctrine. The results for the coming generation would be electric.

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The composition of the student body at Moore College exposed Robinson to a surprisingly broad range of churchmanship. Writing in 1981, Lawton says that it

would be rare to see a crucifix in a student's room now; in those days [the early 1950s], some rooms were like Chapels—one could see religious pictures, crosses, crucifixes, even Rosary beads and holy water 'specially blessed by the Bishop of Norwich.'<sup>56</sup>

Robinson himself recalls a relatively broad range of sympathies among the College students in the late thirties and early forties.<sup>57</sup> Ironically, 'A system which taught Aquinas and the Oxford Movement, even if to oppose them, nurtured a Catholic belief.'<sup>58</sup> McIntosh has recently argued that, despite the wider sectarian culture of Australia at the time, and despite T. C. Hammond's own background in Ireland and own reformed theological emphases, there is little evidence that a specifically anti-Roman Catholic agenda was inculcated at Moore College.<sup>59</sup> Certainly Robinson did not use sectarian language or express sectarian attitudes regarding the Roman Catholic Church. He was a convinced Protestant to be sure, but not sectarian in language or ethos.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Lawton, "That Woman Jezebel", 7.

<sup>57</sup> In an interview Robinson recalled '... when I lived at Moore College as a boy, a youth, in the late thirties, early forties, before I went to the war, we had people like Ian Shevill and Dudley Ridley, about three or four of them were Anglo-Catholics. They used to go down to Christ Church St Lawrence to cheer themselves up and so on, and there was a real mixture.' (Marcia Cameron, Interview 1 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 13 September 2006, 10). Moreover, the Robinson family house was a venue for much contact between the young Robinson and the students of the College: 'We had the students in and out of our house all the time. My dad was very hospitable.' (Cameron, Interview 2 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 10).

<sup>58</sup> Lawton, "That Woman Jezebel", 7.

<sup>59</sup> McIntosh, 'Anglican Evangelicalism in Sydney', 126.

<sup>60</sup> Robinson's grandfather, Mark Robinson, was himself from a large Catholic family, baptised in St Mary's Cathedral, though he had married a Presbyterian, Agnes Freeman. Mark Robinson also trained horses at Randwick racecourse and was the publican of the Waverley Hotel—occupations acceptable in the Catholic world but beyond the pale for most Protestants. This background perhaps tempered sectarian language in the Robinson household. See Cameron, Interview 1 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 3.

Robinson once described D. B. Knox's attachment to Anglicanism as 'ambivalent,' lacking emotional attachment and caring little for the Anglican 'ethos.'<sup>61</sup> Nothing of the sort could be said of Robinson. As the Archbishop of Sydney, Robinson would describe being Anglican in Australia as being the nation's inheritors of a tradition of 'Reformed Catholicism'.<sup>62</sup> The phrase certainly captures Robinson's own sense of what it was to be Anglican. It was, on the one hand, to be *Reformed*: to be part of the Church of the Elizabethan Settlement, of a tradition that was broadly and moderately Calvinistic in its Articles, and of a Church that was Protestant in its confession and its relationship to the bishop of Rome. All of this was, of course, emphasised in his Sydney experience. However, to be Anglican for Robinson was also to be a reformed *catholic*. It was to be a member of a church with a *reformed*, rather than *ex-nihilo*, liturgical tradition; it was to be in historic continuity with an ancient communion; and it was to be *catholic* in the sense of being in fellowship with all Creed-affirming Christians worldwide. Both these aspects of being Anglican were dear to Robinson. Without them, much of the origins and content of his NT scholarship would be obscured, to say nothing of his episcopate and his liturgical work. To the outside observer, in the 1970s and 1980s, his biblical empiricism and his Anglican loyalties would sometimes make strange bedfellows.

### **2.3. Evangelical**

Donald Robinson was an evangelical. He was a self-conscious member of that energetic Christian movement, born in the eighteenth century as the result of a remarkable fusion of reformation theology with Continental pietism.<sup>63</sup> But what is an evangelical? And what sort of evangelical was Robinson? The more precisely we can locate Robinson's particular species of evangelicalism, the sharper it will be as an analytical tool, and the more weight-bearing capacity it will have.

Robinson's evangelicalism can be located quite specifically in that form of 'commonwealth evangelicalism' associated with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship and the post-war evangelical scholarly renaissance associated with institutions such as Tyndale House, Cambridge. It was a movement in which Robinson not only felt at home, but one he helped to architect.

The most seminal attempt to define the essential features of evangelicalism has been D. W. Bebbington's now famous quadrilateral, in which he marks out the four constituent characteristics:

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<sup>61</sup> Donald Robinson, 'David Broughton Knox: An Appreciation', in *God Who Is Rich in Mercy: Essays Presented to D. B. Knox*, ed. Peter T. O'Brien and David Peterson (Sydney: Lancer Books, 1986), xii.

<sup>62</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Presidential Address, 1987', in *1987 Sydney Year Book* (Sydney: AIO, 1988), 242.

<sup>63</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 11–22.



... *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism.<sup>64</sup> (Italics original)

Other definitions have suggested enhancements to Bebbington's basic structure: Barclay and others have argued the need to recognise an explicit Christocentricity—a distinct focus on Jesus in piety, proclamation, scholarship, and worship.<sup>65</sup> Warner has argued that, in addition to an explicit Christocentrism, an emphasis on the transformed life and on revival aspirations need to be added.<sup>66</sup> Piggin, in a definition deployed for a specifically Australian context, manages to capture at least the essence of the seven characteristics listed above in simply describing evangelicalism as concerned with the *Spirit* (conversion, revival, and transformed life), *Word* (biblicism, Christocentrism) and *World* (transformed life, conversion).<sup>67</sup>

Warner includes what he calls two organising principles: 'Faith not works' and 'Transdenominationalism.'<sup>68</sup> By these two principles, Warner means to capture the conservative and voluntarist piety that has distinguished evangelicals from both nominalism and ritualism ('Faith not works'), and the historic willingness of evangelicals to make common cause with other Protestants regardless of denomination for the sake of mission.<sup>69</sup>

We will return to these definitional questions in the final chapter of this thesis. Part of the promise of studying a figure like Donald Robinson is to explore how his story might add to or qualify the various definitions and characteristics of evangelicalism offered in the literature. This is especially useful as the majority of definitional work on evangelicalism has happened in a North American or British context. To use Warner's categories, Robinson would be located on the biblicist-crucicentric axis rather than the conversionist-activist axis. Robinson never had a personal conversion experience, and cheerfully shared this fact with fellow evangelicals, who have often seen such an experience as essential. He rather saw his Christian faith as the product

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<sup>64</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Oliver R. Barclay, *Evangelicalism in Britain 1935–1995: A Personal Sketch* (Leicester: IVP, 1997), 11–12.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism 1966–2001* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 18.

<sup>67</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, 'Preface: The Evangelical Synthesis'.

<sup>68</sup> Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism 1966–2001*, 19.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. For Robinson, one of the most important avenues of transdenominational evangelical experience was in his years of war service between 1940–1945. In Brisbane, Robinson made contact with Pentecostal, Baptist, Anglican, and Presbyterian believers. In the army camps he would seek out fellowship with other believers and create informal fellowships with them. In Papua New Guinea he remembered: 'it occurred to me when I was there that for the first time in my life I was not conscious of any fellow Christians around me. I realised that there had never been any time in my life when I was alone, or seemed to be alone.' His response was to pray for guidance and 'within a fairly short time was (sic) had about six or seven and we met regularly just for prayer together and bible study together.' Marcia Cameron, Interview 5 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 31 October 2006, 6.

of a faithful covenantal family.<sup>70</sup> To use Piggin's categories, Robinson could be characterised as a person of the 'Word' more than the 'Spirit' or the 'World'.<sup>71</sup> He described himself as 'a theological person'.<sup>72</sup> However, all of these he would likely understand to be a product of temperament and circumstances rather than as any rejection of the others. He was comfortably and happily evangelical.

At this stage of the argument we address the question of the nature of Robinson's evangelicalism from the ground up: In which institutions and contexts was it nurtured and shaped? It was certainly in his home, and in his church, and within the Crusader group at school. But overwhelmingly there was one institution, one movement that more than any other shaped the kind of evangelical Robinson was to become: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF) and its affiliates. Through the Sydney University Evangelical Union, via participation in the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU), and in later days as a supporter and sometimes president of the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES), Robinson was shaped by and, to a not insignificant degree, shaped the modern evangelical student movement. He was, in his own words, an 'IVF man'.<sup>73</sup>

### **2.3.1. Background to The IFES**

The origins of the modern International Fellowship of Evangelical Students were in the CICCU, founded in 1877 as a product of the synthesis between the revivalism of Moody and Sankey, together with the mild Calvinism of the Charles Simeon tradition.<sup>74</sup> In 1910, it broke away from the Student Christian Movement on grounds of the latter entering into 'Theological Modernism.' (Future Sydney Archbishop Howard Mowll, then a student at Cambridge, participated in the debate, and was the second and long serving President of the CICCU after its split from the SCM.) This split began a relatively bleak period until the golden age of student Christianity of the post-war years from 1945. Unlike the 'Battle for the Bible' in the United States, the split with the SCM was less focussed on a particular issue such as inerrancy and was rather the response to a lengthy process of increasing inclusiveness and perceived compromise which, over time, had an accumulative effect. CICCU members, having removed themselves from the SCM summer camps, became regular attenders at the Keswick Conventions, imbibing the warm holiness teaching on offer there.<sup>75</sup> In 1911, they invited the American revivalist preacher, Dr R. A. Torrey, to conduct a mission in the University—a controversial but, in the end, reasonably successful

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<sup>70</sup> Information shared with me by Peter Robinson, D. W. B. Robinson's son.

<sup>71</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 8.

<sup>72</sup> Cameron, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', xv.

<sup>73</sup> Shiner, 'An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson's New Testament Theology', 13.

<sup>74</sup> David Goodhew, 'The Rise of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, 1910–1971', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 54, no. 1 (2003): 63.

<sup>75</sup> Oliver R. Barclay, *Whatever Happened to the Jesus Lane Lot?* (Leicester: IVP, 1977), 75.

venture.<sup>76</sup> In 1919, the then secretary Norman Grubb met with the SCM leadership to discuss a possible partnership. According to Barclay, Grubb asked the SCM leadership whether they could affirm ‘...the atoning blood of Jesus as central to their message?’ They replied that, though it had a place in their teaching, it was not central. This was sufficient to persuade Grubb that a partnership could not be sustained.<sup>77</sup> All of this is to say that the CICCUC, in the early decades of the twentieth century, was a conservative enterprise, injected with a warm Keswick piety, conversionist in its basic instincts and deeply committed to the centrality of the atoning death of Christ.

In 1928, the CICCUC joined with similar groups from other British Universities to form the British Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF). Due to its background in the liberal SCM, the CICCUC came increasingly to define itself against the social involvement emphasis of the former. In 1944, for example, at the height of WWII, the then president of the CICCUC declared, ‘Your nation’s greatest need is your personal holiness’.<sup>78</sup> Earlier, in 1933, a booklet was distributed free to CICCUC members which, on the issue of social engagement, said:

[w]hile believing that it is always part of Christian duty to ameliorate distress, the CICCUC cannot be enthusiastic about schemes for the bringing of world peace by means of political bodies such as the League of Nations, or social uplifting by methods of reform. It holds that in the Gospel of Christ alone lies the only hope for the world by regeneration of the individual. All else consists of ‘dead works’ without permanent value before God and may be written down as ‘vanity’.<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly several key figures associated with the CICCUC were pacifists, including Cambridge Liberator and CICCUC advisor Basil Atkinson, E. J. H. Nash, and later John Stott and Oliver Barclay.<sup>80</sup> This can give the impression of an unexpectedly radical strand within an otherwise quietist movement. Alister Chapman, though, has recently argued that this pacifism was a product of piety and the priority of evangelism, rather than a commitment to radical discipleship or social justice.<sup>81</sup> The post-war evangelicalism that would re-initiate a cautious and principled re-engagement with the world in matters beyond evangelism was still several decades away.

Goodhew summarises the CICCUC’s characteristics as follows:

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>78</sup> Goodhew, ‘The Rise of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, 1910–1971’, 75.

<sup>79</sup> Barclay, *Whatever Happened to the Jesus Lane Lot?*, 119.

<sup>80</sup> Goodhew, ‘The Rise of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, 1910–1971’, 75.

<sup>81</sup> See Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 18–23.

... CICCUC stood for a conservative Evangelical view of the Bible and deeply mistrusted higher criticism, whilst SCM accepted the validity of the new views of the Bible. CICCUC was rooted in the Keswick Convention ... and saw evangelism as its primary task. SCM sought to work with all Christian Churches and to promote social action alongside evangelism. CICCUC stressed a substitutionary view of the atonement, whereas SCM saw this as one view amongst others.<sup>82</sup>

Such were the main features of the context in which the modern evangelical student movement was born. Robinson would not go on to share the 'deep mistrust of higher criticism,' and his roots in Keswick spirituality would be complicated by events in Sydney in the middle of the twentieth century. However, in almost every other way, CICCUC's stance was Robinson's theological home base.

### **2.3.2. Sydney University Evangelical Union (SUEU)**

The 1928 IVF was committed to establishing a witness not just in every British University but in all the Universities of the British Empire<sup>83</sup> and to this end Howard Guinness (1903-1979) was sent to Canada and Australia, establishing student groups, including the SUEU at Sydney University in 1930. Robinson was a member of that generation of post-war students who were to revolutionise the Christian witnesses on their campuses. Their war-time experience and older years brought with them 'a maturity and experience in leadership the campus had not known before.'<sup>84</sup>

In Robinson's 1987 Presidential Address to the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES), he reflected on the nature of the term 'Fundamentalism.' In the 1940s, the SUEU was very conscious of its mission to uphold the 'fundamental truths of Christianity'<sup>85</sup> with a 'large proportion of our public meetings and studies devoted to the items of our doctrinal basis.'<sup>86</sup> In doing so, the SUEU understood itself simply to be upholding what all the great churches of the Reformation held in their various confessions.

Robinson cited T. C. Hammond as the SUEU's 'theological guiding star' for these years, encouraging the students in upholding those beliefs shared by churches of the reformation. In following Hammond's lead, Robinson clearly felt that the SUEU, though sometimes 'insensitive

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>83</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 4.

<sup>84</sup> Barclay, *Whatever Happened to the Jesus Lane Lot?*, 122; John Prince and Moyra Prince, *Out of the Tower* (Sydney: ANZEA, 1987), 24; Keith Hunt and Gladys Hunt, *For Christ and the University: The Story of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of the USA, 1940-1990* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 1992), 117.

<sup>85</sup> Robinson, 'What Shall We Do with the Bible?', 22.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 23.

to the complexity of Christian doctrine as a whole,<sup>87</sup> was not susceptible to the particular accusation of ‘fundamentalism’ understood in terms defined later by John Stott as (1) a total rejection of all biblical criticism, (2) an excessively literal interpretation of the Bible, and (3) mechanical theories of biblical inspiration.<sup>88</sup>

Two further influences on the SUEU bear special mention in this context. The first is the role of the Brethren. Though dominated by Anglicans, the Brethren were a significant force in the SUEU and in Sydney evangelicalism more generally. The SUEU would hear regular teaching from Brethren preachers. The Brethren were overwhelmingly dispensationalist, and the question of Israel in the New Testament, and eschatology more generally, in Robinson’s work owes much to the influence of Brethren thinking. Robinson was never himself dispensational. Dispensationalism was the ‘joker in the pack’ for evangelicals, and influenced his work on Israel and on eschatology, even if that influence was in Robinson correcting errors he saw in the dispensational schema.<sup>89</sup>

The second influence to note is that of Sinless Perfectionism within the SUEU. During the 1930s, a doctrine emerged in evangelical circles as an illegitimate child of Keswick holiness teaching. Keswick did teach of access to a ‘higher spiritual life.’ It did not teach or encourage the idea that sinlessness could be attained.<sup>90</sup> Sinless Perfectionism (as the name suggests) did. Within the SUEU, a faction emerged centred on former SUEU president Lindsay Grant.<sup>91</sup> Robinson himself was attracted by Grant’s charismatic personality, finding him ‘magnetic.’<sup>92</sup> Over the years 1939-1940, events took a political turn such that, by the end of 1940, many were concerned that Perfectionists would control the Executive of the SUEU.<sup>93</sup> On 25 September 1940, the entire election ran on Perfectionist versus conservative lines, with conservatives winning the day. Robinson himself was installed as Secretary in this election. In an interview, Robinson recalled going to T. C. Hammond’s house for a ‘squash’ (a Saturday night gathering of students to ask Hammond questions on anything related to theology) where the explicit topic was Perfectionism. He also recalled that Katoomba conventions (the Keswick movement conventions held since 1903 in the Blue Mountains village of Katoomba, 100 kilometres west of Sydney) worked hard to

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>89</sup> Interestingly, one of the several ways in which Robinson’s biography tracks with F. F. Bruce’s is the way in which Anglican and Brethren influences fused together (Bruce being a Brethren in an Anglican-dominated evangelical scene, whilst Robinson was an Anglican in a Brethren-influenced scene). This was true of the CICCUC more broadly, with several key speakers at the CICCUC being Brethren, and with a sizable minority of students in the Anglican-dominated CICCUC being members at Panton Hall, the main centre for Brethren in Cambridge at the time. See Tim Grass, *F. F. Bruce: A Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), chap. 3. Kindle edition

<sup>90</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Meredith Lake, *Proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord: A History of the Sydney University Evangelical Union* (Sydney: Evangelical Union Graduates Fund, 2005), 20.

<sup>92</sup> Cameron, Interview 3 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 11.

<sup>93</sup> Lake, *Proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord*, 20.

‘bash orthodoxy into us’ by having speakers directly address the issue from Romans 6-8.<sup>94</sup> ‘It was’, recalled Robinson, ‘a very distressing period.’<sup>95</sup> As well as providing Robinson with more experience of the challenges of leadership, the Perfectionist affair probably provides some background for Robinson’s engagement with neo-Pentecostalism in the 1970s. And in his scholarly studies on Romans, he was to come to an understanding of Romans 6–8 that agreed neither with Christian Perfectionism, nor with the orthodox alternative taught at Katoomba, and in a different way, by figures like J. I. Packer in the English context.<sup>96</sup>

These battles were not without their victims or their regrets. However, they did serve to bolster the intellectual leadership of the SUEU office bearers. And they were to help office-bearers hammer the SUEU into a particular theological shape. As Andrew Reid summarises: ‘The brand of evangelicalism in the IVF in Australia during this time was increasingly literate, intellectual, and free from the obscurantism that characterised some other streams of that movement.’<sup>97</sup> It was also increasingly wary of holiness movements.<sup>98</sup>

Marcus Loane (1911–2009), a towering figure of Sydney Anglicanism and the Archbishop to precede Robinson, was neither a Sinless Perfectionist nor (strictly) a proponent of the Keswick holiness teaching. He did, however, represent an emphasis on personal piety and a devotional approach to scripture.<sup>99</sup> According to Edwin Judge, Loane was shaped by

his total immersion in, total appropriation of the practice of piety and the devotional life as exemplified in the reformers, the puritans, the evangelical tradition on which he wrote book after book . . . His life was wholly admirable. And yet it was one thing and not another.<sup>100</sup>

This approach was to alter drastically under Knox and Robinson’s influence, with the more florid evangelical expressions of piety disappearing almost completely across the 1970s and 1980s. The Sinless Perfectionist controversy contributed to this newly didactic, somewhat emotion-wary form of evangelicalism in Sydney.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> For Robinson’s understanding of Romans, see Donald Robinson, ‘The Priesthood of Paul in the Gospel of Hope’, in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L.L. Morris on His 60th Birthday*, ed. Robert Banks (Exeter: Paternoster, 1974), 231–45.

<sup>97</sup> Reid, ‘Evangelical Hermeneutics and Old Testament Preaching’, 127.

<sup>98</sup> Cameron, *Phenomenal Sydney*, 34.

<sup>99</sup> Allan Blanch, *From Strength to Strength: A Life of Marcus Loane* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2015), 168–70.

<sup>100</sup> Rory Shiner, Interview with Edwin Judge on Donald Robinson, 13 December 2012. When Judge said that Loane’s approach was ‘one thing and not another,’ Judge was speaking in the context of a conversation about the differences between Loane and Robinson.

### 2.3.3. Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union

The Sydney University Evangelical Union of the 1930s and 1940s was highly conscious of its historic origins in England, and particularly Cambridge. Donald Coggan's 1934 book *Christ and the Colleges*, an early history of the CICCUC, was widely read in SUEU circles at the time.<sup>101</sup> Robinson himself has said

... we were all very up on the history of [CICCUC]. I could have taken you on a tour of the Cambridge colleges, I think, before I ever went there.<sup>102</sup>

It was therefore natural that, when the opportunity presented itself to go to Cambridge, Robinson took it, not least because of his interest in the CICCUC. Robinson's presence at Cambridge in 1947-50 places him right in the middle of what Goodhew declares to be 'CICCUC's finest hour'—the years from 1946 to 1958.<sup>103</sup> They were years punctuated by several extraordinary missions, including two by Donald Barnhouse (1946 and 1949), two by John Stott (1952 and 1958), and one by Billy Graham (1955).<sup>104</sup> Robinson threw himself into the life of the CICCUC, attending the daily prayer meetings held in the hall behind Holy Trinity Church, going to the weekly evangelistic services on Sunday nights, and holding office on the General Committee to represent overseas students.<sup>105</sup>

The influence of the Keswick movement was strongly felt within the CICCUC, with its influence peaking in the years between the wars (1919–1939). Keswick avoided American fundamentalism, liberal evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, and developments such as the Oxford Group Movement and the CICCUC followed suit.<sup>106</sup> The publication of T. C. Hammond's *In Understanding Be Men* in 1936 was well received by the CICCUC leadership and served to moderate the influence of 'full sanctification' then coming through various quarters.<sup>107</sup> The book avoided controversy over the Second Coming and over evolution, making *adiaphora* of issues that were radically challenging evangelical unity in the United States at the same time.

In the period 1946-1958, the CICCUC put some effort into apologetics and the relationship of faith to science, and distanced itself from the fundamentalist groups such as the 'Evolution Protest Movement'.<sup>108</sup> It quietly ignored the dispensational views of some of its American missionaries. As the influence of the 'Bash camps' rose in the years 1930s, patterns of ministry

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<sup>101</sup> Lake, *Proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord*, 28.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Goodhew, 'The Rise of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, 1910–1971', 75.

<sup>104</sup> Oliver R. Barclay and Robert M. Horn, *From Cambridge to the World: 125 Years of Student Witness*, rev ed. (Leicester: IVP, 2002), 137–42.

<sup>105</sup> Marcia Cameron, Interview 6 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 28 November 2006, 6.

<sup>106</sup> Goodhew, 'The Rise of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, 1910–1971', 67.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 77.

became set on presenting a very simple gospel message, a wariness of both emotion and intellect, and an emphasis on ‘personal work’ (that is, leading people to conversion and discipling them one on one).<sup>109</sup>

From this soil began to emerge some of the figures of the evangelical scholarly renaissance, such as Stott. ‘In John Stott’, says Goodhew, ‘there was a new kind of evangelical: doctrinally sound but also well-read, urbane and upper-middle class.’<sup>110</sup> Robinson was not upper-middle class, but in urbanity, education, and reading he was very much one of ‘the new kind of evangelical’.

### **2.3.4. Harvard University, 1947**

Robinson’s life path managed to align elegantly and effortlessly with several major moments in the developing evangelical student world. Not only was he present and active in a heady era for the SUEU and present in Cambridge for the CICCUs golden age; he also happened, *en route* to Cambridge in 1947, to be present at the International Leaders Conference of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, held at Phillips Brooks House, Harvard University (16-22 August)—arguably the birthplace of the IFES. On his way to Cambridge for studies, he was invited by Howard Mowll to accompany himself and the Reverend H. M. Arrowsmith to the meeting as an Australian student representative. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones chaired the conference and guided it into hammering out a constitution.

...

Writing in the 1950s, Robinson proffered his own definition of an evangelical. An evangelical churchman is:

One who has special attachment to ... the supreme authority of Holy Scripture, salvation only through the atoning death of Jesus Christ as our representative and substitute, justification by faith alone ... a definite view of the church and sacraments ... aware that participation in the earthly forms is not the same thing as participation in the spiritual and heavenly reality.<sup>111</sup>

This definition captures precisely the ‘commonwealth’ conservative evangelicalism of student groups such as the SUEU and the CICCUs. An emphasis on the supreme authority, though not

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 70. The ‘Bash camps’ were the Christian camps held at a school in the Iwerne Minster village by evangelical Anglican cleric E. J. H. Nash (1898–1982). The camps were for schoolboys from the elite British public schools. Many evangelical leaders in the post-war period, including John Stott, came through these camps.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>111</sup> D. W. B. Robinson. ‘Evangelical Churchman’, from *Australian Church Record* letter file held in the Samuel Marsden Archives at Moore College quoted in William J. Lawton’s *The Better Time to Be*, 17.



necessarily inerrancy<sup>112</sup> of scripture, and on the centrality of the substitutionary atonement of Christ. It was doctrinal and socially conservative, emotionally cautious and intellectually confident. This has been Robinson's own style of evangelicalism for all his life. It was somewhat shaped by his Anglicanism (note the emphasis on a 'definite view of the sacraments').<sup>113</sup> However, it was overwhelmingly the evangelicalism born of student transdenominationalism, rather than Anglican in-fighting. The most distinguishing feature of Robinson's intellectual formation lay not in any rejection or modification of his student evangelicalism, but in a significant addition to it. He was warmly to receive instruction from a quarter of which most evangelicals were wary: the Cambridge Divinity School.

## **2.4. Cambridge (1947–1949)**

Crucial to my account of Robinson's thought is the second significant reason he went to Cambridge—its Divinity School. The point is worth labouring. John Stott is the most prominent example of generations of Anglican evangelicals who went from public school to Cambridge University to study for the ministry despite an ambivalent attitude to its Divinity Faculty. (Stott was a student of Divinity about 3 years before Robinson, and so the faculty were mostly identical to those who taught Stott). As Chapman describes it:

The Faculty of Divinity of [Stott's] day was hardly a bastion of liberal theology...but for someone reared on the works of American fundamentalist Reuben Torrey, the faculty produced a lot of anxiety. One of Stott's tutors, John Burnaby, wrote of the "ordeal" suffered by theology students whose settled beliefs were brought into question in their Cambridge courses . . . For the most part, Stott was wary of his lecturers and did not develop close relationships with any of them.<sup>114</sup>

Robinson's attitude could not have been more different. This difference is a crucial key to unlocking the shape and direction of his thought.

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<sup>112</sup> In his fascinating thesis on evangelicalism and sport, Tyndall compares Robinson's definition with Bebbington's. He notes that Robinson places the authority of holy scripture first, whereas Bebbington has conversion and activism ahead of biblicism. Tyndall explains that is because Robinson was 'a son of the Diocese of Sydney which has fought long and hard (occasionally in the secular courts) to uphold the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture.' David Bruce Tyndall, 'Evangelicalism, Sport and the Australian Olympics', PhD Thesis, Macquarie University, 2004, 64. In fact, as we have seen, neither Robinson himself nor the evangelicalism he inherited (either from the Sydney Diocese or from the student world) were strictly inerrantist. Moreover, the Sydney diocese's adventures into secular courts have been on constitutional or liturgical matters, and not on scripture as such.

<sup>113</sup> Whilst including a 'definite view of the sacraments' in a definition of evangelicals is almost certainly shaped by Robinson's Anglican context, it is interesting to note that even a staunchly non-Anglican figure like D. M. Lloyd-Jones also includes this in his definition. In a 1971 address 'What is an Evangelical?', he says: 'The next thing about the evangelical is that he *takes a particular view with regard to the sacraments*...The evangelical, speaking broadly, takes a 'low' view of the sacraments.' D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times: Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions, 1942–1977* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 329.

<sup>114</sup> Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 26.

Connections between Moore College and Cambridge University were deep and long. Bishop Barker (1808–1882), himself a graduate of Jesus College, Cambridge, invited William Hodgson (1809–1869) of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, to be the founding principal, and both principals to follow him were also Cambridge-educated evangelicals.<sup>115</sup> A. L. Williams (1853–1943), who served as principal from 1879 to 1884, was the first MTC principal to have taken the then new Cambridge Theology Tripos, and was personally recommended by B. F. Westcott. And when Williams's term ended, Bishop Barry (1826–1910) sought to replace him with 'someone of the school of Lightfoot or Westcott'.<sup>116</sup> Meanwhile, Bishop Barry was himself replaced by William Saumarez Smith, another Cambridge evangelical with some debt to the Cambridge theology of Lightfoot and Westcott.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, the Cambridge-educated Archbishop Howard Mowll was, in appointing T. C. Hammond, breaking an almost unbroken record of Cambridge-educated principals.

Robinson chose to do his basic theological training at Cambridge, feeling that he 'knew enough about Moore' and that Cambridge would provide the 'best basic training in sound theology'.<sup>118</sup> As basic training, the emphasis was on depth rather than breadth. In Robinson's recollection, the course featured OT and NT exegesis, NT history, and some church history. 'The whole time I was there,' said Robinson, 'didn't take me past the Council of Chalcedon in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century.'<sup>119</sup> He claims to have done no historical theology, not even to have attended a lecture on systematic theology. He had never read Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In answer to a question about Calvinism at Moore College he replied:

Well, I don't know. I am not a Calvinist, I can't claim to be that because I do not know enough about it, although Broughton insisted that students read *The Institutes*. I never read *The Institutes*. I was never required to and I never did ...<sup>120</sup>

The only lectures he heard on the reformation were on reformation liturgy by E. C. Ratcliff.<sup>121</sup> This has implications for understanding what Robinson meant by his self-designation as 'reformed'. It did not mean he was strictly Calvinist, and certainly not shaped in a Westminster Confession form of reformed faith. His reformed understanding was rather mediated through the English tradition, which he understood as reformed catholicism.

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<sup>115</sup> McIntosh, 'Anglican Evangelicalism in Sydney', 121.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>118</sup> Cameron, Interview 6 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 1.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>120</sup> Marcia Cameron, Interview 9 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 5 August 2007, 6.

<sup>121</sup> Cameron, Interview 6 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 11.

The pedagogy at Cambridge was based on the idea that dealing thoroughly with limited material would give you the skills to do the rest on your own.<sup>122</sup> This was deeply attractive to Robinson, whose linguistic instincts were to interrogate the meaning of words. Thus for Robinson, the Cambridge approach was thrilling; low on dogmatics, low on historical theology, and ‘anxious to find out what the bible was really on about.’<sup>123</sup> This tradition would profoundly shape Robinson, who would in turn shape, for better or worse, how the Bible is approached by Sydney Anglicans.

#### **2.4.1. Cambridge Tradition of New Testament Exegesis**

The Cambridge tradition of New Testament scholarship is traced back to the nineteenth century work of the already mentioned figures of Lightfoot, Wescott, and Hort. As these three scholars grappled with the task of New Testament interpretation, they developed an approach that was somewhat distinct from that developing on the Continent, and particularly in Germany. Their approach is characterised by Neill and Wright as follows:

A New Testament commentary, they held, must be *critical*; it must be based on the most accurate Greek text that could be produced. It must be *linguistic*, and must accept the necessity of minute philological study of the meaning of words and sentences. It must be *historical*, relating each book to the situation in which it appears to have been written, but at the same time seeing it as part of an immensely broad revelation of which history is the scene and the medium. It must be *exegetical*, it must endeavour to make plain to the reader what words meant, as far as we can grasp this, to the one who wrote them and to his first readers. It must not aim directly at edification ...<sup>124</sup> (Italics original).

Through the efforts of Westcott, Lightfoot, and Hort, the inroads of higher criticism from Germany were delayed by some decades. Instead, England developed its own tradition of critical scholarship, one which aimed to be both critical and confessional, something Treloar characterises as a ‘reverent higher criticism.’<sup>125</sup> For Wright and Neill, this is a living tradition, continued in Robinson’s day by the work of E. G. Selwyn, C. F. D. Moule, and through to G. B. Caird.

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>124</sup> Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1986*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 93–94.

<sup>125</sup> G. Treloar, ‘Smith, William Saumarez’, in *ADEB*, cited in McIntosh, ‘Anglican Evangelicalism in Sydney’, 128. For a detailed study of Lightfoot’s approach and influence see Geoffrey R. Treloar, *Lightfoot the Historian: The Nature and Role of History in the Life and Thought of J.B. Lightfoot (1828–1889) as Churchman and Scholar* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998).

This Cambridge tradition is the one in which Robinson placed himself.<sup>126</sup> It was an approach for which he felt he had been prepared by the teaching, at Sydney University, of G. P. Shipp. Under Shipp, Robinson had done comparative work on the vocabulary and semantics of language across the synoptics. Through the process, he ‘began to find a Greek concordance of more use than a lexicon: the lexicons tell you what a word might mean, while the concordance encouraged you to consider how it is actually used’.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, as well as preparing Robinson for study at Cambridge, this tutelage also made him sensitive to the ways in which the biblical theological approaches of people like Dodd and Flew could sometimes outrun the linguistic evidence.<sup>128</sup>

#### **2.4.2. C. H. Dodd**

Robinson’s supervisors at Cambridge were Henry Hart, Henry Chadwick, and in his third year, C. F. D. Moule. Influential though Hart and Chadwick were, Dodd and Moule were those to whom Robinson owed the biggest debt.

C. H. Dodd (1884–1973) was probably the principal drawcard for Robinson. D. B. Knox had gone to C. H. Dodd’s seminars when in Cambridge from 1942 to 1944. On returning to Australia, Knox urged Robinson to read Dodd’s *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*, something Robinson had already done.<sup>129</sup> Robinson identifies Dodd as ‘probably the strongest influence’ on him in his development of biblical theology.<sup>130</sup>

Robinson was a guest of C. F. D. Moule at C. H. Dodd’s New Testament seminar, described by Dodd’s biographer as ‘his most distinctive contribution to the academic life of Cambridge.’<sup>131</sup>

W. D. Davies, who visited the seminars, described them in these terms:

This openness to outside scholarship was typical of his whole attitude, which was best experienced in his seminar ... above all, one felt his complete freedom from any dogmatism despite, nay, more probably because of, his massive knowledge, and his unselfconscious openness to all possible positions ... For this reason, probably, he never formed a school. His students never felt that he expected them to follow his positions

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<sup>126</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘“The Church” Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 260.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 261–62.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>129</sup> Marcia Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life: David Broughton Knox, Father of Contemporary Sydney Anglicanism* (Melbourne: Acorn Press, 2006), 71.

<sup>130</sup> Robinson, ‘Origins and Unresolved Tensions’, 3.

<sup>131</sup> F. W. Dillistone, *C. H. Dodd, Interpreter of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 149. At these seminars, senior University faculty would carve out two hours on a Wednesday afternoon to work on issues of NT interpretation. Members included Stanley Cook, F. S. Marsh, Wilfred Knox, R. Newton Flew, and Noel Davey as well as two outstanding Jewish scholars, Herbert Loewe and David Daube. And, of course, C. F. D. Moule.

and certainly not to follow him. The unexpressed assumption was that we were all together engaged in a high task but each free to pursue it in his own way. It was his freedom within his conscientious dedication that constituted his authority over us and made his seminar so remarkable.<sup>132</sup>

Robinson's scholarly career was characterised by a similar academic freedom and willingness to consider all possible positions. Did he pick this up from Dodd? At the very least, he must have found the seminars highly congenial. In his own teaching method he returned the favour, giving people a sense of many loose ends they were left to pursue for themselves.

It was characteristic of Dodd to reject the more speculative modes of biblical studies sometimes exhibited on the Continent, and focus on answering New Testament questions by a rigorous and creative assault of the texts themselves. In his landmark 1936 study *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*,<sup>133</sup> Dodd asks: 'What did the earliest preachers of Jesus actually tell their audiences?' Neill and Wright explain:

It was clear that they did not, as Harnack had supposed, tell them of the Fatherhood of God and the infinite value of the human soul.<sup>134</sup>

What Dodd discovered from interrogating an 'ingenious combination'<sup>135</sup> of evidence from Acts, 1 Peter, the Pauline Epistles and elsewhere, was that the early Christian teachers were heralds of what God had done. They did not primarily teach or edify, but they brought *news* of God's acts in Christ. Teaching would follow, but the difference between *kerygma* and *didache* was keenly observed. Robinson's debt to this line of teaching will become increasingly apparent as this thesis unfolds.

Dodd's earlier book, *The Parables of the Kingdom*,<sup>136</sup> explores the original eschatological context of the parables. In turn, Robinson's earliest scholarly work was on the parables, and an interest in the precise nature of the apostolic message is evident throughout Robinson's work. So also is an abiding interest in NT eschatology.

### **2.4.3. C. F. D. Moule**

Where Dodd was a non-conformist with a background in the Welsh revivals, C. F. D. Moule's lineage was much more like Robinson's own: Anglican, evangelical, and English. He was a

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 151–52.

<sup>133</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963).

<sup>134</sup> Neill and Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1986*, 272.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961).

reasonably conservative scholar, though ‘too liberal for Stott’s liking’.<sup>137</sup> He was a nephew of Bishop Handley Moule, who had been a key figure in the Keswick evangelical scene.

D. A. Carson suggests Moule’s contribution to New Testament studies was in three main areas: First, an organic and developmental sense of the growth of primitive Christianity with the historical Jesus, as opposed to a more Hegelian account. Second, it was featured by treatments of several NT themes such as the death of Jesus, the place of sacrifice and sacrament in the NT, and the nature of the canon. And, third, it was a tradition of clear and rigorous exegesis which he bequeathed to several generations of students.<sup>138</sup> Both Robinson’s general approach and specific topics of interest were, as we shall see, shaped by Moule.

In an interview with Marcia Cameron, Robinson summarised his Cambridge experience as follows:

... I was taught exegesis and I didn’t go to any theology lectures—there weren’t any! ... You did Old Testament—a limited amount of that. The theory was if you knew a certain part of Old Testament or New Testament very well, you could work the rest of it out for yourself ... Church history—I only did outlines of Church History to 325, nothing else. Then outlines of doctrine to 451—Chalcedon. That’s all. No Reformation, nothing. So I was delivered from any danger of what you might call dogmatism.<sup>139</sup>

Both critics and admirers of Moore College remark on the freshness, the biblicism, and the penchant for exegetical novelty. This was not true of Sydney Anglicans or of Moore College before the time of Knox and Robinson. It was they, and particularly Robinson, who mediated the adventurous Cambridge tradition to the diocese of Sydney.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

Robinson’s Anglican heritage, his evangelicalism, and his embrace of the Cambridge tradition of New Testament scholarship are not incidental features of Robinson’s biography, but essential elements in the shaping of this NT scholar.

First, I have argued specifically that Anglicanism in its Sydney expression delivered him into a reformed and centrist theology; that its liturgy deeply formed his theology; and that membership of the Anglican Church brought him into conversation with scholars and topics that were to shape profoundly his NT project and in ways that would simply not be the case were he not Anglican. He was, in short, an *Anglican* NT scholar.

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<sup>137</sup> Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 26.

<sup>138</sup> See D. A. Carson, ‘C. F. D. Moule’, in *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (London: Routledge, 2007), 228–29.

<sup>139</sup> Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life*, 137.

Secondly, I have argued that Robinson was an uncomplicated and self-conscious evangelical, locatable specifically in what I have called a ‘commonwealth evangelicalism’ shaped largely by student ministry. In Bebbington’s terms, Robinson could be plotted on a biblicist-crucicentric axis, and did not emphasise the conversionist-activist strands of the movement. The biblicism of the post-war evangelicals sought to cast off any remaining obscurantism with a principled foray into the world of biblical scholarship. Robinson was on the ‘adventurous’ end of this foray, tending to produce more controversial and less defensive scholarship than others in the movement.<sup>140</sup>

Thirdly, I have argued that Robinson, in his embrace of the scholarship of C. H. Dodd and C. F. D. Moule, was an inheritor of the Cambridge tradition of critical scholarship. This does not make him unique. F. F. Bruce, John Stott, Edwin Judge, D. B. Knox, Leon Morris, and later D. A. Carson and N. T. Wright could all be seen in this tradition. However, it will be my argument that, more than almost anyone else in his generation, Robinson took many of the specific concerns of his teachers and made them the focus of his research, sometimes developing them in even more radical directions than his teachers.

These factors are not a comprehensive account of everything that went into Robinson’s thought. But taken together and placed in the context of 1950s and 1960s Sydney, they provide significant explanatory power in answering the question: ‘Why was Robinson’s New Testament scholarship what it was?’

...

In June of 1950 Robinson, along with Marie and their newborn son Martin, left Cambridge for Australia. Having passed the Third Part of his Theological Tripos at Cambridge he would never again be a student except in the informal sense in which great teachers always are. He was never a student at MTC. As he was fond of telling people, he completed his undergraduate education without once attending a class in systematic theology. His ‘Calvinism’, such as it was, was mediated largely through the Anglican tradition rather than a direct knowledge of Calvin or the Calvinists. His grasp of the Apostolic Fathers and Patristic theology was considerable. His knowledge of the history of Anglicanism and of liturgical development was likewise deep and impressive. Above all, he knew intimately the texts of the Greek NT.

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<sup>140</sup> It also placed Robinson in a tradition wary of social engagement—a posture that Robinson was to grapple with several times in connection with the Church of England in South Africa, with his stance on Apartheid, and with the various social demands placed on a Bishop and Archbishop in Sydney. Robinson’s social theology falls largely outside the scope of this study. It would be a fascinating line of enquiry for any future biographer.

He did not take a particular interest in the Continental Theology of the Reformers, and showed little interest in, or debt to, Protestant Scholasticism or to English and American Puritanism. References in Robinson's work to the then contemporary neo-orthodox theology of people like Karl Barth and Emil Brunner are uniformly positive, sharing a common concern of returning to what Barth called 'the strange new world of the Bible'. With the neo-orthodox, he was more a fellow traveller than a direct debtor.

Robinson's independence of mind never translated into an independent attitude toward institutions. In a sharp contrast to a figure like D. B. Knox, who, for example, never joined the SUEU<sup>141</sup> while at Sydney University, and whose ambivalence to Anglicanism has already been noted, Robinson's life would be characterised by a deep loyalty to the institutions that formed him. His life, whether at the local parish, at Shore, Moore College, the Army, Sydney University, or Cambridge, followed the same pattern—significant involvement in the institutions to which he was committed. He did not slavishly reproduce the conclusions of these traditions, but he would always revere them, and do his work as a conscious and thankful heir.<sup>142</sup>

Armed with this inheritance, Robinson returned to Australia, where the particularities of the theological scene in Sydney were to prove fertile conditions for a remarkable scholarly output. He was ordained deacon in November of 1950 and priested toward the end of 1951. After a curacy at St Matthew's Manly, he accepted a call from T. C. Hammond to be his curate at St Philip's, Church Hill, Sydney. And so, in March of 1952, Robinson began a somewhat curious route, explained in the next chapter, to becoming a teacher of the New Testament.

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<sup>141</sup> Robinson, 'David Broughton Knox: An Appreciation', xiii.

<sup>142</sup> His attitude, for example, to church attendance was almost unnaturally sunny. When asked 'Did you ever feel rebellious against all that church upbringing?' Robinson replied, 'Not at all. I loved it ... I loved going to Church. I loved meeting everybody and so on and I have a little gold medal, given to me in 1931 for attendance at Church 52 Sundays a year.' (Cameron, Interview 2 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 7, 11). When on war service in Brisbane in the 1940s, he attended a Pentecostal church for the first time with his hosts, the Schwarz family. On Sundays he worked out a regular pattern of going to 8am communion at an Anglican Church, a mid-morning Presbyterian Church, and then an evening service at the Baptist Tabernacle. Cameron, Interview 5 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 4.





### 3. Foundations: 1952–1959

#### Early Scholarship at Moore College

A visitor to the new suburban developments growing around the Australian cities in the post-war era could quickly see what developers were intending. Networks of empty streets marked where clusters of houses would one day stand. Drained swamps awaited their transformation into family-friendly parklands. The grey concrete slabs indicated the size and shape of the houses they would one day support.

For Donald Robinson, the 1950s were, like these new housing developments, the period in which the parameters and shape of his subsequent scholarship were laid out. If the 1940s were Robinson's most formative years, and the 1960s his most productive, the 1950s were foundational. It was during this time that Robinson established himself as a teacher and scholar, and it was during this time that Robinson would offer his first published forays into what would become the mainstays of his New Testament work: church, the sacraments, canon and apostleship, eschatology, and biblical theology. Jew and Gentile is the only major area of Robinson's scholarship in which he did not publish in this period. However, as we will see, the foundations were being laid in the biblical theology course he was developing at this time. Robinson's published material from this period is littered with intriguing and provocative suggestions on Israel and the Gentiles—suggestions that would come to full flower in the following decade. The years from 1952 until 1959 are therefore arguably the most crucial period for addressing two of the three questions at the heart of this thesis: (1) what were the origins of Donald Robinson's NT theology, and (2) how did it begin to develop?

This foundation-laying period for Robinson also happens to coincide with what was perhaps the most remarkable decade in the story of Christianity's place in Australian society. The 1950s and early 1960s represents the high water mark for religious involvement in Australia, and the most successful period for evangelical Christianity in particular. But how is this to be understood? Were the 1950s the moment of synthesis and triumph for the evangelical vision of Christianity, as in Piggin's account?<sup>1</sup> Or were they the moment in which the seed of the church's subsequent demise was sown, as Lawton would argue?<sup>2</sup> And what does it mean to locate Robinson's work within this halcyon period? In Sydney, the 1950s saw D. B. Knox and Donald Robinson begin the theological revolution that would shape modern Sydney Anglicanism. Should this be understood as a period of impressive theological creativity in which a more narrow

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<sup>1</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 6.

<sup>2</sup> William Lawton, 'The Winter of Our Days: The Anglican Diocese of Sydney, 1950–1960', *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review* 9 (1990): 11–31.

sectarian Anglicanism was left behind in favour of a more broadly reformed theological vision?<sup>3</sup> Or was this the moment in which Sydney Anglicanism drank from the poisoned chalice of a separatist and world-denying eschatology, a time in which an idiosyncratic doctrine of the church was to find its way into the system and do long-term damage to traditional evangelical churchmanship?<sup>4</sup> In beginning to address some of these questions, we are also able to consider the third aspect of this thesis, the question of Robinson's influence.

...

This chapter covers the period from Robinson's appointment as a residential tutor at Moore College in 1952 through to becoming Vice-Principal to D. B. Knox in 1959 and has four main sections. First is a sketch of relevant historical context followed, second, by an account of Robinson's life at this time, noting the way in which his appointments, experiences, and teaching load contributed to his intellectual development. The third section looks at Robinson's scholarly output in this period, beginning with the crucial Moore College Biblical Theology Course developed by Robinson at this time and then through to his major published and unpublished writings on eschatology, church sacraments, and apostleship. Throughout I will seek to demonstrate the ways in which Robinson's Anglicanism, his evangelicalism, and his appropriation of the Cambridge tradition all begin to converge in his work. The final section will then draw some conclusions on the origins and development of Robinson's ideas based on the investigation.

### **3.1. Robinson In Context: Australia and Australian Christianity in the 1950s**

Robinson's return to Australia happened to coincide with one of the most fruitful periods evangelicals in Australia have ever witnessed. The economic and sociological realities of relative prosperity, cultural homogeneity, and the unifying effects of a common enemy in communism proved to be fertile ground for the churches. Evangelistic endeavours led to local revivals, significant student missions, and culminated with the extraordinary 1959 Billy Graham Crusade, creating a point at which Australia 'came closer than at any time before or since to a general spiritual awakening'.<sup>5</sup> New Bible Colleges were established and existing ones strengthened in numbers and faculty. Reformed evangelicalism in particular was buoyed by the presence of T. C. Hammond in Sydney, the establishment (in 1942) of the *Reformed Theological Review* out of

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<sup>3</sup> Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*.

<sup>4</sup> Lawton, 'Winter of Our Days'; John Reid, *Marcus L. Loane: A Biography* (Melbourne: Acorn Press, 2004), 104–109; Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, chap. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Piggan, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 7.

Melbourne, and the revival of an academic evangelicalism represented by the IVF movement in the universities.

### **3.1.1. *British, White, and Christian***

Socially and culturally, Australia was in its self-understanding (to use Hugh Chilton's trifecta) 'Christian', 'White', and 'British'.<sup>6</sup> The 1954 census reported an Australian population that was 89.4 per-cent Christian, with 41.9 per-cent Church of England. A 1955 Gallup poll reported 33 per-cent of Australians saw themselves at least as 'regular churchgoers'.<sup>7</sup> A 1948 survey had belief in God in Australia at 94 per cent, while the English were at 84 per cent, challenging the idea that Australia was an unusually Godless country.<sup>8</sup> Australians understood themselves in an uncomplicated way to be members of a Christian nation.

An observer of the 1954 Royal Visit would have been deeply impressed by the *Britishness* of Australian society at the time. That promising students like Donald Robinson would complete a second undergraduate degree at Oxford or Cambridge was an unremarkable feature of the academic world, as much to do with making connections to the Mother Country as it was about the academic opportunities.<sup>9</sup> The connection between *Britishness* and *Whiteness* were to come under strain in the 1950s as post-war immigration from southern Europe introduced a new challenge to White and British hegemony. Like a beach whose calm surface hides a powerful undertow, it was in this first of the post-war decades that Australia was drawn irresistibly toward the United States of America. The decade would end with the remarkable reception of the American evangelist Billy Graham.

The Billy Graham Crusade is an irresistible focal point for religious historians of this period. It was the largest and most successful evangelistic enterprise in Australia's history. Judd and Cable describe its effects as both 'immediate and long lasting', pointing to data such as the trebled sales of Bibles, mobilisation of parishes for evangelism, personal conversions, and the many church leaders who look to the 1959 crusade as the moment of their call into leadership.<sup>10</sup> Piggin marks the 1959 Crusade as the moment when the evangelical synthesis of 'Word', 'World', and 'Spirit' was attained and dedicates a whole chapter of his history to Graham's visit, with a sustained argument that it constituted a genuine revival.<sup>11</sup> Breward is more circumspect, seeing on

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<sup>6</sup> Hugh Chilton, 'Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia: Nation and Religion in the Public Square, 1959–1979' (PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 2014), 49–84.

<sup>7</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> D. B. Knox was in Oxford during the war years, and leading academics of the post-war era, such as Manning Clarke, Kenneth Cable, and Edwin Judge, all did second undergraduate degrees at either Oxford or Cambridge.

<sup>10</sup> Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, chap. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 7.

the one hand the unprecedented crowds as a sign of real spiritual hunger,<sup>12</sup> but noting on the other hand that the peak of Protestant worshippers in 1960 was in fact falling in relation to total population, danger signals that were masked by the expansionist mood of the 1950s, beguiling church leaders into thinking that modest updates in worship and pastoral practice would suffice to ensure continued growth.<sup>13</sup> Frame sees similar patterns<sup>14</sup> while Lawton characterizes the Graham Crusade as a blip on the radar screen—the last gasp of the 1950s, ultimately unsuccessful flirtation with evangelical revivalism as an option for mainstream Christianity in Australia.<sup>15</sup> Brewitt-Taylor’s thesis that Christian secularisation discourse preceded and in some ways contributed to the reality in Britain seems also to have been true in Australia.<sup>16</sup> Chilton has more recently argued for the genuine significance of the Graham Crusade, drawing attention to the real agency of Australian participants in the events, and to Graham’s status as an international, and not merely American, figure.<sup>17</sup>

Robinson himself had a complex relationship to Graham’s moment. On the one hand, Graham was the sort of post-fundamentalist American neo-evangelical who was the recognisable counterpart to the British evangelical renaissance of which Robinson was a part. Similarly, the world of appeals and ‘decisions for Christ’ were a staple of Robinson’s own experience of parish missions, Crusader evangelism, and the evangelistic efforts of the SUEU. However, by personality, Robinson himself was not given to such appeals, gravitating to the role of teaching more than the work of an evangelist. He was also later to express misgivings about the whole approach of framing the preaching of the gospel in what was functionally a church service complete with congregations singing and robed choirs.<sup>18</sup> On Bebbington’s quadrilateral, the *conversionist* strain in Robinson was present but somewhat muted.

### **3.1.2. Eschatology in the 1950s**

The real and perceived threats of communism, secularisation, and materialism were, at least in the early years of the 1950s, marshalled to embolden the churches for action. In 1951, for example, Archbishop Mowll claimed that the ‘total collapse of our civilization seems within the realm of possibility.’<sup>19</sup> For Mowll, however, this possibility was perceived through the optimism of a

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<sup>12</sup> Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches*, 148.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Frame, *Losing My Religion: Unbelief in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009), chap. 4. Kindle edition.

<sup>15</sup> Lawton, ‘Winter of Our Days’, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Sam Brewitt-Taylor, ‘The Invention of a “Secular Society”? Christianity and the Sudden Appearance of Secularization Discourses in British National Media, 1961–4’, *Twentieth Century British History* 24, no. 3 (2013): 327–50. For application to the Australian situation see Chilton, ‘Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia’, 34–35.

<sup>17</sup> Chilton, ‘Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia’, 175–222.

<sup>18</sup> See for example Donald Robinson, ‘The Doctrine of the Church and Its Implications for Evangelism’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 106.

<sup>19</sup> *Diocesan Magazine vol 5 no 9*, 11–12 20 February 1952, 174. Cited in Lawton, ‘Winter of Our Days’, 12.

broadly post-millennial eschatology, seeing such events as portents of a new chapter opening in the history of the world, where Christ would come in glory and power, an event for which the church must prepare through evangelism and social responsibility.<sup>20</sup> It was an eschatological optimism that seemed to have as much to do with the times as it did with particular churchmanship and theological conviction. Perth's Anglo-Catholic Archbishop Moline, like Mowll, declared in 1947 that there was 'an unrivalled opportunity for building a Christian nation in Western Australia' and in 1951 that Australia could be a 'forward base for the Kingdom of Heaven in the Southern Hemisphere.'<sup>21</sup> It was a confidence that would disappear almost without trace by the 1960s. Robinson's own forays into eschatology discussed here need to be understood against this context. Robinson's eschatology is striking for its sobriety, and somewhat modifies Lawton's picture of a community gripped by eschatological fervour.

### **3.1.3. Ecumenical Activity**

The religious energy of the 1950s was by no means confined to evangelical circles. Both locally and internationally, post-war Christianity saw a surge of new life and activity. The neo-orthodox theology of Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann was re-energizing theological enterprise. And, beginning in the late 1940s, there was a wave of activity related to institutions such as the World Council of Churches and, for Roman Catholics, the build-up toward Vatican II. Locally, the *Joint Commission of the Basis of Union* responded to the ecumenical spirit as it began work toward the unification of the Presbyterian, Congregational, and Methodist Churches. In Anglican circles, the movement toward the adoption of a new constitution was a focus of theological and organisational energy. This ecumenical activity provides crucial background for Robinson's work on the doctrine of the church.

