

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Towards a Safe Church: More Than a Lambeth Call

Fergus J. King¹ , Alexandra Banks² , Alfred Sebahene³ , Nant Hnin Hnin Aye⁴,
Maimbo W.F. Mndolwa⁵  and Albert Chama⁶

¹University of Melbourne Trinity College, Parkville, Australia, ²University of Stellenbosch Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch, South Africa, ³St John's University of Tanzania, Dodoma, Tanzania, ⁴Holy Cross Theological College, Yangon, Myanmar, ⁵Anglican Diocese of Tanga, Korogwe, Tanga, Tanzania and ⁶Anglican Diocese of Lusaka, Lusaka, Zambia

Corresponding author: Fergus J. King; Email: fergusk@trinity.edu.au

(Received 3 May 2024; revised 8 August 2024; accepted 9 August 2024)

Abstract

This paper gives definitions of terms which have become critical in ensuring that Anglican churches minimize the risk of harm to all who are involved as practitioners or recipients of its ministries. This imperative is rooted in Scripture, not just the recent history or pronouncements of the Lambeth Conference 2022. The terms 'Safeguarding', 'Safe Ministry' and 'Safe Church' (SC) are set out with reference to the 'Lambeth Calls'. This paper explores why such terms have come to the forefront of current theological praxis, notes historical iterations of such matters and asks why some Anglican churches or provinces may resist adopting this Lambeth Call. It offers both an apologetic for the universal adoption of SC practices and a scriptural and dominical mandate for them. The paper identifies theological and scriptural principles on which SC theory and practice might be grounded. Anglican churches and provinces are encouraged to develop a theory and practice of SC pertinent to their environment rather than adhere to abstract universal prescriptions which risk irrelevance amidst cultural and contextual particularity.

Keywords: abuse; codes of conduct; lambeth call; leadership; restorative justice; Safe Church

Introduction

The Lambeth Conference of 2022 produced a series of 'Lambeth Calls', injunctions to address matters of serious theological and missional importance that face the church and the communion. One of these was a call to Safe Church (SC), which has sometimes also been known as Safeguarding or Safe Ministry. In this essay, SC will be adopted as a single term to cover this variety. The Lambeth Call makes two affirmations:

a key part of the mission of the Church is to create communities in which all people are safe and cared for. This conviction must be a core component of our theology and must therefore characterise our identity, thinking, words and actions in being God's Church for God's World;

we will take action to make churches of the Anglican Communion places of enhanced safety for everyone, where church workers act with integrity; victims of abuse receive care and a just outcome; church workers who commit abuse are held accountable; and church leaders do not conceal abuse.¹

It then gives four ‘Calls’:

1. to the Instruments of Communion, to make the safety of all persons in the provinces of the Anglican Communion a priority of their focus, resource allocation and actions;
2. to ourselves, to fulfil our responsibility to protect all people in our care by: adopting the Charter for the Safety of People within the Churches of the Anglican Communion
 - implementing the Protocol for disclosure of ministry suitability information between the churches of the Anglican Communion; following the Guidelines to enhance the safety of all persons – especially children, young people and vulnerable adults – within the provinces of the Anglican Communion;
3. the people of our provinces and dioceses to partner with us to protect everyone in our church communities by having systems in place to prevent abuse and provide appropriate pastoral support to those who have been abused;
4. to the leaders of the world, to take whatever steps are necessary to achieve SDG targets 5.2 and 16.2.²

While these would not seem objectionable in themselves, the reaction to this call has not been uniform. For some, its origins in Lambeth are problematic. Anglicans aligned with the Global Anglican Futures Conference (GAFCON) may reject this call as being authoritative because of their ecclesial stance in relation to Canterbury and the perceived failure of the instruments of communion to maintain orthodoxy.³ Anglicans in this position need, therefore, to be presented with a coherent apology for safeguarding practices in the promotion of an SC which does not rest on the authority of Canterbury but rather on agreed and historic principles that underpin Anglican theology. Scripture and tradition will both be appropriate: Scripture is non-negotiable, and the 39 Articles are strongly desirable. These provide the basics of common ground between those associated with both Canterbury and GAFCON,

¹*Lambeth Calls* (London: Lambeth Conference, 2022), 5. This piece has been produced under the aegis of the Commission for Theological Education in the Anglican Communion. The authors wish to thank the Anglican Communion Office’s Adviser on Theological Education and Lambeth Conference Implementation, Revd. Dr. Stephen Canon Spencer, for his encouragement.

²*Lambeth Calls*, 6–7.

³For an overview, see Mark D. Thompson, “The Global Anglican Future Conference,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Anglican Communion*, ed. Ian S. Markham, et al. (Chichester: John Wiley, 2013): 739–749; For more recent views, Keith Joseph, “The challenge of GAFCON to the Unity of the Anglican Communion,” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 20/1 (2022): 3–21, here at 4; Richard Condie, “Response to Bishop Keith Joseph’s ‘The challenge of GAFCON to the Unity of the Anglican Communion,’” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 20/2 (2022): 139–149.

even if the Articles command varying degrees of authority across the communion.⁴ Irrespective of where Anglican ecclesiological allegiance might lie, here is an undisputable foundation to shape the practice of SC.

While the origins of Anglicanism within England suggest that its canon laws and ecclesiastical courts might have a formative influence on other provinces, the systems that now operate across different provinces do not conform to one model.⁵ Indeed one factor that must be reckoned with is that SC must be performed within a variety of legal contexts which may differ significantly in their philosophic underpinnings. For example, does a particular legal system focus more on individual rights than communal or social outcomes?⁶ These matters cannot be resolved here for all Anglican provinces, but the question, at least, may be raised. What this means is that arguments used in one place, which, say, stress individual rights, may not be effective in challenging abusive behaviours which take a different view of such rights or might rather address abuse not as an infringement of rights but as harmful to society and relationships. Local thinking will always be critical to the formulation of culturally appropriate theory and practice.

The focus of the 39 Articles on the nature and work of God and Jesus Christ, and the sacraments means that there is little which speaks directly to Safe Church matters. This is not surprising given the context in which the Articles were formulated. Although the following comments may seem to be an over-reach, some justification may be found in suggesting that they point towards an ethos rather than provide a blueprint to follow.⁷ Article 23 is the most direct:

23. Of Ministering in the Congregation.

It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard.⁸

The details are scant: 'judge lawfully called' is open to a variety of interpretations, depending on context. More information may be gleaned from 'The Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons'.⁹ These give some general principles about suitability for ministry:

⁴J. Robert Wright, "Thirty Nine Articles," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity Vol. 5: Si-Z*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch, Jan Milič Lochman, John S. Mbiti, Jaroslav Pelikan, and Lukas Vischer, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans/Leiden: Brill, 2008): 481–485, here at 483–485.

⁵For a comparison of the English and Australian systems; Muriel Porter, *The New Scapegoats: The Clergy Victims of The Anglican Church Sexual Abuse Crisis* (Northcote: Morning Star, 2017), 53–58.

