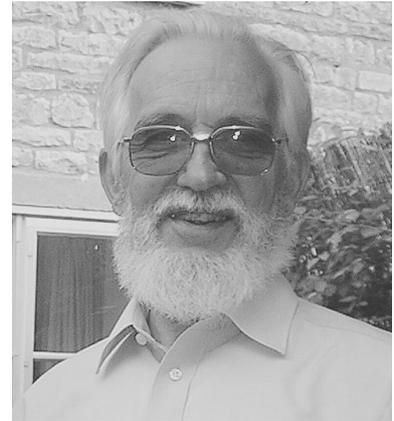


## Peter H Nancarrow, St Mary the Virgin, Ketton, Rutland Deanery

I am offering myself as a candidate in this election because of my strong belief that the Church of England is facing a number of serious challenges in this decade, and my wish to be able to contribute to the debate in General Synod, whether in voting, in formal speeches or in informal discussions.

My background in the Church of England includes membership of PCCs in Rochester, Ely & Peterborough dioceses, serving as churchwarden in Rochester and Ely, on Deanery synods in Ely and Peterborough (in Ely being Deanery Secretary) and the diocesan synods of Ely and Peterborough. I stood for General Synod in the recent by-election in the diocese of Peterborough.



In my working life I have had a wide range of experience, starting from my education as a scientist and qualification as an Intellectual Property lawyer. In my middle years I read the degree course in Oriental Studies at Cambridge, where I spent 16 years in total, teaching Classical Chinese and Chinese history, and researching aspects of computational linguistics. Later I was involved in IT project management in international R & D projects, setting up two major consortia to establish basic principles for digital copyright management systems. Most recently I was the Webmaster at the Cambridge Newspapers group. In my retirement I have taught Mandarin to GCSE level. I have also written books on Chinese history and philosophy.

However, my main motivation to stand for election springs from my encounter with formal theology through my wife's theological training and her ordained ministry. Put simply, I believe that the Church of England, along with many other Christian churches, is facing a deep and rapidly widening credibility gap with the general, increasingly un-churched, community, including, sadly, parents accompanying their young families to child-friendly services. This is because the church is seen to be more concerned to maintain centuries-old traditions than to take into account what is now generally known, either about the way the world is, or more specifically, what is now known about the origins and significance of the biblical books on which our faith is built.

The gap has been widening since at least the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as a result of the scientific advances which began a century or more earlier, and the scholarly study of the biblical texts which began in Tübingen in the 1830s and has developed ever since, fuelled in more recent years by the documents found at Nag Hammadi and other middle eastern sites.

I am not alone in my concern about the implications of this gap. In the 1960s, Bishop William Wand commented in his autobiography that a fundamentalist view of scripture was untenable, and forty years later Bishop David Jenkins wrote that dependence on mediæval and earlier definitions led to the Christian message being incredible to the world at large. His concern was expressed in the same book in a vivid image: “. . . *what an animal ethologist once told me about chimpanzees. When a troupe gets into a tizzy over some outside threat . . . they calm themselves down by turning their backs on the world and picking nits off one another*”.

Please help me to serve the church.

*Peter Nancarrow* .

NOTE:

For those interested, the references overleaf are contained in the following publications:

Extract from *Changeful Page: the Autobiography of William Wand 1965*:

“The second turning point was at one's entry into the university, or more exactly towards the end of the first year when I began specialising in theology. I had been brought up in the old-fashioned, verbal-inspiration view of the Bible and had been quite ready to take up arms against the 'higher critics'; but a fortnight's reading was sufficient to show me how untenable was the fundamentalist position.”

However, in his next paragraph, Wand writes,

“the theologian's work has become so highly specialised that one can hardly expect even the intelligent layman to achieve an adequate grasp of it.”

This reluctance to reveal what lies behind the biblical texts is not unrelated to the increasing 'credibility gap' which so concerns me.

Extract from *The Calling of a Cuckoo: not quite an autobiography, David Jenkins 2002*:

“Secondly, their understanding of the real world in which we all lived had to be a 'world apart' from mine. The speaker's position assumed that his measure of verity – that certain beliefs were guaranteed as literal fact simply because they were recorded in the Bible – would still carry authority under the common assumptions of present ways of thinking today.

“In other words, in that [General Synod] discussion group that afternoon I was forcibly struck by the conviction that traditionalists' dependence on mediæval and even earlier authoritative definitions was bound to trap them in simple credulity, while making the Christian message seem even more incredible to the world at large”.

Whatever one's view of certain controversial aspects of Dr Jenkins' theology, his observation pinpoints very precisely what I see as the Church's problem.

I believe that Anglicanism already has its own blueprint to address that problem, in the three-fold model of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century reformer Richard Hooker, who described Anglicanism as supported by Scripture, Tradition and Reason. Hooker's real contribution was to include Reason as the essential third component of the Anglican approach. I believe that if the Church of England embraces Hooker's analysis, we may be able to close the credibility gap and move forward.

I expect to attend the hustings in Kettering on 24<sup>th</sup> September, and will be happy to answer questions on that occasion.