### **3.1.4. The Sydney University Evangelical Union**

The 1950s were fruitful days for the SUEU. The Stott mission of 1952 was somewhat emblematic of the mood of the SUEU over that decade. Whereas Howard Guinness had been a flamboyant and emotional missionary, Stott represented a more content-driven, dispassionate approach to evangelism. Before the War, leadership had been almost exclusively from medical students, while after the War people like Robinson and Frank Andersen (Arts and Classics students) began to inject a more theological and intellectual strand of Christianity into the SUEU. Toward the end of the 1950s, there was a distinct movement toward more objective and reformed Christianity. Encouraged by Dutch immigrants from the reformed tradition, it resulted, for example, in John McIntosh's decision to study at Westminster in the USA rather than at Moore. It was a context in which student leaders were reading neo-orthodox theology

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>21</sup> Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches*, 141.

appreciatively, a contrast with the English student scene which remained largely nervous of theology.<sup>22</sup> The conflict in the late 1940s over Sinless Perfectionism continued to influence the SUEU, moving it to a more intellectual, less pietistic direction. Many of Robinson's students in the 1950s and 1960s were to be shaped in this environment.

### **3.1.5. Moore College**

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Moore College was still the evangelical Anglican College of T. C. Hammond. Culturally, Lawton describes it as a place in which 'subjectivism was rife.'<sup>23</sup> If by 'subjectivism' Lawton has in mind pietism and heart-religion, there were broadly two main streams represented at the College. There was the mainstream of evangelical Anglican piety represented by the figure of J. C. Ryle, and incarnated *par excellence* in the teaching and pastoral approach of Marcus Loane.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, there was the pietism represented by the holiness movement, which found its theology in Wesley and in holiness authors such Andrew Murray and Norman Grubb. Lawton himself recalls:

... I remember vividly the students who were swept up into the perfectionist movement. Some would not go to bed until they had spoken about Christ to one other person ... The desire for holiness was pervasive ... The language of desire for personal holiness and revival could be heard distinctly across the College triangle.<sup>25</sup>

It was also a College somewhat divided by churchmanship: the Young Evangelical Churchmen's League maintaining the Protestant cause, whilst others loyal to the churchmanship expressed by Christ Church St Laurence could be observed to give a 'barely perceptible nod of the head to the Communion Table and a concealed sign of the cross.'<sup>26</sup>

On Hammond's retirement in 1953, Loane became Principal. Having been associated with the College since 1934, and as Vice Principal since 1939, his impact on the College's ethos and culture had already been established. Less gregarious than Hammond, Loane was committed to personal work with the young men. He made a point, and encouraged other faculty to follow him, in visiting men in their rooms to pray with them and encourage them in their walk with Christ.<sup>27</sup> His lectures and sermons were noted for their commanding, old-style oratory and their

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<sup>22</sup> Note, for example, F. F. Bruce's experience in the student world in the 1930s. Tim Grass notes: 'After the more doctrinal cast of Scottish evangelicalism, which helped to shape Bruce and other evangelical students at Aberdeen, he appeared to have found the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU) something of a shock to his system. It had been the first to separate from the SCM (in 1910), but its grasp of theology went little beyond the evangelical basics.' Bruce's orthodoxy would later be questioned due to his appreciation of Barth. Tim Grass, *F. F. Bruce*, chap. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Lawton, "'That Woman Jezebel'", 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–15.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>27</sup> Blanch, *From Strength to Strength*, 134–36.

relentless drive toward the personal spiritual development of the students. His lecture on Acts 15, in which he expounded the reformed doctrine of justification by faith, was a moment to which several people have traced their conversions.<sup>28</sup>

### **3.2. *Donald Robinson: Priest and Lecturer***

Robinson was deaconed on 12 November 1950 and priested on 21 December 1951. In 1952, Archdeacon Hammond invited Donald Robinson to be his curate at St Philip's, Church Hill, a position he held in conjunction with the role of Lecturer at Moore College. In this way, Robinson heard Hammond preach each Sunday for two years. In 1950, he also heard Hammond lecture on Cranmer and the Lord's Supper at Moore College as part of his Deacon training. Thus Robinson, though not a graduate of Moore College, had significant contact with Hammond's teaching. He commenced lecturing at Moore in March of 1952. The family resided at the rectory of St Philip's, with Marie and their then 18-month-old son Martin. With Hammond's retirement in 1953, Robinson became a resident tutor by appointment of the then principal Marcus Loane in January of 1954.

Given the relatively small numbers at the College in the 1950s, Robinson's teaching load spanned areas as diverse as Church History, Old Testament, Liturgiology, and 'Special Doctrine.' He also conducted the weekly choir practice and hosted a fortnightly Reading Group in the family home. Had he been employed at a larger theological institution, or on the faculty of a University, his teaching and research would have been quickly narrowed to a specific area such as New Testament (or, more likely, a sub-set within New Testament). As it was, the small size of the College, together with its commission to train priests for the diocese, meant that Robinson began to teach across a wide range of subjects, allowing the kind of synthesis and creative interplay that a more narrow focus might not. The demands of his curacy at St Philip's were also significant, including, for example, conducting 319 weddings over the two years of 1952 and 1953.<sup>29</sup> When in the 1980s Robinson entered into conflict with his clergy over the remarriage of divorced persons, he had at least some parish experience behind him.

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<sup>28</sup> Lawton, for example, says of a lecture of Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council: 'As Canon Loane expounded the doctrine of the unmerited grace of God, I committed my life to Christ ... Over the years, I am told, several students have been converted during this series of lectures, suddenly and dramatically.' Lawton, "That Woman Jezebel", 12.

<sup>29</sup> Robinson, 'Some Rectors and Recollections', 58.



### 3.3. *Robinson's Scholarship*

Robinson came to Moore College with a small publishing record already in place. Hammond had published books and pamphlets—intellectually rigorous but often intended for a popular audience. Loane, though a keen intellect, had mostly written devotional books and inspirational biography. By comparison, Robinson's work was decidedly academic. His first published work of New Testament scholarship was his 1949 piece in the *Evangelical Quarterly* on the semantic range of the term *παραβολή* in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>30</sup> Unlike Loane, who had argued for the priority of Matthew,<sup>31</sup> Robinson accepted the current critical consensus of the priority of Mark and the existence of Q.<sup>32</sup> The article goes on to be a confident and sophisticated example of form criticism. He argues that the common modern English understanding of the word 'parable' as a short story illustrating a specific point needs to be tested against actual usage in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>33</sup> When tested, the lexical definition is found wanting and, according to Robinson, a rigorous linguistic study demonstrates different usage of the word from Mark to Luke, and finally to Matthew. Matthew emerges as the 'first Form critic'<sup>34</sup> with novel usage of *παραβολή* as meaning something like the modern definition of a didactic story.

The article is striking for several reasons. Firstly, it is an early instance of what would become a characteristic linguistic approach to the New Testament, deployed later especially on the question of 'church' (*ἐκκλησία*) in the New Testament. Secondly, it is noteworthy for the discernible confidence and self-assured attitude with which the then 27-year-old undergraduate of Queens' College, Cambridge approached his study, cheerfully setting out to demolish positions advocated in many cases by those who taught him at Cambridge.<sup>35</sup> And thirdly, the article exhibits a combination of critical scholarly work with personal faith, a combination that had proved so elusive to evangelicals in the pre-War period. Here, an article that leans heavily on form criticism, that engages with the best of critical contemporary scholarship, and that draws a somewhat critical conclusion, nevertheless ends with an invitation to 'observe how God the Holy Spirit speaks through the thoughts and words of men in such a way as to provide a rich

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<sup>30</sup> Donald Robinson, 'The Use of *Parabolē* in the Synoptic Gospels', *Evangelical Quarterly*, vol. 21 (1949): 93–108.

<sup>31</sup> Blanch, *From Strength to Strength*, 187.

<sup>32</sup> Robinson, 'The Use of *Parabolē* in the Synoptic Gospels', 93–94.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>35</sup> As examples of this confidence, he challenges the linguistic work of Professor C. H. Dodd in footnote 3. He also challenges an assumption shared by 'most commentators since Adolf Jülicher.' And note the brash reply to B. T. D. Smith's comment in the Cambridge Bible Commentary regarding the difficulty of interpreting *παραβολή* in two different ways in one section, to which Robinson curtly replies: 'No such difficulty exists.' *Ibid.*, 96.

perspective on the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>36</sup> Piety and critical scholarship were not incompatible for Robinson.

In April 1951, he published a similarly academic piece in *The Evangelical Quarterly* on the date and significance of the Last Supper.<sup>37</sup> In it, he argues, via close attention to specific Greek phraseology, that there is no discrepancy between John's Gospel and the Synoptic date for the Last Supper, with both agreeing on the night of Passover itself.<sup>38</sup> The article, like the 1949 one that preceded it, demonstrates the same close attention to the text, critical interrogation, and scholarly confidence. It ends with some fresh suggestions for John's possible OT allusions in his account of the Last Supper, thus delivering on the article's promise to say something about the *significance* as well as the *date* of the Last Supper.

Also in 1951, Robinson published a booklet through Tyndale House called 'Josiah's Reforms and the "Book of the Law"'. It is an interrogation of the historiographical questions surrounding the discovery of 'the book of the Law' in the reign of Josiah. It is another example of the conservative-critical scholarship in which Robinson was engaged. Old Testament scholar Andrew Reid describes it as indicative of his later scholarship, noting that

[t]here is close attention to detail and a constant open and free questioning of the text; broad linguistic ability spanning both Hebrew and Greek; deep analysis and understanding of the flow of the text and its inherent structure; willingness to independently explore, compare and contrast sources and to assess their implications; measured intertextual interaction; and readiness to read the text in its own right rather than prejudging it or forcing upon it preconceived notions. He is aware of the differences that exist between ancient and modern commentators on the text and the impact this has on interpretation. Here, as elsewhere, he demonstrates that he is unafraid to go against the grain of accepted opinion and to follow where the text leads on the basis of his detailed exegesis.<sup>39</sup>

Also noteworthy is the fact that it is on an OT topic. He also wrote two small articles on 'Obadiah' and 'Jonah' for the *New Bible Commentary* at around this time. This shows that Robinson was happy to move between the two Testaments, perhaps as yet not settled on whether to be an OT or NT scholar. Years later, after attending an OT paper at the Fellowship for Biblical Studies in Sydney, he commented to OT scholar Graeme Goldsworthy that he 'wondered if he should

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>37</sup> Donald Robinson, 'The Date and Significance of the Last Supper', *Evangelical Quarterly*, no. 23 (1951): 126–33.

<sup>38</sup> It has been commonly understood that John places the Last Supper on the night before Passover, and the Synoptic Gospels on the night of Passover itself.

<sup>39</sup> Reid, 'Evangelical Hermeneutics and Old Testament Preaching', 256–57.

have stayed with the OT.<sup>40</sup> The diversity of his teaching load would continue to foster the story of diachronic and synthetic thinking crucial to the discipline of biblical theology. It is to the emergence of that discipline at Moore College which I now turn.

### **3.3.1. The Biblical Theology Course**

Robinson's pioneering work in the discipline of biblical theology has arguably been the most influential aspect of his work. Yet, mediated as it was through classroom teaching rather than publications, and advanced through his students rather than by himself directly, his role in its development was for a long time hidden from historical view. Recent work has drawn attention to his seminal role.<sup>41</sup> The 1950s was the crucial period.

In 1954, the then principal Marcus Loane asked Robinson to teach the 'Special Doctrine' course to first-year students at Moore. The course had originally focused on the central evangelical doctrine of the Atonement. Robinson, having recently done the doctrine of church in Special Doctrine at Cambridge with C. F. D. Moule, persuaded Loane to allow that to be his focus at Moore.<sup>42</sup> This was to be the basis for the biblical theology course.

In developing the course, Robinson engaged a series of conversation partners to whom he had been exposed at Cambridge: A. G. Hebert, Norman Snaith, G. Ernest Wright, R. V. G. Tasker, and Sir Edwyn Hoskyns. First among these was C. H. Dodd, whose own approach pervades Robinson's work. Robinson himself notes that Dodd's *According to Scripture: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* appeared in 1952, when Robinson was in his first year of lecturing.<sup>43</sup> He also cites Oscar Cullman's *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Concept of Time and History* as a formative influence.<sup>44</sup>

Robinson and Knox had both been impressed by a J. I. Packer article on the importance of the idea of covenant in the Bible's story.<sup>45</sup> The covenantal approach was suggestive to Robinson of a way in which the Bible's disparate parts could be integrated. However, in what would become one of the distinguishing features of biblical theology at Moore College, covenant came

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<sup>40</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 20, footnote 4.

<sup>41</sup> On Robinson's role in the development of biblical theology in Australia, see Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*. See also Shiner, 'An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson's New Testament Theology'; Reid, 'Evangelical Hermeneutics and Old Testament Preaching'.

<sup>42</sup> Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions', 2.

<sup>43</sup> In a footnote, Robinson recalls that his friend Brevard Childs, himself a leader in the new wave of Biblical Theology, wrote to Robinson to tell him of the impact Dodd's Stone Lectures at Princeton had had on him. (Childs was at Princeton while Robinson was at Cambridge). These lectures, given at Princeton in March of 1950, were the basis for the book *According to Scripture*. *Ibid.*, 3, footnote 4. Childs and Robinson had met each other in 1947 as leaders on the Campus in the Woods camp. They stayed in contact after that.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Robinson mentions the existence of this article in both 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions' and in "The Church" Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment', 262. In neither article can he recall the name and provenance of the piece by Packer.

to assume a smaller place than was typical of other reformed approaches. Covenant was subsumed under wider ideas such as the Kingdom of God (again, a Dodd emphasis).<sup>46</sup> Along with this, Robinson rejected the conventional idea that 'Israel' was fulfilled in 'the church'; a position that was to be worked through in dozens of articles and publications over the next few years. As we will note further in chapter 4, the dispensationalism with which Robinson had contact through Brethren and Baptist teachers at the SUEU also brought some exegetical questions to the table that were to prove creative for Robinson's biblical theology. Robinson rejected dispensationalism's answers, but imbibed its questions.

The biblical theology course was also developing through personal contact between Robinson and the leading Anglo-Catholic scholar Father Gabriel Hebert. Hebert was a member of the Society of the Sacred Mission and teacher at St Michael's House, Crafers, South Australia between 1950 and 1960. Robinson had met Hebert at a small conference of evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics at St Paul's College, Sydney in 1952. The conference, organised by Mowll, focused on the doctrine of scripture. Robinson was in more or less continuous discussion with Hebert from 1952 to 1960, particularly influenced by Hebert's understanding of the nature of theological education as an effort to engage with God by entering the scriptural story.<sup>47</sup>

In 1957, Hebert published a critique of evangelical and fundamentalist approaches to scripture, *Fundamentalism and the Church of God*.<sup>48</sup> He alleged evangelicals were timid in their exegesis and lacked an integrated biblical theology.<sup>49</sup> It was a book to which J. I. Packer would reply with his well-known *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God*.<sup>50</sup> It is an interesting reflection on the local theological scene around Moore College that Hebert does not seem to have thought of Robinson and his colleagues as guilty of the exegetical and theological crimes under investigation in his book. Indeed, Hebert's Preface acknowledges 'conservative evangelical friends here in Australia ... who have helped me much by the loan of books and in discussion'—a clear reference to Robinson.<sup>51</sup> Hebert also wrote warmly of T. C. Hammond's *Inspiration and Authority* and apparently wrote to Robinson at an early stage describing Hammond as 'a real theologian!'<sup>52</sup> Thus, whilst the theology of British evangelicalism was shaping itself against the criticism levelled by Hebert, the Moore College biblical theology course was being developed in consultation with Hebert.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>47</sup> Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions', 5.

<sup>48</sup> Gabriel Hebert, *Fundamentalism and the Church of God* (London: SCM, 1957).

<sup>49</sup> Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions', 6.

<sup>50</sup> J. I. Packer, *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958).

<sup>51</sup> Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions', 6.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

The course itself was originally intended as an introductory course for first-year students looking toward Anglican ministry. As such, it was to be a survey of the whole College curriculum, including the creeds and the liturgy. With regard to the Bible in particular, the great concern was to read the Bible ‘on its own terms,’<sup>53</sup> to enter the Bible ‘on a journey of exploration and discovery, without knowing what it would tell us next.’<sup>54</sup> It would, says Robinson, ‘speak for itself, whether or not we knew what to do with it in the end.’<sup>55</sup> There are clear affinities here with Barth’s re-discovery of ‘the strange new world of the Bible.’ If Loane had tended to open the Bible with a view to discovering that which we share with NT believers, Robinson was on a mission to make the Bible strange again, to lead students to discover the differences between their situation and ours. Loane found in Acts 15 the reformed doctrine of justification by faith. Robinson was more likely to draw the students’ attention to a Jerusalem church that still participated in the temple cult and still retained prestige among the churches of the Gentiles. The fact that it was not immediately obvious how this would ‘land’ in contemporary Australia was part of the thrill. For students, it felt as if they were reading the Bible for the first time.

Probably the most distinctive element of the course was the three stages in which Robinson framed the Bible’s story: (1) from the promises of Abraham to the fulfilment in Solomon, (2) from the decline of Solomon’s kingdom through to the period of the prophets, and (3) from Christ to the consummation of the ages.<sup>56</sup> Hebert had a similar division in his *Christ the Fulfiller*. The idea that there is a promise and fulfilment pattern to the Bible, with the OT being promise and the NT fulfilment, has been a mainstay of Christian approaches to scripture from very early times. The idea, however, that there is a promise and fulfilment pattern within the OT itself, with Solomon’s kingdom as a fulfilment of the earlier promises, and the NT as largely a fulfilment of the radical new promises made in the wake of the kingdom’s collapse and subsequent exile—this appears to be a genuine innovation of Australian biblical theology.<sup>57</sup> As such, it is a paradigm example of the Robinson synthesis at work. Anglicanism brought him into conversation with Anglo-Catholic scholars like Hebert, evangelicalism disposed him to see the Bible as a coherent unity, and the Cambridge tradition allowed him to develop his thought in conversation with the best of conservative-critical approaches like that of Dodd and Flew. Finally, and crucially, the small numbers and collegiate atmosphere of Moore College, in which Robinson developed this work without any apparent sense of fear that he was moving beyond

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<sup>53</sup> J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958).

<sup>54</sup> Robinson, ‘Origins and Unresolved Tensions’, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Goldsworthy and Reid both judge this to be one of the key distinguishing insights in Robinson’s schema. Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 24–26; Reid, ‘Evangelical Hermeneutics and Old Testament Preaching’, 153.

<sup>57</sup> Reid, ‘Evangelical Hermeneutics and Old Testament Preaching’, 139–163.

traditional evangelical boundary markers, meant that he could break new ground in an environment of trust and freedom. There is an element of serendipity and happenstance in the emergence of biblical theology in the 1950s at Moore College. However, a seed that falls on the path cannot grow, no matter what its promise. The seed of biblical theology fell, in the 1950s, on good soil.

### **3.3.2. Eschatology**

Lawton has alleged that evangelical Christianity in Sydney in the 1950s featured a revival of apocalyptic, pre-millennial eschatology, the effect of which can be felt to this day. For Lawton, ‘futurism haunts its [that is, Sydney Anglicanism’s] theology.’<sup>58</sup> This resulted in a view of the church as separate from the world and accounts for the apparently world-denying and sectarian nature of the so-called ‘Knox-Robinson view of church.’<sup>59</sup> Political fears and societal changes meant that Sydney Anglicans translated ‘their fears into a preoccupation with eschatology and the heavenly church.’<sup>60</sup> In Lawton’s narrative, it is a clear difference between Mowll and the generation of leadership that would follow. Whereas Mowll was optimistic and engaged with the world in the 1930s and 1940s:

The *Australian Church Record*, an independent evangelical Anglican newspaper circulating in the diocese, had gloomy expectations for the 1950s and its introspection contrasts with the optimistic programs of Archbishop Mowll.<sup>61</sup>

As the editors of the *ACR* were Robinson and Knox, it is the Mowll-Hammond to Knox-Robinson comparison that Lawton has in mind. Lawton recognised some nuance separating Robinson’s eschatology from both the optimism of Mowll and the pessimism of pre-millennialism. He acknowledged that

At the same time, Donald Robinson . . . introduced other new courses on ‘biblical theology’ . . . Evangelicals increasingly described themselves as a-millennial —a theology that sat loose to the imagery of apocalypticism whilst retaining its futurism. The ‘Battle of Armageddon’, so central to millennialist interpretation . . . now focused on the death of Christ. That event became the herald of the eschaton, the foretaste of the end of the times. By this explanation, the eschatology of the revivalist movement was adapted to the new theological education, but shorn of its exaggerated millennialism and its pietistic introspection.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Lawton, ‘Winter of Our Days’, 11.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 28.

The example of Robinson's eschatology in the 1950s substantially challenges and very nearly undermines Lawton's picture of eschatology in Sydney in the 1950s. This is the case I wish to demonstrate here.

Eschatology was certainly a concern of the biblical theology course Robinson was developing in the 1950s. The then current discussions of 'realised' and 'inaugurated' eschatologies were followed with interest by Robinson. He was particularly taken with Dodd's notion of realised eschatology. In 1954, Robinson outlined his understanding of New Testament eschatology to clergy at a Diocesan Clergy School at Moss Vale. These talks, which were expanded for Moore College Chapel addresses and for a Christian Graduates Conference in Paraparaumu, New Zealand in June 1957, were eventually published as *The Hope of Christ's Coming*, in 1958. The booklet includes a note of thanks to both Knox and to Father Hebert.

One of the reasons Dodd's scholarship was held in suspicion by many evangelicals was precisely because of his distaste for apocalyptic and future eschatology. Robinson certainly did not share any 'distaste' for eschatology. He did, however, share Dodd's cool attitude to the pre-millennial atmosphere of the time. In *The Hope of Christ's Coming*, Robinson offers popular-level exposition of a realised, a-millennial eschatology. The booklet begins with what, compared with many other treatments by evangelicals in the 1950s, is a remarkably sanguine and irenic account of communism. In his visit to America in 1947, Robinson had been asked to give a talk on communism, and recalls that he was considered 'decidedly pink' for even knowing about dialectical materialism. Robinson had been schooled in dialectical materialism by Fred Schwarz with whom he had boarded in Brisbane in 1943.<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, to Sydney Anglican clergy in 1954, Robinson claimed that 'Christians ... are not greatly concerned about that part of their faith which has to do with the future.'<sup>64</sup> At least from Robinson's perspective, futurism was not a feature of his circles.

The fruits of Robinson's developing biblical theology are everywhere evident in this work. Chapter 3, 'The Day of the Lord', expounds an account of OT eschatology in terms of 'the reign of God' and 'the day of the Lord'. Here Robinson argues that a day of judgment, both vindication and condemnation, is deeply woven into the OT texts. The day of the Lord will be 'the vindication of God's true and elect people against all her accusers and oppressors.'<sup>65</sup> The

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<sup>63</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Fifty Years of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students', *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review* 23 & 24 (1998–1997): 111–20. Fred Schwarz was a medical doctor, a Pentecostal Christian, and a tireless campaigner against communism. See his Fred Schwarz, *Beating the Unbeatable Foe: One Man's Victory over Communism, Leviathan, and the Last Enemy* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Pub, 1996).

<sup>64</sup> Donald Robinson, *The Hope of Christ's Coming* (Beecroft, NSW: Evangelical Tracts and Publications, 1958), 3.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

tragic element of the OT story is that 'Israel will find herself among God's enemies if she continues in disobedience to His covenant.'<sup>66</sup> Unlike many evangelical treatments of the time, which tend to read 'the day of the Lord' as a general and universal theme, for Robinson it was only within Israel's story that the idea found its sense.

For the NT, Robinson grounds his understanding of the eschatological import of Jesus as the fulfilment of the story of Israel. Jesus acted in a way that would signify to his contemporaries 'the day of the Lord.' In the Gospels, Jesus acts by providing bread in the wilderness (John 6), enters into Jerusalem as its king (John 12:13), and cleanses the temple (Matt 21:12). All these are singled out as sign-acts of the end. By them, Jesus communicates to his generation that 'the kingdom of God has come with power' (Mark 9:1).<sup>67</sup>

Similarly, Acts and the Epistles mark this in-breaking of the kingdom of God. In the period after the ascension, the two events would continue to mark this time as 'the day of the Lord': the outpouring of God's Spirit and the conversion of the Gentiles. For Robinson it was realities grounded in OT expectation that continued to persuade NT writers that they were in the last days.<sup>68</sup> Robinson goes on to outline a classical C. H. Dodd-style account of NT eschatology, based on the twin assertions that the end is entirely compassed by the person and work of Jesus and that through him, the end has been inaugurated but not yet consummated.<sup>69</sup>

In *The Hope of Christ's Coming* Robinson understands contemporary Christians as within the perspective of the NT, still looking for an imminent second coming of Christ. 'If we have lost our hope for the future,' says Robinson, 'we are no longer Christians like the first believers in Jesus Christ.'<sup>70</sup> Later in his career, Robinson would revise this estimate and wonder whether NT eschatology was indeed a point at which we could not stand within the NT, with its expectation of Christ's imminent return, but must now stand apart.<sup>71</sup> We will return to Robinson's developing eschatology in chapters 6 and 9. Evidently here in 1954, he was happy with the conventional evangelical understanding.

On the second coming of Christ, Robinson argues for a literal, future, and bodily return of Jesus. However, he warns against attempts to discover a programme of events in the lead up to it,

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Note how crucial these insights would be for N. T. Wright's multi-volume project *Christian Origins and the Question of God*.

<sup>67</sup> There are interesting affinities here with what would come to be labelled the 'Third Quest' approach to the historical Jesus. See N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2, *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 83–120.

<sup>68</sup> Robinson, *The Hope of Christ's Coming*, 16.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 16–18.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>71</sup> For further discussion of Robinson's eschatology and particularly the Parousia, see chapter 8.



and he cautions against overly literalistic readings of passages associated with the parousia.<sup>72</sup> He specifically distances himself from the ideas that either the rise of communism or the establishment of the state of Israel has any direct bearing on eschatology.<sup>73</sup> For Robinson, the direct implications of New Testament eschatology are a personally expectant piety and an impetus to evangelism.<sup>74</sup> Mowll's optimistic post-millennialism is gone, its only trace perhaps being that we must 'evangelize to a finish to bring back the king.'<sup>75</sup> However, the pessimistic pre-millennial outlook that would feature in the preaching of, for example, Billy Graham is also rejected. What is put in its place is (*pace* Lawton) not a re-packaged revivalist eschatology, but rather a sober NT eschatology gleaned from some of the best critical scholarship of the day, infused with evangelical piety and hope. Rather than fanning millennial excesses, Robinson used his opportunity to bring eschatology into sober, serious, and scholarly perspective.

### **3.3.3. The Origins of the 'Knox-Robinson View of Church'**

For Lawton, the most significant theological artefact of the 1950s was not its eschatology as such, but its illegitimate child, the new doctrine of the church:

From that volatile period, the doctrine of the church emerged as the most significant contribution to the present generation ... The theology of the church was forged out of the anxieties of the fifties yet it has survived because it questioned the biblical foundations of the denomination. In this sense, its emergence in mid-decade marked the end of the older evangelical concerns about churchmanship and sectarian rivalry. It was the focus of new interests in 'biblical theology' and led inevitably to changed pastoral and preaching attitudes in the diocese.<sup>76</sup>

The origins of the 'Knox-Robinson view of church' are a curiously contested feature of the relevant historiography. The phrase itself first began to appear in print in the mid 1980s. Judd and Cable's history of the diocese discussed the views of Knox and Robinson on church, but does not introduce the compound 'Knox-Robinson'.<sup>77</sup> Then in 1987, Graham Cole presented a paper at the Moore College school of theology in which he outlined a view he called 'the Robinson-Knox Corrective' and goes on to speak of the 'Robinson-Knox concept' or the

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<sup>72</sup> Robinson, *The Hope of Christ's Coming*, 20–21.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 31. How this combines with the earlier statement that Christians do not think much about the future is not clear. I suspect that in the earlier statement, he meant Sydney Anglican clergy and his immediate circles, whereas in the later statements on concern about communism and Israel, he was thinking more generally about evangelicals in the parachurch organisations in Sydney with which he was familiar. Robinson's views of the modern State of Israel are discussed at the relevant points in chapter 6 and 8.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>76</sup> Lawton, 'Winter of Our Days', 20.

<sup>77</sup> Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, chap. 17.

‘Robinson-Knox line’ (always with ‘Robinson’ first). He does not in this paper use the now canonical phrase the ‘Knox-Robinson view of church.’<sup>78</sup>

As quoted above, Lawton places its emergence in the mid 1950s and associates it with the newly emerging biblical theology and with the wider prevailing eschatology. This is not correct. In the 1950’s Knox was propounding a view unrecognisable as the ‘Knox-Robinson’ view.<sup>79</sup> The first written piece with a distinct ‘Knox-Robinson view’ does not appear until 1959.<sup>80</sup> If Lawton is correct to claim that Sydney Anglican theology fed a fearful ‘little flock’ ecclesiology and mentality, the ‘Knox-Robinson view’ corrected rather than fed such a posture. Judd and Cable date its emergence in the early 1960s (correctly) and note its impact on subsequent attitudes to the diocese and wider ACA.<sup>81</sup> It was not, however, until the 1980s that people (not Knox or Robinson) began to identify and speak of a ‘Knox-Robinson view’ in academic contexts, though its influence via the pulpits of Sydney had been felt long before that. These treatments from the 1980s begin to assume the existence of a ‘Knox-Robinson view’ that was to some extent coordinated by Knox and Robinson themselves. More recent treatments have begun attempting to disentangle the views of Knox from that of Robinson.<sup>82</sup> Edwin Judge has reported Robinson strongly rejecting the idea that there was such a thing as the ‘Knox-Robinson view’: ‘There wasn’t

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<sup>78</sup> Graham Cole, ‘The Doctrine of the Church: Towards Conceptual Clarification’, in *Church, Worship and the Local Congregation*, vol. 2, Explorations (Sydney: Lancer Books, 1987), 3–17.

In his PhD thesis, Chase Kuhn reflects on the ‘Knox-Robinson’ compound. He says:

We may speculate that the name “Knox-Robinson view” places Knox first because of his charisma. Also, Knox’s style was looser than Robinson’s more careful approach, making Knox seem edgier to his students. In the development of ideas, this would have made the original propositions attractive. It also may have been due to the fact that Knox was the senior partner – he was older, he was the Principal, he had earned his doctorate, etc. One way or another, Knox was identified as the primary source. The reality, at least in our understanding of their thought, is that Robinson did the preliminary legwork for the ecclesiology that developed. Kuhn, ‘The Ecclesiology of Donald Robinson & David Broughton Knox’, 247.

It is interesting to note that, if my contention is correct that Cole was in fact the first to use the compound here, then it was first offered as the ‘Robinson-Knox’ rather than ‘Knox-Robinson’ position. In the context of Cole’s paper, this is because he begins (rightly) with Robinson’s linguistic work and sees Knox as having built on that. In this way, Kuhn and Cole agree on the way in which ideas moved from Robinson to Knox and the older designation of ‘Robinson-Knox’ is in this sense the most historically accurate.

In the essay that follows and responds to Cole, Robert Doyle speaks of the ‘Knox-Robinson view’ (with Knox first) and so Doyle may provide the first instance in print of the now canonical nomenclature. See Robert Doyle, ‘A Response to Graham Cole’s Paper’, in *Church, Worship and the Local Congregation* (Sydney: Lancer Books, 1987), 19–25.

<sup>79</sup> D. Broughton Knox, ‘The Church and the People of God in the Old Testament’, in *Selected Works of Broughton Knox: Church and Ministry*, ed. Kirsten Birkett, vol. 2 (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2003), 9–17.

<sup>80</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘The Church in the New Testament’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 212–21.

<sup>81</sup> Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, chap. 17.

<sup>82</sup> See Judd, ‘When Grandpa Met the Queen’, 36; Rory Shiner, ‘D. B. Knox’, in *Church of the Triune God: Understanding God’s Work in His People Today*, ed. Michael P. Jensen (Sydney: Aquila Press, 2013), 123–39. I also note that Graham Cole’s 1987 paper, despite using the compound ‘Robinson-Knox’, does carefully delineate Robinson from Knox, pointing out their distinct contributions and even areas of disagreement. See Cole, ‘The Doctrine of the Church: Towards Conceptual Clarification’, 5–7.

any such thing!’<sup>83</sup> Robinson has also claimed that he and Knox never directly collaborated or even spoke about the doctrine. In 1989, Robinson himself believed the story of the doctrine’s origins were sufficiently contested to write a piece entitled “‘The Church’ Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’,<sup>84</sup> in which he gave his account of the origins and development of his thinking.

What can we establish regarding the contested origins and development of this work on the doctrine of the church? In the context of the 1950s, we can ask: When did it emerge? What were its sources? And is there any evidence of collaboration between Knox and Robinson? There are three interrelated lines of evidence to consider: (1) the scholarly influences on Robinson, (2) the wider historical context, and (3) the question of direct collaboration with Knox.

### *Scholarly Influences*

Lawton is correct to associate this new thinking on the doctrine of the church with the biblical theology that was an emerging part of the College curriculum under Robinson in the 1950s. ‘Church’ had been a key focus of the Biblical Theology Movement in Britain and the United States.<sup>85</sup> As early as August of 1950, D. B. Knox was presenting his emerging views on the topic.<sup>86</sup> Robinson’s first published piece appears in *St Mark’s Review* in 1959. Between Knox’s 1950 paper and Robinson’s 1959 piece lies a vast chasm, with Knox’s reasonably conventional treatment contrasting sharply with Robinson’s original and energetic 1959 paper. Knox’s next publication on the topic was not until 1973, by which time Knox had radically revised the viewpoint of the 1950 paper, bringing many of Robinson’s insights to bear. Thus, while Knox’s 1950 paper demonstrates an early interest and nascent biblical theological approach to the topic, it is Robinson’s 1959 essay that is the first published example of work bearing ‘Knox-Robinson’ characteristics. Therefore the key period of the doctrine’s emergence is between 1950 and 1959.

Lawton’s claim that the view arose from the ‘anxieties of the 1950s’ is unfair. Knox’s 1950 paper does have a certain besieged feel to it, with its emphasis on the idea of a remnant elect

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<sup>83</sup> Edwin Judge, quoted in Judd, ‘When Grandpa Met the Queen’, 36.

<sup>84</sup> Robinson, “‘The Church’ Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’.

<sup>85</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970). See especially 82–87. The relationship between the Biblical Theology Movement Childs describes and the biblical theology emerging under Robinson at Moore College from the 1950s is real, but complex. Robinson’s biblical theology is better understood as a cousin, rather than a child, of the Biblical Theology Movement. For the difficulties of defining biblical theology generally see the detailed discussion in Reid, ‘Evangelical Hermeneutics and Old Testament Preaching’, 15–107. For a description of where the Biblical Theology Movement fits within the broader map of biblical theology, see pages 55–58 of this thesis.

<sup>86</sup> Knox, ‘The Church and the People of God in the Old Testament’.

within a wider and often faithless visible church.<sup>87</sup> This is directed at evangelical survival in the context of an institutional Church in which Anglo-Catholic churchmanship predominated. As such, it could perhaps be characterised as at least responding to anxiety. However, the so-called ‘Knox-Robinson view’ would precisely *reject* the idea of a remnant mentality. Rather than a product of anxiety, it reflected a new confidence as both men interacted with contemporary scholarship and forged a new and assertive account of the spiritual prestige of the local gathering.

Robinson himself accounts for his own thinking as arising in Cambridge in late 1947. C. F. D. Moule’s ‘Special Doctrine’ course that year was to be on ‘Church’, a topic with which Robinson was initially disappointed, as it seemed to him to be outside the main concerns of his evangelical priorities.<sup>88</sup> In his course reading, Robinson became deeply impressed with F. J. A. Hort’s classic study *The Christian Ecclesia*. Through reading Hort, Robinson became sensitive to the potential confusion and ambiguity caused by Christian tradition’s use of the word ‘church’ to designate the totality of Christian people. Hort argued for a narrow usage in the NT. Ironically, Knox’s 1950 paper is an excellent example of the sort of linguistic and anachronistic fallacies to which Robinson was becoming sensitised.

Robinson was further stimulated by the evident disagreement between R. Newton Flew and J. Y. Campbell, both of whom were members of C. H. Dodd’s New Testament seminars in Cambridge, which Robinson had attended. Flew had argued for the Church as the new Israel, while Campbell had argued that, in choosing ἐκκλησία the early Christians were simply adopting the most obvious Greek word available to describe their practice of meeting together. For Campbell, the use of ἐκκλησία had little theological import, and did not imply a transfer of Israel categories to the Gentile church.<sup>89</sup> Flew’s work was published in 1938 whereas Campbell presented his paper at a meeting of the Cambridge Theological Society on 29 January 1948. It is entirely probable that Robinson was present at that meeting.

C. F. D. Moule’s own combination of a biblical-theological approach with rigorous linguistic analysis impressed Robinson deeply.<sup>90</sup> Moule himself had published an article in 1950 on the Church and this, along with Alan Cole’s Tyndale lecture of July in 1950, provided stimulation to Robinson just as he was preparing to return to Australia.<sup>91</sup> Karl Barth had also published an essay in the WCC’s *The Universal Church in God’s Design* in which he claimed the

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<sup>87</sup> See especially Knox, ‘The Church and the People of God in the Old Testament’, 16.

<sup>88</sup> Robinson, ‘“The Church” Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’, 260.

<sup>89</sup> J. Y. Campbell, ‘The Origin and Meaning of the Christian Use of the Word ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ’, *The Journal of Theological Studies* 49, no. 195/196 (1948): 130–142.

<sup>90</sup> Robinson, ‘“The Church” Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’, 261.

<sup>91</sup> C. F. D. Moule, ‘Sanctuary and Sacrifice in the Church of the New Testament’, *The Journal of Theological Studies* New Series, 1, no. 1 (1950): 29–41; Alan Cole, *The New Temple: A Study in the Origins of the Catechetical Form of the Church in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Tyndale, 1950).

Church was neither the ‘invisible fellowship’ nor the ‘visible community’ but rather the event of gathering in the name of Christ.<sup>92</sup>

The historical value of Robinson’s 1989 essay on the origins of his work on the doctrine of church needs to be critically assessed.<sup>93</sup> It is polemic and apologetic in character and was given whilst Robinson was Archbishop and at a time when ‘his’ doctrine of church was being used to oppose decisions and emphases of his episcopate. Nevertheless, what the paper does clearly establish is that the origins of Robinson’s work cannot be simply located in evangelical anxieties of the 1950s. On the contrary, Robinson’s work was clearly part of a wider conversation among broadly ecumenical and critical scholars in the 1940s and 1950s, none of whom were nervously responding to situations in the Australian church scene. Whilst the work may have been pressed into particular service in Sydney in the decades to follow, it was not eccentric, nor the product of anxieties, nor accounted for merely by reference to local conditions.

### *Historical Factors*

Robinson’s 1959 paper ‘The Church in the New Testament’ acknowledged its own context. He refers both to the then proposed new *Constitution of the Church of England in Australia* and to the ‘great practical problem’ of inter-communion, which, according to Robinson, was ‘little dealt with in the New Testament because there was little threat to complete mutual recognition and acknowledgement.’<sup>94</sup>

Michael Jensen notes the World Council of Churches initiative was treated with puzzlement and suspicion by many evangelicals.<sup>95</sup> Howard Mowll warmly supported the movement. Indeed, in Mowll’s case, support of the WCC cost him the first presidency of the IFES.<sup>96</sup> Marcus Loane had concerns,<sup>97</sup> as did the younger figures of Knox and Robinson. However, whereas most evangelical opposition to the WCC stemmed from a broader concern about the place of doctrine in general, Robinson’s objections related to what he found to be unbiblical and over-reaching claims about the place and nature of the church in particular. In this way, Knox and Robinson trod an unusual path: while reflective evangelicals often conceded

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<sup>92</sup> Karl Barth, ‘The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ’, in *God Here and Now* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 75–104.

<sup>93</sup> Robinson, ‘“The Church” Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’.

<sup>94</sup> Robinson, ‘The Church in the New Testament’, 221.

<sup>95</sup> Jensen, *Sydney Anglicanism*, chap. 6.

<sup>96</sup> Robinson, ‘“The Church” Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’, 271, endnote 8.

<sup>97</sup> Blanch, *From Strength to Strength*, 171–72.

ecclesiology was not ‘their thing’, Robinson, along with Knox, challenged the ecumenical movement precisely at the point of its traditional strength—its ecclesiology.

The work on forming a constitution for the Church of England in Australia in the 1950s was also a factor. Robinson and Knox had both been keen opponents of the constitution, often on theological grounds. Robinson did not object to the title ‘Church of England’ as such; but he was concerned that in the constitution particular prerogatives and privileges of the church of God were being transferred to the national body.

### *Collaboration with Knox?*

Knox’s 1950 paper on church had originally been presented at the Goulburn Diocese Clergy Conference in August of that year. It is a fascinating document because it demonstrates a point before the key insights that would form the ‘Knox-Robinson view’ had crystallised. It is in many ways a conventional account of the church, assuming more or less T. C. Hammond’s basic understanding. As Trevor Edwards describes it, it is clear at this stage that ‘Knox was still arguing within traditional evangelical categories.’<sup>98</sup> In terms of linguistics, the paper is partly built on the claim that ‘church’ means ‘called out’—an example of the etymological fallacy Robinson was so intent on avoiding, and which Knox would avoid in subsequent scholarship. In any case, the paper lacks the crucial linguistic-exegetical contention that ἐκκλησία in its NT usage (as opposed to its etymology or lexical status) only refers to gathered entities, whether locally gathered or gathered ‘in the heavenlies’. Knox rather argues for a remnant concept of church in which the true church may be hidden within the institutional church, asserting that it is ‘possible to be a member of the Church and not a member of Christ’.<sup>99</sup> Where the paper does represent a harbinger of future work is in a fledgling attempt at a biblical-theological method. Though the paper represents the basic theology of T. C. Hammond on church, it departs methodologically from Hammond with its attempt to trace the concept chronologically and diachronically across the Old and New Testaments.

Four months after presenting the paper, in November of 1950, Knox returned to England to take up doctoral studies at Oxford. He would be there until 1954. Robinson had shown that his views of church were formed in Cambridge in the late 1940s and he began teaching them at Moore College in 1953. And, Trevor Edwards argues, theologically Knox was to return from England in 1955 ‘a changed man’. Moreover, Edwards makes a plausible case that a personal

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<sup>98</sup> Edwards, ‘Developments in the Evangelical Anglican Doctrine of the Church’, 11.

<sup>99</sup> Knox, ‘The Church and the People of God in the Old Testament’, 9–17.

falling out between Knox and Archbishop Gough in 1960 created the context in which Knox's more radical conclusions could be pursued.<sup>100</sup> All of this is consistent with Robinson's later claims that he and Knox never worked on the doctrine together, and points to them both being influenced, separately, by similar scholars. It seems incredible to believe that between 1954 and 1972 they did not influence each other *at all*. But it does seem to be the case that their interest in the topic arose independently and as part of a wider theological conversation. Part of the argument of subsequent chapters is that this independence may have evolved into mutual influence, but that it never became collaboration and did not produce an undifferentiated 'Knox-Robinson' view. The line of influence appears to have gone from Robinson to Knox rather than the other way around.

### **3.3.4. 'The Church in the New Testament' (1959)**

It remains now to note the salient features of Robinson's 1959 essay, 'The Church in the New Testament'.<sup>101</sup> The article itself sounds all the major notes that Robinson's work on NT ecclesiology would subsequently develop. It begins with the observation that the sum total of local churches, which may in modern English be called 'the Church', is never so called in the NT; indeed for Robinson 'the New Testament does not think of the sum total of these local churches as amounting to anything.'<sup>102</sup> For Robinson, the only ecumenical concepts present in the NT itself are the world-wide gospel mission and the saints in every place calling on the name of the Lord.<sup>103</sup> The *ἐκκλησία* on the other hand, is not an ecumenical concept because a church is by definition something capable of gathering and therefore visible and empirical.

Robinson notes another usage of the term *ἐκκλησία*; one that is neither local nor ecumenical, but supernal. This *ἐκκλησία*, on view in Ephesians 1:3 and Hebrews 2:12 for example, is an entity whose locality is determined not by geography but by the presence of Christ. This seems to be an advance on Campbell, whose argument for the relative insignificance of the word *ἐκκλησία* left him with little to do with its usage in Ephesians. Robinson's theological account of usage in Ephesians may represent a genuine theological innovation.

In a mirroring of the Campbell-Flew disagreement witnessed at Cambridge, Robinson's paper is at odds with Knox's over the Jew-Gentile question. While Knox (like Flew) sees the NT *ἐκκλησία* language as in direct theological contact with the Old Testament gathering of YHWH, Robinson (like Campbell) rejects the connection. Robinson begins with the Jerusalem church—a

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<sup>100</sup> Edwards, 'Developments in the Evangelical Anglican Doctrine of the Church', 21.

<sup>101</sup> Robinson, 'The Church in the New Testament'.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

church consisting of exclusively Jewish members who were zealous for the law of Moses, who engaged in the Temple cult, and had for its president Jesus' own brother, James. For Robinson, this church, with its devoutly Jewish flavour, contrasts remarkably with the overwhelmingly Gentile communities whose form could be contained within a single household. Robinson's question is then: why did such vastly different entities acquire the name *ἐκκλησία*? For Robinson, it seems most probably that the nomenclature began with the primitive church of Jerusalem, and was synonymous with *συναγωγή* (*synagogue*), being preferred perhaps as a word slightly less employed in first century Judaism and therefore somewhat distinguishing for the new sect.<sup>104</sup> Given the theologically loaded contexts in which the *ἐκκλησία* language is introduced (Acts 5:1, 7:38 and then to the Christian entity in 8:1) Robinson, whilst acknowledging that *ἐκκλησία* was 'a good ordinary Greek word', nevertheless sees that for the first Jewish believers the name carried with it some sort of claim to being 'those who were in truth sons of the covenant and of the prophets of Israel'.<sup>105</sup>

What was more curious for Robinson was why predominantly Gentile communities also adopted this nomenclature, especially in contexts where they clearly evoke the full dignity of OT connotations. The traditional solution has been to assume that the Gentile churches were claiming for themselves the titles and privileges of Israel, and indeed to supersede Israel as the people of God. For Robinson, however, the relationship between the church in Jerusalem and the churches of the Gentiles is more complex. Robinson rather sees that the mission of Jesus was specifically to the house of Israel with a view to its restoration (Matthew 10:6; Luke 19:10; John 4:22 etc.). Thus, in Acts 1:6, when the disciples ask about the *ἀποκαθιστάνω* of Israel, the question is not dismissed as mistaken or irrelevant. Robinson argues that for Luke, the gospel in Acts continues to address Israel and its restoration (Acts 4:10; 5:31; 10:36; 13:23; 28:20). For Robinson, it is in the believers of the Jerusalem church that Luke sees as the promised restoration of Israel (Acts 2:47; cf Joel 2:32). It is this restored Israel that is commissioned, in terms of the servant Israel of Isaiah 43-44, to be the witness of the Messiah in Jerusalem, Samaria, and to the Gentiles.

Thus, for Robinson, the appropriation of *ἐκκλησία* for the early Christians was intended to invoke blessings and privileges associated with the *qahal* ('assembly') of YHWH of the OT. However, this was not done in a transferring of previously Israelite privileges to Gentiles, but through a more complex process involving the vocation of Israel with respect to Gentile

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 214. Robinson notes the way *συναγωγή* is used interchangeably for *ἐκκλησία* in James 2:1 as further evidence of this.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.



salvation and ‘the church at Jerusalem holding a primacy which was not merely chronological but (having in mind God’s *oikonomia*) dispensational’.<sup>106</sup> These are all insights Robinson will articulate more fully in his 1961 IVF lecture ‘Jew and Gentile in the New Testament’, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

According to Robinson’s reading, then, the doctrine of Christian unity, at least for Paul, is not located in a now predominantly Gentile church which in effect becomes the new Israel, but rather in a unity of the sons of Abraham who are both Jews and Gentiles (Gal. 3:7), and who together become ‘one man in Christ Jesus’ (Gal. 3:28). For Robinson, the head-body image for Christ’s lordship over the church is probably not anatomical so much as derived from the Adam-Eve relationship of Genesis 2 (cf. Eph. 5:23). By invoking the unity of the man and woman in Genesis 1-2, Paul reaches back for a ‘promise in Christ more ancient than even the promise to Abraham.’ Thus for Robinson ‘the church of which Christ is the head belongs to the new creation.’ It is an eschatological reality.

Robinson concludes with some questions. Does the NT *ever* equate the church with Israel? He notes 1 Peter as a possibility. He also asks about the relationship between the developed doctrine of the church in Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews, and how that plays out in the local churches. He sees that at least two truths must be in play: Firstly, local churches ‘are not lightly or arbitrarily formed’ but are ‘spiritual’ entities and secondly, ‘the relationship between such local churches is a concern of highest importance’. Thus, the article is framed not by a dismissal of ecumenical activity, but with an urging that these relationships be negotiated through a ‘proper assessment of the true character of the local church and of its relationship to that heavenly reality’.<sup>107</sup>

### **3.3.5. Conclusion**

The 1950s are indeed the crucial decade for the development of the so-called ‘Knox-Robinson view’. I have argued that its origins are in a wider theological conversation of the 1930s and 1940s, shaped by contributors like Flew, Campbell, Dodd, Moule, and Barth. These were further stimulated by the continued work of the WCC, and in Australia by local developments in the *Joint Commission for Church Union*, and the contemporary work being done on the Constitution of the Church of England in Australia. I have further argued that, whilst some mutual influence is patently the case, Knox and Robinson were not in close collaboration on the topic, and that the affinities in their work are largely due to each participating in the same wider scholarly discussion. Where there is evidence of influence, it is in Knox picking up some of Robinson’s exegetical

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 221.

work and developing it into a more systematic theological framework. In NT scholar Paul Barnett's words, 'Broughton, as theologians do, joined the dots'.<sup>108</sup>

### **3.4. Sacraments in the NT**

With his 1951 publication 'The Date and Significance of the Last Supper', Robinson began what was to be four decades of sustained engagement on questions related to the sacraments in the NT and in the life of the church.

Evangelicals have tended to inherit their sacramental views from their denominations rather than via their shared theology. Indeed, historically they have most often treated the sacraments as matters *adiaphora*, putting differences to one side in order to focus on shared convictions and to facilitate interdenominational labours. As an evangelical giving serious and creative attention to the topic, Robinson was more the exception than the rule. His work in this area would be undergirded by rigorous interrogation of the NT texts. These would often yield results that lent themselves to a 'low' view, though often not by the traditional route. As a bishop, Robinson was to be very concerned to see the sacraments duly administered, often insisting on Anglican tradition in ways that many found hard to relate to his NT work. Anglo-Catholicism, which was virtually to collapse as a movement over the 1970s and 1980s, was strong in the 1950s and early 1960s, providing Robinson with a confident conversation partner in sacramental matters. In short, Robinson's exegesis learned at Sydney and Cambridge, his evangelicalism and his Anglicanism, were all brought to bear on his sacramental theology, with creative results.

Whilst the 1951 article on the Last Supper is technically on a sacramental topic, it has largely to do with the date of the Last Supper in John's Gospel, and so is more obviously a work of NT exegesis.<sup>109</sup> Robinson's main sacramental piece in this period is *The Meaning of Baptism*, a tract published for Evangelical Tracts in 1956, and intended for a popular readership. The piece follows Robinson's normal method of careful work on the semantic range of words coupled with an attention to the biblical-theological context of NT concepts. He argues that βαπτίζω has by the time of the NT acquired a technical meaning as a cult-word and as such is associated with the rite of baptism; it does not mean merely 'to dip'.<sup>110</sup> Based on an investigation of usage in the LXX and Apocrypha, Robinson draws two conclusions: that βαπτίζω in the New Testament, having acquired a technical cult-word meaning, can no longer be taken in a literal sense to describe the

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<sup>108</sup> Rory Shiner, Interview with Paul Barnett on Donald Robinson, 27 November 2012.

<sup>109</sup> Robinson does conclude the article with an argument that even in John, the Fourth Gospel is connecting the Last Supper with Passover and Robinson draws some theological conclusion from that. That is, Robinson argues for a Passover date for the Supper in John, and then draws Passover theology from the event. Hence the title of the article, and hence its inclusion in this section of the chapter. See Robinson, 'The Date and Significance of the Last Supper', 112–13.

<sup>110</sup> Donald Robinson, 'The Meaning of Baptism', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 230.

mode of baptism and, secondly, that the Jewish usage of the word connects the rite with cleansing from defilement and therefore, in Christian usage, with the remission of sins.<sup>111</sup>

Robinson defends Anglican formularies and theology as a faithful expression of NT theology, including a spirited defence of infant baptism.<sup>112</sup> Confirmation, argued Robinson, does not have an exact precedent in the NT. It is nevertheless a worthy practice in which the confirmed affirm everything implied by their baptism. He counsels against the idea of confirmation as a sacrament of admission to the church of God; baptism is ‘quite complete’ in this regard without confirmation.<sup>113</sup>

Robinson also addressed at some length the question of the mode of baptism. Having established that βαπτίζω in the NT does not imply a specific mode, he does go on to argue that ‘[s]prinkling, or a mere moistening of the forehead, are not recognised forms of baptism either in the Church of England or in the Roman Catholic Church.’<sup>114</sup> He argued that ‘copious affusion’ is probably the more ancient and better attested practice. He advocated either it, or immersion, as the proper modes of the rite. There is, here in 1956, some signalling that Robinson would not have a latitudinarian attitude to how baptism was administered: ‘There is a great need for a more careful administration of baptism’.<sup>115</sup> Significantly, the fact that sprinkling or moistening of the forehead are not recognised in the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, or the Eastern Orthodox Church are for him powerful reasons to abandon it. It is an early example of the authority of tradition in Robinson’s mind. The movement from exegesis to contemporary practice is not direct. It was mediated through church tradition, which in his mind has its own authority and cannot lightly be discarded. As his exegesis of the sacraments in the NT became even more radical in the 1960s and 1970s, the way he related his exegesis to Anglican practice became oblique to even his most admiring observers.

The article is also noteworthy for putting forward positions that Robinson would later go on to abandon or modify. He would later reject the centrality of covenant ideas in the NT presentation of baptism, would argue against infant baptism being a NT or even early church practice, and would argue there was no NT connection between baptism and church membership. But those developments were not until the 1960s.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

### 3.5. ***Apostleship***

In 1954, Robinson published his first article in the *Reformed Theological Review*. Entitled ‘Apostleship and Apostolic Succession’, it is divided into two halves: the first a strictly exegetical study of the New Testament reference of the word ἀπόστολος, and the second half an application of those findings to Anglo-Catholic claims regarding apostolic ministry. In the first section, he argues that ‘apostle’ does not refer exclusively to the Twelve and Paul, nor to a wider band who share the qualifications of the Twelve. Rather, according to the NT, two factors qualify someone as an apostle: the Holy Spirit’s guidance together with missionary preaching of the gospel. These together are sufficient grounds in the NT for a person to be considered an ‘apostle’.<sup>116</sup>

In applying his findings to Anglo-Catholic theology, he says that what is named ‘Apostolic Succession’ is not in fact concerned with apostleship in the NT sense but with the ministry of *episcope* (ἐπισκοπή, ‘oversight’) in the congregation. What set apart the Twelve—their witness to Christ—is not by its nature transferable, and we are not given any evidence either way that the Twelve ever appointed others as in the wider sense.<sup>117</sup> Positively, Robinson believes that apostolic ministry continues to this day in the sense that ‘churches are still being brought into being through the preaching of the Word of God by the lips of messengers’.<sup>118</sup> Robinson would return to ideas of apostleship and apostolic tradition many times in his career. Indeed, it is probably the topic on which he most consistently spoke or wrote, as a NT interest, in church debates and as a central place of his mature biblical theology as articulated in 1981’s *Faith’s Framework*.<sup>119</sup>

The Anglo-Catholic movement would continue to be a powerful force in the coming decade, before beginning its decline. By the 1980s and 1990s, Robinson would be making common cause with remaining Anglo-Catholics in his debate with the wider ACA over the ordination of women.