⁶David Abraham, "Are Rights the Right Thing? Individual Rights, Communitarian Purposes and America's Problems (Book Review)", *Connecticut Law Review* 25 (1993), 947–965.

⁷This would be analogous to the comments by Clodovis Boff which are cited below.

⁸"Thirty Nine Articles of Religion", [www.anglicancommunion.org](https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/109014/Thirty-Nine-Articles-of-Religion.pdf). Online at <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/109014/Thirty-Nine-Articles-of-Religion.pdf>. Accessed 03 April 2024.

⁹For example, "The Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons According to the Order of the Church of England", www.churchofengland.org. Online at

to be a person of virtuous conversation and without crime, and after examination and trial finding him to possess the qualifications required by law and sufficiently instructed in holy Scripture.¹⁰

‘The Ordering of Deacons’ and ‘The Ordering of Priests’ additionally stipulate that candidates be ‘apt and meet, for their learning and godly conversation’, and free from, according to the rubrics, ‘any great crime or impediment’.¹¹ The different rites then set out a number of questions and answers that relate to the candidate’s intentions to minister in the prescribed fashion: the performance of worship, personal conduct and obedience to ecclesial authority. Article 26 (Of the Unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacraments) is also relevant.¹² It must be pointed out that these Anglican phenomena are typical of much historical reflection on what is called SC in that they are focused on the clergy. This should come as no surprise given that canon law and reflections on clergy discipline predate SC.¹³ The most recent iterations of SC demand that it embraces the behaviour not just of ministers, but of the laity. Lay ministers and volunteers within the church are subject to selection processes and checks and may be asked to sign up to codes of conduct such as the Anglican Church of Australia’s *Faithfulness in Service*.¹⁴

Others are dissuaded by the circumstances that have driven recent developments in identifying an SC ethos and practice: the call seems to be based on problems and behaviours that are not recognised in their particular context or experience as they relate to culture, economics, gender-based violence, politics and local ecclesiastical settings and issues. Put crudely, they are someone else’s problem.

Much of the impetus from Northern and Western provinces has come from the tragic revelations of historic sexual abuse that go back decades but should not be limited to those areas:

At the turn of the millennium, the crisis of sexual abuse changed the societal landscape, first disclosed in the western and English-speaking world and found to be problematic everywhere. A growing awareness of its epic proportions – from the recognition in the 1970s of the prevalence and lasting harm of incest to the uncovering of sexual abuse by clergy to the #MeToo movement’s

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/form-and-manner-making-ordaining>. Accessed 03 April 2024.

¹⁰‘The Form and Manner of Making’.

¹¹‘The Ordering of Deacons,’ www.churchofengland.org. On-line at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/ordaining-and-consecrating>; ‘The Ordering of Priests,’ www.churchofengland.org. On-line at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/ordaining-and-consecrating-0>. These prefatory remarks are absent from ‘The Consecration of Bishops,’ www.churchofengland.org. On-line at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/ordaining-and-consecrating-1>. All accessed 03 April 2024.

¹²See below, Step 1.

¹³As evidenced in the title of Peter Collier, ‘50 Years of Safeguarding – 950 Years of Clergy Discipline: Where Do We Go From Here?’ *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 24 (2022), 148–174.

¹⁴For example, General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia, *Faithfulness in Service: A National Code for Personal Behaviour and the Practice of Pastoral Ministry by Clergy and Church Workers* (Sydney: General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia, 2016); Muriel Porter, *The New Scapegoats*, 52.

spotlight on abuse in various sectors – has called attention to the suffering of victims. The World Health Organization (2016) estimates that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 13 boys suffer from sexual abuse worldwide.¹⁵

For those who do not identify such trajectories in their own history, there can be resistance to such matters. For some, the promotion of SC may be viewed as an attempt by neo-colonialists to export their problems and issues onto others for whom they are an irrelevance.¹⁶ Thus, the first step in promoting a culture of SC must be to show that this is, indeed, a universal issue that may be manifested in different times and places in a variety of forms.

It is essential to increase recognition that the documented cases of abuse in specific ecclesiastical jurisdictions represent only a fraction of potential abusive practices within religious institutions globally. These abuses can manifest in diverse forms across various temporal and geographical contexts. They often stem from the complex interplay of three key factors: 1) the interpretation and application of canonical law, 2) the exegesis and implementation of scriptural teachings and 3) the influence of socio-cultural norms on religious practices. This interpretive triad can have profound and often detrimental effects on marginalized populations. Specifically, it can perpetuate or exacerbate existing inequalities and injustices related to gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic background, physical or cognitive abilities and socioeconomic status.

Like a chameleon, abuse may adopt as many colours as habitats. Accordingly, attention must turn to the church and a realistic understanding of it, addressing the question: is it a divinely inspired institution that is beyond such catastrophic failures? To make the contrary case, it is necessary to turn to Scripture to consider whether the church has too high an opinion of itself and its own capabilities. By acknowledging this broader context, we can better understand and address the systemic nature of abuse within religious institutions.

The first business of this paper is to make a case for the place of SC in varying Anglican contexts. It is tempting to say that this is tantamount to making a declaration to be against sin. Nevertheless, it is a step that must be made. Then, attention will finally turn to ways of identifying non-prescriptive principles that may inform theology and practice. These comments are not prescriptive, given the variety of contexts and the tools needed for theologians in those places to adapt

¹⁵Karlijn Demasure, Katharina A. Fuchs, and Hans Zollner, "Introduction," in *Safeguarding: Reflecting on Child Abuse, Theology and Care*, ed. Karlijn Demasure, Katharina A. Fuchs, and Hans Zollner (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 1–3, here at 1. For the Anglican Church in Australia as a case study; Porter, *The New Scapegoats*, 15–25.

¹⁶The late Peter Nyanja, a former Bishop of Lake Malawi, considered that this dynamic impeded Anglican discussions about marriage in Africa, with the disinterest of Northern and Western provinces in helping their African counterparts to a resolution of issues around polygamy, and the subsequent debate about same-sex unions, in which African provinces detected a double standard in now being asked to assist those same Northern and Western provinces to resolve their issues. If this is so, Southern concerns about colonial attitudes within the Communion long predate same-sex issues. GAFCON embraces a critique of the Anglican Communion as a vehicle of colonialism, but may itself be subject to those same forces; Charlotte Dalwood, "Orthodoxy and the Politics of Christian Subjectivity: A Case Study of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON)," *Journal of Anglican Studies*, 18/2 (2020), 235–250.

them for local use. However, they provide a scriptural foundation that may be adapted to different environments in mature interpretations and applications.

In doing so, they embody a traditional manner of reading Scripture, which was known to the writers of the New Testament and is well described as ‘correspondence in history’:

The important point about correspondence in history is that the text is not used up by a single event . . . We have not interpreted a text appropriately until we have determined how it corresponds or does not correspond with our present situation.¹⁷

Reading the book of Revelation exemplifies this. In the words of Emmanuel Obeng:

In Africa today, there are still marks of the ‘beast’ – pain and suffering arising from ethnic conflicts and civil wars, corruption in high places which results in unnecessary deaths on our roads, political assassinations, high increase in crime on our streets, extreme poverty and hunger which dehumanises many Africans. These are our experiences which must be reflected in our interpretation of the book of Revelation. Critical study of the Bible then places the biblical message in a correct perspective from which point then our needs as Africans can better be addressed. Our needs must be paramount.¹⁸

Clodovis Boff gives a broader interpretive rationale:

We need not, then, look for formulas to ‘copy’, or techniques to ‘apply’, from scripture. What scripture will offer us are rather something like orientations, models, types, directives, principles, inspirations – elements permitting us to acquire, on our own initiative, a ‘hermeneutic competency’, and thus the capacity to judge – on our own initiative, in our own right – ‘according to the mind of Christ’, or ‘according to the Spirit’, the new, unpredictable situations with which we are continually confronted. The Christian writings offer us not a what, but a how – a manner, a style, a spirit.¹⁹

It should be noted that the SC Call starts by citing a handful of Scriptural texts.²⁰ Likely occasioned by the brief nature of the document, this is a reminder that the Lambeth Call is indeed grounded on Scripture and not plucked out of theologically thin air or from the spirit of the age. The suggestions which follow draw more deeply on a wider range of scriptural texts. The benefit of this approach is a more explicit and coherent appeal to elements that all parties have claimed to recognize as

¹⁷Klyne Snodgrass, “The Use Of the Old Testament In The New,” in *The Right Doctrine From The Wrong Texts*, ed. G. Beale (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 29–51, here at 38.

¹⁸Emmanuel A. Obeng, “The Use Of Biblical Critical Methods In Rooting The Scriptures In Africa,” in *The Bible In African Christianity*, ed. Hannah W. Kinoti and John Mary Waliggo (Nairobi: Acton, 1997), 8–24, here at 19.

¹⁹Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 149.

²⁰1 Peter 1:1–2, 15–16; 2: 16–17; 5:1–2; *Lambeth Calls*, 5.

authoritative, even if their interpretations are disparate. They will look at key matters outlined in the SC Call and provide Scriptural texts that underpin desirable behaviours, along with reflective questions to enable their application in different environments.

Step 1: Admitting the Imperfections of the Church

Admitting that the church is imperfect, is a necessary step in admitting the need for SC, as it recognizes that abuse may occur but does not condone it. Two approaches indicate this reality. The first is ecclesiological. In its simplest form, this is an admission that life in this realm is not to be confused with the kingdom in heaven: it lives in and with imperfection. Matthew recognizes this in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43):

The present age is thus one in which human society (and thus even the Church) is a mixture of those of the evil one and those of the kingdom.²¹

St Augustine of Hippo adopted the imagery to describe the church as the city of God:

Let the city by all means remember that among the very enemy lurk some who will become citizens. Let her not assume even in their case that no harvest can be reaped while we bear their enmity until such time as they profess Christianity. Likewise among those now professing, the City of God has in her company during her pilgrimage in the world, joined to her by sharing the sacraments, some who will not be with her to share eternally in the lot of the saints. Some secretly and some openly there are who even in company with our enemies do not hesitate to murmur against God under whose standards they serve, at one time with our enemies crowding the theatres, at another the churches with us.²²

The medieval church differentiated the church militant on earth (*ecclesia militans*) from the perfect triumphant church in heaven (*ecclesia triumphans*).²³ This distinction was retained by Luther, albeit in a different fashion from his predecessors.²⁴ It also appears in Anglican formularies. Article 26 admits the imperfection in the person of its ministers:

²¹Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (Word Biblical Commentary 33A. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 395.

²²Augustine, *Civ.* 1.35. Translation from Augustine, *City of God, Volume I: Books 1–3*, trans. George E. McCracken (Loeb Classical Library 411. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 137–139.

²³Scott H. Hendrix, *Ecclesia in Via: Ecclesiological Developments in the Medieval Psalms Exegesis and the Dictata super Psalterium (1513–1515) of Martin Luther* (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought Vol. VIII. Leiden: Brill, 1974), 75–95.

²⁴Hendrix, *Ecclesia*, 216–242.

26. Of the Unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacraments.

*Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments, yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their Ministry, both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving the Sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith, and rightly, do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men. Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil Ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally, being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed.*²⁵

The italicized words need no further explanation: they are a bald statement of the compromised nature of the church, sitting in a key Anglican document. Yet, despite this, both clericalism and deference, on occasion, frustrated the disciplining of clerics.²⁶

The same rationale can be seen in the New Testament. Jesus' teaching avoids confusion between the Kingdom and the church or Christian movement in this realm. That the Kingdom of God is near but yet fully manifest is made clear in a swathe of passages across the New Testament writings, which, in turn, draw on the Old Testament (OT).²⁷ Claims that some texts involve a realized eschatology – that the Kingdom was already present in its fullness – briefly challenged this perception but have not stood the test of time. The consensus has shifted to an inaugurated eschatology, which recognizes that the death and resurrection of Jesus have inaugurated a new reality that is yet to be manifest in its fullness.²⁸ John O'Neill gives a succinct analysis of this state of affairs:

People can be rescued now from evil and can be destined to enter the kingdom (2 Tim 4:18; 2 Pet 1:11); this certainty can be so strong the future kingdom can be spoken of as already accomplished, in the way that the prophets spoke of what the Lord had promised to do as already accomplished (Col 1:13; cf. the aorists of the Magnificat). There are deluded people who think that the kingdom has come already, who believe they are full and rich and reigning; Paul wishes they were right, for then he would be reigning and troubles would be over (1 Cor 4:8; cf. 2 Tim 2:18). These people held exactly the same view of the kingdom as did everyone else at the time; they differed only in their perception of the world.²⁹

The same reality is recognized in Hebrews. Drawing on the Exodus narrative and Psalm 95, Hebrews 3:7–4:11 makes it clear that believers are on their way to the rest

²⁵“Thirty Nine Articles of Religion”, italics ours.

²⁶Collier, “50 Years”, 150, 152.

²⁷John C. O'Neill, “The Kingdom of God,” *Novum Testamentum* 35/2 (1993), 130–141, here at 132–134, 135–136.

²⁸Fergus J. King, *A Guide to St John's Gospel* (SPCK International Study Guide 51. London: SPCK, 2015), 288.

²⁹O'Neill, “The Kingdom of God”, 135.