### 3.6. ***Conclusion: Donald Robinson in the 1950s***

The 1950s certainly represented a high-water mark for evangelical energy and piety in Australia. This has to be understood, though, in the context of a wider surge of post-war Christian initiative

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<sup>116</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Apostleship and Apostolic Succession’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 80. Robinson does not miss the implication that Junias is likely a woman. He says, ‘Incidentally, if Junias is a woman, apostleship must be reckoned among the ministries which it is open to women to perform, at least with their husbands, unlike the ministry of ἐπισκοπή or of teaching in the congregation.’

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>119</sup> Donald Robinson, *Faith’s Framework: The Structure of New Testament Theology* (Blackwood, SA: New Creation Publications, 1996).

that included the Ecumenical movement's World Council, the Roman Catholic Church's movement toward Vatican II, and the neo-orthodox movement in theology.

The ground Robinson occupied in this decade is interesting. He did not, as we have seen, participate in whatever eschatological excesses may have characterised the era. Nor was he particularly drawn to the revivalist atmosphere, which culminated in the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade. He drank deeply, not only from the fledgling resurgence of evangelical scholarship, but also from the wider offerings of neo-orthodox, ecumenical, and other streams of contemporary scholarship. Over the course of this decade, he would establish himself as what he would self-describe as 'a theological person'.

It is a decade in which we clearly see the main sources of Robinson's identity and scholarship: his Anglicanism, his evangelicalism, and his Cambridge-Tradition exegetical approach begin to find their synthesis in the relative isolation of 1950s Australia. He was to strike out in a direction significantly different from Loane and Hammond, but with the personal approval of both. Like the early work on a housing estate, the 1950s were the years in which Robinson laid out the basic shape or street plan of his future work. His most productive decade was just around the corner. If the 1950s were when the foundations were laid, the 1960s were when the settlement would be built.



## 4. Teacher of the New Testament, 1960-1972

*Writer | Teacher | Scholar*

This chapter considers what was to be the most productive period of Donald Robinson's scholarship and teaching—the 1960s. On 3 April 1959 D. B. Knox was installed as Principal of Moore College and Robinson appointed his Vice-Principal. On 25 January 1973 he was consecrated as Bishop in Parramatta in St Andrew's Cathedral. Between 1959 and 1973, though he produced no monograph, he was to publish over 35 articles and papers in which his distinctive ideas about the NT, first aired in the 1950s, were explored and developed. He taught continually across this time, profoundly shaping a generation of MTC students, who in turn would go on to be rectors, archbishops, OT and NT scholars, and church leaders in the Diocese of Sydney and beyond. Several of his students from this period would themselves go on to hold teaching positions at institutions such as Fuller Seminary (California), Tyndale House, Cambridge, Union Seminary (India), the Australian College of Theology, Durham University and Regent College (Vancouver) where they would continue to develop and disseminate ideas first learned from Robinson.<sup>1</sup> Many would write books and articles in which Robinson's influence is evident. In short, this was the period in which Robinson's scholarly legacy was made.

In addition to writing and teaching, from 1962 to 1977 he was profoundly involved in ACA liturgical revisions, a labour that culminated in the 1978 *An Australian Prayer Book* (AAPB).<sup>2</sup> Thus, whilst from 1970s onward, Knox was to withdraw somewhat from the ACA and the wider life of the Sydney diocese, Robinson remained highly involved in both, a fact that was to significantly impact their respective ventures into ecclesiology.

The 1960s is therefore the crucial decade in the argument of this thesis. It is crucial for tracing the development of Robinson's thought. It is crucial for establishing the nature of his influence (the results of which will be explored in chapter 9). And it is also crucial for addressing the question of continuity and discontinuity in Robinson's thought, and especially his ecclesiology. If Robinson's approach as a bishop represented a significant discontinuity with his scholarship, then this is the period in which we should expect to find the scholarship most at odds with his episcopate. This was the time when he could express his most radical ideas, free from the demands of ecclesiastical leadership. If there is more continuity than is commonly supposed between Robinson the scholar and Robinson the bishop then the case needs to be demonstrated here. If it can show that at this time, when his academic freedom was at its

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<sup>1</sup> For examples, Robert Banks taught at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena (USA); Bruce Winter at Tyndale House (Cambridge); Peter O'Brien at Union (India); John Painter at ACT; Bruce Kaye at Durham; and Paul Barnett at Regent College Vancouver.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson's liturgical work is discussed in the next chapter at the point of the publication of AAPB.

greatest, Robinson was generating a line of thought that he would continue to follow and seek to implement as a bishop, then the case for continuity will be greatly strengthened. This chapter can answer the question ‘what precisely were Robinson’s positions?’ Only then can we adequately address the question central to chapter 8: ‘To what extent did he pursue those positions as Archbishop?’

The chapter is in four sections. In section 1 I consider the broader context in which Robinson was operating: the ‘religious crisis’ of the 1960s, the Sydney diocese and Moore College. Section 2 outlines the salient features of Robinson’s biography. Robinson’s life and work divide into two sections: the first from 1959 to 1967 and the second from 1970 to 1972. These are punctuated by a two-year period in the middle (1968 to 1969) in which other demands appear to have created a hiatus from scholarly publishing. Moreover, there is a discernible change in topical focus between the two periods. Robinson is focussed on church, Jew and Gentile and the sacraments between 1959 and 1967. Then from 1970 onwards he turns his attention to liturgy, scripture and neo-Pentecostalism. Because of this distinction, section 3 divides into two sub-sections, exploring the nature of his contribution in each period. Finally, section 4 draws together what conclusions can be made on the basis of the study so far.

## **4.1. The 1960s in Context**

### **4.1.1. Society**

If the 1950s were the peak of Christian influence in Australia the 1960s were the beginning of a great decline. Across the western world, the 1960s brought with them a crisis for traditional patterns of Christian behaviour and belief. After the initially propitious post-war period, the 1960s saw a sudden and significant decline across almost every index of religious vitality. The causes and consequences of these changes are widely debated; that something significant happened seems beyond dispute.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars have argued for a ‘long 1960s’ in which ideas planted in western culture years, decades or even centuries before, slowly came to fruition.<sup>4</sup> Others like Callum Brown have argued for a sudden change, brought about not so much by ideas and elites, but by changes in society around family, sex and employment. Rather than a gradual decline, Brown has pin-pointed the moment of change in the UK as 1963. In Australia, Hilliard has pointed to a period between 1964 and 1972 as the ‘remembered ‘60s.’<sup>5</sup> Certainly, by 1971

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<sup>3</sup> See Callum G. Brown, ‘What Was the Religious Crisis of the 1960s?’ *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 4 (1 December 2010): 468–79. On specific impact in Australia, see David Hilliard, ‘The Religious Crisis of the 1960s: The Experience of the Australian Churches’, *Journal of Religious History* 21, no. 2 (1 June 1997): 209–27.

<sup>4</sup> See Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For the seminal history of ideas approach, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Hilliard, ‘The Religious Crisis of the 1960s’, 210.



sociologist Hans Mol claimed that Australia was either ‘a Christian nation in search of a religion, or a heathen nation in flight from one.’<sup>6</sup>

In Australia the religious crisis came after the modest but significant religious boom of the 1950s. This was true in the United States and in Britain as well, but in Australia it was dramatically capped off by the extraordinary 1959 Billy Graham Crusade. In the wake of the campaign, Christian leaders were prepared to say that a revival, if not actual, was at least imminent.<sup>7</sup> From the vantage point of 1959, the coming turn of the 1960s was hard to predict before it happened, and hard to take when it did.<sup>8</sup>

#### **4.1.2. Christian Responses**

Christian leaders scrambled to diagnose why Australians were now disengaged with the churches and their message, and to offer solutions. Indeed, the public ‘secularising’ discourse of Christian leaders in Australia, as Sam Brewitt-Taylor has argued in the British case, may itself have been a contributor to the process.<sup>9</sup> In Australia the crisis was augmented by a national debate on Australian identity in a context where ‘British’ ‘White’ and ‘Christian’ were increasingly abandoned as plausible sources of identity.<sup>10</sup>

Among liberal and progressive Christians, the crisis was an opportunity to reconsider traditional church dogma and practice. Bishop John Robinson’s *Honest to God* (1963) was received warmly in such circles as a fresh attempt to think as a Christian in the new context.<sup>11</sup> Others also re-considered the vocation of the church in the new context, through books such as Colin William’s *Where in the World?* and *What in the World?* and Harvey Cox’s *The Secular City*, each arguing in their own way for a more worldly and secular vocation for the churches.<sup>12</sup> Hugh McLeod has argued that liberal Christians in particular architected an end for Christendom themselves.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Hans Mol, *Religion in Australia: A Sociological Investigation* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1971), 302. Cited in Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 7.

<sup>8</sup> On post-1959, see Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 8.; Hilliard, ‘The Religious Crisis of the 1960s’, 209–227.; Lawton, ‘Winter of Our Days’, 13–30.; Chilton, ‘Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia’, 1–7.

<sup>9</sup> Brewitt-Taylor, ‘The Invention of a “Secular Society”? Christianity and the Sudden Appearance of Secularization Discourses in British National Media, 1961–4’. Chilton applies this analysis to Australia, arguing that the public statements of Christian leaders of ‘secularisation’ and ‘crisis’ this era were ‘somewhat overstated’ and ‘became something of a self-fulfilling prophecy.’ Chilton, ‘Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia’, 34.

<sup>10</sup> Chilton, ‘Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia’, 49–84.

<sup>11</sup> Hilliard, ‘The Religious Crisis of the 1960s’, 212.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>13</sup> McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, 213–214.

More conservative figures like Marcus Loane (1911-2009) fought gently but persistently to see a Christian and British identity preserved. He was deeply reluctant to see his own Church abandon its English heritage, its Prayer Book or the King James Bible, all of which he saw as bulwark against theological compromise as well as sources of spiritual vitality.<sup>14</sup>

Hugh Chilton recently has drawn important attention to the creative responses of the Jesus People Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. A response at once conservative in theology and radical in practice, the Jesus People argued that the churches had failed to translate the Christian faith into idioms and language to which average Australians could relate. The leaders longed for ‘the gospel becoming real in the Australian context.’<sup>15</sup> Gallant efforts were made to create evangelistic, liturgical and instructional material able to get past the communications bottle-neck. The movement occasionally spoke of a ‘Gum-Leaf Theology’ as a self-conscious attempt to bring Christian thought into Australia language. Uniting Church minister Bruce Prewer published his *Australian Psalms* and *Australian Prayers*, which were widely read.<sup>16</sup> In 1985 the biggest selling book from the Australian Broadcasting Commission’s retail outlets was *The Day the Grog Ran Out and other Stories from the Big Book*—a translation of popular Bible stories into the idiom of Australian slang.<sup>17</sup>

It is easy to cast a figure like Robinson as a non-combatant or even conscientious objector in the Battle for Relevance with which many church leaders were engaged in this period. Certainly, he was not a liberal or progressive, and put some energy into defending attacks on evangelical orthodoxy in these years. Neither was he a radical, seeking to translate the faith into contemporary Australian idiom. However, he cannot be characterised as a simple conservative. The ideas with which he grappled in writing and which he taught in class were daring and original. His proposals for liturgical revisions (discussed in chapter 5, section 4) were so bold they made national headlines.<sup>18</sup> In their own way, Robinson’s efforts deserve to be tabled, alongside others, as a considered and interesting response to the ‘religious crisis.’

#### **4.1.3. Reformed Theology**

The fact that the 1960s began an era of religious decline in general coexists with a renaissance of conservative and reformed Christianity in particular. In the UK, the evangelical renaissance was

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<sup>14</sup> On Marcus Loane’s spirituality see Blanch, *From Strength to Strength*. On Loane’s response to the religious crisis, see Chilton, ‘Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia’, 223–58.

<sup>15</sup> Athol Gill, quoted in Chilton, ‘Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia’, 272. See for example John Smith, *Advance Australia Where?* (Sydney: ANZEA, 1989). See also Mal Garvin, *Us Aussies* (Sale: Hayzon, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> Bruce Prewer, *Australian Psalms* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing Company, 1979), Prewer, *Australian Prayers* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing Company, 1983), cited in Chilton, ‘Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia’, 291–92.

<sup>17</sup> See *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> See discussion in chapter 5, section 3 of this study.

in full flower, with institutions such as Tyndale House flourishing, scholars like F. F. Bruce and I. Howard Marshall creating scholarship that was able hold its head high in the Academy, and noted ministries like those of London preachers John Stott and Martyn Lloyd-Jones coming to the height of their powers. In Australia, Piggin characterises the era as one that favoured the sort of conservative and reformed theology for which Robinson stood.<sup>19</sup> Robinson's experience of the religious crisis was mediated through participation in one of the few venues in which religious indices were trending upwards: theology and theological education.

Post-war migration brought both new strength and new dynamism to various traditions, including Catholic, Orthodox and Reformed churches. Pentecostalism, which has its own long and distinctive history in Australia, was strengthened by the charismatic renewal so that, by the beginning of the 1970s, they were together a major force, unable to be ignored by the mainline churches.<sup>20</sup> It was a movement to which Robinson would respond several times, and in creative and surprising ways. It was also the period in which post-war ecumenism's most conspicuous organisational fruit was to ripen in Australia with the coming together of the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist churches into the Uniting Church. It was the decade in which the Church of England in Australia finally passed its constitution, making it an autonomous Church. And it was a period of great liturgical experimentation as the Church of England in Australia searched for an appropriate means of common prayer and worship. The 1960s were simultaneously a period of both decline and dynamism. And Donald Robinson, especially in regard to the resurgence of reformed theology and in liturgical revision, was an important contributor to this dynamism.

#### **4.1.4. The Diocese of Sydney**

In October of 1958 Howard Mowll died at 68 after twenty-five years in office. Marcia Cameron describes it as 'the felling of a colossus.'<sup>21</sup> Lawton claims that his death left the diocese in a vulnerable position, arguing that the 'theological and structural changes of the sixties found evangelicals largely unprepared.'<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless Moore College enjoyed high enrolments and theological productivity in the period. More significant for this era was not Mowll's loss, but his successor. The election of Englishman Hugh Gough as Archbishop of Sydney struck many as an out of touch appointment. At just the point where a self-conscious nationalism was emerging, and when the appointments of Governors-General and archbishops from England were beginning to abate, Sydney chose for its leader an Englishman with no experience outside of England. The ACR, edited by Knox and Robinson, ran an article on 1963 on the appointment of

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<sup>19</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life*, 157.

<sup>22</sup> Lawton, 'Winter of Our Days', 20.

a new archbishop for Perth under the provocative title ‘Another English Archbishop.’<sup>23</sup> Marcia Cameron reasonably suggests the article embeds a thinly veiled criticism of Archbishop Gough. By way of contrast, in the 1966 election, six of the seven nominations were Australian, with Stuart Barton-Babbage New Zealand born but long-time resident in Australia.<sup>24</sup>

In 1957 Mowll had invited Loane to become an assistant bishop. From his consecration in February 1958 until the end of the year, Loane continued as principal of MTC, but doing both roles indefinitely was impossible. In 1959 the College Trustees appointed D. B. Knox in the role. This appointment would prove to be the single most significant factor in the shaping of modern Sydney Anglicanism.

Gough’s was to be a short appointment, lasting only till 1966, and ending under circumstances the historiography has so far discreetly left unchronicled.<sup>25</sup> He would be replaced by Marcus Loane, universally esteemed in the diocese and widely known and respected beyond it. Loane however was increasingly hesitant of the direction D. B. Knox was taking the College. It was a relationship complicated by the fact that Loane was married to Knox’s sister Patricia.

#### **4.1.5. Moore College**

According to Trevor Edwards, 1960 was to prove the watershed moment for Knox and for Moore College.<sup>26</sup> The College was in a strong position, with already good enrolments receiving a boost from the Billy Graham Crusade. And then Knox had a significant falling out with Archbishop Gough. Knox, Robinson and others had petitioned the parliament to delay the passage of the new constitution for the Church of England. They were not successful. Gough thought the action disloyal and indicated that he had lost confidence in Knox. A meeting between the relevant parties was mishandled by Gough, with the result that, according to Marcus Loane, ‘Knox went back to entrench himself in Moore College, and to erect his barricade against all possible interference.’<sup>27</sup> Edwards argues (plausibly) that Knox’s 1964 essay ‘The Church and the Denominations’ in which Knox argues for a local church free and protected from the interference of the denomination, has its historical context in the falling out with Gough.<sup>28</sup>

By the end of the 1950s, much of the Hammond-Loane tradition was in flux at MTC. Under Knox, Hammond’s reading list was replaced by Gustav Aulen, B. B. Warfield and John

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<sup>23</sup> ACR 28.3.1963, 4. Cited in Cameron, *Phenomenal Sydney*, 85.

<sup>24</sup> Reid, *Marcus L. Loane*, 59.

<sup>25</sup> Marcia Cameron has now published a book in which she describes the circumstances of Gough’s premature return to England. See Cameron, *Phenomenal Sydney*, 105–6.

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, ‘Developments in the Evangelical Anglican Doctrine of the Church’, 20–28.

<sup>27</sup> Marcus Loane, quoted in John Davis, *Anglicans and their Constitution* (Canberra: Acorn Press, 1993), 163. Cited in *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 21. For fuller discussion and quotes from correspondence between Gough, Knox and Robinson, see Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life*, 166–70.

Calvin.<sup>29</sup> As a student at the time, Lawton recalls people reading and discussing the work of Joachim Jeremias, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner and Søren Kierkegaard. These authors had powerful advocates in Bruce Smith (lecturer from 1955) and Stuart Barton-Babbage (Dean of St Andrew Cathedral from 1947 to 1953). The effect was not to make the College neo-orthodox, but rather to open the College to contemporary scholarship, and to move the College in a more reformed (as opposed to specifically Anglican) direction. Students were, in other words, encouraged to ‘cross the Channel in their thinking’ and engage with contemporary continental theology.<sup>30</sup> Robinson himself began to expose students to the work of Hoskyns, Davey and Oscar Cullman. He also began inviting students to his home to discuss poetry and novels.<sup>31</sup>

In 1962, Robinson wrote on theological education for the *Journal for Christian Education*. He is adamant that a theological college ought to be a centre of theological knowledge rather than pastoralia or ministry technique.<sup>32</sup> This is not because he saw the latter as unimportant, but because he believed that college was not the appropriate place in which to give this sort of instruction. Personal piety ought to be a prerequisite for entry rather than a goal of study. The skills needed for pastoral ministry are better learned in-service from a senior minister than in a classroom.<sup>33</sup> Instead, theological college should have the study of the Bible at its very centre, and related disciplines, such as the biblical languages, should be mandatory though Robinson acknowledged normal students arriving with no language attainment would probably find two new languages more than they could handle. His concession was to expect at minimum a working knowledge of Greek.<sup>34</sup> Biblical theology and biblical exegesis might occupy half the total curriculum, establishing students in an ability to do ‘scientific exegesis.’<sup>35</sup> Like the Cambridge Tripos, detailed exegesis of a few biblical books is judged better than shallow attention to the whole.<sup>36</sup> Historical theology, church history, philosophy and liturgiology are important but subordinate to scripture, for ‘their chief value lies in helping to explain the present situation in which the church finds herself.’<sup>37</sup> This was Robinson’s vision for Moore College. It was a vision shared by Knox, and one which they were overwhelmingly successful in implementing.

Academic standards rose considerably both by more rigorous entry requirements and by a considerably more demanding curriculum. The library grew rapidly, new faculty were appointed,

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<sup>29</sup> Lawton, “‘That Woman Jezebel’”, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, chap. 17.

<sup>31</sup> Lawton, “‘That Woman Jezebel’”, 11. Bruce Kaye remembers Robinson reading them Edgar Allan Poe. Rory Shiner, Interview with Bruce Kaye on Donald Robinson, 14 November 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Robinson, ‘Colleges for Theological Knowledge’, 158.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

the campus itself expanded its land holdings, and an increasing number of students were encouraged to pursue post-graduate careers at prestigious overseas universities.

Cable and Judd rightly place these changes to Moore College in the context of the wider post-war resurgence of scholarly evangelicalism, citing the growth of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, the research institutions of Tyndale House in Cambridge and Latimer House in Oxford, and the establishment or revitalisation of organisations such as the Eclectic Society and the *Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion* (EFAC) as sister movements.<sup>38</sup> However, local conditions mean that the resurgence was expressed differently at Moore College. Despite the rise of evangelical institutions such as St John's, Oak Hill and Ridley, none of these were what Moore College was: the theological training institution for a single diocese. Similarly, the evangelical resurgence in the Church of England in England looked to a broad influence on the National Church; it did not have an instance of what Sydney represented: namely, a diocese that was, from the bishop down, overwhelmingly in conservative evangelical control. Sydney was not only a conservative evangelical diocese, it also happened to be the oldest, largest and best resourced diocese in Australia. The effect of all this was, among other things, that significant time and energy was exerted by Knox and particularly Robinson in activities that, at the constitutional and liturgical level, sought to influence the whole ACA. No equivalent existed in England.

#### **4.1.6. Donald Robinson's Long 1960s**

Between 1954 and 1973 the Robinson family was based in Newtown at the Moore College site. Donald and Marie arrived with the three-and-a-half-year-old Martin and eighteen-month-old Peter. Anne would be born in 1955 and Mark in 1958.<sup>39</sup> It was the place where all his four children, apart from Martin, would be born. The stay at Newtown would be punctuated by reasonably frequent travel, including some lengthy times away. In 1961 Robinson took six months of study leave at Tyndale House in Cambridge, in which time he presented a paper on church at the Reformed Congress.<sup>40</sup> It was to be the only sabbatical in his academic career.

In 1963 and 1964, at the invitation of the Graduates Fellowship of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, he was to travel to Perth (1963) and Brisbane (1964) to give lectures under the title 'The Form of the Church and Church Unity', lectures that were subsequently published by Ward Powers in a 1965 book *The Church of God: Its Form and its Unity*.<sup>41</sup> It is noteworthy that Robinson felt his positions on the church deserved attention in contexts such as the Cambridge Congress of Reformed Theology and in a parachurch context such as the IVF graduates fellowship. He

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<sup>38</sup> Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*.

<sup>39</sup> I acknowledge with thanks Peter Robinson for his help with some of these details.

<sup>40</sup> Being resident in the UK, he was also able to attend T. C. Hammond's memorial service in London.

<sup>41</sup> Donald Robinson, 'The Church of God: Its Form and Unity', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 230–53.

begins the lecture to the latter with the claim that church ‘is one of the liveliest subjects in Christian discussion today.’<sup>42</sup> Clearly Robinson believed his research on NT ecclesiology was sufficiently urgent and his argument sufficiently robust to be aired in such contexts.

There were two years (1968 and 1969) in which Robinson does not appear to have published anything, and a third year (1970) in which only one article is produced—a rare gap in a period of prodigious output. An explanation is not hard to find: in 1968 Knox was again on study leave in England and Robinson was acting Principal of the College. Then in 1969, Robinson spent a term teaching at Union Biblical Seminary in Yeotmal, Maharashtra, India. Around this period he also travelled to South East Asia twice.<sup>43</sup>

These three years of limited publishing between 1968 and 1970 neatly divide Robinson’s scholarly output into two halves. From 1960 until 1967, Robinson published a steady stream of articles and booklets on his developing ideas on church in the NT, on Jew and Gentile and on the sacraments. Then, from 1970 to 1972 Robinson’s attention turns noticeably to liturgy, to work related to scripture, evangelism and preaching, and, from 1972 to the neo-Pentecostal movement. Those topics might indicate that Robinson was heading in his mind in a more ecclesiastical direction several years before the position at Parramatta was offered him.

## **4.2. Scholarship: Phase 1, 1960-1967**

### **4.2.1. Jew and Gentile in the New Testament**

Robinson’s study-leave at Tyndale House, Cambridge in 1961 was the time when his thinking on Israel and the Gentiles, first aired in his 1959 essay on church, came together.<sup>44</sup> Through this period he published seven separate pieces on the issue. It is worth noting this work in the wider context. As I described it in a 2008 essay:

The lecture was about 10 years on from Munck’s comments and two years prior to his important study *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*. Henry Chadwick’s lecture *The Circle and the Ellipse*, on the place of Jerusalem in the early church, has also been delivered two years before Robinson’s. Peter Richardson’s *SNTS* monograph would appear 9 years later. Karl Barth’s influential comments on Israel in *Church Dogmatics IV* would appear in English in 1962, and Stendahl’s lecture on Paul’s conscience took place in September of

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>43</sup> On 5–13 November 1968, he went to the Asian South Pacific Congress on Evangelism and in July of 1970 he attended the Asia Evangelical Theological Consultation.

<sup>44</sup> Robinson, ‘Origins and Unresolved Tensions’, 13.

the same year. The question of Israel in the New Testament was a question whose time had come and Robinson was an early and original contributor to the discussion.<sup>45</sup>

Prior to leaving for Cambridge, Robinson presented a comprehensive account of his views on Jew and Gentile to a large audience at St Barnabas' Broadway. The date was Tuesday, 11 April 1961 and the occasion was the IVF Annual lecture.<sup>46</sup> The comprehensive nature of the lecture, being a study of the whole NT on the topic, meant that the lecture was the 'bomb', with a series of academic articles issued between 1962 and 1967 the 'shrapnel'.

According to the 1961 lecture, all students of the NT can agree on two matters: that Jew and Gentile were radically differentiated in the first century and that the NT declared a radical unity of the two parties 'in Christ'.<sup>47</sup>

The NT grapples with this unity and diversity, on the one hand declaring that Jew and Gentile are a new mankind (Colossians 3:10) and one body (1 Corinthians 12:27), and yet on the other hand the NT continues to observe Jewish and Gentile distinctions.<sup>48</sup> The question is how to make sense of this unity and diversity.

The most common solution to this has been to say the church is the 'new Israel.' It is a move made explicitly in the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* and, in Australia, in *The Report of the Joint Commission on Church Union of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches of Australia*.<sup>49</sup> As in this position the church in some way or other supersedes Israel, the position may be called 'supersessionism.'

Evangelicals had an alternative available to them which Robinson described as 'a joker in the pack'—dispensationalism.<sup>50</sup> A position associated with Brethren teacher John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), it taught that God has operated within a series of historic dispensations, beginning with the dispensation of innocence with Adam, and culminating in the millennial kingdom in which a thousand-year reign of Christ precedes the final judgement. Significantly, the present age is understood as the age of the church or the age of grace, a time in which God's salvific attention has turned, somewhat expectedly, to the Gentiles. This will be followed by a period in which the promises to Israel are fulfilled. It is a position popularised by Cyrus Scofield's 1909 *Scofield Reference Bible*.

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<sup>45</sup> Shiner, 'An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson's New Testament Theology', 16.

<sup>46</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Jew and Greek: Unity and Division in the Early Church', in *Donald Robinson Selected Works I*, 109, footnote 1.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>49</sup> Robinson cites both of these in his 1967 RTR article on Romans 9–11. See Donald Robinson, 'The Salvation of Israel in Romans 9–11', in *Donald Robinson Selected Works, Volume I*, 47.

<sup>50</sup> Robinson, 'Jew and Greek', 81.



Dispensationalism is a popular rather than scholarly movement, and has flourished in exclusively evangelical and fundamentalist communities. It is a position with which Robinson was very familiar, having described it as ‘the atmosphere I was brought up in.’<sup>51</sup> Robinson himself rejects dispensationalism, but felt the need to interact with it rather than simply ignore it. This is important for understanding Robinson’s thought in two ways. First, if biblical theology is an attempt to relate the OT and NT, then dispensationalism is an effort in that direction. Robinson’s biblical theology was not done in a vacuum, but worked out in a context where a powerful alternative account of the unity and diversity of scripture was available to evangelicals and believed by many.<sup>52</sup>

Secondly, in dispensationalism Robinson was familiar with a position that did not equate the church with Israel. In this way dispensationalism, with its sensitivity to the vocation of Israel, prepared Robinson as an early contributor to the coming New Perspective on Paul (NPP) associated with scholars such as E. P. Sanders, James Dunn and N. T. Wright, all of whom arrived at a sensitivity to Israel’s vocation by a different (i.e., non-dispensationalist) route.

For Robinson ‘the exponents of these two positions [dispensationalism and supersessionism] are wrong in what they affirm, but right in what they deny.’<sup>53</sup> Dispensationalism is right to deny distinctly Jewish promises belong to Christians in general, while mainstream supersessionism is right to deny those promises await a future fulfilment. However, the crucial statement at the heart of Robinson’s contribution to the topic is that

What neither position allows for, but what I believe to be the teaching of the New Testament, is that God’s distinctive promises to Israel are in the NT fulfilled, not to all believers, but to Jewish believers who constitute the restored remnant of Israel; and that Gentile believers are inheritors of other promises altogether, that is, the promises made in the OT to the nations who should come to Israel’s light ... [these promises] are both finally transfigured by a new disclosure of God’s purposes, namely that both Israel and the Gentiles should lose all their distinctiveness in the one new man which will be the end product of the salvation of God in Christ.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Marcia Cameron, Interview 10 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 16 May 2007, 11. According to Robinson, the influence was largely through the Brethren, and when he was growing up ‘about half’ of the Katoomba Convention was dispensationalist. Robinson felt that his own father was probably ‘betwixt and between’ on the issue, though he never talked about it. Lawton claims Howard Guinness as an Anglican who held to the position. See Lawton, ‘Winter of Our Days’, 24. Affirmation of dispensationalism is still required to teach at Dallas Theological Seminary.

<sup>52</sup> See discussion of Robinson’s biblical theology in chapter 3, section 3.1 of this thesis.

<sup>53</sup> Lawton, ‘Winter of Our Days’, 81.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

For Robinson, the historical realities of church and mission in the time of the NT meant that Gentile dependence on Israel for salvation was a tangible, and not merely spiritual, reality.<sup>55</sup> All apostles and missionaries of the NT were Jewish as far as we know. The Jerusalem church continued to enjoy prestige as the church of the restored remnant of Israel, which continued to command the homage of the Gentile churches (Romans 15:28). Moreover, within the Gentile churches it seems that nearly all had within them a Jewish nucleus whose identity was not entirely lost. These Jewish believers remained the representative of the royal priesthood of Israel whose vocation was being fulfilled in the establishment of the Gentile congregations.

Robinson goes on to ground these claims in a study of the theology of Luke and Paul. On Luke, Robinson argues that the restoration of Israel is an early and prominent theme (Luke 1:68-69, 2:25, 38), the day of Pentecost being the fulfilment of this promised restoration (Acts 1:6, 8, *pace* dispensationalism). Paul remains conscious of this mission (Acts 13:46-47) and at the council of Jerusalem James cites Amos 9:11 as the fulfilment of what is happening: namely, that the 'tent of David' has been rebuilt and that the Gentiles are now seeking the Lord as a consequence. For Robinson it is here in Acts 15 that his thesis most clearly moves beyond the impasse of the two alternative views. The Scofield Bible notices the distinct promises but (by an 'incredible *tour de force* of exegesis,'<sup>56</sup> says Robinson) reverses their order and relegates the restoration of David's tent to the future. However, on the other side, 'it is remarkable that so many much abler exegetes should have failed to discern that James is talking about two activities, not one.'<sup>57</sup> Even C. H. Dodd, says Robinson, fails to notice it.<sup>58</sup> Against these two options, Robinson sets forth a third possibility, that the restoration of Israel was indeed promised, but that that promise was fulfilled in the Jewish Christians of the Jerusalem church. It is an elegant solution.

Turning to Paul himself, Robinson argues that his position regarding Israel and the Gentiles is essentially one with Luke's. Paul embodies the complexity of the matter within his own person, for he is a Jew specifically commissioned to bring light to the Gentiles and who, at the same time, conducts this ministry with a view to the full restoration of Israel (Romans 9-11). Paul expected the entire eschatological programme would be accomplished within his lifetime, fuelling his missionary efforts and adding to the urgency with which he looks to the full salvation of Israel. This is the first time that Robinson would advocate the idea Paul expected the Parousia in his lifetime, a commonplace idea, but one generally avoided in evangelicalism. This seems to

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<sup>55</sup> Robinson owes some of these historical insights to Henry Chadwick. See Henry Chadwick, *The Circle and the Ellipse: Rival Concepts of Authority in the Early Church. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 5 May, 1959* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

<sup>56</sup> Robinson, 'Jew and Greek', 88.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

represent a change of view from his 1958 booklet on eschatology. We will return to Robinson's views of NT eschatology through significant statements in the 1980s and 1990s. It is worth noting that it is part of his framework from at least 1961.

Robinson then turns to a brief survey of Paul's epistles to demonstrate his thesis and answer the more obvious "problem passages" for his perspective. As a survey it proved to be a sort of publishing programme for Robinson, the 'shrapnel' from the 'bomb' of the 1961 lecture. In the remainder of the decade, Robinson would publish on many of the issues in Paul's epistles related to his thesis. In 1962 he argued that 'the saints' in 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 were in fact specifically Jewish Christians who were fulfilling their role as the holy remnant of Israel.<sup>59</sup> In *RTR* the following year he argued more widely that 'the saints' in most of Paul's writing referred specifically to Jewish Christians and, understood as such, make particular biblical-theological sense in Colossians and Ephesians when consistently read this way.<sup>60</sup> In this same year his entry for the *New Bible Dictionary* floated the idea that James was a Prince-Regent or legitimate protector of the Jerusalem Church, noting the suggestive fact of Eusebius's reports that a cousin of Jesus succeeded James in leadership, and that Vespasian is reported to have searched for Jews of the family of David after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, in order that there be no Jewish royal line left.<sup>61</sup>

In 1964-65, Robinson published two articles specifically on the exegesis of Galatians. They are an extraordinary cache of fresh proposals and minority readings. For example, he forwards the bold proposal that Titus was in fact circumcised by Paul in Galatians 2:1-5.<sup>62</sup> Robinson further argues that in the incident with Cephas and the Gentiles in Antioch (Galatians 2:12), what was sent from Jerusalem was not people but the decree of the Jerusalem council itself.<sup>63</sup> It is a position that would explain the otherwise remarkable fact that the letter contains no reference to the Jerusalem council's decree.

The 1965 *ABR* essay deals more widely with the issue of Jewish and Gentile distinctions in Galatians, arguing many of the apparently more comprehensive terms and phrases in Galatians ('the Jerusalem that is above,' 4:26; 'the Israel of God,' 6:16) are in fact restricted to Jewish believers. The article includes an interrogation of the plural pronouns of Galatians. In 1967 he

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<sup>59</sup> Donald Robinson, 'To Submit to the Judgement of the Saints', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 152–59.

<sup>60</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Who Were the Saints?', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 160–69.

<sup>61</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Church', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 222–29.

<sup>62</sup> Donald Robinson, 'The Circumcision of Titus, and Paul's "Liberty"', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*. The argument is based on a reading of the Western Text, which omits ὅς οὐδέ. On this basis, Robinson argued that Titus was in fact circumcised by Paul, and that the wider argument in Galatians makes better sense if this was the case. See page 114.

<sup>63</sup> This is argued based on a textual variant in P46 and in some Latin versions. *Ibid.*, 125.

argued Paul's phrase 'we are the circumcision' in Philippians 3:3 is restricted to an intra-Jewish group, and does not imply therefore a transfer of specific Jewish privilege to Gentile Christians.<sup>64</sup>

In 1967 Robinson turned his attention to the most important Israel text in the NT: Romans 9-11.<sup>65</sup> He rejects the idea that the full salvation of 'Israel' means the salvation of all God's people. Nor does he accept premillennial schemes that see the salvation of Israel as something in the future. He argues rather that the relationship between Israel and the Gentiles, with the salvation of the Gentiles leading to the salvation of 'all Israel' (11:26) is *logical* rather than *temporal*, a dynamic that is at work 'now' in the dynamics of the Pauline mission (11:30-32).

The work on Israel in the NT first flagged in 1961 and pursued through to 1967 was some of the most productive, original and adventurous NT work Robinson ever did. It represents a powerful example of Robinson's synthesis at work—particularly the interplay between his evangelicalism and his critical scholarship. Evangelicalism exposed him to dispensationalism; critical exegesis allowed him to ask interesting questions and provide fresh solutions to some of the puzzles of NT exegesis. The work between 1961-1967 gives the feeling of a coherent project: The hypothesis of 1961 was followed by a rigorous testing of the hypothesis against the details of the NT texts between 1962-1967. In 1961 Robinson flagged the possibility that the NT contained a variety of language and even theologies of 'Israel.' By 1967 he had satisfied himself that, at least in the case of Luke and Paul, a consistent theology was present.

#### **4.2.2. The Developing Doctrine of the Church**

Piggin observes that evangelicals 'have always believed that they belonged to the true, invisible church, but they had not spent a lot of time defining what they meant by 'church'.<sup>66</sup> Historically, evangelical Protestantism is to some extent by definition 'a rejection of an overblown view of the church'.<sup>67</sup> And the evangelical tendency toward cooperation across denominational barriers for the sake of mission has meant that doctrines of church and sacrament have been largely relegated

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<sup>64</sup> Donald Robinson, 'We Are the Circumcision', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 170–78.

<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, the piece is framed by Robinson as a contribution to the ecclesiological debates appearing through publications such as the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* and, in Australia, *The Report of the Joint Commission on Church Union of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches of Australia*, both of which explicitly equate the Church with Israel.

<sup>66</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 8. The main point at which ecclesiology did raise its head in English-speaking Evangelicalism proves the point. At the National Assembly of Evangelicals in Westminster Central Hall in October of 1966, Martyn Lloyd-Jones made what John Stott, the meeting's chair, understood to be a call for Evangelicals to come out of their denominations and into a new and purer structure. Stott opposed Lloyd-Jones from the platform, leading to a significant rupture between the two men personally and between evangelical Anglicans and Free Church evangelicals like Martyn Lloyd-Jones more broadly. Significantly, the debate centred around whether there was a theological imperative to come out of a theologically mixed denomination. The main protagonists in the debate did not even raise the question that both Knox and Robinson believed to be at the heart of a proper ecclesiology and imperative for approaching ecumenism: what in fact is a 'church'? For description and analysis of the incident in 1966 see Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 50–52.

<sup>67</sup> Jensen, *Sydney Anglicanism*, chap. 6.

to matters of secondary importance. At least in the twentieth century, English-speaking evangelicals had been focussed on other matters. In this way, the attention Robinson (and Knox) gave to the matter was distinctive.

Robinson published four articles directly on ecclesiology between 1960 and 1966, working through the details of the ecclesiology first outlined in his 1959 article.<sup>68</sup> Robinson would not publish directly on ecclesiology again until his 1989 autobiographical paper “‘The Church’ Revisited.”<sup>69</sup> However, his thinking on the mission of the church would be worked over significantly when in the 1970s he gave his attention to the theology of evangelism, and to the rising charismatic renewal movements. Knox, who was presumably teaching on the topic regularly over this time, only published again in 1964, more than a decade after his 1950 article.<sup>70</sup> It was here that Knox first appeared in print with something that is recognisably the ‘Knox-Robinson view’.

In the discussion that follows I will note three factors: First, those points at which Robinson’s positions are identical to those outlined in the 1959 article; secondly points where Robinson elaborates, qualifies or supplements positions described in 1959, and thirdly, given Robinson’s move to episcopal duties at the end of this era, I will pay attention to those statements or positions which have direct bearing on Anglican forms and polity. This will be critical data for considering his ecclesiology in his episcopal years.

#### **4.2.3. Ecclesiology Restated**

Robinson continued to marshal evidence and support for his 1959 position on the word *ἐκκλησία*. In an unpublished 1960 paper he demonstrated that Origen (circa 184-254) was operating with an understanding of *ἐκκλησία* that referred only to local gatherings or the heavenly gathering. Origen, said Robinson, had ‘no conception of any earthly or visible body, other than the local church, to which the term *ἐκκλησία* could be applied.’<sup>71</sup>

In 1961, whilst he was resident at Tyndale House in Cambridge, Robinson presented a paper at the International Reformed Congress in August on the (non)authority of the church. He again commended the cogency of his exegetical argument, and took Calvin to task for his definition of ‘church’ as a world-wide body (no slight thing at a *Reformed* Congress!).<sup>72</sup> In this speech he also defends his 1959 claims that the ecumenical concepts present in the New

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<sup>68</sup> I say ‘directly’ because, as I have noted in the preceding section, much of Robinson’s work on Jew and Gentile has ecclesiological significance.

<sup>69</sup> Robinson, “‘The Church’ Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’.

<sup>70</sup> Edwards, ‘Developments in the Evangelical Anglican Doctrine of the Church’, 22.

<sup>71</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Origen’s Conception of “Church” in the Contra Celsum’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 257.

<sup>72</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘The “Authority of the Church”’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 298–311.

Testament are those of evangelisation, prayer, faith and fellowship, rather than organisational unity.<sup>73</sup> ‘The present day quest for an ecumenical church is therefore in vain.’<sup>74</sup> He continues

If all the denominations in the world were persuaded to unite, the resultant body would not be a church in any biblical sense, no matter what formula of faith or what order it adhered to. Nor would such a body possess any authority of a spiritual kind. The same must be said in regard to any national and denominational ‘churches’.<sup>75</sup>

In his 1965 Booklet *The Church of God: Its Form and its Unity* (originally a series of addresses given in Perth in 1963 and Brisbane in 1964 for the IVF Graduates Fellowship) Robinson makes the same point, citing the recent Billy Graham Crusade as a good example of genuine NT ecumenism, arguing that ‘this was a far more significant meeting of “the church which is at Perth” or “Sydney” than if we had organised a communion service with even as many as 10,000 communicants from half a dozen denominations.’<sup>76</sup> The modern ecumenical movement, he continued to argue, is based on a confusion as to what ‘church’ is and what the proper means of ecumenical unity are.

In summary, Robinson continued over this period to argue for the major features of his ecclesiology first outlined in 1959—the semantic range of *ἐκκλησία*, the NT instruments of ecumenism, and the relationship of the Gentile church to Israel.<sup>77</sup> What is striking is the confidence Robinson had that his insights were true, important, and even urgent. He took them to various contexts (Perth, Brisbane, Cambridge), and applied them critically and forcefully to live issues of the day such as conventional reformed ecclesiology, the Joint Commission on Church Union<sup>78</sup> and the wider ecumenical movement.<sup>79</sup> He published his findings in places such as the New Bible Dictionary (NBD), a publication that became the standard reference work of its kind for a generation of evangelicals.<sup>80</sup> Clearly, Robinson did not see his case as weak or marginal. Nor was it for him a polemical doctrine with certain utility for local debates. His exegesis was not sealed off from contemporary church life. Exegetically, theologically and practically, he earnestly believed that ‘he was onto something.’

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Robinson, ‘The Church of God’, 250. Note the phrase ‘the church which is at Perth’. This is evidence that, even in 1963 when his case for the primacy of the local, gathered church was at full strength, Robinson did retain some sense that the sum total of Christians in a city might be ‘the church at’ that city. He returned to this in the 1980s as he attempted, as Archbishop, to expound the status of a diocese in terms of a ‘church’. See Donald Robinson, ‘The Diocese of Sydney and Its Purpose’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 312–17. See chapter 8 of this study for discussion.

<sup>77</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘The Biblical Doctrine of the Church’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 209.

<sup>78</sup> See his 1966 article in which he critically assesses the Doctrinal statements of the Joint Union. Donald Robinson, ‘Church Union: Perusing the Proposals’, in *Donald Robinson Selected Works I*, 272–81.

<sup>79</sup> Robinson, ‘The Church of God’, 239–245.

<sup>80</sup> J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).

#### **4.2.4. Ecclesiology Developed**

Robinson also began to develop and extend his ecclesiology into new areas, including implications for denominations, for church polity, for authority and for the place of the sacraments. These issues were the ‘elephant in the room’ for Robinson’s view as first outlined in 1959. If his position holds, then what were the implications for the Anglican Church (or ‘Church’), with its Episcopalian polity, its central authority structure, and its liturgical and sacramental traditions?

##### *The Authority of the Church*

In this period, Robinson argued that the church *qua* church had no authority. The churches are rather subject to Christ’s authority. Submission and obedience, rather than authority, are of the *esse* of the church.<sup>81</sup> Robinson acknowledges that actions emanating from a group may be said to have the authority of that body, but for Robinson this is true of any human society or union. It has no spiritual significance as such. It is a ‘secular’ instance of authority.<sup>82</sup> Article 20 of the 39 Articles (which establishes the King or Queen as having authority over the Church of England) Robinson argued is meant too in the ‘secular sense.’ Moreover, the monarch is granted temporal authority over the denomination and not the church in the biblical sense.<sup>83</sup>

In an argument that in the 1980s would become the central plank of his opposition to the ordination of women, Robinson argues that the church submits to the ‘word of God’; that is, the OT, expounded in light of the ‘apostolic testimony’ to Christ and his resurrection (that is, ‘the gospel’) and to the ‘apostolic tradition’ on Christian behaviour and ‘the ordinances of a common life.’<sup>84</sup> The Bible, so understood, produces the church and not the other way around. There has never been a church without a Bible, because the church has always had what is the essence of the NT, ‘the gospel’ and ‘the apostle.’ Churches are ‘handed over’ (παράδιδωμι) to the gospel and ‘handed over’ to the traditions of life and order given by the apostle. Thus, whilst the churches may have significant liberty in terms of polity, denominational allegiance, local custom and worship, a church has no authority to depart from either the ‘gospel’ or from the traditions to which they were handed over by the ‘apostle.’

##### *Denominations*

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<sup>81</sup> Robinson, “The “Authority of the Church””, 301.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 302–3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 300. Robinson believed that it was contrary to the ‘apostolic tradition’ to ordain women. See discussion in chapter 8.

In this period Robinson also begins to argue for the utility of denominations. Contra the ecumenical movement, Robinson saying ‘there is no *a priori* reason why we should regard their co-existence as reprehensible.’<sup>85</sup> Indeed, he makes the historical argument that a plurality of denominations is a good, allowing for freedom of conscience, and discouraging the possibility of the persecuting church. Therefore, we should embrace the utility of denominations ‘so long as they do not impose unscriptural restrictions on the life of local congregations.’<sup>86</sup> He extols the primacy of the local church as ‘the church of God’ and warns against the danger of despising them if we ‘exalt ecumenism, or denominationalism, or diocesanism above the unity of the local church.’<sup>87</sup>

### *Schism*

Robinson also began to think through the implications of his theology for schism. For Robinson, schism is not forsaking the assembly, which he says is apostasy,<sup>88</sup> nor does it describe the differences and disagreements between denominations. Rather schism is only ever possible *within* an assembly. It is a situation in which the unity of a congregation, such as the case in Corinth, is maintained but impaired or in some way damaged. If the point can be established, it has significant implications for the motivations behind the WCC, or the reasoning behind local expression of ecumenism such as the Joint Commission on Church Union in Australia. Indeed in a 1966 article for *Inter-Varsity* this is precisely how Robinson applied his thinking.<sup>89</sup> Here, Robinson argues that much of the urgency and theological energy behind the Joint Commission evaporates if the biblical principles of ‘church unity’ are being mistakenly applied to an entity (e.g. a group of denominations) to which the biblical injunctions are not addressed.

### *Mission*

In this period, Robinson starts to develop his argument that the church has no ‘face to the world’ and is not, *qua* church, tasked with mission. The church is the result of, rather than an instrument for, evangelism. Robinson says:

... the church as a meeting is entirely disassociated from the society where it is and, unless it is forced to meet in public, makes not the smallest impression on it. (It was *preachers* that the community encountered, not the church.) What went on in church became a closely guarded secret. When, as a result of ignorance, various inconveniences

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<sup>85</sup> Robinson, ‘The Church of God’, 248.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>89</sup> Robinson, ‘Church Union’.



and misunderstandings began to arise, Christian apologists answered with books, not with opened doors or neon signs or youth fellowships.<sup>90</sup>

### *Church order and polity*

Finally, Robinson explicitly relates his findings to questions of church order and polity. Robinson argues that the local churches of the NT were ‘independent assemblies’ and that even the Apostle’s authority over them was undefined and uncertain.<sup>91</sup> He argues that the NT does not exhibit any consistent polity<sup>92</sup> and that the word ‘Bishop’ in NT usage does not seem distinguished from the person of the ‘Elder.’<sup>93</sup> Indeed, the word ‘Bishop’ may not refer to an office as such, but rather to one of the functions of the elder.<sup>94</sup> In the 1960 article on Origen, Robinson argues the Anglican Ordinal has used the same language as Origen in speaking about becoming a ‘priest or bishop in the Church of God,’ but means something quite different by it. In Origen, the ‘church of God’ is the local church, rather than what in the Ordinal seems to refer to a world-wide church.

In *The Church of God: Its form and its Unity*, Robinson argued against the idea that exchange of ministry is a necessary expression of ecumenical unity between churches. In the context he has in mind the ecumenical movement proper, but what he says seems to apply equally to the mutual recognition of orders within the Anglican denomination:

Why should a man who was an elder in, say, the Church at Ephesus, have been expected to function as an elder in the church at Corinth, in the event of his visiting Corinth? ... His eldership was peculiarly related to his qualifications and existing relationships with the situation at Ephesus.<sup>95</sup>

This is a significant challenge to the Anglican tradition of mutually recognised orders—a topic Robinson would be enmeshed in in the 1980s.

### *Protestants and the Pope*

Before drawing some conclusions regarding Robinson’s 1960s ecclesiology, I make mention of a remarkable little piece responding to the visit of Pope Paul VI.<sup>96</sup> Originally a Radio Broadcast, its occasion was the controversy in which Archbishop Loane had refused to attend

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<sup>90</sup> Robinson, ‘The Church of God’, 247. Italics original.

<sup>91</sup> Robinson, ‘The Biblical Doctrine of the Church’, 210.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 210–11.

<sup>94</sup> See discussion in Robinson, ‘The “Authority of the Church”’, 306–10.

<sup>95</sup> Robinson, ‘The Church of God’, 244.

<sup>96</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Protestants and the Pope’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 282–92.

the ecumenical worship service in the 'Town Hall'.<sup>97</sup> Loane had written in the *Southern Cross*, explaining the theological objections that precluded his attendance at the service. The decision won him the admiration of many conservative Protestants world-wide, but was considered by some Catholics to be hostile and by many fellow Anglicans and secular people to be unnecessarily sectarian.

In Robinson's broadcast, he shares Loane's classical Protestant objections to Roman Catholic dogma and in particular the understanding of the bishop of Rome as the Vicar of Christ. Robinson also demonstrated a sympathetic engagement with contemporary Catholic theology and offered the conclusion that a Protestant might welcome Pope Paul to Sydney 'as Paul, but we cannot welcome you as Peter'.<sup>98</sup>

Robinson argued that Protestants were ill-equipped to interact with Roman Catholic moves toward ecumenical relations because of their own lack of agreement on a doctrine of the church. His own high ambitions for the work on the biblical doctrine of church with which he had been engaged are revealed in the following:

For although the Reformers and their successors rejected the Roman concept of the church, they did not go on to formulate a clear and agreed alternative doctrine. In fact, the doctrine of the church has never been thoroughly ventilated among Christians in the way that other doctrines have been. We have now, in the twentieth century, an unprecedented interest in the subject of the church, but there is more confusion than clarity as to what we mean when we talk about the church. Perhaps we are on the verge of a really important period of definition.<sup>99</sup>

This gives a sense of the grand hopes Robinson harboured for the work then being conducted by him and others. It reflects, not grandiosity in Robinson, but a characteristic fearlessness and confidence that a well-grounded argument, anchored in close exegesis of scripture could yet win the day. It also demonstrates that Robinson believed his own contribution to ecclesiology to be part of a wider conversation he found exciting and about whose promise he was optimistic. This challenges the view that Sydney ecclesiology in this period was parochial in nature; Robinson himself believed he was part of a wider, cosmopolitan conversation.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> For the story, see Blanch, *From Strength to Strength*, 245–48.

<sup>98</sup> Robinson, 'Protestants and the Pope', 289.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 292. Also notable in the essay is the moment of personal recollection on his engagement with Roman Catholic scholars at the initiation of Dr William Leonard of St Patrick's College in Manly. Since the early 1950s, Robinson had been involved with these conversations which, under Dr Leonard's leadership, were united by a common love for the Bible. Robinson saw this renewed interest in Catholic Biblical scholarship in the post Vatican II era as extremely hopeful. The experience at Manly must have also played a big part in Robinson's own approach to the Liturgical work and later in his role as Archbishop where Robinson regularly operated on the hope that

Robinson ends the paper with the rather surprising hope that the Pope's office might become pastoral rather than jurisdictional, based on the discipline of Christ's Word rather than coercion, then 'a new day might dawn.'

I can see nothing which would prevent Protestants from recognizing in the Bishop of Rome, and in other bishops, an office and ministry of openly proclaiming the truth of God; if you like, a prophetic office, in which he will declare the gospel and the apostolic Word, to city and world as he may choose, and with whatever weight the antiquity of his See may lend him.<sup>101</sup>

There is a clue here to the way Robinson was relating his exegesis to the contemporary church. One might think that his exegesis would dismiss the position of the Pope as irrelevant altogether. Robinson does not think so. Rather, he believed in this complex process of relating the authoritative traditions of the NT to the still authoritative (though subservient) traditions of the church. And so in this case, the end-game of a new appreciation of NT ecclesiology might be a re-imagined bishop of Rome, rather than the abolition of the position altogether.

#### **4.2.5. Conclusion: The Knox and the Robinson Ecclesiologies**

Some conclusions about Robinson's ecclesiology and its relationship to the 'Knox-Robinson view' can now be drawn.

Historically, Knox and Robinson never produced a document of any kind that purported to be 'their' view. Both had an asymmetrical publishing record in this period. Robinson published a dozen or more articles in relatively quick succession between 1959 and 1966 either directly or indirectly on the topic of church. Knox's articles on the topic would be published over long intervals between 1950 and 1989, with a 'Knox-Robinson view' first appearing in 1964.<sup>102</sup> This complicates the work of comparison. We have a detailed account of Robinson's views between 1959 and 1966. With Knox, we only have a few points at which we can compare his thinking with Robinson's at this time and only one if you consider that Knox's mature view is not reflected in the 1950 article. With these challenges in mind, three points can be made on the Knox-Robinson relationship.

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common attention to scripture would move people beyond the impasses of churchmanship. He says, '... I do not yet think we have by any means yet fully explored our common ground in the gospel and the Scriptures, and if there be a way forward, it will surely be along this path.'

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 292.

<sup>102</sup> The published academic essays Knox produced in 1950, 1964, 1973, 1986, and 1989 respectively were D. Broughton Knox, 'The Church and the Denominations', *Reformed Theological Review* 13 (1964): 44–53. Knox, 'The Church and the People of God in the Old Testament'; D. Broughton Knox, 'The Biblical Concept of Fellowship', in *D. Broughton Knox: Selected Works: Volume II: Church and Ministry* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2003), 57–84. D. Broughton Knox, 'The Church, the Churches and the Denominations of the Churches', *ibid*, 85–98. It should be added that Knox was also broadcasting, preaching, and teaching on this topic across the 1960s to the late 1980s, so his views were being disseminated outside of academic publications.