(*katapausis*) promised by God, but have not yet grasped it, and still risk its forfeiture by their disobedience.³⁰

The description of the bronze serpent also draws on Exodus typology but makes a Christological rather than an eschatological point (John 3:14–15). In this image, believers look to Christ ‘lifted up’ (NRSVUE) for eternal life. The church is made up of the disciples in the desert, the location in which looking occurs. Such a reading admits not just the distinction between Jesus and the Church but also that if the church is a wilderness where abuse has taken place, it is also the place where healing, transformation, and restorative justice may be found.³¹ Revelation maintains the Exodus dynamic of journey, *safari* or pilgrimage. The Heavenly Jerusalem will appear in chapters 21–22 as the final act in God’s salvific work. Before that, the faithful people of God, from the very beginnings of the narrative flow in the letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2–3), are exhorted to adopt right behaviour and perseverance in faith. The repeated juxtaposition of earthly and heavenly visions, shot through with proleptic messages of hope for those who believe and persevere (e.g., Revelation 6:11; 7:9–12; 11:15–18; 14:1–5; 15:2–8), and the limits placed on destructive forces (Revelation 8:7–12; 9:4–5, 15) indicate that this final state has not yet come, but, as per O’Neill’s summary, may be viewed as ‘already accomplished’. A coherent view runs through all these: the church is not yet a perfect entity, even if identified as the Body of Christ. This prompts the reflective question: What is our understanding of the church – Church militant or Church triumphant? And should this change consider both Scripture and formularies?

Step 2: ‘Not in My Backyard?’ – The Scope and Extent of Abuse

If there is resistance to the implementation of SC as an imposition demanded by others because of their history and circumstance, it must be noted that the scope of abuse is much wider than, for example, historic sexual abuse. The broadest possible definition of what constitutes abuse should be foundational. Again, there may be resistance to this, as even universal agreement may be beyond reach. As Gail Wyatt and Stefanie Peters note, ‘Despite efforts to promote uniform criteria for defining abuse, there are still variations in the definitions adopted by individual researchers.’³² Theologians and Christians may be added to researchers.

³⁰George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic/Apollos, 2007), 919–995, here at 952–956; George W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 92–96.

³¹Fergus J. King and Isaac Poobalan. “The Bronze Serpent: Abuse, Trauma and the Lifted Healer in the Wilderness,” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 22 (2024), 176–196. For restorative justice, see below.

³²Gail Elizabeth Wyatt, and Stefanie Doyle Peters, “Issues in the Definition of Child Sexual Abuse in Prevalence Research,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 10/2 (1986), 231–240, here at 231; Kieran P. O. Hagan, “Emotional and Psychological Abuse: Problems of Definition,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 19/4 (1995), 449–461.

Yet, a degree of consensus is visible. Several different Anglican meetings, some predating the Canterbury-GAFCON divide, identified a wide range of behaviours that constituted abuse:

- bullying;
- concealment of abuse;
- cyber abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- financial abuse;
- gender-based violence;
- harassment;
- neglect;
- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse; and
- spiritual abuse.³³

Churches or provinces which are either unable or unwilling to recognize historic abuse of children as part of their experience are likely to find examples of at least one of the above within their anecdotal or judicial history. For example, the behaviour of Bishop Nolbert Kunonga of Harare (Zimbabwe), who would be excommunicated from the Church of Province of Central Africa after declaring unilateral independence from the province, included and condoned bullying and harassment.³⁴ Similarly, events in the Diocese of Victoria Nyanza (Tanzania) in the 1990s indicated abuses of authority.³⁵ Between 1990 and 1995, Ellen Cooke of the Episcopal Church (USA) misappropriated \$2.2 million.³⁶ Allegations of bullying led to the resignation of the Bishop of Ballarat (Australia) in 2013.³⁷ The Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney (Scotland) has yet to resolve allegations of bullying.³⁸

³³The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-9) meeting of 1993, subsequent ACC meetings, the Lambeth Conferences of 1998 and 2008, Primates' Meetings and specialist consultations all considered what constituted abuse; Garth Blake, "Enhancing the Safety of All Persons within the Anglican Communion: Initiatives of the Instruments of Communion," *Journal of Anglican Studies*, 19/2 (2021), 134–150, here at 135–143, list from 148.

³⁴Graham A. Duncan and Farai Mutmiri, "A Critical Historical Evaluation of the Formation of the Anglican Province of Zimbabwe (APZ) by Bishop Nolbert Kunonga," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiae* 44/2 (2018), 1–16; Paul H. Gundani, "A 'Decolonisation Project' that Went Awry: A Missio-Ecclesiological Interrogation of the Anglican Diocese of Harare during Bishop Nolbert Kunonga's Episcopacy: 2001–2007," *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 50/1 SE (2022), 27–43; Johann-Albrecht Meylahn and Joshua Musiyambiri, "Ubuntu Leadership in Conversation with Servant Leadership in the Anglican Church: A Case of Kunonga. (Nolbert Kunonga)," *HTS Teologiese Studies* 73/2 (2017): 1–6. Online at <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/4509/10370>. Accessed 03 April 2024.

³⁵Mkunga H. P. Mtingele, *Leadership and Conflict in African Churches: The Anglican Experience* (Studies in Episcopal and Anglican Theology Vol 11. New York NY/Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2017), 81, 84–85.

³⁶Gustav Niebuhr, "Misuse of Money totalled \$2.2 Million, Church Says," *The New York Times*, May 2, 1995. Online at <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/02/us/misuse-of-money-totaled-2.2-million-church-says.html>. Accessed 03 April 2024.

³⁷Barney Zwartz, "Departing Bishop Takes Hammer to Bitter Chalice," *The Age*, December 21, 2010. Online at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/departing-bishop-takes-hammer-to-bitter-chalice-20101220-1937q.html>. Accessed 03 April 2024.

³⁸Fergus J. King, "A Sair Trauchle?: Reflections on Process, Mediation and Reconciliation in Aberdeen & Orkney," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 21/3–4 (2021), 282–300.

On occasion, other factors make the identification of abuse problematic. Sometimes, matters of abuse flourish because societal norms proscribe their being mentioned or identified. Sexual violence can be a difficult matter to raise. The use of texts like 2 Samuel 13 coming from an authoritative text allows an introit to discussions of sexual violence in South African townships. Put crudely, ‘as the Bible can talk about this, so can we . . .’.³⁹ Conversely, such behaviours may hide in plain sight, even endorsed by societal norms and apparent support from authoritative traditions, which may include the Christian. Thus, Esther Mombo has denounced the normalization of violence against women in the populist *vumilia* (endure, ‘cannot[ing] passive submission’) theologies found in Kenya and elsewhere and the denial of such behaviours by Anglican leaders.⁴⁰ An answer to such matters lies in what has already been advocated: a critical dismantling of the interpretations used to justify such behaviours, based on close exegesis of the misappropriated texts.⁴¹ Yet again, it must be stated that local legal theory and practice provide a formative and even normative context which Scripture and tradition may challenge.

The Church can, as history tragically reveals, be part of the problem, not the solution.

Such phenomena prompt a first reflective question: ‘Which of the above categories of abuse are visible within the lived and historical experience?’ Discernment of any gives grounds to ask how the theory and practice of SC needs to be implemented.

Given the recognition of the brokenness of the church, attention must be paid to potential victims of harmful or abusive behaviour within the church. The gospel of Matthew uses the term ‘little ones’ three times (Matthew 10:40–42; 18:6, 10–14; 25:31–46; cf. Luke 17:1–4) with stern warnings against their mistreatment. Whilst used in conjunction with ‘child’, these verses should not be taken as restricted to juveniles or the mistreatment of children, common though it was in antiquity.⁴² The Matthean ‘little ones’ are difficult to identify clearly:

³⁹Gerald O. West, “Contextual Bible Study in South Africa: A Resource for Reclaiming and Regaining Land, Dignity, and Identity in South Africa” *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West & Musa Dube (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 595–610, here at 605–607.

⁴⁰Esther Mombo, “Resisting *vumilia* Theology; The Church and Violence against Women in Kenya” In *Anglicanism: A Global Communion*, ed. Andrew Wingate, Kevin Ward, Carrie Pemberton and Wilson Sitshebo (London: Mowbray, 2003), 219–224. *Vumilia* theology draws on texts like 2 Timothy 4:5 (*Bali wewe, uwe na kiasi katika mambo yote, vumilia mabaya, fanya kazi ya mhubiri wa Injili, timiliza huduma yako- Maandiko Katakatifu ya Mungu yaitwayo Biblia. Yaani Agano la Kale na Agano Jipya*. Union Version. Dodoma/Nairobi: Bible Societies of Tanzania/Kenya, 1997), formatting mine.

⁴¹A straightforward example is found in denying that Ephesians 5:21–24 be read in isolation without reference to 5:25–33. See further, Marc Girard, “Love as Subjection, the Christian ideal for Husbands and Wives: A Structuralist Study of Ephesians 5:21–33” in *Women Also Journeyed with Him: Feminist Perspectives on the Bible*, ed. Gerald Caron (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 125–152.

⁴²For example, René Clarijs, “Structural and Legalized Child Abuse in Europe, from Ancient Times until Now”, *Социална работа VI* (2018), 1–17; Christian Laes, *Children in the Roman Empire: Outsiders Within* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Stephen Walker, *Children Forsaken: Child Abuse from Ancient to Modern Times* (St Albans: Critical Publishing 2021), Chapter 1. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347342679_Child_abuse_in_ancient_times. Accessed 12 April 2024.

In 18:5–9, the exact identification of the little ones is unsettled. Possibilities include disciples, weaker disciples, simple believers, new believers, ordinary church members.⁴³

However designated, they are ‘in close contact with God’ and ‘valuable to God’.⁴⁴ The warnings against their mistreatment thus extend to all who are viewed as ‘little’ or potentially vulnerable. The phrase envisions the ‘little ones’ being the care of those who would identify as disciples and deserving of care. As the term focusses on those who are not numbered among the influential or powerful, it may well come to imply a special provision for those identified as the marginalized or subalterns, including women.⁴⁵ Thus, Craig Keener identifies them as Jesus’ representatives identifiable ‘as those who became like children – the epitome of dependence and powerlessness’.⁴⁶ As the actions extended to the ‘little ones’ match a number of the metaphors and actions used for Jesus’ response to the poor and marginalized, it does not seem unreasonable to similarly extend the scope of the term.⁴⁷ Thus, just as the definition of abuse needs to be widened, so does the range of potential victims. Disciples should care for their ‘little ones’, not abuse them.

Step 3: The Discernment of Safe People for a SC

Reference to Article 23 has indicated the need to scrutinize and discern those who would serve in holy orders. SC processes may expand this to include all church workers, lay and ordained, paid or voluntary. In some jurisdictions, the implementation of SC has meant that some with criminal convictions for offences and exclusion from the public life and worship of the church. Herein lies a potential difference between provincial responses: national legal statutes may set parameters for inclusion and exclusion. Churches must be aware of compliance with the parameters for the identified issues within their contextual and synodical/canonical jurisdiction. This might well mean that, within a province that covers more than one sovereign territory (e.g. The Episcopal Church, Central Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, Melanesia and the West Indies), regulations may demand local variations in practice within that one province. Legally required formal exclusion can be particularly challenging, given the fundamental Christian business of forgiveness and reconciliation. Perpetrators’ and victim/survivors’ access to word and sacrament must somehow be managed. Advice from the Corinthian

⁴³Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 218.

⁴⁴Matthew 18:10–14; Talbert, *Matthew*, 219.

⁴⁵Nant Hnin Hnin Aye, “A Postcolonial Study of Jesus’ Mission and the Matthean Community from the Context of Myanmar.” MPhil Thesis. University of Divinity (Melbourne, 2024), 156, 172.

⁴⁶Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 331, 449.

⁴⁷For the actions towards the poor, see Lazare Rukundwa and Andries van Aarde, “Revisiting Justice in the First Four Beatitudes in Matthew (5:3–6) and the Story of the Canaanite Woman (Mt 15:21–28): A Postcolonial Reading.” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* [Online] 61/3 (12 October 2005).

correspondence addresses, but cannot completely resolve, matters regarding modern contextual approaches to SC practices.⁴⁸

The OT includes several descriptions of leaders and leadership. Samuel warns Israel that choosing a king will end badly (1 Samuel 8:10–18). Later prophetic criticisms (as in Jeremiah 23's and Ezekiel 34's sustained reflection on leaders described as shepherds) outline both positive and negative examples of the desirable characteristics of leaders, kings, priests and prophets. Such critiques both address what might be distinguished today as secular and spiritual leaders – a distinction unknown in the original contexts. In so doing, they suggest what should be looked for in those who are to undertake leadership roles. Better to recognize and not appoint than to deal with the consequences of a bad choice.

OT imagery, particularly that which describes leaders or ministers using the metaphor of the shepherd, will underpin New Testament reflections and leadership (John 10:1–18; 1 Peter 5:1–4).⁴⁹ If the Scriptures advise of the dangers of leaders who are wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15), that surely demands care in the discerning of leaders, be they clerical or lay, so that wolves are not so vested. Further passages give indications of the desirable characteristics of ministers and leaders. Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–9 give culturally appropriate advice about the desirable characteristics for potential ministers and leaders. In some ways, these reflect a number of sociocultural norms which were in operation but add an important distinction:

Pastoral Paul recognizes the presumptions of power that pertain to free, wealthy, male householders but he ameliorates those with a theological understanding of those as *God's* house.⁵⁰

In others, these are countercultural: the writer ignores the popular wisdom about the potential for Cretans to do such work in advising Titus to appoint ministers (Titus 3:12). It is additionally worth noting that in Roman contexts, the seeming identification of the church leader as a head of household did not necessarily restrict such roles to males. The Latin terms are important:

Because *materfamilias* [lit. the female head of household] did not designate and estate owner, a woman estate owner could be designated a *paterfamilias* [lit.- a male head of household] in legal contexts where 'use of a word in the masculine is usually extended to cover both sexes' . . . The term *paterfamilias* reflected the social reality that typical estate owners were male, but it did not prescribe that they be male.⁵¹

⁴⁸See further in Step 4.

⁴⁹Duane F. Watson and Terrance Callan, *First and Second Peter* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 117.

⁵⁰Christopher R. Hutson, *First and Second Timothy and Titus* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 87.

⁵¹Hutson, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, 90.

The picture emerges of a leader as primarily ‘like a parent rather than a monarch or a business executive’.⁵² Any such picture should be predicated on the divine ideal. The injunction, ‘and call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father, the one in heaven’ (Matthew 23:9) could usefully be expanded beyond comments about honorifics to read that no earthly model of parenting should supplant the concept of Father as envisioned in the scriptural depictions of God.