First, the fact that Knox's 1973 article is vastly different from his 1950 article, most noticeably in that it now shares Robinson's linguistic case for the range and referent of the word ἐκκλησία, is consistent with (but not proof of) the contention that Knox leant on Robinson's exegetical work.<sup>103</sup> As we have seen, these exegetical conclusions were available elsewhere such as in Campbell's 1949 work, and it is not impossible that Knox accessed them that way. However, access to Robinson in conversation or through his writing seems eminently more likely. And, though by this stage Knox had pulled out of most ecumenical activity,<sup>104</sup> Knox, almost certainly, was significantly influenced by Robinson.

Secondly, there is actual evidence of Robinson's use of Knox. Ironically, Robinson is the only one of the two to explicitly cite the other.<sup>105</sup> Robinson was much more likely to use normal academic apparatus than Knox, so there is little or nothing to read into the statistics of who quotes whom the most. (In the event, one quoted the other once.) But it does confirm that Robinson was reading what Knox was writing, and incorporated at least one insight into his own work.

Thirdly, despite mutual giving and receiving, the respective ecclesiologies remain distinct. Robinson's understanding of Israel and Gentiles for example is something Knox did not adopt. There is also a distinction on the purpose of church. Robinson emphasized that central to the church's purpose is 'to meet God' rather than fellowship with each other, as Knox argued. And, despite sounding a similar note to Knox regarding the 'secular' and contingent nature of denominations, Robinson had a complex and non-primitivist understanding of church tradition, making his application of NT ecclesiology to contemporary practice a complex affair, as his work in the 1980s made clear. There is no question that between 1960 and 1966, Robinson's proposals were bold, brash and far-reaching. It is not for nothing that someone like Robert Banks found so much stimulus in Robinson toward his work in the house church movement, or that someone like Bruce Ballantine-Jones would be perplexed by the joint-cure of souls he asserted as Archbishop, or that a theologian like Chase Kuhn would be perplexed as to how Robinson's scholarly findings could not break the wineskin of Anglican governance.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Compare, for example Knox, 'The Church and the Denominations', 44–45, with Robinson, 'The Church in the New Testament', 212–15.

<sup>104</sup> Knox had been involved with the WCC at the request of Archbishop Mowll in 1952 at Lund, Sweden, and in 1954 at Evanston, Illinois.

<sup>105</sup> Robinson quotes Knox and footnotes him in Robinson, 'Church Union: Perusing the Proposals', 279.

<sup>106</sup> For Robert Banks's ecclesiology, see Robert J. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994). On Bruce Ballantine-Jones's disappointments with Robinson's application of his ecclesiology as archbishop, see Bruce Ballantine-Jones, 'Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013: The Political Factor' (PhD Thesis, Macquarie University, 2013), 169–72. For Chase Kuhn on the relationship between Robinson's ecclesiology and its place in Anglican forms, see Kuhn, 'The Ecclesiology of Donald Robinson & David Broughton Knox', 142–46.

It would be churlish to deny the existence of a ‘Knox-Robinson view of church’. There is such a theological construct, with its own recognisable features. Even though Robinson distanced himself from the idea, it is hard to deny that both Knox and Robinson came to some common conclusions about ‘church’ in the NT. However, just as in historical theology one needs to distinguish ‘Augustine’ from Augustine or ‘Calvinism’ from John Calvin, so too on historical grounds it is important to challenge the idea that they in any self-conscious way set out to create such a view. They did not. My purpose here is simply to avoid conflating the ‘Robinson’ of history with the ‘Knox-Robinson’ of faith.

#### **4.2.6. The Sacraments**

The freshness of Robinson’s approach to ecclesiology in the 1960s was eclipsed in originality by his work on the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. In fact, his 1964 booklet *Baptised into Christ: The Nature of Christian initiation* was commissioned for publication, but was turned down because it was deemed too radical. One influential British evangelical wrote describing it as a ‘kind of baptismal *Honest to God!*’<sup>107</sup>

Over the years 1960 to 1966 Robinson wrote six articles on the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.<sup>108</sup> Historically, these were being published in tandem with his work on the church, and so they give us an opportunity to see whether and to what extent Robinson was integrating his work on ἐκκλησία with traditional understandings of the sacraments. And they come after work done on the sacraments in the 1950s, allowing us to note any development in his thinking.

##### *Baptism*

Robinson’s *Baptised into Christ* is an extraordinary *tour de force* of fresh exegetical and theological thinking. It is striking for the development and departures from the 1957 booklet, and it is an important case study in seeing Robinson attempt to apply his thinking.

The booklet begins with an awareness of a need for the ‘pruning of luxuriant growth’ around the doctrine of baptism, an exercise in which he judges the Reformation to have been only partly successful.<sup>109</sup> In light of the Reformation’s liturgical revisions, Robinson argued that the revisers have been too superficial in not digging down ‘to the rock of scripture,’ and have

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<sup>107</sup> Doyle, ‘Suppressed Truth’, 223.

<sup>108</sup> In chronological order, these were Donald Robinson, ‘The New Baptismal Service: A Criticism’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 334–50; Donald Robinson, ‘The Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ’, *ibid*, 380–90; Donald Robinson, ‘The Doctrine of Baptism in the Anglican Service’, *ibid*, 351–59; Donald Robinson, ‘Baptised into Christ: The Nature of Christian Initiation’, *ibid*, 271–333; Donald Robinson, ‘Born of Water and Spirit: Does John 3:5 Refer to Baptism?’, *ibid*, 217–26.

<sup>109</sup> Robinson, ‘Baptised into Christ’, 270.

made much of a return to the ‘primitive church’ which, in practice is the church of the third and subsequent centuries ‘whose worship and practice was already far removed from that of the New Testament.’<sup>110</sup>

However, Robinson does not therefore advocate a simple return to the NT church. As he says later in the booklet, it ‘would be impossible to return to the actual practices of the NT, even if we could discover, in all detail, what that practice actually was.’<sup>111</sup> Rather, for Robinson, attention to scripture allows us to find a ‘fundamental conception’ of baptism from which contemporary practice can be worked out.<sup>112</sup> For Robinson, this fundamental conception is repentance—turning away from sin and to Christ.<sup>113</sup> In his understanding, it is a sacrament of *our* repentance rather than God’s forgiveness, and relies on God’s promise to forgive those who turn to him, rather than being itself an ‘outward and visible sign’ of God’s inward and visible grace.<sup>114</sup> The changes and developments over the three centuries following the NT period included introducing a period of catechesis prior to baptism, beginning to see baptism as an ‘ecclesiastical ceremony’ and a matter of ‘church order,’ regarding baptism as the outward sign of Spirit-baptism, and the practice of baptising the infants of Christian families as opposed to the NT practice of baptising whole households upon conversion.<sup>115</sup>

### *Spirit Baptism*

Robinson argues that in the NT, the baptism of the Spirit is never an ‘inward and spiritual’ matter as there is ‘always some sign of his presence and power.’ For Robinson, the work of the Spirit doesn’t need an outward sign or seal; it is itself the outward sign and seal from God, and does not require ‘a ritual token to assure the believer of its existence.’<sup>116</sup> It is not coincident with water baptism, and they do not mean the same thing: Water-baptism is *man’s* outward confirmation of his inward repentance and faith: Spirit-baptism is *God’s* outward confirmation that he has accepted the believer and regards him as a son.<sup>117</sup>

Robinson suggests that a congregation who has received a newly baptised person could pray that God would ‘confirm his faith by sending the Spirit upon him with manifest gifts (at

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid. For an example of Robinson critiquing a newly proposed baptism service on precisely these lines, see Robinson, ‘The New Baptismal Service’.

<sup>111</sup> Robinson, ‘Baptised into Christ’, 318.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 272. This is an excellent example of Robinson’s understanding of how the ‘gospel’ and ‘apostle’ are to function as ‘canon’ within the life of the church.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 290.

least if he has not yet received such gifts).<sup>118</sup> In 1972, Robinson would publish the first of several articles grappling with the rising neo-Pentecostal movement. Robinson's fresh exegesis, and his abandonment of traditional reformed pneumatology prepared him to be a new and provocative voice in that debate.<sup>119</sup>

### *Infant baptism*

In 1957, Robinson had argued forcefully for the propriety of the baptism of infants. By 1967 his position had modified substantially. He now rejected all connections of baptism with the idea of the new covenant as having no biblical basis. The early Christian practice, such as Jewish believers continuing to circumcise their children, also tells against it. However, he does not therefore adopt the position of credo-baptism, which assumes the children of Christian households are in a catechumenate stage until their baptisms. On the contrary, Robinson argued that precisely *because* the children of Christian families were considered 'holy', it is unlikely that the NT Christians baptised their children *at all*. He said:

I venture to draw a different conclusion: that no baptism was considered necessary in such a case, either for the child if brought up in (and accepting) the faith, or for the unbelieving partner in the event of him turning his heart to Christ.<sup>120</sup>

### *Baptism and Anglican order*

Given the originality of many of Robinson's conclusions in this booklet, it is significant that Robinson goes on to apply his conclusions to Anglican faith and order. Here we have a case study of how Robinson saw his exegetical conclusions relating to the tradition of which he was a member. We can observe two broad factors at work.

First, Robinson clearly believed that, if his exegesis has indeed successfully dug down to the 'rock of scriptural truth' then those conclusions ought to have a reforming influence on his tradition. He did not, in other words, believe that his scholarly NT work was hermetically sealed off from the tradition in which he found himself. So, for example, he criticised the BCP as a

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>119</sup> Reformed theology has traditionally taught that the Spirit's work is inward and often undetected. Pentecostal and Charismatic-Renewal teachers, whilst not denying this, vigorously argued (in the Pentecostal case) that a manifest experience of the Spirit, seen by speaking in tongues, was the sign of 'baptism in the Spirit' and, if not necessary to conversion, still a vital Christian experience. The charismatic renewal movement did not insist on baptism in the Spirit, but did affirm that the Spirit's work was manifest in the gifts, which were not inward and quiet, but manifest. Whilst almost no Sydney Anglicans argued from a cessationist position, almost all argued against the idea of a manifest experience of the Spirit. Robinson, it appears, was alone in critiquing the movement whilst sharing its basic pneumatology. See discussion in chapter 5 of this study.

<sup>120</sup> Robinson, 'Baptised into Christ', 301.

place in which we find ‘evangelical truth and Reformed theology imposed on a fundamental conception of baptism which is not plainly scriptural.’<sup>121</sup> However, for Robinson it does not follow from this that the task of the Anglican tradition is to conform itself to the ‘NT church.’ For Robinson, this is both unworkable (as there is no one NT church in terms of polity, worship and order) and unnecessary, as the authority that scripture exercises is more complex than providing a blue-print on which all Christian activity must take place.

Nevertheless, Robinson’s actual proposals for reforms are unrestrained and far-reaching. His suggestions include: infants being baptised in homes and, if desired, by the head of the house rather than a minister;<sup>122</sup> members of the local church rather than family friends being sponsors (Godparents) of the child; baptismal service that represented the baptism of the child as a recapitulation of the original conversion-baptism; confirmation continuing, though clarified as a prayer for an increase in the Spirit’s gifts, rather than a sign of the giving of the Spirit;<sup>123</sup> devising a simple procedure for receiving Christians from other churches, consisting of a brief confession of faith and ‘imposing no other conditions of fellowship.’<sup>124</sup>

My purpose here is not to assess the merits of Robinson’s proposals, but to observe the point: Robinson did not divorce his scholarship from the practices of his tradition. Neither did he believe that reform was a simple process of adjusting the denomination to what was discovered in the NT. Such complexity is of course true in practice; the crucial point for Robinson is that it was also true *in theory*. A new conviction on infant baptism did not in Robinson’s mind lead directly into the transformation of Anglican practice. But neither is the discovery irrelevant. It is incumbent on the tradition to reform itself in light of the NT. But how that process would work was complicated, both in theory and (as we will see in the 1980s) in practice.<sup>125</sup>

### *The Lord’s Supper*

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>122</sup> Robinson, in his entry on ‘Family, Household’ for the NBD notes that references to a ‘church’ in connection with a household (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2) probably imply that either those households were regarded as churches, or that churches met within their orbit. He notes as ‘not unimportant’ the fact that the Lord’s Supper and baptisms seem to have taken place within households, along with Christian instruction. The importance is that ‘... it was from the ranks of proved heads of households that overseers (bishops) as well as deacons for the church were drawn.’ Donald Robinson, ‘Family, Household’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 202–4.

<sup>123</sup> He also said that confirmation ought to be able to be given by the minister and not just a bishop, though he does not explain why.

<sup>124</sup> Robinson, ‘Baptised into Christ’, 319.

<sup>125</sup> Edwards reports that a church in the diocese of Sydney in 1971 ‘spent several months developing a parish baptismal policy based on the Bible and Prayer Book teaching, and came to its conclusion that the rite was only available to adults who were *‘actively pursuing the Christian life within the fellowship of the local congregation.’* Edwards, ‘Developments in the Evangelical Anglican Doctrine of the Church’, 36. It is not hard to see how such a church, having read Robinson’s 1967 booklet, might have assumed he would approve of their local reformation.



The two main publications from Robinson in this period on the Lord's Supper are less exegetically adventurous, and both are grounded in discussion of the Anglican liturgy. The first picks fault with the report of the 1958 Lambeth Conference's Committee Report on Prayer Book Revisions, which had argued for 'further recovery of other elements of worship of the Primitive Church.'<sup>126</sup> In particular the report had suggested that the 'Offertory, with which the people should be definitely associated, to be more closely connected with the Prayer of Consecration.'<sup>127</sup> Against this proposal Robinson argued that there was no 'Offertory' in Anglican worship as the alleged prayer is a prayer of thanks for alms collected during the service rather than the bread and wine. He also argued that an Offertory of bread and wine was not an element in the worship of the Primitive Church.<sup>128</sup> In the second article Robinson seeks common ground between Anglo-Catholic and evangelical Anglicans by arguing that the idea of a 'Eucharistic sacrifice'—so central to Anglo-Catholic theology—is also 'fully consistent with the Reformed doctrine both of the death of Christ and of the Lord's Supper.'<sup>129</sup> He makes his case by arguing that the 'sacrament proper' is the bread and wine received and not any particular acts associated with the administration of them: 'At the last supper the apostles were all communicants and participants only; they were not 'clergy' or potential clergy.'<sup>130</sup> If the sacrament proper is the eating and drinking, then the receiving must be at the heart of the 'Eucharistic sacrifice.' For, says Robinson, paradoxically 'we offer by receiving' and it is as we 'feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving' that we offer the sacrifice of praise God accepts.<sup>131</sup> For Robinson this is evangelical truth. By it, he means to offer an olive branch to Anglo-Catholics and a way forward in common worship grounded, not in compromise, but in a return to 'gospel' and 'apostle.'

### **4.3.      *Scholarship: Phase 2, 1970-1972***

#### **4.3.1. *Evangelism, Scripture, Canon, and Authority***

From 1966 onward, Robinson gave the first of what would be a steady stream of papers or articles directly on the topic central both to his evangelical heritage and to the scholarly concerns of his teachers at Cambridge—the nature of scripture and of the apostolic preaching.<sup>132</sup> Two factors shaped the discussion. The first was the increasing presence and strength of the neo-Pentecostal movement, whose claims to immediate divine revelation challenged traditional Protestant and evangelical understandings of the nature of God's communication. The second

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<sup>126</sup> Robinson, 'Family, Household', 202–4.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Robinson, 'Eucharist and Offertory'.

<sup>129</sup> Robinson, 'The Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ', 380.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 381.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 389.

<sup>132</sup> In chronological order, Donald Robinson, 'Theology of the Preached Word', *Donald Robinson Selected Works II*, 136–47; Donald Robinson, 'By Scripture Alone', *ibid.*, 7–18; Donald Robinson, 'The Theology of Evangelism', *ibid.*, 99–102; Donald Robinson, 'A Theological Note on "Preaching"', *ibid.*, 148–51.

was the quiet revolution in preaching method within the diocese of Sydney in the wake of John Stott's Bible Readings at the CMS Summer School in Katoomba in 1965. Prior to Stott's visit, the mainstay of preaching in the Sydney diocese had been to meditate on a single verse of scripture, often drawing in scripture from elsewhere as the 'textual sermon'.<sup>133</sup> Peter Jensen recalls growing up under this sort of preaching, and the style that Sydney evangelist and noted preacher John Chapman used, prior to Stott's 1965 visit.<sup>134</sup> Though Stott had visited Australia previously and to great effect, it seems that the 1965 visit was the real catalyst.<sup>135</sup> Chapman and fellow Sydney clergyman Dudley Foord went to work on changing the style of preaching within the diocese and, by 1970 the 'College of Preachers' was formally endorsed by the Sydney Synod.<sup>136</sup> Robinson's own style of preaching would possibly be described as textual rather than expositional,<sup>137</sup> though many of his insights and approaches were to become the fuel that powered subsequent expositional preaching in Sydney.

From 1961, Robinson had been contributing to discussions on the word of God with his emphasis on the three constituent elements of scripture: The OT, the gospel and the apostolic tradition.<sup>138</sup> These distinctions follow Dodd's seminal work in *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* of identifying the apostolic *kerygma* and distinguishing it from the *didache*, the apostolic instructions for the Christian life.

At the Moore College Autumn School of Theology on 9 May 1966, Robinson presented a paper on 'The Theology of the Preached Word'.<sup>139</sup> It acknowledges a general unease at the apparent ineffectiveness of preaching, both as a means of communication and as a means by which people might convert.<sup>140</sup> After a survey of OT and NT for a broad theology of the word, Robinson distinguishes three ministries of the word: The passing of the *tradition*, characteristic in the OT of priests; the work of prophecy, which represents a more direct form of address to people in the particularities of their situation; and preaching proper which, following C. H. Dodd, Robinson defines as 'the public proclamation of Christianity to the non-Christian world'.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> For a definition of the 'textual sermon' as well as a history of the development of the Sydney expository sermon, see Piggin, 'Sydney Episcopal Preaching'.

<sup>134</sup> See Holt, 'The Emergence of Expository Preaching', 75.

<sup>135</sup> For clarity on this date, given some of the confusion in the historiography, see *Ibid.*, 78–79.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>137</sup> Andrew Reid shares this judgement in his study. See Reid, 'Evangelical Hermeneutics and Old Testament Preaching', 179.

<sup>138</sup> Robinson, 'The "Authority of the Church"', 300.

<sup>139</sup> Robinson, 'Theology of the Preached Word'.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 136–137. Is this a general or gnomic statement about preaching, or does this, in the context of 1966, reflect the beginning of an awareness of a society and church increasingly alienated from each other, a moment in which the enthusiasm of the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade is beginning to dissipate?

<sup>141</sup> Robinson, 'Theology of the Preached Word', 143.

The paper concludes with an exhortation to practise applied preaching, an area in which Robinson describes himself as ‘the chief of sinners’.<sup>142</sup> As an insight into Robinson’s assessment of the preaching scene in 1966, the diagnosis is telling:

... I believe that one of our big weaknesses is in what we call ‘application’ in imparting God’s Word. I don’t mean a personal appeal tacked on to the end of a sermon. I mean an awareness on the part of the speaker of the condition of the audience, and the addressing of his utterance to that particular condition. Or to put it in more personal terms: a knowledge of the *people* on the part of the *person* who speaks .... a chief defect of modern preaching is that it is so often fundamentally impersonal ... Too many sermons ... terminate on themselves. They do not touch the conscience of the hearer, because the speaker knows little or nothing of the condition of that conscience, or of the personal, human situation in which he is operating, and therefore has not addressed the person who possesses it.<sup>143</sup>

I have already argued that the conversionist strand in Bebbington’s quadrilateral was the most muted in Robinson’s personal evangelical synthesis. It is noteworthy here that this was Robinson’s own self-assessment, understanding himself to be the ‘chief of sinners’ in an underdeveloped practice of preaching for decisions.

Poignantly, on 10 May 1966, the day after presenting the paper on preaching, Robinson woke to discover that his father, who had been staying with them at the Vice-Principal’s house at Moore College, a man whom Marcus Loane had described affectionately as a ‘clear preacher ... always on the level of his hearers’, had died<sup>144</sup> It was early in the morning and he was found sitting in his pyjamas on the armchair next to his bed with his Bible open at the book of Psalms, and apparently in prayer.<sup>145</sup>

Another line of inquiry was suggested to Robinson when, in 1968, he attended the *Asia South Pacific Congress on Evangelism*. The conference, hosted by the Billy Graham Association, was held in Singapore from 5-13 November. At the conference, Robinson attended a seminar entitled ‘A Theology of Evangelism’ by Akbar Abdul-Haqq. He took extensive notes, clearly disagreeing with most of what he was hearing.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Loane, *Mark These Men*, 52.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>146</sup> From Donald Robinson, Box 2. MTC Archives.

In July of 1970, Robinson returned to Singapore and presented a paper at the *Asia Evangelical Theological Consultation* on ‘The Theology of Evangelism.’<sup>147</sup> In many ways it reads as a reply to Akbar Abdul-Haqq’s seminar from 1968. In it, Robinson further teases out his understanding of the gospel, arguing that there is a consistent, ‘eternal’ gospel in scripture: the constant call for the creatures of God to ‘fear God and give him glory.’<sup>148</sup> He mounts a characteristic linguistic argument that the word εὐαγγέλιον, despite its etymology, does not mean ‘good news’ but rather ‘properly delivered’ proclamation.<sup>149</sup>

Robinson’s ecclesiology and his missiology led him to be bemused, if not troubled, by the tendency of much gospel proclamation to be dressed up in the form of a church service. In a further reflection on this topic, Robinson says:

The messenger is a servant of the Word only. It is a great peril to give the impression that response to the gospel must include adopting the characteristics and adornments of the messenger. This is a problem in the West no less than the East (though sometimes the incongruity is more easily seen in the East).<sup>150</sup>

Later, as Archbishop, many of Robinson’s clergy would precisely argue for the loosening of dress and liturgical legislation for local churches because of the peril of inferring an enquirer must act or dress in a certain way to be a Christian. We will observe how Robinson navigated that argument in the relevant section of this thesis; here it is sufficient to note that for Robinson this applied to the preacher and not to the ἐκκλησία. To apply the missiology relevant to the preaching to the church is for Robinson a category error. God sends preachers, not churches.<sup>151</sup>

Robinson clearly believed his thinking in this area had wider benefit for the church and inter-church discussions. In 1971, Robinson accompanied Archbishop Loane to an Ecumenical Conference at Ormond College, University of Melbourne, where he presented a paper titled ‘By Scripture Alone’ in which, alongside a conventional reformed account of *sola scriptura*, he outlined his more distinctive case that the NT created the church in the sense that ‘gospel’ and ‘apostle’ are how the church comes into existence.<sup>152</sup> Robinson clearly sees avenues in his account that could prove fruitful for ecumenical discussion— ‘some such evaluation of Scripture as tradition may prove useful to us in our dialogue with the Church of Rome’, he says.<sup>153</sup> And closer to home, Robinson provided an appendix for the Sydney Synod-commissioned report *Move in for Action*—a

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<sup>147</sup> See Robinson, ‘Origins and Unresolved Tensions’, 13.

<sup>148</sup> Robinson, ‘The Theology of Evangelism’, 100.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>151</sup> Robinson, ‘The Church of God’, 247.

<sup>152</sup> Robinson, ‘By Scripture Alone’, 16–17.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 17.

report on the current status of the Sydney diocese's outreach. He provided a short but thorough account of the antecedents and NT usage of *εὐαγγέλιον* and associated words.<sup>154</sup>

#### **4.4. Conclusion: Donald Robinson in the 1960s**

The great question for any longitudinal study of Robinson's thought is to try to relate his radical scholarship to his conservatism as a churchman. There are three broad possibilities: The first is that Robinson changed his views, adopting positions he did not hold earlier, and abandoning positions he once did. The second is that he changed roles. It is possible that he saw the role of a NT scholar as fundamentally different from the role of an archbishop: the former inviting radicalism, the latter conservation. The third possibility is that the change is apparent rather than real. That is, it is possible that Robinson held more or less the same positions he held as a scholar, and that a better grasp of what he in fact believed would relieve the apparent tension. As we come to the end of our study of Robinson the scholar, some preliminary comments can be made.

First, a study of Robinson's thought from 1947 to 1973 gives evidence of both continuity and of change. His views of baptism, for example develop and do so into a more radical key. However, on other areas such as the apostolic tradition, Israel and the Gentiles and the church he is notably consistent, sticking with and refining convictions first arrived at in the 1940s and 1950s. I will argue that his thought generally featured continuity rather than change.

The second possibility is that he understood himself to have changed roles rather than perspectives. This is something I will need to explore when, in 1973, his role changed.

The third possibility is that such change was more apparent real. An assessment will again need to wait for the results of the chapters to follow. What I have sought to do in these last three chapters is to give as clear and accurate as possible a picture of what Robinson's thought was when, on 25 January 1973, he was to leave the cloisters of Moore College for the demands of overseeing Christian life and witness in the expanding western suburbs of Sydney. A clear statement of Robinson's thought, disentangled from Knox and appreciated chronologically, diachronically and synthetically, is the necessary foundation for exploring the question of continuity. There is no value in declaring the continuity or otherwise of Robinson's early and later thought if he is being held accountable for positions he never in fact took. With a clear statement of Robinson's thought now in place, we turn to exploring its development first in the context of Parramatta over the 1970s and then as Archbishop in the 1980s.

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<sup>154</sup> Robinson, 'A Theological Note on "Preaching"', 148–51.



## 5. Spirit, Word, and Worship: The Scholarly Bishop in Parramatta, 1973-1981

The period considered here is bracketed by two highly significant moments for my study of Robinson: his consecration as Bishop in Parramatta<sup>1</sup> on the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul on 25 January 1973, and his delivery of the Moore College Annual Lectures in 1981. His consecration would mark a slow but inevitable withdrawal from the academic career that seemed to so many his natural destiny. And the delivery of the Annual Lectures, only months before his election to the See of Sydney, meant those lectures would be his swan song as a scholar of the NT. Subsequently published as *Faith's Framework*,<sup>2</sup> they provide powerful evidence for Robinson's own understanding of the significance and synthesis of his work. They also marked the point at which Robinson would definitively withdraw from the scholarly life. The diocese 'in whose service he was always too much in demand'<sup>3</sup> would eventually claim his intellect and attention as its Archbishop. In his time at Parramatta, he continued to teach at Moore College and to write. He may well have hoped to be a bishop-scholar; he would, in the end, have to be content to be a scholarly bishop.

This chapter has four sections. The first sets out the historical and biographical context for Robinson's move to Parramatta. Sections 2, 3 and 4, the heart of the chapter, explore three key areas into which Robinson extended his thought at this time: the *Spirit*, the *Scriptures* and *Worship*. The *Spirit* occupied his attention as he responded to the neo-Pentecostal movements of the 1970s; the *Scriptures* as he participated in evangelical debates over the Bible's nature and purpose, and *Worship* as his liturgical and sacramental work culminated in the publication of *An Australian Prayer Book* in 1978.<sup>4</sup> Through these three studies I intend to demonstrate that this period, whilst not Robinson's most productive in terms of publications, were amongst his most intellectually interesting. They were years in which the demands of office called on him to apply his scholarly mind to the issues that challenged Christian life and faith in the 1970s. It was a task he approached with originality and energy.

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Robinson was consecrated 'Bishop *in* Parramatta', which was the position's original title, when established under Archbishop Loane. As archbishop, Robinson would change the title to 'Bishop *of* Parramatta'. See Blanch, *From Strength to Strength*, 235.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, *Faith's Framework*.

<sup>3</sup> Dumbrell, 'An Appreciation of the Theological Work of Archbishop Donald Robinson', xxxvi.

<sup>4</sup> In choosing on these topics, I am focusing on those parts of Robinson's corpus and teaching that were particularly his focus in the 1970s. He also continued to develop his thought on Jew and Gentile in the NT at this time, and I will pick up on those publications in the context of chapter 6's discussion of the Annual Lectures. In this period, he also published what was probably his most accomplished academic essay, Robinson, 'The Priesthood of Paul in the Gospel of Hope'. It was Robinson's contribution to the *Festschrift* for Leon Morris.

## 5.1. **Context: Bishop Robinson of Parramatta**

In September of 1972, Archbishop Loane announced in the *Southern Cross* that Donald Robinson would replace the retiring Bishop Begbie.<sup>5</sup> Parramatta is the central business district for the vast and expanding outer western suburbs of Sydney. Socio-economically, it represented a more working class and disadvantaged part of the city. As Bishop Donald Cameron described it, Robinson was

taken from a life which was run by the routine of a College, a day ordered by bells, and thrust into one of the most rapidly growing areas of Sydney where the church was thinly represented.<sup>6</sup>

It was a decision that surprised many of his friends and colleagues. He was by many accounts the most gifted and promising scholar in Sydney Anglican circles, and yet he accepted a role that would inevitably curtail his own contribution to NT scholarship when he was at the very height of his powers. Several of his friends implored him to stay. Paul Barnett and Peter Jensen met with him to implore him to remain in academia.<sup>7</sup> Bruce Kaye wrote to him from Durham University, where he was teaching, also to encourage him to remain.<sup>8</sup> Professor Edwin Judge, who does not recall raising the issue with him, nevertheless received a personal letter from Robinson which obliquely acknowledged that he had made a decision for which Judge would not be enthusiastic.<sup>9</sup> The reasons people wanted him to stay are not hard to come by. In Paul Barnett's words 'I firmly believe Robbie would have become an international leader in NT studies.'<sup>10</sup>

For the College it was momentous news. Robinson had taught there for 20 years, and his teaching and research were highly valued. Moreover, the combination of Knox and Robinson was a carefully calibrated partnership. Academically, Robinson's more careful and inductive approach to the NT worked in well with Knox's theological and speculative style. Administratively, as Vice-Principal Robinson ran the day-to-day workings of the College. According to Dumbrell, Robinson's 'strong personality kept the students under control. Once Don went, Broughton didn't communicate with anyone or confide in anybody.'<sup>11</sup> In Cameron's biography of D. B. Knox, she notes that the students who entered the College in 1973 were the

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<sup>5</sup> *Southern Cross*, August 1972.

<sup>6</sup> Cameron, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', xiii.

<sup>7</sup> Shiner, Interview with Paul Barnett on Donald Robinson.

<sup>8</sup> Shiner, Interview with Bruce Kaye on Donald Robinson.

<sup>9</sup> Shiner, Interview with Edwin Judge on Donald Robinson.

<sup>10</sup> Shiner, Interview with Paul Barnett on Donald Robinson.

<sup>11</sup> Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life*, 192.



most difficult Broughton ever had to deal with.<sup>12</sup> These difficulties were at least compounded by Robinson's absence. Certainly, according to many reports Knox seemed lost for some time after Robinson had left the College.<sup>13</sup>

Why did Robinson leave? Allan Blanch and Marcia Cameron both argue that Robinson had a good working relationship with Knox, and Robinson himself recalled 'no major differences with Knox.'<sup>14</sup> Many others have speculated that Robinson was finding Knox increasingly difficult to work with, or at least was finding the MTC environment one in which his wings were clipped. This seems quite possible, though the sources available do not make the conclusion certain.

What is certain is that relationships with the archbishop and the College had grown tense. Archbishop Loane was concerned at the independence and doctrinal emphases of Moore College graduates, perceiving that the sort of evangelical churchmanship for which he stood was being eroded.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, Knox's anti-episcopal stance was well known.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, Robinson was by personality compliant, trusting of institutions and their processes. And Robinson's attitude to the Church of England's liturgy and order was much more positive than Knox's. It is therefore easy to imagine Robinson found the College an increasingly difficult place in which to work and may have seen in the move to Parramatta a chance for some independence from Knox. It may be that Robinson himself was hinting at such difficulties when, in his biographical contribution to the 1986 *Festschrift* for D. B. Knox, he described his principalship as a regime of 'benign paternalism': Knox would consult the faculty only to 'ignore the conclusions to which the discussion had led!'<sup>17</sup> The only data points we have are general accounts of an increasingly independent College in the early 1970s and the fact that in 1972 Robinson accepted Loane's invitation to become bishop in Parramatta. When the Knox view of church is disentangled from Robinson's view (which, as we have already argued, it must be), the idea that Robinson would accept an episcopal appointment is unremarkable. Perhaps Mark Robinson, Donald's son, provides the most telling analysis. Robinson left the College to become a bishop 'because Marcus asked him to.'<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>13</sup> Blanch, *From Strength to Strength*, 269.

<sup>14</sup> Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life*, 192–93; cf. Blanch, *From Strength to Strength*, 269.

<sup>15</sup> Reid, *Marcus L. Loane*, 107.

<sup>16</sup> He apparently returned from Donald Cameron's consecration as a bishop and joked that it was a 'pity to see such a good man leaving the ministry.' Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life*, 204.

<sup>17</sup> Robinson, 'David Broughton Knox', xv.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Robinson in personal conversation with the author, 2012.

## 5.2. Spirit: Donald Robinson and Charismatic Christianity

*‘Certainly, God intends Christianity to be charismatic. But what a wide-ranging term that is!’<sup>19</sup>*

*Donald Robinson, 1973.*

### 5.2.1. Neo-Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity in Australia

The rise of charismatic renewal movements in the 1960s and 1970s created both dynamism and trauma for the wider evangelical world. Unlike the separatist Pentecostal movements in the first half of the century, the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic renewal movements<sup>20</sup> tended to stay within existing denominations, greatly enhancing their capacity to influence the wider Christian world. Non-charismatics spoke of the new energy and resources the movement brought to the wider church.<sup>21</sup> However, perceived theological error on topics such as baptism in the Spirit and speaking in tongues moved evangelical leaders such as John Stott in UK and Paul Barnett in Australia to distance themselves publicly from these features of the movement.<sup>22</sup> The response of Sydney Anglicans was particularly forceful.<sup>23</sup>

Robinson’s academic and popular responses to neo-Pentecostalism in the 1970s were influential in the Sydney context, shaping the approaches of leaders such as Peter Jensen and Paul Barnett. However, Robinson’s views were not adopted *in toto*. His understanding of Spirit baptism, for example, was closer to classical Pentecostalism than to the conservative evangelical position outlined by leaders such as Stott in England and Barnett in Australia. Conversely, Robinson’s lukewarm response to the movement’s liturgical laxity, the very feature of the movement younger Sydney clergy welcomed, was grounded in Robinson’s wider liturgical vision. Robinson had also had warm personal contact with Pentecostals since at least the 1940s.<sup>24</sup>

Pentecostal Christianity has a long history in Australia, with the first Pentecostal congregation generally recognised as the Good News Hall, founded by Jeannine Lancaster in Melbourne in 1909.<sup>25</sup> Antecedent experiences of speaking in tongues are reported from as early as

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<sup>19</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Charismatic Christianity’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 191–201.

<sup>20</sup> I will use the terms ‘neo-Pentecostal’ and ‘charismatic renewal’ interchangeably. The term ‘neo-Pentecostal’ is the more popular term in the primary documents whereas latter historiography seems to have settled on the term ‘charismatics’ or ‘charismatic renewal’.

<sup>21</sup> For positive comments, see Paul Barnett and Peter Jensen, *The Quest for Power: Neo-Pentecostals and the New Testament* (Sydney: ANZEA, 1973), 76–79.

<sup>22</sup> For the response of conservative evangelicals to the charismatic renewal in UK, see Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 229–48; Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 72–74; Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism*, 188–92; Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry: The Later Years* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 37–40.

<sup>23</sup> Brian Stanley writes, ‘In Australia the dominant influence in New South Wales of a strongly Reformed variety of the evangelical Anglican tradition has limited the impact of renewal among Anglicans.’ Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism*, 182.

<sup>24</sup> This acceptance was fostered by personal contact, including with the Schwartz family, committed Pentecostals with whom he stayed whilst in Brisbane for War service in the 1940s.

<sup>25</sup> Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

1870 in the context of an era of apparently genuine and widespread local revivals, mostly predating the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906 (the traditional birthdate of the modern Pentecostal movement).<sup>26</sup> In Piggin's words, 'Australian Pentecostalism, then, was not founded by Americans, and to this day retains a distinctive character.'<sup>27</sup>

Unlike separatist Pentecostals, the neo-Pentecostal movement brought matters of the Spirit closer to home both for evangelicals and for the mainline churches. In 1963, John Stott's curate Michael Harper received baptism in the Spirit and subsequently began to exercise leadership in the charismatic renewal movement within the Church of England.<sup>28</sup> Stott was initially unsure as to whether the baptism in the Spirit was a biblical doctrine. He set himself the project of thinking through the issue at his Welsh writing cottage, The Hookses. He came to his conclusion and at the Islington Clerical Conference in 1964, announced that post-conversion Spirit-baptism was unbiblical.<sup>29</sup> In the booklet published subsequently, Stott argued that baptism in the Spirit necessarily accompanies conversion and is not a distinct experience.<sup>30</sup> According to Bebbington, by the 1970s concerns sounded by Stott in 1964 were giving way to a general rapprochement between evangelicals and charismatics.<sup>31</sup> In Sydney, by contrast, the 1970s were when sharper lines were being drawn.

In John Reid's judgement the charismatic movement did not make a widespread impact in the Sydney diocese, lacking a significant leader.<sup>32</sup> There were, however, significant charismatic ministries within the diocese. Under Canon Jim Glennon, a significant healing ministry was conducted in St Andrew's Cathedral from the early 1960s through to the 1980s.<sup>33</sup> It was a ministry simultaneously at the very centre of the diocese geographically and at its margins theologically. Marcus Loane pursued a policy of benevolent containment, happy for the ministry to continue, but concerned about possible perceptions that a 'Pentecostal foothold' was being established in the Cathedral.<sup>34</sup> As Paul Egan has argued, whilst Glennon's ministry was broadly charismatic in character, the historical roots of healing ministry in Anglo-Catholic thought

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<sup>26</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., chapter 3. The story of Pentecostalism in Australia includes the extraordinary story of John Alexander Dowie, whose ministry in South Australia, Sydney and Melbourne culminated in the establishment of the Zion City Christian Catholic Church in the United States, which in turn established the Zionist tradition of Sub-Saharan Africa. See Joel Cabrita, 'Revisiting "Translatibility" and African Christianity: The Case of the Christian Catholic Church in Zion'. *Studies in Church History* 53 (2017): 448-75.

<sup>28</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 230.

<sup>29</sup> Dudley-Smith, *John Stott*, 37.

<sup>30</sup> John Stott, *Baptism and Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 247.

<sup>32</sup> Reid, *Marcus L. Loane*, 120.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Egan, 'The Development Of, and Opposition To, Healing Ministries in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, with Special Reference to the Healing Ministry at St Andrew's Cathedral 1960–2010' (PhD Thesis, Macquarie University, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> See Ibid., 75.

fostered additional suspicions.<sup>35</sup> Glennon's ministry was one seen as somewhat marginal by local Christians, but exercised significant influence internationally. His book *Your Healing is Within You* (1978) sold over 200,000 copies. When the ministry's Healing Centre was opened in Newtown on 1 December 1985 by then Archbishop Donald Robinson, messages came from Archbishop Runcie of Canterbury, the Australian Primate, Bishop Hugh Gough and Dean Lance Shilton. In his address, Robinson said: 'I have been in many parts of the world and when I say I come from Sydney ... it is often very nice to have someone say 'Do you know Jim Glennon?''<sup>36</sup>

The Rev Geoffrey Bingham (1919-2009) shared similar views on healing to Glennon, though for Bingham they were part of a wider revivalist package. After being inspired by stories of the East African revival, and having experienced revival first hand in Pakistan, Bingham returned to Sydney keen to see revival at home. Reception of Bingham's ideas in Sydney were cool,<sup>37</sup> with Bingham himself saying that his ideas went down like a 'lead balloon.'<sup>38</sup> Both Egan and Piggin judge that Bingham's ministry was held in suspicion of having a 'sinless perfection' streak.<sup>39</sup> It was a charge Bingham denied.

In 1966 Robert Banks, then a PhD student at Cambridge who had been a gifted student of Robinson's and the senior student at Moore College, had also experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.<sup>40</sup> For Banks, this was an experience not channelled into mainstream charismatic or Pentecostal churches but rather formed part of what would be a journey into a house church movement, public theology and a distinguished academic career.<sup>41</sup>

Despite Loane's policy of benevolent containment, a degree of momentum was developing for the charismatic movement with the Sydney Anglican scene in the 1960s, with charismatic parishes developing in Picton, Malabar, Darlinghurst, Normanhurst and Surry Hills. In the Surry Hill's parish the Rector, Peter Hobson, received some tabloid press coverage, developing a reputation for exorcisms.<sup>42</sup>

In summary, significant local factors shaped the Sydney diocese's experience of the charismatic renewal in the 1960s and 1970s. It did not have a significant leader. Prominent figures like Glennon were moderate, and were successfully contained. Bingham moved to South

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>37</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Paul, 'Healing Ministry', 52.

<sup>39</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 8; Egan, 'Healing Ministry', 50.

<sup>40</sup> Archbishop's Office, Correspondence, Rev Geoffrey Narramore Moon, 1962-1969. 1995/020/020. Confidential. Sealed until 2000AD.

<sup>41</sup> On Robert Banks, see Geoffrey Treloar, 'Three Contemporary Christian Radicals in Australia: Robert Banks, Stuart Piggin and Bruce Kaye', in *Agendas for Australian Anglicanism: Essays in Honour of Bruce Kaye*, ed. Tom Frame (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2006), 195-229.

<sup>42</sup> Egan, 'Healing Ministry', 77.

Australia, and the experience of Banks showed that the Spirit baptism did not always lead into classical charismatic ministry patterns. And Sydney, unlike anywhere in the UK, was a diocese under conservative evangelical control. Responses could therefore be institutional and official. Such was the situation in Sydney in the early 1970s.

In October of 1971, the Diocesan Synod formed a committee of twelve to report on the charismatic movement.<sup>43</sup> According to Egan, only Crawford, Glennon and Hobart were sympathetic to the charismatic movement, and Crawford resigned in November of 1972.<sup>44</sup> In 1981 Glennon would describe his involvement with the committee as ‘a very disagreeable experience.’<sup>45</sup> They were commissioned to ‘consider the Charismatic Movement from a scholarly and pastoral point of view’ and to assess the movement with respect to the personal life of believers, the corporate life of the church and the witness of the church in the world.<sup>46</sup> Despite the apparent imbalance on the committee, the report it produced, *Both Sides of the Question*, lived up to its title in setting out both sides of the debate and refraining from making ‘final judgments.’<sup>47</sup>

In 1973, Paul Barnett and Peter Jensen published a small book called *The Quest for Power: Neo-Pentecostalism and the New Testament*.<sup>48</sup> Dedicated to Broughton Knox and Donald Robinson, the book addressed the confused non-charismatic Christians and presented them with an interrogation of the main biblical passages used to establish the neo-Pentecostal position. In common with Stott’s treatment, Barnett and Jensen deny that Spirit baptism is an event separate from conversion and normally evidenced by speaking in tongues to be sought by all Christians. Biblical passages normally cited are, on closer consideration, either distinct events in salvation history, not to be sought as normal Christian experience, or they are synonyms for conversion. Barnett and Jensen are not cessationists and do allow for the continued presence of the gifts of the Spirit, including tongue speaking.<sup>49</sup>

### **5.2.2. Robinson and Neo-Pentecostalism: Early Positions**

Robinson produced a cluster of publications and addresses on neo-Pentecostalism and associated topics between 1972 and 1977, including academic papers, lectures and a public address given on

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<sup>43</sup> The twelve members were The Revs A. M. Blanch, J. C. Chapman, D. H. Crawford, G. H. Feltham, D. T. Foord, R. E. Lamb, A. J. Glennon, D. B. Knox, J. R. Reid (Chairman), Dr B. B. Hamilton, R. B. Hobart, and Dr D. Treloar.

<sup>44</sup> Egan, ‘Healing Ministry’, 79.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Canon A. J. Glennon to the Rev Alan Nichols, NEAC Office, Melbourne, 13 February. Cited in *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>46</sup> Sydney Diocesan Standing Committee, ‘Both Sides to the Question: Official Report of an Anglican Commission on the Neo-Pentecostal Movement, Received October 1973 by the Synod of The Church of England Diocese of Sydney’ (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 1973), 3.

<sup>47</sup> Sydney Diocesan Standing Committee, ‘Both Sides to the Question’.

<sup>48</sup> Barnett and Jensen, *The Quest for Power*.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

ABC radio in 1973.<sup>50</sup> Prior to the 1970s, several of the distinguishing features of Robinson's response were already in place. In particular, through his work on baptism, Robinson had already come to the position that many of the references to 'baptism' in the NT were in fact references to Spirit baptism.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, he held the position that in several cases this 'baptism in the Spirit' was an experience of the Spirit subsequent to conversion and of which the recipient was necessarily conscious—which is to say, a position resonant with, if not identical to, the classical pentecostal position.<sup>52</sup> As early as 1965, Robinson was arguing that Spirit baptism was 'an *evident* reality, not something undetectable.'<sup>53</sup> Indeed, he chastises fellow Anglicans for being 'so dominated by our traditional definition of a sacrament that we have failed to see that for Paul the 'outward and visible sign' was the Spirit himself, 'who needed no attestation.'<sup>54</sup> Robinson agreed with Pentecostals: NT writers did not see baptism in the Spirit and conversion as the same event. Robinson came to his position, not through an engagement with Pentecostal theology, but via a critical engagement with the NT, and most often in conversation with Anglican sacramental theology.<sup>55</sup>

In 1971 Robinson addressed the first National Evangelical Anglican Congress in Melbourne. He spoke on the topic of liturgy. Whereas Barnett and Jensen saw a relaxation of stiff liturgical forms as one of the blessings of the charismatic renewal,<sup>56</sup> for Robinson this was one of its least attractive fruits. He argued forcefully, for example, against the introduction of extempore prayer in the service, seeing unset prayers as against the principle of common prayer, and allowing lay members to lead prayer as against church order.<sup>57</sup> In this context he makes an interesting aside: 'If there were evidence of a widespread gift of prayer in the churches,' he said, 'one might be inclined to stretch the legal point.'<sup>58</sup> The implication is that a charismatic outpouring of extempore prayer would be grounds for reconsidering the liturgy. As it stood, however, for Robinson no such outpouring was then evident.

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<sup>50</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Charismata Verses Pneumatika: Paul's Method of Discussion', *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 163–71; Donald Robinson, 'The Gifts of the Spirit', *ibid.*, 172–83; Robinson, 'Charismatic Christianity', *ibid.*, 191–201; Donald Robinson, 'St Paul's Spiritual Man', *ibid.*, 184–90.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Robinson's 1965 booklet 'Baptised into Christ: The Nature of Christian Initiation'.

<sup>52</sup> 'Now we tend to think of this work of the Spirit as something unseen and hidden. We speak of an "inward and spiritual grace." But it is doubtful if the New Testament ever thinks of the operations of God's Spirit among men as merely "inward and spiritual." There is always some sign of his presence and power ...'. *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 289. Emphasis added.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 290. Robinson cites Paul's question in Acts 19:2 as evidence.

<sup>56</sup> Barnett and Jensen, *The Quest for Power*, 77.

<sup>57</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Liturgical Patterns of Worship', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works I*, 331.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

Robinson's first publication specifically on neo-Pentecostal topics was in 1972.<sup>59</sup> An exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12-14, Robinson takes as his starting point his Cambridge tutor Henry Chadwick's 1955 paper in which Chadwick argued that in 1 Corinthians Paul affirms the position held in Corinth, only to work from a shared point in order ultimately to subvert their thinking.<sup>60</sup> It was an insight that had a profound and ongoing influence on Robinson's approach to Paul.

Robinson extended Chadwick's argument in 1 Corinthians 12. He argued that Paul's use of the language of the *πνευματικοῖς* (the 'spirituals') was another instance of Paul using the Corinthians' own language, only to subvert it with a more adequate doctrine of 'gifts' (*χάρισμα*).<sup>61</sup> It is an exegetical option often masked in English translation by the gratuitous insertion of the word 'gifts' to qualify the word 'spiritual.'<sup>62</sup> For Robinson this undermines Paul's whole argument, for it is the Corinthians who wish to speak of *pneumatics*, and it is Paul who wants to draw them to a better mind by introducing the concept of 'gift'.

Robinson saw a clear implication for the modern charismatic movement: to describe a movement whose primary distinguishing feature is 'pneumatic' experiences is 'to turn Paul's evaluation on its head.'<sup>63</sup> For Robinson, the language of *charismata* was deployed precisely to correct a church whose fixation with pneumatic experience Paul considered unbalanced.

Robinson also argued that the phrase 'gifts of the Spirit' wrongly implied that the giving of gifts was a distinct activity of the Third Person of the Trinity. 'The truth,' says Robinson, 'is that gifts are given by God, or by Christ.'<sup>64</sup> Robinson is quick to clarify that he does not question the value or reality of those who experience pneumatic manifestations. He was not a cessationist, nor was he coy about spiritual realities.<sup>65</sup> But the effect of his argument is to pour cold water on much of the modern movement's more extravagant claims.

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<sup>59</sup> Rory Shiner, 'Reading the New Testament from the Outside', in *All That the Prophets Have Declared: The Appropriation of Scripture in the Emergence of Christianity*, ed. Matthew R. Malcolm (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2015), 185–97.

<sup>60</sup> H. Chadwick, "All Things to All Men", *New Testament Studies* 1:4 (May 1955): 261–275. So, for example in 1 Corinthians 7 a superficial reading would suppose that Paul is disparaging of marriage and sees celibate life as superior. But in Chadwick's understanding 'the drift of the chapter as a whole is in the opposite direction ... a rear-guard action in which the apostle manages to surrender almost everything in principle to the opposition with an ability to make practical recommendations not easily reconciled with the theory he virtually accepts.' Quoted in Robinson, 'Charismata Versus Pneumatika', 163.

<sup>61</sup> Robinson, 'Charismata Versus Pneumatika', 165.

<sup>62</sup> So, for example, NRSV, NIV, ESV. KJV inserts 'gifts' but does so in italics to alert the reader to its insertion.

<sup>63</sup> Robinson, 'Charismata Versus Pneumatika', 168.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, in 1952–1953, when students from the local girls school asked about exorcisms, Robinson responded by inviting a missionary who had herself performed exorcisms to come and address the girls. Evidently, despite a scholarly disposition, Robinson was an unselfconscious supernaturalist. See Robinson, 'Some Rectors and Recollections', 60.

In 1972, Robinson spoke publicly (most likely at Moore College) on the topic of ‘the gifts of the Spirit’<sup>66</sup> and said;

There would seem, for instance, to be no reason why an outburst of tongues and healings should be called a ‘charismatic movement’ any more than a revival of cheerful giving, or a wave of helps and counsellors, or a marked increase in the ministry of pastors and teachers. All gifts are, by definition, charismatic, which is merely to say all gifts are gifts!<sup>67</sup>

Robinson also noted the difficulty in establishing what any gifts in the NT actually were, and so counsels against assuming a modern experience is an instance of what is described in the NT.<sup>68</sup> He concluded that the modern manifestation of tongues and healing may well be genuine but needed to be ‘shrunk to size and allowed a place only in the larger and more urgent concerns of the body of Christ’.<sup>69</sup> It was an approach to the topic that would shape the influential Anglican preacher Phillip Jensen’s engagement with the charismatic movement in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>70</sup>

Without an adequate basis in Paul, for Robinson the modern movement stood or fell on the phenomena recorded in Acts. However, Robinson understood Acts to be salvation-historical, containing ‘nothing that would prepare us for a repetition in later ages of the phenomena which it records.’<sup>71</sup> He did entertain the possibility that the founding of a new contemporary church might include such manifestations. This, though, was a question of history, not exegesis.<sup>72</sup>

On March 16, 1973, for the Crossways programme on ABC radio, Robinson gave an address aimed at a general audience on the emergence of charismatic Christianity.<sup>73</sup> Robinson argued the phenomenon of speaking in tongues was embarrassingly absent from the majority of Christian history. From this he drew the conclusion: ‘It would be much easier to accommodate tongues if they could be divorced from the claim to be the authentic mark of baptism with the Holy Spirit ...’<sup>74</sup> It is not clear how Robinson related this to his work in the 1960s on the manifest experience of the Spirit.

In the coming few years, Robinson would become less confident that the experiences of the modern neo-Pentecostals had a direct equivalent in the NT. Robinson expressed misgivings

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<sup>66</sup> The particular context in which Robinson gave this address is not known. He does say at the beginning of the address that he has been asked to speak on the topic of ‘the gifts of the Spirit.’

<sup>67</sup> Robinson, ‘The Gifts of the Spirit’, 177.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>70</sup> Listen, for example, to Phillip Jensen’s exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12 in Phillip Jensen, *True Spirituality: 1 Corinthians 12:1–11*, n.d., accessed 19 May 2017, <http://www.phillipjensen.com/audio/true-spirituality3/>.

<sup>71</sup> Robinson, ‘The Gifts of the Spirit’, 177.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>73</sup> Robinson, ‘Charismatic Christianity’.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 193.



as to whether the modern phenomenon of tongues has any equivalent *at all* in the New Testament. This appears to be a development from his thinking in 1972, where he assumed that tongues was the topic of 1 Corinthians 12-14. In 1973, however, Robinson argued that in 1 Corinthians 12-14 it is likely, and indeed probable, that the tongues there were simply human languages.<sup>75</sup> His conclusion, however, was not to dismiss the modern manifestations, but to appeal for a broadening of the term ‘charismatic Christianity’ to include the widest possible reference to the variety of gifts which God bestows on his people.<sup>76</sup>

In 1988 then Archbishop Robinson would give his last major statement on neo-Pentecostal matters. At the Lambeth Conference of that year, charismatic renewal had been a significant focus. In that context he delivered a paper entitled ‘Renewal from an Evangelical “Non-Charismatic” Viewpoint.’<sup>77</sup> The scare quote around “non-charismatic” reflects Robinson’s most consistent contention across the 1970s and 1980s regarding renewal: namely that there can be no such thing as a non-charismatic Christianity. ‘All Christians,’ he told the Lambeth audience, ‘share in the grace of God and are recipients of his gifts.’<sup>78</sup>

### **5.2.3. Conclusion**

In the light of the discussion above, I draw the following conclusions regarding Robinson’s approach to neo-Pentecostalism in the 1970s:

First, by personality and churchmanship Robinson was not drawn to the relaxation of liturgical forms the movement was advocating. But neither was he drawn to the loosening of liturgical worship in non-charismatic contexts. This was not an objection to the charismatic renewal as such, but grounded in deeper convictions about the place of the liturgy in general and the obligations of the Anglican tradition in particular.

Secondly, in his exegesis Robinson stood apart from other evangelical leaders in seeing Spirit baptism in the NT much in the way Pentecostal exegesis did, as an event distinguishable from conversion, and something that was manifestly conscious to the believer, often through signs, though not exclusively tongues. Despite arguing for the exegetical basis of Spirit baptism, he was not impressed with the modern movement’s claims to have revived a NT teaching. He presumably saw Spirit baptism in the NT as salvation-historical rather than normative.