Thus far, the materials described are unproblematic in their depiction of desirable and undesirable characteristics. They give the impression that there are clear criteria that may be recognized. Yet a critical reader might point to one instance in which a significant minister or leader within the church had a history that was noticeably problematic and could potentially disbar him from consideration of a role in ministry. That minister is Paul of Tarsus. His history, which he readily admits himself to have included the mistreatment of Christians (e.g., Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6),⁵³ might well be construed as a valid impediment to his potential leadership in the church. His example always raises the issues of how the process of conversion and restoration may be tested and his suitability for ministry validated in contrast to observable data about past experience.⁵⁴ Nor, it must be admitted, did the early church need to address modern standards of compliance. If ever an example of the difference between ancient and modern contexts was needed and that ancient practice cannot be simply applied in modern contexts, this is one. The texts suggest that Paul has proved that he has changed and that those involved discern that he is changed (e.g., Galatians 1:18–2:10). Paul, the persecutor, has become persecuted (Galatians 5:11; 6:12, 17).⁵⁵ Additionally, Paul is constantly held accountable and proves the apostolicity of his ministry by reference to the quality of his works and actions, by a series of counter-cultural claims that make virtues out of apparent weakness and failure rather than the more normative claims of his opponents (2 Corinthians 11:16–12:10).⁵⁶

There is one noticeable change that may affect the verdict of Paul’s suitability. His change in circumstances removes him from an environment in which he could exercise his previous authority: he is no longer a member of the Pharisaic establishment. He is removed from the means and opportunity to harm others in the previous manner. The instruments of his previous errors and temptations are gone. Discernment should never put people into temptation or leave them in its

⁵²Hutson, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, 99.

⁵³It should be noted that Paul’s description in Philippians 3:6 is more an apologetic piece of rhetoric than a confession, even if his prior blamelessness is ultimately viewed as worthless; James W. Thompson and Bruce W. Longenecker, *Philippians and Philemon* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 97, 118.

⁵⁴In the 1980s, the Church of Scotland negotiated the approval and appointment of James Nelson, who had been convicted and served a sentence for the murder of his mother, as a minister; Stuart Kelly, *The Minister and the Murderer: A Book of Aftermaths* (London: Granta, 2018).

⁵⁵Peter Oakes, *Galatians* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 54. Note that Paul’s identification of himself as a victim is based on a comparison of his life as a Pharisee and as a Christian. At no point does he adopt the claim, sometimes visible in the behaviour of abusers, that he was an abuser because he was a victim, or because of some force of circumstance (victim-claiming): King, “A Sair Trauchle?”, 391–392.

⁵⁶Raymond F. Collins, *Second Corinthians* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 224–227.

midst. The verses about the ‘little ones’ already mentioned (Matthew 10:40–42; 18:6, 10–14; 25:31–46; cf. Luke 17:1–4) may include a wider meaning: that people should not be put into positions which may tempt them to sin or cause harm; they are as much about preventing abuse as its consequences. A ‘little one’ should not be put in a place that tempts.

Step 4: Being and Doing SC

The practice of SC demands that some behaviours be eliminated and confined to the dustbin of history immediately. Thus, ‘damage limitation’ and the viewing of victims as ‘collateral damage’ to preserve the reputation of the church should have no place in organizations that claim to be Christ-like, selfless or dying to self in the service of God and the world:⁵⁷ institutional reputation is not a priority, and never should have been.⁵⁸ There is no place for clericalism or deference to clergy or ministers which obfuscates or obstructs the investigation or addressing of abuse.⁵⁹ Also to be set aside is the notion that matters of abuse constitute what Hannah Arendt called a ‘radical evil’: one which lies beyond forgiveness or punishment.⁶⁰ Arie Nadler has noted that both Desmond Tutu and Primo Levi walked back from such a term, calling instead for ‘radical empathy’, ‘radical forgiveness’ and ‘radical reconciliation’ as they addressed phenomena like the Rwandan genocide.⁶¹ Potential harm may also come from the tendency to scapegoat:

When the scapegoat mentality takes hold in a country it destroys any sense of proportion, threatens to banish the rule of law, tends to demonise those who are suspected, and frightens people from speaking the truth, lest they are accused of colluding with the accused.⁶²

More recent commentators have noted the prophetic elements in these words. Peter Collier raised a number of questions about the nature of allegations and the nature of precise juridical language from the bringing of allegations to the resolution of an inquiry, and their relation to civil or criminal proceedings.⁶³ Nicholas Coulton warned that, in England, concern about child sexual abuse had meant that the Church of England ‘was reversing the principle that people are innocent until

⁵⁷Fergus J. King, “More than a Vapid Sound: The Case for a Hermeneutic of Resonance,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 148 (2014), 83–98, here at 97–98.

⁵⁸Porter, *The New Scapegoats*, 5–6, 73.

⁵⁹IICSA, *The Anglican Church–Safeguarding in the Church of England and the Church in Wales* (Crown Copyright, October 2020), p vi; cited in Collier, “50 Years”, 150–151.

⁶⁰Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961); Marguerite La Caze, “Promising and Forgiveness,” in *Hannah Arendt: Key Concepts*, ed. Patrick Hayden (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014): 209–222, here at 213.

⁶¹Arie Nadler, “Intergroup Reconciliation: Definitions, Processes, and Future Directions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Intergroup Conflict*, ed. Linda R. Tropp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 291–308, here at 303–304.

⁶²Gerard W. Hughes, *God in All Things* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2003), 228. See further for such phenomena within Anglicanism; Porter, *The New Scapegoats*, 6–12.

⁶³Collier, “50 Years”, 154–160.

proved guilty'.⁶⁴ Measures introduced affected the care of those against whom allegations had been brought and also alleged victims: clerics and officials might not be allowed contact with them.⁶⁵ David Jasper raised concerns about the handling of historic abuses and was moved to comment:

As long as there is any hint that anyone is found to be guilty, or suffer the destruction of character through the undue haste of the church to defend itself institutionally in the public eye, before their innocence or guilt have been established by the due and unprejudiced processes of law, then none of us is safe.⁶⁶

These, naturally, speak into the English legal context but raise questions that each church should consider within its own legal jurisdiction, namely, how its handling of such matters might raise ethical and moral, not just legal, questions, as well as a potential impact on pastoral care.

Much of the above focuses on criminal and civil modern contexts. However, the behaviour of churches in addressing such matters also has a theological context and warns about the use of ecclesial or spiritual authority. The critical passage here is Acts 5:1–11. Here, Peter's use of his authority leads to the deaths of the erring Ananias and Sapphira. His use of authority in this way is not repeated in Acts. On subsequent occasions, wrongdoers are punished in a way that leads to repentance and restoration, not death. The text does not tell us anything about Peter's motivation and whether the consequences were intended or unintended. It does reveal a context in which a bearer of authority was considered to hold power, effectively, over life and death and that the apostles, now aware of the effects that their actions may have, learn more caution in investigating and judging wrongdoing.⁶⁷ Those addressing abuses today need to be equally aware of the potential consequences of their investigations for both victims and perpetrators. Investigations must be made, but one in which either victim or abuser can no longer participate because of self-harm or even suicide will ultimately be a tragic failure, not least because a final full disclosure or resolution may be rendered impossible. If an alleged perpetrator ends their own life, retribution might have occurred, but restorative justice may well be thwarted by silence. If a victim takes their own life, the systems and process have obviously failed their duty of care. The heirs of Peter need to learn from his experience.