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<sup>75</sup> Robinson, ‘Charismatic Christianity’.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>77</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Renewal from an Evangelical “Non-Charismatic” Viewpoint’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 202–14.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

Thirdly, he took an empirical, rather than ideological or dogmatic approach to the modern charismatic manifestations: 'History alone can tell us whether this has occurred or not.'<sup>79</sup>

Fourthly, his exegesis of Paul with its deployment of Chadwick's insights was to have a significant impact on Sydney's most prominent and powerful critic of charismatic teaching in the following decade, Phillip Jensen.

### **5.3. The Word: *Robinson and the Nature of Scripture***

Scripture is an evergreen topic for evangelicalism. The 1970s were a time of conflict. In the United States, an intra-evangelical debate had taken place, focused on whether it was sufficient to affirm that the Bible was 'infallible' or whether one should also affirm that it is 'inerrant.' In 1976, former Fuller Seminary faculty member Harold Lindsell published his book *The Battle for the Bible*,<sup>80</sup> in which he asserted that Fuller has betrayed evangelical and orthodox Christianity by relaxing its commitment to inerrancy in the 1960s. Although Lindsell was on the right wing of the conservative spectrum (he later abandoned the term 'Evangelical' in favour of 'Fundamentalist'<sup>81</sup>) the idea that inerrancy was the crucial issue was widely supported in the American context.<sup>82</sup> In 1978 The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) produced 'The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy', which concluded that inerrancy was a necessary entailment of a faithful doctrine of scripture.<sup>83</sup> The statement largely settled the issue for conservative evangelicals in the USA.

In Australia and the UK, however, the deck was shuffled differently. Evangelicals had not seen inerrancy as a boundary issue in quite the same way, and evangelical leaders such as F. F. Bruce, I. Howard Marshall and T. C. Hammond had explicitly rejected inerrancy as a necessary entailment of an evangelical doctrine of scripture. F. F. Bruce's vision was for an institution like Tyndale House to be a place of unfettered scholarship, in which members were free to adopt whatever positions the evidence suggested.<sup>84</sup> Robinson clearly stood in this UK and Australian tradition.

In the decades prior to the 1970s, Robinson had given some attention to the topic: in his 1954 article on apostolic succession he had first expressed his understanding of 'apostle' and

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<sup>79</sup> Robinson, 'The Gifts of the Spirit', 182.

<sup>80</sup> Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

<sup>81</sup> Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism*, 107.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>83</sup> Stanley notes that the Council was international 'only as a result of Packer's participation: he was the sole non-American member.' (That is, J. I. Packer). Ibid., 107.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 95.

‘gospel’ as the constituent elements of the NT.<sup>85</sup> And his 1966 School of Theology paper had developed his thinking on the relationship between the preached and written word.<sup>86</sup> However, it was to be over the course of the 1970s and into the 1980s that Robinson was to make his main contribution with at least six papers and addresses directly on the topic.<sup>87</sup>

### **5.3.1. ‘By Scripture Alone’, 1971**

On 4 June 1971 Robinson presented a paper on scripture at Ormond College, Melbourne University, as part of an ecumenical conference. Robinson reflected on both Roman Catholic teaching and the *Basis of Union* for the proposed Uniting Church. He did so from the perspective of the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*. Scripture, argued Robinson, is the means by which Christ rules his church.<sup>88</sup> Though impressed with the Second Vatican Council’s *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (‘a statement of extraordinary interest and subtlety’<sup>89</sup>), he nevertheless judged that its statements did not do enough to disentangle scripture from tradition and thus allow the scripture to ‘stand clear of the church so as to make its voice heard in a commanding way.’<sup>90</sup> Regarding the *Basis of Union*, he regretted that the principle of *sola scriptura* has not been put ‘beyond all doubt.’<sup>91</sup> He noted that the phrase ‘Word of God’ was not used as a term for scripture in a way true of the 39 Articles.<sup>92</sup> And he was troubled by the ways in which the document seems to allow tradition and the church to exist alongside each other in a way ‘not incompatible with the Vatican II Constitution.’<sup>93</sup> In short, Robinson presented a classical reformed critique of both Roman Catholic and liberal Protestant accounts of scripture.

However, Robinson believed that simply to repeat Reformation slogans was inadequate.<sup>94</sup> In place, Robinson offers the delegates his thinking on ‘gospel’ and ‘apostle’, first expressed in 1954, as a way forward. He argued that scripture is the tradition of the church, and that to

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<sup>85</sup> Robinson, ‘Apostleship and Apostolic Succession’, 84.

<sup>86</sup> Robinson, ‘Theology of the Preached Word’.

<sup>87</sup> Robinson, ‘By Scripture Alone’; Robinson, ‘A Theological Note on “Preaching”’; Donald Robinson, ‘Some Thoughts on the Problem of Pseudonymity in Relation to the Canon of the New Testament’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 64–71; Donald Robinson, ‘Is the Bible Objective Revelation?’, *ibid.*, 19–21; Donald Robinson, ‘Using the Bible Today’, *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Robinson, ‘By Scripture Alone’, 8.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

understand it as such ‘may prove useful to us in our dialogue with the Church of Rome.’<sup>95</sup> In a move that would prove crucial for Robinson’s thinking in the following years,<sup>96</sup> he said,

One often hears that the church created the New Testament. If we are to have a simple statement, then the opposite is the case. The New Testament created the church. For the New Testament is made up of the Gospel and the Apostle. The church was responsible for neither the Gospel nor the Apostle.<sup>97</sup>

The 1971 address raises all the key features of Robinson’s doctrine of scripture: a classical reformed account of *sola scriptura*, his original proposal of ‘gospel’ and ‘apostle’ and, as he acknowledges in his closing paragraphs, the need for a credible hermeneutic.<sup>98</sup>

### *Pseudonymity*

Central to Robinson’s account of scripture is the claim that the authority and canonicity of the NT documents was something the church recognized *in* them rather than a quality it bestowed *on* them. This raises the question of pseudonymous books within the NT.<sup>99</sup> Since the nineteenth century, most mainstream scholarship has concluded that several of the books in the NT are in fact pseudonymous.<sup>100</sup> Most evangelical scholarship has attempted to defend the apostolic authorship of the disputed books.<sup>101</sup> A minority have accepted their pseudonymous status, but argued nevertheless for their continued authority as scripture.<sup>102</sup>

In Robinson 1973 set out an alternative solution.<sup>103</sup> Accepting that a genuinely pseudonymous writing would put an unbearable strain on the concept of a canonical scripture, Robinson challenges the idea that the NT canon itself is fixed at its current 27 books. In the

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>96</sup> See especially his argumentation against the ordination of women, discussed in chapter 8.

<sup>97</sup> Robinson, ‘By Scripture Alone’, 17.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 17–18. The mention of the term ‘hermeneutic’ in this context is highly significant. Though it is the first time the word is used in Robinson’s corpus, the question of the rules that guide faithful interpretations of texts has been a preoccupation of Robinson’s since the 1950s, most prominently in his biblical theology, and also in his work on the NT as canon. The question of hermeneutics would become a preoccupying concern for evangelicals in the coming decades, as seen (for example) in the papers at the 1977 Keele Congress (UK) and the 1981 NEAC Conference (Aust).

<sup>99</sup> That is, a document allegedly written under a false name.

<sup>100</sup> In most mainstream scholarship, 2 Peter, Jude and the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) are thought to be pseudonymous. Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians are also books ascribed to Paul that several scholars believe were not written by him.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, the introductions to the Pastorals, 2 Peter, and Ephesians in D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Leicester: IVP, 1992).

<sup>102</sup> Some evangelical figures such as I. Howard Marshall had come to the conclusion that the Pastoral Epistles were not written by the Apostle Paul. For Marshall on the authorship of the Pastorals see I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 57–79. For F. F. Bruce was circumspect on the issue, but seems to have come to a similar conclusion. See Grass, *F. F. Bruce*, chap. 8.

<sup>103</sup> Robinson, ‘Some Thoughts on the Problem of Pseudonymity in Relation to the Canon of the New Testament’.

Continental reformation, the extent of the canon was a debated point.<sup>104</sup> And within the Church of England, Robinson noted that Article 6 mentions only those books ‘whose authority was never in any doubt in the church’ and those which are commonly received.<sup>105</sup> The phrase ‘never in any doubt’ has usually been understood as a claim about the 27 NT books. However, with Westcott, Robinson considered that the article was deliberately worded as to allow a degree of freedom, leaving open the question of what to do with those books in the NT whose authority was in doubt.<sup>106</sup>

Robinson used 2 Peter as his case study.<sup>107</sup> Luther demonstrated no awareness of the doubts regarding 2 Peter, though he was happy to leave open the question of the canon in the case of James. Calvin was aware of the problem and acknowledged the strength of Jerome’s objections. He left room for an amanuensis, and was impressed with ‘the majesty of the Spirit of Christ within the letter.’<sup>108</sup> It seems clear that for Calvin, if Peter were proved not to be the author, its canonicity would need to be revised. It is this freedom that Robinson believed Article 6 allowed.

Robinson’s proposed way forward on the question is to work forward from what we know about the process that led to the canon. In the case of Paul, his letters were instruments of his authority from their inception. They were written from ‘the Apostle’ and received as ‘canon’ (that is, ‘rule’) from the moment they were sent. For Robinson it then followed if a letter falsely attributed to Paul were unwittingly included at a later stage, its credibility could not be sustained as canon because its purported authority would be bestowed rather than inherent. It was an original and daring proposal.

Robinson’s proposal synthesised the Anglican, evangelical and critical strands of his thought. With traditional evangelical scholarship, he firmly located the authority of the NT documents in their stated authors. However, in line with more critical scholarship, he acknowledged some books in our current NT might not meet this criterion. Then, drawing on Westcott’s understanding of the 39 Articles of the Church of England, he proposed that the NT canon is understood as open or at least corrigible. On this basis he concluded that a proper course of action for a book whose pseudonymous status was beyond doubt would be to regard it

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>107</sup> He notes: ‘Of these 7 *antilegomena* only 2 Peter would be, if unauthentic, pseudonymous. (All seven, if unauthentic, might be classed as pseudepigraphic, as this latter term is used to include anonymous or obscure works commonly ascribed to known persons.) Hebrews is anonymous, 2 and 3 John claim the authorship by ‘the presbyter’, and it is unclear, to say the least, whether ‘James’, ‘Jude’ and ‘John’ are to be taken as implying identity with the known apostolic characters who bear those names.’ Robinson, ‘Some Thoughts on the Problem of Pseudonymity in Relation to the Canon of the New Testament’, 66.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 67.

as ‘in a category like the OT apocrypha, that is, to be read for instruction in life and manner’ but to deny it the authority of a genuinely Apostolic document.<sup>109</sup>

In this way, Robinson’s view simultaneously opens up the question of which books ought to be received as canonical and at the same time narrows the relationship a Christian can have with a document whose canonicity is beyond doubt. Christians, in other words, may be free to query the number of books in the canon. However, they have no freedom to release themselves from the authority of a book whose apostolic origins they accept. This would, in the 1980s, become the centrepiece of his argument against the ordination of women.<sup>110</sup>

### *Hermeneutics*

One of the conspicuous features of the 1977 National Evangelical Anglican Congress (NEAC) in Nottingham had been a new interest amongst evangelicals in the question of hermeneutics. It was a field of study to which John Stott lent his support.<sup>111</sup> In 1981 he would write in his personal diary that ‘hermeneutics is Issue No. 1 in the church today, & not least for Evangelical Christians.’<sup>112</sup> Others, both in the UK and in Australia, feared the new interest in hermeneutics was a symptom of a decreasing trust in the clarity and authority of scripture.<sup>113</sup> Bebbington argues that the interest in hermeneutics was fostered by the proliferation of Bible translations, and by the failure of evangelicals to reach a common mind via scripture on issues such as the ordination of women.<sup>114</sup> Certainly, evangelical identity was far less cohesive at the 1977 Keele Congress than was the case in 1967. The apparent failure of scripture to settle disputes between evangelicals was a major factor.

The second Australian National Evangelical Anglican Congress at Monash University in Melbourne in May of 1981 bore striking resemblances to Keele 1977. At one level, it was an impressive display of Anglican evangelical unity. According to Neil Bach, ‘[e]very evangelical Anglican who could make it was assembled.’<sup>115</sup> But it would be the last time that Anglican evangelicals in Australia would meet in such a comprehensive way. The cracks were beginning to

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>110</sup> Later in the 1970s (for example in a reply to Paul Schrotenboer in *Theological Forum* in 1977), he was also able to deploy the same arguments to defend the Bible as objective revelation. If the Bible is the rule of faith, then ‘one need hardly add the term ‘objective’, because it is so by definition. A rule is nothing but an objective standard.’ Robinson, Robinson, ‘Is the Bible Objective Revelation?’, 21.

<sup>111</sup> Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 102.

<sup>112</sup> Quoted in Ibid., 104.

<sup>113</sup> Dick Lucas, Rector of St Helen’s Bishopsgate, warned the 1979 Islington Clerical Conference that hermeneutics may usher in new liberal scholarship. See reference in Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 269.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 268–269.

<sup>115</sup> Bach, *Leon Morris*, chap. 15.

show: the 1980s would be a period in which the various wings of evangelicalism moved further apart on issues such as the ordination of women.<sup>116</sup>

Robinson used an address at the National Evangelical Anglican Congress to develop some of his own thinking on hermeneutics, a topic hinted at in the 1971 Ormond College paper. After sketching a brief history of biblical interpretation, Robinson paused at the Reformation and noted that, with the emphasis on the literal sense of scripture, there was a perceived need to ‘synthesize the fruits of exegetical study into an overall “biblical theology”’.<sup>117</sup> Robinson judged Calvin’s *Institutes*, though based on the Apostles’ Creed, was an example of this sort of biblical-theological thinking. According to Robinson, the modern evangelical tradition has likewise developed its own theological traditions, though ‘with little consistency of interpretation beyond the major convictions.’<sup>118</sup> Robinson also acknowledged the continuing tradition of a ‘devotional use of the Bible, with its affinities to the ancient spiritual use.’<sup>119</sup> He was reluctant to condemn the practice. ‘No one’ he said, ‘can regulate the interaction of a devout mind with the text of Scripture.’<sup>120</sup> However, the value for Robinson of such an exercise lies in what is brought to it rather than what is brought from it.

Robinson argued that modern study had increased our sense of distance between our world and the Bible’s. In an enigmatic statement, he said that ‘there are new conditions of things which the central tenets of agreed evangelical theology apparently do not help us to understand.’<sup>121</sup> Robinson’s solution was that which he taught Moore College graduates for nearly 50 years: a salvation-history approach in which the Bible’s theology as a whole can be employed to understand the parts. Clearly Robinson understood his biblical theology work as part of, rather than apart from, the new interest in hermeneutics.

At the 1981 Congress Robinson again raised his question about eschatology: should modern Christians place themselves in the eschatological programme of the NT? If the NT writers expected Christ to return in ‘this generation’ and that the world would be evangelised in their lifetime (Col 1:6), how do we relate ourselves to such documents twenty centuries later?

The New Testament is itself the record of how the scriptural promises of God found their ‘application’ in the first generation of Christ and the Spirit. The apostles believed

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, chap. 15. See also Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 90–111.

<sup>117</sup> Robinson, ‘Using the Bible Today’, 44.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 46.

they were witnessing the end of the age; they did not think they were writing the first chapter of a long church history.<sup>122</sup>

Robinson's solution is that, while the Bible does not contain a blueprint for church life in subsequent generations, we can expect the Bible to be of continued relevance because 'it reveals God.'<sup>123</sup> Though we might not live under the same eschatological circumstances, we do know the same Lord through the same gospel, and can relate ourselves to the Bible in this way. By introducing the idea that the NT's eschatological timetable did not, in fact, eventuate, Robinson ventures into territory relatively uncharted by evangelical scholars.<sup>124</sup> Certainly, nothing presented at Keele 1977 or in the other papers at NEAC in 1981 countenances anything like it.

Toward the end of the paper Robinson addresses the ordination of women, arguing that the proposal is an 'acute test' of our hermeneutical principles.<sup>125</sup> It was a test Robinson himself would face. Thus Robinson is at once on the conservative side of the key debate over the ordination of women and on the radical end of the hermeneutical debate—at least regarding NT eschatology.

### **5.3.2. Conclusion**

In his 1987 Presidential Address for the AFES, Robinson gave what would be his last and most expansive treatment of the nature and purpose of scripture. He affirmed that, whilst he did not himself doubt the apostolic claims of any of the 27 books of the NT, he believed it was in principle important to distinguish between the character and the limits of Scripture:

It is better to allow that in principle the canon of Scripture, being part of ecclesiastical tradition, is reformable, than to allow that a writing falsely claiming the authority of an apostle of Christ can be regarded as divinely inspired Holy Scripture.<sup>126</sup>

Robinson also affirmed, contrary to C. F. D. Moule, that scripture is inspired, 'God-breathed'.<sup>127</sup> He recognised the designation 'infallible' as controversial, though ancient and, in his view, necessary.<sup>128</sup> He rejected, however, inerrancy, and argued that a certain latitude for poetic licence and turn of phrase must be allowed and that decisions about the inerrancy or otherwise of

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> See Shiner, 'Reading the New Testament from the Outside', 185–97.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>126</sup> Robinson, 'What Shall We Do with the Bible?', 35–36.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.,



scripture cannot be decided *a priori* but must be worked out in the study of the actual phenomena of scripture.<sup>129</sup> He explains:

If you discover what from some limited or particular point of view could be regarded as an error or discrepancy in the incidental features of the text, do not conclude that the discrepancy must necessarily be explained away as not a discrepancy. You may as well conclude that God is able to incorporate such features in his work without impeding the purpose to which his word in that Scripture has been sent forth. The matter need not be decided *a priori*.<sup>130</sup>

I will explore the way in which Robinson applied his understanding of scripture to the question of women's ordination in chapter 7 and his eschatology and hermeneutics in chapter 9. The 1970s were the decade in which the foundation for Robinson's response to these issues were shaped, foundations at once radical and conservative.

#### **5.4. Worship: Church, Sacraments, and An Australian Prayer Book (1978)**

On the topics of church and worship, Donald Robinson came into his bishopric with two streams of thought seemingly at odds with each other. On the one hand, his work on 'church' and on the sacraments had been radical and original. And yet, on the other hand, Robinson had been constructively involved in the work of the Liturgical Commission since the 1960s—a task he took very seriously and a deployment that had him working closely with Anglicans of different traditions. How did the iconoclastic strands of his work relate to the more conservative and constructive strands in this period? I will attend to church, baptism and liturgy in turn.<sup>131</sup>

##### **5.4.1. Developments in the Doctrine of the Church in the 1970s**

In 1974, Bishop Robinson was invited to present a paper at a conference on evangelism in Sydney. The paper re-stated much of what Robinson had argued in his 1971 *Interchange* article, though in more detail.<sup>132</sup> Its distinctive contribution was to relate his thinking on evangelism specifically to his doctrine of church.

The radical changes in Australian society across the 1960s had not gone unnoticed by the leadership of the Sydney diocese. In 1968 the Synod had appointed a commission to explore the

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Significant sections of 5.4.3 and 5.4.4 are now published as 'Speaking to God in Australia: Donald Robinson and the Writing of *An Australian Prayer Book* (1978)' in Simon Ditchfield, Charlotte Methuen, and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Translating Christianity*, Studies in Church History, 53 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 435–47. It is included here, in a modified form, with the permission of the editors. For this I express my gratitude.

<sup>132</sup> Donald Robinson, 'The Theology of Evangelism', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 99–102.

task of evangelism in the changed context, and to make organizational and methodological recommendations.<sup>133</sup> The commission, chaired by Archdeacon John Reid, produced a substantial report by 1971. The report emphasises a crisis of relevance for the church: the church was ‘answering questions no one was asking’ and needed to do a better job of explaining the gospel in a way that was ‘relevant and meaningful.’<sup>134</sup> The report went on to note the rise of home-based small groups as contexts with significant potential for evangelism.<sup>135</sup> And it took a dim view of Prayer Book services that were then still the norm for almost all Sydney Anglican churches. A non-churchgoing man, said the report, would find the ‘customs, procedures and language of the service so foreign, as to make a second visit in the near future very unlikely.’<sup>136</sup> It is important to understand Robinson’s work on evangelism and church against this context.

Robinson argued evangelism was the chief activity of the group the NT designates ‘apostles’ and that the work of evangelism is given to individuals gifted and appointed by God, and not to all Christians in general, or to the ‘church’ as such. Therefore, Robinson could not see that ‘the doctrine of the church has any direct implication for evangelism.’<sup>137</sup> By ‘church’ Robinson meant the assembly of God’s people, which ‘is not the whole story of what Christians are or do in the world.’<sup>138</sup> When Robinson said that ‘the church as such has no *face to the world*’<sup>139</sup> he meant neither that Christians, nor denominations nor even dioceses have no face to the world, but specifically that Christians as they gather as church are not at that point related to the world so much as they are related to God and to each other.<sup>140</sup>

Robinson went on to list three ways in which church and evangelism might be related: First, the church is brought into being by the evangel; secondly, the church might contribute materially to the work of an evangelist (Phil 4:10-20) and, thirdly, the church may be the context in which the Holy Spirit calls for the releasing of people for the work of apostleship (Acts 13-14). Individual Christians may be involved in the greater task by bearing witness to God, by good works, by direct confession when called for, by spiritual and material fellowship with those God has called to be evangelists, and by asking the Lord to send out labourers into the harvest.<sup>141</sup>

These were a complex of ideas and distinctions that opened Robinson to misunderstanding both inside and outside the diocese. From within, the younger Sydney clergy were aware of an

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<sup>133</sup> John Reid et. al., *Move in for Action: Report of the Commission on Evangelism of the Church of England Diocese of Sydney* (Sydney: ANZEA, 1971), 7.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 7, 8.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 38–39.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>137</sup> Robinson, ‘The Doctrine of the Church and Its Implications for Evangelism’, 109.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 109–110.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 113.

increasingly secular context and were desperate to re-evangelise Australia by training up lay Christians as evangelists.<sup>142</sup> Robinson's view raised a question about that whole enterprise. And from without, the language of a church with 'no face to the world' troubled those who already suspected Sydney Anglicans of sectarian and inward-looking tendencies.

#### **5.4.2. Baptism**

As a bishop, Robinson administered the sacraments regularly. This did not, it seems, precipitate a rapprochement between his early positions and Anglican order. On the contrary, 1974 would see his most radical statement yet on the topic of baptism in the NT, via a paper delivered to the Fellowship for Biblical Studies on 25 July 1974.

The paper restated his case for the semantic range of the 'baptism' words in the NT. It then opened up new ground pushing his conclusions into NT territory previously assumed safe from the sorts of revisionism Robinson had promoted in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, Robinson noted that the commentators assume, 'with one mind and mouth, and almost without question'<sup>143</sup> that Ephesians 4:5 and its reference to 'one baptism' must be referring to Christian water baptism. F. F. Bruce is the only author Robinson is aware of who even considered the option of a Spirit baptism reference here.<sup>144</sup> Robinson argued that a reference to Spirit baptism was far more likely in the context.<sup>145</sup> Indeed for Robinson almost all of the references to baptism in the Epistles are places where a reference to Christian water baptism cannot be assumed, but must be argued for and that 'the question of their interpretation should remain open until we have examined the full range of semantic possibilities'.<sup>146</sup>

He went on to interrogate the Gospel of Mark, asking his hearers to imagine an original Roman reader of Mark and what conclusions they would draw about baptism from the text of Mark itself. Robinson says:

He would learn, first, that the gospel of Jesus Christ has its beginning in a baptism in the Jordan to which John called all Israel ... but he would infer that this baptism had ceased with John ... succeeded by a greater baptism with the Holy Spirit to be administered by Jesus himself. He would learn, secondly, that Jesus sat light to the tradition of the Jews with regard to the customary baptisms for ritual purity...thirdly, that the suffering of

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<sup>142</sup> See Reid et. al., *Move in for Action*.

<sup>143</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Towards a Definition of Baptism', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 255.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. For Robinson the assumption of a reference to water baptism is challenged by the absence of the more obvious sacramental oneness of the one loaf and one cup of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 10:16), and the fact that there were many baptisms, as Hebrews 6:2 makes clear, so that the 'best we could say of "one baptism"' is that it is a generic unity—something that would represent a different kind of unity to every other item on the list. Ibid., 255.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 256.

Jesus ... was his baptism ... Nothing in this Gospel would lead him to expect that he himself should be, or should have been, baptized with water.<sup>147</sup>

By this method, Robinson goes on to reject baptismal language as a reference to Christian water baptism in vast swathes of the NT.<sup>148</sup>

In concluding, Robinson considered the objection that he had developed an ‘either/or’ case for something that is properly a ‘both/and’ scenario: ‘[W]hy not suppose that [water-baptism] attracted to itself, all the connotations of Christ’s baptizing with the Spirit and also his baptism of suffering?’<sup>149</sup> Given this is what eventually occurred, why not assume the process has not begun in the New Testament itself?<sup>150</sup>

Though this seems like an obvious means by which to broker a peace between the NT and subsequent church practice (including his own as an Anglican bishop), Robinson is clearly resistant. The Great Commission is, for Robinson, the most likely bridge to this identification. However, Robinson canvases alternatives to understanding Matthew 28:19 as a reference to water-baptism. He seems unconvinced of these, and concluded by the frank admission that

... the command to baptize is abrupt and unexpected in this Gospel, and raises a question of congruity with what has gone before. It is intelligible on the assumption that ‘everybody knows what Christian baptism is’, but much less intelligible as a climax to Jesus’ mission as recorded by Matthew.<sup>151</sup>

In a footnote, Robinson considers a possibility of textual criticism that the reference to baptism in Matthew 28:19 is not original but a latter ecclesiastical inclusion in the text.<sup>152</sup>

For those who see a fundamental discontinuity between Robinson’s scholarship and his practice as a bishop, his views on baptism are strong evidence. And it is not just that Robinson simply put down his academic gown in January of 1973 to put on his bishop’s chimere. By July of

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 259. The passage is significant not only for Robinson’s views on baptism, but for his whole approach to the task of exegesis. It involved a rigorous exclusion of all *known* assumptions the contemporary reader might bring to the text. As with his work on Jew and Gentile in the NT, it brackets out any doctrinal development in the post-apostolic era. Evidence of how, for example, baptism was understood in the second century, or how the titles of Israel were appropriated by the Christian community, were not in the first instance evidence for what might also be meant in the NT. The exegete needed to err, if anything, on the side of *discontinuity*—assuming that latter developments of the traditions of, for example, *baptism* or *Israel*, were as likely to obscure as they were to shed light on what the NT meant. Whether the kind of epistemological positivism this approach relies on can be sustained will be considered in the last chapter. At this point, I merely note that this approach is a key to the originality of many of Robinson’s ideas. It is also, as I will argue later, crucial for understanding a tradition of exegesis and doctrinal work in the Sydney Diocese since the 1960s.

<sup>148</sup> See discussion in chapter 9.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 270, footnote 17.

1974, well into his second year as bishop, we see, not just old positions re-stated, but even more radical positions being advanced. I will return to this discontinuity in the final chapter to examine how it challenges and modifies my thesis of essential continuity. Here I merely note that, in Robinson's views on baptism, the discontinuity case is very strong.

### **5.4.3. An Australian Prayer Book (1978)**

In contrast to his views on baptism, Robinson's work on *An Australian Prayer Book* (AAPB) represents a high-water mark for his integration of church and scholarship. In Knox's ecclesiology, both liturgical form and denominational strictures could (and, in Knox's estimation, often did) undermine authentic fellowship in church.<sup>153</sup> Robinson did not share this view. He gave his energy to liturgical work, believing that the liturgy served the purposes of church as he understood them.

It is important to understand Robinson's liturgical work against the background of the religious crisis of the 1960s. Much of the diagnostic work of Christian leaders centred around a perceived failure to translate Christian scripture, liturgy, thought and praxis into language contemporary Australians could understand and to which they could relate. Australian Christians, it was argued, had failed to give people a language in which they could speak authentically about God and to God, and were being punished for their failure to translate with shrinking churches.

#### *The Prayer Book Commission*

Robinson had served on the General Synod's Prayer Book Commission since its inception in 1962. The catalyst was the passing of the new constitution. This is circular, because the pressing need for a constitution was at least partly motivated by a need for liturgical reform.<sup>154</sup> Thus, the liturgical work began in a decade where the need for change would be increasingly felt.

When Robinson joined the Prayer Book Commission of the General Synod, he had a decade of liturgical interest and scholarship behind him.<sup>155</sup> The Commission reported back to the General Synod in 1966 with two draft liturgies.<sup>156</sup> In September 1966 news broke that among the submissions to the Synod was a revision of the Lord's Prayer including the line: 'Our bread of the morrow give us today.' The line, based on recent linguistic and exegetical work, was Robinson's.

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<sup>153</sup> See D. B. Knox, 'The Biblical Concept of Fellowship' in Kirsten Birkett, ed., *D. Broughton Knox: Selected Works, Volume II: Church and Ministry* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2003), 57–84 and 'Church, the Churches and the Denominations of the Churches', *ibid*, 85–98.

<sup>154</sup> Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life*, 293.

<sup>155</sup> Robinson, 'The Date and Significance of the Last Supper', 126–133; 'Apostleship and Apostolic Succession', in *Reformed Theological Review* 13, 2 (1954), 33–42; 'The Meaning of Baptism' in Bolt and Thompson, *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 227–251; 'The Church in the New Testament', *St Mark's Review* 17 (1959), 4–14; 'A New Baptismal Service: A Criticism' in Bolt and Thompson, *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 334–350.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

It was widely reported, and focussed on Canon Robinson as the man ‘who rewrote the Lord’s Prayer’ and announced, Tabloid-style: ‘Leave the Lord’s Prayer Alone: Man in the Street Doesn’t Want Change.’<sup>157</sup>

The 1966 General Synod set up a new liturgical commission to continue the work, again including Robinson. According to Robinson, despite the diverse churchmanship of the commission, it was an easy group of people to work with, characterised by ‘a remarkable degree of mutual understanding and friendliness.’<sup>158</sup> They were only given the brief to continue drafting new liturgies. However, a more ambitious cause gripped the commission; the writing of a whole new Prayer Book. Fellow commissioner Professor Edwin Judge explained:

Donald suddenly actually said to us, the ten of us sitting around the table, he said something like ‘we should write a whole new book.’ It was his idea. It was like a bombshell. We were getting nowhere, we were sick to death of variations and revisions and floundering and so on, and inertia was settling in on the commission and really frustration as to what it was all about. And he simply said ... ‘We must write a book’ ... Nobody had thought of that. So on the one hand, it was a truly creative moment, and nobody had told us to write a book, so we were naughty in a way, we took it upon ourselves ... we were going to spring a surprise on our church!<sup>159</sup>

#### *Robinson at NEAC (1971)*

Meanwhile, in August of 1971 Robinson had addressed the National Evangelical Anglican Congress in Melbourne on the topic of liturgy. The speech began by arguing that our ‘obligation to worship God is total, and is not confined to special times, places or actions.’<sup>160</sup> Indeed, he argued that ‘liturgy’ is a dangerous word for Christians, as it is likely to attach itself to a particular type of formal service, rather than to the totality of a life lived for God.<sup>161</sup> For Robinson liturgical language in the New Testament invariably describes ‘the ordinary deeds and words of Christians, never rites and ceremonies.’<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> ‘Leave the Lord’s Prayer Alone: Man in the Street Doesn’t Want Change’, *The Sun*, Page 1, September 14, 1966; ‘Sticks Out Like Granny’s Teeth: Why I Rewrote Lord’s Prayer’, *The Sun*, Page 1, September 15, 1966; ‘Anglican Lord’s Prayer: Protests on New Version’, *Daily Telegraph*, September 15, 1966; ‘Lord’s Prayer’, *Daily Telegraph*, September 16, 1966; ‘Lively Prayer Debate Expected’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 15, 1966; ‘Cartoon’, *The Australian*, Page 8, September 16, 1966; ‘Why the Canon Rewrote Prayer’, *The Australian*, September 15, 1966. All citations from Judd, ‘Donald Robinson and the Imperfect Unity’, 121, footnote 39.

<sup>158</sup> Judd, ‘Donald Robinson and the Imperfect Unity’, 125; see also Donald Robinson, ‘The Church of England in Australia’, in Buchanan, ed., *Modern Anglican Liturgies 1958–1968*, 297–320.

<sup>159</sup> Judd, ‘Donald Robinson and the Imperfect Unity’, 127.

<sup>160</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Liturgical Patterns of Worship’ in Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson, *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II* (Camperdown: Australian Church Record, 2008), 318.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> Robinson extends this to the sacraments, arguing that baptism, whilst obviously a ‘symbolic’ gesture, was, in the New Testament, a ‘personal act and not part of corporate Christian worship.’ And the Eucharist or Lord’s

What then was the purpose of church services? Did they, as Knox was to argue, undermine the purpose of fellowship? Robinson argued that, in studying the Book of Common Prayer, it becomes clear the Reformers assumed a community such as a village, parish or even household whose life and network of relationships extended well beyond the Sunday services. Indeed the Sunday services were not what constituted them as a community.<sup>163</sup> The services of the Book of Common Prayer presupposed an existing community and provided for that group of people a means of ‘common prayer.’ In short, it envisaged a sharply different pattern of community life to the realities of twentieth-century suburban Australia. It was observations of precisely these sociological factors that bolstered Robert Banks’s contention that a re-configuration of church around a house-church model was required.<sup>164</sup>

The 1971 NEAC speech demonstrated that Robinson’s doctrine of church did not entail an abandonment of Anglican liturgy. He was persuaded of the need for a liturgy reformed, not a liturgy abandoned. Despite an emphasis on fellowship, for Robinson the gathering of the church is nevertheless ‘to meet Christ.’<sup>165</sup> And for Robinson the questions of engaging with and bearing witness to twentieth century Australia were not questions that could be addressed simply by modernising the Sunday service. If church was primarily a meeting of the faithful, it would be exactly the wrong point at which to agonise over engaging the culture. Church was not, for Robinson, ordered toward engaging the world, but for encouraging the faithful, and to meet the Lord. Years later, in his 1988 Synod Address as Archbishop he would make his thinking explicit, calling for a ‘renewal of true worship’, convinced that ‘as Christ exercises his kingly power in the midst of his church, we may be sure that his word will run very swiftly into the world.’<sup>166</sup>

Robinson was, however, sensitive to the changed cultural circumstances of Australians. On intercessions, for example, he argued that there should be ‘less prayer for the Queen, who is now a mere figurehead of government and more for those on whom real power rests, including trade union leaders and captains of industry.’<sup>167</sup> It is a striking comment, unimaginable on the lips of Marcus Loane. Despite a growing nationalism, in 1971 the Monarchy still commanded enormous respect. The Queen had completed a very successful tour of Australia just the year before.

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Supper was, as Dom Gregory Dix also acknowledges, not a ‘new rite’ established by Jesus, but an existing meal to which Jesus and then the early Christians gave significance. For Robinson (again citing Dix), there was ‘no need to tell men to eat bread together, or to drink wine on their festive occasions. This was their normal way of life.’ Therefore, the Lord’s Supper was not ‘liturgical’ as such, but essentially a fellowship meal at which the Lord is present according to his promise. *Ibid.*, 320–321.

<sup>163</sup> Robinson, ‘Liturgical’, 321.

<sup>164</sup> See Robert J. Banks and Julia Banks, *The Church Comes Home* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998).

<sup>165</sup> Robinson, ‘Liturgical’, 321.

<sup>166</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Presidential Address 1985’, in *1985 Yearbook of the Diocese of Sydney* (Sydney: AIO), 211–230.

<sup>167</sup> Robinson, ‘Liturgical’, 330.

As liturgical reform continued, Robinson implored his fellow evangelicals at NEAC to apply the 1 Corinthians 11:33 principle to the wider Anglican Church in Australia and to ‘wait for one another’ in the matter of liturgical revision.<sup>168</sup>

### *Reception of the AAPB*

Prayer Book revisions continued across the 1970s, led by the two dominant figures of Donald Robinson and Anglo-Catholic liturgist Brother Gilbert Sinden.<sup>169</sup> By 1977 the commission was able to present a completed manuscript of *An Australian Prayer Book* to the General Synod. It was approved with only one vote against. It became available for use on 5 April 1978 and passed into wide use, apparently without controversy. Indeed, in a somewhat bad-tempered review, Australian literary figure Barry Spurr complained in 1981 that ‘it has already superseded [the BCP] in many parishes at most services.’<sup>170</sup>

The book was criticised for lacking a post-British identity and for being a product of theological compromise—‘a testament to disunity’.<sup>171</sup> However, as Judd has argued, it stands amongst Prayer Book revisions as a testimony to precisely the opposite; a product of Anglo-Catholic and evangelical co-operation grounded, not in compromise and studied ambiguity, but rather in a genuine attempt to attend to scripture and tradition, and, in doing so, to ‘wait for one another’ until agreement, and not mere compromise, could be found. Cable and Judd describe the *AAPB* as an instance of ‘remarkable agreement between church people of very different theological persuasions.’<sup>172</sup> It was a practical example of scripture’s capacity to act as ‘canon’ among Christians. In its own quiet way it was a testimony to growing Australian confidence. It was the product of people who neither self-consciously produced ‘Australianised’ services, nor timidly updated the *BCP*, but who had the quiet audacity to write a prayer book for Australia.

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In a 1979 review of the *Good News Bible* (GNB) Robinson provided some important clues to his liturgical thought.<sup>173</sup> Robinson continued to hold the view that there existed within Australia a sizable constituency of Anglicans who, despite a perhaps tenuous personal connection

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<sup>168</sup> Note again here a contrast with Knox who drew the implication that, if the local gathering is ‘church’ then the denomination, which never gathers, is not ‘church.’ Denominations in Knox’s view have a fundamentally ‘secular’ character.

<sup>169</sup> On the warm personal relations between Robinson and Sinden, see Judd, ‘Donald Robinson and the Imperfect Unity’, 134–136.

<sup>170</sup> Barry Spurr, ‘An Australian Prayer Book’ in David Martin and Peter Mullen, *No Alternative: The Prayer Book Controversy* (London, 1981), 162.

<sup>171</sup> On lacking post-British identity, see citations in Judd, ‘Donald Robinson and the Imperfect Unity’, 140, footnote 115. On the *AAPB* as a ‘testament to disunity’, see Spurr, ‘An Australian Prayer Book’, 163.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>173</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Translation of the Bible for Public Worship’, *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 53–62.



with the Christian faith, could be won back and, if won, would expect the church to which they returned would be something like the church they had left.<sup>174</sup> This view contrasted sharply with younger clergy who believed the task was no longer to win back the lost sheep, but to gather new ones.<sup>175</sup> Thus, continuity, both in liturgical reform and in Bible translation, had a pastoral imperative for Robinson.

However, his purpose was not to make the liturgy or the scripture sound ‘normal’ either to returning ‘sheep’ or to as yet unbelieving Australians. His consideration of the ‘dynamic-equivalence’ translation method employed in the *GNB* is instructive.<sup>176</sup> The effort to stimulate in the contemporary reader the same reaction to the text its original readers would have had, he saw as both ‘impossible and misguided.’<sup>177</sup> He said:

it is not possible to produce the identical reaction, since our whole presuppositional background is so different from that of the first readers. Salvation is of the Jews, and the aim of translation is to enable us to understand how that salvation appeared to a Jew, not to show how the Jew would have thought had he been an Englishman.<sup>178</sup>

Robinson’s headline-making proposal for the Lord’s Prayer is an instance of such thinking. ‘Our bread of the morrow give us today’ is not an effort at making the Lord’s Prayer more immediate, but more strange. As such, it is an invitation to enter into a world and way of thinking not our own.

Robinson felt the evangelistic situation in Australia was confused by using church services as an evangelistic platform, and found it bemusing that, even when neutral ground was chosen for gospel proclamation (such as a show ground or a public hall) Christians still had a tendency to ‘dress up the proceedings to appear as much like a Christian assembly as possible.’<sup>179</sup> Does this mean, he asked, ‘that we really have no frontier with the genuine non-Christian today, of the kind St Paul had when he spoke at Athens?’<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> It is interesting to relate this to his radical revision of the Lord’s Prayer suggested in the 1960s. Perhaps his views were altered in the two decades of liturgical revision that would follow?

<sup>175</sup> See Bruce Albert Ballantine Jones ‘Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966-2013: The Political Factor’, (PhD Thesis, Macquarie University, 2013), 169–196.

<sup>176</sup> ‘Dynamic’ or ‘functional’ equivalence translation is the attempt to translate from one language to another in a ‘thought for thought’ rather than ‘word for word’ manner. It is, of course, more complicated than that. For discussion see, D. A. Carson, ‘The Limits of Functional Equivalence in Bible Translation’ in Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss and Steven M. Voth, eds., *The Challenge of Bible Translation: Communicating God’s Word to the World*, (Grand Rapids, 2003), 65–113.

<sup>177</sup> Robinson, ‘Translation of the Bible’, 55.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>179</sup> Robinson, ‘The Doctrine of the Church and its Implications for Evangelism’, 106.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 106.

For Robinson, it seems, evangelism in the 1970s was not too radical, but not radical enough—having failed to come to terms with the specific challenges of speaking to non-believers, rather than addressing people who were Christian but ‘not Christian enough.’<sup>181</sup>

#### **5.4.4. Summary: Robinson on Worship**

Our study of Robinson on worship in the 1970s has produced a complex picture. He worked patiently and persistently on the *AAPB*, counselling his fellow Anglican evangelicals to be similarly patient with the wider ACA. He was a loyal churchman, executing his various roles as a bishop with a singular regard for how that role was traditionally understood and legally defined. And he wanted to produce a prayer book that Anglicans would recognise as their own, in deep continuity with the 1662 BCP. In his regard for institutions and for his role, he was a conservative. In this sense he was not well positioned to speak the language of what philosopher Charles Taylor has called the ‘age of authenticity.’<sup>182</sup> He could not, for example, accept extempore prayer, which for the members of the age of authenticity feels like the only authentic kind of prayer.

However, he was not simply a conservative, and certainly not a conservative ‘in the Loane mould.’<sup>183</sup> His Cambridge education had made him more cosmopolitan than anglophile. He was not nostalgic for empire. He produced the first Anglican prayer book in the world to dispense with Elizabethan forms of address. He suggested a radical re-casting of the Lord’s Prayer, and encouraged a mode of evangelism in which evangelists were genuinely sent out, and the laity were encouraged to ‘go in peace to love and serve the Lord’ in their places of calling. He worried that insisting on ‘churchly’ modes of evangelism (like the Billy Graham Crusades) meant Christians had ‘no frontier with the genuine non-Christian today’. He was concerned, with D. B. Knox and Robert Banks, that our patterns of church and community life could not deliver the sort of intimate community envisaged in the New Testament.<sup>184</sup> He agreed, with Knox, that worship was all of life and that fellowship, ‘the communion of the saints’, was central to the purpose of church. And his most radical claims regarding the nature of baptism in the NT were made in this era, seemingly at odds with Anglican practice.

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<sup>181</sup> Chilton, ‘Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia’, 2.

<sup>182</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 473–503.

<sup>183</sup> Ballantine-Jones, ‘Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013’, 45.

<sup>184</sup> Robert Banks had explored Paul’s idea of community in several contexts. His most mature statement is in Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*. Banks was a student of Robinson’s at Moore from 1959 to 1962. In the book’s original preface, he says ‘But I must thank Donald Robinson, now Archbishop of Sydney, who in his lectures some years ago first opened my eyes to some of the distinctive features of Paul’s view of church.’

## 5.5. Conclusion

In the years 1973-1981 Robinson continued to work out his thinking by clarifying and expanding his understanding of the Spirit, the Word and Worship in the context of an increasingly secularised Australia and an increasingly fragmented evangelicalism. He continued to produce scholarly work, though the demands of ministry had an inevitable impact on his publishing rate.

William Dumbrell's judgement was that the academic contributions Robinson made after becoming bishop in Parramatta 'were either stimulated by current issues in the Diocese or were the product of time hastily snatched from other pressures.'<sup>185</sup> This is not entirely fair. In this period Robinson produced some important academic work, including perhaps his most accomplished exegetical essay—a piece on Romans for the Leon Morris *Festschrift*—cited to this day in commentaries on Romans.<sup>186</sup>

Dumbrell's judgement also fails to credit the most impressive feature of Robinson's work in this period, its contemporary application. Across the 1970s Robinson applied his thought to church life in integrated, creative and sometimes remarkable ways. His response to neo-Pentecostalism, his work on evangelism and its relationship to church, and his liturgical work are all excellent examples.

At other points, however, Robinson seems to operate in two distinct and un-integrated spheres, with academic conclusions and churchly practice seemingly in tension, if not at odds. His continued work on baptism in the NT and the way in which he relates (or fails to relate) that to Anglican practice is the prime example considered here. Bruce Kaye has said of Robinson: 'Thinking yourself into the world of the first century was a constant theme. The journey back into the twentieth was not always easy.'<sup>187</sup> The 1970s bore out the mixed, occasionally stunning, occasionally perplexing results of the attempted journey back.

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<sup>185</sup> Dumbrell, 'An Appreciation of the Theological Work of Archbishop Donald Robinson', xxxvi.

<sup>186</sup> Robinson, 'The Priesthood of Paul in the Gospel of Hope'.

<sup>187</sup> Bruce Kaye, 'The Origins of the Eschatological Interpretation of the New Testament', in Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*, 237.



## 6. Synthesis: Faith's Framework (1981)

### *Interlude #1*

*"If anyone is interested in my own thinking subsequent to my ceasing to have responsibility for the Biblical Theology course in the early 1970s, I would refer them to the Annual Moore College Lectures which I gave in 1981 . . ."*

Donald Robinson, 1995.

Donald Robinson ceased to teach biblical theology at Moore College in the early 1970s. From 1982 until 1993, as archbishop, he would cease teaching altogether. Thus his 1981 Annual Lectures at Moore College occupy a uniquely important place in this history. They warrant, in my judgement, their own short chapter and for three main reasons:

First, the topic of the lectures—"the structure of NT theology"—gave Robinson an opportunity to draw together much of the disparate scholarship of the last three decades into a coherent whole. The lectures, and the book that followed, *Faith's Framework*,<sup>2</sup> give an unparalleled opportunity to grasp how Robinson himself understood the synthetic shape of his thought. Robinson himself felt they had this sort of significance, pointing to them in 1995 as a faithful account of his thinking and his biblical theology.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, the lectures provide a vantage point from which we can assess how Robinson's thought developed over the years. Delivered three decades after he had first started out as a Moore College lecturer in the early 1950s, they represent his mature thought. He had been away from the College for a decade, and so they allowed Robinson to report on his latest thinking and its developments. If Knox's shadow was indeed one from which he wanted distance, he now had it. Additionally, if his ideas were of no practical service to the church, the years as bishop in Parramatta ought to have exposed some of those limitations.<sup>4</sup>

Thirdly, at a biographical and historical level, the Moore College Annual Lectures were to be his last major piece of scholarly output before taking on the role of Archbishop of Sydney. As Archbishop, Robinson's scholarly output would drop dramatically. The demands of the office meant that his considerable intellectual skills would be directed toward areas of more immediate

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<sup>1</sup> Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions', 13.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, *Faith's Framework*.

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions', 13.

<sup>4</sup> 'Useful to the church' should probably be a general criterion for all theology and biblical studies. However, in the case of biblical theology in particular, this need is acute. Biblical theology was, after all, from its very beginning intended to serve the church in a way that other approaches (such as form and redaction criticism) were seen to have failed to do. For an account of biblical theology's attempt to bring the Bible back to the church see Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis*.

contemporary concern, such as the ordination of women, remarriage of divorced persons and the use of authorised forms of worship. Thus, the content and argument of *Faith's Framework* is an abiding testament to what Robinson's considered his principal scholarly interests. Had he continued in academia, *Faith's Framework* is the surest guide to what Robinson's project would have looked like. Conversely, some parts of *Faith's Framework* shed light on why he approached those contemporary concerns in the distinct, even idiosyncratic, way he did as Archbishop.

I have called this chapter an 'interlude' chapter (the first of two) because it is significantly shorter than the others and it forms an important hinge in this study.<sup>5</sup>

## 6.1. *Occasion and Content*

The Moore College Annual Lectures had been instituted by D. B. Knox in 1977, with F. F Bruce as the inaugural lecturer. J. I. Packer, Professor Klaas Runia and D. B. Knox himself had given the lectures prior to Robinson's, whose were fifth in the series. Lecturers are required to deal with some aspect of the reformed and evangelical faith, and are invited to speak on either systematic theology or biblical exposition.

Robinson's lectures were delivered under the title 'The Structure of New Testament Theology'. It is an allusion and homage to C. H. Dodd's *According to Scripture: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology*.<sup>6</sup> They were not published until 1985. When published, they were given the title *Faith's Framework*. In 1996 they were re-published by New Creation Publications with the encouragement of Geoffrey Bingham.<sup>7</sup> The whole book was included as chapters within the 2008 *Selected Works*. They have since been published again in a third edition by Mount Street Media as an e-book.<sup>8</sup> This alone is a testimony to the esteem in which some held the book. Despite never selling particular well, three different groups of supporters each independently took the trouble to make sure its contents were available to others.

### *Chapter 1: The canon and apostolic authority*

What, then, is *Faith's Framework* about? It is essentially an argument that a 'theology of the NT' is in principle possible, and it lays a foundation on which such a project might be pursued. The

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<sup>5</sup> The second interlude chapter is chapter 8.

<sup>6</sup> C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952). In interview Marcia Cameron asked Robinson how 'they' (his Cambridge teachers) influenced him:

'MC: Can you put your finger on how they influenced you long term?

DR: Oh, yes the structure, particularly perhaps Dodd, the structure...' Cameron, Interview 6 with Bishop D. W. B. Robinson, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, *Faith's Framework*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> The publisher in this case, Andrew Judd, is Donald Robinson's grandson.

obstacles to such a project are numerous. The NT is not in fact a single account from a single author, but a twenty-seven document collection, suggesting that ‘theologies’ of the NT might be more likely than a single ‘theology’. The churches of the first century did not at any rate have what we call the NT. And they did not call their emerging collections ‘New Testament’. What did come to be collected and called ‘the New Testament’ from the second to fifth centuries is understood by many scholars as a ‘defence mechanism’, responding to various challenges to Christian faith, rather than a positive theology as such.<sup>9</sup> Against such challenges, Robinson asks, is a NT theology even possible?

To find a basis for the project, Robinson begins with the process of canonisation. If the eventual collection was deemed to serve as a ‘canon, a measuring rod’ why were those documents *in particular* capable of fulfilling that role? The answer seems to have been that they carried specific apostolic authority.<sup>10</sup>

The thirteen Pauline letters and the four Gospels were the ‘irreducible core’ of the collection that came to be known as the NT.<sup>11</sup> These were the ‘indisputable test of what Christians must believe and do.’<sup>12</sup> By the end of the second century, these seventeen books together with Acts, 1 Peter and 1 John were the collection over which there was no dispute between the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity.<sup>13</sup> The other seven disputed books now within the NT, the *antilegomena*, drifted in and out of the collection according to doubts about authorship and patterns of usage across the churches.<sup>14</sup> Crucial to Robinson’s developing argument is the fact that, when the final twenty-seven book collection took form, it was not by a general council but rather ‘by a wide practical consensus after a slow process of discovery, familiarity, usage, discussion and controversy.’<sup>15</sup> The spiritual or doctrinal value of a book was relevant, though apostolic origin was the formal principle of acceptance.

Robinson’s purpose in recounting this history is to alert modern Christians to a situation in which the extent of the canon was a live issue. In a bold move, Robinson moves from the Patristic era to the Reformation, arguing that even for the Reformers ‘the notion of an *antilegomena*, a still mobile group within the twenty-seven-book canon, was alive and even

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<sup>9</sup> Robinson, *Faith’s Framework*, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>14</sup> These books are Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.

<sup>15</sup> Robinson, *Faith’s Framework*, 19.

adaptable.’<sup>16</sup> In his Anglican context, Robinson makes an important claim about the English Reformers. In 1563, Article 6<sup>17</sup> of the 39 Articles of Religion was altered with what Robinson judged to be a significant addition:

In the name of holy scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the church.’<sup>18</sup>

Following Westcott, Robinson believed two implications followed: first, the framers of Article 6 were intentionally allowing for some freedom on those books whose authority *was* disputed by the church (that is, the *antilegomena*). Secondly, ‘holy scripture was a possession of all the churches...and should be determined by the consent of all.’<sup>19</sup> He argued, in effect, that the question of the canon was open at the time of the Reformation. ‘It is at least a reminder’, Robinson says,

that our Reforming fathers viewed the matter of the canon in the light of the patristic evidence in a way we are not accustomed to doing. Where we are now merely dogmatic, they were historically minded as well.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 23. Robinson discusses Wycliffe, Luther, Erasmus, Karlstadt, Calvin, the Council of Trent, and the English Reformers as examples of discussions in which the extent of the canon and the status of the *antilegomena* were live issues.

<sup>17</sup> Article 6 of the 39 Articles of Religion says:

**VI. Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation.**

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

***Of the Names and Number of the Canonical Books.***

Genesis, The First Book of Samuel, The Book of Esther,  
Exodus, The Second Book of Samuel, The Book of Job,  
Leviticus, The First Book of Kings, The Psalms,  
Numbers, The Second Book of Kings, The Proverbs,  
Deuteronomy, The First Book of Chronicles, Ecclesiastes or Preacher,  
Joshua, The Second Book of Chronicles, Cantica, or Songs of Solomon,  
Judges, The First Book of Esdras, Four Prophets the greater,  
Ruth, The Second Book of Esdras, Twelve Prophets the less.

And the other Books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine; such are these following:

The Third Book of Esdras, The rest of the Book of Esther,  
The Fourth Book of Esdras, The Book of Wisdom,  
The Book of Tobias, Jesus the Son of Sirach,  
The Book of Judith, Baruch the Prophet,  
The Song of the Three Children, The Prayer of Manasses,  
The Story of Susanna, The First Book of Maccabees,  
Of Bel and the Dragon, The Second Book of Maccabees.

All the Books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive, and account them Canonical.

<sup>18</sup> Robinson, *Faith's Framework*, 28.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 31.



If the question of the extent of the canon was not a unique feature of the Patristic era, but also at the Reformation, then it is at least possible it could be a live question for Christians today.

For Robinson, these are questions of the *extent* rather than character of holy scripture. Such questions are the necessary starting point for a NT theology. The alternatives are recourse to a dogmatic position on the extent of scripture such as provided by the Council of Trent, or to subjective judgements. Robinson's position is one of historical probabilities. However, for Robinson, this does not subject the believer to endless uncertainty on the question, for within the process of canonisation is a clue for a firm basis for a NT theology: the concept of 'gospel' and 'apostle'.