The ecclesial setting must also consider the nature of justice. Popular opinion will often look to retributive justice, the idea of a due penalty being paid for an offence committed. Of itself, this demands that justice be administered properly. This immediately raises an issue about the burden of proof. This may vary, for example, between criminal and civil courts, and then ecclesiastical investigations may set a

⁶⁴Nicholas Coulton, "Assessing the Risk," *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 18 (2016), 316–335, here at 316.

⁶⁵Coulton, "Assessing the Risk", 320.

⁶⁶David Jasper, "The Case of Bishop George Bell," *Scottish Episcopal Church Institute Journal* 5/1 (2021), 31–37, here at 36. These remarks could refer to either of alleged victims or perpetrators.

⁶⁷For a fuller exposition; Fergus J. King, "'Pointing the Bone': Sorcery Syndrome and Uncanny Death in Acts 5:1–11," *Irish Biblical Studies* 30/1 (2012), 12–34.

different benchmark.⁶⁸ Peter Collier has raised concerns about what he deems a 'lack of clarity'⁶⁹ and the disciplinary actions which follow in some SC schemes. He suggests as a fundamental principle that:

the test must surely be whether there is evidence capable of belief that something has occurred that either has caused significant harm or that puts someone at risk of such harm.⁷⁰

Such a broad principle is flexible enough to be tailored to local legal contexts and requirements. SC needs to be firmly grounded in fair legal principles and practice, and those administering such schemes need to recognize such matters. When, as Coulton notes, the *zeitgeist* resists this, there is a need for the church to act justly even if it may appear counterintuitive.

Additionally, prophetic ministries may be exercised when Scripture is used to bring into light behaviours deemed inappropriate for public discourse⁷¹ or by naming and shaming misappropriations of scripture and proof-texting used to justify abuse or its tolerance. Thus, pronouncements like those called out by Esther Mombo⁷² may be resisted by the kind of solid exegetical work of scholars like Thomas C. Oden. He notes of texts cited to demand the submission of women from the Pastoral Epistles that:

The text says nothing at all about to whom women are to be attentive. It is a large leap of logic to assume here that women are to be submissive to men. To learn tranquillity with all attentiveness is to learn that tranquillity from God through humility. The obedience is to God, not to patriarchy.⁷³

Just as exegesis may challenge such views, it also challenges popular notions of justice. The imperatives of the gospel demand restorative justice. This is well described as:

a process in which all the stakeholders affected by an injustice have the opportunity to discuss the consequences of the injustice and what might be done to put them right.⁷⁴

Here, again, it must be stressed that this paper can only point to general principles or contexts. The theory and practice of restorative justice will always need to be

⁶⁸Collier, "50 Years", 156–158.

⁶⁹Collier, "50 Years", 156.

⁷⁰Collier, "50 Years", 158.

⁷¹West "Contextual Bible Study in South Africa", 605–607.

⁷²See Step 2; Mombo, "Resisting *vumilia* Theology", 222.

⁷³Thomas C. Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus* (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 97; see further, Fergus J. King and Dorothy A. Lee, "Lost in Translation: Rethinking Words about Women in 1–2 Timothy," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 74/1 (2021), 52–66.

⁷⁴John Braithwaite, "The Fundamentals of Restorative Justice," in *A Kind of Mending: Restorative Justice in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Sinclair Dinnen (Canberra: ANU Press, 2010), 35–44, here at 35.

fine-tuned for particular contexts. The general concept may be identified within scripture. The bronze serpent of John 3:14–15 exemplifies its practice:

Restorative justice seeks to heal all parties involved in an offense: victims, offenders, and communities. It does this by considering three basic conceptions. The first, encounter: bringing all ‘stakeholders’ – offender, victim, and other affected members of a community – together in various configurations of a mediated conversation to discuss not only what happened, but what contributed to it and what resulted from it. The second is reparation, the group of stakeholders decides on what can be done to repair the harm . . . Finally, transformation, the stakeholders work together to find processes that allow life to be lived in a way that makes the offense less likely to occur again.⁷⁵

The practice of restorative justice extends to those who have committed sin and/or been involved in the harm of others and provides a reminder that such errors are not a reason for permanent exclusion from the means of salvation, including sacraments:

Matthew 18:15–17, often used to support such practice really deals rather with expulsion from the community rather than exclusion from the eucharist. Those excluded are treated as non-believers, and the practice is a temporary measure intended to bring about repentance: a corrective measure. Similarly 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 is more about expulsion from the community than excommunication from the eucharist. Whether or not the punishment is considered as illness or physical death, a curse, or the excising of one’s physical (worldly) nature, the banishment is temporary rather than permanent, designed to save the malefactor from ultimate destruction.⁷⁶

Portions of scripture suggest even more counter-cultural behaviours be adopted. Exodus 21:13; Deuteronomy 4:41–43, 19:1–7; Numbers 35: 6, 11–15; Joshua 20:1–9 and I Chronicles 6:57–60, 67–70 all describe cities to which homicides were able to flee for sanctuary.⁷⁷ As such, they indicate a divine concern for environments in which justice, not vengeance, may be observed. The descriptions share a common qualification: that of a killing committed without intent. Two points need to be made. The first is that the cities do not offer an opportunity to escape justice; they offer a place for ‘true justice’ to be served.⁷⁸ Therefore, the ministry of the church, adopting the role of sanctuary, is to enable that to happen.

⁷⁵Allison R. deForest, *Lifting Up the Serpent in the Gospel of John: The Cross as Restorative Justice* (Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2020), 5–6.

⁷⁶Fergus J. King, “Tragedy and Ethics: Responding to the Crisis of Historic Sexual Abuse,” *Anglican Theological Review* 99/3 (2017), 461–477, here at 465–466.

⁷⁷A. Graeme Auld, “Cities of Refuge in Israelite Tradition,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 10 (1978), 26–40, here at 26–27. The Rt Revd Dr Humberto Maiztégui Gonçalves, Bishop of Porto Alegre, pointed out the potential relevance of this material in a C-TEAC online meeting (6th March 2024).

⁷⁸Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., “Rest for the Wary: Cities of Refuge and Cycles of Violence” in *Encountering Violence in the Bible*, ed. Markus Zehnder and Hallvard Hagelia (The Bible in the Modern World, 55. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 165–177, here at 175.

The second is about the qualification. It may be argued that abuse happens with a great deal of intent in terms of the deceit and preparation that allow it to take place. Thus, the giving of sanctuary is redundant. But is this so from a Christian perspective? The words attributed to Jesus in Luke 23:34 draw heavily on texts associated with the Day of Atonement and the evaluation of sinful behaviour as either intentional or not. They show Jesus describing those responsible for his death as unaware of what they are doing, and so suggest God's evaluation of human behaviour as unintentional.⁷⁹ It may be hard teaching to live out, but it suggests that the attitude of Christ is that which governs the treatment of abusers. None of which is in any way to diminish the magnitude of any offences committed, but rather to speak of the measure of God's forgiveness.

SC demands the implementation of pastoral care as well as a search for restorative justice. This has not always been handled well, as has already been indicated. Conflicts of interest may well arise when church bodies attempt to provide both justice and pastoral care and delegate such matters to the same ministers or carers. A further set of potential conflicts arises from attempting to care for both victims and perpetrators. Even the most even-handed practitioner will struggle to avoid the perception of being biased one way or another. Perceived conflicts of interest and loyalties must be minimized and avoided wherever possible. That will usually involve the spreading of pastoral and judicial matters across a number of office-bearers, some of whom may be better placed to address such concerns from outside local church bodies.

Care for victims needs to address spiritual as well as physical wounding (the loss of trust, power and voice, as well as the effects of violence and desecration) through listening, healing, empowerment and the recovery of self-worth.⁸⁰ Specifically, Christian material such as Resurrection may assist these processes.⁸¹ Churches should be able to provide, not just utter platitudes about, support for victims and survivors of abuse.⁸² Care for perpetrators includes navigating the shame, guilt and cognitive distortions that impede rehabilitation and reparation.⁸³ Likewise, care for ministers needs to be part of the practice of SC. Ministers may suffer from burnout, secondary or vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue: care for them involves recognizing the psychological and environmental factors that may reduce the

⁷⁹Fergus J. King, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do': Reflections on Luke 23:34a, *Kol Nidre* and the Atonement," *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* XXIV (2010), 134–160. A similar reckoning of culpability is found in Acts 3:17; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 207, esp. fn. 3.

⁸⁰Jean-Guy Nadeau and Karlijn Demasure, "Spiritual Wounds and Pastoral Care for Victims and Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse," In *Safeguarding: Reflecting on Child Abuse, Theology and Care*, ed. Karlijn Demasure, Katharina A. Fuchs, and Hans Zollner (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 81–103.

⁸¹Hildegund Kiel, "Resurrection as an Art of Living: Restoring Faith after Abuse," In *Safeguarding: Reflecting on Child Abuse, Theology and Care*, ed. Karlijn Demasure, Katharina A. Fuchs, and Hans Zollner (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 105–126.

⁸²Collier, "50 Years", 151–152.

⁸³Stéphane Joulain, "From Shame to Guilt: A Journey through Cognitive Distortions," In *Safeguarding: Reflecting on Child Abuse, Theology and Care*, ed. Karlijn Demasure, Katharina A. Fuchs, and Hans Zollner (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 127–149.

chance of harm, as well as strategies to promote self-care.⁸⁴ Lastly, there needs to be an institutional dimension: churches as institutions need to learn from mistakes, hone their theory and practice of SC and do all they can to minimize abusive and harmful behaviours at every step: identifying ministers, forming them, ensuring accountability in practice and, should abuse occur, in dealing with all affected parties, ensuring transparency and, finally, adopting better practices based on lessons learned. Succumbing repeatedly to the same shortcomings is to be avoided. Swahili wisdom criticizes those who do not learn from their mistakes or history:

Kilichoniama jana nikaona uchunguwe hakinitambai tena

That which bit me yesterday and hurt me, does not crawl over me a second time.⁸⁵

These remarks may appear frustratingly brief. This is a necessity to avoid foisting one culture's strategies onto all as a prescriptive norm. What is needed at the local level is the identification and implementation of culturally appropriate strategies that address such matters.

A last set of questions addressing SC are raised by Muriel Porter in her *The New Scapegoats*. These focus particularly on the Anglican Church of Australia and the standards and behaviours demanded in its code of conduct, *Faithfulness in Service*. Some of her remarks may be viewed as contentious: not everyone would agree with her comments that 'chastity in singleness' and 'faithfulness in marriage' indicate a 'harsh standard'.⁸⁶ She is, however, on firmer and less controversial ground, in noting two further phenomena. The first is the tacit and unexamined prejudice that power is concentrated in the hands of the clergy:

the assumption that the clergy always and everywhere hold 'greater resources, respect, power and trust' than every parishioner is nonsense. It is offensive to competent adult parishioners at every level, let alone the lawyers, accountants, professors, medical doctors and so on who inhabit the church's pews. In far too many cases, of course, powerful lay people – sometimes referred to as the parish 'owners' – dominate and control both the priest and the parish. The bullying and undermining of clergy in parish life by some parishioners is a sad fact of life in the Anglican Church.⁸⁷

⁸⁴Judith Malette, "Self-care for Helping Professionals," in *Safeguarding: Reflecting on Child Abuse, Theology and Care*, ed. Karlijn Demasure, Katharina A. Fuchs, and Hans Zollner (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 173–195.

⁸⁵SWAHILI PROVERBS: METHALI ZA KISWAHILI, "Abuse" 42. Centre for African Studies. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. <http://swahiliproverbs.afirst.illinois.edu/abuse.html>. Accessed 12 January 2023. See King and Poobalan, "The Bronze Serpent", 183.

⁸⁶Porter, *The New Scapegoats*, 39.

⁸⁷Porter, *The New Scapegoats*, 44.

The second is related but focuses on the issue of fiduciary trust⁸⁸ over ‘competent, mature lay people’:⁸⁹

In Anglican polity, as in the Protestant tradition, lay people are, together with the ordained, part of the ‘priesthood of all believers’... [The underlying theology of fiduciary trust] is also insulting to competent adult women and men. It effectively declares that they are not capable of taking equal responsibility for their relationships; it infantilises them...⁹⁰

Thus, measures meant to provide protection do so at great cost: they strip believers of their autonomy. ‘Little ones’, however, identified in particular contexts, may come to Christ as little children, child-like, but this never means that they should be treated as if childish. These remarks suggest that the practice of SC must engage with a cross-section of issues and matters: legal, ethical, pastoral and theological. They are to be shaped by the specific priorities of the gospel: justice, healing and restoration for all. These must be delivered to all victims, perpetrators and bystanders.

Conclusions

These short remarks cannot give every Anglican church or province precise instructions for exercising SC. What they can do is suggest some broad principles based on our Anglican theological authorities, such as Scripture and tradition, which speak to the scope of such work and its necessity within the life of the church. This involves the development of an ethos that recognises the reality of abuse as an ever-present threat and reality and attempts to limit, manage and address its scope and consequences – whatever the cost.

⁸⁸This is not to deny that clergy have a duty of care, and certainly never have licence to abuse or harm, but does ask whether their relationships are analogous to those of other professional groups; Porter, *The New Scapegoats*, 12, 41.

⁸⁹Porter, *The New Scapegoats*, 44.

⁹⁰Porter, *The New Scapegoats*, 42, 44.