### *Chapter 2: The 'Gospel' and the 'Apostle'*

Robinson begins by acknowledging 'disarray' in the discipline of the theological interpretation of the NT. Consensus is elusive. Would a 'theology of the New Testament' be the theology *of* those twenty-seven books as interpreted and arranged by scholars? Or is it the theology that *produced* the NT, the convictions and beliefs that caused its existence in the first place?<sup>21</sup> How should historical criticism and theological interpretation relate to each other? And what should we make of the more recent tendency to emphasise the diverse, even contradictory 'theologies' within the NT?<sup>22</sup>

Robinson's proposal that the process of canonisation provides a clue to the collection's unity leads him to reject the designation 'New Testament' as a false lead. As a title for the collection, it comes relatively late and it does not arise naturally from the collection itself. The Letter to the Hebrews is the only document within the collection to discuss the idea of a 'new covenant' at length.<sup>23</sup> It appears in the end to be more of an imposition on the collection than a designation arising meaningfully from the collection:

The title 'New Testament' really testifies to the second century method of interpreting the Old Testament, rather than to the impression made by the contents of the books which constituted the first canon.<sup>24</sup>

For Robinson, 'gospel' and 'apostle' or, to give the words their historical figures, 'Jesus' and 'Paul' are both more historically ancient and more theologically fertile.<sup>25</sup> Two consequences follow: first, we would 'expect a certain coherence in the theology of the New Testament and not

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 46.

just a collection of disparate “theologies.”<sup>26</sup> Secondly, it introduces the concept of a ‘corrigible’ canon—a collection that must, in principle, be open to reform. If, for example, charges of pseudonymity for a particular document could be sustained, Robinson would advocate its removal. Thus, Robinson’s position had at once a conservative effect in arguing for a theologically coherent collection and a radical one in arguing for a corrigible canon.

### *‘Gospel’*

Robinson drills down into the concepts of ‘gospel’ and ‘apostle’ in more detail. Developing and extending some of the work he did on ‘gospel’ in the 1970s, Robinson clearly identifies the background of Paul’s usage especially in the Roman Imperial context.<sup>27</sup> There is a problem here. In the Gospels, Jesus is a preacher of the gospel; in Paul, the ‘gospel’ is the message about Jesus.<sup>28</sup> But in Robinson’s definition of the gospel, gospel preaching happens whenever the implications of the immanence of God’s coming reign are pressed onto the hearer. Even Paul’s ethical instructions should not be too quickly removed from the category of gospel proclamation: ‘Whenever we are confronted by the kingdom of God and its demands, we are being evangelised.’<sup>29</sup>

The apparent tensions between ‘gospel’ and ‘application or instruction’ are also questioned. In a discussion of Ignatius’s use of the concept of ‘gospel’, Robinson wants to lessen the space between ‘gospel’ as the message about Jesus and ‘Gospel’ as a genre of literature. For Ignatius, they are in essence the same: the message of the gospel is what the canonical ‘Gospels’ are. Ignatius is thus an ally for Robinson’s argument.

### *‘Apostle’*

The ‘apostle’ has a recursive relationship with the ‘gospel.’ ‘The gospel is authenticated by the apostle, yet the apostle is bound by the gospel.’<sup>30</sup> The letters of the NT, and particularly Paul’s can be summarised as ‘defence and confirmation’ of the gospel.<sup>31</sup> In this way, the collection

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>27</sup> Robinson mounts the argument on three main planks: first, he cites the usage in contemporary Roman society of ‘gospel’ language associated with the emperor. Second, he argues that Paul’s usage comes directly from that. And third, he argues that where the language is absent, it is absent for the same reasons. So, for example, in Luke-Acts, Luke seems actively to avoid the noun *εὐαγγέλιον*, likely because ‘it was a word with too much of a political edge to it.’ (57). (Luke’s use of the verb *εὐαγγελίζομαι*, on the other hand, was rooted in the Greek OT and therefore was not as susceptible to the political charge. This is important if, as is often argued, Luke had an agenda to demonstrate to Rome that the gospel was not a threat to the political order.)

<sup>28</sup> Robinson, *Faith’s Framework*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 70.

designated ‘New Testament’ is better understood as the ‘gospel’ of the Lord and the authorised apostolic teaching of that gospel and its implications.

### *Chapter 3: The Gospel and the Kingdom of God*

In this chapter Robinson outlines his biblical theology schema. Robinson began with a disclaimer, acknowledging that his students will have heard much of this before.<sup>32</sup> He must have been more conscious of the faculty than the current students. No one had heard him teach on biblical theology for a decade. Graeme Goldsworthy would publish the first of his spate of biblical theology books in the same year as these lectures.<sup>33</sup> Thus for Robinson to speak on biblical theology in 1981 was to speak of an oral tradition transmitted through teachers at Moore and in pulpits across Sydney rather than through academic journals and learned monographs. The outline is similar to Goldsworthy’s, with the distinctive accent on a promise-fulfilment dynamic *within* the OT, culminating in Solomon’s kingdom. Robinson says:

What is not sufficiently realised—especially by those whose chief interest is in observing the *weaknesses* of Solomon and the signs of economic danger in his administration—is that, as the book of Kings tells his story, the reign of Solomon is the very fulfilment of the original promise made to Abraham. It therefore represents the experience of the kingdom of God—the ultimate blessing of Israel, the rest, the peace, the enjoyment of the inheritance—made possible through the redemption from Egypt and the victory of God over all the powers of evil.<sup>34</sup>

Three points follow: first, at the time of Jesus, Israel is still in ‘exile’ and awaiting the promised restored kingdom. Secondly, when Jesus comes proclaiming ‘the kingdom of God is near’ he means ‘that *God* is about to act, to exert his kingly rule.’<sup>35</sup> This proclamation of Jesus is not an abstract claim about ‘God’ in general, but a specific claim about Israel’s God and the coming of the kingdom he promised.<sup>36</sup> Thirdly, it helps to better locate the Gospels in their first century Palestinian setting. Whilst many scholars have argued that the Gospels are the products of Gentile Christianity and shaped by Gentile needs, Robinson says ‘it is hardly necessary to have recourse to this form-critical hypothesis *as long as* the material makes good sense in a purely Jewish setting.’<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Donald Robinson, *The Gospel of the Kingdom Lecture 3 - Moore College Annual Lectures 1981: The Future of the NT* (Moore College, 1981), <https://myrrh.library.moore.edu.au/handle/10248/1930>.

<sup>33</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster 1981).

<sup>34</sup> Robinson, *Faith’s Framework*, 78.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 91. Resonances with N. T. Wright’s project to locate the Gospel material firmly in its first century Jewish setting are again noticeable. See Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 2:125–44.

The sparse use of ‘kingdom of God’ language in Paul is not a problem. Paul was taking the concept of the ‘kingdom of God’ from its Jewish milieu and Jewish symbols, and applying its categories—‘God’s rule, God’s judgement, God’s purpose and God’s promise’<sup>38</sup>—to the situations of his Gentile hearers. Paul was an apocalyptic preacher rather than a systematic theologian, proclaiming ‘the dawning victory of God ... into the contingent particularities of the human situation.’<sup>39</sup> That is, *mutatis mutandis*, Paul and Jesus were preaching the same message.

#### *Chapter 4: Jew and Gentile in the NT*

Chapter four outlines Robinson’s case for a continued Jew and Gentile distinction in the NT. The argument is essentially that of his 1961 lecture.<sup>40</sup> If anything, he is more confident: ‘The popular view that God rejected the Jews,’ he says, ‘is so far at variance with the New Testament . . . that a complete reappraisal of the New Testament is called for.’<sup>41</sup> He is able to incorporate here some relatively recent work of his own on Mark and John. He argues that Mark has a subtle theology of a falling and rising Israel, with a replacement of Israel’s leadership but not the nation as such.<sup>42</sup> John on the other hand is entirely Jewish, reflecting an exclusively Jewish understanding of salvation and does not touch on the salvation of the Gentiles.<sup>43</sup> It is not, therefore, concerned with supersessionism at all, but rather a change within Israel.

With this work on the Gospels in place, Robinson rests the case he first announced in 1961: ‘Israel’ remains a distinct category throughout the NT. In 1961 he was open to the idea that different NT books might have different theologies of Israel; by 1981 he is sure the entire NT speaks with one voice on the matter.

#### *(5) The Future of the NT*

The argument is brought together in the final chapter, ‘The Future of the New Testament.’ Robinson is certain the NT writers understood themselves to be living in the eschatological moment. They were not expecting the long use or preservation of their writing, because ‘the time is at hand.’<sup>44</sup> For Robinson, this entails a significant hermeneutic implication: the author’s original

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<sup>38</sup> Robinson, *Faith’s Framework*, 92. Note how similar this language is to what Goldsworthy would eventually summarize in the pedagogically brilliant, ‘God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule’ in Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*.

<sup>39</sup> Robinson, *Faith’s Framework*, 92.

<sup>40</sup> Robinson, ‘Jew and Greek’.

<sup>41</sup> Robinson, *Faith’s Framework*, 97.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 119. He has included some of his 1978 work on Mark. Donald Robinson, “‘Israel’ and the ‘Gentiles’ in the Gospel of Mark’, in *Donald Robinson Selected Works II*, 28–44.

<sup>43</sup> Robinson, *Faith’s Framework*, 117.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 125.

purpose in writing and the purposes their writings served in the next generation were not always the same.<sup>45</sup>

Both Paul and the Gospel writers wrote to address immediate needs. The Gospels were written to make ‘a fresh impact on early readers’, whether to convert unbelievers or to enliven the faith of those who already believed. Their impact was intended to be immediate: ‘They had no expectations of any course of history beyond “this generation” to which Jesus himself spoke.’<sup>46</sup> Paul’s letters had immediate and local purposes for the churches or individuals to whom they were written. Those situations have now long past. This raises the question: why were they of interest to others once the situations they addressed were over? Robinson’s answer is that they all provided crucial information about the gospel and the apostolic traditions. Churches geographically and historically distant from their first recipients valued them because by them they could continue in their submission to ‘gospel’ and ‘apostle’.

Thus, the future generation did not read them in a way identical with their authorial intention. Later generations continued to read them to discover the content of apostolic faith. This is crucial context for the way in which Robinson saw scripture’s role in the debate over the ordination of women in the 1980s, discussed in the next chapter.

For Robinson, this usage of the Gospels and the apostolic writings involved one major theological modification: the expectation of the imminent coming of the Lord. Speaking of 1 Thessalonians, he says:

If what Paul says in this letter about ‘the coming of the Lord’ was framed in the expectation that it would occur in his lifetime, those who take up this letter long after Paul’s death do not and cannot read it with the same sense of urgency—or even with the same understanding of the gospel as the announcement of fulfilment as did the Thessalonians to whom it was first addressed. At the very least they were likely to say ‘the Lord delayed his coming’. And may they not go further and place themselves at a distance from the whole context within which Paul fulfilled his calling consciously or unconsciously reinterpreting the historical and conceptual framework within which the gospel was first preached?<sup>47</sup>

Robinson concluded his case by returning to the place he began: the canon. Authority was not imposed on the letters by the church, but claimed from within the letters themselves by their apostolic authors. It follows that a letter which, with reasonable probability, is discovered to have

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 130.

not been written or authorised by an apostle could not be afforded continued canonical status.<sup>48</sup> Robinson recognised that the chances of a process leading to the agreed relegation of one of the twenty-seven NT books is remote. Robinson's proposal is more modest: actively to embrace the notion of a 'canon within a canon.' Of this he says:

It is preferable to see within the canon certain books that are more surely based than others, regarding these as primary witnesses. If there is truly a canon within the canon, it is the canon of the apostolic gospel as testified by the primary witnesses: the fourfold Gospel and the epistles of Paul. There is no difficulty in a principle of interpretation which relates all other writings to these and which exercises caution, should need arise, in the rare event that these writings present us with otherwise unsupported teaching.<sup>49</sup>

By this somewhat daring and original path Robinson suggested a conservative conclusion by means of a radical route. He sought to establish the coherence of the concept of an authoritative NT theology; he got there by questioning, recasting and even abandoning many cherished evangelical positions. In this way, Robinson's *Faith's Framework* was quintessential Robinsonian.

## **6.2.      *Delivery and Impact***

There is a tradition in NT scholarship of writing the small book whose impact is out of proportion to the book's physical size. C. H. Dodd's *The Apostolic Preaching*, C. F. D. Moule's *Thoughts on the New Testament* and Edwin Judge's *Social Patterns of Early Christianity* are all examples. Whether or not Robinson was conscious of participating in that informal tradition, *Faith's Framework* is of the genre. It is cited in academic contexts<sup>50</sup> and praised by some scholars.<sup>51</sup> It also

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<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, somewhere across the 1970s, Robinson appears to have become open himself to the widespread scholarly opinion that the NT Pastoral Epistles—1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, were not written by Paul. In his 1978 essay on Jew and Gentile in the NT, he says 'Not only the authorship, but the purpose of the Pastorals constitutes a problem.' He does later go on to say that the 'us' of Titus 2:14 might refer to 'the apostle and his colleagues' so he is perhaps leaning toward Pauline authorship in that case. Donald Robinson, 'Israel and the Gentiles in the New Testament', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 20–27. In that same section he considers that 2 Corinthians 6:16 may also be a non-Pauline interpolation.

<sup>49</sup> Robinson, *Faith's Framework*, 148.

<sup>50</sup> Carson, Moo, and Morris use the concept of 'gospel' and 'apostle' as possibly the 'genesis of the New Testament canon', citing Robinson. D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Leicester: IVP 1992), 496.

<sup>51</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Presidential Address, 1987', 242. John Dickson, for example, has said 'Donald Robinson's *Faith's Framework* defies neat categories. Is it theology? Is it history? Whatever its classification, it is a masterful account of the internal "logic" of the group of texts we call "the New Testament". Robinson pinpoints the centrality, and interconnectedness, of the themes of gospel and kingdom, the authority of the apostles, and the inclusion of Jew and Gentile in God's family. When I come back to this book, as I have done several times over the years, I am amazed at its clarity and continuing relevance. It has a special place in my intellectual affections.' 'Mountain Street Media', accessed 7 January 2017, <https://mountainstreet.media/library/faiths-framework/>. Professor Judge also spoke in interview of how important the book was to him in his thinking, and how close to his own convictions.

has similarities with Brevard Childs's canonical approach to scripture in by-passing historical questions (without dismissing their importance) for a literary and theological approach to scripture.<sup>52</sup>

The concept of 'gospel' and 'apostle' is at once more radical and more conservative than its alternatives. Radical because it proposed to go behind nearly 1800 years of tradition, and because it opens the question of a corrigible canon. But it is also more conservative: the impact is to double down on the authority of the NT in the life of the church: if submission to gospel and apostle was of the *esse* of the church, then the options for a church are limited: either it may reject gospel and apostle, or it may submit. The position in effect rules out a developmental hermeneutic. This will prove crucial for understanding Robinson's opposition to the ordination of women in the 1980s.

*Faith's Framework* showcased Robinson the NT scholar over Robinson the churchman. However, in a subtle way, the book is still the product of an Anglican theological environment. Graeme Goldsworthy has argued that the biblical theology produced by Anglicans such as himself, Robinson, Hebert and Phythian-Adams flourished within the relative theological minimalism of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Those such as Vos and Clowney, operating within the context of the Westminster Confession, simply had less room to move.<sup>53</sup> On questions of canonicity, Robinson exploited the space the Thirty-Nine articles left open. The Westminster Confession leaves no such room. Robinson's argument in *FF* would simply not have been possible as a confessional Presbyterian. This in turn sheds light on the nature of the Sydney diocese. Though rightly understood as conservative, it nevertheless elected the author of *FF* to be its archbishop—a fact that needs to condition what the word 'conservative' means when applied to Sydney.

Positively, the lectures provide a valuable insight into Robinson's own assessment of the weight and centre of his scholarship. Sadly, for those who wished Robinson to continue in academia, they are a faithful and tantalising hint of where his project might have gone had circumstances been different.

In the closing paragraphs of *Faith's Framework*, Robinson makes an important comment regarding the relationship of the contemporary churches to the NT. He says:

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Bruce Kaye, on the other hand, did not think it was a particularly good piece of work. See Shiner, Interview with Edwin Judge on Donald Robinson; Shiner, Interview with Bruce Kaye on Donald Robinson.

<sup>52</sup> For Brevard Childs's approach to scripture see Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). For Robinson on by-passing historical questions in favour of the Bible's self-presentation, see Robinson, *Faith's Framework*, 79.

<sup>53</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 169, footnote 11.

The NT says nothing to our time or our church except what it said to its first readers. This does not mean that we are to model ourselves on the New Testament churches—even if that were a possibility. Rather we are to respond to the urgency of the gospel of the kingdom of God, to open our ears to the word of Christ and to his apostles. This is not a question of failing to value our church traditions; it is a question of the ultimate significance of these traditions in light of the kingdom of God.<sup>54</sup>

In the light of Robinson's coming episcopate, the words are ominous. The coming decade would be largely shaped by the tensions alluded to in this paragraph. It names the great tension of the coming decade—valuing 'our church traditions' on the one hand and assessing the 'ultimate significance of these traditions in light of the kingdom of God' on the other. Robinson, his clergy and the wider ACA would have three incompatible solutions for holding these two interests together. The conflict that resulted would be intense and the consequences for Australian Anglicanism would be significant.

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<sup>54</sup> Robinson, *Faith's Framework*, 149.





## 7. Reformed Catholicism: Archbishop Robinson, 1982-1993

*Institutions tend to strangle the ideas that gave them birth.'*

*Principal George Morling to Donald Robinson, 1966.<sup>1</sup>*

*We ourselves inherit the character and traditions of the Church of England, ecclesia Anglicana. We are not Papists, or Presbyterians, or Methodists, or Independents, or Baptists or Quakers. Positively, we may say that we represent in this country Reformed Catholicism.'<sup>2</sup>*

*Donald Robinson, Presidential Address, Sydney Synod, 1987.*

On 1 April 1982, Bishop Donald Robinson was elected to the See of Sydney. Unlike previous incumbents for whom the trip from England (Gough), or West China (Mowll) or a lengthy tenure as administrator (Loane) provided significant lead-time, Robinson started almost immediately. This denied him the 'greater muzzle velocity' available to his predecessors.<sup>3</sup> At the Synod in October of that year he described himself as still engaged in a 'struggle to surface.'<sup>4</sup> A two-week consultancy in late 1984 claimed that Robinson's 'duties in administering the Diocese had hitherto overwhelmed him.'<sup>5</sup>

It was a pace of life that would not let up. Extensive travel,<sup>6</sup> an ambitious programme for new churches in Sydney's west (the 'Vision for Growth', VFG), and the regular run of an archbishop's duties were supplemented by several significant controversies. Two in particular shaped his time in office and are the central motifs of this chapter: the ordination of women and the retention of Anglican forms of worship and order.<sup>7</sup> On the ordination of women, he stood with his Synod, resisting the innovation and arguing Sydney's position at the national level. But on Anglican worship and order, he often stood against his Synod, taking a position with which the ACA was largely sympathetic, and with which his own clergy were not.<sup>8</sup> He lost both battles.

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<sup>1</sup> Handwritten note from DR. Robinson Family Archive, Box 2 'Papers by Australians'.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, 'Presidential Address, 1987', 242.

<sup>3</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Presidential Address, 1982', in *1982 Year Book of the Diocese of Sydney* (Sydney: AIO, 1983), 213.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Reed, 'Addenda to a Consultation on the Role of Archbishop in the Diocese of Sydney' (London: The Grubb Institute, 1985), AP1/2. The report is discussed in section three of this chapter.

<sup>6</sup> Taking the Synod Addresses as a guide, in these years Robinson travelled to every capital city in Australia, internationally to Barbados, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Norfolk Island, Singapore, USA, Israel, and Jordan. Locally, across the years 1984–1985, in order to promote 'Vision for Growth', he visited every parish in the diocese.

<sup>7</sup> Such as the use of the Prayer Book, clerical dress, and the role of bishops within the church.

<sup>8</sup> On the conflicts and reforming programme in the Diocese of Sydney from 1960 through to 2013, see Ballantine-Jones, 'Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013'.

On 7 March 1992, the Archbishop of Perth, Peter Carnley, ordained ten women to the priesthood, with others to follow around the country.<sup>9</sup> At home, distinctive Anglican forms continued either to be modified or disappear from the churches altogether, despite increasingly earnest pleadings from Robinson. By the time of his retirement, the ACA had lost two features Robinson had fought to retain: a tradition of common prayer and mutually recognised holy orders.

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In Andrew Judd's words, the 'apparent contradiction between Donald Robinson the NT scholar and Donald Robinson the Bishop is well rehearsed.'<sup>10</sup> Observers more personally removed from Robinson, and therefore unaware of this apparent contradiction, have been able to cast him as a conservative, resistant to all the incursions of modernity, of which the ordination of women was but one example.<sup>11</sup> For those aware of Robinson's wider career, and therefore obliged to relate his episcopal conservatism to his adventurous and sometimes iconoclastic exegesis, various accounts have emerged. In chapter five I considered three broad models. The first is that he changed with his role; the second that he changed his thinking; and the third that his positions did not change at all, but were misunderstood.

Those who emphasise a change in role argued he was simply able to hermetically seal off two roles from each other. As a NT scholar, he was 'flying some kites'; as the Archbishop of Sydney he was conscience-bound to defend the formularies of the ACA. Attention to the NT text made him a radical; attention to the details of the ACA's constitution made him a conservative.<sup>12</sup> How else could one make sense of the fact that the diocese's most radical post-war scholar also became one of its most conservative archbishops?

Others have wondered whether some sort of intellectual *volte face* occurred. Did Robinson abandon his academic gown for his chimere, the Fox now transformed into the Lion? Ballantine-Jones grapples with the tension by arguing that he was '... conservative by nature, though with a radical and inquisitive side which seemed contradictory to many.'<sup>13</sup> The radicalism, especially in guise of the so-called 'Knox-Robinson view of church', and in the exegetical work on baptism in the NT, were being deployed by younger clergy in various reform programmes. When he proved

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<sup>9</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Judd, 'Donald Robinson and the Imperfect Unity of An Australian Prayer Book', 140–1.

<sup>11</sup> Chris McGillion, *The Chosen Ones: The Politics of Salvation in the Anglican Church* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 3, 7; Louise Williams, 'A Hard Man of God', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1992, Spectrum, SMH Archives, 43.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Judd and Cable say that 'Robinson's theology was linguistically-based upon the text of scripture; as Archbishop he displayed similar concerns for the literal meaning of the Constitution.' Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, chap. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Ballantine-Jones, 'Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013', 169.

to be also deeply committed to liturgical forms, it became easy to understand him as someone who had in office ‘abandoned his purer teaching’.<sup>14</sup> The younger clergy were confused, perceiving that Robinson as archbishop was opposing the views he himself had taught them as students.<sup>15</sup> Despite grappling with this tension, Ballantine-Jones in the end concludes: ‘Robinson was a conservative in the Loane mould’.<sup>16</sup>

More recent perspectives from within Sydney have begun to explore lines of continuity between Robinson’s scholarship and his approach to the episcopate.<sup>17</sup> Such approaches argue that when Robinson’s theological positions are properly understood, the tension between the scholar and the bishop are significantly relieved.

My own argument is that the picture is genuinely complex. A change in role, changes in his own thought and misunderstandings of his positions all played a part. Robinson may have in some senses been a conservative, but he was certainly not a conservative in the ‘Loane mould.’ Robinson’s apparent conservatism was not of the same type as Loane’s more nostalgic stance. He continued to bring his NT scholarship to bear on the questions of his episcopate in creative and stimulating ways. The three theological areas explored in this chapter—the ordination of women, ecclesiology and sacraments—each exhibit this complexity. His argumentation in the women’s ordination debate drew on original and distinctively Robinsonian approaches to NT canon and authority. In this debate, Robinson was rigorously consistent with his previous scholarship. Robinson’s ecclesiology in this period displayed both continuity and development as it was refined and applied to the particulars of the Sydney diocese. At some points, Robinson’s ecclesiology had been misunderstood whilst at other points his loyalty to the Anglican tradition put strain on what he had taught his students. However, the tension between the scholar and the bishop was deepest, I will argue, not at the point of his ecclesiology but rather in his sacramental theology. In this area, genuine and radical changes of mind are evident.

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In 1966 Principal of the Baptist College, George Morling, wrote to Robinson with the saying that ‘institutions tend to strangle the ideas that gave them birth.’ From the perspective of clergy eager

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<sup>14</sup> ‘It was said by some that by accepting consecration that Bp Robinson had, in practice, abandoned his purer teaching.’ Raymond Heslehurst, ‘The Doctrine of the Church and the Diocesan Mission: A Preliminary Examination of the Doctrine of the Church as Expressed in the Synod Addresses of Bishop D W B Robinson 1982 –1992’ (The Richard Johnson Senior Common Room Seminar, Wollongong, 2004), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 34, 45. See also Reed, ‘Addenda to a Consultation on the Role of Archbishop in the Diocese of Sydney’, AP5/4.

<sup>16</sup> Ballantine-Jones, ‘Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013’, 45.

<sup>17</sup> For examples of recent work stressing Robinson’s continuity, see Judd, ‘When Grandpa Met the Queen’; Judd, ‘Donald Robinson and the Imperfect Unity of An Australian Prayer Book’; Heslehurst, ‘The Doctrine of the Church and the Diocesan Mission’; Shiner, ‘An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson’s New Testament Theology’; Shiner, ‘Church of the Triune God’; Jensen, *Sydney Anglicanism*.

to reform the church and position it for the evangelistic challenges of the day, Morling's words look prophetic. In the 1980s, the Sydney diocese appeared committed to strangling some of the more radical theologies nurtured within its womb. In many cases, it was the very source of those ideas—namely Robinson—against whom the reformists were now butting their heads.

### **7.1. Robinson's Election in Context**

Marcus Loane had served as Archbishop from 1966 until 1981. Widely respected and revered by his clergy, he represented a conservative leadership over a period when the groundswell for radical change grew ever stronger. Though the first Australian-born Archbishop in the Sydney See (all before him were English), he was also an Anglophile, a loyal monarchist and a firm believer that the Anglican formularies were the best possible guardians of evangelical orthodoxy and fonts of spiritual strength. He held steadfast on insisting on clerical dress and on the use of authorised prayer books at a time when both were increasingly seen as impediments to mission. The almost universal high regard in which his leadership was held, and admiration for his evident piety, tended to keep reform at bay.

Thus, after 16 years of Loane's leadership, many clergy held high hopes for change. After Loane, the two main contenders for the See of Sydney were Robinson and John Reid.<sup>18</sup> John Reid's support came largely from the laity and from those whom Ballantine-Jones characterises as 'social progressives'.<sup>19</sup> Robinson on the other hand had a strong support base in the clergy whom he had taught at Moore College, and from conservative evangelicals. There is an important irony here. Those who wanted to conserve a more traditional Anglican identity supported Reid, whilst those looking for a more radical change supported Robinson.<sup>20</sup> Reid, as his *Looking into the Parish* report indicated, was open to changes to parish life also desired by the Synod's more reformist clergy. In supporting Robinson, however, those clergy were taking a gamble that the more conservative figure would, when push came to shove, allow his radical NT insights to overwhelm his Anglican loyalties. They traded superficial but certain change from Reid for the much less certain but, if delivered, root-and-branch change that Robinson (or at least Robinson's theology) offered. Also, Robinson was sure to remain conservative on *the* issue of the coming decade—the ordination of women.

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<sup>18</sup> Nominations on Friday 26 March were Bishop Donald Cameron, Rev. David Hewetson, Bishop John Reid, Bishop Donald Robinson, and Bishop Ken Short. After due process and voting, the final list on Tuesday 30 March was down to Bishops Cameron, Reid, and Robinson. In the final vote on 1 April, Robinson won the Lay vote by 20, and the vote of the Clergy by a decisive 73 votes. See *1983 Yearbook*, pages 201–204.

<sup>19</sup> Ballantine-Jones, 'Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013', 170.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

The case against Robinson's election rested on three main issues: his conservative views on the marriage of divorced persons, his commitment to Anglican liturgical forms, and allegations of support for apartheid in South Africa.<sup>21</sup> The conservative evangelical clergy, who were overwhelmingly supporters of the Church of England in South Africa (CESA), defended Robinson against the charges of supporting apartheid in the press.<sup>22</sup> They did not, on the whole, share Robinson's commitment to liturgical forms or his strict views of the remarriage of divorced persons. These two issues were to prove much more of an impasse than his supporters had calculated.<sup>23</sup>

In electing Robinson, the Synod signalled a distrust of the sort of social progressiveness and the broader, more international evangelicalism represented by Reid.<sup>24</sup> In Robinson they had a candidate who represented an 'unswerving commitment to the conservative theological tradition of the Diocese.'<sup>25</sup> He was not a generic evangelical, but distinctively a *Sydney* evangelical. In a day when the ordination of women was clearly going to be the issue of the decade, Sydney had an archbishop whose position was clear and unwavering. His knowledge of the Constitution of the ACA and the wider Anglican tradition was formidable and would serve them well in public debate.

The Synod had elected a defender of the traditions it held dear. The trade-off was a person who also held dear traditions from which the clergy wanted relief. A vision for ministry and mission that was at once both *less* Anglican and more distinctively 'Sydney' was gathering pace. It came through powerful and successful ministries such as those represented by Phillip Jensen at the University of New South Wales. It was a vision formed by the teachings of D. B. Knox, with an approach to scripture and exegesis learned from Robinson. If Robinson could lead the battle with the ACA, the reforming clergy could work with him on what they wanted at home. Whatever Robinson's candidacy meant, he was far from simply being the non-Reid candidate. The clergy who supported him had been deeply shaped by his teaching at the College, and much of the theological infrastructure for their calls for reform within the parishes came from the 'Knox-Robinson view of church.' The stage was set for a difficult decade of leadership for Robinson, and growing frustration for his clergy.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>24</sup> On Reid's social concern, see Chilton, 'Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia', 338. See also Ballantine-Jones, 'Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013', 170–171.

<sup>25</sup> Ballantine-Jones, 'Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013', 169–173.

## 7.2. *The Ordination of Women*

Robinson the scholar and Robinson the bishop were most clearly aligned in the debate over the ordination of women. His output was significant: he wrote articles, published booklets and gave several key speeches, including one at the 1988 Lambeth Conference and another in London to the Church Society at Central Hall in Westminster.<sup>26</sup> He was a key participant in the debates at General Synod, and spoke regularly on the topic at Synod across the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1986 he joined the Bishop of London, Graham Leonard, as co-chair of *The Association for Apostolic Ministry* (AAM).<sup>27</sup> In these ways, Donald Robinson was to become the leading voice for those opposed to the ordination of women in Australia, as well as a key figure internationally. A topic that had featured only sparsely in his corpus and teaching before this period would become, in the 1980s, the main anvil on which his theological tools were struck.

Robinson was an indefatigable opponent of women's ordination. However, while he argued tirelessly for the same outcome as other conservatives, the route by which he arrived at his conclusion was strikingly distinctive. As Kevin Giles (a strong supporter of women's ordination) noted:

A high regard for church tradition, not usually found amongst Sydney evangelicals (a distinct subspecies), can also be seen in the writings of Archbishop Robinson. In his uncompromising stance against the ordination of women, he bases his case not 'on particular passages of Scripture' but on a 'a specific nexus between the apostolic church and its ministry on the one hand [that is what he calls the biblical tradition] and our own [Anglican] church and its ministry on the other.'<sup>28</sup>

It is this distinctive shape of Robinson's argument, understood in its historical context, that is my interest here.

### 7.2.1. *Context for the Debate*

The women's ordination debate was, in Piggins's description, 'perhaps the most divisive issue which the church had confronted in its Australian history.'<sup>29</sup> This deep and difficult debate framed Robinson's entire arch-episcopate. Opposition to the ordination of women was a key part of his

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<sup>26</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Ordination for What?', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 414–37; Donald Robinson, "'Tradition' in the New Testament", *ibid*, 438–41; Donald Robinson, 'Walking According to the Traditions of Christ', *ibid*, 442–450; Donald Robinson, 'Scripture, Apostolic Tradition and the Ordination of Women', *ibid*, 451–54; Donald Robinson, 'Lambeth 1988: Authority, Unity, and the Ordination of Women', *ibid*, 455–63; Donald Robinson, 'Speech at Lambeth 1988', *ibid*, 464–67; Donald Robinson, 'Conversation Concerning the Ordination of Women', *ibid*, 468–77.

<sup>27</sup> Alan Gill, 'Bishop Joins UK Ordination Lobby', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 July 1986, *Sydney Morning Herald* Archives.

<sup>28</sup> Kevin Giles, 'Evangelical Systematic Theology: Definitions, Problems, Sources', in Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*, 267.

<sup>29</sup> Piggins, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 9.

election in 1982, and disciplinary measures and a court case with Bishop Dowling over the issue cast a shadow over his last full year in office, 1992.<sup>30</sup>

The theological terrain on this issue in the 1970s and 1980s was complex. Evangelicals were a house divided. In Melbourne, Leon Morris returned from a Sabbatical in 1975 to discover that Ridley Theological College had erupted over the issue.<sup>31</sup> Beginning in 1976, Morris began to publish and teach on the topic, arguing that there was no biblical impediment to women's ordination.<sup>32</sup> In March of 1988 there was an EFAC conference at which evangelicals discussed the issue.<sup>33</sup> Consensus proved elusive. Other prominent figures theologically close to Robinson, such as F. F. Bruce, became prominent allies in the cause women's ministry.<sup>34</sup> John Stott presented something of a middle way—open to the ordination of women, but reluctant to see them installed as Rectors of local churches, in line with his understanding of passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-15.<sup>35</sup> Other figures of the post-war evangelical renaissance, such as D. B. Knox, Phillip Hughes, and J. I. Packer resisted the change on biblical grounds.<sup>36</sup>

For many evangelicals, the spectacle of a community committed to the final authority of scripture and yet unable to find a common mind on this issue was deeply troubling.<sup>37</sup> Evangelical leaders began to speak about hermeneutics as a way beyond the impasse.<sup>38</sup> At the English Nottingham Congress in 1977 for example, Stott saw hermeneutics as a vital concern.<sup>39</sup> In his diary in 1981 he said: 'It is increasingly clear to me that hermeneutics is Issue No. 1 in the church today.'<sup>40</sup> The question of the ministry of women, along with the charismatic renewal, were the background issues.

In Australia at the 1981 NEAC conference the question of hermeneutics also surfaced. Indeed, Robinson introduced it. There is an important Australia-UK contrast here. In 1977 Stott was coming fresh to the discipline. Robinson, on the other hand, had had a sustained scholarly interest in the topic since his time at Cambridge in the late 1940s. In England, the appeal to hermeneutics was offered as a means by which evangelicals could come to terms with diversity.

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<sup>30</sup> For a description of the events from a participant-observer, see 'Women's ordination: 1992—A year to remember' in Ballantine-Jones, *Inside Sydney*, 51–70.

<sup>31</sup> Bach, *Leon Morris*, chap. 14.

<sup>32</sup> Leon Morris, 'The Ministry of Women', in *A Woman's Place: Anglican Doctrine Commission Papers on the Role of Women in the Church* (Sydney: AIO, 1976), 19–32.

<sup>33</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Grass, *F. F. Bruce*. As a member of the Brethren, Bruce did not see the need for ordination as such, but encouraged recognition of women's ministry as equal to men, and endorsed the preaching ministry of women so called and able.

<sup>35</sup> Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 123–24.

<sup>36</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism*, 220–224.

<sup>39</sup> Chapman, *Godly Ambition*, 102.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 105.



By contrast, in Australia Robinson hoped hermeneutics would lead toward consensus and unity. In his paper he said:

Despite our high feelings about the issue of women in the church, it is an acute test of our hermeneutical principles.<sup>41</sup>

In his work on *AAPB* the previous decade, Robinson's faith in the ability of the NT to function as canon amongst Christians had been vindicated. In that case, returning to the text of the NT had moved people of diverse churchmanship to a common mind on liturgical reform. How much more, therefore, could the NT be expected to garner consensus amongst fellow evangelicals on the issue of women's ordination? It was not to be. In historical perspective, recourse to the question of hermeneutics now appears more as a symptom of evangelical disunity than a mechanism for future rapprochement. Bach notes that after NEAC 1981,

... the evangelicals had moved further apart...there has yet to be another fully representative Anglican Evangelical Conference in Australia of the size of the 1981 Conference.<sup>42</sup>

Unity—or at least the kind of unity represented by a plenary conference—would elude Anglican evangelicals for decades after the 1981 NEAC conference. A failure to resolve the question of women's ordination was the main obstacle.

The Sydney diocese itself was much closer to a consensus on the issue, with leading conservative figures such as Marcus Loane, Peter Jensen, John Woodhouse, Robert Doyle, Phillip Jensen and D. B. Knox all firmly in the conservative camp. Back in 1968, Archbishop Loane had addressed the Sydney Synod in the context of that year's Lambeth Conference. Bruce Ballantine-Jones describes Loane's account as containing 'the essential elements of Sydney's position.' Loane told his Synod:

I can see no New Testament precedent for the ordination of women; nothing even to hint at such a development. On the contrary, the ordination of women seems to me to be in conflict with the doctrines of Headship and Authority which are rooted in the Godhead. [Concerning male and female roles] Man can do something which women cannot do; woman can do some things which man cannot do. That is a fact which has nothing whatsoever to do with false ideas of male superiority; it is a law of nature which we cannot obliterate.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Robinson, 'Using the Bible Today', 50.

<sup>42</sup> Bach, *Leon Morris*, chap. 15.

<sup>43</sup> 1969 *Sydney Year Book*, 206–207. Cited in Ballantine-Jones, 'Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013', 75.

Other important treatments in the coming decades would largely follow this programme. Some focussed on the text of the NT itself, with close exegesis of key passages such as 1 Timothy 2.<sup>44</sup> Others gave broader consideration to the way in which the authority of scripture functioned in the debate.<sup>45</sup> Still others teased out some of the theological ideas around gender, personhood and (controversially) the implications of the doctrine of the trinity within the Godhead.<sup>46</sup>

Outside the evangelical constituency, conservative Anglo-Catholics' opposition was argued differently again, appealing to Church Tradition, the nature of the priesthood and the need for a male to represent Christ at the Eucharist. As Robinson elegantly summarised it, Anglo-Catholics worried that a woman couldn't represent Christ at the altar, evangelicals that a woman could not represent Christ in the pulpit.<sup>47</sup>

Robinson's argument was not Anglo-Catholic. But neither was it typical of the way in which the evangelical case was normally brokered. Robinson's line of argument was independent and subtle. It gathered together key strands of his evangelical, Cambridge and Anglican sources in a creative way. And it is to this argument we now turn.

### **7.2.2. Background to Robinson's Thought**

Given how much Robinson's views on this matter dominated his theological output in the 1980s, it is surprising to note how little the issue occupied his attention before that time. Indeed, between the late 1940s and early 1981, the topic barely surfaced in his published work. Three points are worth noting as background to his thought:

First, in 1949 an Australian Presbyterian Donovan Mitchell published an article in *RTR* called 'Women and the Ministry: Whither Exegesis?' Robinson described it as the most important article he had ever read on the topic.<sup>48</sup> In it, Mitchell addressed what he saw as the growing confusion over the ministry of women. In the face of conflicts over exegesis, Mitchell commended two 'instruments of interpretation' which he designated 'the Apostolic Tradition' and 'the law of nature.'<sup>49</sup> The Apostolic Tradition was 'that corpus of thought and practice, of precept and doctrine which the Lord Jesus substituted for the tradition of the Jewish elders, and

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<sup>44</sup> Glenn Davies, 'Biblical Studies Paper: 1 Timothy 2:8–15', in *Personhood, Sexuality, and Christian Ministry*, Explorations: Moore Papers 1 (Sydney: Lancer Books, 1986), 84–97.

<sup>45</sup> John Woodhouse, 'The Use of the Bible in Modern Controversies: A Watershed Among Evangelicals?', in *Personhood, Sexuality and Christian Ministry*, Explorations: Moore Papers 1 (Sydney: Lancer Books, 1986), 4–14.

<sup>46</sup> For the theology of gender and personhood, see Robert Doyle, 'Sexuality, Personhood, and the Image of God', in *Personhood, Sexuality and Christian Ministry*, Explorations: Moore Papers 1 (Sydney: Lancer Books, 1986), 45–58. The full-blown controversy over the use of Trinitarian arguments in the women's ordination debate would not break until the early 2000s.

<sup>47</sup> Robinson, 'Ordination for What?', 423.

<sup>48</sup> *Southern Cross*, March 1985, 27. Cited in Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 8, footnote 13.

<sup>49</sup> Donovan F. Mitchell, 'Women and the Ministry: Whither Exegesis?', *The Reformed Theological Review* 8 (1949):

which he committed to the stewardship of the Apostles.<sup>50</sup> Donovan argued that submission to this tradition was of the *esse* of the church: it would have solved the problems at the church in Corinth,<sup>51</sup> it is the duty of Christian ministers to ‘guard’ it, and that the Holy Spirit’s guidance is to keep the church under its authority.<sup>52</sup> The ‘law of nature’, on the other hand, referred to the roles of men and women discoverable within the created order. Robinson would do very little with the latter concept. The former, however, with its promise of problems solved and divisions gone, would prove decisive for his own argument, and for his approach to the NT more generally.

Secondly, Robinson’s first published comment on the roles of women in the church appears in his 1954 article on Apostolic Succession. He accepts there that, if the Junias of Romans 16:7 is a woman, then an apostolic ministry of evangelistic gospel preaching was open to women in a way that teaching a congregation was not.<sup>53</sup> His first foray into the debate was to argue for an expanded, rather than contracted, role for women.

Thirdly, Robinson would address the issue head-on at the 1981 NEAC Conference. There he instructed his fellow evangelicals in the approach he had learned from Mitchell: the debate over the ordination of women was a subset of the question of how the churches related themselves to the apostolic traditions.<sup>54</sup> This was not for him ‘primitivism’ which he understood to be ‘wrong in principle.’<sup>55</sup> It was not an attempt to mimic the cultural and social features of the early church, but rather to share its relationship to the apostles. The hermeneutical task, argued Robinson, was precisely to distinguish the essential from the incidental. Many at the time felt such hermeneutical work would reveal the restrictions on women to have been incidental; Robinson was confident it would lead to the opposite conclusion.

At the end of the NEAC address, Robinson reminded his fellow evangelical Anglicans: ‘we are not starting from scratch, but are the inheritors of what our evangelical fathers regarded as a godly order and discipline.’<sup>56</sup> Robinson here signals what would be a complex relationship between the Apostolic Tradition and the obligations he believed were imposed by Anglican traditions. Those latter traditions, whilst not on the same level as the Apostolic tradition, nevertheless exercised an authority that could not be lightly put aside.

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<sup>50</sup> Mitchell, ‘Women and the Ministry’, 2.

<sup>51</sup> ‘It was to be the criterion for the local Corinthian Church. Their problems would be solved and their divisions disappear as they placed themselves under guidance of the Tradition.’ Ibid., 4.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>53</sup> Piggan, *Spirit, Word and World*. 80.

<sup>54</sup> Robinson, ‘Using the Bible Today’, 50.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 51.

To summarise: prior to the 1980s, Robinson was known to hold conservative views on women's ordination. The topic was not, however, a major interest of Robinson's, except as a footnote to a wider and abiding interest in the Apostolic Tradition itself. As a NT scholar, he discerned submission to this tradition as an essential feature of NT Christianity; as a churchman, he wished to see its authority continued over the churches today. And he took the Anglican tradition to be a 'godly order and discipline' which imposed obligations on those who were its inheritors. His convictions regarding the apostolic tradition put him at odds with progressives nationally; his convictions regarding the Anglican tradition put him at odds with evangelicals at home.

### **7.2.3. The Shape of Robinson's Argument**

Robinson was to articulate and explain his position many times over the course of the decade with remarkable consistency. He did not engage in the exegesis of the contentious passages. Indeed, his concern was not to 'foreclose the question of the interpretation of particular passages of Scripture.'<sup>57</sup> Rather he focussed his argument on the relationship of the church to the canon of scripture itself. In 1990, he summarised his argument as follows:

1. The Anglican Church has an agreed description of authorised ministry.
2. This authorised ministry is authenticated in Anglican formularies by appeal to Apostolic order.
3. In the NT, this order is found in the form of tradition (παράδοσις)—'teaching', 'words' and 'commands' having dominical authority, and relating to topics such as the gospel, morality, family relations, the Christian community and order within the congregation. Such traditions are committed to 'all the churches' and were transmitted in the name of the Lord, and cannot be regarded therefore as the inventions of Paul.
4. Within these traditions are what Paul says about men and women. They therefore have dominical authority. Moreover, Paul grounds that particular tradition in the creation narrative, indicating that it is not 'a changeable custom but is inherent in the divine purpose for the man/woman relationship.'<sup>58</sup>
5. Both the Eastern and Western Church had received this tradition and observed it. It is not 'a tradition which is capable of development. It can be discarded, but not developed.'<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Robinson, 'Scripture', 451.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 452.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 453.

This line of argument put him into direct conflict with progressives. It also, in several important ways, set him apart from conservatives, both of the Anglo-Catholic and evangelical camps.

Against progressives, Robinson's argument meant the tradition was not open to development. The church could discover it has wrongly adopted a tradition, but it could not develop the Apostolic tradition and still claim to be an Apostolic church. It even jeopardised that church's claim to have 'received Christ', because 'adherence to the Apostolic tradition is the test of loyalty to Christ himself.'<sup>60</sup> Bishop Dowling had argued that, in terms of the church's decision on these matters

the order is clear: the living experience of the church, then synodical discussion and decision-making to clear up disagreements and set uncertainties aside. The church then acts fearlessly under the Spirit, not necessarily tied by the traditions *or even the written commands of Scripture*. It is a church which faces the demands of the Gospel and refuses to be bound by law.<sup>61</sup> [italics added]

Donovan Mitchell's 1949 article had persuaded Robinson to reject arguments based on the idea that the Holy Spirit would lead the church to break with apostolic tradition.<sup>62</sup> Dowling's argument was perfectly (if unwittingly) calibrated to alarm Robinson.

Anglo-Catholics found many points of resonance with Robinson's argument, especially with the value it afforded tradition. In the argument enumerated above, points 1, 2, and 5 were rarely made by evangelicals, but appealed to Anglo-Catholic sensibilities. However, Robinson did not share with Anglo-Catholics the same concerns over administration of the sacraments.

Conversely, evangelical opposition to women's ordination had focussed almost exclusively on point 4: what Paul said about men and women and how he grounded his argument. The fact that Robinson spent so much time on Anglican tradition and the way he framed the Apostolic tradition was (as far as I am aware) unique in evangelical argumentation.

Robinson concludes his case by saying:

Unless it can be shown—and, I would add, acknowledged by the *consensus fidelium*—that the New Testament teaching on the relations of men and women in creation, in marriage, and in the congregation has *wrongly* been understood to have been part of the Apostolic tradition delivered to the Churches, and that consequently the Church has *mistakenly*

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Bishop Dowling's Presidential Address, 1990, 27. Cited in Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 8.

<sup>62</sup> 'Attempts are sometimes made to escape from this conclusion [of the Tradition's authority] by an appeal to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is argued that the Holy Spirit is manifestly leading the Church to break with 'tradition'—a nebulous term—and that all 'progress' comes through breaking with 'tradition.' Mitchell, 'Women and the Ministry', 5.

included it in its on-going tradition ever since, the ordination of women to the priesthood must of necessity be regarded as a violation of the charter of our faith as a Church.<sup>63</sup> [Italics original]

Robinson's argument had a clinical character to it. It had no real theory of gender, it did not evoke the doctrine of the Trinity, nor did it make an appeal to the law of nature. More surprisingly, it did not feature any of the close exegesis of which he was so capable. It rested on a constitutional view of scripture: the Apostolic tradition constituted the church, and it continued to function much as a constitution functions in an association. Paul, says Robinson, 'provided all his churches with the same constitution, with the articles of association, with the rules of the group.'<sup>64</sup>

#### **7.2.4. Conclusion**

Historically speaking, Robinson's argument did not succeed. On 21 November 1992, at 4:50pm, the General Synod then meeting in Sydney, passed the resolution to allow women priests by two votes. According to Piggin:

In the silence that followed the historic decision, Charles Sherlock from Melbourne wept. It was not for himself, as he explained to one who sought to comfort him, for he was a committed supporter of the ordination of women. He wept for the Archbishop of Sydney. To Donald Robinson himself, who also sought to comfort him, he explained that if the vote had not gone as it had, he would not have known how to comfort his wife, but because it had gone as it had he did not know how to comfort the Archbishop for whom he had always held a special affection.<sup>65</sup>

Stuart Piggin has argued that no one in Sydney managed to challenge Robinson's position 'with anywhere near the acumen that the strength of his position warrants.'<sup>66</sup> It was certainly a distinctive and original line of argument. Piggin speaks of Robinson's integrity, his capacity to separate the principle from the personal, and his ability to not hold grudges as factors that won him 'admiration from both sides.'<sup>67</sup>

Robinson's approach to this issue is also something of a window into his approach to the episcopate more generally. The tradition of exegesis at Moore College, which Robinson had been so much a part of establishing, has given birth to a generation of scholars and churchmen who were inspired to allow their exegetical discoveries to have their full impact on the contemporary

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<sup>63</sup> Robinson, 'Scripture', 453.

<sup>64</sup> Robinson, 'Walking According to the Traditions of Christ', 442.

<sup>65</sup> Piggin, *Spirit, Word and World*, chap. 9.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., chap. 9.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., chap 9.

church. For some (such as Robert Banks) this new wine had burst the wineskins of Anglican discipline and order altogether. For others (such as John Woodhouse and Phillip Jensen) the revolution would be mounted from within the Anglican fold, but with a radical re-thinking of traditional Anglican positions in the light of exegetical discoveries.

Robinson set himself a more complex path. On the one hand, his exegetical work was every bit as radical as the reformist clergy—often more so. His approach, however, was augmented by a high loyalty to the Anglican tradition. Bishop Dowling saw himself as acting ‘fearlessly under the Spirit.’ The reformist Sydney clergy saw themselves as acting fearlessly under the authority of scripture. Robinson worked his position through a nexus between the apostolic church and its ministry on the one hand and the Anglican church and its ministry on the other. As Kevin Giles has argued, this unusual regard for church tradition (which Giles commends) entails a weakness:

no critical biblical scholar today would endorse the idea that the present threefold Anglican form of ministry is to be found in Scripture, let alone that it is given in Scripture as a binding pattern.<sup>68</sup>

Robinson was aware of the impossibility of grounding a case for the threefold order of ministry in scripture. He did not, however, see this as a zero-sum game. The fact that the three-fold order was ancient, that it was received by both Eastern and Western churches, and that it was the tradition in which Robinson himself participated all afforded it significant authority. Not, of course, the same authority as the Apostolic tradition found in scripture, but nevertheless an authority under which Anglicans were obliged to operate. Over the course of this time Robinson was also prosecuting a similar line of argument regarding the re-marriage of divorced persons. The evangelicals who had wanted Robinson to lead the charge on the ordination of women often also advocated a liberalising of the church’s position on this issue.<sup>69</sup> But for Robinson, his argument against the ordination of women was part of a wider and complex vision of Anglican ecclesiology. To that topic I now turn.

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<sup>68</sup> Giles, ‘Evangelical Systematic Theology: Definitions, Problems, Sources’, 267.

<sup>69</sup> Ballantine-Jones, ‘Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013’, 170.

### **7.3. 'The Church of God that is at Sydney': Robinson's Ecclesiology in the 1980s**

*'The tradition of this diocese has been to affirm itself not only as reformed, evangelical and Protestant but also catholic and apostolic.'*<sup>70</sup>

*D. W. B. Robinson, 1992.*

If Robinson's position on women's ordination was an example of continuity, his ecclesiology in this period was more complex, exhibiting both significant continuity and significant development. Ecclesiology was naturally a major theological and practical concern for Robinson in office. Personally, Robinson grappled with the role of a diocesan bishop and the purpose of the diocese in characteristically analytical, theological, and historical fashion. He continued to work through his own thinking on the NT doctrine of church, and more broadly he grappled with the nature and essence of Anglican identity, both in Australia and internationally. Nationally, the women's ordination debate raised questions for Robinson about the ACA's claim to be genuinely apostolic. Meanwhile in Sydney, changes leveraged by an ecclesiology that bore his name equally cast doubts for Robinson on that diocese's claim to be liturgical and catholic. When the Reformed Evangelical Protestant Association (REPA) emerged in early 1992, it was in part a symptom of and protest against this feature of Robinson's era.<sup>71</sup> REPA had a stated agenda to 'change the Diocese from top to bottom to make it more effective for evangelism.'<sup>72</sup> In common with REPA, Robinson wanted a diocese that was reformed, evangelical and Protestant; he also believed it should be catholic, apostolic and liturgical. In the end, Robinson failed to win the diocese to his Anglican ecclesiological vision. The purpose of this section is to understand what that vision was.

#### **7.3.1. The Grubb Report (1985)**

Historically, Robinson's ecclesiology in the 1980s needs to be understood in the context of an important consultancy the diocese undertook in 1984. It gave shape to Robinson's vision and cast significant light on his thinking and his decisions in this era. Conducted by the Reverend Bruce Reed (1920-2003), Executive Chair of the Grubb Institute of Behavioural Studies, it was designed to help Robinson think through his role as Archbishop. Reed was a graduate of Moore College who had gone to Cambridge for studies in the 1950s, and had remained in England. From the late 1950s onwards, Reed was engaged in innovative work in organisational dynamics, leadership development and consultancy. According to his obituary in *The Telegraph* he 'always felt

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<sup>70</sup> Neil Chenoweth, 'An Almighty Row in the Pews', *The Bulletin*, 21 July 1992.

<sup>71</sup> Ballantine-Jones says: 'Towards the end of Robinson's term, this pressure erupted in the emergence of the Reformed Evangelical Protestant Association (REPA).' Ballantine-Jones, 'Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013', 189.

<sup>72</sup> Ballantine-Jones, *Inside Sydney*, 138.



that the Church was too concerned with its own internal affairs and blind to the demands of serving God in the secular world.<sup>73</sup> Reed had similar modernising impulses to John Reid and a more radical or progressive outlook than Robinson.<sup>74</sup> He did, however, share Robinson's essential commitment to Anglican order and ministry patterns and they were in regular contact over the years. He was also married to Mary, Robinson's eldest sister.

The context of the report is a sense of crisis around the relationships between the parish churches, the diocese and the bishops. Reflecting on his interviewees, Reed reported that 'the distance between the bishops, and the clergy and the people at local level was such that frequently the expression "break down" was used.'<sup>75</sup> The consultancy was Robinson's response.

*The Grubb Report* is an invaluable historical source for the following reasons: First, its results are grounded in empirical research, based on analysis of interviews conducted from 29 November to 9 December, 1984. Secondly, it is written by someone not entirely sympathetic to the theological emphasis of the diocese in the 1980s. Reed had studied at MTC under T. C. Hammond and greatly admired Hammond's theology. Subsequent studies in Cambridge had developed his theology toward exploring the intersection of church and society. He thus offers a description of the diocese with different theological and analytical tools than those by which an insider might account for its culture and structures. Reed had developed these tools from the organisational psychology of Group Relations theory and practice, and had worked these through his own theology. Therefore, features of diocesan life were put into a sociological and organisational frame. Thirdly, it came early in Robinson's time in office. This meant the consultancy, which was intended to enable him more effectively to take personal authority for how he himself took up his role in relation to the whole diocese, would exercise a significant influence over the greater part of his episcopate.<sup>76</sup>

### **7.3.2. 'Associational' and 'Parish' Churches**

At the heart of the report was Reed's distinction between 'associational churches' and 'parish churches'. For Reed, an associational church is that sort of church more typical of the free church tradition in which members are drawn together by key commitments, identity markers and shared interests. They therefore tend to direct their energy internally, placing their emphasis on their members rather than their context. They were likely to relax distinctions between

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<sup>73</sup> 'The Reverend Bruce Reed', *The Telegraph*, 25 November 2003, accessed 19 May 2017 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1447609/The-Reverend-Bruce-Reed.html>.

<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, John Reid appears to have taken a dim view of Reed's influence on Robinson. 'In my view', Reid said, 'his coming was a terrible mistake. He was responsible for Don adopting a view of the authority of a bishop in the congregation. He convinced Don that he needed to live in a grand house which would accentuate his view of the episcopacy.' Quoted in Ballantine-Jones, *Inside Sydney*, 120.

<sup>75</sup> Reed, 'Addenda to a Consultation on the Role of Archbishop in the Diocese of Sydney', AP1/1.

<sup>76</sup> The extent to which the report's influence can be discerned is considered at the end of this section.

ordained and lay ministry, and they had a tendency to ‘project’ the good aspects of themselves onto the group and the bad parts outside the group.

The parish church, on the other hand, is a geographic entity that tends to foster a wider (though less intense) concern for the people in its geographic area regardless of their allegiances. They are embedded in their context, far more blurred in the lines between the community and the church’s members, and far more attentive to the formal quality of its corporate worship. Whereas the associational church will make its decisions internally, the parish model of church will be open to outside influence in its decision-making. Members, says Reed, will welcome distinctions between ordained clergy and the laity, understanding them to be operating with different roles.<sup>77</sup>

Reed’s analysis of parish churches around the world was in obvious tension with the ‘Knox-Robinson view’, which had emerged by the 1980s as a powerful theological blueprint. What for many in the diocese was a theologically rich and missionally expedient vision Reed was now dismissing as ‘associational’. The report recognised the tension. Whilst isolated and independent parishes are not unique to Sydney:

What is different in Sydney, however, is that apparently many clergy and people do not regret their isolation but use it as a means to develop the congregation along the lines which cause them to sit loose to the Anglican connection.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, what was for Reed a ‘bug’, was for many in Sydney a ‘feature’. Moreover, it was a feature many of the clergy had learned from Robinson. Reed explained that in interviews many had said that ‘due to [Robinson’s] earlier lectures in Moore College, he had been instrumental in giving validity to the associational type church.’<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Reed, ‘Addenda to a Consultation on the Role of Archbishop in the Diocese of Sydney’, AP2/1–4.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., AP 1/2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., AP 5/4. In the report, Reed makes much use of the psychological notion of ‘projection’. It seems fair to at least ask whether Reed himself is guilty of projecting a particular vision of church life onto the diocese of Sydney and to the data. Reed may be too confident in diagnosing the diocese’s challenges as related to this particular ecclesiology, and too ready to see the vision as stemming from the ecclesiology coming from Moore College. For example, Miroslav Volf, in a context far removed from the diocese of Sydney, has argued that all churches, including Episcopal churches, are moving toward a Free Church or congregational pattern of life—what Reed would call ‘associational churches.’ Volf says:

Today’s global developments seem to imply that Protestant Christendom of the future will exhibit largely a Free Christian form. Although the episcopal churches will probably not surrender their own hierarchical structures, they, too, will increasingly have to integrate these Free Church elements into the mainstream of their own lives both theologically and practically. Although restorative efforts will slow the appropriation of these elements, they will be unable to obstruct them entirely. It seems to me that we are standing in the middle of a clear and irreversible “process of congregationalization” of all Christianity’.

Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 13.

### **7.3.3. The Nature of the Diocese**

Reed claimed most Anglican churches in Sydney were of the associational type. This had significant implications for the diocese. According to Reed, it meant the diocese was seen as an administrative machine ‘with no other specific spiritual function.’<sup>80</sup> However, Reed claimed that if a parish model of church was to become the majority, then the diocese would have the potential to be more than an administrative machine and emerge as a living organism and spiritual entity.<sup>81</sup>

In the emerging Sydney ecclesiology influenced by Knox, the argument ran exactly the other way. The diocese was an ‘administrative machine’ of a ‘secular’ nature which must be contained precisely so that the living organism and spiritual entity of the local churches could flourish. This in turn shaped the way in which parish clergy approached the diocese. Ballantine-Jones states the implication:

Once denominationalism was demystified and its secular nature recognised, many in Sydney had a new and liberating framework for political action and this shaped many policies for reform.<sup>82</sup>

Reed’s analysis was that the diocese in its present state was likely to foster associational rather than parish churches ‘whether or not this is the intention of the Archbishop and his colleagues.’<sup>83</sup> The situation was more likely the reverse: the ‘associational churches’ were fostering a ‘secular’ diocese, which was not the intention of the Archbishop or his colleagues.

### **7.3.4. The Role and Purpose of the Archbishop**

Reed believed the ‘break down’ between the bishops, clergy and laity stemmed from a lack of clarity regarding the role of the archbishop. In the report, Reed argued that the archbishop was too bogged down in administrative detail, that he was not delegating enough, that he was unclear in planning and dithered in decision making. Some felt his objectivity came across as impersonal, remote and legalistic, and that he was sometimes unaware of the impression this could create in others.<sup>84</sup> Reed noted that Robinson had never been the head of an organisation before. Overwhelmingly, people regretted that Robinson’s role prevented from doing more of that for which he was so valued—teaching.<sup>85</sup> Reed summarised:

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The point is that Reed may have been projecting local conditions onto what was in fact a much wider phenomenon.

<sup>80</sup> Reed, ‘Addenda to a Consultation on the Role of Archbishop in the Diocese of Sydney’, AP 3/1.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., AP 3/1.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., AP 5/1.

<sup>84</sup> For John Reid’s critical reflections on Robinson’s leadership style, see Ballantine-Jones, *Inside Sydney*, 120–21.

<sup>85</sup> Reed, ‘Addenda to a Consultation on the Role of Archbishop in the Diocese of Sydney’, AP 6/1–4.

The consequence of these reactions is that people who have known him, or know about him from other connections, see the Archbishop's role as being a constraint upon him personally.<sup>86</sup>

The emerging picture placed Robinson in a seemingly unwinnable situation. On the one hand, his clergy regretted that his role as Archbishop constrained him from more teaching. However, partly as a result of his earlier teaching, they were reluctant to afford the office of archbishop or the diocese significant spiritual authority. Reed on the other hand was encouraging him to take back some of the more traditional roles of an archbishop. His report, if implemented, would steer the diocese back to a more classically Anglican pattern of parish churches and theologically freighted understanding of diocese and bishop. It is to Robinson's own understanding of these dynamics that we now turn.

### **7.3.5. Robinson and the Local Parish Church**

Robinson's ecclesiology in this period was articulated against the backdrop of tensions in two key areas: the nature and purpose of the local congregation, and the relationship of the local congregation to the diocese and the bishop.

For people keen to see a roll-out of 'Knox-Robinson' ecclesiology, Robinson's first Synod address in 1982 sounded a promising note. Early in his first speech he said:

I am totally committed to the view that the primary task of the diocese is located in the parishes, and that the diocese exists for the sake of the parishes, not the parishes for the sake of the diocese. Likewise, the bishop exists for the sake of the local congregation and its ministry, not the local congregation for the bishop.<sup>87</sup>

The statement, however, came with a clear and for many surprising qualification: 'I share the cure of souls with every incumbent in the diocese.'<sup>88</sup> Unlike Knox's account, the idea of a shared 'cure of souls' placed the diocese and particularly the bishop in a spiritual, rather than 'secular' relationship to the local church. It implied, to use Reed's language, something like a 'parish' rather than 'associational' church. Robinson followed this with a note of contingency, declaring that this

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. AP 6/3.

<sup>87</sup> Robinson, 'Presidential Address, 1982', 213–214. This emphasis continued in his addresses. For example, in 1985 he affirmed that 'the parishes and their ministries ... are the true location of the visible church of Christ.' Donald Robinson, 'Presidential Address, 1985', in *1985 Year Book of the Diocese of Sydney* (Sydney: AIO, 1986), 211.

<sup>88</sup> Robinson, 'Presidential Address, 1982', 215.

might not be the only possible model, but it is the one we have inherited ... [but by it] the whole church is enriched ... and ... is inspired and liberated to be the agent and witness of God's truth and love, his justice and peace, bringing glory to God in the whole community.<sup>89</sup>

Several features of Robinson's ecclesiology in this quotation are worth noting. First, Robinson was affording the diocese and the bishop a more central role in the church than merely administrator or para-church service. Secondly, he introduced the idea that the tradition 'we have inherited' places some sort of obligation on its participants. Unlike Knox, whose language thrilled with his apparent appetite for root-and-branch reform, Robinson understood his role and decisions to be fundamentally contained by the Anglican tradition. Thirdly, while he is careful to affirm that the Synod is not 'the church', he is happy to speak, both of the diocese and of the ACA as 'churches'.<sup>90</sup> The implication is that the local church does not have the exclusive spiritual status Knox (and Robinson) had claimed for it; it must now share its glory with another.

Another significant emphasis in Robinson's ecclesiology of the local church was an affirmation that central to its purpose in gathering was worship. In 1984, for example, he argued that the diocese did not have an adequate understanding of the purpose of public worship. Seemingly shadow-boxing with Knox's emphasis on church as ordered toward fellowship, he went on:

There has been a welcome emphasis on the relationship that should exist between those who come together, but 'fellowship' is inadequate as a definition of worship. Fellowship in what?<sup>91</sup>

In 1985 he would make his most impassioned plea to the Synod on these matters. It is worth quoting in full:

The living heart of our church is our worship, our *communio in sacris*. Here we come, like the Israelites at Sinai, "to meet God." Here we come to contemplate the kingdom and the power and the glory, we partake of the Holy Spirit, and taste the powers of the age to come. Or do we? How often do we come away from church conscious that we have seen the king in his beauty and have been revitalised by the spiritual good of the body and blood of Christ which is the source of our eternal life? . . . If I have one desire for this Diocese above all others it is for a renewal of true worship, a cleansing of the springs of prayer and praise, of confession and absolution and intercession, and of hearing of God's

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>90</sup> 'The primary function of the Synod is to make ordinances for the order and good government of the Church within the Diocese. The Synod is not the church, nor does it have any power to alter the character of the Church. The character of the church is as set out in the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia.' Ibid, 219.

<sup>91</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Towards a Definition of Baptism', 252.

most holy word. As Christ exercises his kingly power in the midst of his church, we may be sure that his word will run very swiftly in the world.<sup>92</sup>

These words evidently caught the attention of the Synod. In 1986 the Synod asked for a report into the meaning and importance of worship within the local church. It was received in 1988. Robinson was clearly unhappy, stating in his speech that he was ‘troubled by the extent to which the report seeks to minimise, if not exclude, the concept of “worship” in connection with the purpose of meeting in church ...’<sup>93</sup> He went on to re-assert the centrality of worship to the gathering.

Finally, Robinson continued to assert that the church *qua* church had ‘no face to the world.’ The church fulfilled its purpose as the faithful gathered to ‘meet God’. Here Robinson appears to emphatically reject Reed’s critique of the ‘associational church.’ The church’s location, says Robinson, is irrelevant. Ironically, at this point Robinson’s younger critics were closer to Reed than he was. Robinson saw little problem in the churches continuing to use liturgy and their ministers the surplice because the church was not God’s agent for the proclamation of the gospel. Evangelists were.

### **7.3.6. Robinson on the Nature and Purpose of the Diocese**

By 1989, Robinson was speaking to Synod about the ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality between the churches and the diocese, arguing that a

growing congregationalism in the diocese is largely due to the attenuation of the link between bishop and clergy, and the uncertainty as to what it means to be united in the same diocese.<sup>94</sup>

For nearly a decade Robinson had been pursuing a vision for the diocese that was consonant with the insights of *The Grubb Report*. Nevertheless, by 1989, the features of diocesan culture he had attempted to redress were growing rather than abating.

In 1990 Robinson wrote a paper entitled ‘The Diocese of Sydney and its Purpose.’<sup>95</sup> Written for the Finance Committee of the Diocesan Standing Committee, it attempted to clarify his understanding of the diocese. He made the following assertions:

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<sup>92</sup> Robinson, ‘Presidential Address, 1985’, 230.

<sup>93</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Presidential Address, 1988’, in *1988 Year Book of the Diocese of Sydney* (Sydney: AIO, 1989) 239.

<sup>94</sup> It seems unlikely that the emerging ‘us’ and ‘them’ relationship and the growing congregationalism was due to a lack of clarity on the link between bishop and clergy. Rather, it was because of (1) the influence of Knox’s theology, and (2) the radically changed cultural circumstances in which ministry was being conducted. The clergy had clarity on the link between bishop and clergy—it was simply different to the link Robinson was proposing.

<sup>95</sup> Robinson, ‘The Diocese of Sydney and Its Purpose’.

First, Robinson argued that the term ‘the diocese of X’ corresponded to the NT notion of ‘the church which is at X.’ Contrary to Reed, who in his report had claimed that the parish idea came out of the Roman system of government,<sup>96</sup> Robinson argued that it arose from the growth of local churches into branch churches. In his 1991 Synod address he puts the case more fully, arguing that the diocese was originally a parish in which the bishop shared with other presbyters the oversight or ‘cure’ or the congregation. As the parish church grew and planted branch churches, the emergence of a ‘diocese’ (meaning ‘housekeeping’) ‘reflected the need for a system to hold the various branch churches together.’<sup>97</sup> This, however, was an additional responsibility for the bishop, who continued in his joint cure of souls.<sup>98</sup> In this sense the diocese of Sydney was indeed the church of God which is at Sydney. It has not forfeited its spiritual status.<sup>99</sup> Robinson had spoken of ‘the church that is at X’ in these terms in his 1965 booklet on church.<sup>100</sup> This was not a new position for him.

Secondly, he argued that the distinctive character of this church (that is, the Diocese of Sydney) includes its faith and order as at once catholic, apostolic, Protestant and reformed, that it is episcopal in governance, scriptural and creedal in authority, liturgical in worship and synodical in government.<sup>101</sup> He was not a primitivist.

Thirdly, because of this neither the bishop, nor the parish, nor its minister is authorised to change any of these distinctive characters; they remain either unalterable (the Fundamental Declaration) or unchangeable by a diocese acting alone (the Ruling Principles).

Fourthly, the diocese, being the church of God, is spiritual, not secular in character—properly defined in biblical terms as ‘God’s temple’, ‘the body of Christ’ and so on. Fifthly, the fact that it can no longer meet in one place is an artefact of time that does not fundamentally alter the spiritual status of the diocese. Nevertheless, the individual parish will inevitably become the operative locus of ‘the church.’<sup>102</sup>

In the paper, Robinson moves between the biblical character of the church and the historical character of the Sydney diocese. For him, both create an obligation for the present generation to conserve. He says:

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<sup>96</sup> Reed, ‘Addenda to a Consultation on the Role of Archbishop in the Diocese of Sydney’, AP 2/1.

<sup>97</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Presidential Address, 1991’, in *1991 Year Book of the Diocese of Sydney* (Sydney: AIO, 1992), 264.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>99</sup> Note that this is a significant departure from Knox who, writing in roughly the same period, was arguing that ‘one of the gravest threats to Christian fellowship is the modern denomination’ because ‘... it is very difficult, if not impossible, to have fellowship if you are being directed with regard to the ways of expressing it by somebody outside the fellowship.’ Knox, ‘The Biblical Concept of Fellowship’, 83.

<sup>100</sup> Robinson, ‘The Church of God’, 250.

<sup>101</sup> Robinson, ‘The Diocese of Sydney and Its Purpose’, 312.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 313.

It is with both these aspects of the Diocese of Sydney in mind that we have to formulate the goals of the Diocese, that is, the particular objectives which should guide the Archbishop and his ministerial leadership.<sup>103</sup>

Robinson's reverence for, and sense of obligation to, the historic inheritance of being the Anglican church in Sydney was a frame of mind foreign to many of his clergy, grappling as they were with a rapidly secularising and diversifying context.<sup>104</sup> Bruce Ballantine-Jones speaks for many of the clergy in the 1980s when he says a 'passion for the gospel also manifested itself in the determination to make Anglicanism fit *around* the evangelistic imperative, rather than let evangelism fit *into* Anglicanism.'<sup>105</sup> In Robinson's understanding, considerably less freedom was available. For him, the diocese had to navigate its evangelistic imperative in the context of its biblical and historical character. The work of evangelism did indeed need to fit into Anglicanism.

### **7.3.7. Robinson on the Role of the Bishop**

If the Diocese was an extension of the 'church of God which is at Sydney', what was the role of the Bishop? The episcopal traditions have in various ways connected the role of the bishop with the ministry of the Apostles. With this Robinson concurred, though he made the connection in a decidedly Protestant manner. If the Anglo-Catholic tradition has seen the bishop as the locus for apostolic authority, for Robinson the bishop was apostolic because he bore the apostolic gospel. The bishop was, in essence, an evangelist.

As early as 1954 he had published on the role of the apostles in the New Testament and the nature of apostolic succession in the post-New Testament church.<sup>106</sup> These convictions continued into his episcopate. In a 1988 paper, he asserted that the charge placed on a bishop 'if rightly framed, is not ecclesiastical but apostolic.'<sup>107</sup> The gospel exists prior to the church and the bishop, inasmuch as he is an evangelist, is given to the church but not possessed by the church.

*The Grubb Report* had assumed a more prominent and authoritative role for the archbishop. Robinson's own reflections on episcopacy and apostolic ministry in the 1950s had formed in him the view that the bishop's primary charge is to defend and proclaim the gospel. He had more recently come to the position that the archbishop shared the cure of souls with the ministers. The net result was Robinson's conclusion that the biblical and constitutional responsibilities of the archbishop were broader than had been commonly understood in Sydney.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 316.

<sup>104</sup> In a copy of the paper given to me by Bruce Ballantine-Jones, next to the statement on the history of the forming of the diocese in 1847, Ballantine-Jones has written 'so what?'

<sup>105</sup> Ballantine-Jones, *Inside Sydney*, 5.

<sup>106</sup> Robinson, 'Apostleship and Apostolic Succession'.

<sup>107</sup> Donald Robinson, 'The Bishop as Evangelist', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 85.



### 7.3.8. *Vision for Growth*

A case study for how Robinson's understanding of the Archbishop's role played out is in his *Vision for Growth* (VFG) initiative. Announced at the 1983 Synod, the VFG was a relatively ambitious programme to provide money and resources for new churches in the vast and expanding Western suburbs of Sydney.

According to *The Grubb Report*, the VFG programme had considerable potential for establishing Robinson's personal and positional leadership in the diocese, 'not so much because of its financial results and the possibility of developing churches in new areas, but because the Archbishop can share his vision of the Diocese as a whole with the clergy and people at local church level.'<sup>108</sup>

As a programme, the VFG was reasonably successful. By 1988, twenty-nine out of forty-six projects were either completed or underway. Churches and individuals had given about \$4.7 million toward the project.<sup>109</sup> When the project came to an end in 1990, over \$7 million had been raised.<sup>110</sup>

In Ballantine-Jones's judgement, the VFG was for its time 'a bold enterprise', running its course 'on its merits and within the limitations of Robinson himself and the structures that *he* created.'<sup>111</sup> For Ballantine-Jones, these limitations were related to the pivotal role of the Archbishop himself, which had the effect of reducing parish, synodical and Standing Committee ownership.<sup>112</sup> If this judgement is correct, then Bruce Reed's hope for the VFG's impact on Robinson's role was not to be realised.

The VFG also reflected something of a parting of ways on missiology between Robinson and the next generation. Based in his emerging Anglican ecclesiology, Robinson believed that, as inheritors of the Anglican tradition, the ministers of the diocese had a particular responsibility to 'seek to recover its lost sheep'; the then 25 per cent of the population who identified as Anglican. For Robinson 'this goal has a greater claim on our energies than addressing ourselves to those who claim adherence to other ecclesiastical bodies.'<sup>113</sup> This was almost exactly the opposite evangelistic strategy to that being advocated by younger leaders. Figures such as Phillip Jensen were rather arguing the case for ignoring historic connections with the Anglican church and

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<sup>108</sup> Reed, 'Addenda to a Consultation on the Role of Archbishop in the Diocese of Sydney', AP6/4.

<sup>109</sup> Robinson, 'Presidential Address, 1988', 235.

<sup>110</sup> Ballantine-Jones notes that it is unclear how much of this money came from rationalisations of parish properties as opposite to donations. Ballantine-Jones, *Inside Sydney*, 126.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 127. Italics original.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>113</sup> Robinson, 'The Diocese of Sydney and Its Purpose', 315.

evangelising beyond and in spite of historic allegiances, leaving the one sheep in order to chase the ninety-nine.<sup>114</sup>

### 7.3.9. “‘The Church’ Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’ (1989)

It is important to place Robinson’s 1989 paper “‘The Church’ Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’ in the context of the 1980s, when the battle between the ‘Knox-Robinson’ and the ‘Robinson’ view of church was at its height. From 1988 to 1991, Robinson’s Synod addresses continually engage the Synod on matters of ecclesiology and Anglican order, reaching something of a crescendo in his final address to Synod in 1991, where the call for the clergy to return to Anglican forms is sustained and impassioned. This polemical context is clear within the article itself. It begins:

There is a view abroad that in the 1960s a ‘revised’ concept of ‘the church’ was being promoted by the teaching of the then Principal and Vice-Principal of Moore College, Sydney, Dr D. B. Knox and myself.<sup>115</sup>

And further

I have sometimes been accused of generating a kind of congregationalism among the clergy I have helped to train.<sup>116</sup>

Several features of Robinson’s 1989 apologia should be noted in this context. First, the article regularly promotes a sense of happenstance in Robinson’s early interest in ‘church’. For example, he says that when ‘church’ was the special doctrine under Moule, he was initially disappointed having ‘hoped for the opportunity to study a New Testament doctrine closer to the heart of my evangelical convictions.’<sup>117</sup>

Secondly, the article makes explicit the way in which Robinson’s work on church could sit alongside his loyalties to the Anglican tradition. Despite his assertion that the Church of England

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<sup>114</sup> See, for example, comments on Phillip Jensen, *Ministry Training Talks 2012–2016: Issues of Evangelism for Parish Ministry Today: The Parish*, 2016, accessed 19 May 2017 <https://itunes.apple.com/au/podcast/phillipjensen.com/id311446800?mt=2&ci=1000372056986>; Phillip Jensen, *Ministry Training Talks 2012–2016: Issues of Evangelism for Parish Ministry Today: The Congregation*, 2016 accessed 19 May 2017 <https://itunes.apple.com/au/podcast/phillipjensen.com/id311446800?mt=2&ci=1000372056986>.

<sup>115</sup> Robinson, “‘The Church’ Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’, 259.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 260. See also page 262 when Robinson describes the origins of his teaching on church at Moore College: ‘I was asked to lecture to first year students on what used to be called ‘special doctrine’. This had usually been on the Atonement, but it was agreed that I should lecture on the Church.’ Note the use of the passive voice, creating some ambiguity about who initiated the change in topic, which was almost certainly Robinson. The same passive voice is used in the corresponding passage in his 1997 autobiographical essay on biblical theology. ‘When I was assigned by Principal Loane to teach Special Doctrine it was agreed that I would take the doctrine of the church rather than of the atonement...’. Here, however, he adds the reason for the decision— ‘...as this had been the subject of my own ‘special doctrine’ study in Part III of the Theological Tripos at Cambridge a few years earlier.’ Robinson, ‘Origins and Unresolved Tensions’, 2.

was not a church in any NT sense, he says that he ‘had no objection to the use of the title Church of England as such; it has grown up through long usage and everyone knew what it referred to.’<sup>118</sup> Such a justification was frustrating to the younger clergy whose reformist instincts and frustrated evangelistic energies meant that an appeal to ‘common usage’ was a poor substitute for thoroughgoing reformation. But for Robinson the denomination, rather than being an accident of history, was in some sense the continuation of the ‘Rule of Faith’. The development of dioceses, bishops and denominations served the purpose of keeping ‘local churches on the rails’.<sup>119</sup>

Thirdly, as I have argued early in this study, Robinson rightly saw his own distinct contribution to the doctrine as placing church in its biblical theological context. This connecting of the concept of *ἐκκλησία* across the Testaments in Robinson’s understanding absolved him from the ‘conceptual isolation’ of which Graham Cole has accused the doctrine.<sup>120</sup> It also distanced Robinson’s concept from the notion that church’s primary purpose was fellowship and from the implication of independency. In this Robinson is clearly wanting to distance himself from Knox’s articulation.<sup>121</sup>

### **7.3.10. Conclusion**

Given the perplexity so many felt over Robinson’s apparently changed ecclesiology when in office, *The Grubb Report* could be mistaken for the historical smoking gun that precipitated the change in direction. Certainly, as a consultation, the whole thing was intended to influence the Archbishop, so it would be surprising if no change occurred. However, it is my argument that at the level of Robinson’s ecclesiology, *The Grubb Report* described Robinson’s ecclesiology more than it influenced it. Indeed, the report cannot have been the cause of change in Robinson. Reed reports:

Some people confided in me that the present Archbishop was elected because it was expected that he would not wish to change the direction: in fact, according to them, due to his earlier lectures in Moore College, he had been instrumental in giving validity to the associational type church.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Robinson, “‘The Church’ Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment’, 267.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>121</sup> In the case of rejecting ‘fellowship’ as the primary purpose of church, this is clear. Independency is a little more complex because Knox also explicitly argued against independency (see Knox, ‘The Biblical Concept of Fellowship’, 83.). However, I would argue that for Knox the mutual dependency was almost purely spiritual. Robinson did not have the same allergic reaction to coercion and conformity, and indeed saw this as partly how the churches maintained apostolic fellowship.

<sup>122</sup> Reed, ‘Addenda to a Consultation on the Role of Archbishop in the Diocese of Sydney’, AP 5/4.

Thus, whilst *The Grubb Report* likely clarified Robinson's thinking, it was not the source of it. Based on the preceding discussion there are three main factors crucial in grasping Robinson's ecclesiology in this period. First, as discussed previously, Robinson's ecclesiology should not be conflated with Knox's. Secondly, Robinson understood the Anglican tradition to impose limits on the possibilities of reform. Whilst many of the younger clergy saw the move from what the NT said to what the church now ought to be, for Robinson this process was complicated and mediated through an intermediate question: what *may* we do in the context of our (Anglican) tradition? Thirdly, Robinson's ecclesiology did undergo adjustments in this period, especially in a growing understanding of the role of the bishop as the diocese's chief pastor, grounded in his understanding of the diocese as the continuation and extension of the congregation.

## **7.4. Anglican Identity, Sacraments, and Liturgy**

Robinson's sacramental theology is the point at which the tension between scholar and bishop was at its sharpest. Robinson's Synod addresses reveal an escalating sense of frustration with his clergy at the abandonment of Anglican forms of worship. In the early years of the 1980s, he spoke as one who believed his clergy could be persuaded to return to the liturgy, and that appropriate means could be found for engaging the ACA in a process of review so as to move forward together. By the early 1990s, the tone had changed markedly. Robinson was giving sustained chastisements to his clergy, calling them back to the 'simple morality' of keeping their trusts in not deviating from the promises made in their ordinations.<sup>123</sup> The repeating issues were the wearing of the surplice, the use of authorised services and a wider embrace of Anglican forms and identity. If the ordination of women was the battle he lost nationally, this is the battle he lost at home.

### **7.4.1. Context**

For Robinson four main factors were at play: First, as we have seen, he believed the tradition in which one found oneself exercises a certain authority over its participants. This was true whether in the context of student evangelicalism or the Anglican Church.<sup>124</sup> Unlike the Apostolic tradition, these traditions were open to change, but change ought to be gradual and cautious. Secondly, he believed it was moral to keep vows made before God. As archbishop he was duty bound to defend and uphold those matters. Thirdly, he believed any change in these matters should

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<sup>123</sup> For example, in his 1991 Synod Address, he said that some clergy 'seem to have released themselves altogether from the obligation to use authorised forms in public worship,' (266). Acknowledging the anti-authoritarian changes in society since the 1960s, he says that 'the implications of these changes need to be addressed in the context of the history and character of our Church, and of the obligation we have to each other, and even of the simple morality of keeping our undertakings and observing trusts.' Robinson, 'Presidential Address, 1991', 268.

<sup>124</sup> 'There is no need to knock the idea of a "holy tradition." Every Christian church, every body of Christians including your Christian fellowship or EU, has its "holy tradition" by which it regulates its life, and which it believes or hopes reflects the word of God for its life.' Robinson, 'What Shall We Do with the Bible?', 31.

happen at the national level, rather than at the parish or even the diocese. This was of course a crucial plank of his argument against the ordination of women. It would create a situation in which orders were not mutually recognised and therefore impair communion. He could not run this argument nationally whilst tolerating unilateral liturgical change at home. He believed in the catholic principle of moving forward together, of ‘submitting to one another’ and ‘waiting for one another’.<sup>125</sup> Fourthly and finally, he simply liked the liturgical and sacramental traditions of the Anglican church. He was invested in them and formed by them. He could not easily set them aside. He cherished reformed catholicism.

#### **7.4.2. Baptism and Confirmation**

Robinson’s views on baptism changed markedly in this era. In earlier scholarship, Robinson had argued that baptism was not a rite of initiation into the church, but rather a participation in Christ.<sup>126</sup> In his 1965 booklet, he was concerned that his findings reform Anglican practice. He was highly critical of aspects of the theology of baptism in the 1662 BCP, and of the Reformers more generally, arguing for sweeping changes to their work.<sup>127</sup> His calls for reform to Anglican baptismal practice included provision for baptisms to take place in homes, administered by heads of households rather than ordained ministers.<sup>128</sup> As archbishop he was much more cautious. He spoke in increasingly traditional terms of church membership being constituted by baptism. In his 1987 Synod address, for example, he expressed disappointment with churches who had moved to allowing children to receive holy communion prior to confirmation on the basis of baptism as the full and complete sacrament of inclusion in Christ and his people.<sup>129</sup> Despite seeming to be a position with which Robinson would have sympathy,<sup>130</sup> he argued that, because the BCP does not allow unconfirmed infants to receive communion, a church or diocese that ignored this rubric would impair the sacramental agreement within the Anglican Communion.<sup>131</sup> In 1984 Robinson responded to a question from the Rev R. E. Lamb on confirmation. In this short essay, a much more conventional view of confirmation is outlined, and the bishop as chief pastor of the diocese retains his role.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Robinson, ‘Liturgical Patterns of Worship’, 323.

<sup>126</sup> Robinson, ‘Baptised into Christ’, 275.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 315.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>129</sup> Robinson, ‘Presidential Address, 1987’, 246.

<sup>130</sup> In 1965, for example, Robinson thought the Lord’s Supper itself would be best administered in homes due to its essentially domestic character. Robinson, ‘The Church of God’, 250.

<sup>131</sup> Robinson, ‘Presidential Address, 1987’, 246. The BCP rubric states that ‘There shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed.’

<sup>132</sup> Donald Robinson, ‘Integrating Youth into the Full Life and Work of the Church: An Essay on Confirmation’, in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 361–64, 361. The question this essay is answering seems to be the appropriate age for confirmation. Robinson simply notes that the BCP does not fix an age. Evidently some had argued against the age of 14 as too turbulent a time, and ministers worried that high numbers of confirmees were not attending church after five years. In reply, Robinson is untroubled by the idea of confirming young people at a

### 7.4.3. *The Lord's Supper*

Similarly, Robinson's understanding of the Lord's Supper became much more conventional in this period. In 1964 he had suggested, for example, that the Lord's Supper was originally envisaged as part of a wider shared meal.<sup>133</sup> He had also noted that, at least in Matthew and Mark, that there is no command to repeat the event. At the Last Supper, the apostles were communicants, not ordinands in training.<sup>134</sup> In his 1964 discussion, he argues that many, indeed all, of the questions of administration of the supper (such as the offertory prayer, the consecration of the bread and wine, and the breaking of the bread) were of practical rather than theological significance. He concludes:

The New Testament is completely silent on what we should call the 'administration' of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in the early church. We do not know who administered it, or in what manner.<sup>135</sup>

As archbishop, Robinson was far more cautious. In 1990, for example, he used his Synod address to give extended attention to the unilateral adoption in some churches of using individual cups rather than a common cup in the Communion service. 'It is not good', he said, 'that individual ministers or parishes should make up their own rules in so significant an area as the administration of the sacraments.'<sup>136</sup>

The presenting issue in 1990 was the fear of communicable disease.<sup>137</sup> Robinson was extremely reluctant to make changes to the administration of the sacrament on this basis. On the shared cup he argues that nothing 'received more emphasis in the Gospel accounts of the last supper or in St Paul's discussion of the Lord's supper in 1 Corinthians than the singularity of the shared cup.'<sup>138</sup> For Robinson the common cup co-ordinates with the shared loaf in 1 Corinthians 10:14–22.<sup>139</sup> He went on to say that in the NT the cup is not a mere metonymy for the wine but

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turbulent age as the 'heart of the confirmation is the prayer of the bishop ... that God will "defend this this thy child."' If the confirmer should later depart from the faith, Robinson says (somewhat tongue in cheek) 'the bishop should be recalled, and informed that his prayer and blessing hadn't worked!'

<sup>133</sup> Robinson, 'The Eucharistic Sacrifice', 383.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 381–382. It was suggestions like this that John Woodhouse and Barry Newman would explore in coming years. See chapter 9 for discussion.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 384.

<sup>136</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Presidential Address, 1990', in *1990 Year Book of the Diocese of Sydney* (AIO, 1991), 266.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.. Robinson says that this 'mainly through fear of AIDS and Hepatitis B.' He assured the Synod that the risk of contracting AIDS through a shared cup were 'negligible', though noted it may be different in the cases of Hepatitis B.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 268.

itself a ‘sign of the unity and love of those who share it.’<sup>140</sup> This is a long way removed from his understanding first outlined in the 1960s.<sup>141</sup>

Robinson was in principle open to a review of the matter in light of health concerns. The process he outlines though is somewhat onerous. It would involve determining what the BCP required, if a change from the BCP is justifiable, and, if so, by what process that change should be made.<sup>142</sup> He reminded the clergy that they have an obligation to each other to observe a common order in worship, and that ‘above all we must order our worship in accordance with the ordinances of Christ and the teaching of the New Testament.’<sup>143</sup> The cumulative effect was to pour cold water on any hope of change in this area. It must have been perplexing to clergy who, based on Robinson’s own NT work, held hopes for radical reforming of sacramental practice.

#### **7.4.4. Authorised Worship**

Robinson’s take on the common cup was an instance of a wider and abiding concern of his episcopate—the use of authorised worship. The use of the surplice, the BCP and the proper administration of the sacraments were regular themes of Synod. Divorce and remarriage (a major theme of Robinson’s episcopate which is beyond the scope of this study) fit here. Robinson was persuaded on an indissolubilist position on exegetical and theological grounds, but for Robinson it was also a liturgical issue. Robinson was deeply concerned that ‘the solemnisation of matrimony, and the invocation of divine blessing ... in the name of the Trinity’ not be enacted by ministers in situations where the status of that marriage was at least questionable.<sup>144</sup>

For Robinson, women’s ordination and liturgical reform were inseparable from each other: both were tests of the principles of Anglican unity.

The fact is that the unity of our Church is at stake if we act without agreement on the matter of the acceptance and recognition of orders throughout the Church. It seems to me essential that a process comparable to that which we adopted for the revision of our liturgy should be initiated.<sup>145</sup>

This explains much of the frustration Robinson felt toward his clergy and the clergy toward him in this period. On the issue of ordination they were overwhelmingly supportive of him as a champion of biblical truth. When he insisted on matters such as the use of the surplice, or when

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> He argues for example that the idea of the breaking of the bread being a symbol of Christ’s body broken on the cross is an example of evangelical piety with no basis in the NT. ‘The bread is broken merely so that it can be distributed.’ At any rate ‘our Saviour’s body was *not* broken on the cross.’ Robinson, ‘The Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ’.

<sup>142</sup> Robinson, ‘Presidential Address, 1990’, 268.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Robinson, ‘Presidential Address, 1982’, 224.

<sup>145</sup> Robinson, ‘Presidential Address, 1985’, 222.

he stood in the way of reforms such as lay presidency, they were perplexed. In both cases, however, Robinson was using the same argument: Anglican tradition and identity obliged them to ‘wait for one another’ in reform, and committed them to common prayer and order.

It is here in liturgy and sacraments, rather than in Robinson’s ecclesiology, where the real tension between Robinson’s scholarship and his episcopate lay. His Anglicanism, as we have seen, was heartfelt and sincere. This muted his evangelical instincts, at least on the conversionist-activist axis. Bishop Dowling had encouraged the church to ‘go boldly beyond the words of scripture’. In Sydney, reformist clergy wanted Robinson to lead them ‘boldly beyond the Anglican forms’. He was conscience-bound to do neither.

## **7.5. Conclusion**

In a mildly critical review of Michael Jensen’s book *Sydney Anglicans: An Apology*, Tony Payne said in 2013:

The gospel and its growth is what animates Sydney Anglicans ... we are evangelicals first and Anglicans second. The gospel is our passion, our motivational force. The gospel explains us. It’s the reason we stopped wearing robes and running formal liturgies in the 1980s and 1990s (because we wanted to reach a lost Australian community with the gospel).<sup>146</sup>

It is an interesting exercise to try and relate Robinson to this picture of Sydney Anglicans. Clearly, he was not a member of the ‘we’ who abandoned formal liturgies ‘to reach a lost Australia with the gospel.’ In Robinson’s thinking, the claim would be a *non-sequitur*; what happens liturgically would be irrelevant to the question of reaching Australia with the gospel. His attitude to robes and liturgies had nothing to do with his faith in the gospel. To ‘change the church’ to ‘win the lost’ was for him a confusion of theological categories.

It is true to say, however, that of the three main strands in Robinson’s thinking—Anglicanism, Cambridge scholarship and evangelicalism, evangelicalism was the least prominent strand in the 1980s. This is not to suggest that Robinson relinquished any of his evangelical commitments, but simply that he took seriously the catholic nature of his role as bishop.<sup>147</sup> He continued to grapple deeply with scripture in the way he had learned at Cambridge. In response to the needs of the day, he drilled down into previously established positions on the apostolic

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<sup>146</sup> Tony Payne, *The Briefing* (Matthias Media, Sydney, March 2013), cited in Ballantine-Jones, *Inside Sydney*, 27.

<sup>147</sup> Indeed, in 1987, in a speech at the AFES Annual Dinner, Robinson had cause to reflect on his Evangelical commitments. He said: ‘In becoming President of the AFES last year I was again required to declare my assent to the doctrinal statement. I should say that I did not do that automatically.’ Over the course of the speech he reflects at length on the claims of the doctrinal basis, especially in connection with scripture, and locates himself firmly as an Evangelical.



tradition, the nature of the NT as canon, on ecclesiology and on worship. And he drew on his considerable resources in knowledge of the Anglican tradition as he grappled with the theology of ordination, of polity and of common worship. This sometimes involved deep continuity with his scholarship, at other times development, and still at other times seemingly straight contradiction of earlier positions. Robinson believed tradition imposed a moral obligation on its participants. It stood as a mediator between ‘what the Bible says’ and what the contemporary believer should do next. It could not easily be cast aside.

Robinson understood himself to be duty-bound in his positions whether they displeased the ACA on the one hand, or his own diocese on the other. In a revealing passage from 1988 he says:

In a time of change and uncertainty such as we Anglicans are going through at present, when national and provincial church constitutions are proving inadequate to secure the church against erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God’s Word, the final line of defence in many instances may be simply that ‘the bishop’ is faithful to his charge. The diocese is the unit of the church.<sup>148</sup>

Here, mid-term, Robinson expressed himself in almost romantic terms. As a constitutional archbishop and a conscientious theologian, he contended in two major cases: preventing the ordination of women in the ACA, and keeping his own diocese from abandoning the liturgy. In neither cause did he prevail. But he remained at his post, duty-bound, and defended his cause, *contra mundum*.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Robinson, ‘The Bishop as Evangelist’, 86.

<sup>149</sup> ‘Against the world’. Given that his constitutionalism failed its two main tests (keeping the ACA from ordaining women and his own diocese from abandoning the liturgy) it is no surprise that, in 1992, the radical candidacy of Phillip Jensen was touted, and the winner was eventually the pastor, Harry Goodhew.

## 8. Robinson after the Episcopate: 1993–2016

### Interlude #2

On 29 January 1993, Donald Robinson preached in St Andrew's Cathedral. It was his farewell service as Archbishop, having served the diocese for a tumultuous decade. His text was 1 Corinthians 15:58: 'Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the world of the Lord, knowing that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.' The choice was apposite. In his years of service the main battles in which he fought appeared to have been fought in vain. Toward the end of the sermon he reflected

'I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing.' [Isaiah 49:4] And I think if I am honest I would admit that there have been days in the past ten or eleven years when I have said that. Apparent success may or may not attend our labours.<sup>150</sup>

The emergence of REPA and the election of Harry Goodhew meant that the 1990s were to prove even more conflicted still.<sup>151</sup> The seeds of the battles of those years were sown in the 1980s. Despite the pugnacity of the decade, Robinson ended his time with the wide and sincere respect of both allies and opponents.

Like chapter 6, this interlude chapter is significantly shorter than others. It accounts for Robinson's twilight years in which the rate of writing and teaching began naturally to drop off and demands on his time began, albeit very slowly, to ease up. It is a hinge chapter, tying off consideration of Robinson's life and work, and preparing the way for the last chapter, in which his influence and legacy are evaluated. In this period there were several significant contributions to Robinson's NT project, most notably in the area of Jew and Gentile in the NT. There were pieces written in the aftershock of the 1992 ordination of women on apostolic tradition and ordination itself. They also articulated one more time, and with greater clarity than before, his puzzling over NT eschatology.

#### **8.1. *Historical Context***

Robinson retired in 1992, having reached the retirement age of 70. The family moved to their house in Pymble and Marie and Donald became parishioners at the local church of St Swithuns (a parish where, incidentally, Robinson regularly heard women preaching, a situation he apparently accepted without comment or criticism). Robinson also resumed teaching at Moore College, a role he continued in until 2002, marking exactly 50 years since he first taught on the College's faculty.

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<sup>150</sup> Donald Robinson, 'A Sermon by Archbishop Donald Robinson on 1 Corinthians 15:58, Preaching on 29 January 1993 at His Farewell Service as Archbishop' (Sydney, 1993), 1.

<sup>151</sup> Ballantine-Jones, 'Changes in Policy and Practices in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney 1966–2013', 197.

Recognition of Robinson's theological achievement came in two distinct waves. In 1992, two former students of Robinson's, David Peterson and John Pryor, edited a *Festschrift* of biblical studies in honour of the Archbishop, written overwhelmingly by his former students. The death of D. B. Knox in 1994, followed by the publication of three volumes of Knox's *Selected Works* in 2003 and a major biography in 2006 all contrived to mean that Knox was the more celebrated and recognised of the two scholars over the period 1994–2008. This is arguably also in proportion to Knox's influence relative to Robinson's. Marcia Cameron's claim that Knox is the 'father of contemporary Sydney Anglicanism' is surely correct.<sup>152</sup>

A growing recognition of Robinson's theological achievement came in 2008 with the publication of a two-volume *Selected Works*, edited by two Moore College faculty, NT lecturer Peter Bolt and theology lecturer (now principal) Mark Thompson. This was accompanied by a second *Festschrift*, with contributors this time from a younger generation who had, on the whole, not been taught by Robinson directly. Unlike the 1992 *Festschrift*, however, all contributors to the 2008 volume interacted directly with Robinson's work.

Personally, Robinson suffered the losses of his beloved wife Marie in 2013, and his much loved son Mark in 2015.

## **8.2. Anglican Theology and Practice**

In the 1990s, Robinson had several opportunities to reflect on specifically Anglican themes, a natural enough deployment for a former archbishop. In particular, he continued to be invited to speak into the debate over the ordination of women. Many of these invitations were from outside of Sydney and in contexts where the issue was 'live', or in Anglo-Catholic contexts in which Robinson's particular line of argument resonated with existing sympathies. Conversely, in Sydney he was often called upon for matters to do with liturgy and the sacraments.

### **8.2.1. Lay Administration of the Lord's Supper**

In 1995, Robinson made a submission to the General Synod Standing Committee for an enquiry into lay administration (or lay presidency) at the Holy Communion service. The question was whether a person other than a priest or bishop could administer the Lord's Supper in church. It was an issue that had come before the Sydney Synod several times since the 1970s and it was coming to increasing prominence in the 1990s, being debated at General Synod in 1995. The idea was warmly supported by Sydney's Doctrine Commission, and many of the evangelical

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<sup>152</sup> Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life*.

fellowships in UK dioceses had also indicated their support.<sup>153</sup> The argument for lay administration rested on the fact that the NT did not make any comment on who should preside, and the rise of lay preaching meant that one activity traditionally associated with ordained ministry (preaching) was open to the laity, whilst another (administering the Lord's Supper) was not. For many evangelicals, this appeared arbitrary, and seemed to elevate the sacrament above the word.<sup>154</sup> The case against, acknowledging the silence of the NT on the issue, rested on early church practice, the Anglican formularies and on concerns for ecumenical relations.<sup>155</sup>

Robinson was opposed. In this opposition he found himself aligned with Archbishop Peter Carnley of Perth, formerly one of his chief opponents in the women's ordination debate. On reading Carnley's reply to the Sydney Doctrine Commission, Robinson apparently said 'I agree with almost every point he makes.'<sup>156</sup>

Robinson's 1995 submission was a close reading of the Anglican formularies with respect to their theology of order and ministry. He made three main points. First, the BCP expects all the ministry it describes to be ordained ministry, restricted entirely to bishops, priests and deacons.<sup>157</sup> He argued that the BCP had biblical warrant for this restrictive use of 'ministry' in Ephesians 4:7ff, with its reference to prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastor and teachers. In the Ordinal the bishop quotes this very passage and then thanks God that he has 'called these thy servants here present to the same Office and Ministry'.<sup>158</sup>

Secondly, Robinson asked what role the BCP envisages for the laity. His answer is: 'None.'<sup>159</sup> From here Robinson outlines probably the clearest statement of his understanding of lay versus ordained ministry, a distinction he has touched on several times across the 1970s and 1980s, without ever fully articulating. For Robinson, whereas ordained ministry is the ministry of the church, the laity (according to the BCP and, for Robinson, reflected in the NT) 'is simply to live for the glory of God, or to serve God.'<sup>160</sup> They are sent out from the church in peace to 'love and serve the Lord' and to 'live and work to his praise and glory.' This coheres with (but is not

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<sup>153</sup> Margaret Rodgers, 'Now for next Anglican Controversy', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 May 1994, SMH Archives.

<sup>154</sup> See discussion in Ballantine-Jones, *Inside Sydney*, 77.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>156</sup> Rodgers, 'Now for next Anglican Controversy'.

<sup>157</sup> Donald Robinson, 'What Theology of Order and Ministry to the Anglican Formularies Teach?', *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 406.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 407. The use of Ephesians 4 here is instructive. Robinson's own exegesis is of the passage is somewhat at odds with the way it is understood by the BCP. The explanation might simply be in the brief—Robinson was asked to report on the BCP, not to critique its exegesis. Nevertheless, this treatment does highlight a significant development from the Robinson of the 1950s and 1960s, who confidently expected his exegesis, if sustained, to reform the formularies.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

derived from) *The Grubb Report* which saw one of the features of ‘parish churches’ as a clear and well received distinction between lay and ordained ministry.<sup>161</sup> Robinson clearly believed that this vision of ordained and lay ministry was life-giving and served to honour the role of both ministries in the economy of God. However, in an increasingly democratic and egalitarian environment, it was a tough sell. Robert Banks had argued for dropping the distinction between lay and ordained ministry altogether, arguing that all Christian ministry was in effect lay ministry. Conversely, Phillip Jensen was building a movement and articulating a vision that was in a profound respect Banks’s opposite—a vision in which all Christians were active in the ministry of the word. In short, Banks was arguing for the dismantling of the ‘clergy’; Jensen for what some have dubbed ‘the clericalisation of the laity’. Both programmes, despite coming from a different basis, appealed to an egalitarian age much more readily than Robinson’s vision, which largely fell between the cracks.

Thirdly, Robinson applied his thinking to the presenting question of lay administration. He naturally disagrees with the proposal. According to the BCP no one apart from the bishop and his delegates is authorised to preside at the Lord’s Supper. As a Protestant, he rejects the notion of a ‘sacerdotal’ ministry, and argued that the very idea of ‘priesthood’ in this sense had no support in the Anglican formularies.<sup>162</sup> Thus the Anglo-Catholic account of presidency is excluded. Instead, Robinson’s argument rested on two foundations: first there is no lay ministry *at all* in the BCP and, secondly, ‘the communion is intended for all the eligible communicants of the parish on every occasion of its administration ...’<sup>163</sup>.

His argument was that, according to the Anglican formularies there is no such thing as a ‘Communion Service’ attended by a sub-set of the congregation (such as the ubiquitous 8am Holy Communion Service, often attended by more elderly members of the church as their weekly service). Rather, in the BCP every eligible member of the parish is anticipated to be at Holy Communion every time it is administered. The cure of souls is the responsibility of the parish priest. He may be assisted in his ministrations by an assistant, including the work of preaching and teaching. However, the priest could not delegate the presiding as such because by its nature the Lord’s Supper is ‘complete in itself on every occasion of the ministration.’<sup>164</sup> The ministry teaching the word of God, however, is never complete but is of an on-going nature over a period

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<sup>161</sup> Reed says that in a ‘parish church’ the ‘members will welcome the distinction between ordained clergy and themselves, not because of their difference as Christians but because they have distinct roles.’ Reed, ‘Addenda to a Consultation on the Role of Archbishop in the Diocese of Sydney’, AP4/4.

<sup>162</sup> Robinson, ‘What Theology of Order and Ministry to the Anglican Formularies Teach?’, 410.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 411.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*.

of time. Therefore the priest's 'presidency' over the teaching ministry must be understood as overarching, rather than needing to be performed by him on every occasion.

Teaching can be delegated in a way that presiding at communion cannot. This did not elevate word above sacrament in Robinson's view. A deacon preaching a sermon would only be taking a small part in the ministry of the word, over which the priest still presided. The same is not possible at Holy Communion, due to the complete nature of the event.

This also explains why Robinson was apparently open to the idea of women preaching in church and able to see this as acceptable alongside a prohibition of women's ordination and consistent with the prohibition of women's teaching in 1 Timothy 2. In the Anglican context, the teaching ministry is presided over by an ordained man; but, due to the nature of a teaching ministry, instances of teaching can be delegated to others including, at least in principle, to women.<sup>165</sup>

Robinson concluded his submission with an acknowledgement that there was a certain 'quaintness' in an account of the ministry taken entirely from the Anglican formularies and with reference to contemporary challenges. 'Everyone knows how different the ministry looks in modern circumstances', he said.<sup>166</sup> His proposed way forward, however, was not to grapple with the changed circumstances, but (at least in the first instance) to return to the formularies and amend practice in light of them: 'if the theology of order and ministry in our formularies is sound and biblical, as I believe it is, we should be guided by that, and not by what one of our formularies calls "newfangledness."'<sup>167</sup> This assessment highlights the impasse that Robinson had not only with his clergy but, in a sense, with himself. He was acutely aware of the changing patterns of society and indeed aware that the model of parish ministry and parish life envisaged by the BCP was simply not possible in a modern western city. However, he could not in good conscience disregard the obligation under which he believed his vows had placed him.

### **8.3. *Israel and the Gentiles***

Robinson made three new written contributions to the question of Israel and the Gentiles in the NT in this period.

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<sup>165</sup> See comments on Donald Robinson in John P. Dickson, *Hearing Her Voice: A Case for Women Giving Sermons* (Sydney: Dickson Publishing, 2013). See also the revelation section of the blog post John P. Dickson, 'Hearing Her Voice', *Hearing Her Voice*, accessed 7 January 2017, <http://www.johndickson.org/hearingher/>.

<sup>166</sup> Robinson, 'What Theology of Order and Ministry to the Anglican Formularies Teach?', 412.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 412. The term 'new-fangled' occurs in the Preface to the 1549 Book of Common Prayer entitled 'Of Ceremonies.' (My thanks to the Rev. Allan Blanch for alerting me to this.)

In 1994 he wrote an article for *St Mark's Review* on the vexed question of a biblical understanding of the *land* of Israel. The article attends to something of a loose end in Robinson's understanding of Israel and of biblical theology. Dispensationalism has encouraged a keen interest in the Jewish people repossessing the land. Mainstream supersessionism on the other hand tended to ignore or to spiritualise its significance. Robinson argued that

there is no ground in the New Testament understanding of God's promise to Abraham to see in the Jewish settlement there, or in the establishment of the State of Israel, a divinely revealed dispensation.<sup>168</sup>

He made his case, as one would expect, not by an appeal to supersessionism, but via biblical theology. He noted that the land promised in the OT is much larger in extent than most realise, including current day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and northern Sinai.<sup>169</sup> He argued also that, within the OT itself the exile of Israel changed to some extent the referent of the land, introducing the idea of a land beyond exile that would be miraculous in its fruitfulness (Amos 9:13, Isaiah 35:1), in the relations between its animals (Isaiah 11:6–9) and in its physical properties (Isaiah 54). In short, within the OT narrative, the post-exilic Jews were looking for a 'new' Jerusalem. 'Jewish Christians', said Robinson, 'were not the only Jews who "spiritualised" the promise.'<sup>170</sup> Finally, argued Robinson, in the NT itself there is little or no interest in the geographic entity of the land as such, and therefore nothing in NT theology 'that gives ground for expecting a physical restoration of God's people to the territory promised to Abraham.'<sup>171</sup> Robinson accepted the case for Jewish people finding a home in Israel, but on secular grounds, and only with due regard for the non-Jewish communities already there.

In 1998 he gave a short speech at an open meeting of the Council of Christians and Jews—a Council on which he represented the diocese. In the speech Robinson outlines the position he had explored in the 1950s and decidedly adopted in 1961 on the relation of Israel and the Gentiles. In that context (and to a presumably largely Jewish audience) he makes this frank assessment:

In my view [the church] has been seriously dysfunctional, both in its self-understanding and in its actual relations to Jewish people, even though it makes daily use of the Hebrew

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<sup>168</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Biblical Understanding of Israel—the Geographic Entity', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 189.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 186. Robinson said, 'one wonders if these dimensions have been appreciated by Christians who support the return of the Jews to 'their own land' on the strength of the Abrahamic covenant!'

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 187. Note that this trades on the idea of a promise and fulfilment dynamic *within* the OT, an insight that Robinson saw as 'the most distinctive feature' of the biblical theology he developed at Moore College in the 1950s and 1960s. See Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions', 9.

<sup>171</sup> Robinson, 'Biblical Understanding of Israel—the Geographic Entity', 188.

scriptures in its liturgies, and bases its creed on the doctrine of the apostles of Jesus, all of whom were Jews who believed themselves to be followers of the Messiah of Israel.<sup>172</sup>

His final written contribution to this topic was to be a chapter in Peter O'Brien's *Festschrift*, edited by Bolt and Thompson.<sup>173</sup> It is an exegetical interrogation of Romans 9–11, looking this time to understand better the admonition against Gentile boasting (Rom 11:20). Robinson here declares his sympathy with Wilfred Knox and William Manson in seeing the Christian community in Rome as predominately Jewish, and is attracted to the idea that the metaphor of the Olive Tree might be an allusion to the 'Synagogue of the Olive' in Rome, to which perhaps both Jewish and Gentile believers had some relationship.<sup>174</sup>

In the context of a book on the theme of mission, Robinson ends by reflecting on the relative success of gospel proclamation amongst Jewish people in recent decades. He concludes with a call to 'Gentile circumspection in the divine economy', finishing up with a quite stunning exegesis of Ephesians 4. He here claims that 'the saints' are Jewish Christians, whose work it was to build the body of Christ, i.e. by building Jews and Gentiles together into one body, until 'we all' (that is, Jew and Gentile, 4:13) come to perfection as God's 'one new man' in Christ.<sup>175</sup> It is a fittingly eschatological note on which to conclude an abiding scholarly interest, and one to which Robinson made a creative and (as we will see in chapter 9) influential contribution.

#### **8.4. Biblical Theology**

In 1996 the Moore College annual school of theology addressed the topic of 'Biblical Theology and the Pastor'. Robinson was invited to present a paper on the history of the development of biblical theology as a discipline. He also took the opportunity to indicate what he calls some 'loose ends' in the concept of biblical theology.<sup>176</sup>

As we have seen, Robinson understood the NT writers to believe Jesus would return in their lifetimes. The 1997 paper clarifies Robinson's position (or at least Robinson's question). He says:

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>173</sup> Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson, eds., *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001).

<sup>174</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Not Boasting Over the Natural Branches: Gentile Circumspection in the Divine Economy', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 70.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 77. Robinson outlines and even expands this exegesis of Ephesians 4:12 in the context of a paper on ministry in the Bible given at the Forward in Faith Conference. Another example of Robinson, with all the attendant difficulties, attempting to bring the conclusions of his exegesis to the questions of contemporary church life. See Donald Robinson, 'Ministry/Service in the Bible: Human and Divine, Secular and Sacred', in *Donald Robinson: Selected Works II*, 132–135.

<sup>176</sup> Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions', 1.



The question which used to tease me was this: are we latter-day Christians to see ourselves as still within the Christian movement as depicted in the NT, still in the ‘this is that’ era, still within the dynamics of Jew/Gentile relations, apostolic commissions, and expectations of the Parousia of Christ in ‘this generation’, even though this generation has been unconscionably attenuated to now two millennia?<sup>177</sup>

The question, which had teased him since at least the early 1960s, remained unresolved in his mind. Two alternatives are offered. The first is that we are indeed still ‘inside’ the NT, with the ‘problem’ of the delayed Parousia addressed in various ways. The second is that we could understand ourselves to be ‘outside’ the whole biblical drama, ‘accepting it as the divinely revealed paradigm in history of God’s purposes’ and providing the ‘database’ for dogmatic theology.<sup>178</sup> The question for Robinson is grounded in a tension between belief and practice. He judged that, whilst in the evangelical tradition the ‘inside’ option is assumed as correct, that same tradition ‘has tended to act as if the *second* situation were the case.’<sup>179</sup> It seems clear that Robinson found the ‘inside’ case unpersuasive. It is hard to see, however, that simply to mine the bible for dogmatic theology is not in the end a surrendering of the whole project of biblical theology. It would be fascinating to have seen Robinson interact with the eschatological proposals of N. T. Wright, the cross-as-apocalypse contention of Peter G. Bolt, or the narrative-theology approach of Kevin Vanhoozer.<sup>180</sup> Would any of these have constituted a way through the eschatological impasse for Robinson?

## **8.5. Conclusion**

In the twilight of his career, he continued to grapple in fresh and creative ways with the NT questions that had occupied him since he was a student in the 1940s. Robinson’s health has prevented him from teaching or writing since about 2010.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>180</sup> I mention Wright, Bolt, and Vanhoozer because they are all conservative scholars who have felt the weight of the puzzle of NT eschatology. Wright has tended to locate the imminent eschatological language of the NT in the destruction of the Temple in the Jewish Wars, 66–70 CE. Bolt has suggested much of the eschatological discourse from Jesus in the Gospels describes the cross-event. And Vanhoozer’s idea of ‘doctrine as drama’ reflects on what it means for contemporary Christians to still participate in the narrative begun in the NT. Wright also thinks of our relationship to the NT in narrative terms. See Peter G. Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance: Atonement in Mark’s Gospel*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Leicester: IVP, 2004); Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*; N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2013); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).



## 9. The Influence of D. W. B. Robinson on Reading the Bible in Australia

Until recently, Robinson's achievement and influence as a biblical scholar were hidden in plain sight. The reasons have already been established. Since 1973 his main work had been as a bishop rather than a scholar. His writing was scattered through mid-tier journals and in church publications. He never published a major monograph. His crucial role in the development of biblical theology was little understood. This tide has now turned significantly with a variety of studies, two *Festschriften*, the two-volume *Selected Works* and Robinson's own biographical writings having now brought his work and its influence into historical view.<sup>1</sup>

This study has so far investigated the origins and the development of Robinson's biblical thought. I have argued that Robinson's approach to his scholarship was shaped by three main factors: his evangelicalism, his Anglicanism and his engagement with the Cambridge tradition of NT exegesis. Furthermore, I have argued that it was in the relative isolation of Sydney in the 1950s and 1960s that Robinson's distinctive approach was able to incubate and flourish. In this chapter I address the final area of investigation, Robinson's influence. I will do this in two sections. First, I will explore those sources in which the topic of Robinson's influence is explicitly discussed. And secondly, I will outline those points in both the academy and the church where his influence can be discerned.

The picture of Robinson's influence emerging from these sources is mixed. Some of Robinson's approaches and conclusions have been widely accepted in Sydney Anglican theology, decisively shaping its modern expression. His biblical theology and his work on *ἐκκλησία* in the NT are the prime examples. Other aspects of his work have been picked up enthusiastically by a few and ignored by others. His understanding of 'Israel' and his sacramental work fit here. And some aspects of his work, such as his work on the canon and his questions about NT eschatology, have been largely ignored. Finally, Robinson's work has bequeathed an exegetical ethos: an approach to reading the Bible in which an appetite for fresh exegesis sits within a conservative evangelical context.

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<sup>1</sup> The two *Festschriften* are Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*. Bolt and Thompson, *Donald Robinson. Appreciation*. Treatments of Robinson's life and work can be found in those *Festschriften* (discussed below) and in Shiner, 'An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson's New Testament Theology'; Shiner, 'Reading the New Testament from the Outside', 2015; Judd, 'Donald Robinson and the Imperfect Unity of An Australian Prayer Book'; Judd, 'When Grandpa Met the Queen'. Biographical writings from Robinson himself include Robinson, '"The Church" Revisited: An Autobiographical Fragment'; Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions'; Robinson, 'What Shall We Do with the Bible?'; Robinson, 'Some Rectors and Recollections'. Sustained engagements with his thought can be found in Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*; Chase R. Kuhn, *The Ecclesiology of Donald Robinson and D. Broughton Knox* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017).

## 9.1. *The Remembered Robinson: Assessment of his influence from others*

*Festschriften* are an important primary source. They often contain biographical sketches and assessments of their subjects' achievements. Furthermore, the choice of contributors, the topics they choose and the incidental comments they make all help to build a picture of how a person's life and work are understood. This is true for Robinson. *In the Fullness of Time* (1992) marked his seventieth year and the end of his time as Sydney's archbishop. *Donald Robinson: Selected Works, Appreciation* (2008) was published in anticipation of Robinson's eighty-fifth birthday and accompanied the publication of the *Selected Works*. The former was edited by two students of Robinson, David Peterson and John Pryor (both NT scholars) and the contributions came overwhelmingly from former students. The second, edited by Moore College faculty Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson, represents a generation of scholars who, though not taught by Robinson directly, were influenced through his writing, his students, or by encountering his teaching in sermons or occasional lectures.

In both the 1992 and the 2008 *Festschriften* contributors were invited to write on themes related to Robinson's work. In 1992 these were all biblical studies. The 2008 volume also contained work on wider theological themes and on Australian church history. The topics tackled are instructive. The 1992 volume contains six general exegetical studies,<sup>2</sup> three studies specifically pursuing Robinson's work on Jew and Gentile in the NT,<sup>3</sup> two on ecclesiology,<sup>4</sup> two on biblical theology,<sup>5</sup> one on eschatology,<sup>6</sup> and one on evangelical theological method.<sup>7</sup> Of the eighteen essays, thirteen could be said to have engaged with or followed a line of enquiry suggested by Donald Robinson's own work.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, 'The Passion Narratives in the Gospels', in Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*, 1–16; John Nolland, 'The Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels: The Man of Destiny', *ibid*, 17–28; Barnett, 'Mark', 29–44; Ray Barraclough, 'Power-Sharing in the Kingdom of God—a Political Paradigm in Mark 10:35–45 and Parallels', *ibid*, 45–56; Pryor, 'Jesus as Lord', *ibid*, 57–78.

<sup>3</sup> Dumbrell, 'Israel in John's Gospel', 79–94; Nichols, 'The Fate of "Israel" in Recent Versions of the Bible', *ibid*, 111–130; O'Brien, 'Paul's Missionary Calling Within the Purposes of God', *ibid*, 131–48. (The third entry here by O'Brien is an exploration of Paul's missionary calling which O'Brien understands, like Robinson, to be shaped by Israel's vocation to the Gentiles.)

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Winter, 'The Problem with "Church" for the Early Church', in Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*, 203–17; Robert Banks, 'Denominational Structures: Their Legitimacy, Vocation and Capacity for Reform', *ibid*, 277–300.

<sup>5</sup> David Peterson, 'Biblical Theology and the Argument of Hebrews', in Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*, 219–35; Graeme Goldsworthy, 'The Pastoral Application of Biblical Theology', *ibid*, 301–17.

<sup>6</sup> Kaye, 'The Origins of the Eschatological Interpretation of the New Testament'.

<sup>7</sup> Giles, 'Evangelical Systematic Theology'.

<sup>8</sup> Those that *don't* explicitly owe something to Robinson in the content of their essays were contributions from Morris, Nolland, Barraclough, Painter, and Pryor. (All, of course, owe something to Robinson personally).

The 2008 volume invited contributors to engage directly with Robinson's work. After two biographical treatments,<sup>9</sup> three addressed NT Christology,<sup>10</sup> five grappled with aspects of Robinson's understanding of Jew and Gentile in the NT,<sup>11</sup> three were on the ministry of the Apostle Paul,<sup>12</sup> two on the doctrine of scripture,<sup>13</sup> one on ecclesiology,<sup>14</sup> three exegetical studies,<sup>15</sup> three on the ministry of women,<sup>16</sup> and two on Australian church history.<sup>17</sup>

I draw two tentative conclusions from this data: First, Robinson inspired an enthusiasm for close, original readings of NT texts; secondly, that he inspired a biblical theological approach to reading the testaments of Christian scripture together. Taken together, more than half of the contributions in both volumes fall into one of these two categories.

When direct assessments of Robinson's work are analysed, several recurring themes emerge. The most prominent is Robinson's originality. In *In the Fullness of Time*, the editors' preface noted that he was 'never happy simply to accept traditional views.'<sup>18</sup> Bishop Donald Cameron likewise mentioned Robinson's 'freshness and originality', and his refusal to 'allow his students to fall unchecked' into the evangelical habit of importing ideas into a passage 'because these ideas seemed pious and helpful'.<sup>19</sup> John Pryor praised Robinson's 'imaginative and critical approach to the text'<sup>20</sup> whilst Bishop Anthony Nichols spoke of Robinson's encouragement to

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<sup>9</sup> Thompson, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson'; Shiner, 'An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson's New Testament Theology'.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Petterson, 'Toward a Theology of the Virgin Birth', in Bolt and Thompson, *Appreciation*, 65–71; Andrew Leslie, 'Christ's Faithfulness and Our Salvation', *ibid*, 73–81; Michael R. Stead, 'Ὁ Κατέχω in 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7', *ibid*, 83–94.

<sup>11</sup> W. H. Salier, 'Jew and Gentile in John', *ibid*, 95–103; Pakula, 'A Biblical Theology of Israel in the New Testament', 105–112; Read, "'That You May Not Be Conceited'" 113–23; Athas, 'Reflections on Scripture Using the Distinction Between Jews and Gentiles as an Exegetical Key', 125–140; M. Palu, 'The Significance of the Jew-Gentile Distinction for Theological Contextualization', *ibid*, 141–52.

<sup>12</sup> Gavin Perkins, 'Paul's Suffering and the Gentile Mission', *ibid*, 153–56; Lionel Windsor, 'Paul's Covenant of Ministry', *ibid*, 157–67; Con Campbell, 'Finished the Race? 2 Timothy 4:6–7 and Verbal Aspect Theory', *ibid*, 169–75.

<sup>13</sup> Mark D. Thompson, 'What Have We Done to the Bible? Or Lessons We Should Have Learned from Donald Robinson on the Authority of Holy Scripture', *ibid* 177–88; Ben Underwood, 'Preaching the Word', *ibid*, 189–95.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Foord, 'We Meet Again! In Heaven or on Earth? Donald Robinson's Ecclesiology', *ibid*, 225–34.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Jensen, 'Being "Sons" (Children) of God in 1 John', *ibid*, 197–203; Donald West, 'Petitionary Prayer in the "Now" and "Not Yet"', *ibid*, 235–40; Jane Tooher, 'Bishop Robinson's "Questions about Marriage in 1 Corinthians 7": An Appreciation', *ibid*, 241–50.

<sup>16</sup> Rory Shiner, 'Tradition and Reality in Donald Robinson's New Testament Theology: Some Comments on Robinson's Line of Argument in the Debate over the Ordination of Women', *ibid*, 251–59; Claire Smith, 'Robinson, Apostolic Tradition and the Ordination of Women', *ibid*, 261–69; Carmelina Read, 'Old Wives' Tales', *ibid*, 271–78.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Bolt, 'The Family Correspondence of Thomas Moore, Esq., of Liverpool', *ibid*, 279–302; Colin R. Bale, 'In God We Trust: The Impact of the Great War on Religious Belief in Australia', *ibid*, 303–13. (Though it is outside the scope of this study, Robinson did make some significant contributions to Australian church history).

<sup>18</sup> Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*, ix.

<sup>19</sup> Cameron, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', xii.

<sup>20</sup> Pryor, 'Jesus as Lord', 57.

students to ‘scrutinise our ecclesiastical shibboleths in the light of the Bible and the Bible understood on its own terms.’<sup>21</sup>

This theme is also prominent in the 2008 *Appreciation*. Rory Shiner notes Robinson’s ‘resistance to finding glib solutions for difficult New Testament questions,’<sup>22</sup> Petterson speaks of Robinson’s willingness to ‘float an idea’<sup>23</sup> and Martin Pakula speaks of his ‘original, careful and exacting exegesis.’<sup>24</sup> Shiner also notes his refusal to accept exegetical conclusions simply because they fit well with prior theological commitments or apply readily to contemporary life.<sup>25</sup> Mark Thompson similarly sees Robinson as someone ‘always willing to ask whether the traditional understanding of a passage was the only possible understanding’<sup>26</sup> while Robert Doyle praises Robinson’s work on the sacrament of baptism as a ‘gentle offer of escape from undue impatience and pre-emptive construction.’<sup>27</sup>

According to these testimonies, Robinson’s originality was secured by an ability to defer the rush to contemporary application in favour of serious grappling with the text’s original context. Phrases such as ‘letting the text speak for itself’ or ‘understanding the text on its own terms’ are repeated often.<sup>28</sup> This discipline is most often related to what Jeff Read describes as ‘drawing our attention to the Jewishness of the gospel’<sup>29</sup> For George Athas, Robinson’s Jew-Gentile distinction is the key to unlocking the NT and warding off ‘narcissistic’ reading of scripture.<sup>30</sup> Goldsworthy describes his determination to study the Bible on its own terms as ‘the key to Robinson’s approach to biblical theology.’<sup>31</sup> We know from Robinson that understanding scripture on its own terms was at the heart of his own sense of purpose; the fact that others made that same assessment of his work indicates a degree of success.<sup>32</sup>

Robinson is also remembered as an attentive and careful exegete. In his 2008 introduction John Woodhouse spoke of Robinson’s ‘profound insight into and meticulous care with the text

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<sup>21</sup> Nichols, ‘The Fate of “Israel” in Recent Versions of the Bible’, 111.

<sup>22</sup> Shiner, ‘An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson’s New Testament Theology’, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Petterson, ‘Toward a Theology of the Virgin Birth’, 65.

<sup>24</sup> Pakula, ‘A Biblical Theology of Israel in the New Testament’, 105.

<sup>25</sup> Shiner, ‘An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson’s New Testament Theology’, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, ‘Donald William Bradley Robinson’, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Doyle, ‘Suppressed Truth’, 218.

<sup>28</sup> See for example Nichols, ‘The Fate of “Israel” in Recent Versions of the Bible’, 111; Chapple, ‘The Lord Is Near (Phil 4:5b)’, 161; Kaye, ‘The Origins of the Eschatological Interpretation of the New Testament’, 237; Read, ‘“That You May Not Be Conceited”’, 113.

<sup>29</sup> Read, ‘“That You May Not Be Conceited”’, 123.

<sup>30</sup> Athas, ‘Reflections on Scripture Using the Distinction Between Jews and Gentiles as an Exegetical Key’, 125. See also Palu, ‘The Significance of the Jew-Gentile Distinction for Theological Contextualization’, 143.

<sup>31</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 22.

<sup>32</sup> For example: ‘The first task of theology as I see it is the understanding of the revelation of the Scriptures in their own original terms, that is, given the language and cultural forms in which it was originally given.’ Robinson, ‘What Shall We Do with the Bible?’, 30.

of the New Testament.’ Others speak of his exegesis as ‘careful’, ‘exacting’ and ‘inquisitive.’<sup>33</sup> In interview Paul Barnett described Robinson’s exegesis as ‘very precise, very much into the nitty gritty of exegesis.’<sup>34</sup>

People also comment on Robinson’s ability to make connections, to see patterns and to synthesise ideas. The 1992 preface speaks of Robinson’s holistic approach to reading scripture.<sup>35</sup> In 2008 Mark Thompson noted Robinson’s ability to see connections.<sup>36</sup> Shiner argues for the ‘compelling synthesis’ represented by *Faith’s Framework*<sup>37</sup> and Ben Underwood speaks of the ‘ah-ha’ experience Robinson’s biblical theological approach provided for many of his generation in Sydney.<sup>38</sup> Allan Chapple says that Robinson did his detailed exegesis ‘without ever losing sight of the wider biblical-theological horizons’.<sup>39</sup>

Contributors also note Robinson’s prescience in anticipating future directions in NT studies. This is most often claimed in connection with the ‘New Perspective on Paul.’ So, for example, William Dumbrell regretted that Robinson was not still in academic work when the controversies over Israel and the law broke ‘subsequent to 1977’<sup>40</sup> (‘1977’ is an allusion to E. P. Sanders’ ground-breaking work *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, a crucial text for the New Perspective.) Thompson says that Robinson’s scholarly attention to Jew and Gentile was ahead of its time ‘by almost twenty years.’<sup>41</sup> Lionel Windsor makes the point more explicit:

Long before the phrase ‘New Perspective on Paul’ had gained widespread currency, Donald Robinson was vigorously contending that the relationship between Jews and Gentiles was one of the most significant exegetical keys for the interpretation of the New Testament—including Paul’s letters.<sup>42</sup>

Thompson also argues that Robinson anticipated contemporary debates on scripture.<sup>43</sup>

Two reflections on the shape of Robinson’s career are also repeated. First, many people express regret that Robinson was diverted from scholarship by his episcopal duties. For example, Dumbrell, agreeing with D. B. Knox’s judgement that Robinson was one of the finest NT scholars of the day, expresses his regret that ‘his full potential as an academic was not realised’.

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<sup>33</sup> See Pakula, ‘A Biblical Theology of Israel in the New Testament’, 105; Thompson, ‘Donald William Bradley Robinson’, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Shiner, Interview with Paul Barnett on Donald Robinson.

<sup>35</sup> Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*, ix.

<sup>36</sup> Thompson, ‘Donald William Bradley Robinson’, 3.

<sup>37</sup> Shiner, ‘An Appreciation of D. W. B. Robinson’s New Testament Theology’, 54.

<sup>38</sup> Underwood, ‘Preaching the Word’, 192.

<sup>39</sup> Chapple, ‘The Lord Is Near (Phil 4:5b)’, 161, footnote 1.

<sup>40</sup> Dumbrell, ‘An Appreciation of the Theological Work of Archbishop Donald Robinson’, xxiv.

<sup>41</sup> Thompson, ‘Donald William Bradley Robinson’, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Windsor, ‘Paul’s Covenant of Ministry’, 157.

<sup>43</sup> Thompson, ‘What Have We Done to the Bible?’, 178.

For Dumbrell this was because his 'wide ranging endowments drew him into the full life of the Diocese of Sydney, in whose service he was too much in demand.'<sup>44</sup> Paul Barnett speaks of his departure from Moore College for episcopal ministry as a 'problem' for his academic career, mournfully reflecting on how different circumstances might have 'brought him to the forefront of New Testament scholarship.'<sup>45</sup>

By 2008 contributors are less aware of this sense of loss. Thompson does mention it, and Martin Foord refers to Robinson being 'whisked away to Episcopal duties', preventing him from further probing the exegetical basis of his ecclesiology.<sup>46</sup> In 2012 Paul Barnett said 'I firmly believe Robbie would have become an international figure in NT studies' had he not taken the posting at Parramatta.<sup>47</sup>

Secondly, several contributors also make mention of the theologically isolated circumstances in which Robinson conducted his work. Dumbrell notes generally that 'biblical scholarship in Australia was somewhat isolated from the rest of the world in the 1950s.'<sup>48</sup> Paul Barnett speaks of 'the isolation of Australia from the centres of international scholarship' as one of the 'problems' Robinson encountered in his academic career.<sup>49</sup> In 2008 Thompson mentioned the isolation of Australia from theological centres in the United States or Europe as a reason why Robinson's work was not more widely known or appreciated.<sup>50</sup>

Book dedications are another source of testimony about Robinson. The earliest was Barnett and Jensen's short book on neo-Pentecostalism, *The Quest for Power*.<sup>51</sup> Marcus Loane's *Mark these Men* was also dedicated to Archbishop Robinson, as was Marcia Cameron's 2006 biography of D. B. Knox.<sup>52</sup> Robert Banks' important work, *Paul's Idea of Community*, acknowledges Robinson 'who in his lectures some years ago first opened my eyes to some of the distinctive features of Paul's view of church'.<sup>53</sup> The history of the prominent Anglo-Catholic parish of Christ Church, St Laurence does not carry a dedication, but it is a book to which Robinson contributed a generous Foreward, acknowledging the parish as a 'precocious member of the family'.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Dumbrell, 'An Appreciation of the Theological Work of Archbishop Donald Robinson', xxvi. See also Cameron's assessment that though Robinson was a churchman he was also at heart a 'theological person' and that 'theology was the key to his life.' Cameron, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', xv–xvi.

<sup>45</sup> Barnett, 'Mark', 29.

<sup>46</sup> Thompson, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', 5; Foord, 'We Meet Again! In Heaven or on Earth', 228.

<sup>47</sup> Shiner, Interview with Paul Barnett on Donald Robinson.

<sup>48</sup> Dumbrell, 'An Appreciation of the Theological Work of Archbishop Donald Robinson', xvii.

<sup>49</sup> Barnett, 'Mark', 29.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, 'Donald William Bradley Robinson', 5.

<sup>51</sup> Barnett and Jensen, *The Quest for Power*.

<sup>52</sup> Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life*, iii.

<sup>53</sup> Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, 'Preface to the Original Edition'.

<sup>54</sup> Donald Robinson, 'Foreword', in *The Archbishops of Railway Square: A History of Christ Church, St Laurence, Sydney*, by John Spooner (Sydney: Halstead Press, 2002), 7.



Robinson is in turn acknowledged for his ‘comments and suggestions on the whole manuscript.’<sup>55</sup> The most lavish of dedications is in Graeme Goldsworthy’s 2012 book, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*. The entire book is ‘dedicated as a tribute to Donald Robinson’ and Goldsworthy writes that it is ‘impossible to say how my thinking and practice in biblical theology would have developed if Donald Robinson had not been my teacher.’<sup>56</sup>

Some scholars have drawn attention to Robinson’s role in their career. Distinguished NT scholar John Painter says that ‘Robinson introduced me to the academic study of the NT’ and says that for his growing preoccupation with exegesis and the academic career that flowed from it ‘Donald Robinson must share considerable responsibility.’<sup>57</sup>

Similarly, Frame and Treloar’s introduction to the *Festschrift* for the Anglican theologian Bruce Kaye contains this insight:

Bruce’s time at Moore College was a mixed blessing. While learning a great deal, he found little of intellectual stimulation in much of the curriculum. Many of the ideas presented seemed to Bruce to be second hand with the notable exception of the New Testament. The Reverend Donald Robinson (later Archbishop of Sydney) was the College’s New Testament lecturer. He was an energetic teacher whose engaging questions brought to life the text being studied...It proved to have enduring consequences, prompting a pilgrimage of enquiry that continued over four decades.<sup>58</sup>

Taken together, these various testimonies from the *Festschriften*, from book dedications and elsewhere are remarkably convergent. They describe someone whose ability to think creatively, originally, synthetically and attentively about the task of exegesis greatly impressed others. People saw him as someone able to anticipate future trends in NT scholarship. The isolation of mid-twentieth century Australia shaped his work and, to some extent, curtailed his influence. His ‘loss’ to scholarship is broadly regretted. There are very few comments on his achievements as a bishop or archbishop; the focus is overwhelmingly on his scholarship.

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<sup>55</sup> John Spooner, *The Archbishops of Railway Square: A History of Christ Church, St Laurence, Sydney* (Sydney: Halstead Press, 2002), 9.

<sup>56</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 5.

<sup>57</sup> John Painter, ‘John the Evangelist as a Theologian’, in Peterson and Pryor, *In the Fullness of Time*, 95.

<sup>58</sup> Tom Frame and Geoffrey R. Treloar, ‘Introduction’, in *Agendas for Australian Anglicanism: Essays in Honour of Bruce Kaye* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2006), xiii.

## 9.2. **Robinson's Legacy: Tracing the Influence**

The previous section dealt with direct commentary on Robinson's influence and legacy. Here I ask a more subjective question: where can Robinson's legacy be perceived? Where in both scholarly and popular approaches to scripture can Robinson's influence reasonably be inferred? And which parts of his work were *not* picked up by subsequent generations? This section moves from areas where Robinson's influence has been both strong and wide (ecclesiology and biblical theology), to areas where his influence has been picked up by some but not widely distributed (sacraments, and Jew and Gentile) and finally to those areas where his proposals have been largely left to one side (eschatology and scripture).

### 9.2.1. **Ecclesiology**

The question of a 'Knox-Robinson' ecclesiology and its relationship to Robinson's own thought has already been discussed in this study and need not detain us here. Robinson's particular work on the semantic range of ἐκκλησία in the NT and on the relationship between the local and heavenly church has proved to be fertile, and its influence far reaching.

At a scholarly level, several important books and studies owe a direct debt to Robinson. First published in 1979, Robert Banks's *Paul's Idea of Community* has become a classic work on the question of Pauline ecclesiology. Banks make his debt to Robinson explicit.<sup>59</sup> With Robinson he argued that Paul resolves the Jew-Gentile relationship not in the church becoming Israel, but in Israel and the Gentiles becoming 'Adam at Last', the new humanity.<sup>60</sup> He accepted and even extended Robinson's claims that ἐκκλησία only refers to actual gatherings, even going so far as to argue that Paul's persecution of 'the church' must have involved persecution of Christians as they were gathered.<sup>61</sup> Peter O'Brien's 1987 essay also presents an essentially Robinsonian understanding of ἐκκλησία to an international audience.<sup>62</sup> More recently Chase Kuhn has written a PhD thesis interrogating and ultimately endorsing the theology of the Knox-Robinson view of church.<sup>63</sup> Several collected volumes have interacted with Robinson's ecclesiology.<sup>64</sup> And significant numbers of students at Moore College continue to write papers on 'Knox-Robinson' themes.

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<sup>59</sup> 'But I must thank Donald Robinson, now Archbishop of Sydney, who in his lectures some years ago first opened my eyes to some of the distinctive features of Paul's view of church.' Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, 'Preface to the Original Edition'.

<sup>60</sup> Banks says 'Correlatively, the salvation effected by Christ follows from his being not just an individual but a corporate personality, the "second" or "last" Adam (or, as it has been so strikingly expressed, "Adam-at-last!"). The phrase 'Adam-at last' comes, of course, from Robinson. See Banks, *ibid*, 2. 'The Arrival of Radical Freedom'.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 3. 'Church as Household Gathering'.

<sup>62</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, 'The Church as a Heavenly and Eschatological Entity', in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 98–105.

<sup>63</sup> Kuhn, 'The Ecclesiology of Donald Robinson & David Broughton Knox'.

<sup>64</sup> Goldsworthy, 'The Pastoral Application of Biblical Theology', 302.

Kevin Giles's 1995 book *What on Earth is the Church?* is in large part an attempt to correct and extend the ecclesiology the author learned from Knox and Robinson in the 1960s.<sup>65</sup> Giles argues for a wider semantic range for ἐκκλησία, one that could legitimately extend to ungathered entities such as denominations.<sup>66</sup> Though Giles disagrees with Robinson on this, it is significant that Robinson set the terms of the debate. Giles agrees that Robinson was asking the right questions, even as he rejects some of Robinson's answers. So, Banks, Giles and O'Brien each in their own way brought Robinson's ideas from the classroom and into international academic contexts where they could be critically assessed. At a more popular level, variations on Robinson's ecclesiology have been taught widely in the AFES movement, in Sydney churches, at conferences such as Katoomba Convention and through popular publications such as *The Briefing*.<sup>67</sup> Moore College's status as a training college for a diocese, and its history of training not only Sydney Anglicans but also Presbyterians, Baptists, Independents and para-church workers, means the movement of ideas from the academy to the churches is unusually swift.

### **9.2.2. Biblical Theology**

Former Warden of Tyndale House, Bruce Winter, described biblical theology as one of Robinson's 'great legacies to his students.'<sup>68</sup> It is almost certainly the point at which his influence is most widely felt. This influence has been mediated overwhelmingly through the work of Graeme Goldsworthy.

Goldsworthy was at Moore College in 1956. He was Robinson's student though, as it happens, he was not in his special doctrine class where he would have heard Robinson's biblical theology in detail. Goldsworthy's introduction to Robinson's schema was via Robinson's answer to a student's question in an OT class. The idea of a three-stage schema: creation to David-Solomon, the prophetic eschatology and then Christ outlined in that answer gripped him. Goldsworthy recalls:

On one occasion during my final year the Vice-Principal, as he was then, was lecturing us on a matter of biblical interpretation when he gave, almost parenthetically, a description of his understanding of the structure of biblical revelation...It was simple, profound, and like a bolt of lightning which produced a radical and permanent shift in my thinking on the Bible.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Kevin Giles, *What on Earth Is the Church?: An Exploration in New Testament Theology*, Reprint ed. (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>67</sup> See for example Mark Thompson, 'Knox/Robinson for Today (Extended)', *The Briefing*, 20 December 2011, accessed 19 May 2017 <http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2011/12/knoxrobinson-for-today-extended/>.

<sup>68</sup> Winter, 'The Problem with "Church" for the Early Church', 214.

<sup>69</sup> Goldsworthy, 'The Pastoral Application of Biblical Theology', 302.

Goldsworthy went on to do further studies in the UK and USA. This included studies at Cambridge where Goldsworthy sat under many of Robinson's teachers, including Henry St John Hart and C. F. D. Moule. In 1963 he returned to Moore College and began teaching a biblical theology course based on the schema he'd first learned from Robinson. This course would be the basis for his highly successful book, *Gospel and Kingdom*, published in 1981.<sup>70</sup> A series of popular books followed, each exploring different aspects of the basic outline Goldsworthy had first learned from Robinson.<sup>71</sup>

Goldsworthy continued to explore and develop Robinson's proposal for a biblical theology. Comparing it with many other proposals, he judged that 'it had more to commend it' than anything else available.<sup>72</sup> Biblical theologies such as those from Geerhardus Vos, Edmund Clowney and Willem VanGemeren focussed on the connections between Adam, Moses and Christ. They struggled to account for the Solomon-David material and the prophetic eschatology in the same comprehensive way in which Robinson's schema did.<sup>73</sup> In Goldsworthy's estimation, several advantages follow. Robinson's view better accounts for the pattern of recapitulations of Israel's story in the prophetic eschatology, it better accounts for Israel's status as still 'in exile' in the first century, it is closer to the NT typological hermeneutic and it lays the theological basis for a more Christocentric preaching and teaching ministry.<sup>74</sup>

Goldsworthy progressed Robinson's proposal to argue that the fulfilment of God's promises in Christ are comprehensive. Exegetes do not need explicit connections between specific OT types and their NT fulfilments to find fulfilment of the OT in the NT. Rather, Paul's cosmic Christology in places such as Colossians 1:15-20 and Ephesians 1:10 means that 'God has drawn all things together in Christ.'<sup>75</sup> The consequence is that there is 'no limit' to the types in scripture which find their fulfilment in Christ. Goldsworthy hastens to add that Robinson himself did not explicitly make this step. It is rather 'a logical further step from his schema of typology.'<sup>76</sup>

The reach of Robinson's biblical theology, via Goldsworthy, is impressive. Goldsworthy recalls that when he returned to teach at Moore in 1995 he would ask classes who had read *Gospel*

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<sup>70</sup> Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*. The publication date means that Goldsworthy would go into print with the schema before Robinson did in his 1985 publication *Faith's Framework*.

<sup>71</sup> These include *ibid.*; Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Wisdom: Israel's Wisdom Literature in the Christian Life* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1987); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downer's Grove: IVP, 2002); Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*.

<sup>72</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 79.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 80–99.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

and Kingdom. He estimates that 90 per cent of the hands would go up. Robinson's schema is the basis for the biblical theology strand material used to train the next generation of leaders at both the Katoomba Youth Leaders Convention (now 'NextGen') and at the AFES National Training Event. By these means thousands of young Australian Christians have learned Robinson's understanding.<sup>77</sup> The Moore College external studies course, which uses the biblical theology material, has 'in excess of five thousand students in over fifty countries around the world.'<sup>78</sup> On this basis Goldsworthy concludes that 'the legacy of Donald Robinson has taken on global proportions.'<sup>79</sup>

### **9.2.3. Sacraments and Worship**

Robinson's work on baptism and the Lord's Supper has not had the same sort of reach as his ecclesiology or his biblical theology. His proposals have nevertheless been picked up and worked on in a variety of contexts. John Woodhouse, for example, wrote a series of articles in *The Briefing* in 1993, arguing that, based on the evidence of the NT, it is likely Jesus did not intend the Lord's Supper to be an ongoing practice for his followers.<sup>80</sup> The series does not cite Robinson, or announce a conclusion Robinson himself anywhere advocated. The approach to the NT and to NT sacramental theology does, however, deeply resonate with Robinson's approach.

More recently Barry Newman has written a detailed study of the sacraments. Entitled *The Gospel, Freedom and the Sacraments: Did the Reformers go Far Enough?*<sup>81</sup>, the book interrogates the NT, probing the texts to see whether either baptism or the Lord's Supper are genuinely held out by the NT authors as normative, ongoing and obligatory for the Christian community. The answer, in essence, is no. The debt to Robinson is obvious: he is both thanked by name in the acknowledgements and cited regularly in the book itself. Years earlier Robinson had chastised his fellow Anglicans for being 'so dominated by our traditional definition of a sacrament' that important exegetical insights were missed.<sup>82</sup> Newman and Woodhouse are examples of writers who continued to peruse Robinson's method of exegesis less dominated by traditional definitions.<sup>83</sup> In this strand of Robinson's legacy, there is a palpable sense that the revolution has stalled, with the sixteenth-century reformed and twentieth-century Sydney Anglicans failing to go far enough to rediscover the Bible's actual teaching on the sacraments and allow it to reform

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<sup>77</sup> For NextGen see <http://www.nextgen.kcc.org.au/>. For the AFES NTE see <http://nte.org.au/>.

<sup>78</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 228.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>80</sup> John Woodhouse, 'The Body of the Lord', *The Briefing*, 4 November 1993, accessed 19 May 2017 <http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/1993/11/the-body-of-the-lord/>.

<sup>81</sup> Barry C. Newman, *The Gospel, Freedom, and the Sacraments: Did the Reformers Go Far Enough?* (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2016).

<sup>82</sup> Robinson, 'Baptised into Christ', 289.

<sup>83</sup> Whilst not taking up the case in the same way as Woodhouse and Newman have, Goldsworthy has also rehearsed Robinson's position on baptism in the NT, commending them to a wider audience. See Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 208–13.

contemporary practice.<sup>84</sup> Robinson himself occupies the strange space of both encouraging the revolution exegetically and opposing it ecclesiastically.

#### **9.2.4. Jew and Gentile in the New Testament**

Robinson's understanding of Jew and Gentile has been more unevenly adopted. His specific conclusions have attracted some enthusiastic advocates. More broadly, in the context of Sydney Anglicanism, a continued distinction between Israel and the Gentiles in the NT is a live exegetical and homiletical option, as well as an ongoing scholarly interest. At a scholarly level, Graeme Goldsworthy, for whom the distinction in the NT was largely muted in his early publications on biblical theology, has more recently returned to Robinson's position. In his 2012 book, for example, he retracts his earlier (1984) exegesis of Revelation 7, now accepting Robinson's position that the title 'Israel' is never transferred to the Gentiles and that consequently the 144,000 of Revelation 7:4 (from 'the sons of Israel') are Jewish believers and separate from the 'great multitude from every tongue and tribe and nation.'<sup>85</sup> Later in the book Goldsworthy declares that Robinson has made good his case exegetically: 'This position of maintaining the distinction of the new Israel and the church is contentious but is amply dealt with exegetically by Robinson in his various articles on the matter.'<sup>86</sup> Citing Martin Pakula and Jeff Read's articles in the 2008 *Appreciation* volume, Goldsworthy says that these two Jewish Christians show the practical value of Robinson's insight for the contemporary church.<sup>87</sup> Lionel Windsor's work on Paul's vocation also leverages many of Robinson's basic insights on the Jew-Gentile question.<sup>88</sup> Phillip Jensen, certainly the most influential Sydney Anglican preacher of his generation, also shares and teaches Robinson's basic contentions regarding the place of Israel in the NT, the identity of 'the saints' as Jewish Christians and the ongoing significance of Jewish identity today.<sup>89</sup>

Despite his ideas being picked up in these various contexts, Martin Pakula remains disappointed that Robinson's position has not commanded more adherents:

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<sup>84</sup> Note the subtitle of Newman's book: 'Did the Reformers Go Far Enough?'. Newman, *The Gospel, Freedom, and the Sacraments*. See also the speeches at the launch of Newman's book, which speak about this sense of a revolution stalled. See 'Launch', accessed 19 May 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Subr2KLz08](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Subr2KLz08)

<sup>85</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 165.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 205. Interestingly Paul Barnett, another of Robinson's students, takes this same position in his commentary on Revelation. See Paul W. Barnett, *Apocalypse Now and Then: Reading Revelation Today*, Reading the Bible Today (Sydney: AIO, 1989), 84.

<sup>87</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 205.

<sup>88</sup> See Lionel J. Windsor, *Paul and the Vocation of Israel, How Paul's Jewish Identity Informs His Apostolic Ministry, with Special Reference to Romans* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014). For mention of Windsor's debt to Robinson, see Windsor, 'Paul's Covenant of Ministry'.

<sup>89</sup> For Phillip Jensen on Israel in the NT see, for example, Phillip Jensen, *Israel's Future*, MP3, 2006, accessed 19 May 2017, <http://www.phillipjensen.com/audio/israels-future/>.

Finally we should surely ask then why Donald Robinson's views, held so strongly and written about in paper after paper, weren't taken up. Why is it that his Old Testament Theology has been taken up with gusto, but his New Testament Biblical Theology has not?<sup>90</sup>

Given the examples above, Pakula's assessment is overly dour. In the wider evangelical world, either dispensationalism or supersessionism are the overwhelmingly dominant positions. Robinson's legacy has been in part to create a theological scene in which a credible alternative is widely accepted and taught.

### **9.2.5. Eschatology**

Since the 1960s, Sydney Anglicans have experienced a remarkable consensus on eschatology. An a-millennial, inaugurated eschatology has been the default position. Few publications from Moore College faculty in the period from 1960 to the present have felt the need to interact with alternative eschatologies within or without evangelicalism. Robinson shared, and to some extent shaped, this consensus.

For Robinson himself however, the question of the NT's imminent eschatology was a live one. As we have seen, he believed the expectation that Christ would return in 'this generation' was literal, and, in the event, mistaken.<sup>91</sup> Bruce Kaye appears to have felt the weight of Robinson's question, using his 1992 *Festschrift* essay to explore the eschatological interpretation of the NT. He does not directly interact with any of Robinson's writings on eschatology, but frames the essay as an attempt to complete the 'journey back' from the NT to contemporary readers. This journey he related to Robinson and his approach to the NT.<sup>92</sup>

Peter Bolt has offered an alternative that could resolve the dilemma Robinson felt, arguing that the cross-event was the eschatological moment to which much of the imminent NT eschatology pointed.<sup>93</sup> Bolt does not directly interact with Robinson's eschatology in his study, but his fresh and original exegesis is characteristic of Robinson's own.

Goldsworthy's eschatology shares the same basic shape as Robinson's. He does not, however, appear to have felt the same anxiety as Robinson over the imminent Parousia of the NT authors. 'The New Testament', says Goldsworthy, 'despite confident assertions sometimes made to the contrary, gives us no indication how long a period of the history of the church there

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<sup>90</sup> Pakula, 'A Biblical Theology of Israel in the New Testament', 111.

<sup>91</sup> Robinson, 'Origins and Unresolved Tensions', 16.

<sup>92</sup> Kaye, 'The Origins of the Eschatological Interpretation of the New Testament'.

<sup>93</sup> Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance*, 85–115.

will be before the return of Christ and the revealing of his kingdom.<sup>94</sup> Given how closely Goldsworthy had read and interacted with *Faith's Framework*, he must have been aware of Robinson's question. Goldsworthy is warmly commending of Robinson's early booklet *The Hope of Christ's Coming*, dedicating three pages to it in *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology* and commending it as a work whose significance is 'far greater than its brevity might suggest.'<sup>95</sup> It seems that Goldsworthy found Robinson's questions either too hot to touch, or that he was satisfied an inaugurated eschatology sufficiently answered Robinson's questions. Whatever the reason, they have been passed over in silence.

### 9.2.6. Scripture

Robinson's approach to exegesis has been hugely influential in Sydney and beyond. The particulars of his doctrine of scripture, however, have not on the whole been picked up. Robinson's non-inerrantist position, for example, has not featured strongly in subsequent generations. Peter Jensen and Mark Thompson have both published significant works on the doctrine of scripture and found, in nuanced and cautious terms, a place for inerrancy.<sup>96</sup> In his 2008 essay on Robinson's doctrine of scripture, Thompson praises Robinson's confidence in the authority of scripture. He is critical, however, of Robinson's endorsement of a distinction between infallibility and inerrancy, arguing that the distinction is 'generally regarded as a late twentieth-century innovation.'<sup>97</sup>

Robinson's understanding of the canon has had some subtle ongoing influence. Goldsworthy is warm to the categories of 'gospel' and 'apostle', but does not follow Robinson with a corrigible canon: the drawn-out process that led to canonization 'does not alter the fact that we can regard the canon as now closed.'<sup>98</sup> Carson and Moo's *Introduction to the New Testament* sees some promise in Robinson's categories of 'gospel' and 'apostle', but does not develop them.<sup>99</sup> Thompson also remarks on Robinson's 'decidedly more relaxed' perspective on the limits of the canon.<sup>100</sup> He neither endorses nor rejects Robinson's view, but sees it as an example of his 'quiet confidence' in the scriptures, a confidence '... that puts into sharp relief the near hysteria

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<sup>94</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 65.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>96</sup> Mark D. Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture* (Nottingham: IVP Academic, 2006); Peter Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002). Jensen in particular is very cautious in commending the category, stating that 'the acceptance of infallibility without inerrancy has something to commend it,' 199.

<sup>97</sup> Thompson, 'What Have We Done to the Bible?', 183.

<sup>98</sup> Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centred Biblical Theology*, 45.

<sup>99</sup> Carson, Moo, and Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 496.

<sup>100</sup> Thompson, 'What Have We Done to the Bible?', 186–87.



that too often lies just below the surface in the debates about the nature, status and use of the Bible.<sup>101</sup>

### **9.2.7. General exegetical studies**

Robinson's academic essays continue to play a small role in NT studies, appearing with some regularity in the footnotes of commentaries and journal articles. Google Scholar yields 281 results for a search of 'D. W. B. Robinson'. There, his 1970 article on 'Faith of Jesus Christ' is the most cited, appearing in twenty-four scholarly contexts. Major NT commentaries continue to cite and interact with Robinson's exegesis: James D. G. Dunn, Douglas Moo and Michael Bird's commentaries on Romans are all examples.<sup>102</sup>

## **9.3. Conclusion**

Robinson has been a significant shaper of modern Sydney Anglican theology. His work on ecclesiology and his biblical theological approach has had a vast and deep impact on the way the Bible is read and studied in Australia. Other aspects of his work have been picked up in more selective ways. His work on the sacraments in the NT has been pursued with vigour by some, as has his understanding of the place of Israel and the Gentiles in the NT. Whilst his attitude and approach to scripture has been widely influential, his views on inerrancy and on the limits of the canon have few unqualified supporters. And his questions about the Parousia in the NT have not been pursued, at least in the terms he suggested.

The real impact and legacy of Donald Robinson's biblical thought is not primarily in whether any of his particular proposals were adopted. It has been in a wider ethos and approach to the task of reading the Bible itself. And it is to this wider and more impressionistic picture I will now attend.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>102</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1988); Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Michael F. Bird, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).



## 10. Conclusion

This study has attempted to account for the origins, development and influence of D. W. B. Robinson's biblical studies. Whilst others have noted the distinctiveness of his approach, this is the first study to offer a comprehensive account of why it was distinctive, how it developed and what influence it has had. I have argued that it was the product of a synthesis between his evangelicalism, his Anglicanism and the critical approaches to scripture he learned at Cambridge. Furthermore, I have argued that the isolated circumstances of Sydney created a social and religious context in which Robinson was free to develop this synthesis relatively unencumbered. I conclude here with three brief reflections on how the findings of this study could be leveraged for wider work on twentieth-century evangelicalism, Sydney Anglicanism and the history of religious thought in Australia.

### 10.1. *Robinson and evangelicalism*

The life and work of Donald Robinson offers important insights for anyone attempting a descriptive account of evangelicalism in the twentieth century. Other figures of the post-war evangelical resurgence such as John Stott, J. I. Packer and F. F. Bruce have each attracted scholarly studies.<sup>1</sup> Robinson was a more minor figure than any of them, so the lack of an equivalent study of him is not remarkable. However, placing Robinson in the context of post-war evangelicalism could advance our understanding of the movement in two important ways.

First, Robinson is a rare example of a post-war evangelical Anglican scholar who took on senior episcopal leadership. Most either eschewed episcopal posts or were not offered them. On the whole, they were content to pursue the evangelical cause from the position of parish leadership (e.g. Stott) or teaching in theological institutions (e.g. Packer). And, with notable exceptions such as Colin Buchanan, very few involved themselves in Anglican liturgical reform. Robinson on the other hand was deeply involved in both episcopal leadership and liturgical work. In this way, his Anglican identity was not incidental, but integral. The relationship between being Anglican and being evangelical in the twentieth century has been a complex one. Robinson offers the students of twentieth century evangelicalism a fascinating and singular example of one way in which that relationship was navigated.

Secondly, of the post-war evangelical scholars Robinson was one of the most open to critical scholarship. Others such as F. F. Bruce and I. H. Marshall provide examples of critical

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<sup>1</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *J.I. Packer: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); Chapman, *Godly Ambition*; Grass, F. F. Bruce.

evangelical scholarship. Robinson, though, countenanced positions that were more original and risky than either Bruce or Marshall. Moreover, he did this in the context of a confessional theological College rather than a secular university. He managed to combine these forays into critical scholarship with an unquestioned reputation for weapons-grade conservatism. These facts need to be accounted for in any faithful descriptive account of the post-war evangelical resurgence.

## **10.2. Robinson and Sydney Anglicanism**

Robinson is also an important figure for anyone seeking to understand Sydney Anglicanism. To be sure, Robinson has already featured extensively in both warm and hostile accounts of the diocese. His senior leadership, his participation in church controversies, and the influence of his teaching have secured him prominent place.

However, a closer study of Robinson might help to refine and qualify what an adjective like ‘conservative’ means when applied to the diocese of Sydney. For example, critics such as Muriel Porter have described the diocese as ‘puritan’. In any theological sense, it is the wrong word.<sup>2</sup> If anything, from the 1950s to the close of the century the diocese has been featured by a move *away* from the more Puritan theology of Marcus Loane. Even to describe Moore College as increasingly ‘Calvinist’ in the post-war period fails to grasp the nature of the theology that was there developing. Certainly, Calvin’s theology was admired and his *Institutes* read, but a systematic Calvinism simply did not emerge in the College during this period. D. B. Knox was an independent thinker, and rejected Limited Atonement—a doctrine many would consider an essential tenet of ‘Calvinism’. And in the present study we have seen that Robinson did not even describe himself as a Calvinist, nor had he read Calvin’s *Institutes*. ‘Calvinism’ conceals as much as it reveals when applied to the theology of the diocese of Sydney. Likewise, descriptions of the diocese as ‘extreme’ in its conservatism need to reckon with how a figure like Robinson maps onto the wider evangelical theological terrain. Even those who are warmer to the conservative stance of Sydney Anglicanism note the idiosyncrasies of some of its theology, and the freshness of much of its exegesis.

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<sup>2</sup> The word ‘Puritan’ services a wide semantic terrain. In the usage of a critical observer of the Sydney diocese such as Muriel Porter, the word is nearly a synonym for ‘fundamentalist’ (note the title of her book *The New Puritans: The Rise of Fundamentalism in the Anglican Church*). Porter draws a line from the Elizabethan Puritans, who argued for the further reform (or ‘purification’) of the English Church, to Sydney Anglicans who, under Archbishop Jensen, ‘want to remove everything they believe distracts from the pure knowledge of God...’. Porter, *The New Puritans: The Rise of Fundamentalism in the Anglican Church* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006), 21. It is true that Archbishop Jensen pursued the reform of the diocese, and to this extent his agenda has some affinities with the Elizabethan Puritans. But the actual influence of Puritan theology on contemporary Sydney Anglican theology is not prominent. Archbishop Loane, who was not a reformer, possessed a theology more deeply shaped by Puritan spirituality that did the generations to come after him. Donald Robinson was not a Puritan, either in his attitude to the reform of the diocese, nor in the sources of his theology or his spirituality.

Opposition to some of N. T. Wright's project illustrates some of these points. On the surface, conservative evangelicals in both the United States and in Sydney have found fault with aspects of Wright's work. Scratch below the surface, however, and it becomes clear that the points at which they find fault are often different. In the United States, Wright's advocacy of the 'faith of Jesus Christ' and his rejection of the concept of imputed righteousness have been roundly critiqued.<sup>3</sup> Amongst Sydney Anglicans, both these positions had powerful advocates in Knox and Robinson before Wright's work came to prominence, and are therefore not the flashpoints they have been elsewhere. Similarly, Wright's contention that the place of Israel and the Gentiles is a major theme of the NT had been a mainstay of Moore College exegesis years before Wright's work became prominent. Therefore, Sydney Anglicans who have critiqued Wright's work have tended to do so on other grounds.<sup>4</sup>

### **10.3. Robinson and Australian Religious Thought**

Historians often give the impression that little has happened in Australia in the area of religious thought. Instances of significant religious thinking have been sparse. When it has occurred, it has been thought to be largely derivative. Wayne Hudson's recent study on the topic has sought to redress this impression with a lively and well-researched account of the topic.<sup>5</sup> Donald Robinson features briefly in Hudson's study in a section that rightly identifies ecclesiology as a field in which Australians have made a significant contribution. Further work on Robinson could help secure Hudson's case for the importance of religious thought in Australia. He writes on Knox, Robinson and Banks separately, but does not relate them to each other. Martin Foord's essay is helpful in this regard as it demonstrates that Robinson is part of a wider, significant tradition of ecclesiology in Australia.<sup>6</sup> It would be fruitful to ask why ecclesiology in particular has been a feature of Australian religious thought.

Since World War II, evangelicalism has tended to play a defensive role in academic theology. As evangelicals made their principled return to the academy, leading scholars tended to produce work which demonstrated that the doctrines under attack could in fact be credibly and robustly defended. John Stott's book on *The Cross of Christ*, Leon Morris's work on propitiation

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see John Piper's critique of Wright in John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> For an example of a critique of Wright from a Sydney Anglican perspective, see Robert Smith, 'Wright Up Close', *The Briefing*, December 1998, accessed 17 November 2017 <http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/1998/12/wright-up-close/>

<sup>5</sup> Wayne Hudson, *Australian Religious Thought* (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Martin Foord, 'Recent Directions in Anglican Ecclesiology', *Churchman* 115, no. 3 (2001): 316–49.

and J. I. Packer's defence of penal substitutionary atonement are all notable examples.<sup>7</sup> They did not mean to advance to new ground. Robinson is a distinct figure in this regard. Although he did his share of 'defensive' work, his scholarship mainly offered new suggestions and original solutions. For this reason, one suspects his work will continue to find its way into the footnotes of commentaries for a long time into the future. In this Robinson bolsters Hudson's picture of Australia as a context in which fresh religious thought has been aired and developed.

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The economist Tyler Cowan argues that globalisation is making the world less rather than more culturally diverse.<sup>8</sup> As with natural ecosystems, contact and exposure tend to overwhelm local varieties. I suspect that this is also true of Australian evangelical theology. As an institution such as Moore College has more contact with the wider evangelical world, there is reason to believe some of its unique features, such as the synthesis represented in Robinson, will be lost. It is not the purpose of this thesis, nor is it within the competencies of its author, to pass judgement on whether this is a good development. My purpose has merely been to explain the origins, development and ongoing significance of how Donald Robinson read the Bible in Australia.

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<sup>7</sup> Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955); J. I. Packer, 'What Did the Cross Achieve?', *Tyndale Bulletin* 25 (1974): 3–45; John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Tyler Cowen, *Creative Destruction: How Globalization Is Changing the World's Cultures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

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### **3. Newspapers and Magazines**

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## Appendix: Final Ethics Approval

Ethics Application Ref: (5201200711) - Final Approval

Email sent from artsro@mq.edu.au on 24/10/2012

A/Prof Stuart PigginMr Rory James Wilson Shiner

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 24/10/13

Progress Report 2 Due: 24/10/14

Progress Report 3 Due: 24/10/15

Progress Report 4 Due: 24/10/16

Final Report Due: 24/10/17

NB: If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how\\_to\\_obtain\\_ethics\\_approval/human\\_research\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms)

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit

on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how\\_to\\_obtain\\_ethics\\_approval/human\\_research\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms)

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University.

This information is available at the following websites:

<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/>

[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how\\_to\\_obtain\\_ethics\\_approval/human\\_research\\_ethics/policy](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy)

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of Final Approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have Final Approval, please do not

hesitate to contact the Faculty of Arts Research Office at [ArtsRO@mq.edu.au](mailto:ArtsRO@mq.edu.au)

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of  
final ethics approval.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mianna Lotz

Chair, Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee