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Ecclesiology in the Church of England: an historical and theological examination of the role of ecclesiology in the church of England since the second world war

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Abstract

From a 'postliberal' perspective I argue that there is no means by which divine truth can incontrovertibly be known or directly understood and communicated. However a communitarian and historicist approach locates the experience and the expression of the engagement with God in the community of the church. The central problematic of ecclesiology is the discernment of authentic continuity with Jesus Christ in the context of churches which are divided, sinful, limited, and variously ordered.

I have examined one strand of Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology as a case study of an attempt to assert a particular ecclesiology as true for the whole church. Second, I have traced the steps by which the Church of England gained legal authority over its central concerns of worship, doctrine and self-government, in order to sift out ecclesiological ideas implicit in its decision making. In these two chapters my focus has been to articulate an account of the idea of how God has been and should be made manifest in the structures and ordering of the Church of England. Third, I have evaluated the way ecclesiology has been deliberately used as an element of the legitimation of change in the church in particular in the Turnbull report.

From these sources I have tried to extrapolate an overview of the actual role ecclesiology has played in the contemporary Church of England. I predict that ecclesiology will grow more significant in the Church of England, and that this will be beneficial, but to do so optimally it requires reinforcement with a stronger critical apparatus.

I conclude that the determination of authentic continuity with Jesus Christ will not be found in the articulation and application of propositional divine truths, but in creative and dynamic engagement with God expressed and embodied in the community of the Church.

Chapter 1

Introduction

'... the structure had never been pulled down altogether and started again from the foundations, because, as with a medieval family mansion, they felt it had something about it, with its tradition and even its asymmetrical and inexact constitution, which they would be sorry to lose.'[1]

Ecclesiology has not had a high standing in the Church of England[2]. Yet as the church progressively disentangles itself from subservience to the state, and as ecumenical discussion becomes more pervasive, it is probable that ecclesiology will gain a higher profile.

This thesis will explore some of the roles that ecclesiology has played in the post-war Church of England. It will examine, in chapter 3, a particular strand of Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology, leading to the publication of *The Apostolic Ministry*[3],

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[1] **The Archdeacon of Wisbech** describing patronage in an image which could equally have been applied to the Church of England as a whole *Church Assembly Report of Proceedings*, (Vol. XXX, No. 3, Autumn 1950) p. 237.

References will henceforth be to *'Proceedings'*, *'Journal'* for the *York Journal of Convocation*; *'Chronicle'* for the *Chronicle of Convocation* [Canterbury]; and *General Synod Proceedings* for the *General Synod Report of Proceedings*, with dates and page numbers.

[2] I suspect that a number of mutually reinforcing reasons have marginalised ecclesiology in the Church of England. First, establishment has been a substitute: a sufficient answer to the question 'what kind of church is the Church of England' has been, 'a Church by law Established'. Second, the potential of ecclesiological debate to define theological grounds of validation of the church implied the probability of theological criteria by which to judge the political settlement. Third, as a national church, the Church of England sought to avoid confessionalism with its implications of excluding the uncommitted and the danger of internal division. Fourth (in another meaning of 'national church') the complacent idea of the Church of England as quintessentially English was expressed not least in praise of pragmatism and suspicion of systematic theology.

[3] K.E. Kirk (ed.), *The Apostolic Ministry, Essays on The History and The Doctrine of the Episcopacy*, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1946; reprinted with a new Foreword by A.M. Farrer, 1957).

and the debate which ensued. This chapter will focus primarily on hermeneutic questions examining both the theoretical claims of the theologians concerned, and their use of evidence to substantiate their ecclesiologies. Chapter 4 will trace some of the steps by which, between 1947 and 1974, the Church of England slowly expropriated from the state authority over its own affairs, especially in worship, doctrine, and self-government. The primary focus of this chapter will be on questions of the location, distribution and control of power and authority in the church. Chapter 5 will look briefly at elements of the revision of the settlement of the 1960s and 1970s and in more detail at the role of ecclesiology in the Turnbull report[4] and subsequent debate. Chapter 2 sets out the theoretical assumptions which inform this thesis, whilst the final chapter seeks to draw these threads together, and to suggest ways in which the role of ecclesiology in the Church of England might be enhanced.

The starting point of this thesis is the perception that, in the period since the second World War, the Church of England has undergone a sea-change in its structures, its place in the nation, and in its self-perception. At the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II the Church of England stood at the zenith of its post-war self-assurance and its standing in the nation. The event

> '... undoubtedly brought together the Church of England, the monarchy, and the nation in an act of sacralization, witnessed for the first time by a television audience numbered in millions.'[5]

Archbishop Fisher received a standing ovation at the following meeting of the Church Assembly. The church was strong, purposeful, relatively united, and appeared to have settled itself securely into the reconstruction of post-war Britain.

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[4] *Working as One Body, The Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Organisation of the Church of England,* [The Turnbull Report] (London, Church House Publishing, 1995).

[5] **G. Davie**, *Religion in Britain since 1945 - Believing without Belonging* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1994) p. 31.

By the end of the 1950s there was an audible rumbling of nascent storms. Some of the writing surrounding the Lambeth Conference in 1958 was critical of the church[6]. But these were straws in the wind. The 1960s began with great optimism for constructive change in the Church and a correlated fear of apparently inevitable change. The decade was in fact marked by a drastic loss of adherents of the Church of England and a parallel collapse in its public standing[7] from both of which it has never recovered. From its negotiations with the state a new settlement emerged in which the Church of England became a little more distinct from both state and nation. It gained control over more of its affairs, discovered a greater variety of worship, and continued to use legislation to control its affairs, albeit that this was sometimes at odds with a more pastoral ethos amongst the clergy. At the start of the twenty-first century there is an amorphous sense that the Church of England is a new creation, but that it lacks confidence as to the shape, direction, or potential it might or should have.

> 'Like Britain, only much later in the twentieth century and on into the twenty-first, the Church of England has to struggle with the unwelcome genie from the bottle of a different self-knowledge, the discovery that it may not be quite what, or who, it used to think it was.'[8]

In the context of a changing Church of England I had initially assumed that ecclesiology might provide a theological beacon, illuminating the identity of the

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[6] Daniel Jenkins identified several books published before the Lambeth Conference of 1958, all of which had a 'note of self-criticism'. He singled out in particular **D. M. Paton (ed.)**, *Essays in Anglican Self-Criticism* (London, SCM Press, 1958). **D.T. Jenkins**, *Ungentlemanly Conduct or Anglicans Criticising Themselves* in *Frontier*, Vol. 1, No. 3, July 1958, pp. 199-201

[7] 'In the country as a whole, though not everywhere to the same degree, the Church of England is facing a loss of membership and the attrition of its power and influence.' The opening words to **L. Paul**, *The Deployment and Payment of the Clergy* (Church Information Office, London, 1964) p. 11.

Adrian Hastings detailed a number of the themes which embodied the sudden shift of mood in which '... neo-traditionalism crumbled in ridicule and the pendulum swung rather wildly to the other extreme, the glorification of the modern.' **A. Hastings** *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985* (London, Collins, 1986) p. 581. He dates the shift '... reasonably well to 1962-4.' *ibid.* p. 582, and summarises the changes as '... a crisis of "secularization", that much used and much abused word.' *ibid.* p. 585.

[8] **M. Furlong**, *CofE the State its in* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2000) p. 3.

church, and providing a framework for systematic analysis and normative theological criteria which would together assist the ceaseless task of mediating and managing change whilst guaranteeing authentic continuity with Jesus Christ. In Stephen Sykes' words,

> 'What is required is a Christian doctrine of the Church, making claim to evangelical and catholic truth, which Anglicans, who are as a matter of fact a distinct denomination in Christendom, can accept as true. Whether such a doctrine strikes other people as 'distinctively Anglican' is for them to judge. What is needed is an understanding of the Church corresponding to the norms of catholic doctrine as Anglicans believe them to be, and which makes sense of their witness, experience and hope.'[9]

I conclude, however, that these assumptions were misplaced and the aspirations unattainable. First, in a plural church there is and can be no single ecclesiology, but there are multiple ecclesiologies each of which contributes to the conflicts endemic to a church.

> '... it seems to me, even from an examination of the biblical evidence, that the phenomenon of internal theological criticism and argument is intrinsic to the life of the Christian Church; and that it must learn to worship God and engage in Christian mission *at the same time* as it argues its way through difficult problems.'[10]

Second, ecclesiology is not sufficient alone to inform decision making in the ordering of the church. Churches draw on a range of sources to guide their decisions, from management theory to financial constraints, and theology is but one strand in these complex processes. Furthermore, ecclesiology is evoked in the conscious management of change, but a church is a part of (though distinct from) wider society, and its leaders cannot always control change.

Conversely, by providing a theological framework capable of legitimating change and adaptation, ecclesiology is also necessary to the church. In the absence of

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[9] S.W. Sykes, *Richard Hooker and the Ordination of Women*, (1990) reprinted in *Unashamed Anglicanism* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995) pp. 82-83.

[10] S.W. Sykes, *Authority in the Anglican Communion* (1981) reprinted in *Unashamed Anglicanism*, p. 156; italics in original.

ecclesiology as the exposition of the significance of the church there is no framework which can generate criteria adequate to judge whether any particular proposal or development, or a church as a whole, is in authentic continuity with Jesus Christ.

Two sub-themes emerged from this enquiry which have wider implications. The first is the recurrence of the assertion that the Church of England was not a democracy. In its negative phrasing (and in the absence of a positive affirmation of the nature of the church) this assertion exposed considerable ambiguity around two interwoven themes: the polity of the church and the reception of developments in faith. I suggest that these issues will cause, and be the subject of, considerable dissension in the Church of England as the church continues to disengage itself from its subordination to the State, and as it discovers and creates for itself an identity as a more autonomous body.

Second, a complex constellation of ideas around authority, order, conflict and control, power, uniformity and diversity, rumble through every issue of this thesis. There is an inherent compulsion to order in the life of the church which is substantiated in its structures and patterns of governance. Yet there is also an irresolvable tension between those who desire to impose a certain order on the church and the political reality that in a divided church no group can unreservedly impose its theology on the rest of the church. The imposition of order on the church is always limited by pragmatic considerations.

Given its low standing in the Church of England I suggest that, if ecclesiology is to play a greater role, it first requires a stronger theoretical framework. Contending ecclesiologies would benefit from laying bare their philosophical and theoretical assumptions; analyses of power and authority need to be sophisticated (and, as a first step, these notoriously elusive concepts require clear definition); and the selection, interpretation and use of evidence must be rigorous and open to

critical scrutiny. I do not suggest that this will be a path to greater unity, quite the reverse, but I suggest that as the Church of England discovers a new sense of its self and its place in society, ecclesiology may play a more overt role in both criticising and strengthening the church.

Chapter 2

Theory and Methodology

'Or take the idea of strength involved in the fear that authority is breaking down. It is the strength of our generation's values and beliefs; we want them to last, but they don't because our bodies don't. In society as in private life, we want a sense of stability and order, and these benefits a regime possessed of order is supposed to bring. This desire appears in the monuments of public life: massive churches, shrines, government buildings, all symbols that the ruling order of power will last beyond the generation which now rules and the generation which now obeys.'[1]

Ecclesiology is a theological discourse centred in the practical realities of the historical church. I suggest that its central problematic is the question of how a church can legitimately claim and give substance to authentic continuity with Jesus Christ, in the face of the fact that churches are divided, sinful, limited and variously ordered. Accordingly, in its methodology, ecclesiology must seek to weave together the divine and the mundane in a manner which is sufficiently precise as to be applicable to a church's incessant day-to-day decision making.

The theoretical axioms[2] of this thesis may be described as 'postliberal' as summarised by Alister McGrath:

'... postliberalism rejects both the traditional Enlightenment appeal to 'universal rationality' and the liberal assumption of an immediate religious experience common to all humanity. Arguing that all thought

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[1] R. Sennett, *Authority*, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1980; London, Faber and Faber, 1993) p. 18.

[2] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to justify this choice of starting point. However I seek to outline some of the consequences of these assumptions in the argument and analysis which follows.

and experience is historically and socially mediated, postliberalism bases its theological programme on a return to religious traditions, whose values are inwardly appropriated. Postliberalism is thus anti-foundational (in the sense that it rejects the notion of a universal foundation of knowledge), communitarian (in that it appeals to the values, experiences and language of a community, rather than prioritizing those of the individual), and historicist (in that it insists upon the importance of traditions and their associated historical communities in the shaping of experience and thought).'[3]

To explore the role and potential of ecclesiology I have constructed a framework by which to approach both historical evidence and theoretical reflection in a moderately consistent manner. This has only been partially successful. The framework is a little disjointed and is only unevenly applicable to the different types of evidence. It is, moreover, no more than an heuristic device, its elements are not cleanly distinguished in practice, but are mutually reinforcing and serve to inform and reinforce complex patterns of political and ecclesiastical allegiance.

The framework comprises, first, an ontological and epistemological enquiry, predicated on the assumption that epistemological convictions are entailed in ontological assertions. Second, I have explored themes of power and authority. Third, I have considered some hermeneutical questions, looking especially at the selection, interpretation and use of evidence[4] in formulating ecclesiological proposals. Finally, I have sought to draw these elements together to begin to address the questions of authentic continuity with Jesus Christ.

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[3] A. E. McGrath, *The Renewal of Anglicanism*, (London, SPCK, 1993) p. 132.

[4] A limitation of this thesis is that I have concentrated very largely on historical evidence and have neglected biblical and other sources of evidence.

In this chapter I have looked at each element of the framework in turn, arguing against an essentialist approach and proposing a communitarian[5] and historicist[6] alternative. My argument against essentialist[7] theology is based in an examination of Anglo-Catholic theology (chapter 3). At the risk of setting up an Aunt Sally, however, I believe that this analysis is applicable to propositional-cognitive[8] theology more broadly, at least as far as it shares the common factor of a claim to express divine truth directly. However this is not a systematic study of different styles of theology and does not examine the detail of, or variations between, theological approaches[9].

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[5] That is, not only appealing to the community before the individual, but grounding faith and theology in the community of church, as a body which is both part of and distinct from wider society. This does not in itself presume or prescribe any particular ordering of a church.

[6] That is, drawing on the *OED*, to perceive all social and cultural phenomena, all categories, truths, and values, as relative and historically determined, and to distinguish (but to hold as equally valuable) analyses undertaken today or at any point in the past. Whilst rejecting determinism in historical events and universal rationality in their interpretation, I would still retain the possibility of generalising within limits from historical enquiry.

[7] While 'essence' in the platonic sense has a long history, the terms 'essentialist' and 'essentialism' appear to have been coined by Karl Popper in the post-war period. Cf. 'This "realist" theory has also been called "idealist". I therefore propose to rename this antinominalist theory "essentialism". **K. R. Popper**, *Poverty of Historicism* (1957) p. 27 cited in the *OED*.

[8] George Lindbeck identifies three models of theology: cognitive-propositional; experiential-expressive; and a hybrid of these two, for which he cites Rahner and Lonergan. **G. Lindbeck**, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, (Philadelpia, Westminster Press, 1984) p. 16. He proposes a third, cultural-linguistic model, in which theology performs a regulatory function parallel to the role of grammar in relation to language. *Ibid.* p. 18.

In the ecclesiological writings considered in this thesis the cognitive-propositional model is dominant. Stephen Sykes propounds a hybrid model. *'It is in the process of interaction between this inward element and the external forms of Christianity that the identity of Christianity consists.'* **S.W. Sykes**, *The Identity of Christianity, Theologians and the Essence of Christianity from Schleiermacher to Barth* (London, SPCK, 1984) p. 261 (italics in original).

Experiential-expressive approaches are expounded in **A.M. Ramsey**, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church: An Essay in Biblical Theology*, (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1936) and **D.T. Jenkins**, *The Protestant Ministry* (London, Faber and Faber, 1958).

[9] I have focused on the neo-Thomist school of Anglo-Catholic theologians, not as the best exponents of such theology, but because they dominated ecclesiological debate in the Church of England before and after the Second World War. I have also examined **J. Milbank**, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Blackwells, Oxford, 1990) as an example of contemporary neo-orthodoxy.

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The first section of this framework is an exploration of ontological and epistemological themes. An essentialist theology assumes that reality is the nature of God, and that creation and human historical experience are but a pale shadows of the divine underlying reality. Essentialist ontology is thus strictly tri-partite, comprising God; the underlying essence (an expression of, or emanation from, God); and mundane reality[10]. For Milbank, for example, reality comprised God, an ontology of peace derived from the nature of God, and humanity sunk in the *mythos* of power and violence[11].

> 'One could say that Christianity ... seeks to recover the concealed text of an original peaceful creation beneath the palimpsest of the negative distortion of *dominium*, through the superimposition of a third redemptive template, which corrects these distortions by means of forgiveness and atonement.'[12]

Christianity held the keys to paradise by virtue of its ontological subsistence in the divine peace, notwithstanding its contamination by violence. For most purposes, however, the distinction between God and essence was irrelevant. Statements about essence were statements about God because the essence was a true expression of God's nature and will.

The epistemology which reflected this ontology was complex and arcane. Because divine truth was masked, being simultaneously concealed and revealed by mundane reality, the manner by which truth may be known is ultimately

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[10] **A.G. Hebert**, *The Form of the Church.* (London, Faber and Faber, 1944; revised edition, 1958) p. 22.

Karl Barth dismissed Protestant essentialism on the grounds the 'The Word of God may not be replaced even vicariously by any basic interpretation of the 'essence of Christianity', however pregnant, deep and well founded.' Church Dogmatics 1/2, p. 82, quoted in **S.W. Sykes**, *The Identity of Christianity.* pp. 188-189.

[11] **J. Milbank**, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 5

[12] *Ibid.* p. 417

mysterious and vouchsafed only to the few[13]. Yet the claim of the cognoscenti was to express divine truth in a manner which was accurate, absolute and universal.

> 'Those who are to some degree traditionally orthodox understand the propositional truth that they attribute to religious statements as a function of the ontological correspondence or 'isomorphism' of the 'structure of knowing and the structure of the known'. Each proposition or act of judgement corresponds or does not correspond, is eternally true or false: there are no degrees or variations in propositional truth.'[14]

The idea that there are knowable 'fundamentals'[15] of faith has been popular with some Anglican writers. By its focus on certain aspects of divine truth, and the avoidance of the need for wholesale 'isomorphism' in its epistemology, a 'fundamentals'[16] approach appears to offer an alternative to essentialism. However, I argue that this approach shares the distinguishing features of essentialist ontology and epistemology.

> 'A fundamental is, by definition, a principle which serves as groundwork for a system, or as the base from which other aspects derive.'[17]

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[13] **S.W. Sykes**, *The Identity of Christianity*. p. 3.

Although the interpreters of the essence of Christianity sought to bring Church and Truth into closer harmony, the effect was to underscore the gulf between God, Truth, and 'ordinary' Christians: the need for an interpreter further estranges humanity from paradise. **R.K. Fenn,** *Liturgies and Trials*, p. xii

[14] **G. Lindbeck**, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 47. He quotes Bernard Lonergan, *Insight* (Harper & Rowe, 1978) p. 399.

[15] '... according to this tradition the Christian Church is characterized by the invariable profession of certain 'fundamental articles', distinguished from non-variable elements, otherwise known as non-fundamentals which should never be absolutized. ... the whole principle of the Henrician reformation rested on Melanchthon's doctrine of *adiaphora*, or things indifferent, in implicit distinction from things necessary for salvation.' **S.W. Sykes,** *The Identity of Christianity*, p. 106.

[16] The content and use of fundamentals has varied,

> 'Many Anglicans concluded that though there were fundamentals, no one could give an exhaustive list of what they were. This is a position which I consider to be fully feasible today, both theologically and practically.'

S.W. Sykes, *The Genius of Anglicanism* (first published 1992) in *Unashamed Anglicanism* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995) p. 220. Sykes is arguing for the vitality of dispute rather than seeking to build a theology of fundamentals.

[17] **H. McAdoo**, *The Unity of Anglicanism Catholic and Reformed*, (Wilton, Connecticut, Morehouse-Barlow, 1983) p. 70.

A fundamental may be restated in contemporary categories of thought, but never in such a way as to contradict the truth intended by the original definition[18]. Consequently fundamentals must, first, be transferable, that is capable of appearing at every point in history, and in differing conceptual frameworks, without a change of meaning. Second, there must be an equivalence of function, so that a fundamental plays the same role in theological exposition in different conceptual frameworks and at different points in time. Third, for the first two conditions to obtain, there must be a conceptual level (which is neither the fundamental itself nor historical reality) in which the timeless aspect of a fundamental is located. This level need not be described in ontological terms, but if fundamentals are to be understood merely as conceptual or heuristic devices, then the idea is as subject to historical contingency as any particular expression. Consequently the flow of the argument would suggest that fundamentals be accorded a distinct ontological status. Finally the epistemological implications are identical to those of essentialism. Given the difficulty of identifying what constitutes a fundamental in different contexts, knowledge of them is arcane, limited, and yet claims to be absolute.

By contrast, the communitarian and historicist approach expounded here locates ontological reality in a combination of the course of historical events and the

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[18] *Ibid.* p. 62. Cf.

> '... certain doctrines of Christianity must be retained or defended at all costs because they are essential to the genius and spirit of that faith.'
> [the Church] '... has always found it necessary to re-interpret and re-assess its traditional doctrine, shuffling the elements and changing the emphases in the fundamentals of the faith, and viewing them with new eyes.'

A.T. and R.P.C. Hanson *The Identity of the Church: a Guide to Recognizing the Contemporary Church* (London, SCM Press, 1987). pp. 84, 85. They state earlier that:

> 'Violent distortion of the Christian tradition of doctrine, or gross over-emphasis upon one doctrine at the expense of the others, or the introduction into Christian doctrine of ideas which are alien to it or even contradictory of it, must affect the status among God's people of communities which err in this way.' *Ibid.* p. 60

They do not say who should judge, nor by what authority or criteria, nor how this 'change of status' would be effected and visible. It would seem that the Reformation would fall foul of these criteria when viewed from within traditional Roman Catholicism.

interpretation placed on those events. Human reality is a social construction, a matter of meaning, commitment and power. I do not deny the existence of an impersonal material creation, nor the reality of God independent of human cognition. On the contrary I assume their existence and the possibility of apprehending both. What I deny is the possibility of incontrovertible propositional knowledge of divine truth. My approach is based on the assumption that spirituality is a profound, active engagement with God. At times this engagement is agonistic, at times harmonious.

A church[19] is both an observable entity as a social institution, and also an idea, or, more precisely, a multiplicity of ideas held by both its members and others. It is an imagined community,

> 'It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of the fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.'[20]

Each such church (or nation) is imagined in its own particular style. It is limited, because beyond its boundaries, however permeable, lie other different, though comparable, communities.

> 'Finally, it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as deep, horizontal comradeship.'[21]

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[19] There exists no single entity which may properly be called 'the' church. The phrase may be used as a collective shorthand for all churches, but this use requires and conceals assumptions about what it is that churches have in common which enables them to be referred to collectively.

Nonetheless the idea of participation in the universal church is central to the affirmation of validity of each separate church. 'The Church of England ... belongs to the true and apostolic Church of Christ; and, as our duty to the said Church of England requires, we do constitute and ordain that no member thereof shall be at liberty to maintain or hold the contrary.' Canon A1 *The Canons of the Church of England* (London, Church House Publishing, Fifth edition, 1993)

[20] **B. Anderson**, *Imagined Communities, Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London, Verso, 1983), p. 15, italics in the original. Anderson is here describing a nation in terms that I believe are directly transferable to a church. The analogy may be particularly appropriate to the Church of England which has closely emulated the state.

[21] *ibid.* p16, italics in original.

The idea of the nation or church is substantiated in its structures. But this is not a straightforward process. Ideas of a church both affirm the church that has been inherited and experienced, and constitute a critique. No church ever attains the ideal imagined for it, and so is criticised and changed in a continual process of moving towards ideals that are themselves always changing. Churches are also part of the culture in which they are set[22], and within that broad setting, they may predispose and shape an individual's perception of God, and the articulation of their faith, but I suggest they do not determine it. The capacity of creativity, both divine and human, always includes the possibility of the unexpected.

In this approach churches are seen as communities in which the Christian faith is held, expressed, and transmitted in continuous engagement with God. Churches are human creations, sustained by the continual exercise of creativity, but human creativity does not exclude God.

> '... it is vital to realize that contingent 'making' should naturally be conceived by Christianity as the site of our participation in divine understanding - for this is also a making, combined with the 'reception' of what is made by the Holy Spirit. The great failure of modern Christian ontology is not to see that secular reason makes the essentially Platonic assumption that 'the made' lies beneath the portals of the sacred, such that a humanly made world is regarded as arbitrary and as cutting us off from eternity.'[23]

Faithful human 'making', the continual process of engaging with God and the appropriation of human perception of God into the ordering of personal life and the church as a social institution, is also a participation in divine revelation. For

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[22] Churches are not simply subject to the vagaries of changing cultures. They are both part of and distinct within their broader societies.

> 'We shall note how the links between divine and political images are by no means one-way causal relationships but assume a dialectical character.'

D. Nicholls, *Deity and Domination. Images of God and the State in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London & New York, Routledge, 1989) p. 3. He complained that in so far as theologians and church historians have considered the importance of non-theological factors they have concentrated on ecclesiastical politics, 'on imperial might and episcopal spite', or on the influence of purely philosophical movements. *Ibid.* pp. 3-4. I plead guilty as charged.

[23] J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* p. 425.

Thornton revelation and interpretation were inextricably intertwined in a dynamic and continuous self-disclosure[24] through God's engagement with humanity. Divine revelation required a medium, and was always embodied in religious structures[25], which were inevitably historically and culturally situated and conditioned. In those structures humanity was part of the revelation of God.

> 'The Word of God in its coming to man generated an answering word as the means to its own fuller elucidation.'[26]

But for Thornton (as for Milbank) this process of engagement eventually resolves itself into the human acceptance of a univocal divine truth. Thornton can admit only one response to God as authentic (albeit one which changed over time) which was the right response required by a controlling God:

> 'This rightly ordered response to revelation is the essence of true religion. ... True religion, then, is the appointed organ of revelation; and it is in this sense that we may properly refer to the bible as *revealed religion.*'[27]

I suggest that engagement with God is a ceaseless activity, entered into anew by each person and generation as they seek and find God. Human history was the location and medium of divine revelation in the Incarnation, and I suggest that it

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[24] '... divine wisdom is *continuously* embodied in the holy community through its succession of recognised teachers, just as it is *once for all* embodied in the canon of scripture.' J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 208 (italics in original).

[25] L.S. Thornton, *The Form of the Servant*, Vol. I. *Revelation and the Modern World* (Westminster, Dacre Press, 1950), pp. 15-16.

> 'For in a revelation given to rational creatures interpretation is an inevitable part of response. But further, there is also a sense in which interpretation is integral to the revelation itself. For in the New Testament, at least, it appears that revelation and interpretation are complementary and even inseparable, as parts of a single whole.' *Ibid.* p. 60.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 22. Revelation, for Thornton, was neither the product of the environment, nor transcended culture, rather it mastered the environment through God's transformatory action. *ibid.* p. 1. Consequently Thornton appears to reduce God's engagement with humanity to little more than a patient tactic of revelation, and human creativity limited to acceptance of a directive God. The autonomy Thornton ascribed to people may therefore be little more than the capacity to sin.

continues to be the location and medium of divine revelation. The apprehension and discernment of God lies in the struggle, and in its articulation, not in the acceptance of propositional conclusions. Because humanity can never comprehend God, any articulation of the divine this side of the *eschaton* must always be limited, provisional, and inculturated.

Epistemologically, I suggest that the human apprehension of God is inevitably constrained by its cultural limitations, and theology should claim no more than can be justified within those boundaries. Yet at the same time I suggest that the detail of human history is theologically significant in that it is evidence of the process of engagement with God, and of the struggle of generations of faithful people to articulate their experience of God and to embody their apprehension of God in the specificities of the church.

The second category I wish to deploy is an examination of the themes of power and authority. A claim to power and authority is entailed in a claim to articulate divine truth[28]. In the claim to articulate the truth, which is obscured but universal and prescriptive, essentialist theologians claim in effect to speak with a voice as close to the voice of God as humans may utter. Within essentialist theology, their authority was powerfully weighty, they commanded assent, and their claim to speak truth pre-empted challenge and denied validity to debate, except on terms they had previously defined. John Milbank argued this stance through with rigour. To be true to its ontology, he concluded, theology must

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[28] 'When the truth of order is viewed as an aspect of its existence (as in Plato, Aquinas and Hooker), then it carries with it a decisive prescription for action.' **E.B. Heaven,** *The Transcendence of Order,* in **M.D. Bryant (ed.),** *The Future of Anglican Theology* Toronto Studies in Theology, vol. 17; (Toronto, Edwin Mullen Press, 1984) p.125.

position (that is, subordinate) all other forms of reason[29], and as the explication of ecclesial practice ecclesiology must position all other social practice[30]. Essentialist theology implied that theocracy was the optimal polity for a church, in which theologians would speak as regents for God.

I make the assumption that power and authority are both necessary to create, sustain, and adapt the church. The themes are central to ecclesiology in that the determination of authentic continuity with Jesus Christ is ultimately a matter of authority (and, conversely, ecclesiastical authority is established by the capacity to determine authentic continuity). The focus of this approach is on the human action of the exercise of authority and not on power or authority as abstractions. Because the terms have been used in significantly varying ways, and because both are complex concepts, I set out below the manner in which I am using them, even at the risk of a certain arbitrariness.

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[29] The first eleven chapters of *Theology and Social Theory.* seek to do just this, as

> '... preludes to an assertion: of theology as itself a social science, and the queen of the sciences for the inhabitants of the *altera civitas*, on pilgrimage through this temporary world.'

J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory.* p. 380. Thus the sociological 'Policing of the Sublime' (the title of chapter 5) would be replaced by a theological policing of the secular.

[30] 'In this fashion a gigantic claim to read, criticize, say what is going on in other societies, is absolutely integral to the Christian Church, ...' J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p. 388. This would appear to contradict his view that the proper role of the Church is to be an asylum, a place of refuge from the operation of punishment, where the practice is always atoning, forgiving and restitutionary. *Ibid.* p. 422.

I define power as the capacity to effect or prevent change[31], and authority as the right to take decisions[32]. I suggest that both in harness are necessary to sustain the church[33]. These definitions imply discarding certain other characterisations, in particular bi-polar concepts, in which some people have power or authority and the rest do not, and the concept of power and authority as episodic and therefore absent between episodes[34]. Nor is power or authority object-like[35]. Rather, both are entirely a matter of agency: people and God exercise power and authority.

Power, conceived in this way, implies intentionality. But the concept of power is not restricted by intent since the intended effects of human exercise of power may not be realised, whilst wholly unforeseen consequences may follow. Power may also be distributed in a society or social institution in a manner which reflects and creates impersonal structures of inequality. In that context those who exercise power may not always perceive or acknowledge their contribution to sustaining those structures through their actions and decisions.

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[31] Power: '1. a. Ability to do or effect something or anything, or to act upon a person or thing.' '4. a. Possession of control or command over others; dominion, rule; government, domination, sway, command; control, influence, authority.' *OED*.

Cf. 'Power is the ability of its holders to carry out their will, exact compliance, exert force and compel obedience.' **M. Percy,** *Power and the Church: Ecclesiology in an Age of Transition* (London and Washington, Cassell, 1998) p. 1. Percy designates this as a 'dispositional' as opposed to an 'episodic' understanding of power.

[32] Authority: '1. a. Power or right to enforce obedience; moral or legal supremacy; the right to command, or give an ultimate decision.' *OED*.

[33] Milbank notes, but does not build on, the sociological perception that '... in reality, and this is especially clear from traditional societies, legitimation is inseparably interwoven with power in all its distributed complexity.' *Theology and Social Theory*. p. 104.

[34] These are ways in which power is often experienced, and may be accurate and appropriate characterisations of power in some societies.

[35] Notwithstanding the language of, for example, holding, taking, wielding, or abusing power.

Power entails a capacity for violence[36]. In practice, in a church as in as any human organisation, force is implicit, coercion is possible, and both overt and subtle structural violence may be perpetrated and experienced[37]. Even so the exercise of power is not merely destructive. It is also creative, and often destruction and creation occur in the same moment.

Authority is characterised by legitimacy[38]. Ecclesiological discussion has at times focused on the sources of authority, the interrelationship between different sources, and their authoritative interpretation[39]. But, to be adequate to the needs of decision making processes in a church, understandings of authority also need to be sufficiently precise as to be justiciable.

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[36] Sociologists may divide into those who emphasise force as the essential characteristic of power, and those who perceive power as the production of certain effects, including the collective capacity to pursue human welfare. See summaries of (different) sociologists in P. Avis, *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church*, (London, Mowbray, 1992) pp. 20-23; and M. Percy, *Power and the Church*. p. 9.

[37] 'I would have hoped that the Church was a safe place to be oneself, but I actually don't find that it is. It's a place of great condemnation.' one of many unattributed quotations describing their rejection by women who had left the church. R. Miles (ed.), *Not in Our Name: Voices of Women who have left the Church*, (Nottingham, Southwell Diocesan Social Responsibility Group, 1994) p. 37.

[38] 'The most important general feature of Weber's approach is that he identifies authority with legitimacy. ... we can always tell when a sense of authority exists in society: it is when people *voluntarily* obey their rulers. If they have to be coerced it is because they don't find the rulers legitimate.' R. Sennett, *Authority*, p. 22.

[39] See for example, discussion of dispersed authority as exemplified by the Lambeth Conference Report 1948, S.W. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism*, (London, Mowbrays, 1978) p. 88; G.R. Evans, *Authority in the Church: a challenge for Anglicans* (The Canterbury Press, Norwich, 1990) on the tests of authoritative decisions and pronouncements (p. 96); H. McAdoo, *Authority in the Church: Spiritual freedom and the Corporate Nature of Faith* in S.W. Sykes (ed.), *Authority in the Anglican Communion: Essays Presented to Bishop John Howe* (Toronto, Anglican Book Centre, 1987) on the subordination of all instruments and exercise of authority to the service of the church in truth, (p. 72); and 'it is also clear that behind the particular issues there lies a more fundamental disagreement about the nature of the different authorities of Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Conscience, and what weight should be given to each of these when they appear to conflict.' M. O'Connor, *Foreword*, in R. Jeffrey, (ed.), *By What Authority?* The Open Synod Report on authority in the Church of England (London & Oxford, Mowbray, 1987) p. xi.

In a church all authority is from God, and all members of the body share in that authority, but detailed questions remain concerning the manner by which divine authority is mediated[40]. To be justiciable there must be reasonable precision as to location and distribution of authority, and clarity as to the manner in which it may properly be exercised and constrained. Consequently discussion of authority in the context of organisational change in the church will focus on jurisdiction (the exercise of authority within the constraints of geography, subject matter and procedure); the means by which decisions are enforced; and the relative authority of different groups within the church.

Power and authority are relational. Analysis from one side of the relationship alone (or an exclusive focus on the relationship between divine and human power) omits the central dimension of the response expected from those over whom authority is exercised. I suggest that this has been somewhat neglected in ecclesiology, though it has been a central concern of political science,

> 'The defining mark of the state is authority, the right to rule. The primary obligation of man is autonomy, the refusal to be ruled. It would seem therefore that there can be no resolution of the conflict between the autonomy of the individual and the putative authority of the state.'[41]

In the approach of this thesis the exercise of power and authority is considered primarily in political and ethical terms, rather than in terms of the relationship between the claim to authority and divine truth.

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[40] See, for example, *Working as One Body*, which began with the theological statement (amongst others) that God was the source of all authority in the church (p. 7) and then proposed an extensive reallocation of powers within the Church of England.

[41] **R.P. Wolff**, *The Conflict between Authority and Autonomy*, in, **J. Raz (ed.)**, *Authority* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990) p. 23

Whilst much of the exercise of power and authority in a church has reflected secular structures[42], theological legitimation has tended to comprise the positive attribution of qualities of God to human action. I suggest the theological legitimation of authority and power in a church may be better grounded in a contrast between God and humanity. The claim to authority to exercise or mediate divine power (however qualified or contested) is a claim to express and exercise in the present the sovereignty that God will realise fully at the *eschaton*. Yet God is always transcendentally greater than the human imagination, and in the *saeculum* our claim to know divine truth, to apprehend God's self-disclosure, is always bounded by the narrow limits of our temporal and contingent existence. God's judgement is characterised by omniscience, omnipotence, by merciful love and the desire to save. God's word has illocutionary force. Consequently the expression of the knowledge of God must always be provisional and offered in humility. A careful distinction between God, the perception of God, and the expression of that perception is, I suggest, necessary to avoid unwarranted claims to express divine authority.

The nature of the exercise of authority is conflictual. Because theological presuppositions and interpretations vary; because each decision embodies the faith and helps to shape the church; and because the outcomes matter, decision making is always open to challenge. A challenge is always, overtly or implicitly, made both to the substantive question at issue and to the claim to authority. I suggest that, far from being a matter of regret and a sign of the failure of the church to embody the faith, conflict is the manner in which the church is constantly being recreated. It is in the disputatiousness of God's faithful people

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[42] 'The development in the West is both more explicit and more dismal, for the theology of the Church appears to have been derived in large measure by analogy from the conception of an earthly empire.' C. Gunton, *The Church on Earth: the Roots of Community* in C.E. Gunton, and D.W. Hardy (eds.), *On Being the Church - essays on the Christian Community* (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1989) pp. 48-80; p. 51. He argues that ecclesiology has been largely based on a monist conception of God, and has neglected the Trinity. Reaffirmation of the Trinity in ecclesiology will open '... its rich store of possibilities for nourishing a genuine theology of community.' *Ibid.* p. 49.

that divine authority is appropriated and realised and Christ may make himself visible. The hope and possibility of divine creativity is a risk contained in the self-same process which holds the danger of irreconcilable division. The exercise of authority is always contested, and in that contest reaffirmed; those most likely to separate from the majority are those who will not engage in dispute.

The third element of my framework is an examination of certain hermeneutic questions. In contested authority debate centres on the relationship of theoretical assertions and conclusions to their supporting evidence. Because essentialism is an ahistorical theological and ontological thesis historical enquiry cannot logically support or deny it. On the contrary, ideas of essence generate criteria by which historical events might be judged. At the very best, historical enquiry (and indeed biblical study) can only furnish examples of what theologians had previously decided to seek[43]. An overt emphasis on the visible church, in the case of the Anglo-Catholic theologians, concealed a greater concern for an invisible church. John Milbank too, despite his assertion of the historically situated nature of both church[44] and theology, and of the importance of recognising the divine in human making, in practice ignored the eventful course of history and denied the worth of

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[43] Mascall averred that authentic catholic wholeness,

> '... persists beneath all its [Christianity's] distortions and partial expression and provides them [distorted expressions of Christianity] with whatever authenticity they possess. The appeal to the past therefore involves us in diligently working our way back through the history of the Church and using at every stage whatever powers of discrimination we possess, in order to extricate the authentic norm so far as we are able and to see how it can best be expressed in the life of the modern church.' E.L. Mascall, *The Recovery of Unity: A Theological Approach* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1958) p. 42

[44] The society of the church is the real practical and linguistic context for salvation (J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, pp. 245-246), at least in so far as it is a new community (*ibid*. p. 387) containing and promoting a counter-history (*ibid*. p. 382), a counter-ethics (*ibid*. p. 398), and a counter-ontology (*ibid*. p. 422). But in historical fact the church has failed to be a counter-Kingdom (*ibid*. p. 432). Thus the actual 'context for salvation' has evaporated and been replaced by an idealised church which is then used as a template by which to condemn the historical church.

what humans have made[45]. His primary concern was not with history, but with divine ontology and objective criteria by which all human making may be judged.

Ecclesiology may be understood by analogy with history. 'History' is generally used in three senses, as the course of past events; as the methodical narration of those events; and as the discipline concerned with understanding the past[46]. Ecclesiology draws its evidence from the church past and present, the witness of the scriptures to Jesus Christ, and the experience of the Holy Spirit. It interprets and orders that evidence as the narration of the action of God in and through the church. Customarily history is written 'backwards', that is, looking back from our present perspective to events whose significance is, in part, determined by their outcome[47]. I suggest that ecclesiology is largely written in the same way, taking the present experience of the church as its primary perspective for the selection and weighing of evidence. In this manner both history and ecclesiology reflect on and contribute to a contemporary sense of identity[48].

By contrast with history I suggest that the discipline of ecclesiology, the canons of selection, interpretation and use of evidence, is significantly underdeveloped. While the critique of *The Apostolic Ministry* was undertaken according to the high

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[45] For example,

> 'But on either the stoic-nihilist, or the Aristotelian-neo-Platonic-Christian reading, narrative is our primary mode of inhabiting the world, and it characterizes the way the world happens to us, not, primarily, the cultural world which humans make. There is, therefore, no special 'human' sphere of narrative action, and no sphere of 'ethics' which uniquely characterizes human life, even if human life is systematically more 'open' and 'intense'. Instead the question about what the whole of nature should look like, how even it would like to appear, impresses itself through all our apprehensions.' *Ibid.* p. 359

[46] *OED.*

[47] D. Nicholls, *Deity and Domination. Images of God and the State in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London & New York, Routledge, 1989) p. 15.

[48] Identity is also a complex concept. It entails both a positive affirmation of 'who we are', and also differentiation from others. The narratives of history and ecclesiology, not least in their selection of evidence, may reinforce both qualities of identity simultaneously.

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critical standards appropriate for academic theology, there was little evidence of those standards in the everyday use of ecclesiological assumptions in decision making in the church.

In one dimension of ecclesiology the analogy with history fails. By definition, history is a temporal study, whilst ecclesiology also has an eschatological dimension. Though impossible to evidence, the prospect of divine judgement contributes to the sense of Christian identity alongside the inheritance of faith.

Using these three foci (ontology and epistemology; power and authority; and hermeneutics) I wish to focus on the role of ecclesiology in the determination of authentic continuity, in the historical specifics of one denomination at one point in time.

Continuity is not merely a matter of temporal transmission within defined boundaries. It is a complex normative concept,

> 'For when we Christians speak of tradition, we mean the experience of
> the Christian community lying authentically within that which God
> through Christ has handed over for the revelation of himself and the
> salvation of men and women everywhere.'[49]

Continuity is the synchronic and diachronic unity of a church with Christ[50]. However, there is an inbuilt circularity in criteria of continuity. First, because by definition a church regards itself as valid, the tradition that it embodies guarantees its authentic continuity with Jesus Christ, as much as continuity guarantees the authenticity of that tradition. Second, criteria by which to judge continuity, and judgements as to what would constitute adequate compliance with those criteria, are embedded in the ontological assumptions theologians make: the answer is always implicit in the construction of the question.

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[49] A.M. Ramsey (D. Coleman, ed.), *The Anglican Spirit* (London, SPCK, 1991) p. 11

[50] S. Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity*, pp. 240, 245.

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In an essentialist approach to theology criteria of continuity are deduced from the elaboration of divine truth. Ecclesiology thus becomes the articulation of an ahistorical template by which the actual church may be judged. Paradoxically, the use of absolute criteria of continuity becomes an exercise in discarding historical difference and the discovery of changelessness in contrast to the course of historical events[51]. Thus the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry* discerned the constant *esse* of the episcopacy across Christian history irrespective of the changing acts, character, context and contemporary understandings of the episcopate[52].

Criteria for continuity in an communitarian and historicist framework are no easier to define. This approach offers no hope of solid ground from which to make judgements and will not resolve circularity or insecurity. I suggest that criteria for continuity are part of the inherent conflict of a church, not its resolution. Judgements as to what would constitute adequate compliance with those criteria are not fixed, but are made and contested in the ceaseless exercise of authority. Thus continuity with Jesus Christ is created in the ceaseless engagement of the church with God, which in practice resolves itself into the humdrum detail of ecclesiastical politics.

But far from this logic leading to the negation of ecclesiology, I would argue that it makes ecclesiology all the more significant. It may, given an adequate critical structure, offer a discipline within which claims and challenges to authentic

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[51] Thus, in the case of the 'fundamentals' of faith, whilst historical and cultural difference is fully acknowledged it is regarded as the problem. The solution is the identification of underlying immutable truths which transcend temporal differences.

Milbank's rigorous application of an ontology of peace as a normative criterion would exclude every historical church from valid continuity.

[52] [The episcopate] '... is the same office which undergoes transformation, and the essence of it, which is sacramental and supernatural, does not change.' T.M. Parker, *Feudal Episcopacy* in *The Apostolic Ministry*, in K.E. Kirk (ed.), *The Apostolic Ministry*, pp. 351-386; pp. 384-385.

continuity might more rigorously be tested and the exercise of authority more effectively undertaken.

In order to develop this thesis further I have followed a kind of triangulation. First, I have examined a strand of Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology as a case study of an attempt to assert a particular ecclesiology as true for the whole church (chapter 3). I have looked at both the content and method of this ecclesiology and its critique, and also examined it as an example of ecclesiology used as a political programme. Second, I have traced the steps by which the Church of England gained legal authority over its central concerns of worship, doctrine and self-government (chapter 4) in order to sift out ecclesiological thinking implicit in its decision making. In these two chapters my focus has been to articulate an account of the idea of how God has been and should be made manifest in the structures and ordering of the Church of England. Third, (chapter 5) I have looked at the way ecclesiology has been deliberately used, in some more recent documents and debate in the Church of England, as an element of the legitimation of change in the church. From these sources I have tried to extrapolate an overview of the actual role of ecclesiology in the contemporary Church of England. From this base I wish to argue that ecclesiology will grow more significant in the Church of England, and that this would be beneficial, but to do so requires a further strengthening of the discipline of ecclesiology.

Chapter 3

The Apostolic Ministry and its critique

'Catholicity means wholeness, inclusiveness, universality. The Catholic Faith is that which contains the whole Gospel of God and the answer to the whole of man's needs. The Catholic Church is that which includes all nations, because it can gather into unity the diversities of all the races of men. The Church is Catholic because its Gospel is true, from heaven and not from men; its catholicity then resides primarily in Him, the Saviour of the world. But in the members of the Church this catholicity is defectively realized; for the Church visible and militant on earth is in a state of imperfection.'[1]

Since at least Lancelot Andrewes[2] a high doctrine of the church has been a central characteristic of Anglican high churchmanship[3]. With some exceptions, Anglo-Catholics dominated thought about the nature of the church in the Church of England between the wars and for the first decade after the second World War.

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[1] **K.D. Mackenzie,** *Sidelights from the Non-Episcopal Communions, in:* **K.E. Kirk (ed.),** *The Apostolic Ministry Essays* p. 463.

[2] **K. Hylson-Smith,** *High Churchmanship in the Church of England, From the Sixteenth Century to the Late Twentieth Century,* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1993) p. 18; William Laud argued that there could be no true Church without episcopacy in his Doctoral thesis (1604). **P. Avis,** *Anglicanism and the Christian Church, theological resources in historical perspective.* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1989) p. 140.

[3] Ecclesiological themes were important to a much wider audience of Anglo-Catholics than theologians. The four Anglo-Catholic Congresses all had ecclesiological themes, and the third (London, 1930) was entitled simply 'The Church'. 28,000 people were said to be members of the Congress in 1930. **G. Gillett (ed.),** *Introduction, in Report of the Oxford Movement Centenary Congress, July 1933* (London, The Catholic Literature Association, n.d.) p. ix.

Daniel Jenkins credited ecclesiological debate in the Church of England with encouraging interest in the subject in the Free Churches. **D.T. Jenkins** *The Nature of Catholicity* (London, Faber and Faber, 1942) p. 8.

Ecclesiology remains an important theme for Anglo-Catholics. See, for example, **D. Stancliffe,** *A Catholic Future for the Church of England?* (Address given by the Rt. Revd David Stancliffe, Bishop of Salisbury, to the General Council of Affirming Catholicism at Westhill College, Birmingham, on 15 June 1996. Unpublished.)

The publication of *The Apostolic Ministry*[4] in 1946 was intended in part to embed Anglo-Catholic convictions deeper into the heart of Anglicanism in general and the Church of England in particular. In retrospect it proved to be the apogee of the movement's strength before its star began to decline.

This chapter looks first at two aspects of the background[5] to the publication of *The Apostolic Ministry*. Perceived threats from ecumenical developments, especially the prospect and fact of The Church of South India and the ecumenical concerns of successive Lambeth Conferences, provide a political background to *The Apostolic Ministry*[6]. Second, aspects of Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology (neo-Thomist ontology; sacraments; and the credal notes of the church) are briefly examined. These issues are preludes to a more detailed examination of *The Apostolic Ministry* and the critique of its argument.

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[4] Much of the development of this debate is conveniently summarised in Chapter VIII of **A.M. Ramsey,** *From Gore to Temple, The Development of Anglican Theology between* Lux Mundi *and the Second World War 1889 - 1939.* The Hale Memorial Lectures of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1959 (London, Longmans, 1960) pp. 111-128.

[5] It has not been possible to address causal issues in this thesis. Roberts, for example, has suggested that a high doctrine of the ministry, focused in the episcopacy and expounded most triumphantly in *The Apostolic Ministry,* is directly correlated with the decline in Christology 'from above' and the growth of secularisation and pluralism. **R.H. Roberts,** *Lord, Bondsman and Churchman: Power, Integrity and Identity,* in: **C.E. Gunton and D.W. Hardy (eds.),** *On Being the Church,* pp. 160-161.

[6] Like all traditions, Anglo-Catholicism was a coalition of broadly like-minded people, and containing a range of approaches and views. Other Anglo-Catholics were in favour of greater intercommunion and refused to draw conclusions from their doctrine of the episcopacy or to act in ways that would 'unchurch' other Christians:

> 'No "unchurching," and no denials of the experience of any Christians need accompany the firmest insistence upon Episcopacy, so long as the insistence is made in terms of the universal Church. The truth manifested in Congregational fellowship, in Presbyterian order, in every section of Christendom will be preserved in parts, but only as parts of the whole. The Episcopate expresses another factor in the truth, namely the one historic family wherein all sections, including those now possessing Episcopacy, shall be made full. No Christian shall deny his Christian experience, but all Christians shall grow more fully into the one experience in all its parts.'

A.M. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* , pp. 222-223.

In the absence of any official deposit of doctrine, Lambeth Conference pronouncements are as close to 'official' statements as the Anglican Communion contrives. Since the second Lambeth Conference of 1878[7] relations with other denominations have been thematic. The third Lambeth Conference (1888) adopted the Lambeth Quadrilateral as a benchmark and guide for Anglicans in ecumenical dialogue, though its wording, interpretation and use has varied. Although Anglican provinces could and did make ecumenical arrangements of differing substance and rationales from other provinces, and statements of the Conferences are not binding on participating bishops or provinces, nevertheless the Conferences provided a global focus and some co-ordination across the Anglican Communion in ecumenical matters. As such, and as reflections of global Anglican thought, Lambeth Conferences were seen as a key object of Anglo-Catholic campaigning.

Anglo-Catholic claims were almost invisible in the report of the Lambeth Conference of 1920. The Conference issued an 'Appeal to all Christian People'[8], which presented the historic episcopate as possessing 'not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body'[9],

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[7] The first Conference (1867) included an expression of sorrow at '... the divided condition of the flock of Christ throughout the world ...' but in fact concentrated almost exclusively on strengthening relationships between the various parts of the Anglican Church. *The Formal Resolutions of the Conference of September 24th-27th 1867* in R. Davidson (ed.), *The Five Lambeth Conferences* (London, SPCK, 1920) p. 11.

[8] This was an approach to ecumenism which the assembled Bishops described as '... in idea and in method a new appeal.' The novelty lay in their approach to other churches on the basis of the reality of union which all already shared in God. 'The unity which we seek exists. It is in God. ... Again, the one Body exists. It needs not to be made, nor to be remade, but to become organic and visible.' *Encyclical Letter, in Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion Holden at Lambeth Palace, July 5 to August 7 1920* (London, SPCK, 1920) p. 12.

[9] *An Appeal to all Christian People, in ibid.* p. 134. The formulation adopted by the Lambeth Conference of 1888 read, 'The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.' *Resolutions Formally Adopted by the Conference of 1888*, in R. Davidson (ed.), *The Five Lambeth Conferences* (London, SPCK, 1920) p. 122.

which was 'the one means of providing such a ministry'[10]. They acknowledged that non-episcopal ministries were '... manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace.'[11], and desired that episcopacy 'be everywhere exercised in a representative and constitutional manner ...'[12]. The Conference was primarily concerned with relations with Protestant Churches, rather than with the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches[13].

In 1930 the Lambeth Conference revisited the issue. Its report *The Unity of the Church*[14], prepared under the chairmanship of William Temple, included a more theological exposition of the historic episcopate. Of the first three elements of the Lambeth Quadrilateral the report perceived at least enough agreement to provide a basis for further discussion. But on the fourth there was a visible divide between Anglican and non-episcopal churches[15]. On this widely shared analysis[16] episcopacy was the critical issue which could make or break moves towards reunion, and which would determine the conditions of any reunion.

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[10] *An Appeal to all Christian People*, in *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion, 1920*, p. 134.

[11] *Ibid.* p. 135.

[12] *Loc. cit.*

[13] The *Appeal* was sent to Rome, and led to The Malines Conversations, approved by both Archbishops and the Pope. However, they were held against the background of the papal condemnation of Anglican orders of 1896, and in January 1928 Pius XI withdrew authorisation for any further conference. N. Sykes, *Old Priest and New Presbyter, Episcopacy and Presbyterianism since the Reformation with especial relation to the Churches of England and Scotland* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1956) pp. 227-231. Notwithstanding discussions with the Old Catholics which led to inter-communion in 1932, the more extensive ecumenical discussion in this period took place between Anglican and Protestant, often non-episcopal, churches. It was against this background that the Anglo-Catholics had, as they saw it, a vital struggle for the soul of Anglicanism.

[14] *The Unity of the Church* in *Lambeth Conference Report 1930* (London, SPCK, 1930) pp. 107-151; the passages concerning the historic episcopate are on pp. 114-116.

[15] *Ibid.* p. 114.

[16] For example, '... the crux of the whole matter [of Christian re-union] is the doctrine of ministry.' K.E. Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry*, Foreword to the original edition, p. xxi.

The Unity of the Church side-stepped debate about the origins of the episcopacy, and accorded it a status in the church comparable to the biblical canon and the creeds[17]. Subsequent centuries, however, had seen the corruption of the episcopate by secular forces, and so the substance of the historic episcopate was not identified with the contemporary episcopacy, but with an abstract ideal[18]. The report affirmed the 'spiritual reality' of non-episcopal ministries; and acknowledged that no extant ministry fully conformed to God's purpose. In the end, however, episcopacy was non-negotiable for Anglicans[19].

By comparison with 1920 this report was much closer to the Anglo-Catholic position. But the exposition appeared to lose all practical import by the statement:

> 'But while we thus stand for the Historic Episcopate as a necessary element in any union in which the Anglican Communion can take part, and have given our reasons for so doing, we do not require of others acceptance of those reasons, or of any one particular theory or interpretation of the Episcopate as a condition of union. We recognise as fully the gifts of the one Spirit entrusted to those others, and their equal responsibility to maintain their several trusts; and we are content to believe that the acceptance of the Episcopate itself, in its continuity of succession and consecration, and in the discharge of its historic functions, will bring to the united Church those gifts of Grace which, as we believe, the Providence of God has associated with it.'[20]

This was not enough for the Anglo-Catholics. It appeared to evacuate the Anglican doctrine of any meaning, and to indicate that the minimum conditions for reunion were little more than the title 'Bishop' and episcopal consecration.

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[17] *The Unity of the Church.* p. 115.

[18] 'The Historic Episcopate as we understand it goes behind the perversions of history to the original conception of the Apostolic Ministry.' *Loc. cit.* 'Historic' here can only mean persistence or longevity. The concept is almost completely divorced from history, except through its genesis in antiquity.

[19] *Ibid.* p. 116.

[20] *Ibid.* p. 119.

Between 1930 and the following meeting of the Lambeth Conference in 1948 the tempo of the ecumenical dance had dramatically altered. In England Archbishop Fisher's Cambridge Sermon (1946) proposed that full, organic unity could be attained by a process of growing together, and that free Churches could 'take episcopacy into their system'[21]. On the world stage too the Church of England was prominent at the inauguration of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam in 1948[22]. In the absence of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches some saw this as a step towards a global Pan-Protestant alliance.

But a more pressing threat for the Anglo-Catholics was the formation of The Church of South India (1947). For the first time Anglican debate centred on the reality of relationships with a unified Christian body in which Anglicans played a full part. Furthermore, not least as a regional church, it was perceived to be a beacon and model for ecumenical progress across the world. It had addressed relationships between episcopal and non-episcopal churches in a charitable and novel manner. For an interim period all ministries properly constituted by the separate denominations would be considered valid and equivalent. All new ordinations, however, would be episcopal. In a generation of clergy The Church of South India would become a fully episcopal church. To many Anglo-Catholics this implied not only the equal validity of non-episcopal churches, which they had never previously conceded, but also the acceptance of episcopacy on pragmatic grounds alone. They had opposed the scheme since at least 1932. Dom Gregory Dix had at one point considered a 'non-juring' church of those unable to accept

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[21] Quoted in **K. Hylson-Smith,** *The Church of England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II, Volume III 1833-1998* (London, SCM Press, 1998) p. 313.

Hastings observed that 'Here was an ecumenical strategy in which the Church of England would do nothing but wait until other Protestant Churches had accepted her conditions by modifying their ministry ...' **A. Hastings,** *A History of English Christianity,* p. 467.

[22] Archbishop Fisher was in the chair at the moment the World Council of Churches was formally inaugurated; Bishop Bell of Chichester was immediately elected General Secretary, a post he retained until 1954. *Ibid.* pp. 469-470.

either Roman Catholicism or intercommunion with The Church of South India[23]. The 1948 Lambeth Conference, which would address the question of intercommunion with the newly constituted Church of South India, was thus a vital battle-ground[24].

The political strength of the Anglo-Catholics in the inter-war and immediate post-war years reflected in part a strong theological tradition, in which the most systematic approach was that of neo-Thomism[25], a philosophy closely associated with Roman Catholicism[26]. Gabriel Hebert, for example, expounded an understanding of the nature of divine truth primarily in terms of the underlying archetype or 'Form'. In particular he espoused a conception of a dynamic and teleological essence[27] in which a thing's 'Form' was that which

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[23] E.W. Kemp, *The Life and Letters of Kenneth Escott Kirk Bishop of Oxford 1937-1954* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1959) pp. 154-155. The main missionary society in the area SPG voted in 1947 to cease to support missionaries financially from the end of 1948. Kenneth Kirk was Vice-President and Archbishop William Temple President, and while Temple sought to find other ways to continue support, Kirk and others opposed him. *Ibid.* pp. 173-175.

[24] 'It is ... no secret that at the 1948 Conference Kirk was a dominating figure in the discussions of South India, and that the expression of what came to be known as the Lambeth minority view was his work.' *Ibid.* p. 178.

[25] Hastings observed that, with other strong theologians 'to one side of them', Gregory Dix, Lionel Thornton, Austin Farrer and Eric Mascall '... created something unusual for Anglicanism - a working school of historical theology, drawing not only on Scripture and the Fathers but very especially upon St Thomas.' A. **Hastings**, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*, London, Collins, 1986, p. 446. He describes the group in the 1930s as in the 'high summer of Anglo-Catholic theology' (p. 298) and in the 1950s as 'nearing the height of their achievement,' (p.446).

[26] In 1879 Leo XIII commended the study of philosophy and especially of the work of St Thomas Aquinas to the church in the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. The commendation was acted on through the twentieth century. J. **Macquarrie**, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*, (London, SCM Press, 4th edn. 1988) p. 279.

[27] He sought a synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions, which was, he said, justified, even demanded, by the truth of Christianity, that itself reflected the one true God

> 'Thus Christian theology is able to make a true synthesis of elements which in the Greek philosophers lie in scattered fragments: and it is indeed to be expected that it should be able to do this if the Christian Gospel is true, precisely because the Church is not one more philosophical school or one more religious sect, but has its basis in God's own action and God's own redemptive work.'

A.G. Hebert, *The Form of the Church*, p. 23.

'... makes a thing to be what it is, and moulds or shapes the matter of which it is also composed, so that the growth of the thing towards the fullness or perfection of its being is the actualization of its form.'[28]

'Forms' belonged to the divine essence. They issued from and revealed the nature of God[29]. The divine order and structure, embedded in creation and in history, was God's eternal law[30]. Thus too the church:

> 'For there is a Form of the Church. The complex reality called *Church* is not something which we are free to make and remake according to our liking; it is something given, having a definite pattern of its own. It rests on a course of action, proclaimed to have been taken in history by the Eternal God for the salvation of mankind.'[31]

Hebert's dominant image of the Church was the Body of Christ, other models being mentioned only briefly[32]. The Body was characterised by the fellowship of its members, sharing and seeking a common faith and a common mind on all things, animated by the Spirit of God, with the Holy Eucharist at its heart.

Eric Mascall's ecclesiological method was christological[33] and trinitarian[34]. Humanity participated in the divine nature through the adoptive union of human

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[29] A.G. Hebert, *The Form of the Church*, pp. 22-23.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 27, citing Aquinas and Hooker.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

[32] The Church was the 'People of God', A.G. Hebert, (ed.) *The Parish Communion: A Book of Essays*, London, SPCK, 1937 (reprinted four times over the subsequent 20 years). p. 8. He also cited the New Testament images of 'the Bride, the Body, the Flock, the Temple, the City.' *The Form of the Church*, p. 46.

[33] Discussing the difference between Catholic and Protestant approaches, Mascall observes that, '...the conception that a man will form of the nature of the Church is determined by his view of the relation of the Christian to Christ.' E.L. Mascall, *Christ, the Christian and the Church: A Study of the Incarnation and its Consequences*, (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1946), p. 112.

[34] In an earlier work, E.L. Mascall, (ed.) *The Church of God: An Anglo-Russian Symposium by members of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius* (London, SPCK, 1934) the trinitarian emphasis is absent. In it he perceived God revealed through the progressive stages of the birth, life and ascension to a new form of being (*ibid.* p. 13). Continuity between Jesus' earthly body and his existence in the body of the church was analogous to the manner in which, in the same person, adult and child have both the same body, and a different one (*ibid.*, pp. 17-18). Thus the church was literally and ontologically, and not metaphorically, the Body of Christ.

beings into the Trinity by incorporation into the humanity of Christ[35]. There was, therefore, no radical separation from God:

> 'We are God's children, not *mere* creatures having no kinship with their Creator, but moral beings made for communion with God and becoming, even in our fallen state the emblems of our dignity.'[36]

The visible church was a sacramental entity in and through which God acted and also ontologically part of the supernatural realm. It was an eschatological reality. Participation in the church, in unity with God, gave '...a certain transcendence over the time process.'[37] by virtue of which not only was the Communion of Saints an ever-present reality but the final judgement of God was also already realised. Holiness was thus the incorporation of the believer into the divine, and Christian unity '...is nothing less than a participation in the unity of God himself...'[38]. Mascall remained, however, concerned not to deny or minimise human, created, nature[39].

Lionel Thornton too was concerned to hold in the one sentence the church's simultaneous identity with, and distinction from, Christ[40].

> 'The identity between Christ and the church cannot be affirmed too strongly provided that we recognise the differentiation between his mode of existence and ours, the contrast (that is) between his session in heavenly glory and our present earthly pilgrimage.'[41]

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[35] *Ibid.,* pp. 93-94; a simplified version of this model, describing the relationship as like a 'bridge with two arches', is in **E.L. Mascall,** *Corpus Christi: Essays on the Church and the Eucharist,* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1953; 2nd edn., revised and enlarged, 1965) p. 6.

[36] *Ibid.,* pp. 9-10.

[37] *Ibid.,* p. 99.

[38] **E.L. Mascall,** *Christ, the Christian and the Church,* p. 99. Mascall repeatedly stressed that his theology was not a matter of psychology, but of ontology.

[39] '... through the exaltation into the life of God which is the fruit of our incorporation into Christ, we are granted, in a profoundly mysterious manner, and in a mode which is strictly conformed to our creaturely nature, a real share in the eternity of God, ...' *ibid.,* p. 100..

[40] **L.S. Thornton,** *The Form of the Servant,* Vol. III, *Christ and the Church* (Westminster, Dacre Press, 1956) p. 12.

[41] *Ibid.,* p. 15.

The church lived in both the spiritual and the created order, it was the meeting-place of two worlds, mediating between them, and marking out the limits of creation and divinity in both directions[42]. The church is the site of conflict between God and evil, the means and extension of battle[43], visible evidence that the battle is far from won[44], and the effectual sign of ultimate victory[45]. It is the first-fruits of redeemed humanity[46].

The church was the intermediary stage of the new creation in Christ. The first stage was Christ himself; the second, the church; the third will be the general resurrection in which all things shall be transformed into their true nature[47]. In that perspective the church was '... an outpost of the heavenly city. The church militant is like an army serving in a foreign land.' [48]. Or it was a pilgrim people, travelling through the wilderness, following a vision of glory glimpsed from afar[49]. The visible church concealed and revealed Christ as it foreshadowed,

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[42] *Ibid.*, p. 20. Thornton's theology was not Thomist. He declared that there was no 'essence' or core of revelation which could be extracted by historical enquiry because religion and culture were mutually interdependent, forming a single pattern of life. *Revelation and the Modern World* pp. 11, 16.

Nonetheless, his thesis is essentialist, predicated on two ontologically distinct orders of revelation and of creation, within an hierarchical structure (*ibid.* p. 308). He pointed to the impossibility of distinguishing the different order, 'At one point after another form and content have shown themselves to be inseparable. (*ibid.* p. 46; see also pp. 129, 225), and he asserted that concepts of order and process were of equal importance (*ibid.* p. 192). Yet he did not sustain these presumptions through his method. In practice order was primary, and the exploration of process was dependent on his initial characterisation of order. For Thornton, the structure of the universe comprised the mutual dependence of the 'higher' on the 'lower' orders of being, and

> 'The problem involved in the dependence of 'higher' upon 'lower' factors is, in reality, *the* problem with which we have been occupied ...' *Ibid.* pp. 316-317.

[43] **L.S. Thornton,** *Christ and the Church,* p. 43.

[44] *Ibid.,* p. 46.

[45] *Ibid.,* p. 83.

[46] *Ibid.,* p. 34.

[47] *Ibid.,* p. 122ff.

[48] *Ibid.,* p. 50.

[49] *Ibid.,* p. 27.

anticipated and yet hid the glory of the resurrection to come[50]. And by Christ's act, this sinful and paradoxical church was still '... the place of reconciliation between God and all that he has made.'[51]

Michael Ramsey, firmly identified as Anglo-Catholic[52], was not a neo-Thomist[53] and *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* was based on alternative ontological grounds. Despite some ambiguous language[54], Ramsey did not assert the

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[50] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

[52] The acknowledgements in the first edition include A.M. Farmer, Charles Smythe, and A.G. Hebert. **A.M. Ramsey,** *The Gospel and the Catholic Church: An Essay in Biblical Theology* (London, Longmans Green and Co., 1936) p. vii.

The book was reprinted (with relatively minor amendments) in 1956. Hastings regarded it as a major contribution to the reconciliation of Protestant and Catholic in the Church of England. **A. Hastings,** *A History of English Christianity,* pp. 295-260.

[53] Ramsey asserted that Christianity can properly use a system of thought, such as Platonism, Thomism or modern humanism, but could not be dominated by any of them. **A.M. Ramsey,** *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* pp. 132-133

[54] For example, Ramsey spoke about 'essential Christianity' (*ibid.* p. 57). He described the Episcopacy as of the *'esse'* of the Church (*ibid.* p. 84). He regarded the priesthood as an indelible order (*ibid.* p. 117).

By 'essential Christianity' Ramsey referred to the relationship between the historical church and the Gospel, rather than to an ontological essence (*ibid.* p. 58). But by the 'universal church' he means something other than the present historical churches (*ibid.* pp. 66), and his hope of Christian unity lay in the discovery of unity in the 'pattern of a structure whose maker and builder is God.' which may be read as implying an essentialist form of the church, but it is more probable that he is referring to Christ's death as the template for the church. *ibid.* p. 222.

Ramsey stated that if the episcopacy could be 'stripped of its excrescences', it would be revealed as 'the one organ of God before and behind all that is local or sectional' (*ibid.* p. 84). But his argument effectively inverted the arguments of the neo-Thomists. First, he relocated the debate from the governance of the church to the relationship of episcopacy to the Gospel, and in so doing subordinated episcopacy to questions of the whole church. Second, instead of the 'essence' being an external truth to which episcopacy is referred, he established the episcopacy as revealing the essential (i.e. inevitable or inescapable) fact of the brokeness of the church.

> 'It [episcopacy] speaks of the incompleteness of every section of a divided Church,
> whether of those who possess the Episcopate or those who do not.' *ibid.* p. 85

The status of priest's orders was ambiguously phrased:

> '...ministerial priesthood - an indelible order as it is - is the priesthood of the one Body
> focused in certain organs which act for the Lord and for the Body.' *ibid.* p. 117

He described the idea that the priest can offer a eucharistic sacrifice to God somehow separate from the rest of the Church, as if in virtue of rights inherent in himself, as an 'abuse'. *Loc. cit.*

ontological existence of an essence separate from the direct relationship between God and creation.

By contrast with neo-Thomist ontology, Ramsey's concern was to look directly at the historical reality of the church[55] as an icon of God, and to discern both its inner and outer meaning[56],

> '... the inward and outward are inseparable, and the Church's inward meaning is expressed in the Church's outward shape and structure and the *ecclesia* wherein the parts depend on the whole.'[57]

The nature of the truth revealed by the Church was not external, objective and propositional, but the faithful participation by Christians, within history, in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

> 'Here [i.e. John 17[21]] there is a complete setting forth of the meaning of the Church: the eternal love of Father and Son is uttered in the Church's self-negation unto death, to the end that men may make it their own and be made one. The unity, in a word, means *death*. The death of the self *qua* self, first in Christ and thence in the disciples, is the ground and essence of the Church.'[58]

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[55] Rowan Williams argued that this was Ramsey's central insight:

> 'Fundamentally, however, the Church *is* the message. There is no cluster of ideas or ideals that can be abstracted from the life of the Church and passed on in some sort of neutral medium; to belong in the Church is to know what God wants you to know, because it is to live as God wants you to live.'

R. Williams, *Theology and the Churches* in R. Gill and L. Kendall (eds.) *Michael Ramsey as Theologian* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995) p. 14, emphasis in original.

[56] Ramsey revisited the theme of inner and outer faith in *Sacred and Secular*. He explored the ideas of this-worldly and other-worldly spirituality against the advent of 'religionless Christianity'. He argued that knowledge of God was mediated through phenomena, and there was an element of that knowledge which was 'beyond' the material, and neither should be neglected. Christianity was uncompromisingly sacred and secular, otherworldly and this worldly 'in costly interrelation.' A.M. Ramsey, *Sacred and Secular, A Study in the otherworldly and this-worldly aspects of Christianity* The Scott Memorial Lectures for 1964. (London, Longmans, 1965) p. 70. Without specifying any particular target, he observed,

> 'There can be a kind of hope of heaven which sets it in a realm of religion divorced from human life as it is, and this is something less than the Christian hope.' *Ibid.* p. 18.

[57] A.M. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* p. 50

[58] *Ibid.* pp. 25-26. See also the book's opening sentence, 'The underlying conviction of this book is that the meaning of the Christian Church becomes most clear when it is studied in terms of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.' *Preface to the first edition* p. vi.

The distinction between Ramsey's approach and that of the neo-Thomists echoed R.K. Fenn's distinction between Hellenist and New Testament understandings of the term 'witness'[59]. In Hellenist terms, to witness was to observe from the outside, or to theorise. In New Testament terms, to witness was to commit one's whole life, even to the point of self-sacrifice. In Lindbeck's terms[60], neo-Thomist theology was propositional-cognitive whilst Ramsey's was experiential-expressive. Given their different starting points, and different modes of theology, it is not surprising that their consequent characterisations of what the church was, and what it might and should be, also diverged.

Whatever their differences in ontology, Anglo-Catholic theologians all placed the sacraments and the credal notes of the church at the centre of their ecclesiology and their spirituality. In the sacraments something of the complex interrelationship between the divine and the material was made evident[61]. Baptism, confirmation and ordination each conveyed to the recipient an indelible character, marking (for the neo-Thomists) incorporation into a different ontological order[62]. They were signs and symbols and the effectual mode of living in contact with spiritual reality[63]. Their efficacy did not depend on human understanding or intent[64] but on God's action, and they were powerful constituents of the church.

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[59] **R.K. Fenn,** *Liturgies and Trials. p.* 4.

[60] **G.A. Lindbeck,** *The Nature of Doctrine,* p. 16.

[61] '... Baptism is unto the death and resurrection of Christ, and into the one Body (Rom. 6[3], I Cor. 10[13]); the Eucharist is likewise a sharing in Christ's death and a merging of the individual into the one Body (I Cor. 11[26]; I Cor. 10[17])...' **A.M. Ramsey,** *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* p. 50.

[62] **E.L. Mascall,** *Christ, the Christian and the Church ,* pp. 77, 78.

[63] **A.G. Hebert,** *The Form of the Church,* p. 13.

[64] **E.L. Mascall,** *Christ, the Christian and the Church,* p.172, note 1. However, as there was no sacrament without theory about it, so it was important that participants had some understanding of the sacrament. **A.G. Hebert,** *The Form of the Church,* p. 15.

'It is the function of the sacraments to establish, to maintain and to extend, to vivify and to unify, the mystical Body of the whole Christ, made up of head and members in one organic and coherent pattern of life, to the glory of God the Father.'[65]

In the Eucharist all orders of creation came together, all dichotomies were transcended, and salvation was recognised and realised. In the Eucharist there was no longer any divide between the visible church and spiritual reality, and questions of continuity were made redundant. For Ramsey,

> 'Nowhere more vividly than in the sacrament of the Eucharist do Christians find through Christ an openness to the past and to the present, to heaven and to the world. The sacrifice of Christ on Calvary is present in the here and now in its timeless potency, and the homely bread and wine of a contemporary meal are made the effectual signs of Christ's self-giving. The Christian community on earth is one with the saints of heaven. Blending past and present, earth and heaven, the Eucharist is a prophecy and a prayer for our coming to the vision of God and for the coming of God's reign in the world.'[66]

> '... the Liturgy is not an exercise of piety divorced from common life, it is rather the bringing of all common life into the sacrifice of Christ.'[67]

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[65] E.L. Mascall, *Corpus Christi*, p. 43.

[66] A.M. Ramsey, *God, Christ and the World: A Study in Contemporary Theology* (London, SCM Press, 1969) p. 116; cf. A.G. Hebert, The Eucharist '... sums up in itself the whole Gospel of redemption and the whole nature of the Church, Christ's Body.' *The Parish Communion*, p. 4.

[67] A.M. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, p. 119.

For Hebert, the discontents of society, its worship of self and atomistic ordering[68] was replaced in the Eucharist by holistic unity with God and true, hierarchically ordered, community[69]. If the church was reanimated by reinstating the Eucharist as its worshipping heart, the consequence would be to bring true, Godly, life back to society[70].

The 'notes' of the church provided an orthodox schema for the delineation of church, but they also exposed a deep ambivalence in the Anglo-Catholics' analysis of the visible church. 'Notes' were descriptive statements of the divine and ontological nature of the church. But unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity were overwhelmingly absent from, or contradicted by, actual ecclesiastical life. Consequently the 'notes' of the church played three roles which were at least in

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[68] Against a general background of considerable unease in the church concerning socialism, fuelled by fears that events in Russia might be replicated elsewhere, there was also a strong affinity between Anglo-Catholics and socialism, at least of the ethical rather than the ideological variety. They were more concerned to redress the wrongs done to working people as they saw them in daily parish ministry, than to assert the workers' ownership of the means of production as the panacea for social ills. Hastings quotes Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar, at the Anglo-Catholic Congress of 1923:

> 'You cannot claim to worship Jesus in the Tabernacle, if you do not pity Jesus in the slum. ... It is folly - it is madness - to suppose that you can worship Jesus in the Sacraments and Jesus on the throne of glory, when you are sweating him in the souls and bodies of his children.'

H. Maynard-Smith, *Frank: Bishop of Zanzibar*, 1926, p. 302, quoted in A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 174.

[69] In the early church,

> 'The Bishop was when possible the celebrant, and was surrounded by his priests, who (at least in Rome) con-celebrated with him; the deacons, headed by the archdeacon, and the sub-deacons had their share in the reading of lessons and the ceremonial of the altar: chanters and choir, acolytes and doorkeepers all had their place; the people too had their share in the action in the offering of the gifts and the kiss of peace and the communion.'

A.G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society, The Function of the Church in the Modern World*, (London, Faber and Faber, 1935) p. 75

[70] 'It is the church's function to help the common man to apprehend the Eternal by exhibiting in her teaching, her worship and her corporate life, the pattern of the city which hath foundations.' A.G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society*, p. 165; There is more than a hint here of a church of the articulate, or at least educated, classes, showing God to a largely passive working class.

tension, and perhaps contradictory. They were descriptions of the church; bench marks by which to judge the church; and aspirational goals for the church.

The unity of the church was an ontological matter to which human factors were secondary[71]. Unity was the nature of the church[72], because it was '...nothing less than a participation in the unity of God himself ...'[73]. The ascended Christ was the substance and ground of the Christian unity as the ultimate Form or Exemplar[74].

Unity was visible in the local church, especially in incorporation into the body through baptism; in the Eucharist[75]; and in the bishop or parish priest who represented in their person the unity of the church in each place[76]. The reunion of the churches was consequential on their ontological unity in Jesus Christ[77] so that, first, it was an important aspiration[78], and second, that importance was diminished by the pre-existing ontological unity. Ramsey (who was committed to the ecumenical cause) described Christian unity as the unity of a race[79], the New Israel[80], which, with the shared historical originating events of Christianity[81],

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[71] E.L. Mascall, *Corpus Christi*, p. 3.

[72] A.G. Hebert, *The Form of the Church*, p. 68. He suggested that 'We ought to think of schism as a denial of the Church's nature...' *ibid.* p. 69.

[73] E.L. Mascall, *Christ, the Christian and the Church* , p. 99; *Corpus Christi*, p. 5.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[75] Hebert spoke of unity as a spiritual fact with sacramental expression, *The Parish Communion*, p. 18.

[76] A.G. Hebert, *The Form of the Church*, p. 71.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

[79] T.A. Lacey had used the image of the unity of 'race' to describe the underlying commonality of all the baptised. Schism was not between churches, but within the one Church. **T.A. Lacey,** *Unity and Schism, The Bishop Paddock Lectures for 1917* (London, A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1917).

[80] A.M. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, p. 47; see also p. 18.

[81] *Ibid.* p. 48. He accepted B.H. Streeter's argument that historical enquiry would not lead to the establishment of the grounds of continuity. *Ibid.* p. 68.

pertained however scattered or organisationally divided its members might be[82]. If, for the neo-Thomist, visible disunity was a source of sorrow and evidence of sin, but ultimately irrelevant, for Ramsey visible unity was an embodiment of the shared participation of Christians in the death of Christ[83], and behind these all, unity in the unity of God[84].

> 'The return of all Christians to this divine structure is not a movement backwards to something ancient and venerable, nor a submission on the part of some to what especially belongs to others. It is the recognition by all of the truth about themselves as members of the one people of God, whose origin is the historical life of Jesus and whose completeness will be known only in the building up of the one Body.'[85]

Unity and catholicity would not be attained by the setting of tests of validity, but by the recognition of both the truth in each tradition, and its limitations.

> 'No Christian shall deny his Christian experience, but all Christians shall grow more fully into the one experience in all its parts.'[86]

Holiness was also a manifestation of the objective, supernatural reality of the church and the historical truth of salvation[87]. Holiness was not a matter of perfection, but of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church which was a constant school for sinners[88]. Nor was holiness to be identified with the subjective experience of God, and the Anglo-Catholics strove to avoid individualising faith or identifying holiness with personal piety. Personal sanctification was important, but was a *'churchly'*[89] act of 'becoming, morally, that which,

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[82] *Ibid.* pp. 18, 139.

[83] *Ibid.* pp. 25-26.

[84] *Ibid.* p. 50.

[85] *Ibid.* p. 222.

[86] *Ibid.* p. 223.

[87] A.G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society*, p. 112.

[88] A.M. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, p. 139; A.G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society*, p. 154.

[89] E.L. Mascall, *Christ, the Christian and the Church*, p.205.

ontologically, we already are.'[90]. The Anglo-Catholics disdained what they perceived to be the Protestant position that personal piety was the fount of the church[91], and sought to stress God's faithfulness rather than the believer's perseverance[92]. In the tension between the ontological holiness of the church, and the continued presence of sinners, lay unresolved questions of the boundaries between the human and the divine.

Visible catholicity was as absent as visible unity. Hebert drew on Cyril of Jerusalem to expound the dimensions of catholicity as the world-wide extension of the church; the faith taught and held in its wholeness, and in the due proportion of its parts; the gathering into unity of men of all classes and character; and the healing of the diseases of the soul[93]. Yet somehow the absence of visible

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[90] *Ibid.*, p.204.

[91] '... it is a distortion of the apostolic doctrine to say that men are *first* united to Christ, through faith, within an invisible society of the truly faithful, and *then* find admission to the visible Church. The right order is not: Christ — faithful individuals — the Church; but Christ — the Church — faithful individuals.' **Abbott, E.S. et. al.**, *Catholicity: a Study in the Conflict of Christian Traditions in the West*, being a Report presented to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, (Westminster, Dacre Press, 1947), p. 13.

[92] Hebert, *Liturgy and Society*, p. 145. Hebert saw a long drift towards the primacy of personal piety not only in Protestantism but also in the Counter-Reformation, *Liturgy and Society*, pp. 114-122.

[93] **A.G. Hebert**, *The Form of the Church*, pp. 100-104.

The term 'catholicism' and its cognates was used in contradictory ways. It referred to an affirmation of traditional Christian truth and authority,

'... not a type of thought or outlook, but certain facts whose existence and authority Christians acknowledge: the Catholic Church, the Catholic Creeds, the Catholic Faith, the Catholic Sacraments.' *Catholicity*, p. 9.

But it also referred to divergent sub-traditions of divided Christendom, or to an attitude of openness. This tends to encourage a seepage of meaning by which, for example, authority and authenticity are claimed by a small group.

'We have seen 'Catholic' as a positive and inclusive term, but sensed it was being hijacked in a negative and exclusive way. We saw the Catholic tradition in the Church of England in danger of becoming intrinsically anti-Catholic as it became a mechanism for deciding who were the insiders and who the outsiders.' **D. Stancliffe**, *A Catholic Future for the Church of England?*

catholicism did not appear to have constituted a serious challenge to Catholic thought, unlike the absence of unity or holiness.

Apostolicity, in the form of the doctrine of Apostolic Succession had been central to Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology since John Henry Newman. The transmission of 'the power of ordination from hand to hand'[94] led back historically to the Apostles, and thus provided continuity with Jesus Christ[95]. The claim was more than historical. Because the source of authority for the episcopacy was thus from 'above', from Jesus Christ himself, no subsequent church gathering could alter or dispense with it[96], and episcopacy therefore constituted an indispensable criterion of validity of the visible church[97].

This position had been developed in opposition to the theory that authority was from 'below'[98]. In 1879 Lightfoot had argued that the most comprehensive explanation of the historical evidence was that the episcopate had emerged, albeit providentially, from the elevation of individual presbyters into positions of

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[94] J.H. Newman, *Tract 1*. Cited in N. Sykes, *Old Priest and New Presbyter*, p. 209.

[95] Following Darwell Stone a subsequent generation of Anglo-Catholics moved away from an exclusively historical argument, knowing it to be vulnerable to contrary historical evidence, not least in the Reformation and post-Reformation period. N. Sykes, *Old Priest and New Presbyter* p. 211.

[96] A.M. Farrer, *Forward* in *The Apostolic Ministry*, (Second edition) pp. v-vi.

[97] A.M. Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple,*. p. 111.

[98] 'According to one [perspective], the validity of order depends on succession, however conceived, from the original apostolate, and a continued exercise of apostolic powers not only in but upon the Church. According to the other, order derives its authority from recognition by the Church itself; that is to say, in practice, by some congregation or group of congregations. On the first view the ministry succeeds the apostles in a way in which the laity does not (for we can all talk, in some sense, of the lay apostolate). On the second view the apostles are succeeded by the whole Church; if any individual is an apostle, we all are. ... The student of scripture finds it impossible to trace the origins of such a conviction [i.e. the second view] in the words of Christ, the letters of St. Paul, or anywhere else; and the experienced pastor deplores the practical effects of an erroneous belief.'

A.M. Farrer, *Foreword*, in *The Apostolic Ministry*, p. xviii (The parting shot of his Foreword.)

presidency[99]. The consequence for the present-day church was that the legitimacy of leadership lay in its authorisation by the whole body of the church, lay and ordained.

Apostolicity had to some extent a different character to the first three notes of the church[100]. Its ontological character was indirect, pertaining to the episcopacy first, and only consequently to the church as a whole[101]. Furthermore, by contrast with the absence of the first three notes, the visible church could be described as apostolic, at least to the satisfaction of the Anglo-Catholics. Because episcopacy was a fact of the Church of England its ontological affirmation was less important than acceptance of the particular view which Anglo-Catholics held of the episcopacy[102].

Drawing on this strong tradition of Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology, and against the background of the threat of intercommunion with The Church of South India, *The Apostolic Ministry* was written to embed apostolic succession in Church of England doctrine, to establish that doctrine as the corner stone of all Anglican ecclesiology, and to ensure that ecumenical discussion made no concession on the central significance of episcopacy.

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[99] **J.B. Lightfoot,** *Dissertation on the Christian Ministry,* in *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London, Macmillan & Co, 1879) pp. 179-267.

[100] Hebert acknowledged that he had had much greater problems establishing the equivalent status for the apostolicity of the Church as that of the other notes of the church, causing him to re-write the relevant chapter in the second edition of *The Form of the Church.* p. 116.

[101] For the neo-Thomists, the episcopate was a distinct ontological order entered partially on ordination to the priesthood and fully on consecration as bishop **E.L. Mascall,** *Corpus Christi,* p.30; cf. *Recovery of Unity,* p. 98. Kirk divided the ordained ministry into two: an Essential ministry of bishops, and a Dependent ministry of all other clergy **K.E. Kirk,** *The Apostolic Ministry,* in *The Apostolic Ministry,* pp. 8-9. He did not disagree with the conception of the three-fold ministry, he merely put it to one side.

[102] The episcopate was not to be considered apart from its theological and ecclesiological context. It was '.. a whole *via vitae,* a unity of faith, worship and life in which men and women live as members of Christ ...' **E.L. Mascall,** *The Recovery of Unity* p.193. Mascall was attacking Archbishop Fisher's call to the Free Churches to 'take episcopacy into their system'.

The thesis of *The Apostolic Ministry* was that apostolic succession, and episcopacy, were of the *esse* of the Church. It made two central arguments. The first, theological, argument was that

> 'The institution of apostolic ministry, made in the persons of the Twelve, is a gift or ordinance having as permanent a place in the Church as the institution of the Eucharist.'[103]

> 'The episcopate is the divinely ordained ministerial instrument for securing to the Church of God its continuous and organic unity, not as a club of like-minded worshippers or aspirants to holiness, but as a God-given city of salvation.'[104]

The second argument was historical,

> '[the Twelve] ... did not scruple to use lieutenants for apostolic purposes, and when they themselves died, their disciples and associates were looked to for apostolic direction. By the time these 'apostolical men' died in their turn, an institution had appeared which rapidly became universal, the monarchical episcopate. It seemed providentially designed to become the vessel of apostolical authority, and with the general consent of the faithful, exercised it in fact.'[105]

Both arguments were based in scripture and the early church, and their implications worked through the subsequent history of the church.

The theological argument was the affirmation of the office of the episcopacy as of the *esse* of the church. Because it was constituted and ordained by Christ, it was

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[103] A.M. Farrer, *Forward*, in *The Apostolic Ministry*, p. v.

[104] K.E. Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry*, in *ibid.*, p. 8.

[105] A.M. Farrer, *Forward*, in *ibid.*, pp. v-vi.

unalterable[106]. Episcopacy was necessary for the functioning and unity of the church and the bishop was the guardian of the faith, the source of its teaching and the minister of its sacraments. It had been proved necessary for the early survival of the church, and it remained the guarantor of the means of grace.

Hebert[107] argued the case from first theological principles, starting

> '... with our Lord's headship of the Church His Body, and with His Mission from the Father. This double relation involves a corresponding doubleness in the idea of the ministry: on the one hand it must represent the prophetic, priestly, and royal character inherent in the Church as being the Body of Christ, and on the other be responsible for the guardianship of the Gospel-message, of the sacraments, and of the flock. How, then, does such an idea translate itself into Church order? We shall reply that there needs to be an office in the Church, firstly representing in each place Christ's relation to the church, secondly expressing the unity of Christian ministry both in place and in time, and thirdly entrusted with the commission which our Lord gave to His *shelihim*; and that, while it rests with the Church to arrange all matters of detail, and to fix all the subsidiary forms of the ministry, there must always be at the centre the essential office of the apostolic ministry, namely that which bears the name of bishop.'[108]

The authors of *The Apostolic Ministry* held no doubts about the source of authority for the ordained ministry:

> 'The doctrine that the ministry, as embodied in its highest exemplar, the episcopate, is 'from above,' endowed with grace and authority from on high, and not simply with delegated responsibilities entrusted to it by the contemporary Church, is found fully-operative in the sub-apostolic

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[106] This was strictly a juridic rather than a theological notion. It was grounded on the understanding that a group which has the authority to make a decision has the authority to change it. Therefore, if Christ instituted the episcopacy, the Church had no power to alter it. (Cf. A.G. Hebert, *Ministerial Episcopacy*, in *The Apostolic Ministry*, p. 497).

E.L. Mascall later put the argument negatively, 'If the Apostolate, as something distinct within the family of God, is not meant to be a permanent feature of the Church's life, we can only conclude that the Church is meant to be something essentially, and not merely accidentally, different in all succeeding ages from what it was when the Lord Messiah instituted it in the days of his flesh. And that I find very difficult to believe.' *The Recovery of Unity*, p. 174.

[107] A.G. Hebert, *Ministerial Episcopacy*, in *The Apostolic Ministry*, pp. 493-534

[108] *Ibid.*, pp. 527-528.

period, and continues virtually unopposed to the days of Luther. It involves of course the corollary that only those who already possess this supernatural commission can transmit it to their successors in office, even though the local Church as a whole may play its part in the designation of persons to inherit the responsibility.'[109]

Kirk and his colleagues were emphatic on this central issue. The 'tunnel period' of historical ignorance implied for many that, while it was possible to have confidence in Christ's commission to his disciples, and later in the emergence of an authoritative monarchical episcopacy, it was not possible to deduce with any certainty how the two were related. Dom Gregory Dix directly tackled such historical pusillanimity with the idea of the 'shaliach' that was central to the argument of *The Apostolic Ministry*.

Dix explicated *shaliach* as Christ's conception of the nature of his commission of the Apostles[110], and thus as the defining characteristic of Apostleship. It had two necessary elements: first, a *shaliach* was a plenipotentiary, given full authority to represent the sender[111]. Second, it was a commission that could be transferred to a third party, even to those who had not seen Christ in the flesh[112]. The extension of the apostolate was accompanied by the development of 'ordination' through the laying on of hands.

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[109] K.E. Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry*, Foreword to the original edition, p. xxi.

[110] G. Dix, *The Ministry in the Early Church*, in *The Apostolic Ministry*, pp. 183-303.

[111] '... the Greek *apostolos* is the equivalent or rather the mere translation of *shaliach*, the friend or slave "sent" as a plenipotentiary not only "in the name" but "in the person" of the principle, so that the envoy's action unalterably committed the principle.' *ibid.*, p. 228.

[112] Dix argued that the process was not simple, but one of fusion. A bishop's special liturgical functions stemmed from the primitive *episkopos*. His presidency of the local Christian sanhedrin gave pastoral and disciplinary powers (not exercised alone). Responsibility for the orthodoxy of doctrine (probably), and certainly the power to ordain, came from his inheritance as a successor to the apostles.

> 'As attributes of the *personal* commission of the *shaliach* they could not generally be transferred to the local ministry at the death of the original apostles, simply because the 'corporate' type of presbytery had not yet developed any personal organ to which they could be transferred; ...' *Ibid.* p. 273.

'... it represents a change in the mode of conceiving of our Lord's action in ordaining, from acting immediately but invisibly to acting visibly through a *shaliach*.'[113]

Thus Dix provided the contributors to *The Apostolic Ministry* with a conceptual bridge and sacramental ritual across the 'tunnel period' between Christ's commission of his apostles and the emergence of monarchical episcopacy[114].

Thornton[115] and Farrer re-examined the New Testament evidence. Thornton stressed the mystical identity with Christ in his body,

> 'All that happened to the physical organism of His body (suffering, death, burial, and resurrection) now happens to us also. It happened to Him in the literal facts of history. It happens to us in a mystical order. ... Our incorporation into Christ identifies us with the history of the new organism to which we now belong.'[116]

The apostles received from Jesus his messianic authority, and his continuing presence and guidance and their commission was a genuine transmission of responsibility. Their mission was a continuation of Christ's, and had a permanent character[117]. As Jesus committed his spirit to the apostles, so they committed 'this charge' to Timothy, and through Timothy to other faithful men.

> 'Thus there is a continuous devolution of authority from Christ to the apostles, and from the apostles to those who succeed them in office, that they in turn may hand it on to others.'[118]

Farrer[119] sought to distinguish as clearly as possible between the Twelve and the apostles (including by extension Paul, Timothy, Barnabus and others), deacons,

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[113] *Ibid.*, p. 232.

[114] Dix's arguments were in turn used as foundation stones by A.M. Farrer, *Foreword*, in *ibid.*, pp. vii-ix, and in his essay *passim*; and K.E. Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry*, in *ibid.*, p. 9.

[115] L.S. Thornton, *The Body of Christ in the New Testament*, in *The Apostolic Ministry*, pp. 53-111

[116] *Ibid.* p. 77.

[117] *Ibid.* p. 108.

[118] *Ibid.* p. 109.

[119] A.M. Farrer, *The Ministry in the New Testament*, in *The Apostolic Ministry*, pp. 113-182.

ministers, elders and bishops. In St Ignatius, Farrer asserted, the bishop was treated for the first time as apostolic, adding,

> '*Apostellein* is not used, but the gospels, especially the fourth, use *pempein* of Christ's sending by the Father and the apostles' by Him; and it is impossible to doubt an allusion to the sending of the Twelve (Mark vi *et par.*).'[120]

The development of the church was untidy and uneven. At first it developed into 'apostolic' and 'episcopal' churches[121] with 'apostolical men' and 'local leaders' existing side by side[122]. Over time, however,

> 'The good tradition was canonized, and the bishops jointly became its guardians in solidarity with one another - though the few great 'apostolic sees' remained the corner stones of the widely spread structure.'[123]

Against the thesis that there was no original distinction between bishop and presbyter, Jalland argued that the evidence for differentiation was clear at least in the churches of Syria and Asia. In either case 'few would allow either that the presbyterate is the essential order of the ministry, or that it is of divine origin.'[124] Parker[125] traced the episcopacy through the transformations of the feudal era. Notwithstanding the corruption of the office, the neglect of spiritual duties for secular concerns, and the prelatical authority that was assumed in many places,

> 'There is a continuity which is unmistakable; we must not exaggerate the changes so as to make them appear deeper than they are. It is the same office which undergoes transformation, and the essence of it, which is sacramental and supernatural, does not change.'[126]

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[120] *Ibid.* p. 165, n. 1

[121] *Ibid.* p. 143.

[122] *Ibid.* p. 170.

[123] *Loc. cit.*

[124] **T.G. Jalland,** *The Doctrine of the Parity of Ministers* in *The Apostolic Ministry*, pp. 305-349; p. 307.

[125] **T.M. Parker,** *Feudal Episcopacy* in *The Apostolic Ministry*, pp. 351-386

[126] *Ibid.* pp. 384-385.

Thompson[127] addressed the post-Reformation episcopate in England. She found no discontinuity of consecrations with the preceding Roman Catholic Church[128], and argued that, notwithstanding the difficulty of bishops controlling their vast dioceses, 'alleged irregularities', and the charitable way many bishops spoke of non-episcopal churches, 'the law of the Church leaves no manner of doubt that, so far as the Church of England was concerned, episcopacy, and therefore episcopal orders, were of its very essence.'[129] She also cited a range of Anglican divines to show their belief both in their unbroken continuity with the early church and, particularly under the pressure of conflict with Puritanism, the distinction between the episcopacy and the priesthood *'de jure divino'*[130].

From 1660 to the present Ady[131] continued the story. In the years since the end of the First World War a new danger had arisen which 'threatens to undermine, not so much the bishop's authority, as the essential and sacramental character of his office.'[132]. She was referring to the ecumenical movement and in particular to its impact on Anglicanism in the form of the *Appeal to all Christian People* issued after the 1920 Lambeth Conference.

Ady also reflected the double-edged nature of *The Apostolic Ministry*'s analysis of the episcopacy. On the one hand the essential ministry was not to be identified with the exercise of episcopacy as historically practised. In the contemporary

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[127] **B.M.H. Thompson,** *The Post-Reformation Episcopate in England, (i) From the Reformation to the Restoration,* in *The Apostolic Ministry,* pp. 387-432

[128] Archbishop Parker's consecration was 'valid according to the law of the land, by formally the same rite by which his predecessors in the Church of God had been ordained from the apostolic age onwards - namely by the laying on of hands with the intention to consecrate a bishop in the Church of God, as distinct from any other order.' *Ibid.* p. 398.

[129] *Ibid.* p. 402.

[130] *Ibid.* p. 431.

[131] **C. Ady,** *The Post-Reformation Episcopate in England, (ii) From the Restoration to the Present Day* in *The Apostolic Ministry,* pp. 433-460

[132] *Ibid.* p. 458.

Church of England Ady saw, in the liturgical anarchy which followed the rejection of the 1928/29 prayer book proposals[133]; in the absence of a formally constituted synod of clergy[134]; and in the method of appointment of English bishops[135] derogation from the full expression of essential episcopacy. Similarly Mackenzie asserted that no-one else was expected to take the Church of England system as their model[136]. Yet on the other hand,

> 'To the historian, however, one proof of divine power at work in the Church lies in its preservation of the essentials of faith and order through every vicissitude, and alike in periods of decadence and revival.'[137]

Thus the proof that history offered was only to be found by looking beneath or beyond historical reality.

The contributors to *The Apostolic Ministry* followed through the exclusivist logic of apostolic succession in a way which constituted a critique, and indeed a denigration, of the ministries of non-episcopal churches. Non-episcopal denominations were simply not valid churches. Kirk set up a juridic test of validity: what was valid was that which, by satisfying certain conditions, laid down by competent authority, could properly claim everything to which it appeared to have title[138].

> 'Applying this definition to the ministry, we should say that the competent authority which laid down the conditions of validity was of course the Church of the apostles and their immediate successors. The principle condition so laid down is ordination by a member of the

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[133] *Ibid.* p. 456.

[134] *Ibid.*, p. 458; a view shared by A.G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society*, p. 231-233.

[135] C. Ady, *The Post-Reformation Episcopate in England, (ii) From the Restoration to the Present Day* in *The Apostolic Ministry*, p. 458. She shared this view with Thompson, *ibid.*, p. 398.

[136] K.D. Mackenzie, *Sidelights for the Non-Episcopal Communions* in *The Apostolic Ministry*, pp. 461-491; quotation p. 466.

[137] *Ibid.*, p. 460.

[138] K.E. Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry*, in *The Apostolic Ministry*, p. 33.

Essential Ministry - that is, by one who was himself consecrated by a member of that ministry.'[139]

Therefore, the claim to the title 'Church' by non-episcopal bodies could not, in the end, be made good. Their visible efficacy and Christian behaviour might argue a presumption of validity, but it was not proof. In the absence of a valid ministry the continuity and maintenance of the church of the New Testament with its faith, scriptures and sacraments intact, simply could not occur[140]. Consequently, invalid churches were not so much 'null and void' as 'pretenced'[141]. There could be no parity of status or function for Christian bodies which attributed ministerial status to anyone not so ordained. Therefore ecumenical discussion could proceed, if it proceeded at all, only on the assumption that the true church was dealing with false churches.

The immediate consequences of this logic was spelled out in the book's *Epilogue*.

> 'The 'South India Scheme,' the 'Sketch of a United Church,' and the 'Outline for Reunion' all appear to make shipwreck on the same rock. The Church is regarded not as a wonderful and sacred mystery, a life carrying its own law of development with it, but either, geographically, as a 'province,' or, politically, as a voluntary society, an association based on a Scriptural and historical model. But the reunion of the separated Churches must from the very beginning be a mighty reaffirmation with power of the Church's true and unchangeable nature; it must be a great confession of faith on the part of those who come or rather flow together, weary of schism and confessing the burden of it intolerable. The episcopal ministry, in that day of reunion, will be accepted not grudgingly but joyfully, as the seal and completion of our unity in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.'[142]

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[139] *Ibid.* p. 34.

[140] 'If this [New Testament] Church disappears, the gospel sacraments as efficacious signs of grace disappear with it; we are left with mere *simalcra* of the sacraments.' *Ibid.* pp. 39-40.

[141] *Ibid.* p. 36; though, with a further twist of the knife, Kirk adds as a footnote 'Not, of course, necessarily in bad faith.' *Loc. cit.*

[142] F.W. Green, *Epilogue*, in *The Apostolic Ministry*, pp. 535-550; quotation p. 550.

Only if reunion was based on the notes of the church, understood in their true meaning, would a scheme for unity be possible, valid, and receive the support of this school of Anglo-Catholicism.

Opposition to *The Apostolic Ministry*, its thesis, methods, and detail was extensive. The strength of Anglo-Catholicism appeared to be growing, and such a way which threatened to exclude many, if not all, Evangelicals from the Church of England, and to make union between Anglican and non-episcopal churches all but impossible. In reflecting on the equivocation of the Lambeth Conference of 1948 towards inter-communion with The Church of South India, (but without naming a culprit) Norman Sykes stated,

> 'The difference between Lambeth in 1930 and in 1948 have evoked the suspicion that in fact a particular interpretation of the historic episcopate (and not the adoption of that institution alone) is being asked of nonepiscopal churches as a condition of full union or inter-communion; and further, that this interpretation is not the traditional Anglican doctrine of episcopacy but the exclusive theory of Tractarian *provenance* and championship. It is proper, therefore, to ask which interpretation is more consonant with the Anglican principle to require nothing to be believed of necessity "but that which is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old or New Testament and that which the catholic fathers and ancient bishops have gathered out of that doctrine".'[143]

Thus critics targeted their attack. Was the thesis of *The Apostolic Ministry* in accord with scripture; did it have a warrant in history; was it congruent with the historic formularies of the Church of England; was it orthodox?

Critics accused the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry* of failing in every aspect of their biblical exegesis. Stephen Neill credited the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry* with trying to think biblically. However he regretted the extensive use of

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[143] **N. Sykes,** *Old Priest and New Presbyter,* p. 238. He cited the canons of 1571.

typology[144], a method Moule described as leading Thornton into '.. wild flights of fancy..'[145], while Torrance was still more forthright:

> '... the exegetical acrobatics of both Thornton and Farrer are not worthy of the name of true scholarship.'[146]

Moule suggested that the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry*, not least Farrer, misread and misrepresented the New Testament evidence. He argued that that there was no 'sacerdotal conception of the ministry'[147] and no '*episcopal* sort of apostleship'[148] in the New Testament. The function of the Apostles as witnesses to the truth of the resurrection could not be transmitted, except to the New Testament itself.

Historically, Moule again endorsed Lightfoot's thesis that *episcopos* and *presbyter* were indistinguishable in the New Testament, and that a uniform pattern of leadership arose out of initial diversity[149]. There was a complex relationship between the church and the Gospel to which the Apostles, New Testament, and the community of the church were all witnesses:

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[144] **S. Neill**, *A General Survey*, in *The Ministry of the Church*, (The Canterbury Press, reprinted from *The Record*, 1947) p. 8. **T.W. Manson** accepted the importance of understanding the minds of the New Testament authors through the Old. However,

> '... it does not follow that we are to be bound by their excursions into the more fanciful realms of Rabbinical exegesis, much less by the word-plays and other haggadic fantasies which Dr. Thornton produces on his own account.'

The Church's Ministry, (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1948) p. 11

[145] **C.F.D. Moule**, *The Apostolic Commission in the New Testament* in *The Ministry of the Church* p. 46.

[146] **T.F. Torrance**, *Concerning the Ministry*, in, **J.H.S. Burleigh, T.F. Torrance, and F.W. Campfield**, *Concerning the Ministry - Review of* The Apostolic Ministry *and* The Ministry of the Church, in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 1, No. 2, September 1948, pp. 190-201; p. 190.

[147] **C.F.D. Moule**, *The Origins of the Christian Ministry: Some Aspects of the Apostolate in the New Testament.* The Churchman, Vol. LXII, No. 2, April-June 1948, New series, pp. 71-78. p. 73.

[148] **C.F.D. Moule**, *The Apostolic Commission in the New Testament*, in *The Ministry of the Church* p. 49.

[149] See also **T.W. Manson**, *The Church's Ministry* p. 60; **S.L. Greenslade**, *The Apostolic Ministry - II*, in *Theology*, Vol. L, No 322, April 1947, p. 136; **H. Chadwick**, *Episcopacy in the Second Century*, in The Churchman, Vol. LXII, No. 2, April-June 1948, New series, p. 87; all of whom preferred Lightfoot's thesis.

'The Gospel, introducing men and women to the living presence of God by His Spirit, created the Christian community, while the community, conversely, preserved and interpreted the Scriptures.'[150]

The Christian community required constitutional leadership, and this eventually emerged as the graded system of bishops, priests (elders), and deacons. 'But ... always it has been the Church which has authorized the Ministry, not *vice versa.*'[151] The facts that the Apostles had a pastoral role, and that there was continuity of Christian life and teaching with the apostolic age, did not imply the tactual transmission of authority through a succession of individuals. Similarly, T.W. Manson argued that it was the whole church which was the continuation of Christ's messianic ministry[152] and as such, apostolic[153], and that the only essential ministry was that of Christ himself[154].

Because so much weight was placed on the idea of *shaliach* to explicate the relationship between Christ, his Apostles, and the episcopacy, and because the whole thesis of *The Apostolic Ministry* was vulnerable at this point, considerable criticism was focused on issue. The Bishop of Truro, for example, asserted that '*shaliach*' was not a technical term, and that Dix had taken a custom and turned it into an institution, a '*shaliachate,*' for which there was no justification in the historical evidence[155]. Dix disputed the Bishop's interpretation, citing further supporting evidence[156]. But the Bishop's fundamental point was theological:

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[150] C.F.D. Moule, *The Origins of the Christian Ministry* p. 77.

[151] *Ibid.* p. 78.

[152] T.W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry*, p. 20.

[153] *Ibid.* pp. 32-33; 73.

[154] *Ibid.* p. 30.

[155] The Bishop of Truro [J.W. Hunkin], *The Hebrew word "Shaliach"* in *Theology*, Vol. LI, No 335, May 1948, pp. 166-170.

[156] G. Dix, *The Christian Shaliach and the Jewish Apostle - A Reply*, in *Theology*, Vol. LI, No 337, July 1948, pp. 249-256.

'Our Divine Lord has no plenipotentiaries on earth. The idea that he ever could has been one of the besetting illusions of the Catholic Church.'[157]

Torrance identified three errors in Dix's use of *Shaliach*. First, he was historically wrong in his characterisation of the word which originally implied no religious or mystical connection between a man and his representative, only a legal relationship[158]. Second, the emphasis of the New Testament was not on the person of the apostle, but on their function as witnesses to the truth of the resurrection[159]. Third, in New Testament doctrine,

'... it is supremely the Holy Ghost who is the *shaliach* of Christ, and here the legal relation (Advocate-paraclete) is caught up in the relation of identity between Christ and his other self, the *Shaliach-Spirit*.'[160]

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Torrance pointed out, was almost wholly absent from *The Apostolic Ministry*. In the New Testament it is only the Holy Spirit who is Christ's *shaliach*, and even he does not draw attention to himself, but speaks only of Jesus Christ. By contrast,

'To call a Bishop a *shaliach* in this personal sense, to call him *Alter-Christus*, is to quench the Holy Ghost, and really amounts to blasphemy. The Holy Spirit - Shaliach is dethroned, and in His place there is substituted a doctrine of *Bishop-Shaliach* who in very person and deposit, nay in personal identity, represents Christ Jesus. The Holy Ghost is treated as a mere *paradosis* which Bishops can pass from hand to head.'[161]

In fact, Torrance asserts, the relationship of the Apostolate to Christ lay in the *kerygma*, a doctrine grievously misunderstood by the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry*. In the apostolic proclamation of Christ, the crucified and risen Christ

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[157] **The Bishop of Truro,** *The Hebrew word "Shaliach"* p. 169.

[158] T.F. Torrance, *Concerning the Ministry* p. 193. He accepted that later Jewish Gnostics held a more mystical notion of this relationship, and asserted that thus Gnosticism is imported into *The Apostolic Ministry, Loc. cit.*

[159] *Ibid.* pp. 193-194.

[160] *Ibid.* p. 194.

[161] *Ibid.* p. 195.

again encountered people, and evoked in them an eschatological repetition of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. Because the Holy Spirit was absent from *The Apostolic Ministry* so was the eschatological understanding of the *kerygma*, and apostolic succession was thus reduced to temporal repetition. Rather, the ministry of the apostles created the church, though their ministry was particular and unrepeatable, and every ministry whose proclamation becomes God's own testimony, was essential and creative[162].

Manson also considered the term *shaliach*, and disputed Dix's analysis of its substance, of its application in the early Church, and its contemporary implications. He concluded that powers delegated to the *shaliach* could not be passed to another; that a person was a *shaliach* only until their representative function had been discharged; and that such duties occurred only within the Jewish community[163]. Furthermore, the significance of *shaliach* lay not in the form of commission, but in its content[164].

Hebert later argued defensively that too much emphasis had been placed on the Jewish and rabbinical concepts of *shaliach*, and too little on the *shaliach-apostolos* of the New Testament[165], but this was special pleading. The argument of *The Apostolic Ministry* was vulnerable at this point precisely because their understanding of the episcopacy hung on a legal-rational understanding of the relationship between Christ and his apostles, and the transmissible nature of the dominical commission.

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[162] *Ibid.* p. 196.

[163] T.W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry*, pp. 36, 37, 39.

[164] *Ibid.* p. 47.

[165] A.G. Hebert, *Reflections on The Apostolic Ministry*, in *Theology*, Vol. LIV, No. 378, December 1958, pp. 459-466; p. 461.

Because *The Apostolic Ministry* placed so much weight on the linear nature of apostolic succession, it was also fatally vulnerable to historical attack. One counter-example could destroy the chain, while no amount of affirmative examples could ever finally prove the case.

The standards of historical interpretation of *The Apostolic Ministry* were also heavily criticised. Dom Gregory Dix in particular was accused of having '... a tendency to mistake inference for evidence, and possibility for certainty.'[166] At the very best the historical case was not proven for lack of evidence[167]. And therefore the doctrinal, as much as the historical, thesis is undermined, '... his case is not proved where proof is important if this theory is to support binding doctrine.'[168] Manson, in *The Church's Ministry*, asserted that Dix went 'beyond the evidence and beyond the inherent probabilities of the situation'[169] which 'will hardly do.'[170], while Dix's conclusions about the relationship between Rome and Corinth exemplified in *I Clement* was the result of 'bad logic ... allied with unrestrained fantasy.'[171]

Hebert conceded that the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry* did

> '... in some measure lay themselves open to misunderstanding by the fact that the plan of the book was mainly historical.'[172]

And, although he was personally persuaded by Dom Dix's thesis of the development of the ministry through the 'tunnel period' of the early church, he tacitly accepted this was not universally approved. Unfortunately for the authors

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[166] N. Sykes, *Old Priests and New Presbyter* p. 15.

[167] H. Chadwick, *Episcopacy in the Second Century*, p. 87

[168] S.L. Greenslade, *The Ministry in the Early Church*, in *The Ministry of the Church*, p. 59.

[169] T.W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry*, p. 61

[170] *Ibid.* p. 62.

[171] *Ibid.* p. 64.

[172] A.G. Hebert, *Reflections on The Apostolic Ministry*, p. 460.

of *The Apostolic Ministry*, counter-evidence was adduced in each of the areas of historical concern.

In a detailed essay W. Telfer determined that presbyteral consecration of a patriarch was normal at Alexandria until the Council of Nicaea, and that no-one at that Council challenged the right of the Alexandrian representative, the patriarch Alexander, to sit and participate[173]. Einar Molland concluded that, in all probability, Irenaeus of Lugundum was consecrated by his fellow-presbyters without the assistance of any Eastern Bishop. For Irenaeus episcopal succession was important, but succession was always conditional upon continued witness to the truth: to abandon the truth was to be alienated from the succession. Molland shared the view of presbyteral consecration of the patriarch at Alexandria, adding,

> 'The bishops of Rome were also, we must imagine, consecrated in a similar manner [to that of Alexandria] at an early stage when there were no neighbouring bishops and the rule requiring consecration by a Bishop had not yet come into existence.'[174]

Telfer's conclusion was barbed:

> 'And in view of such a history, the Tractarian emphasis upon the continuous imposition of episcopal hands will not endure the test of the Vincentian Canon.'[175]

This was not the end of the debate. The last word went to Eric Kemp who argued that the Alexandrian case did not affect contemporary debate on apostolic succession. Rather (with Darwell Stone) he moved the goal posts, arguing that, from the point of view of the maintenance of succession, a body of presbyters would be the same in principle as the rule of a single bishop. Consequently

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[173] W. **Telfer**, *Episcopal Succession in Egypt*, in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1953, p. 12.

[174] E. **Molland**, *Irenaeus of Lugundum and the Apostolic Succession*, in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1950. p. 28.

[175] W. **Telfer**, *Episcopal Succession in Egypt*, p. 12.

apostolic succession did not necessarily imply (as Telfer had assumed) a continuous series of monarchical bishops[176].

Neill argued that the early church doctrine of episcopacy was not of the person, nor of the manner of their consecration, but was primarily concerned with the faithful, orthodox proclamation of the Gospel. Both Irenaeus and Cyprian, he said, held that it was the duty of the people to separate themselves from a bishop who did not continue in the apostolic faith[177]. Christian continuity therefore lay in a more complex combination of office, witness, and Christian community[178].

Nor did more recent history support the thesis that the view of episcopacy promoted by *The Apostolic Ministry* was properly Anglican. J.W. Hunkin, drawing on Norman Sykes[179], drew together a number of quotations from Anglican divines showing not only that they had no wish to 'unchurch' non-episcopal Christian communities, but rather that they regarded their ministries as valid, and that there was a long history of inter-communion[180]. Furthermore there were historical

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[176] **E.W. Kemp,** *Bishops and Presbyters at Alexandria* in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* Vol. VI, No. 2, October 1955, pp. 125-142.

This assertion begs the question of precisely what (or who) constituted a succession. In fact Telfer's was probably the more accurate representation of the neo-Thomist views of the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry,* for whom the episcopacy was an ontologically distinct order of being in which priests had only a partial share. Bishops (and not a college of presbyters) constituted the 'Essential' ministry, on which all other ministry was dependent. See, **K.E. Kirk,** *The Apostolic Ministry,* in *The Apostolic Ministry,* p. 8; also **E.L. Mascall,** *Corpus Christi,* p. 30.

[177] **S. Neill,** *A General Survey,* in *The Ministry of the Church* p. 17.

[178] **A. Ehrhardt** rejected *The Apostolic Ministry's* thesis in *The Apostolic Succession in the First Two Centuries of the Church,* reviewed by **J.E.L. Oulton,** in *Theology,* Vol. LVII, No. 404, February 1954, pp. 107-109. He argued that two strands combined in the early church's notion of succession: the succession of the ancient priesthood of Israel (linked to the laying on of hands), and succession to the traditions of apostolic teaching.

[179] **N. Sykes,** *The Church of England and Non-Episcopal Church in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,* (London, SPCK, 1947).

[180] **J.W. Hunkin,** *The Anglican Pattern of Episcopacy,* in *The Churchman,* Vol. LXII, No. 2, April-June 1948, New series, pp. 89-94, 78. On the contrary, he concluded, they held '... that historic episcopacy is of the *bene esse,* and not of the *esse,* of the Church.' *Ibid,* p.92.

precedents for the pattern proposed for The Church of South India. On the restoration of the episcopate to Scotland in 1661 (as in 1610, and 1690), and on the arrival of the first Anglican Bishop in India in 1813, episcopally and non-episcopally commissioned ministers continued to work together with no question of the validity of their respective orders[181]. Such evidence addressed the argument concerning the invariable and unbroken practice of the Church. The corollary of these precedents was, as Bishop Charles Wordsworth observed, that

> 'In 1662 this was the course formally adopted by the Scottish episcopate. The presbyterian ministers were left in possession of their parishes without reordination; and if doing this once has not unchurched us, doing it twice would not.'[182]

To show that the thesis of *The Apostolic Ministry* was both novel and not congruent with the norms of the Church of England both the Ordinal and the Thirty-nine Articles were cited against the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry*. John Taylor addressed the question of the continuity of the episcopacy of the Church of England at the Reformation.

> 'The intention of the Ordinal, sufficiently testified by its contents in which the ministry is defined and by the practice and writings of three centuries of Anglican history, indicate a desire to produce a ministry which was invalid by the Catholic standards of the day.'[183]

He asserted that the Ordinal left open the question of the validity of non-episcopal orders, and for these reasons Miss Thompson was wrong to assert that the Elizabethan divines held the episcopacy to be a necessary form of church government. The great divide lay between Rome and all the reformed communions, not between the episcopal and non-episcopal bodies[184].

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[181] S. Neill, *A General Survey*, in *The Ministry of the Church* pp. 21-22.

[182] cited in N. Sykes, *Old Priests and New Presbyter*, p. 251.

[183] F.J. Taylor, *The Post-Reformation Episcopacy in England*, in *The Ministry of the Church*, p. 77.

[184] *Ibid*. p. 81.

Neill argued that *The Apostolic Ministry* omitted any recognition that the Church of England was committed to the doctrine of the justification by faith as set out in Article XI[185]. J.P. Hickinbotham opined that Kirk seemed to ignore the theory of ministry that was both in accord with the plain meaning of the Articles, and also probably what most Anglicans believed, that the only necessary condition of a valid ministry was the solemn commission of the church through those appointed by it to ordain (Article XXIII). He rehearsed the conventional, pragmatic, Evangelical argument for the episcopacy: that having developed since apostolic times under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it remained a valuable witness to and safeguard of the Church's unity and continuity, and should therefore be '... continued and reverently used and esteemed ...'[186]. Ramsey dismissed Hickinbotham's use of the formularies of the Church of England as doctrinal tests, asserting that,

> 'I see in our formularies a deliberate comprehensiveness and an indication of those limits within which an Anglican is directed to believe and teach.'[187]

But he did not go on in a short article to specify what those limits might be, nor to elaborate further his conception of the historic formularies.

Hickinbotham also stood by the decision of the Lambeth Conference of 1930 that no particular theory of the episcopacy was necessary for Anglicans in the context of discussion about reunion[188]. Though as this was an explicit target of Anglo-Catholic criticism, to argue that the doctrine of *The Apostolic Ministry* was thus going against official Anglican teaching was somewhat disingenuous.

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[185] S. Neill, *A General Survey*, in *The Ministry of the Church*, p. 20.

[186] Preface to the Ordinal. Quoted in J.P. Hickinbotham, *The Doctrine of the Ministry* in *The Ministry of the Church*, p. 34. He speaks of the episcopacy as 'symbolising' such unity, without therefore being essential. *Later Developments in the Ministry*, in *The Ministry of the Church*, p. 70.

[187] A.M. Ramsey, *The Evangelicals and the Ministry*, in *Theology*, Vol. LI, No. 340, October 1948, p. 372.

[188] J.P. Hickinbotham, *The Doctrine of the Ministry* pp. 39-40. See above, p. 31.

Arguments against *The Apostolic Ministry* were all at root theological. The most explicit and excoriating attack on the doctrine in and implied by *The Apostolic Ministry* came from T.F. Torrance. He accused Dix of starting out in his views

> '... with a form of ministry and a shape of the liturgy that are as yet uncorrected by the christology of *Chalcedon*, and tries to make them normative. This means that the major weakness of this volume is christological. Indeed it is christological heresy of the first magnitude.'[189]

Torrance particularly targeted Hebert's essay, *Ministerial Episcopacy*[190] for criticism. He believed that Hebert fused the divine and the created in heretical manner. He accused Hebert of a Docetic Christology, paralleled by the divinisation of the priest through grace[191], a fusing of the human and the divine perceptible throughout *The Apostolic Ministry*. For Torrance, the relationship between God and the sacrament was neither identity nor difference, but *sui generis*, grounded on the act of the Trinity in Christ Jesus and manifested in the Church[192]. The Spirit is both gift and giver, and cannot be possessed any more than one person can possess another, that is, only in terms of *koinonia*, or the hypostatic union of the Trinity. All of which, said Torrance, was denied by *The Apostolic Ministry*. Instead,

> '... they dare to posit a relation of identity, mystical identity, personal identity between the Bishop-Apostle and Christ himself.'[193]

in which the Holy Spirit becomes the gift, not the giver, and eschatology is turned into temporal succession. Its sacramental parallel is the temporal repetition of the sacrifice of Christ in Holy Communion and transubstantiation, which '... is sheer

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[189] T.F. Torrance, *Concerning the Ministry*, p. 192.

[190] A.G. Hebert, *Ministerial Episcopacy*, in, *The Apostolic Ministry*, pp. 493-534.

[191] T.F. Torrance, *Concerning the Ministry*, p. 197.

[192] *Ibid.* p. 198.

[193] *Ibid.* pp. 198-199.

Arianism in the region of the sacrament and the ministry.'[194] The 'sin' of *The Apostolic Ministry* was,

> '... a desire for continuity in space and time of possession of God, so that the eschatological, Kingdom-of-God-event in the Gospel which is creative of the Church is imprisoned in a human institution, in the unbroken continuum of space and time they choose to call Apostolic Succession.'[195]

Hebert, says Torrance, is aware of the danger of Arianism, and falls into the more subtle heresy of Eutychianism. He sees the Nestorian danger, that clerics might claim to act vicariously on Christ's behalf, and

> '... he sees the fatal mistake of identifying the Word of God with the word of man, but does not see the equally fatal mistake of identifying the Person of Christ with the person of the Bishop.'[196]

In the end, Torrance observes, Hebert fails to make any dogmatic argument on Chalcedonian principles for bishops as the *esse* of the church, and finally resorts to the expediency that there 'needs to be' such an office[197].

Finally, Torrance attacks Dom Gregory Dix for propounding the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification by grace alone, and of never having come to terms with the doctrine of justification by faith. Indeed, he said, if Dix had read his Anglican Divines accurately, he would never have

> '... proclaimed himself to be so convicted of a doctrine so unbiblical, un-christological, and un-Anglican.'[198]

Neill took a slightly different tack to Torrance on the question of the status of the Bishop in relation to Christ:

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[194] *Ibid.* p. 199.

[195] *Loc. cit.*

[196] *Ibid.* p. 200.

[197] *Loc. cit.* Cf. **A.G. Hebert**, *Ministerial Episcopacy*, in, *The Apostolic Ministry*, p. 527.

[198] **T.F. Torrance**, *Concerning the Ministry*, p. 201.

'The bishop is, by virtue of his consecration, indeed an *alter Christus*; but so is every Christian by virtue of his baptism; the whole Christian body is priestly, and cannot abandon or delegate finally to others its Christian responsibility.'[199]

The priesthood of all believers implied that bishops, as other officers, act within the church: authority was firmly from 'below'. Furthermore, the relationship of apostles and ministers to Christ was fundamentally conditional. Legitimate ministry depended on continued faithful witness to the truth, not on a juridical relationship.

Detailed ecclesiological argument between the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry* and its critics, however necessary, revealed a much more extensive fissure within the church. Neill argued that the core of the debate was the perception of the relationship between God and creation, and especially between Christ and his people. Where this perception converged, so did the understanding of the Church, but a differing conception of the Church exposed a different perception of God.

'Those of us who reject the doctrine of Church and ministry set forth in *The Apostolic Ministry* reject it, not on grounds of minute differences of archaeological interpretation, but because we cannot recognize as Christian the doctrine of God, which seems to underlie this imposing theological edifice.'[200]

Neill is repaying the Anglo-Catholics in their own coin: he too is claiming the right and capacity to judge the Christian allegiance of others. Ramsey took great offence at the suggestion that Catholics and Evangelicals worshipped different Gods, or that Catholics had a sub-Christian notion of God[201]. However, he wrote, if Neill's meaning was that there were significant differences of thought between the two parties, then he was grateful,

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[199] S. Neill, *A General Survey*, in *The Ministry of the Church*, p. 17.

[200] *Ibid*. p. 28.

[201] A.M. Ramsey, *The Evangelicals and the Ministry*, pp. 369-373.

'It is nearer the truth of the matter than is the common opinion that no major differences of theology divide us, and that it is *only* the ministry which is a problem.'[202]

Ramsey identified three areas of dispute. The doctrine of justification by faith was accepted, but he questioned the meaning of justification by faith alone[203]. Second, he accepted the personal character of the grace of God as Catholic teaching, but denied the corollary that '... the transmission of authority in succession involves of itself an impersonal conception.'[204] Third, he addressed the question of the Holy Spirit in non-episcopal ministries. With a curious image of physical disability, Ramsey asserted that it was possible to survive and function without elements of the *esse* of the body. But the capacity to survive without an arm or a leg or sight does '...not involve us in doubting that the organs given by the Creator are integral to the body itself in its proper *being* and unity.'[205] Neill replied that,

> 'Canon Ramsey's article is fully characteristic in two respects - in its urbane charity, and in its devastating misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the evangelical view.'[206]

He suggested that they should begin discussions from the assumption of mutual incomprehension. Kirk, however, proved Neill's point. He described the views of his critics as 'sub-Christian'.[207]

T.W. Manson also addressed the question of how fundamentally different conceptions of the church and of underlying theology, and lack of mutual

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[202] *Ibid.* p. 369. Emphasis in original.

[203] *Loc. cit.* The point was also made by A.G. Hebert, Review of *The Ministry of the Church*, in *Theology*, Vol. LI, No. 334, April 1948, p. 157. This reflects a discussion in *Catholicity*.

[204] A.M. Ramsey, *The Evangelicals and the Ministry*, p. 370.

[205] *Ibid.* p. 371.

[206] S. Neill, *Correspondence*, in *Theology*, Vol. LII, No. 345, March 1949, p. 106.

[207] 'Kirk imagined Gore, whose own doctrine of the ministry was akin to that of the book [*The Apostolic Ministry*], replying to the critic "That proves that your own doctrines of the ministry and of the Godhead, if they are in general agreement with each other, are in fact both of then sub-Christian. Go back to Scripture, and start your studies again."' E.W. Kemp, *The Life and Letters of Kenneth Escott Kirk* p. 71.

understanding, might be contained within the one church structure. He contrasted two models of the church. In the first, '... the Church is not unlike a well-disciplined army, in which the officers hold their commission by delegation from above and not by election from below.'[208] In the second, the church was characterised as a 'gathered' society, joined by individual conversion and choice. In this society all were priests and there was no special caste of priests[209]. There were, Manson argued, three possibilities: either one way was wrong; or that ministry was fundamentally irrelevant; or that both conceptions embody some basic truth. The first option would 'unchurch' countless millions of Christians, whichever conception was wrong. The second flew in the face of the providential history of the church. Therefore the third must be the way forwards[210]. The apparent ecclesiological contradiction was transcended by a fundamental unity in Christ[211].

At the same time Manson rejected all appeals to an invisible church, whether by Catholics, Calvinists or Platonists, and asserted the historical particularity of the church as the Body of Christ:

> 'The Church is the *Body* of Christ. That is, its place is here and now in the world of space and time. It is a thing, not an idea: a thing as real and concrete as the British Army or Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd. It is *the* Body of Christ; not a particular body or a large number of bodies, but *the* Body. That is, there is one and one only; and it somehow embraces in a single organic unity different parts - Roman, Orthodox, Anglican, Free - which are unconscious, partly conscious, or conscious of their unity in the

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[208] T.W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry* p. 79. Manson cites in particular J. Tixeront, *L'Ordre et les Ordinations* (1925).

[209] T.W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry* p. 80.

[210] *Ibid.* pp. 81-88.

[211] 'We talk glibly about "our unhappy divisions"; but, in truth, so long as we are under one supreme Head, our divisions must remain essentially unreal.' T.W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry Ibid.* p. 89. However this judgement did not easily fit with Manson's repeated emphasis on the historical nature of the church. The impossibility of the idea that Christianity might contain incompatible beliefs, or incommensurable diversity, meant that at the last Manson escaped from historical reality into an contrasting metaphysical refuge.

Body. ... The Church is the Body of *Christ*. That is, it is something that He has created and sustains and uses for His own purposes.'[212]

Daniel Jenkins also engaged with Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology from a Free Church and an existential perspective. Catholicism was to some extent tautologous as a description of the church, and debate was

> '... concerned not merely with the *essence* of the Church, but also with its *fullness*. Just because it is the true and universal Church, the Catholic Church bears all the marks of the Church. It is completely the Church, lacking none of the attributes of the Church, and no body can be more fully the Church than it.'[213]

And for Jenkins,

> 'Where Christ is, His Church is. *Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia*. That is the beginning and end of our argument.'[214]

Accordingly Jenkins' ecclesiological task was the elaboration of 'where Christ is'. He argued that we knew Christ first through the witness of the apostles. Acceptance of and continuity with that witness was both the supreme mark of the catholicity of a church, and the nature of apostolicity. But his emphasis was on the testimony, not on the messenger. Therefore the test of a church's catholicity was whether its witness was the same as that of the Apostles. As the scriptures constituted the authoritative account of the Apostles' testimony, the key to catholicity lay in the exegesis of scripture[215]. This required ecclesiastical authority, but such authority was necessarily grounded in an existential apprehension of the Holy Spirit[216].

> 'It is only when the discipline of κρίσις is undergone that we are in a position to understand the Scriptures and produce properly theological exegesis and therefore to stand in the succession of the Apostles, ...'[217]

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[212] T.W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry*, p. 88. Emphases in original.

[213] D.T. Jenkins, *The Nature of Catholicity*, p. 19.

[214] *Ibid.* pp. 19-20.

[215] *Ibid.* pp. 21-33.

[216] *Ibid.* p. 44.

[217] D.T. Jenkins, *The Nature of Catholicity*, p. 34.

Such personal κρίσις underlay the Spirit-guided church; and all the notes of the Church were similarly spiritual[218]. In practice, therefore, Jenkins redefined 'catholicism' to meet his own prior understanding of the nature of the church.

Having examined Anglican ecclesiology Jenkins found ecumenical discussion between Protestantism and the Anglican Church in a double bind. On the one hand, and despite the perfectly logical Anglo-Catholic criticism of the idea, it was patently obvious that the Anglican Communion did hold no particular theory of episcopacy. Therefore Protestants were being asked '.. to make up their minds about an institution to which its possessors attach great importance but about which they have not made up their minds.'[219] On the other hand clarification only revealed the influence of Anglo-Catholicism, with the corollary that Protestant could not take episcopacy into their system 'if it is meant by this that it must receive a gift of decisive importance for the Church whose lack gravely impairs its witness for Christ.'[220].

Jenkins also pointed out that Anglicans possessed the episcopacy in a form sharply repudiated by Rome, and hardly recognised by the Orthodox[221], though that did not prevent Anglicans holding grandiose ideas of their own self-importance[222].

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[218] *Ibid.* pp. 44-46.

[219] D.T. Jenkins, *The Protestant Ministry*, p. 53.

[220] *Ibid.* p. 70.

[221] *Ibid.* p. 55.

[222] *Ibid.* p. 65.

From a Roman Catholic perspective Adrian Hastings[223] offered a more general critique of the arguments of Anglo-Catholicism. His foundation stone was the assertion that the Roman Catholic Church was the one true church[224], a sacramental communion, guarded by the unity of pastoral government.

Hastings' key criticism of Anglican ecclesiology was that it attempted to justify theologically the Erastian and pragmatic origins of the Church of England. Therefore it was obliged to posit the divisibility of the Church, and to accept the idea of permanent schism within the Church, which was heresy. On the contrary, he asserted, the Church was indivisible; schism was *from* the Church. The Church of England was in fact no more than a lay work, cut off from any continuity of episcopal jurisdiction[225] and therefore from ecclesiastical authority.

Because the Church of England was schismatic, the focus of its ecclesiological attention had to address questions of unity, and could not succeed[226]. The identification of baptism as the visible principle of unity[227] was inadequate, and in

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[223] **A. Hastings,** *One and Apostolic,* (Aberdeen, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1963). The book was based on his Doctoral thesis. The date of publication meant that the book did not contribute to a continuing debate. It is included here to offer an alternative perspective on the issues surrounding *The Apostolic Ministry.*

[224] Notwithstanding identical claims by the Eastern orthodox Church, **A. Hastings,** *One and Apostolic,* p. 2.

In subsequent years, and following Vatican II, Hastings wholly revised his position:

> 'I am assuming, of course, in speaking to Anglicans that the Church of England (or the Anglican Communion) is genuinely a part of the *Ecclesia Catholica* about which I am talking.'

A. Hastings, *The Theology of a Protestant Catholic,* (London, SCM, 1990) p. 46.

[225] *Ibid.* pp. 30-34. This was an irony not lost on some of the Evangelical commentators. In a footnote, John Taylor asked why *The Apostolic Ministry* had not explored further the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to the Church of England, nor the implications of the presence of a second episcopate in England, both claiming sole valid jurisdiction. He leaves hanging the implication that each claim obviated the other. **F.J. Taylor,** *The Post-reformation Episcopacy in England,* in *The Ministry of the Church,* p. 81, note 1.

[226] *Ibid.* p. 27.

[227] *Ibid.* pp. 43-45.

so far as unity was seen as an 'extension' of the invisible unity of the Trinity, Anglican scholars left unanswered the question of how a person joined and remained within such unity. Unity could not, as some Anglo-Catholics appeared to imply, be limited to the invisible realm[228]. Division in ecclesiastical governance was serious, yet ultimately a superficial result of human sin, although it was, he pointed out, a logical absurdity to stress both the division of polity and the essential unity of the church[229]. Nor did the notion of a unity of race help: the implicit notion of division within the race was, for Hastings, an inadequate representation of the New Testament idea of the New Israel[230].

Methodologically, Hastings asserted that Catholics and Protestants appealed to history in fundamentally different ways. Protestants and Anglicans sought to find in history an

> '... absolute doctrinal authority in something of the past, an objective norm identical for all ages, in "firm and unmovable Rules" to be discovered by "an appeal to history".'[231]

But by contrast, although the appeal to history was important for theological and controversial reasons, Roman Catholics looked to the Magisterium as the authoritative declaration of the belief of the universal Church. Only the living church could apply the test of congruence with scripture. Scripture too pointed to the church because the idea of a canon was inevitably bound up with the idea of the Church[232], and although in the Reformation both Roman Catholic and Protestant teachers had appealed to fixed doctrinal norms, both were wrong.

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[228] *Ibid.* pp. 50-51.

[229] *Ibid.* pp. 46-48.

[230] *Ibid.* pp. 56-62.

[231] *Ibid.* pp. 14-15.

[232] *Ibid.* pp. 15-16.

'Neither scripture nor antiquity have ever presented a clear norm sufficient to decide subsequent controversies, and to settle which views in after centuries are heresy, which orthodox.'[233]

In fact orthodoxy had always been developing, and therefore needed to be controlled by unerring authority. Hastings distinguished theology from orthodoxy, the latter involving the decisive element of a factual decision of Church authority[234]. All told, Hastings concluded, only orthodox Roman Catholic ecclesiology was adequate, and the gulf between it and any Anglican ecclesiology, including that of the Anglo-Catholics, was unbridgeable.

The vitality had largely drained from the debate about *The Apostolic Ministry* by the time *The Historic Episcopate* was published in 1954. The book was not academically weighty, and it drew heavily on the Protestant critique of *The Apostolic Ministry*. It was essentially a *pièce d'occasion*, designed to provide Anglo-Catholic members of Convocation with a sufficient rationale by which to enable them support inter-communion with The Church of South India with a good conscience[235]. The authors of *The Historic Episcopate* also felt that their approach would assist in the related, but secondary, question of relations with

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[233] *Ibid.* p. 18.

[234] *Ibid.* p. 23.

[235] **K.M. Carey,** *Introduction,* and *Chapter VII, The Next Step,* in *The Historic Episcopate in the fullness of the Church* (Westminster, Dacre Press, 1954; 2nd edn. with new introduction and appendix, 1960), pp. 5, 6; pp. 128-138.

In 1950 Convocation had decided to wait for five years before making a determination on whether the Church of England could be in communion with The Church of South India. In 1955 the Church of England acknowledged '.. the bishops and the episcopally ordained presbyters and deacons of the C.S.I. to be true bishops, presbyters and deacons of the Church of God.' and (with the Churches of Wales, Scotland, Ireland and the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon) made regulations for inter-communion. The Church of the Province of the West Indies, on the other hand, had deferred judgement for 30 years, and, with the Church of the Province of South Africa, accorded recognition only to former Anglican clergy serving in The Church of South India. *Church Unity and the Church Universal,* Report to the Lambeth Conference 1958, pp. 2.25-2.27.

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Nonconformity[236]. Much of *The Historic Episcopate* concentrated on attacking *The Apostolic Ministry*, drawing on the beginnings of an alternative ecclesiology.

In contrast to Kirk's certitude that authority came from above, John Robinson asserted that although the authority of the Church stemmed from its relationship to Christ and the Kingdom of God, the exercise of authority was located in the living church. Consequently

> 'To establish the validity of the ministry on grounds independent of the authority of the living Church (e.g. by linear succession of episcopal consecration), and then to judge whether a Church is part of the Body by whether it has a valid ministry, is to invert the whole New Testament conception. It is to subordinate the doctrine of the Church to the doctrine of the Ministry; whereas the New Testament bids us have as high a doctrine in the Ministry as we like, providing always our doctrine of the Church is higher.'[237]

Robinson summed up the argument of *The Historic Episcopate*:

> *'But what we are concerned to deny (as unbiblical, unhistorical, and unanglican[238]) is a particular interpretation of the episcopate which would automatically unchurch any part of that Body that for historical reasons has failed to preserve it. For that is to exalt it as a precondition of the Church, whereas the only precondition of the Church is the Kingdom of God. We affirm that the episcopate is dependent upon the Church, and not the Church on the episcopate. We believe its possession to be a necessary mark of the Church's fullness, rather than an indispensable qualification for being a part. It is not what makes the Church the Church - so that in exclusion from it everything else falls to the ground. But in repudiation of it the Church can never express the plenitude of its Being as the one Body of Christ in history.'[239]*

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[236] '... we will never get reunion with the Nonconformists in this country until both sides really want it, and until we can show the Nonconformists a *theological* interpretation of episcopacy which does not involve a denial of their own past.' K.M. Carey, *Introduction*, in *The Historic Episcopate*, p. 8 (emphasis in original).

[237] J.A.T. Robinson, *Kingdom, Church and Ministry*, in: *The Historic Episcopate*, pp. 14-15.

[238] This stylistic reference to Torrance's attack on *The Apostolic Ministry* (see above, p. 66) was repeated several times in slightly different versions and can only have been done to be deliberately insulting.

[239] *Ibid.*, p. 22, italics in the original.

The task of the whole church, located in the *saeculum* between Calvary and the Parousia, was to proclaim the Gospel, to translate Christ's victory into open acknowledgement and moral obedience, to be an instrument of the Kingdom and to carry the Divine glory[240]. Episcopacy was of the plenitude of the church, but all ministry was subordinate to the gospel calling of the church.

Vanstone[241] attacked *The Apostolic Ministry's* use of New Testament evidence. He argued that the whole concept of an 'essential' ministry was anachronistic when applied to the New Testament[242], but he went beyond earlier critics, asking what would have been gained if such evidence was available.

> 'We are perplexed not so much by the paucity and ambiguity of the New Testament evidence itself as by our own uncertainty about the *kind* of evidence which we require; do we require, for instance, proof of the existence of a certain institution in New Testament times, or, on the other hand, proof of the recognition of a certain principle? To put the same dilemma in another form: would it be possible to compose, in New Testament Greek, a number of texts which, by common consent, would be decisive for the present problem, and, if so, what would the content of those texts be?'[243]

Vanstone suggested it was more appropriate to the New Testament evidence to approach the episcopacy in terms of its authority, rather than in terms of a concrete institution. The authority of the apostles, he argued, lay in their function as witnesses to the resurrection[244]. If the episcopate was understood as that which bore the substance of the church, not by its function but merely by its presence, then the key concept was not authority, but hierarchy[245]. For *The Apostolic Ministry* the hierarchy constituted the church, which was then regarded as

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[240] *Ibid.* pp. 15-16.

[241] **W.H. Vanstone**, *The Ministry in the New Testament*, in: *The Historic Episcopate*, pp. 23-40.

[242] *Ibid.* p. 23.

[243] *Ibid.* pp. 23-24 (Emphasis in original.)

[244] *Ibid.* p. 29.

[245] *Ibid.* p. 32.

equivalent to the Kingdom. This structural interpretation was reinforced by the typological approach to biblical analysis. Vanstone's critique of typology was not (merely) that it was pushed to extravagant lengths, but that it was not congruent with Jesus' transvaluing of the scriptures and inversion of the old order[246].

Vanstone grounded his conception of the Church on concepts of power and authority that were utterly opposed to the hierarchical order implicit in *The Apostolic Ministry*. The Kingdom of God inverted hierarchical order such that primacy '... is unmarked save by the inverted symbols of service, humility and having-no-place; ...'[247]. The Church bore witness in its institutional form to the nature and meaning of God's act of redemption[248], but the Spirit did not determine the structure of the Church; nor did the structure validate or mediate the Spirit. Rather,

> '... structure emerges not as the medium or vehicle of the Spirit, but as the expression or embodiment of the Spirit. The Spirit embodies itself, more or less fully, in a meaningful structure.'[249]

The dominant and all-embracing end of the Church, to which all else should be subservient, was the praise of the glory of God[250].

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[246] 'Thus, from the point of view of Christian theology, any simple extrapolation of Old Testament concepts into the New is excluded in principle; and to the contention that the Old Testament is reflected in the New, we must add the qualification that this reflection is, in some sense, inverted, as the reflection of a landscape in a lake. The Old Testament images detected in the New must be transformed by the paradox of a crucified Messiah before they can become definitive for Christian theology.' *Ibid.* p. 34

[247] *Ibid.* p. 35.

[248] *Ibid.* p. 40.

[249] *Ibid.* p. 38. The desire to transcend the opposition of Protestant and Catholic approaches to the relationship of Spirit to structure did not do justice to either position, and raised more questions than it answered. Yet in simultaneously affirming the divine and the material qualities of the church it was a creative attempt to take both insights seriously.

[250] *Ibid.*, p. 39, citing Ephesians 1,6,12,14.

Echoing Manson's comments, Montefiore[251] characterised the debate over *The Apostolic Ministry* as polarised between those (Anglo-Catholics) who believed that the historic episcopate was of the *esse* of the church, and those who held that the church was the spiritual society of the people of God, and comprised all the baptised. In this conception episcopacy, though natural and effective, was of the *bene esse* of the church, and not its *esse* [252].

Montefiore commended a third view: that episcopacy was of the *plene esse* of the church[253]. Episcopacy provided an effectual sign of unity, and it embodied in church order the principle of apostolicity, (in the sense of people sent to represent Christ to his Church, and to be representatives of the church). Episcopacy served as guardian of Word and Sacrament, faith and flock. As such the historic episcopate was a sign of the relation of Christ to his church, a means to show the church's authority, and to make its proclamation actual. Thus the episcopate reflected the sacramental nature of the church. And this, said Montefiore, was the true view of the episcopacy, and in accord with the formularies and tradition of the Church of England[254]. Yet despite his emphasis on the sacramental nature of both church and episcopacy, Montefiore seemed finally to resort to a utilitarian thesis, more akin to expediency than principle:

> 'The historic episcopate is not constitutive of the church in the sense that without it the church would cease to exist. Rather, it is given to us, like the other elements of Christ's church, for the building up of His body, so that we may all attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'[255]

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[251] **H.W. Montefiore**, *The Historic Episcopate*, in: *The Historic Episcopate*, pp. 105-126.

[252] *Ibid.* pp. 105-107. This characterisation of the debate was simplistic and unhelpful. The argument was presented as between the views of two opposed camps, with the hidden implication that this was a Gordian knot which might succumb to imaginative lateral thinking. This approach did not, however, acknowledge the claim to truth, and thus did not seriously engage the position of *The Apostolic Ministry*.

[253] *Ibid.* p. 107

[254] *Ibid.* p. 108.

[255] *Loc. cit.*

There was a further flurry of pamphlets and small books on the issue following the publication of *The Historic Episcopate*, but this time the more conservative Anglo-Catholics were on the back foot[256]. In *This Church of Christ*[257] A.L. Peck acerbically dissected *The Historic Episcopate* and found it woefully lacking. Its New Testament exegesis was flawed[258]; its use of key words was ambiguous and meaning fluctuated even within paragraphs[259]; its logic was at times deceptive rhetoric, full of false antitheses[260]; it nowhere stated what the 'church' was or how it was to be identified[261]; and far from aiding reunion its motives and methods were utterly wrong[262].

Peck's primary criticism addressed the use of *esse, bene esse,* and *plene esse.* He showed that qualification of the concept of *esse* was logically impossible. In considering the meaning of the assertion that episcopacy is of the *plene esse* of the Church, he said,

> 'It should be noted at once that to attempt, as the book [*The Historic Episcopate*] does, to draw a distinction simultaneously between *bene esse* and *plene esse,* and between *plene esse* and *esse,* is to attempt the impossible. Once the position that episcopacy is 'of the *esse* of the Church' is rejected, it is impossible to escape the position that episcopacy is not of the *esse* of the Church. There cannot be degrees of *esse.*'[263]

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[256] *The Historic Episcopate '*... evoked a vigorous reaction from many quarters, some shrewd and helpful comment but much excessive and at times even unfair criticism from the upholders of the *esse* theory of episcopacy.' **H.E.W. Turner,** *The Historic Episcopate and After* in *Theology* Vol. LVIII, No. 420, June 1955 p. 205.

[257] **A.L. Peck,** *This Church of Christ, An Examination of Certain Presuppositions in* The Historic Episcopate (London, Mowbray, 1955).

[258] *Ibid.* pp. 72-78.

[259] e.g. 'ministry' *ibid.* pp. 82-84; or 'validity' *ibid.* pp. 88-90.

[260] *Ibid.* p. 39; p. 94.

[261] *Ibid.* pp. 65-66.

[262] *Ibid.* p. 103.

[263] *Ibid.* pp.-8.

In this Peck was right[264]. Essentialism was by its nature absolutist. Concepts of 'fullness' were being used in ways that were irremediably relativist[265]. The conjunction of the terms *'plene'* and *'esse'* gave the false impression of accepting the essentialist approach, and enriching it. As Peck discerned, the opposite was the case, and concepts of 'fullness' or 'plenitude' had in fact replaced concepts of *'esse'*. Consequently an ecclesiology based on such concepts would itself be relativist, and would, if broadly accepted, render essentialist ecclesiology redundant[266].

The evidential foundations on which *The Apostolic Ministry* had built so high were fatally criticised by Evangelical and Free Church commentators but, perhaps because it had not been made overt, critics had not directly addressed the underlying neo-Thomist philosophy. The critique made in *The Historic Episcopate* was more damaging to the theoretical assumptions made by the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry* and successful in inhibiting the desire of the older Anglo-Catholics to prevent intercommunion with The Church of South India. But perhaps the main reason that Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology ceased to be dominant

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[264] His critique was, however, limited by his inability to step outside the essentialist perspective. For example,

> 'All we can deduce from the statement [that episcopacy is not of the *esse* of the Church] is that anyone who makes it would define or describe the *esse* of the Church without any mention of episcopacy; but we do not know what would be included in such a definition or description.' *ibid.* p. 12

[265] Jenkins had used 'fullness' in a static sense, as a complete description of the church. But for the authors of *The Historic Episcopate* fullness was something unattainable, but towards which the church was ever striving.

[266] H.E.W. Turner, for example, enthusiastically recognised the potential of the *plene esse* formulation as a way out of the 'monotonous and threadbare' discussion between *esse* and *bene esse*. *Review of The Historic Episcopate,* in *The Church Quarterly Review,* Vol. CLV, No. 317, October-December 1954, pp. 306-307. N. Sykes, while not convinced of the value of *'plene esse'* nonetheless thought that the position of *The Apostolic Ministry* had received some mortal blows. *Review of Episcopacy and Reunion* and *The Historic Episcopate,* in *Theology,* Vol. LVII, No. 409, July 1954, pp. 272-276

in the Church of England[267] was not the weight of intellectual argument against it, nor a greater desire for ecumenical charity, but the fact that by the 1950s the political strength of the Anglo-Catholic party was on the wane.

The central conclusion of this chapter is the inherently political nature of ecclesiology, which cannot be transcended by the absolute nature of ecclesiological claims.

First, although the claims of *The Apostolic Ministry* were cast in absolute terms they were made within one sub-tradition of a small national ecclesial community (albeit with an eye to Anglicanism globally), and were intentionally belligerent. *The Apostolic Ministry* was written with a conscious desire to align the Church of England to doctrines more congenial to the contemporary Roman Catholic Church, and against closer ties with the Free Churches.

Second, Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology more generally was inevitably written and read within the context of continuous intra-Anglican conflict. Ecclesiology both assumed the context of ecclesiastical politics, and also the presence of conflicting views and sub-traditions against which theories could be honed and affirmed. The fact of conflict sharpened awareness of the issues at stake in the understanding of apostolicity and the nature of the ordained ministry.

Third, even had there been no conscious political intent, the validation of the neo-Thomist claim to know and expound the truth was only possible in a paradoxical manner. The claim to express divine truth, which transcended the limitations of time and space, could only receive validation through the assent of the

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[267] In 1993 Tim Bradshaw opined that Anglo-Catholic ecclesiology was '... currently normative in Anglicanism ...' and gave over much of his book to describing and attacking it. **T. Bradshaw,** *The Olive Branch: An Evangelical Doctrine of the Church,* Oxford, Paternoster Press, 1993, p. 78. In fact debate has moved on considerably, and it may be more accurate to say that ecumenical discussion on ecclesiology is currently normative.

contemporary church. In so far as the thesis of *The Apostolic Ministry* was endorsed and furthered by Anglo-Catholics it could claim validity; in so far as it was opposed by Evangelicals and others, its validity was limited[268]. Even had the thesis of *The Apostolic Ministry* been endorsed by academic study, and then accepted by the wider church, the method of its validation would have contradicted both the character of its claim to truth and the claim of theologians to authority to expound divine truth. I suggest that this logical paradox applies to all claims to know and expound divine truth in absolute or universal terms, whatever their substance.

Debate over *The Apostolic Ministry* also revealed the depth of disagreement within the walls of one small church between devout theologians on issues as basic as ontology and epistemology. The capacity of the church to contain such incommensurable views also implied the potential for conflict to re-emerge on future occasions. Inevitably such disagreement was reflected in irreconcilable differences over the evaluation of authentic continuity with Jesus Christ. In these circumstances reception could not simply mean agreement.

However, despite these differences, academic canons of biblical exegesis, of the interpretation of historical evidence, and of conformity to credal orthodoxy, provided a shared language for disputation though not the means to resolve the basic disagreements. The debate drew in commentators from a range of

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[268] The suggestion that theologians of other persuasions would simply accept the Anglo-Catholic approach because of their grasp of divine truth was naive or self-deceiving.

> 'In some quarters the publication of this big and important work [*The Apostolic Ministry*] has given rise to jubilations which are, I venture to think, a little premature. There is a tendency to think that the last word has now been spoken; and all that remains to do is to sit back and wait for the logical sequel in a reunited Church, a Church united on the only possible basis - the Apostolic Ministry as here set forth. Whether such reunion is possible on any other terms than submission of non-episcopal communions to the episcopate, I need not try to determine; for I think it may be assumed that, in any case, such mass submissions are not likely to occur.'

T.W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry*, p. 9 (Opening paragraph.)

denominations[269]. But the selection of post-Reformation historical evidence, reference to the historic formularies of the Church of England, and the circumstances which occasioned debate were all specific to the Anglican Communion, and to the Church of England in particular.

The threat to define the convictions of the Church of England more sharply, and thus to exclude those who could not share them, sharpened internal debate about certain characteristics of the church, and reinforced its integrity. However, the residual dubiety as to whether the Church of England held any particular doctrine of the episcopacy[270] revealed the limit of precision about the nature of the Church of England that was possible at that time, given the depth of disagreement in the church.

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[269] Roman Catholic and Free Church participants in the discussion were conscious of intruding on someone else's territory.

[270] **D.T. Jenkins,** *The Protestant Ministry,* p. 53

Chapter 4

The Acquisition of Authority

'It is as if men and angels, by looking at the church in its structural form no less than in the moral life of its individual members, are to see the nature and meaning of God's act in Christ; and, seeing, are to be moved to wonder and praise. The church is to be that enclave of contemporary reality in which the grace of God is made evident in a meaningful and expressive form.'[1]

To explore ecclesiology as centred in the practical realities of a church it is necessary to look not only at the broad view, but also at the minutia of the church's regulation. The ordering of relationships between clergy and laity, for example, is to be found in the details of constitutional arrangements as much as in the broad imagery used of a church.

From the middle of the nineteenth century the Church sought and steadily obtained the transfer of powers from the state into its own control. In 1919 the Enabling Act established the Church Assembly by which the laity would co-operate with the clergy in Convocations, in the governance of the church. Following the Second World War much energy was expended by these bodies in the revision of canon law[2]. Though a long and dull process, revision provided the

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[1] **W.H. Vanstone,** *The Ministry in the New Testament,* in *The Historic Episcopate,* pp. 39-40.

[2] Fisher later reflected,

> ' "The Anglo-Catholic's of our day were deliberately standing out in an organised way for what they thought was authority, what they thought was holiness, and what they thought was the proper use of the sacraments and of the priesthood, and they were very powerful. To have argued this out on theoretical grounds would have been an endless and a fruitless process; we were in the happy position of being able to tackle the Canons one by one. But as we did it there were alarums and excursions all around us, both from the Anglo-Catholics and the evangelicals. That did not bother me all that much. All I knew was that here was a plain task that we had to fulfil by careful co-operation, and it was the kind of task, requiring a clear mind, a sense or [*sic*] order and orderliness and a power of reasonable persuasion which was native to me." '

W. Purcell, *Fisher of Lambeth a Portrait from Life* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1969) p. 208.

means by which the transfer of powers from the state was realised. This revision, with the associated creation of General Synod, laid the foundations for a still more extensive transfer of powers in the 1970s.

In this chapter I have examined some of the threads which enabled the church to take from the state into its own hands

> '... the exercise of the authority of the Church in spiritual matters, its doctrine, worship and the content of Christian behaviour in the exercise of their ministry by the clergy.'[3]

In particular, after an excursus on the implicit understanding of law in the church, I have followed the themes of the revision of canon law, leading to the acquisition of legal powers over worship; the church's capacity to enforce its decisons through the courts; and the modification of the organs of church government in the transition from Church Assembly and Convcations to General Synod.

The centrality of law in the governance of the church has not been matched by an equivalent analytic focus on jurisprudence. The Church of England 'established according to the laws of this realm'[4], largely conducts its business[5] and internal government by means of laws, and by law it locates, distributes and checks power

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[3] **Canon G.W.O. Addleshaw,** *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 324. Cf. also *Proceedings,* 1953, p. 73.

[4] Canon A1. *The Canons of the Church of England* (London, Church House Publishing, Fifth edition, 1993).

[5] 'While its mission may ideally be effected by prayer and by agreement, the church has chosen to use rules as a means to enable the fulfilment of its mission and as a means to deal with problems arising in so doing.' **N. Doe,** *The Legal Framework of the Church of England: A Critical Study in a Comparative Context.* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 3.

and authority[6]. Its overt ecclesiology may not unreasonably be described as juridical[7].

For the Commission which produced *The Canon Law of the Church of England,* the authority of a church to make laws for itself was grounded in its foundation by Christ[8], and limited by the purpose to which it was put:

> 'The Church has, in fact, authority to make only such rules as will further its purpose as an institution for the help of men in their following of our Lord, and which will prevent anything creeping into its life that may hinder it from performing its proper functions.'[9]

Authority to legislate was said to stem from a continuous history of ecclesiastical law-making which was both a source of principles of ecclesiastical jurisprudence[10], and a claim to an authority which was not derived from Parliament.

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[6] 'It is considered axiomatic today that the law in many ways reflects, in a concrete and formal way, ideas which churches have individually and collectively about their own identity, purpose, standards and organization.. Consequently, a study of law, as a repository of ecclesiological ideas, of individual churches in the Anglican Communion affords a unique opportunity to elucidate the nature of the Communion itself and of Anglicanism generally.' N. Doe, *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion: A Worldwide Perspective,* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998) p. 374

Although impossible for a global study, I suggest that it is also important to examine debate surrounding the passing of any particular law. Debate will reveal the range of ideas in the church and the political processes of decision making, while the legal outcome reflects an agreed compromise.

[7] 'That members of the Anglican Communion are canonical churches, churches whose public lives (at least in part) are facilitated and ordered by law, is a common fact.' **Norman Doe,** *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion,* p. 375.

[8] *The Canon Law of the Church of England being the Report of the Archbishops Commission on Canon Law, together with Proposals for a Revised Body of Canons; and a Memorandum 'Lawful Authority' by the Honourable Mr. Justice Vaisey,* (London, The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1947), p. 3.

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 4. Furthermore, such law had to be enforceable (including the possibility of penal sanctions); it could include nothing contrary to Holy writ, but was otherwise guided by utility. *Loc. cit.* The subordination of canon law to statute, legal precedence, and parliamentary authority was left implicit.

[10] *Ibid.* pp. 5-6. Much of the report comprised an historical survey and analysis. It included a call for the development of the Church's '... own system of jurisprudence, if it is to do its work.' *ibid.,* p. 5.

The sharpest debate on the nature of law[11] occurred in 1957 when the Bishop of Exeter (R.C. Mortimer) moved that the Assembly approve the principles of law reform espoused in the Wolfenden Report, and their application to homosexuality, but not to prostitution[12]. Wolfenden propounded a minimalist view of the social function of law: that law should be limited to protecting the rights of the community and individuals, including property rights. In the field of sexual behaviour this principle was expounded as the preservation of public order and decency; protection from what was offensive and injurious; and the provision of safeguards against the exploitation and corruption of others.

The Bishop urged Church Assembly to accept that law could not enforce the observance of a moral code. True morality, he said, was a matter of choice and responsibility. It did not flow from the fear of sanctions imposed for doing wrong.

> 'In the case of children and the immature, there was no doubt a place for some degree of coercion and physical suasion, but - and this was his point - the aim of moral education, the purpose of the work of the Church in guiding and training human souls, was to dispense with this physical suasion and coercion as much and as soon as possible, and to establish a position in which acts were freely chosen because and only because, of their rightness.'[13]

They could not, he concluded, expect the state to do the Church's work of teaching chastity and strengthening character[14].

This thesis clearly came as a shock. The implicit ontological and epistemological assumptions grounded in divine law were suddenly exposed and challenged.

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[11] This debate directly echoed a debate in jurisprudence between Lord Devlin (arguing that law may be used to preserve morality in the same way a state may safeguard anything else essential to its existence), Herbert Hart (arguing against the attempt to use law to preserve a society from change) and Ronald Dworkin (who argued that to identify morality with the dominant morality of a particular society would simply entrench popular prejudice in law). See, for example, **R.M. Dworkin (ed.)** *The Philosophy of Law* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997).

[12] This was formally a debate on the Annual Report of the Church of England Moral Welfare Council (C.A. 1194) *Proceedings*, 1957, pp. 442 - 478. Debate on the nature of law largely occluded debate on the issues.

[13] *Proceedings*, 1957, p. 443.

[14] *Ibid.* p. 447.

Church Assembly members argued, in their defence, that laws were not merely a restraint on evil but in themselves an efficacious force for good. Human law was a means by which divine law might be realised in society, and the Church had a duty to support and encourage the state in making laws that would benefit its subjects[15]. Oswald Clark asserted that sin and crime were not to be equated, but

> '... the public at large did ascribe to the law a moral force, so that if it was not forbidden by law it was not wrong. That might be a wrong understanding, but it was widespread, and they were not legislating for theologians, but for the public at large.'[16]

Mr A.T. Macmillan asserted that the function of the law, both civil and criminal,

> '... was to promote the full development of men and women in the spiritual, moral and intellectual as well as the physical and material sphere by encouraging those acts of men which conduced to such development and by discouraging, in some cases by forcible restraint or punishment, those acts which jeopardised such development.'[17]

The logic of divine law was that society was, or ought to be, governed by it. The public good was more than a matter of property rights, public order, decency, and protection from abuse. It was to be equated with conforming society to the laws of God[18].

In a separate debate in 1957 Michael Ramsey took up the theme of the relationship between law and social order, and the Church's place in it. The Church, he

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[15] 'Jurisprudentially, the fundamental authority underlying internally made church law is conceived by both [Roman Catholic and Church of England] churches to be divine law.' **Doe**, *The Legal Framework of the Church of England*, p. 5.

Chancellor E. Garth Moore grounded canon law on divine law:
> 'In the study of canon law we are concerned with so much of the moral law as is enforced, directly or indirectly, by human sanctions. The basis of canon law is theological.'

E. G. Moore, *An Introduction to English Canon Law*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 1.

[16] *Proceedings*, 1957, p. 453.

[17] *Ibid.* pp. 455-456.

[18] For many in the Assembly homosexuality was not merely a human sin, but a sin against the laws of God. 'Whether in private or in public, the heart of the sinfulness of a homosexual offence was that it was not, as in the case of a heterosexual offence, a sin of one party against the other party; it was a sin against the whole nature of man and the natural law, ...' **The Bishop of Plymouth** *Proceedings*, 1957, pp. 457-458. He found support from the **Bishop of Carlisle** *ibid*. p. 466; **Mr. G. Goyder**, *ibid.* pp. 471-472; **Mr. F.J. Powell** *ibid.* pp. 474-475. **The Bishop of Chester (G.A. Ellison)** asserted that '... private immorality of almost any kind affected the public life of the community.' *Ibid.* p. 465.

argued, had to do two things: to live out the redeemed corporate life of God's Kingdom, and second,

> '... the Church also declared to the world those divine laws which belonged to the world's foundation, law about the nature of the family, the State, and the like. If the former activity was the proclamation of the gospel, the latter was the proclamation of the law, ...[and] the term 'Kingdom of God' in the Bible covered both things.

> 'The Kingdom of God was fundamentally God's reign or sovereignty; that meant His government of the universe through laws in nature which could not be broken without retribution and His government of humanity with moral laws which could not be broken without retribution; but the same sovereignty or Kingdom came in Christ and was partly already embodied in the Church living by the gospel.'[19]

The conviction that human law was grounded in divine law implied that the church's privileged understanding of God gave it a privileged understanding of social life, and a prophetic authority in social affairs which went far beyond its power to effect change. It implied that the church had a duty to support such change as it could in the political realm as would tend to conform society to divine law, and to oppose any derogation from divine law.

The background of the pervasive if unexamined assumption of the efficacious reality of divine law helps explain the commitment to the revision of canon law which dominated Church Assembly in the post-war Church of England. Revision was inaugurated by the report *The Canon Law of the Church of England* which set out the hope that the revised Canons would constitute

> '... a body of law, simple, up-to-date, and sufficient for its [the Church of England's] needs, without either being too detailed or revolutionizing the characteristics of our law, and will at the same time leave the ancient Canon Law as the source of the principles of our ecclesiastical jurisprudence.'[20]

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[19] *Proceedings*, 1957, p. 371.

[20] *The Canon Law of the Church of England*, p. 86.

Its authors believed that

> '... the [proposed] canons contain no challenges, point to no grand ideals. Law, like good liturgy, should be restrained, impersonal, and contain as little as possible of the dreams and ideals peculiar to any one age.'[21]

The Commission considered but rejected the suggestion that they construct a new code. They updated the Canons of 1603, interpolated in canonical form relevant case law and statutes then in force, and suggested new canons in certain areas of ecclesiastical life previously unregulated.

Several motivations converged on the revision of canon law. The Canons of 1603 had become largely irrelevant, unenforceable, and in some instances the source of ridicule. There was a pressing dissonance between the assumption that the Church of England was by law established and the actual state of part of the law which governed the church.

Second, in the 1940s and 50s there was a widely shared perception, now difficult to credit, that disorder was endemic in the Church of England[22]. Such disorder was seen to be engrained in the fabric of the Church, and (because of the presumptions of divine law) to be both organisationally and spiritually deleterious. Mr. Peter Winckworth observed

> '... that extreme situation of individualistic chaos which the Church of England had enjoyed for several hundred years, and which it was the intention of this Canon Law revision to bring under control, if not to stop.'[23]

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[21] *Ibid.* p. 88. It thus reflected an Anglo-Catholic vision of liturgy as much as of law.

By no means everyone accepted the Commission's studied neutrality. The reviewer in the Evangelical journal, *The Churchman*, complained that the Commission had been packed with Anglo-Catholics; that the report tried to slide in partisan practices by a side wind; that the laity had no other place than as assistants to the clergy; and that if the Canons were implemented as proposed Evangelicals would be placed in an intolerable position. **A. Mitchell,** Review of *The Canon Law of the Church of England,* in: *The Churchman,* Vol. LXI, No. 3, July-Sept. 1947, pp. 141-144.

[22] **Canon R.C. Mortimer** observed that a wide divergence existed between law and practice,
'... a divergence indeed so extreme that it was not untrue to say that in many areas of Church life the Church of England was not really governed by law at all, but rather by custom.' *Chronicle,* 1947, p. 117.

[23] *Proceedings,* 1956, p. 312.

When, for example, Mr McQueen asked what grounds they had for thinking that the clergy would obey the newly proposed ecclesiastical courts[24] Fisher replied,

> '... they were working together to remedy what had been an instability in the Church of a very grave kind for many years, that none of them had a law to obey, and it was not surprising that when there was no law to obey everybody became a law to himself. What was uniting them all was a confidence that the Church could now remedy the Canon Law, the Courts, lawful authority and everything else, and get what a fellowship should have - a basis on which they could all act together in unity and law. He was certain that once they had got that law they would not have to appeal to it.'[25]

An agreed contemporary legal code was seen as a prerequisite for the restoration of ecclesiastical order [26].

Third, the church's juridical disorder was perceived to inhibit it from playing as significant role in civil society as it might or should. Archbishop Garbett (who had chaired the Commission) was apocalyptic:

> 'It is a delusion to think we have unlimited time, as we have always assumed we had in the past; we are living in days of revolution; still greater changes than those which have taken place are impending in the future; and there is always the possibility that within the next ten years, through the use of the atomic bomb in warfare, western civilisation as we have known it may be destroyed. The Church will only survive catastrophe if, like the early Church, it is sufficiently detached from the world, and is organised for days of crisis. We cannot claim that this is the position with our Church now. It is because the world as we have known it is passing away and we are on the verge of a new age that I am convinced that the Church must prepare itself to meet any emergency, and must cut itself away from obsolete machinery and archaic methods which hamper and obstruct spiritual and administrative freedom. If we fail to do this we shall be unable to meet the terrific challenge of the Day of the Lord which is now coming and has indeed come upon the human race.'[27]

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[24] *Proceedings*, 1955, p. 85.

[25] *Proceedings*, 1955, p. 102.

[26] **Archbishop Fisher** asserted that a renewed canon law would '... restore, as nothing else can, essential habits of good order and good conscience within the Church.' *Chronicle*, 1947, p. 35.

[27] **Archbishop Garbett**, President's Address to the Convocation of York, January 15th 1948. *Journal*, 1948, p. 25. Fisher's commendation of the report to the Convocation of Canterbury had been more tempered. *Chronicle*, 1947, pp. 35-38.

More measured voices claimed that canon law revision, and the consequent greater authority, would enable the Church to respond more effectively to the challenges of ecumenism[28] or changing public attitudes[29]. It would reinforce its position at the core of the life and culture of English society[30]. Human sinfulness also necessitated provision for the enforcement of law when willing obedience failed, and a contemporary code of law would enable the Church to exercise such discipline[31].

One highly significant motivation was the desire to reduce the degree to which the Church of England was shackled by its relationship with the state. In Archbishop Fisher's words,

> '... for a long period the Church had existed under the ultimate government of parliamentary direction, with no other means of legal authority available to it. That had gone on for a very long time.

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[28] In 1953 a debate in the House of Laity suggested relaxing the requirements of proposed Canon XXI on who might be admitted to Holy Communion, in order to allow inter-communion. *Proceedings*, 1953, pp. 146-176.

The issue of intercommunion was to rumble on over many years. Adrian Hastings records that when Geoffrey Lampe and others appealed to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York for intercommunion in 1961 they were strongly criticised. **A. Hastings** *A History of English Christianity*, p. 540. There was an outcry when the Bishop of Southwell authorised shared communion with members of other denominations at the Faith and Order Conference in Nottingham, 1964. **Revd. Riley** complained that no provision was made for Holy Communion for those Anglicans who could not accept open communion *Proceedings*, 1964, p. 565.

[29] Not necessarily by following public opinion. Proposed Canon 47, *Of the Burial of the Dead*, gave clergy the right to refuse to bury people who had committed suicide (and, on later amendments, required them to use an order of service specifically written for the burial of suicides), notwithstanding the more tolerant attitudes of public opinion. *Proceedings*, 1956, p. 154.

[30] **Canon G.W.O. Addleshaw,** (Secretary to the Commission on Canon Law) cited *The Times* as pointing out that '... the report might, if these resolutions were taken seriously, have a very great influence on the national life, because the code of Canons which they had suggested would enable them to say where they stood, what they stood for, where their doctrinal beliefs were to be found, and what were their discipline, customs and rules of procedure.' *Journal*, 1947, p. 34.

Archbishop Fisher believed that, on the basis of internal discipline and self-government, they could address the community around them with integrity: '... if they were going out to tell the community what the pattern of society should be, they must be sure they knew how to govern themselves ...' *Proceedings*, 1957, p. 375. Fisher's goal was not a single revision, but the power for continuous or periodic revision, so that '... the system would never get out of step with the spiritual outlook of the country.' *Proceedings*, 1956, p. 100.

[31] Fisher's fond hope was that, in large part because of the widespread consultation that informed the revision of canon law, the clergy would voluntarily embrace the new Code. As well as a new court structure, Oaths and Declarations of obedience (proposed Canon LXIX) were integral parts of canon law thus providing a self-referential claim to authority over the clergy.

'What they were trying to do now was, with parliamentary sanction and approval, to substitute for that the direct government of the Church by the Convocations as the proper spiritual authority.'[32]

Such authority was said to be biblical, essential, inalienable, and inconsistent with the present reality[33].

The most significant aspect of the state's hegemony lay in the church's inability to control or determine its worship and doctrine. Despite the assertion that,

'The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: ...'[34]

in daily practice there were four intrusive and pressing issues. The law allowed no deviation from the words of the Book of Common Prayer, howsoever small[35]; the 1928 Prayer Book had been rejected by Parliament but was still in use; key words of the Declaration of Assent were of uncertain meaning; and doctrine was ultimately determined by the secular courts. Because of the narrow constraints almost every act of worship was illegal in some way, and therefore all the clergy were law-breakers[36].

In 1927 and 1928 Parliament had twice rejected proposals for a revised Prayer Book. The church then ignored the rebuff in its attitude to worship.

'It was impossible that the bishops should, in the administration of their dioceses, ignore so great a weight of moral authority, or treat as disloyal to

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[32] **Archbishop Fisher.** *Proceedings*, 1952, p. 307.

[33] *Proceedings*, 1952, pp. 79, 94, 99, 101.

[34] Article XX. 'The English Church, said the Magna Carta 750 years ago, shall be free, and at no time since has freedom appeared to be a very obvious characteristic of the Church in England.' P. **Hinchliffe,** *The One-Sided Reciprocity. A Study in the Modification of the Establishment* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966) p. 15.

[35] '... a clerk has no right in performing divine service to alter, omit, or add anything to the prescribed form, including the lessons to be read.' *Ecclesiastical Law, reprinted from Halsbury's Laws of England,* Third Edition, (London, Butterworth & Co., 1957), p. 328. Cf. *Martin v. Mackonochie* (1886) *Ibid.* p. 339.

[36] **Mr. H. Montgomery-Campbell,** citing the address of the Bishop of Chester to his Diocesan Conference in May 1957, said
> 'Great areas of the Church's law are disobeyed by every clergyman in every church in our land. It is virtually impossible to observe strict observance to that law, and there is not a single church in the land, of whatever tradition, that does so. Everyone who takes part in a service which does not strictly conform with the Book of Common Prayer is a law-breaker.' *Proceedings*, 1957, pp. 498-499

the Church of England clergymen who conformed their practice to regulations thus recommended. Accordingly the Upper House of the two Convocations, with the acquiescent cognisance of the Lower Houses, recommended, with only four dissentients, that the bishops should not, in their administration, feel bound to interfere with clergy whose deviations from the Book of Common Prayer were within the limits of the deviations which the Prayer Book Measure of 1928 would have sanctioned.'[37]

In effect the bishops claimed an extra-legal authority over worship (the *ius liturgicum*) and exercised it negatively by refusing to enforce statute law. However, this bruising experience could not be dismissed in other spheres and was to haunt discussion between Church and state for the following 50 years. Furthermore the division between Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals in the Church was inextricably linked to this experience, with Evangelicals in particular threatening to turn to Parliament to block proposals if they had been dissatisfied with the outcome of deliberation in Convocation or Church Assembly[38].

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[37] *Church & State: Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Relations between Church and State, 1935 (London, The Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1935)* [The Cecil Report], p. 39. Prior to 1927 Parliament had rejected two other Measures: The Union of Benefices and Disposal of Churches (Metropolis) Measure, 1923; and the Bishopric of Shrewsbury Measure, 1924, which was passed by the House of Commons and fell in the House of Lords by 2 votes. **The Archbishop of Canterbury [A.M. Ramsey],** *Proceedings,* 1970, p. 455.

[38] Part of the cause of defeat in 1927 / 28 had been minority campaigns across the country as well as effective lobbying of Parliament. See, **A. Hastings,** *A History of English Christianity,* pp. 204-208.

In 1942 Kenneth Kirk proposed an improved eucharistic Canon. The Upper Houses of York and Canterbury approved the proposal, but the Lower Houses rejected it as 'inopportune'.

> 'The impasse caused by the action of the Lower House was considered to have been due, partly to opposition by some Anglo-Catholics who were unwilling to be tied to this particular form of eucharistic Canon, and partly to a threat by some Evangelicals led by Lord Caldecote to initiate parliamentary or judicial action against the Convocations if the proposal were accepted.'

R.C.D. Jasper, *The Development of the Anglican Liturgy 1662-1980,* (London, SPCK, 1989), p. 153.

The goal of canon law revision, and central to the four twentieth century Commissions on Church and State[39], was the conviction that authority over worship, doctrine, and the discipline of its clergy should be located in the Church of England's own organs of government.

There were a number of perceived constraints on this programme. First was the fear of exacerbating conflict between ecclesiastical parties, not least because it was believed that Parliament would not refuse again proposals on worship made by a Church of England which was visibly and overwhelmingly united. Second, the desire for greater control over its own affairs was qualified by a stronger desire to retain the Establishment. Disestablishment, it was asserted, would be damaging to the nation, and lead to the fragmentation of the church[40]. Third, a condition of the transfer of powers from Parliament which grew stronger as canon law revision

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[39] *The Archbishops' Committee on Church and State* (London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1916) [The Selbourne Report];

Church & State: Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Relations between Church and State, 1935 (London, The Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1935) [The Cecil Report];

Church and State: being the Report of a Commission appointed by the Church Assembly in June, 1949, C.A. 1023 (London, The Church Information Board of the Church Assembly, 1952) [The Moberly Report];

Church and State: Report of the Archbishops' Commission (London, Church Information Office, 1970) [The Chadwick Report].

[40] **The Provost of Portsmouth (E.N. Porter Goff)** argued that the great mass of English people wanted the nation to remain Christian, and the establishment of the Church of England was a sign that this was so. *Proceedings,* 1952, p. 81; **Canon Harman** held that disestablishment would lead to the fragmentation of the Church and the secularisation of the state, *Ibid.* pp. 91- 92.

Eric Kemp summarised the prevailing mood in a footnote:
> 'It is not my intention here to advocate disestablishment. I believe that both Church and State benefit by establishment, and that the disestablishment of the Church of England would be detrimental to the English people and to the cause of Christianity throughout the world. On the other hand I believe that in modern days the terms of the establishment have become in several respects unreasonable, harmful, and offensive, and that the Church should be allowed a freedom of ordering its own faith, life, and worship analogous to that possessed by the other established churches in these islands.'

E.W. Kemp Counsel and Consent, Aspects of Church Government, (London, SPCK, 1961), p. 207, n. 1.

In 1958 **Canon Dewar** argued that Parliament should retain its veto over the Church's proposals on the grounds that although the arrangement was theologically indefensible the alternative, disestablishment, was much worse. *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 468.

progressed, was that the church was required to create structures which would, in the eyes of Parliament, give sufficient voice to the laity.

The mechanisms by which establishment constrained the Church of England, both publicly and privately, were extensive. Members of Parliament sat in Church Assembly, and they and other MPs made statements pertaining to the Church of England. Canon law was subordinate to statute law, and the revision of any Canon which touched on statute law or the rights of Her Majesty's subjects (which turned out to be the great majority) required Parliamentary approval. Revision of diocesan boundaries and other matters not of national application required the promotion of private legislation, and thus the goodwill of those who managed the parliamentary timetable[41]. But perhaps one of the most effective means of control was self-censorship. The desire to avoid confrontation meant nothing was proposed that might conceivably attract parliamentary censure. Extensive confidential contacts between senior clergy and the Ecclesiastical Committee, and between Civil Servants and the General Secretary of the Church Assembly, for example, meant that any matter liable to become contentious was identified and sidelined so that it never became public[42].

The attainment of greater authority over its own worship required, *inter alia,* an effective means by which decisions about worship could be effected in parish churches around the country. The Declaration of Assent was designed to effect this goal. In it a Clerk in Holy Orders publicly promised to use only the form of

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[41] The state (though not Parliament) also controlled the appointment of bishops and other senior clergy, and the perception of political influence in senior appointments remained an issue. The **Dean of Chichester** alleged that there had been political influence in episcopal appointments over the last '40 or 50 years' though he declined to give examples. The claim was accepted by **Archbishop Fisher,** though he felt that a party political element in appointments '... had almost disappeared, or at any rate was disappearing.' *Proceedings,* 1952, pp. 314, 317.

[42] Canon Kemp, having spent much time on various committees, and then serving as Secretary of the Canon Law Steering Committee, commented
> 'On almost every one of these bodies the question of parliamentary control has arisen at some stage or other. ... Often the likelihood of opposition there had made it not seem worth while to embark upon the preliminary process of debate in Convocation or the Church Assembly.'

E.W. **Kemp,** *Counsel and Consent,* p. 206.

worship in the Book of Common Prayer for public prayer and the administration of the Sacraments,

'... except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority.'[43]

It was not, however, clear who constituted lawful authority[44]:

'Certitude, or at least some approximation to certitude, is essential if the obligation is to be of the slightest use, and indeed ambiguity makes it worse than useless by degrading it to a meaningless formula. ... The truth is that the three words 'ordered', 'lawful' and 'authority', both separately and as here conjoined, could hardly be more ambiguous than they in fact are.'[45]

That very ambiguity was also an opportunity to construct new answers. Vaisey's solution was to propose that permission for different degrees of exception could be given by different authorities (by Royal Warrant or Proclamation, with the sanction or approval of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York; by Convocations; or by Diocesan Bishops), in accordance with common sense[46].

Proposed Canon 13 embodied Vaisey's proposal. It was considered by the Convocations in 1948, amended, and submitted to the Moberly Commission on Church and State. Their report opened its chapter on the Control of Worship declaring,

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[43] Clerical Subscription Act (1865), cited in **The Honourable Mr. Justice Vaisey,** *Lawful Authority, A Memorandum,* in *The Canon Law of the Church of England,* pp. 215-223; p. 215. The phrase became known as the 'exceptive words'.

[44] 'Archbishop Davison, I am told, used at that point to say, "and as to what lawful authority means in this diocese, it means me!" This, in a real sense, of course, was true, but not in a legal sense ...' **Archbishop Fisher** in **W. Purcell,** *Fisher of Lambeth,* pp. 207-208.

[45] **Mr. Justice Vaisey,** *Lawful Authority,* in *The Canon Law of the Church of England,* p. 218.

The lack of clarity about what or who constituted 'lawful authority' was widely assumed, though some still argued that Parliament alone was that authority, and such confusion as there was had been created by the refusal of the Church to accept that authority when it was exercised in 1928. **Mr. J.R. Wallace,** *Proceedings,* 1957, p. 147.

Lawful authority for the alteration of the name of the monarch and other royal persons in the Book of Common Prayer was the Queen in Council by an order published in the *London Gazette.* 'In other cases not expressly provided for by statute the *jus liturgicum* of the archbishops and bishops is now often invoked, but it is very doubtful whether this has any legal basis.' *Ecclesiastical Law,* (*Halsbury's*) Third Edn. p. 328, n. *(o).*

[46] Proposed Schedule to the Draft Measure, **Mr. Justice Vaisey,** *Lawful Authority,* in *The Canon Law of the Church of England,* pp. 222-223.

'It is here, if anywhere, that the present form of relationship between Church and State 'impedes the fulfilment of the Church's responsibilities as a spiritual society.' It is here that the gravest doubt arises whether the Church is not virtually subjected to the State, and whether to acquiesce in such a position is to give to Caesar what belongs to God.'[47]

Yet the report's analysis of the rejection of the 1928 Prayer Book was most emollient towards Parliament[48]. Amongst its points was a discussion of the House of Commons as the voice of the laity of the Church. A previous Commission had flatly rejected the charge that the Church Assembly was unrepresentative of the worshipping laity[49], but the Moberly Commission asserted (without evidence) that public opinion, and an 'undercurrent of feeling', held that the House of Laity was indeed unrepresentative of the lay people in the parishes.

'Hence it is arguable that, however paradoxically, the House of Commons represents the mind of the inarticulate mass of laymen more closely than does the House of Laity.'[50]

Based on this temporising analysis, the Commission proposed a fixed-term period of seven or ten years (renewable once) during which deviations from the Book of Common Prayer, although remaining illegal, would be licensed for experimental use to enable the Church to come to a common mind on its forms of worship before submitting final proposals to Parliament. Even this experimental period would require a two thirds majority in each of the Houses of Convocation, and in

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[47] *Church and State, 1949* [The Moberly Commission] p. 19.

[48] Perhaps the desire to avoid further conflict and to achieve what Parliament had denied the Church in 1927 and 1928 was a strong consideration in this analysis. E.W. Kemp called it 'faint-hearted indeed' *The Creation of the Synod*, in **P. Moore (ed.)**, *The Synod of Westminster: Do we need it?* (London, SPCK, 1986) p. 20, but he acknowledged that it did lead to the temporary transfer to the Church of authority over worship. *Op. cit.* p. 21.

Anthony Dyson regarded the report as '... a somewhat pretentious piece of work, describing many flourishes but yielding distinctly meagre returns.' It was 'full of unsupported generalisations and special pleading.'; 'theologically weak'; thin and patronising on ecumenical relations; with a narrow and deferential view of Church-State relationships; and it forgot 'all references to the social, political, and economic changes in British Society' when it came to its conclusions. However, 'as an elaborate dressing-up of a tactical manoeuvre on the part of the Church to move by stealthy stages towards fuller control of its worship, the Report may be hailed a success.' **A. Dyson,** *"Little Else But The Name"*, in **G. Moyser, (ed.),** *Church and Politics Today. The Role of the Church of England in Contemporary Politics*, (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1985), pp. 282-312; pp. 296-297.

[49] *Church & State* 1935 [The Cecil report], p. 46.

[50] *Church and State, 1949* [The Moberly Report], p. 23.

the House of Laity[51]. In this way Parliamentary authority would be respected, and the Church could present the strongest possible case for reform of worship.

The object of Canon 13, the Commission asserted, was to provide an effective means by which

> '... the Church would be able to put forward for statutory authorization amendments to the Prayer Book, either to be substituted for the Book of 1662, or to be authorized alongside of it.'[52]

A structure of experiment and lawful authority was to be created in which deviations in worship (initiated by the Liturgical Commission under the close oversight of the Archbishops) would contain partisan diversity in the Church, ensure grass-roots support, and satisfy the demands of Parliament[53]. The anticipated outcomes of this process were a new Prayer Book and the consequent eradication of the disorder of worship in the Church of England.

The House of Laity considered Canon 13 briefly (twice) in 1957, and, uniquely in the course of canon law revision, a 3-day Conference was held in January 1958 to consider it[54]. Some saw the Liturgical Commission as a putative alternative to

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[51] *Ibid.* p. 32. The revised form of Canon 13 which the Commission considered included provision for deviations from the Book of Common Prayer
> '... as the Convocations of the respective Provinces of Canterbury and York may
> respectively order, allow or sanction within the said respective Provinces ...' ...
> 'provided that such deviations shall have been agreed by the House of Laity in the
> National Assembly of the Church of England.' *Ibid.* p. 30.
At this stage of discussion, therefore, it was proposed that the laity had a veto, but not the power of initiation, in respect of worship.

[52] *Church and State,* 1949 [The Moberly Report], p. 31.

[53] The Bishop of Exeter stated that the Canon Law Commission prepared Canon XIII (of Lawful Authority) with a view to granting powers to the Convocations over the worship of the Church. In so doing they asked themselves 'In what way and on what terms are we going to get this Enabling Measure through Parliament?' conscious of the Act of Uniformity, and that '...Parliament regarded itself ... as the guardian of the rights of minority groups within the Church of England.' *Proceedings,* 1952, p. 278.

[54] January 7th to 9th 1958. *Proceedings,* 1957, p. 502. In 1947 a 'round-table' conference (an informal meeting of representatives of the different schools of churchmanship) had considered the issue. In the view of **Dr Chevasse**, Bishop of Rochester, this had been 'largely abortive', though it had concluded that the laity ought to be involved in framing the Canons. *Chronicle,* 1947, p. 181.

canons, courts and prosecutions[55]. Some predicted that the proposed experimental periods would lead only to chaos as it would be impossible to command their cessation should Convocation or Parliament not give final approval[56]. Others found the proposed procedure too limiting, and argued that what was needed was continuous revision, not the replacement of the Book of Common Prayer by another book designed to last equally as long[57].

In 1960 the Convocations combined Vaisey's principle of a hierarchy of authorisation with Moberly's suggestion of limited periods for experiment, and divided the resultant proposal into Canons B1 to B5[58]. Canon B1a proposed to devolve power to authorise experiments in worship from Parliament to the Convocations, and the initial response of the House of Laity was not favourable. George Goyder pounced on the clericalism of the proposal:

> 'Unless he was mistaken, this would be the first time since 1534 that the laity would be disenfranchised in a matter respecting the liturgy, and the first time since the Reformation that the Convocations had proposed a Canon which disenfranchised the laity.'[59]

Similarly, Canon B3 attributed to Convocations and the Ordinary, in their respective territories, the power to authorise services for which no provision was made in the Book of Common Prayer. Whilst some argued that any new services should require the assent of the House of Laity, others felt that these new powers of control over worship could only be properly located in the Convocations:

> '... it would be difficult to persuade the Convocations to submit any regulations which they had to make in regard to services, and possibly matters of doctrine, to the House [of Laity] for approval. They were the

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[55] **Mr. J.P. Winckworth,** *Proceedings,* 1957, p. 150. The Liturgical Commission was established in the context of preparing for the experimental permissions envisaged in Canon 13. **Archbishop Fisher,** *Proceedings,* 1954, p. 499.

[56] **Mr. H.R.M. Craig,** *Proceedings,* 1957, p. 152; **Mr. H. Montgomery-Campbell,** *Proceedings,* 1957, p. 499.

[57] '... if they were to recapture the people of England for the Church they could not have in future one single rite without any variations.' **Mr. I. Bulmer-Thomas,** *Proceedings,* 1957, p. 154, He supported the proposed Canon (and the Liturgical Commission) as a means to attain the end of continuous liturgical development. Cf. **Mrs E. Coombs,** *Proceedings,* 1957, p. 147.

[58] *Chronicle,* 1960, pp. 166-167.

[59] **Mr. G. Goyder,** *Proceedings,* 1961, p. 212.

guardians of the doctrine of the Church and, pending synodical government, they would find it difficult to surrender that authority.'[60]

At the same time as Canon 13 was edging forwards other matters concerning worship were being considered. In 1961 the New English Bible was published and the Convocations approved it for use in worship. However this approval could not extend to use in the Eucharist because (unlike Morning and Evening Prayer) the readings were printed out in full in the Book of Common Prayer and the Church had no authority to amend or replace them[61]. Accordingly the *Prayer Book (Versions of the Bible) Measure* was drafted to permit the use of the NEB (as the only alternative) in the eucharist[62].

By the following year there had been a change in the Measure which can only be attributed to a significant shift in the attitude of the Government lawyers. The *Prayer Book (Versions of the Bible) Measure* was redrafted to give Convocation, with the concurrence of the House of Laity, the capacity to authorise any version of the Bible in conjunction with the Book of Common Prayer[63]. This constituted delegated legislation which had never previously been permitted[64] and also a major step forward in the campaign for greater autonomy. Yet even this long sought for achievement did not please everyone. Mr. G.E. Duffield declared that there was already too much discretion,

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[60] **Mr. T.A.R. Levett,** *Proceedings,* 1961, p. 409.

[61] **The Bishop of Winchester,** *Proceedings,* 1961, pp. 89-90.

[62] The Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury added the Revised Standard Version.

[63] *Proceedings,* 1964, p. 132.

[64] In 1954, for example, the Draft Representation of the Laity Measure (C.A. 1086) had included a clause stating that the age of eligibility for membership of the electoral roll should be 18, or otherwise as Church Assembly should from time to time determine. This was withdrawn because it would constitute delegated legislation which
> '... would enable the Assembly to make an alteration in what became the equivalent of an Act of Parliament without the approval of Parliament.' **Mr. W.H. Coles,** *Proceedings,* 1954, p. 180; and 1955, p. 6.

'... if this went on it would make a mockery of many of these Measures which were intended to bring order in the Church.'[65]

The *Prayer Book (Versions of the Bible) Measure* became law in 1965[66]. Thus Parliament gave to the church legal authority to determine for itself certain limited aspects of its worship.

The Church moved swiftly to capitalise on the concession of delegated legislation. The *Prayer Book (Alternative and Other Services) Measure* was drafted to implement Canons B1-B5. The Measure was, unusually, introduced to Church Assembly by the President, Michael Ramsey[67]. He described the Measure as of the utmost importance. It would resolve the meaning of the words 'lawful authority' in the declaration of assent for the first time since 1865. Through it the Convocations, with the concurrence of the Laity (in both cases by votes of two-thirds majorities) could authorise experiments in worship, though for no more than two periods of seven years. It made provision for sanctioning alternative services in selected parishes for two-year periods. It permitted the officiating minister to make minor verbal changes. Yet (perhaps for a different audience) Ramsey also under-played the significance of the Measure which, despite a long history of more radical demands, sought only

'... a very modest and restricted autonomy for their Church in the making of variations and experiments in public worship.'[68]

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[65] *Proceedings,* 1964, p. 134; the House of Laity was subsequently told that
'They could give categorical assurance that there was no idea of having a kind of promiscuity of versions.' **Mr. R. St. J. Pitts-Tucker,** *Proceedings,* 1964, p. 428.
There was, however, an implicit clash between competing goals of reform: the desire for authority over worship was perceived by a few to conflict with the desired restoration of lawful order.

[66] A previously separate proposed Measure to permit the use of the Revised Psalter in worship was conflated with the main measure.

[67] *Proceedings,* 1964, pp. 238-245.

[68] *Ibid.* p. 239.

The proposed Measure received overwhelming support in the Church Assembly[69] and had an easy passage through Parliament[70].

> 'Thirty-seven years after the final rejection of the Deposited Book, therefore, the first important legal step towards achieving a new liturgy and liturgical freedom was secured.'[71]

The Measure was an important step forward in substantiating the Church's claim of authority over its own worship. But it expired in 1980 and there was no guarantee that the delegation of powers would be continued. The issue was remitted to a Commission on Church and State and The Chadwick Report[72], not surprisingly, recommended making the delegation of powers permanent[73]. Accordingly General Synod prepared the *Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure* which was designed to give the Church unconstrained power to determine its own forms of worship. The Measure also delegated to the General Synod power to authorise a new Declaration of Assent. It repealed some seventeen Acts of Parliament which governed worship, not least the Act of Uniformity of 1662.

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[69] *Ibid.* 1964, p. 248.

[70] The speed with which this Measure was passed meant that it was the first Measure by which Parliament passed delegated powers to the Church. The *Prayer Book (Versions of the Bible) Measure* had been overtaken in its progress to Royal Assent, but it remains the first Measure for which delegated powers had been agreed.

[71] **R.C.D. Jasper,** *The Development of the Anglican Liturgy,* p. 244.

[72] The report was written in a 'clipped, laconic style,' and was '... a master of understatement and periphrasis; it sedulously avoids dogmatic pronouncements. It is an outstanding exercise of *diplomacy.'* It sees truth in the steady evolution of historical change, it has 'little *theological* argument' or position, and does not state the more radical position (of disestablishment) except to reject it. Its analysis is optimistic, and 'The question of data and trends is fudges and the predominantly conservative value-judgements of the Commission take their place. So there is no real attempt to grapple with the nature and effect of the changes in political, social and religious life over recent decades.' **A. Dyson,** *"Little Else But The Name",* in **G. Moyser, (ed.),** *Church and Politics Today,* pp. 299-300 (emphases in original).

[73] *Church and State, 1970,* [The Chadwick Report], p. 23. A *Note of Dissent* to this specific recommendation was appended by **Sir Timothy Hoare,** who held that, given the novelty of General Synod it was not wise at that point to attempt a complete transfer of powers. *Ibid.* pp. 85-87.

In General Synod the Measure gained overwhelming approval[74]. Its passage through Parliament was less smooth. In the House of Lords Archbishop Ramsey introduced the Measure on the last day of his Archepiscopacy, his seventieth birthday. Speeches sang his valedictory praises rather than addressed the issues. The House of Commons was more truculent. Eldon Griffiths thought the Church wanted the fruits of disestablishment without being disestablished[75]. Enoch Powell disputed the right of the Church to order its own worship, thus attacking the heart of the Measure. He argued that by this step the Church of England was changing its characteristic stamp and quality, a step which was went beyond its legitimate power. He rejected the suggestions (urged by Ramsey and others promoting the Measure) that to defeat the Measure would put the Church of England back to the position before 1965: what should have followed from granting the Church of England a limited period of experimentation in 1965 was not unlimited experimentation, but rather the end of experiment and the presentation to Parliament of the Church's considered conclusions as to the form of worship they wished to employ[76]. Further opposition came from those who disliked modern services. The Measure passed through Parliament with a sizeable majority, but left a legacy of tension between certain Members of Parliament and the Church[77].

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[74] Just 10 votes were cast against it. *General Synod Proceedings*, 1973, p. 100.

[75] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 882, Cols. 1628-1634, cited in **Jasper,** *The Development of the Anglican Liturgy*, p. 282.

[76] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 882, 4th December 1974, Cols. 1666-1677. Cited in **F. Field,** *Church and Parliament,* in **G. Moyser (ed.),** *Church and Politics Today,* pp. 55-74; pp. 61-62.

[77] Frank Field cited the (unsuccessful) *Prayer Book Protection Measure*, 1981; unhappiness in the Ecclesiastical Committee over the *Pastoral Reorganisation (Amendment) Measure*, 1982; and the defeat of the *Appointment of Bishops Measure* in 1984 as evidence of continued, even rising tension. *Ibid.* pp. 64-72.

The Chadwick Commission was probably reflecting accurately the position of parliamentarians in concluding

> 'Not only the record of debates but also our private inquiries show that many
> Members of Parliament feel something unfitting in the present constitutional situation
> over Measures concerning worship. We do not assert that all Members of Parliament
> wish to divest themselves of this responsibility.' *Church and State,* 1970, [The Chadwick
> report], p. 19.

But it was also evident that a minority of Members of Parliament could still exercise a constraining influence over the Church of England.

Having attained the power it sought, the Church proceeded to use it. The following year it exercised its control over doctrine by amending the terms of the Declaration of Assent[78]. The preface affirmed that the 'Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'[79] Following Canon A5 it declared that the church professed the faith uniquely revealed in the Scriptures, set forth in the Catholic creeds, witnessed to by the historic formularies of the Church of England, and which is to be proclaimed afresh in each generation. It required each person making the declaration to

> '... affirm your loyalty to this inheritance of faith as your inspiration and guidance under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making Him known to those in your care.'[80]

In respect of worship, the exceptive words were replaced by

> '... and in public prayer and in the administration of the sacraments, I will use only the forms of service authorised or allowed by Canon.'[81]

thus making clear that the Church was its own authority over matters concerning worship.

Yet to have gained authority over doctrine and worship without the power to enforce decisions would have been a empty victory. It was not automatic that every ordained person would feel bound by their oaths and declarations in the manner which bishops or Convocations would desire. There remained a danger that the disorder created by ignoring statutory law might have been replaced by a

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[78] *Subscription and Assent to the Thirty-nine Articles: A Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Christian Doctrine*, (London, SPCK, 1968) considered and rejected a 'light revision' of the Thirty-nine Articles, (pp. 41-71). Some doubted the propitiousness of authoritative doctrinal formulations, observing that 'Variegation of thought, rather than rigidity of doctrine, characterizes theology today.' *Ibid.* p. 44. The report recommended that
> 'The most practical method of avoiding giving distress to those who are happy to assent to the Articles as they stand while at the same time easing the consciences of those who cannot at present make the required subscriptions without mental reservations is to modify the formula of assent.' *Ibid.* p. 43.

[79] Canon C15 *Of the Declaration of Assent. The Canons of the Church of England*, 5th Edn, (London, Church House Publishing, 1993) p. 96

[80] *Loc. cit.*

[81] *Loc. cit.*

disorder stemming from ignoring spiritual authority. As law provided the paradigm for the transfer of authority, so courts of law provided the location, and legal procedure the style, by which the Church of England sought to enforce its decisions, and in particular to determine the acceptable boundaries of its doctrine[82].

> 'The hope to produce religious harmony by judicial decision was no doubt doomed from the start, but it was not an ignoble hope. The enterprise of maintaining peace through making and enforcing laws often appears uncompromising, but it has its successes to record.'[83]

But this measured judgement has been shared by few in the Church of England since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Since 1833, the final court of appeal for ecclesiastical cases had been the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The nineteenth century saw a number of high profile cases where doctrinal issues were pursued through the courts[84]. Many of these cases concerned the manner in which worship was conducted, not least because worship encapsulated and symbolised the divergent theologies of Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical clergy. The abolition of the jurisdiction of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in ecclesiastical cases had been recommended by five Commissions since 1882[85]. In 1906 a Royal Commission magisterially declared,

> 'The great lay judges who usually and suitably comprise the Crown Court neither occupy such an official position in the Church of Christ as would

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[82] Technically the courts did not determine doctrine. They merely determined whether the doctrines espoused by the defendants were in conformity with the formularies of the Church of England: the articles, the Book of Common Prayer, and Canons. In practice it was almost impossible to sustain this distinction. See O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, (London, Adam and Charles Black, 2 Vols.) Vol. II (1970), p. 81.

[83] R. E. Rhodes, Jr., *Law and Modernization in the Church of England: Charles II to the Welfare State.* (Notre Dame, The University of Notre Dame Press, 1991) p. 259.

[84] A detailed account is to be found in *ibid.*, pp. 259-316. See also O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Vol. I, p. 261 on the Gorham case; and *ibid.* Vol. II, pp. 78-84 on *Essays and Reviews*.

[85] Canon Addleshaw, *Proceedings*, 1956, p. 74.

give spiritual authority to their decisions nor possess as a necessary qualification of their office any special training in religious learning.'[86]

Yet this unsatisfactory structure remained in place until 1963.

In 1948, before the revision of canon law was fully under steam, a noteworthy alliance of the Evangelical Revd Michael Bruce, and the Anglo-Catholic Dom Gregory Dix argued in Convocation that worship should be removed altogether from the jurisdiction of the courts. Bruce argued that worship should be regulated by adherence to doctrine, custom and good taste, and not by adherence to a book (a 'stupid idea') which was a Schedule to an Act of Parliament. Rather, the law should be used for permission, not for ordering worship[87].

Dix cited the Council of Nicaea as propounding the idea that, if a Christian would adhere to the common doctrine of the Church, their prayers would be acceptable to the rest of the Church. He highlighted certain farcical aspects of seeking to control doctrine by law. For example, the second Act of Uniformity had included life imprisonment for a second offence of verbal variation from approved doctrine; and a court case in the 1860s had established that the sole legal doctrinal test of an Anglican communicant was whether or not they believed in a personal devil (though they were not required to believe in eternal punishment). If, he argued,

> '... questions of worship, like questions of doctrine, were to be brought before a Court, which, as was the case with modern Church Courts, could only act upon the principles of statute law and could only interpret the documents as statute law, a very disastrous state of affairs would be brought about.'[88]

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[86] Cited by **Canon E.W. Kemp,** *Proceedings,* 1956, p. 80. He added,
> 'The Judicial Committee would be dealing with questions affecting Christian doctrine side by side with questions of the interpretation and application of the rites and customs of some heathen tribe in Central Africa. The doctrine of the Incarnation might be dealt with by this court on one day, and something connected with witchcraft in Central Africa on the next. The whole setting was such as to make the Judicial Committee unsuitable for this particular purpose, however desirable might be the personal and legal qualifications of its members.' *Loc. cit.*

[87] *Chronicle,* 1948, pp. 44-46.

[88] *Ibid.* p. 49.

The consequences were not merely farcical, they were pernicious:

> 'He believed that it was a demonstrable historical fact that every schism in English religion in the seventeenth century could be traced to the unhappy operation of the theory that Christian worship was a suitable subject for organisation by the police.'[89]

He did not, he said, trust statutes; he trusted the general mind of the Church[90] though he did not elaborate further.

This attempt to remove worship and doctrine from legal constraint failed[91], and the Church of England continued to see statute law and judicial courts as its main means of control over doctrine. In 1954 a further Commission on The Ecclesiastical Courts[92] proposed to establish a court of unassailable authority, both ecclesiastical and legal. This, the Court of Ecclesiastical Causes Reserved, would be presided over by the Archbishop of the province concerned, with two diocesan bishops, and two laymen holding (or who had held) high judicial office, and who were communicant members of the Church of England. The Court was to be the sole judicial authority on matters of doctrine, ritual and ceremonial[93].

In the debate on the Commission's proposals Archbishop Fisher discovered himself to be unusually out of tune with many in the Church Assembly. He conceived the historic formularies of the Church of England to be benchmarks against which subsequent doctrine could be judged, with the implication that those formularies would be amended should the mind of the Church alter over time. For Fisher the interpretation of the foundational documents and historical

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[89] *Ibid.* pp. 48-49.

[90] *Ibid.* p. 51.

[91] By 100 votes to 61; *Chronicle,* 1948, p. 53.

[92] *The Ecclesiastical Courts - Principles of Reconstruction, Being the Report of the Commission on Ecclesiastical Courts set up by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 1951 at the request of the Convocations,* [The Lloyd-Jacob Commission] (London, SPCK, 1954).

[93] Canon Addleshaw explained the choice facing the Commission. If they made a court of first instance sufficiently strong to deal with doctrinal and liturgical matters, there would be no-one left to whom appeal could be made. Conversely a weak court of first instance would invite automatic appeal. They chose a single 'big' Court from which there was no appeal. *Proceedings,* 1955, p.100.

formularies of the church by objective legal minds, offered a certainty in doctrine that no other authority could attain:

> 'It seemed to him that anybody would happily and cheerfully say: 'That is our judgement by our own standards, but we are perfectly willing that a supreme judicial court shall decide whether we are right in so reading our documents.' That was all that was asked. *(Cries of 'No').* He was sorry but he should have thought that was perfectly clear *(Cries of 'No').'* [94]

He raised the question of the invocation of Saints contrary to Article 22, and argued that if the proposed Court of Ecclesiastical Causes Reserved had found against someone in the matter, the only ground of appeal was that the Court had misinterpreted the Article.

> 'Was it not entirely reasonable that the case should go to the Judicial Committee to decide whether, on an objective legal judgement, the right or wrong interpretation had been given to the Article? *(Cries of 'No').* This interested him very much because they were constantly, in their dealings with other Churches, presenting the Articles as the documents on which their faith rested. *(Cries of 'No').* He was sorry, but that had been done by those who carried on their negotiations with the Orthodox and other Churches, and, whether they liked it or not the Articles formed one of their documents.

> 'Was it not (he said this quite honestly) a great gain for the Church to know for certain what its law was? *(Cries of 'No' and applause).* The fact was that on many points now they did not know what their law was. What they were trying to do, in all this long process which he had indicated was to get out of a morass of nescience in the matter of law and courts and worship and everything else, onto a firm and solid basis, and any step they could take to get surety and security was a good thing.

> '... He would have thought that if the Court of Ecclesiastical Causes Reserved was perfectly sure that its interpretation was according to the mind of the Church, the Judicial Committee would say: 'Yes, but that does not coincide with the actual law on your documents,' and they would then have no difficulty in amending the Article so that it meant what they really desired it to mean.'[95]

Part of the opposition to Fisher undoubtedly came from those who rejected any role for the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as a court of appeal beyond the Court of Ecclesiastical Causes Reserved. But others rejected Fisher's basic

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[94] *Proceedings,* 1956, p. 102.

[95] *Ibid.* pp. 102-103.

premise arguing that the application of judicial authority to doctrine (though historically unimpeachable) was an inappropriate exercise of authority. Mr A.T. Macmillan, for example, held that

> 'It was entirely wrong to try to approach the construction of one of the articles or the Nicene Creed in the way in which lawyers approach the construction of an Act of Parliament, or any such document ...'[96]

Nonetheless this forensic approach was embedded in the proposals of the Lloyd-Jacob Commission which were implemented in 1963.

By its revision of canon law, and associated reforms, the Church of England achieved the transfer of authority it had sought for decades[97]. It gained full control over its worship (except that it may not discard the Book of Common Prayer or permit worship which deviates from the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter[98]), and encapsulated its claim to authority in a revised Declaration of Assent. It established courts for the enforcement of its authority, albeit that the jurisdiction of Church courts in relation to worship and doctrine remains untested. And through these changes the Church of England remained both the Established Church and avoided schismatic conflict between its different wings.

Integral to this programme of the acquisition of authority from the state was a readjustment of the distribution of power and authority within the Church of England. It was deemed that a condition for persuading Parliament to transfer to the church powers over matters of worhip and doctrine, was that the laity should have a greater role in decision making in these areas. The outcome was the inauguration of General Synod in 1970, four years before the passing of the *Worship and Doctrine Measure.*

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[96] **Mr. A.T. Macmillan,** *Proceedings,* 1956, p. 92.

[97] The campaign also revealed a remarkable consistency of purpose in the Church of England in sustaining a coherent political purpose over more than 50 years.

[98] *Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure* Clauses 1(1) and 4(1) reproduced in **R.D.H. Bursell,** *Liturgy, Order and Law* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986) pp. 261, 262.

The present system of synodical government may be traced to the Spring Session

of the 1953[99] Church Assembly, at which Mr George Goyder successfully moved

> 'That the Assembly respectfully requests the Archbishops to appoint a
> Commission (including representatives of the Convocations) to consider
> how the Clergy and Laity can best be joined together in the synodical
> government of the Church, and to report.'[100]

The motion was passed by a large majority, and 'gladly accepted'[101] by the

Archbishops, and seventeen years went by before General Synod met.

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[99] This was merely a further step in a painfully slow process:
> 'The movement for the closer association of the laity with the synods of the Church of
> England [i.e. Convocations] has a continuous history since the 1830s, when it began as
> part of the Church's reaction to the opening of the House of Commons to Roman
> Catholics and other non-Anglicans.'

Convocation Report 708. *Report of the Joint Committee on the Association of the Laity with the Clergy
in the Synodical Government of the Church.* (Convocation of Canterbury, 1962). Reprinted as
Appendix I, in *government by synod*, Being the report of a Commission appointed by the
Archbishops of Canterbury and York [The Hodson Commission] (C.A. 1600) (London, Church
Information Office, 1966) p. 94.

There had been discussion concerning associating lay people with Convocations at the
Convocation of York in May and October 1952. This was a general debate, and no report or
commission was sought to follow it up. *Journal*, May 1952, pp. 99-109; October 1952 pp. 93-109. In
November 1952 Archbishop Fisher listed '... how to get the best association of the laity with the
bishops and clergy of the Convocations.' amongst the important aspects of the reform work in
which they were engaged. *Proceedings*, 1952, p. 307. Discussion between 1922 and 1948 had
concerned the clergy sitting with the Bishop in Diocesan Synod, perhaps with a few lay Assessors.

[100] *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 89. The motion was an agreed composite.

[101] *Loc. cit.*

Through this period there was broad agreement to the thesis that the laity should be more closely associated with the clergy in the governance of the Church[102], and precious little agreement as to its form. Three broad emphases may be discerned. In the first phase of debate Convocation was deemed normative, and legal ways were sought by which lay people could become part of Convocation. Second, occurring largely outside Church Assembly, there was a campaign to promote the role of the laity, even to reverse the relationship between clergy and laity, making the clergy accountable to the laity. Third, Convocation was subsumed into Church Assembly in a manner which effectively reinforced the episcopal and clerical character of the Church of England. But while the broad picture is important, it is the detail that is vital, because it is through the detail that power is distributed.

There were several motivations for General Synod. The formal exclusion from consideration of matters of worship and doctrine in Church Assembly (though this did not always prevent debate), was discordant with the belief of some that the laity had a proper role to play in all aspects of church life. This belief was

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[102] **Mr. O. Clark** argued that the fact that clergy and laity were integral parts of Christ's body did not imply that they should have an equal voice on every matter and, indeed, to make an equal voice a matter of principle was to put all previous practice in the wrong. *Proceedings*, 1958, pp. 470-471.

By the 1919 Enabling Act the Church Assembly was empowered to discuss any matter relating to the Church of England with two reservations:

> '... any Measure touching doctrinal formulae or the services or ceremonies of the Church of England or the administration of the Sacraments or sacred rites thereof, shall be debated and voted upon by each of the three Houses sitting separately, and shall then be either accepted or rejected by the Assembly in the terms in which it is finally proposed by the House of Bishops.'

and

> '... it does not belong to the functions of the Assembly to issue any statement purporting to define the doctrine of the Church of England on any question of theology.'

Furthermore, nothing in the constitution of the Church Assembly

> '... shall be deemed to diminish or derogate from any of the powers belonging to the Convocations of the Provinces of Canterbury and York or of any House thereof; nor shall the Assembly exercise any power or perform any function distinctively belonging to the Bishops in right of their episcopal office.'

N. Sykes, *Introduction*, in: *The Position of the Laity in the Church, being the Report of the Joint Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury* (1902) Reprinted with an introduction by Norman Sykes (Westminster, Church Information Board, 1952), p. xvi.

sharpened in reaction to the proposed Canons which seemed to reinforce a clerical conception of the church[103], and by the fact that initial debate was entirely within the Convocations. The House of Laity was included in the process of revision, and with some condescension, only when it was recognised that many of the Canons would require parliamentary approval[104]. Mr C.W. Finney expostulated that,

> 'Surely in these democratic days government by the consent of the governed should be applied in the Church of England as elsewhere. ... He asked the Convocations to accord the laity the right of assent and dissent to the [canon law] proposals propounded.'[105]

But Fisher (who was in favour of consulting the laity) informed him that Convocation did not have that power[106], despite the initial assumption that at least

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[103] Proposed Canon CXXVI *Of National and Provincial Synods* began,
> 'The Sacred Synods of England, in the name of Christ and under the King's authority assembled, are the true Church of England by Representation, and have power to make Canons, Constitutions, and Ordinances, to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and have also authority in controversies of Faith.' *The Canon Law of the Church of England*, p. 205.
This Canon reiterated the substance of Canon 139 of 1603. It ignored the development of lay structures in the governance of the Church since that date. Assemblies of the laity (PCCs, Ruridecanal and Diocesan Conferences, and the Church Assembly) were
> 'In order that the Laity may be the better able to assist the clergy and take their proper place in the work of the Church, ...' Canon CXXX *Of the Place of the Laity in the Administration of the Church, ibid.* pp. 211-212.

[104] They had been told by His Grace in the House of Laity that the laity had no constitutional position as of right in the making of Canons, and that being the case, he thought - if he might speak for the laity - that they would wish to thank the Convocations for graciously inviting the laity to consider the Canons and the pass on any observations they might have. **Mr. G. Goyder,** *Proceedings,* 1951, p. 201. The Archbishop had addressed the members of the House of Laity on June 18th 1951, but this was not minuted as it was not a formal meeting of Church Assembly.

[105] *Proceedings,* 1951, p. 223.

[106] **Archbishop Fisher,** *Loc. cit.*

some of the laity would be subject to the Canons[107]. The necessity for parliamentary approval handed a significant lever to the laity: without full lay participation and their explicit assent to reforms, it was widely held that Parliament would not endorse the revision[108].

A further motivation was money. From its right to deal with clerical taxation Convocation was said to have obtained the right to give or withhold final assent to the proposals of the Upper House on doctrine, discipline and liturgy. Similarly the contemporary increase of financial muscle of the laity was said to have led to the contemporary claims for greater constitutional power within the Church[109].

The particular shape of General Synod was partly informed by unanticipated lessons from the experience of canon law revision[110]. The slow and cumbrous procedure for canon law revision which necessitated approval from five separate

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[107] In 1736 Lord Hardwicke declared in *Middleton v. Crofts*
> '... the Canons of 1603, not having been confirmed by Parliament, do not *proprio vigore* bind the laity; ...'
though he left slightly ajar the question of whether the Canons might bind the laity by some other force or authority, such as ancient usage. The report *The Canon Law of the Church of England* therefore argued that 'These Canons are binding on the laity in so far as they declare the ancient usage and law of the Church of England ...' *ibid.* p. 77. Otherwise the canons were not binding on the laity, except that the ecclesiastical courts could control its officers by rules.

The distinction proved unsustainable, and the claim for ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the laity was deemed obsolete, irrecoverable, and not in accord with modern thought. *Proceedings*, 1955, p. 95.

The Lowe Commission was unclear as to the legal consequences for the laity if they were to be formally associated with Convocations, and consequently suggested explicitly excluding lay people from the jurisdiction of canon law. *The Convocations and the Laity*, being the Report of the Commission set up by the Church Assembly to consider how the clergy and laity can best be joined together in the synodical government of the Church. (C.A. 1240) [The Lowe Commission] (Westminster, Church Information Board, 1958), pp. 32-33.

[108] The point was repeatedly made. See, for example, **N. Sykes** *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 85; 1958, pp. 333-334, **G. Goyder,** *ibid.* p. 339, **The Dean of Winchester** *ibid.* p. 480, **Rev M. Bruce** *ibid.* p. 483. **Canon E.W. Kemp** widened the argument asserting that the greater freedom from Parliament they desired was dependent on greater lay participation. *ibid.* p. 545.

[109] **N. Sykes** *Proceedings*, 1953, pp. 84-85. In a further argument from history, he asserted that the principle embodied in the Church of England since Elizabeth I, was not merely one of clerical consultation with the laity, but of their concurrence and participation. *Loc. cit.*

[110] The **Bishop of Ripon** had presciently observed in 1947 that they might well find the experience of revising canon law so difficult that they would be forced to see if there were a more convenient system of government. *Chronicle*, 1947, p. 24

Houses made a powerful pragmatic argument for the simplification of Church government[111]. Furthermore, whatever the constitutional limits to their rights, in practice the laity had participated with the Convocations on matters of doctrine, worship and the regulation of behaviour in the clergy's exercise of their ministry[112] and had done so on the *de facto* assumption that their concurrence was required[113].

Following the 1953 debate on synodical government The Lowe Commission was appointed. It reported in 1958[114]. It asserted that the corporate action of the Church required the consent of the whole body[115], and, because neither Parliament nor Church Assembly could adequately give that consent, change was necessary[116]. The logical step to take was to put all the powers of the church into the Church Assembly, thus creating a National Synod, an approach favoured by many on the Commission[117].

It was clear however, that this was not acceptable to a significant number of members of the Commission. There were, said the report, 'formidable objections' to this course of action. Accordingly, against its own 'logical' solution, the Lowe Commission recommended joining lay people to the Convocations as separate

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[111] Four Houses of Convocation were involved, as well as the Church Assembly (which itself sometimes met in houses). To make the system work a complicated skein of steering committees was set up, and individuals were appointed to see through each Canon. A sixth body, the Ecclesiastical Committee, then had to be satisfied before Parliament would pass a Measure.

[112] **Canon E. W. Kemp,** addressing a separate meeting of the House of Clergy, *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 543. The House of Laity thus had some power in relation to canon law revision, and an authority derived from its representative character, but no legal authority.

[113] **The Archdeacon of Taunton,** *Proceedings,* 1958 p. 472-473.

[114] The first meeting of the Commission was not until July 1954.

[115] *The Convocations and the Laity,* [The Lowe Commission], p. 5.

[116] *Ibid.* p. 18.

[117] *Ibid.* p. 22.

houses, with powers equal to those of the Lower Houses. Church Assembly would remain in being primarily to pass Measures and deal with finance[118].

A significant part of the opposition was to the abolition of the Convocations, and a reduction of the independence of the province of York. Convocations alone were asserted to be the ultimate spiritual authority both for the Church and for the nation[119]. Their authority lay in their calling[120], their training[121], and the antiquity of the clerical Synods which antedated Parliament[122]. All told, the consequences of adding lay people to the Convocations would be

> 'First, to mar or destroy the age-won, unquestioned spiritual authority which coheres to the two Convocations as each now existed. The second, and it seemed to be no less important, though hitherto little stressed; to

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[118] *Ibid.* pp. 24-25; 33. This proposal would have created six houses of Convocation, as well as Church Assembly. Upper and Lower Houses of the Convocations not infrequently met together, and the two Provinces could hold joint meetings. Church Assembly sometimes met by Houses. The resultant permutations would have been a recipe for the multiplication of business and confusion.

[119] **Canon J. McGill** argued that the Convocations were '... the one bulwark that saved them from the charge of Erastianism' *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 314, apparently on the grounds that Convocations predated, and therefore did not derive their authority from, Parliament. As Church Assembly was a creation of Parliament it could never have spiritual authority. Cf. The **Dean of York,** *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 547.

[120] **The Earl Selbourne,** insisted it was the clergy, not the laity, who were called by God to be officers in his Church. *Proceedings,* 1953, p. 87, also *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 330; **Canon L. Dewar** argued from the New Testament that the clergy alone were divinely appointed and theologically competent *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 466.

[121] Members of Convocations were theologically trained and theology informed all their debates: 'The whole ethos of discussion in Convocation was that it had a certain theological orientation. Even though they did not perhaps often have explicit theological expositions, it was all governed by the conviction that theology was there and mattered and was at work in a way that was deep in their bones in that House.' **The Archdeacon of Taunton,** *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 473.

Professor E.F. Jacob asserted that lay people had neither the knowledge nor the experience to be involved in doctrinal matters *Proceedings,* 1953, p. 79. **Canon J.R. Quartermain** was appalled by the proposal that the laity would not only speak, but vote on matters of which they were abysmally ignorant and inexperienced *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 550.

[122] '... many of them felt that they owed a debt to history which they could not repay by abolishing the Convocations.' **The Bishop of Ripon** proposing change, *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 311; **Canon J. McGill,** saw the proposals as revolutionary change which ignored the trend of history *ibid.* p. 314.

The report opined 'It may be argued that these [Convocations'] 'rights' are somewhat exiguous and could never be exercised against the will of Parliament, but the objection does not dispose of the sentiment.' *The Convocations and the Laity,* [The Lowe Commission], p. 23.

destroy the intimate and unique spiritual atmosphere in which they conducted spiritual business.'[123]

The Commission was charged (though not in so many words) with bad faith. The Commission claimed to have accepted the position of the laity as set out in the 1902 report *The Position of the Laity in the Church*[124]. They had summarised the conclusions of that report as:

> 'That theology justifies and history demonstrates that the ultimate authority and right of collective action lie with the whole body, the Church, and that the co-operation of the Clergy and Laity in Church Government and discipline belongs to the true ideal of the Church.'[125]

But they had in fact jettisoned a central element of that report and changed the meaning of co-operation between the clergy and laity by omitting, from the same concluding paragraph of the original, the words:

> 'We believe that there is a primitive distinction between clergy and laity, and that it will continue to the end of the age in which we live. This distinction is involved in the choice and commission of the Apostles: and its continuance is implied in our Lord's words to them connecting their work with his second coming.'[126]

The charge was laid by Canon Lindsay Dewar, a conservative Anglo-Catholic. He grounded his defence of Convocations on the categoric distinction between clergy and laity. To give to the House of Laity rights equal to those of the House of

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[123] **The Dean of York,** *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 546

[124] *The Position of the Laity in the Church,* This report led directly to the establishment of Representative Church Council in 1903, a purely deliberative body. **E.W. Kemp,** *Counsel and Consent,* p. 193.

[125] *The Convocations and the Laity,* [The Lowe Commission] p. 15, para. 1. The tension ran through the whole debate. In the 1962 *Convocation Report 708* the whole of the original paragraph had been cited. (Reprinted in *government by synod,* p. 96). However, in the body of the 1966 Report *government by synod* the 1958 summary was quoted, *ibid.,* p. 14, as it was in *Synodical Government in the Church of England: A Review. The report of the review group appointed by the Standing Committee of the General Synod* [The Bridge Report] (London, Church House Publishing, 1997).

[126] *The Position of the Laity,* p. 62. The historical note in the Bridge Report says that
> 'There seems no reason to doubt that the 1902 Report of the Joint Committee has exercised a continuing influence on later developments in the Church of England throughout this century.' *Synodical Government in the Church of England* p. 125.

But it is at least arguable that the Lowe Commission's partial summary has been the more influential.

Clergy would, he argued, be to throw to the winds the special safeguards necessary to maintain the position of the teaching body, the clergy. He perceived a dangerous confusion of thought between the doctrine of the Church as a spiritual body and the democratic maxim that what touches everyone must be approved by everyone. The laity, he proposed, might be consulted, but not vote.

> 'The Christian faith was not reached by voting. It was a revelation of God, the "faith once delivered to the Saints". When voting had taken place, it had taken place not to decide what the faith was - on a democratic kind of basis - but to decide what was the true meaning of the scriptures. ... There was a *consensus fidelium* but this consent of the faithful was silent; it was a group mind.'[127]

Dewar did not dispute the right of the laity to participate in the government of the church, but the divinely ordered distinction between clergy and laity implied a prior limit to the extent of the authority that the laity could properly claim. Specifically, they could not legitimately usurp the teaching role of the clergy in relation to doctrine.

Others argued that the whole church, lay and ordained, had to participate actively in the reception of doctrine.

> 'It was not only the passive *consensus fidelium* that they wanted, but the active *consilium fidelium* who knew their minds and thought, brought out in discussion.'[128]

No-one sought to remove the bishops' authority in the determination of doctrine. The Bishop of Derby suggested that the House of Bishops should either have a veto on doctrinal statements, or that they should retain the power to initiate statements of doctrine, but that they should also invite widespread concurrence.

> 'The decision ought not to be treated as authoritative until it had received the constitutional approval of the Church as a whole, because it was the

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[127] **Canon L. Dewar,** *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 467.

[128] **The Bishop of Birmingham, [J.L. Wilson],** *Proceedings,* 1963, p. 635.

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Church as a whole, not merely the bishops and the clergy which had authority in matters of faith.'[129]

He did not elaborate on the mechanics by which the approval of the Church might be sought.

In general, and perhaps reflecting the strength of Anglo-Catholic theology alongside wider acceptance of the hierarchical nature of society, all participants in the debate assumed that the different orders of the Church had their different functions, and that hierarchy was the proper mode of governance of the church[130]. All accepted that the laity were ignorant in theological matters. But some drew different conclusions to those of Dewar and his supporters. They asserted that Convocation would always be incomplete unless the laity joined them[131]. It was, they said, better to include the laity both to educate them theologically[132], and to share their different expertise[133].

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[129] **The Bishop of Derby [A.E.J. Rawlinson]**, *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 83.

In 1958 he repeated the same argument, contrasting the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Church's approaches to reception. The Latin Church, he asserted, tended to say that such and such a theological statement was true because a Council had said it, while the Orthodox tended to say that a Council made that theological statement because it was true, and their utterances derived their authority from the concurrence of the Church as a whole, which might take a generation. **The Bishop of Derby [A.E.J. Rawlinson]**, *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 328.

Cf. **Canon E.W. Kemp**
 'The whole of history seemed to show conclusively that in the last resort it was the
 consent of the whole body which was vital.' *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 341.
He immediately added,
 'The church was not a democracy. The bishops, the clergy and the laity all had their
 different functions. The bishops were in a special sense the guardians of the doctrine
 of the church.' *loc. cit.*

[130] **Mr. T.W. Balmer** asserted the right of the laity not only to be consulted, but to have authority in determining the doctrine, the mode of worship, and the government of the Church. Even so, he immediately added that
 'The divine rights of the bishops and the clergy would always remain in the Church
 and the laity could never take those rights away from them.' *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 81.

[131] **The Provost of Bradford**, *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 554; **Rev F. Bamber,** *ibid.* p. 556.

[132] E.g. **Mr. M.H. McQueen**, *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 325, and **Canon E. Kemp** *ibid.* p. 544.

[133] **Canon C.K. Sansbury**, *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 319f.

Campaigners for change made frequent appeal to the concept or vision of the Church as the Body of Christ[134]. It was, perhaps inevitably, an imprecise notion but one informed by democratic or egalitarian concepts[135]. Its connotations were first and foremost communal: the Church had a corporate nature, and therefore the laity should play a full part in its life as a matter of theological principle[136].

Perhaps the most passionate argument in favour of synodical government was that it would enable the Church of England to face its missionary challenge more effectively, and mission was more important than history. George Goyder concluded his opening speech in the debate of 1953 declaring histrionically:

> 'They were engaged in Church and State in a battle to preserve their Christian heritage against an attack without parallel since the Turks threatened to destroy Christendom in the fifteenth century. It was a battle for the hearts and wills of the people. If the Church was to have the necessary strength and to speak with a united voice, they must discover a new unity.'[137]

Winning England back for Christ required that the laity be much more theologically articulate[138]. Convocations were ineffective as mediums of mission, a task which must largely be undertaken by the laity[139], and without lay

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[134] The notion of the Body of Christ was capable of being understood in a fully hierarchical manner. Although all the components of a body might be necessary for its functioning, they did not necessarily have to be of the same rank or valuation.

[135] Against a proposal to harmonise the pensions of clergy, the **Dean of Winchester** protested,
'... it seemed fairly clear that the discussion in the House of Clergy was motivated by the kind of attitude put forward by the Archdeacon of Derby and Canon Younens, the creed known as egalitarianism. (Cries of dissent).' *Proceedings*, 1957, p. 82.
He was supported by **Dr D.R. Denman**, *ibid.* p. 101, and by **Canon A.P. Shepherd** who declared 'The idea was egalitarianism, and egalitarianism was not Christianity.' *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Sir John Best-Shaw asserted that equality was a magnificent ideal, but was not possible within the Church of England: as it was the Established Church, bishops, for example, had much expected of them, even when they retired. *Ibid.* pp. 104-105.

[136] **The Bishop of Ripon [J.R.H. Moorman]**, *Proceedings*, 1958, pp. 309, 311.

[137] **Mr. G. Goyder**, *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 72; it was an argument he was to repeat in different terms. See, *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 338.

[138] **The Archdeacon of Aston**, *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 336.

[139] **Rev E.J.G. Rogers**, *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 559.

experience at the core of the Church, its ministry to the world was doomed[140]. Synodical government would open a channel for the Holy Spirit[141]. Captain Doig argued that the structures of Church government had a dual duty: to preserve the tradition of the unchanging faith, and to respond sensitively to movements in secular thought[142].

Those arguing for synodical government also appealed to experience overseas, and to other denominations to support their cause. The Bishop of Derby pointed out that the Provinces of Canterbury and York were the only Anglican provinces to exclude the laity from the spiritual governance of the Church[143]. Ecumenically, a central aspect of discussions with the Presbyterian Church of Scotland was the limitation on the laity in several areas of life of the Church of England[144]. These arguments cut little ice. The Earl of Selbourne retorted that the Church of England did not take its lead from other provinces, and indeed, proposals for greater lay participation would not help relations with either Rome or the Orthodox Churches[145], while Canon McGill asserted that

> '... most of our congregations do not want our Church to be on a par with those Churches in which everybody does everything.'[146]

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[140] 'Unless this partnership [of priest and people] was a growing reality in the Church of England in the days to come it would be 'the unmistakable sound of the death rattle in the pulpit and steady progress of *rigor mortis* in the pew'.' **The Provost of Bradford**, *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 555.

[141] **Captain D.H. Doig**, *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 77; **Mr. G. Goyder** argued that the Holy Spirit worked through the whole church, not through groups of experts. *Proceedings*, 1959, p. 347. **Mr. J. Pomfret** '... felt that a regard for the past could be so restrictive as to suggest that the Holy Spirit had ceased to function.' *Proceedings*, 1959, p. 486.

[142] **Captain D.H. Doig**, *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 77.

[143] **The Bishop of Derby [A.E.J. Rawlinson]**, *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 82.

[144] 'The Presbyterians had made it clear that if union with them was wanted they must see that the Church had an effective say in the choice of bishops and that the laity were associated with that choice, and they also said the Church should be free to order its own liturgy. The Presbyterians were concerned with the government of the Church and the share of the laity in it, and the government of the Church at present was largely parliamentarian.' **Rev. M Bruce**, *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 483.

[145] **The Earl of Selbourne**, *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 87.

[146] **Canon J. McGill**, *Proceedings*, 1958, p. 315.

On the contrary, he argued, and particularly in the context of ecumenism, the Convocations were uniquely able to make any restatement of what the Christian Church was and what was required of its members[147].

Those who argued for change regarded themselves as progressive[148], and could be dismissive of appeals to history,

> 'They had got to be forward looking, without reference to history, and not get wrapped up in its grave clothes.'[149]

On the other side the defenders of the *status quo* saw themselves as guarding an ancient and still valuable gathering of theologically informed clergy, and resisting the attempts by the laity to arrogate to themselves rights which adhered exclusively to the clergy. The debate was sometimes cast as a conflict between what was new and what was true. For McGill and others democracy and truth were mutually exclusive[150]. Those who sought greater democracy in the church were accused of seeking to dethrone God's truth.

To summarise and simplify the debate: each group appealed to God as the ultimate source of authority. The conservative group appealed to history as reason to make no change; the progressive camp appealed to history for precedents of change and to locate their position in the trend of history. The latter appealed to contemporary society and the challenges facing the church, to the experience of the wider Anglican community, and to ecumenical discussions with other Protestant bodies. Those opposing them took their stand on truth against

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[147] *Ibid.* p. 317.

[148] **Mr. T.W. Balmer** told Church Assembly that he had been a member of the Representative Council in 1917 and had never dreamed he would have had the privilege of considering the Canons. Nonetheless he had come to think of the Convocations as old fashioned and wasting time. *Proceedings,* 1953, p. 80.

[149] **The Archdeacon of Aston** *Proceedings,* 1958, p. 337; **Canon A.P. Shepherd** stated that, as the present Convocations were to all intents and purposes new bodies, the argument from history was greatly overdone. *ibid.,* pp. 335-336.

[150] 'The trend of thought at the present moment which was most dangerous in ecclesiastical affairs was that which assumed that a thing called democracy was the prevailing wisdom and final blessing of mankind.' **The Dean of Chichester,** *Proceedings,* 1953, p. 79.

the tide of time, even where it had swept other Christian bodies along, and appealed to the impact on relations with Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches.

Deep dissension, and lukewarm support for the practical proposals of the Lowe Commission, led to a second Commission[151]. This was chaired by the Bishop of Chichester and in 1962 it produced a deeply divided document known prosaically as Report No. 708[152]. The Majority Report proposed

> '... to leave the composition of the Convocations unchanged, but to provide that when they meet together as a General Synod they shall have joined to them a House of Laity, and that the General Synod so constituted shall be the chief and final legislative body for the Church of England, subject to whatever limitations may arise from the Church's relationship to the State.'[153]

In the Majority Report plan Convocations would to continue to meet separately, at least annually. Proposals were also made to connect the national and diocesan assemblies more effectively, and to refer certain business to the dioceses before decision[154]. Final approval of any matter touching doctrinal formulae, or the services or ceremonies of the Church could not be given until the matter had been discussed and reported on by the Convocations, sitting together or provincially[155]. Appended to the report were a Note of Dissent[156], a Minority Report[157], and a Note to the Minority Report[158].

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[151] This was a Commission of the Convocation of Canterbury and therefore wholly clerical in its composition.

[152] Report 548 of the Convocation of York.

[153] Report No. 708, reprinted in *government by synod* [The Hodson Report], p. 98.

[154] *Ibid.* p. 99. This was part of the Commission's terms of reference, arising from certain criticisms of the Lowe Commission report. They did not recommend the creation of diocesan synods, but the strengthening of the existing machinery, though here too opinions were divided. *Ibid.* p. 103.

[155] *Ibid.* p. 101.

[156] The **Bishop of Birmingham [J.L. Wilson]** opposed the reservation of certain matters to Convocations and felt there were too many opportunities for delaying tactics. *Ibid.* pp. 101-102.

[157] John Brierley, Michael Bruce and Lindsay Dewar, from different ends of the scale of churchmanship, sought to keep Convocations unchanged, except that the laity might have a right to discuss Canons, and debate on all matters might beheld in full Assembly. *Ibid.* pp. 104-109.

[158] **Revd. M. Bruce** also argued for smaller dioceses. *Ibid.* pp. 110-111.

Given this range of views it was not surprising that the Convocations were themselves divided[159]. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York prepared a compromise scheme (Report 710)[160]. They began with the Majority Report and modified its proposals to make it acceptable to the minority. In particular, they sought to strengthen the powers of the Convocations in matters relating to worship and theology by requiring the Convocations' approval (not merely discussion and advice)[161]. This was a significant victory for those defending Convocations, and a step back for those campaigning for synodical government.

Further confusion ensued when the Archbishops' compromise was put to the Convocations[162]. Reports 708 and 710 were debated together in Church Assembly in November 1963. The compromise scheme suggested by the Archbishops was eventually accepted, but not until the Bishop of Birmingham had moved an amendment which proposed that the Majority Scheme of report 708 be accepted. His amendment was voted on by Houses and accepted by the Bishops and Laity, but defeated by the Clergy.

Debate in Church Assembly had not happened in a vacuum. In the church at large lay people played an ever fuller part in the life of their parish church, and a number of groups actively campaigned to promote their role, and thus to enhance their status relative to the clergy.

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[159] In February 1962 both Upper Houses of Convocation voted to accept the Majority Report, as did the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury. In York, however, the Minority Report was adopted by the Lower House. *government by synod*, p. 11.

[160] *A Report from their Graces the Presidents to the Convocations*, (Convocation of Canterbury, 1963, Report No. 710). Reprinted in *government by synod*, pp. 114-118.

[161]*government by synod*, pp. 115-116; and *Revised Draft Scheme for a General Synod, ibid.* p. 117. Provision was also made to avoid any one House of Convocation permanently blocking business, though they could delay it. *Op. cit.* pp. 117-118.

[162] May 1963. The Upper House in Canterbury was unanimously in favour, while the Lower Houses of York and Canterbury voted in favour by large majorities. Embarrassingly, however, the Upper House in York voted 7 to 5 against the proposal (with one abstention). *government by synod*, p. 11.

The most visible expansion of the role of the laity had been in parochial worship. Since the 1930s the Liturgical Movement had been promoting the centrality of mid-morning parish eucharist and the full place of the laity in worship[163]. Notwithstanding protestations to the contrary the movement was led by Anglo-Catholics and identified with that party. After the Second World War, however, the baton was taken up by the less partisan Parish and People Movement[164]. Committed membership remained small, but their slogan 'Being the Church, not going to Church'[165] attained wider currency, and stressed the necessity of the laity in the unity of the body of the church.

More radical action included the Sheffield Industrial Mission, exported to a number of other parts of the country, whose goal was to build a wholly lay led 'para-church'[166]. The Keble Conference Group, a small ginger group under the leadership of John Robinson and Tim Beaumont, was set up in 1960 to campaign for greater lay involvement in the church[167]. The previous year Douglas Rhymes had set up the first lay training scheme at Wychcroft for the Diocese of

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[163] **P. Jagger,** A History of the Parish and People Movement, (Leighton Buzzard, The Faith Press, 1978) p. 18. In 1965 Roger Lloyd described a service of Parish Communion, followed by breakfast, and highlighted the hope for the fulfilment of the life and worship of the Church associated with it. **R. Lloyd,** The Church of England 1900-1965 (London, SCM Press, 1966), p. 289.

[164] The first Parish and People Conference was held in January 1949, A History of the Parish and People Movement p. 20.

[165] Ibid. p. 70.

[166] **P. Bagshaw,** The Church Beyond the Church, A History of Sheffield Industrial Mission 1944-1994, (Sheffield, Sheffield Industrial Mission, 1994). The Mission had a high public profile, and gained further publicity through the publication of **E. R. Wickham,** Church and People in an Industrial City, (London, Lutterworth Press, 1957).

[167] **P. Jagger,** A History of the Parish and People Movement, p. 78; its aims were to re-examine the Church's pastoral organisation, specifically, the purpose of ordained and lay ministry; the parochial system; the deployment of resources; and liturgical reform. Ibid. p. 63. In 1963 the Parish and People Movement merged with the Keble Conference Group. Ibid. pp. 89-90.

Southwark[168]. The theological programmes of the World Council of Churches gave great attention to ecclesiology, not least to the place of the laity[169].

Theological debate, especially that associated with the World Council of Churches saw a shift in the understanding of churches as institutions to a perception of churches as events[170]. Explicit in this shift was a direct threat to the established ecclesiastical order and a political radicalism:

> 'It seems clear that it [the new ecclesiology] is leading to *a fierce struggle* between those who see the new ecclesiology as the result of Christ's work in history calling us to new forms of obedience and those who see its departure from the ordered view of the past as a dangerous radicalism that will drain the church of its religious substance ...'

> 'This new ecclesiology, we have said, will direct us to new *places* of obedience and new *forms* of obedience; leading to identification with particular people and groups struggling for historical air. It will also lead us into the struggle for *new community* life in which the church seeks to be the sign of the society of God that transcends old tribalisms and breaks through the limitations of our national communities.'[171]

In the early 1960s radical ecclesiological thinking was often associated with Bishop John Robinson. He used his public profile following his appearance for the defence in the trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* and the furore on the publication of *Honest to God*[172], to promote a new vision of an 'accepting church' which met

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[168] **D. Rhymes,** *Time Past to Time Future,* (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1993) p. 17

[169] Periodicals such as *Frontier, New Christian, Parish and People,* and *Prism* and WCC journals *Laity* (the Bulletin of the Department of the Laity) and *Concept* (Papers from the Department on Studies in Evangelism) kept the committed informed. Circulation was small, but the ideas reached a wider audience through such publications as **K. Bliss,** *We the People: A Book about Laity* (London, SCM Press, 1963) and **J. Robinson,** *The New Reformation?* (London, SCM Press, 1965).

Publications which reinforced the role of the laity from differing perspectives included **M. Gibbs** and **T. R. Morton,** *God's Frozen People,* (London, Fontana, 1964); **S. Neill** and **H. R. Weber (eds.)** *The Layman in Christian History* (London, SCM, 1963); **G. Goyder,** *The People's Church: A Layman's Plea for Partnership,* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1966).

[170] **C. W. Williams,** *New Directions in Theology Today, Volume 4: The Church* (London, The Lutterworth Press, 1969) Chapter 2: The Church as Event: The Servant of God's Happening-in-the-World, pp. 27-49.

[171] *Ibid.* pp. 44; 45-46, italics in original.

[172] **J. Robinson,** *Honest to God,* (London, SCM Press, 1963).

people where they were and accepted them for who they were[173]. This church comprised a small nucleus of people scattered like seeds through the world[174]. By contrast potentially heretical church structures, those which sustained barriers of clericalism, professionalism and sexism would have to be overcome by a truly lay theology which would find '... its creative source to be the engagement of the *laos* in the life of the world.'[175] This church, by contrast with so much that had been inherited, would be a reinvigorated community, and true to its nature as an instrument of God's Kingdom[176].

Yet, as rapidly as it had arrived[177], the prospect of radical reform in the church was gone. In 1959 Robinson had preached that great things were afoot in the Church of England, and the tide had turned. By 1969 he wrote that the tide had indeed turned, but 1960 had proved to be the high water mark, not the beginning

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[173] J. Robinson, *The New Reformation?* p. 46.

[174] *Ibid.* p. 48.

[175] *Ibid.* p. 63.

[176] Robinson drew strongly on *The Missionary Structure of the Congregation,* a long range study commissioned by the World Council of Churches, and published in *Concept.* J. Robinson, *The New Reformation?* p. 88

[177] Contrast the statements by George Goyder in 1958, and Christian Howard in 1963:

Mr. G. Goyder, (after four years as a member of the Synodical Government Commission),
'... he became convinced that [outright synodical government] was impractical because of people who would resist and resent any attempt to interfere with a body in which they exercised considerable prerogatives which they valued, and rightly so.'
Proceedings, 1958, p. 338.

Miss R.C. Howard,
'Those who had had the privilege of serving on the Commission which reported in 1958 and which started its labours in 1954 would remember the criticism which they had met. She remembered the inescapable sense which she had that many people - not herself - were spending much time doing something which would result in a report out of which nothing would come. But at the end of their labours they suddenly became aware that they were riding on the crest of a wave, and that a new conception of synodical government was coming about in the Church. Even so, when she thought of the extraordinary change which had taken place in the last five years, she believed there was a distinctly new situation today.' *Proceedings,* 1963, p. 631.

of a new order[178]. Nonetheless ideas about the nature and potential of the church had been widely aired and debated in terms utterly inconsistent with the debate surrounding *The Apostolic Ministry*. That in itself was to influence on the course of debate in the Church Assembly.

Following the tepid acceptance of Reports 708 and 710 a third Commission was formed, this time chaired by Lord Hodson. Its report was published in 1966 when hopes for (and fears of) radical change were still high. It was argued over for the next four years while the appetite for reform visibly waned. The arbitrariness of timing was one of the factors which contributed to the particular shape of General Synod.

The Commission's terms of reference were to translate the Archbishops' compromise scheme into reality. In practice, however, the committee reverted to the 'logical' solution discounted by the Lowe Commission. Instead of attaching the laity to the Convocations, they proposed to reconstitute the Church Assembly by vesting in it the functions and authority of the Convocations[179]. In fact, despite

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[178] J. **Robinson,** *On Being the Church in the World,* (London, SCM Press, 1960; reprinted with new Preface, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1969) 1969 Preface, p. 9.

In 1965 R. **Lloyd** concluded his history of the modern Church of England with a chapter entitled 'The Bubbling Cauldron' and expressed deep uncertainty as to what would emerge. *The Church of England: 1939-1965,* p. 607.

In 1962 *Soundings* was published, in the tradition of Anglican theological essays, exploring the perplexity of the day: 'It is a time for ploughing, not reaping; or, to use the metaphor we have chosen for our title, it is a time for making soundings, not charts or maps.' A.R. **Vidler (ed.)** *Soundings: Essays Concerning Christian Understanding,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1962) Introduction, p. ix. Vidler himself saw in the Church of England both extensive archaisms and considerable strengths for adaptation to a new future. Yet, notwithstanding his conservatively positive conclusions, he anticipated the probability of radical testing and change in the church. A.R. **Vidler,** *Religion and the National Church,* in *op. cit.,* pp. 239-263.

P. **Jagger** records the collapse of optimism in the Parish and People organisation. *A History of the Parish and People Movement,* p. 116. Hastings charted the loss of optimism for reform in many spheres (not merely in the Church of England), perhaps epitomised in the defeat of proposals for union between the Methodists and the Church of England in July 1969. A. **Hastings,** *A History of English Christianity,* pp. 546-552.

[179] *government by synod,* p. 68.

appearances and a new name, no new body was created, and the Enabling Act of 1919 still provides the legal framework of synodical government[180].

Sentiment was still strongly in favour of the retention of Convocations. Hodson proposed that they could continue to meet separately, but in General Synod would meet as a single House of Clergy. The transfer of the functions and authority, rights and privileges of Convocations to General Synod was to be done by Canon, and authorised by Measure[181] to acknowledge that the spiritual authority of Convocations rested, at least in part, on the fact that they had not been established by Parliament. More substantially, matters touching the doctrinal formulae, or the services or ceremonies of the Church remained subject to certain restrictions or safeguards, reflecting the key provision of the Archbishops' compromise Report 710. Such matters could only be submitted for final approval in terms proposed by the House of Bishops. They could be referred to the Convocations, sitting separately, and to the House of Laity, each of which would have to approve the proposition, and therefore each of which could veto it[182]. Thus the laity gained parity with the inferior clergy. The report also adopted a robust approach to dioceses, proposing new synods at diocesan and deanery levels[183].

Selbourne, Dewar, McGill and those who had sought to reserve spiritual authority to the clergy were increasingly marginalised. In 1966 the public mood and those campaigning for a new ecclesiology appeared to have swept away the defenders of the traditional, hierarchical structures of the exercise of spiritual authority. Eric Kemp, proposing that the Report be received, said,

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[180] *Synodical Government in the Church of England, Appendix I*, p. 126.

[181] *Ibid.*, p. 69. The fact remained that the Measure was necessary and the Canon cosmetic.

[182] Article 7(1) and (2) of the Constitution of the General Synod, *Ibid.* p.85; enacted as such by the *Synodical Government Measure, Schedule 2* (London, HMSO, 1969) , pp. 12-13. The procedures are expounded in *Synodical Government in the Church of England*, paras. 7.6 and 7.7, pp. 51-52.

[183] *government by synod*, pp. 72-73. This had been part of the terms of reference of the Lowe Commission, but not addressed by them.

'Whereas in presenting report 708 to the Canterbury Convocation in October, 1962, it seemed necessary to spend about a third of the time arguing the case for full lay participation in Church government, now one had to take account of the argument that, if he put it crudely, 'anything a priest can do a layman can do better'.[184]

But Goyder and others who had campaigned for synodical government for more than a decade had not won the day. Hodson's proposal was described as a 'Heath Robinson'[185] affair which sought to combine a number of irreconcilable principles in a single structure which nonetheless received broad endorsement from Church Assembly and the dioceses[186].

In Hodson's proposals General Synod would constitute the Church of England by representation. Its authority was said to stem in part from the contemporary church and in particular from the relationship between its elected members and their constituency. A debate[187] was held to resolve the question of which test of membership should establish the electoral basis on which General Synod was to be built. At issue was both the relationship of the national church to its putatively national constituency, and also the marking of divisions between different classes of lay member according to the extent of their demonstrated commitment. The choice of criteria lay between baptism, confirmation, habitual worship or actual communicant status, all of which were already in place for different aspects of church life[188]. Canon Wallis warned that Parliament would not like the loss of the right currently held by any baptised person to be on the electoral roll[189], and others saw the potential narrowing of the criteria as a diminution of the Church's national status[190]. Proposals for 'actual communicant member' and 'communicant

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[184] *Proceedings*, 1966, p. 564.

[185] **The Bishop of Manchester [W.D.L. Greer]**, *Proceedings*, 1966, pp. 581-582.

[186] There was an organised campaign against retention of a veto over 'reserved' business by Convocation, on the lines of the Bishop of Leicester's motion in 1958. However only seven of the forty-three dioceses voted in favour of this motion. **E.W. Kemp**, *Proceedings*, 1968, p. 43.

[187] *Proceedings*, 1968, pp. 112-132.

[188] **Prebendary Andrews** suggested the electoral roll could be dispensed with altogether, though this gained no further support. *Proceedings*, 1968, p. 121.

[189] *Proceedings*, 1968, p. 114.

[190] Countered by **Canon G.R. Sansbury**, *Proceedings*, 1968, p. 118.

status' were both passed by comfortable majorities in the House of Clergy, but defeated in the houses of Laity and Bishops. 'Habitual worship' became the test, perhaps on the mild argument that

> '... there should be some appearance of commitment to the Church's interest and welfare and to the Church's worship on the part of those who are to take part in its affairs and electing its highest bodies, such as the Assembly.'[191]

Between General Synod and the church's habitual worshippers the Hodson Commission placed an indirect electoral system. Parishes were to elect members of ruridecanal synods who would constitute the electorate for diocesan synods and General Synod. Arguments for this arrangement were pragmatic. The Commission asserted that

> 'We are firmly convinced that direct parochial election must be sacrificed at diocesan level in order to introduce effective synodical government ...'[192]

Rationales offered in debate were the confusion evident when the Anglican-Methodist proposals had been referred to the parishes; parishes were too varied to meet the desire for reasonable uniformity in the lowest level of the electorate; and the belief that consultation with parishes too often meant receiving the views of the incumbent[193]. The criticism that, as a consequence, '... any kind of representation in the affairs or consultation of the main body of the Church by the parishes and congregations disappeared.'[194] was not answered.

The Hodson Commission had sought to make ruridecanal synods effective, not merely as the electoral body, but proposing that they should consider beforehand the business of diocesan synod, in order to pre-digest it and make effective representation. In the Measure the word 'beforehand' was removed and in

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[191] **Mr. G.S. Sale,** *Proceedings,* 1968, p. 117.

[192] *government by synod,* p. 50.

[193] **E.W. Kemp,** *Proceedings,* 1968, p. 620, summing up the debate.

[194] **Miss V.J. Pitt,** *Proceedings,* 1966, p. 594.

consequence deanery synods were emasculated and subordinated to diocesan synods[195].

At diocesan level the advisory and decision making roles of the synod collided in the person of the Ordinary. The challenge was to balance the authority of the Diocesan Bishop with that of the synod with the goal of creating '... a positive association of the bishop of the diocese with the clergy and the laity in forming a common mind.'[196] The inherited method was negative: the bishop's veto[197]. The Hodson Commission proposed that a bishop could withdraw any matter before it appeared on the diocesan synod's agenda[198] but this was deemed too wide a power and incompatible with the co-operative nature of synodical government[199]. Second, it was proposed that the bishop constitute a separate House in the diocesan synod[200]. Because this would mean that the bishop had to vote in favour of any motion voted on by houses for it to pass (since abstention would mean that it fell) this too did not find favour. There was a wish to avoid any possibility that a bishop might be put in the position of having to carry out the will of the majority against his own view, which would indicate that power had passed from the bishop to the synod[201]. Accordingly a third option was adopted: to continue

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[195] Synodical Government Measure, No. 2, Section 5 (3)(d) and (e), No. 2, (London, HMSO, 1969) p. 5. Deanery Synods may raise matters with the diocesan synod. *Loc. cit.*

[196] **Mr. R.J.H. Edwards,** *Proceedings,* 1969, p. 938.

[197] 'One might regret the way in which at times the bishops had used their authority, but he was sure that it was right in principle.' **Canon C.D. Smith,** *Proceedings,* 1966, p. 619.

[198] There would appear to be some inconsistency in the Hodson Report. In the Draft Schedule 3 *Constitution and proceedings of Diocesan Synods,* para. 7(b), there would appear to be no restriction on the bishop's capacity to withdraw matters. *government by synod* p. 89. In the Draft Measure this power is restricted by the requirement to consult the diocesan synod first, and limited to 'any matter appearing to him to belong essentially to his episcopal office or pastoral duties.' although this remained a very broad category. *Ibid.* p. 79.

[199] Cf. **Mr. G. Goyder,** *Proceedings,* 1966, pp. 583-584. The danger of insisting, as Goyder did, on the necessity of co-operation was that it was effectively handing the diocesan bishop a veto in another form. The proposal was rejected in consultation with the dioceses.

[200] Proposed by **Mr. O. Clark,** *Proceedings,* 1967, p. 927. This proposal implied that if the bishop failed to vote on any matter then the proposal would be lost as any such matter would need to be approved by all three houses.

[201] '... such a change would gravely affect the position of a bishop in his diocese, and indeed some would think it inconsistent with the very principle of episcopacy.' **Canon E.W. Kemp,** *Proceedings,* 1968, p. 45.

the existing position of the Diocesan Conference Regulations by which a bishop might give or withhold sanction and thus both retain a veto and yet (if he so chose) permit what he did not agree with without having to vote for it[202]. Even this was a step too far for some in grafting alien democratic principles onto episcopal government.

> 'We are witnessing a continual erosion of the bishop's authority and place in the Church, and this is something which is not only distasteful to many of us but something which is contrary to the whole idea of synodical government. Many things proposed in the name of synodical government are merely the reflection of a democratic way of thinking, but a synod is not simply a democratic assembly. What has been proposed certainly would not be a synod in the sense that the word 'synod' has been used throughout Church history.'[203]

In 1970 General Synod was inaugurated. It was a remarkable feat of political engineering. The laity were given greater authority in relation to the worship and doctrine of the church, sufficient to permit the transfer of powers from Parliament to the Church, but not such as to unsettle greatly the prevailing concepts of episcopal authority or the privileges of Convocation. General Synod held together the principle that all habitually worshipping members of the Church had a right to participate in the decision making structures of the Church, and the principle of episcopal government[204]. It brought a little more democracy into the church and broadly excluded grass-roots participation. It retained Convocations and made

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[202] **Canon E.W. Kemp,** *Proceedings,* 1968, pp. 45-46.

[203] **Rev H. Cooper,** *Proceedings,* 1968, p. 528, also *ibid.* p. 538; cf. **The Dean of Chester,** *Proceedings,* 1968, p. 56. In so far as the term 'synod' had previously designated clerical gatherings, with the lay people present limited to regal or government representatives, he was undoubtedly correct.

The phrase 'bishop-in-synod', insofar as it means the bishop working with clergy and laity together, is relatively novel to the Church of England, and the idea can be traced back only to the inauguration of synodical government in New Zealand in 1844 *Episcopal Ministry. The Report of the Archbishops' Group on The Episcopate 1990* [The Cameron Report] (London, Church House Publishing, 1990) p. 120. Indeed, the term 'bishop-in-synod' only appears in that report in the context of Local Ecumenical Projects. *Op. cit.* pp. 273, 277.

[204] Ambiguity is explicit in the use of the description of the diocesan synod's standing committee which appears to indicate that this committee is accountable both to the synod and to the bishop. Section 9 of the proposed Constitution of Diocesan Synod provided that 'Every Diocesan Synod shall appoint a Standing Committee (to be known as the Standing Committee and Bishop's Council) ...' *government by synod,* Schedule 3, p. 89. Paragraph 28(h) of Schedule 3 the Measure (Church Representation Rules) says 'that there shall be a bishop's council and standing committee of the diocesan synod...' Synodical Government Measure, p. 33.

them largely redundant. It failed to make the deanery synods an effective part of the church's local government, and it reshuffled the relationships between parishes and the diocese[205]. It provided the conditions which enabled the passing of the *Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure* 1974 which was the culmination of the post-war programme of reform, and with authority over worship and doctrine safely under its belt, the Church of England could begin a new phase in its life.

In conclusion, it is highly improbable that participants in the governance of the Church of England during this period would have espoused a communitarian and historicist theology. Nonetheless the tenets of this approach are visible in their practice. All aspects of the church's 'structures and disciplines'[206], from clergy pensions to Eucharistic prayers, were of spiritual concern to members as they struggled to conform the church more closely to God's will. Whilst certain issues had greater symbolic significance for the ordering of the church, there was no evidence of a working division between matters of fundamental significance and *adiaphora*. It may be that the co-operative enterprise of people with differing views results in a pluralist culture, without any single participant having to forego their absolutist position[207]. Conversely, to insist that all members of the church must hold a particular view, in fact tends to destroy the community of the church.

Questions of power and authority have pervaded this chapter. Both are relational in that they concern relationships between people, and also in that they are exercised in the context of the existing structures of relationships within a community. The creation of General Synod both modified structural relationships in the church, in particular between clergy and laity, and provided the forum and

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[205] Each parish had been represented on the previous Diocesan Conference, which in some dioceses became very large and unwieldy.

[206] **S.W. Sykes,** *Introduction,* in *Unashamed Anglicanism,* p. xi

[207] Only on the rarest occasion did any member of Church Assembly seek to endorse or oppose any proposal on the grounds of the will of God. I suspect such restraint is a necessary consequence of working in deep disagreement with people, whilst yet acknowledging that they are faithful Christians.

mechanism for future changes. In the processes of legitimating change appeal was made to ecclesiological categories, and also to legal, bureaucratic, historical and other sources of argument.

Questions of power and authority were considered in the framework of the establishment, and analysed and debated in terms sufficiently precise as to be contained in an Act of Parliament, and to be enforceable in a court of law. In the 1950s the idea of divine law provided a largely implicit and widely shared paradigm which held in a coherent unity assumptions about the nature of God, God's action in the world, the role of a national church, and the proper use of law in both the governance of the church and of the state. The integrity of social and ecclesiastical stability with the nature of God and true discipleship were concomitant with ideas of divine law. Images of authority as order sanctioned by concordance with the will and nature of God, and substantiated through historical continuity and the security of a stable social hierarchy, all collapsed together in the 1960s.

Despite the speed with which a conservative reaction set in, and the continuity of business in the church as though nothing had changed, divine law as a unifying paradigm could not be reconstituted or replaced. No single alternative theology was adopted which could hold together both the broad vision and the detail of legislation. In the absence of divine law there was a discontinuity between the nature of God and human governance, and a consequent division between the broad vision, which could be articulated in theological terms, and the detail of legislation which required a different rationale. Without this legitimating framework, the ultimate justification of legislation (or other decisions in the government of both state and church) was relocated from divine will to human politics. Legislation could only be justified by instrumental rationales. In the absence of a perceived divine purpose ordering human life, the presumption of providence was greatly weakened and history lost its prescriptive character.

Chapter 5

Revision of the 1960s Settlement and Ecclesiology in the Turnbull Report

Nothing lasts for ever. This chapter looks at the revision of the settlement of the 1960s and 1970s in the review of the ecclesiastical courts[1] and General Synod[2], and in proposals to restructure the national leadership of the Church of England[3]. It examines with some care the overt use of ecclesiological rationales in the arguments for change put forward by the report of the Turnbull Commission, *Working as One Body*.

Many of the themes of the debates which led to General Synod (on, for example, the respective roles of bishops, clergy and laity; centralisation and accountability; the establishment, and the nature of mission) were repeated in the 1990s. But there were new concerns too, and old arguments were set in a new framework, not least the experience of General Synod itself and the advent of ecumenical convergence. The assumptions of divine law, with its direct correlatives in ecclesiastical and social ordering, had evaporated. The doctrine of the Trinity came to occupy the same conceptual territory, so to speak, but the apparent

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[1] *Under Authority, Report on Clergy Discipline, The Report of the General Synod Working Party reviewing Clergy Discipline and the working of the Ecclesiastical Courts*, (GS 1217) (London, Church House Publishing, 1996).

[2] *Synodical Government 1970-1990 The First Twenty Years. A Discussion Paper issued on behalf of the Standing Committee of the General Synod* (GS Misc 344) (London, Church House Publishing, 1990).

[3] *Working as One Body, The Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Organisation of the Church of England*, [The Turnbull Report] (London, Church House Publishing, 1995).

complexity of the idea and the malleability of its correlatives, 'sociality'[4] and κοινονια, limit its utility in decision making. Conversely the associated emphasis on diversity, relatedness and the personal as central characteristics of the identity of the church has the potential for tension with earlier descriptions of the Church of England as by law established. The assertion that mission lay at the heart of church life, the significance accorded to parishes, the culture and language of management not least in the perceived need for effectiveness (in addition to efficiency), and the desire for a strong national executive, were all new elements in debate.

The first of these reviews to commence was the review of the church courts, undertaken against a background of broad dissatisfaction with the disciplinary process *per se*, and with the attendant costs and publicity[5]. The reform of church courts in the 1950s and 1960s had been an integral part of the acquisition of authority from the state. This latter review had more of an internal administrative character, its goals being to balance greater consistency and transparency of procedure, to ensure proper safeguards for those accused, and to do so at a lower cost. It shared the assumption made by its predecessor that improvements to the structure of courts would lead to their more frequent use, with the implicit assumption that greater litigiousness would, and perhaps should, play a larger part in the life of the Church of England.

The basic principles enunciated by the Working Party began with a reminder that every person in Holy Orders in the Church of England made a Declaration of Assent. From an examination of relevant aspects of scripture, tradition, and the historic formularies of the Church of England the Report concluded that, *inter*

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[4] To use Hardy's term in D. Hardy, *Created and redeemed sociality*, in C.E. Gunton and D.W. Hardy, *On being the Church* pp. 21-47.

[5] The Court of Ecclesiastical Causes Reserved has sat twice as the final court of appeal for faculty cases but has heard no disciplinary or doctrine case. In thirty years just three disciplinary cases have been heard before the Consistory Courts. *Under Authority* p. 2. Across the world Anglican church courts exist but many of them 'simply do not sit.' N. Doe, *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion* p. 5.

alia[6], there were limits to acceptable belief and conduct; that clergy should be treated more strictly than laity[7]; and that there was a proper case for structured ecclesiastical discipline[8]. They also added a new proposal, that court procedure should be in accord with the 'basic principles of natural justice'[9], arguing on the basis of best practice, and finding the origin of the rules of natural justice in the courts of the medieval church[10]. They set discipline in the context of the believing community without diminishing individual responsibility[11].

The Working Party proposed to retain doctrine within the jurisdiction of the court and to re-word the offence as:

> 'TEACHING, PREACHING, PUBLISHING OR PROFESSING DOCTRINE OR BELIEF INCOMPATIBLE WITH THAT OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AS EXPRESSED WITHIN ITS CREEDS AND FORMULARIES.'[12]

They acknowledged the breadth of theological approach in the Church of England, but argued that,

> 'Our clergy are called upon to make a clear and consistent reiteration of the essentials of the faith. ... It [the Church of England] has been described as having a hard central core (represented by the Scriptures and the Creeds), and a less clear-cut, more fuzzy circumference. If this is so, and if the Declaration of Assent taken by all in Holy Orders is to have any meaning, then there must be a limit to the breadth of doctrinal expression.

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[6] As in the consideration of the Lloyd-Jacob report, my concern is not with the whole subject matter of church courts, but with the particular case of the justiciability of doctrine.

[7] *Under Authority* p. 18. It is curious that the report defends this latter point which they say was never challenged. *Ibid.* p. 23.

[8] *Ibid.* p. 24. Curiously the Working Party did not take the fact of the Declaration of Assent nor, more particularly the Oath of Obedience, as a ground for discipline. In a speech **Canon Hawker** complained about the 'woeful ignorance' of the content and implications of both the Oath of Obedience and the Declaration of Assent. *Speech to the Clergy of the Diocese of Southwell*, (Southwell Minster, September 7th 1997, Unpublished).

Uniquely in the Anglican Communion, the Oath of Obedience is not made freely and willingly in the Church of England so much as imposed by law. N. Doe, *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion A Worldwide Perspective* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998) p. 152.

[9] *Ibid.* pp. 26-28; arguments based in natural justice and rights would seem, *prima facie*, to open the possibilities of conflict with episcopal authority. It raises the question of what rights have not been foregone in making the Declaration of Assent and the Oath of Obedience.

[10] *Ibid.* p. 25.

[11] *Ibid.* p. 18.

[12] *Ibid.* p. 53 (Small capitals in original).

Denial of the central core must be excluded if the community of faith is to retain any distinctiveness.'[13]

They asserted that the discipline of clergy would be incomplete without this category of offence, but insisted that the courts should limit themselves to the exercise of discipline, and not seek to establish what the beliefs of the Church of England were. 'A disciplinary court would be both inappropriate and dangerous for such an exploration.'[14] In November 1996 General Synod excepted doctrine from the list of offences[15], but in July 1999 it was reintroduced as part of the *Draft Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction (Discipline) Measure.*

The Archdeacon of Surrey (Bob Reiss) argued that historical change meant what was once doctrinally condemned is no longer[16]; that anyone in the position of receiving a complaint against the likes of, for example, John Robinson or David Jenkins, would be put in an invidious position; and that the clause was divisive and would lead to endless complaints[17]. The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne (Michael Bowering) did not want to 'patrol the edges' of doctrine, but to concentrate on the core and live with the fuzzy periphery[18].

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[13] *Ibid.* p. 53.

[14] *Ibid.* p. 64. Ritualist controversies fought through the courts gained ferocity '... because Churchmen had no trust in the theological competence of lawyers and lawyers had no better opinion of the legal sense of churchmen.' G.R. Dunstan, *Canon Law in the Church of England - II* in *Theology* Vol. L, No. 327, September 1947, p. 325.

[15] By 185:168 in the first vote, and then by 222:208 in a second vote. *General Synod Proceedings* 1996, pp 894-895.

[16] The Lloyd-Jacob report pointed out that, in liturgical practice, much of what had been illegal was then customary, and common practices remained illegal. Whilst they wished to retain the capacity to prosecute, they saw greater hope in the amendment of the law to conform with practice. *The Ecclesiastical Courts. Principles of Reconstruction, Being the Report of the Commission on Ecclesiastical Courts set up by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 1951 at the request of the Convocations,* [The Lloyd-Jacob Commission] (London, SPCK, 1954) pp. 71-74

[17] *General Synod Proceedings,* 1996, pp. 890-891; **The Bishop of Newcastle [A. Graham],** saw 'party spirit, intolerance, even a whiff of persecutory zeal.' *General Synod Proceedings,* 1996, p. 872. This anxiety may be reinforced by the apparent desire for doctrinal discipline evinced by Colin Buchanan even though he did not approve legal action or courts as effective means to achieve this end. C. Buchanan, *Is the Church of England Biblical? An Anglican Ecclesiology.* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998) pp. 270-273.

[18] *General Synod Proceedings,* 1996, p. 878.

Under Authority, proposed a procedure for ceremonial, ritual and doctrine cases which would involve the case first being submitted to the House of Bishops (or its Theological Committee) to determine whether there was a *prima facie* case to answer and to appoint two suitably qualified Assessors to advise the tribunal[19]. In 1999 the House of Bishops proposed to examine the question outside the *Draft Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction (Discipline) Measure*[20]. They set up the Clergy Discipline (Doctrine) Group under the Bishop of Birmingham, who took the unusual step of a public appeal for submissions on the issue[21].

The cost of church courts, though high, was trivial by comparison with the losses made by the Church Commissioners on the value of their assets which came to light in 1992[22]. The resultant enquiries and attribution of blame provided the occasion for the Turnbull Commission which proposed the most significant reform of the structures of governance of the Church of England since 1970, and possibly since 1919.

Ecclesiological statements made in *Working as One Body* were important components in the rationale of the particular proposals for reform. By a close examination of the ecclesiology advanced, and the manner in which theological reflection was conducted, this chapter seeks to survey some aspects of the role of theology in the processes of organisational change. Without acknowledging the source, they drew heavily on ecumenical theological thought, not least sections of

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[19] *Under Authority* pp. 59; 64. Despite these two proposed steps, which are peculiar to cases of ceremonial, ritual and doctrine, the Working Party saw no 'need for a separate procedure or a separate adjudication panel.' *ibid.* p. 64.

[20] *General Synod Proceedings*, 1999, p. 294. (citing *Draft Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction (Discipline) Measure, Draft Amending Canon No 24. Note by the House of Bishops*. GS Misc 570) (London, General Synod of the Church of England, June 1999).

[21] **The Bishop of Birmingham (M. Santer)** *Letter*, in *Church Times*, No. 7153, 24 March, 2000, p. 9.

[22] Summarised in **M. Furlong,** *CofE The State It's In*, pp. 172-174, drawing especially on **T. Lovell**, *Number One Millbank: The Financial Downfall of the Church of England* (London, HarperCollins, 1997).

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry[23] and the *Porvoo Common Statement*[24]. However, a desire for some kind of strong, central, co-ordinating and driving body for the Church of England almost certainly predated the Turnbull Commission[25], and consequently the role for theology began as *post hoc* rationale.

The Turnbull report stated that

> 'The fundamental task and aims of the Church of England are those of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. They are not invented or researched by theologians or commissions of enquiry. They are given by divine commission.'[26]

However the subordinate 'objectives' of the church, and its mechanisms, could be the subject of debate[27]. Within the church universal, the report locates its conclusions in Anglican polity.

> 'We were asked to make recommendations about the life not of a business but of a Church in the Anglican tradition, and the conclusions at which we arrived are, we believe, wholly consistent with that tradition. It combines leadership by bishops with governance by synods representing bishops clergy and laity. It avoids a large, centralised bureaucracy because it regards leadership as essentially the enablement of life and work in the dioceses, parishes and other spheres of Christian discipleship.'[28]

Paragraph two stressed the 'compelling' duty of all members to 'work together as one body'[29], in a 'right relationship with those who discharge the responsibilities

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[23] *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva, WCC, 1982).

[24] *The Porvoo Common Statement. Conversations between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches* (London, The Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England, Occasional Paper No. 3, 1993).

[25] This supposition is reinforced by the fact that Bishop Stephen Sykes was appointed as 'Theological Consultant' after the rest of the Commission had been named, and was placed in a separate category in the list of participants. *Working as One Body* p. 127. The Bridge Commission, which had been established on a more planned programme, and in the same area of concern, had no member identified as a theologian. *Synodical Government in the Church of England*, Members of the Group, pp. v-vi.

[26] *Working as One Body*, p. 3.

[27] *Loc. cit.*

[28] *Working as One Body* p. 1.

[29] The Chapter entitled 'Why we must work as one body' makes a brief reference to strengthening the Anglican tradition, but otherwise its rationale is entirely organisational. *ibid.* pp. 24-37. In the final, summary, chapter the only theological reference is to the biblical teaching of the body of Christ (rather than the Anglican tradition) as the reason. *Ibid.* p. 118.

of leadership on behalf of the whole Church.' The relationship envisaged was one of both accountability and trust[30]. The ambiguities of this paragraph echo through the report, not only in recognition that the Church of England is only moderately united and works together only moderately well, but also that the relationship of accountability and trust between leaders and led is only moderately effected. The report focused on one side of the relationship, leadership, and consequently described the terms of the relationship from that side.

The third paragraph described theology as but one of the threads which had informed the Commission's deliberations. They drew on external expertise to effect a 'dialogue ... between Christian theology and organisational theory'[31] in such a way as to essay 'a sound intellectual and spiritual basis for the national structures of the Church of England in its service to the nation as a whole.'[32] In this enterprise theology was clearly not sufficient but needed to be supplemented by contemporary expertise.

Under the heading of 'The polity of the Church' the report concatenated God's love for humanity which meant that the church must be 'relational and personal'; St Paul's image of the body of Christ; an allusion to the church as the bride of Christ; the grounding of the church in the Trinity; the church as the people of the new covenant, responding in gratitude to Christ's saving work, his death and resurrection; the church as part of God's creation; all with the blessing of Richard Hooker; a reference to the notes of the church as fact and aspiration; and a characterisation of the church as a 'learning community'[33]. None of these points were given a more than cursory exposition but they culminated in the assertion that

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[30] *Loc. cit.*

[31] *Loc. cit.*

[32] *Ibid.* p. 2.

[33] *Ibid.* pp. 2-3.

'What is asked of the Church at this particular moment is a combination of fidelity and expertise of various kinds in the formulation of its current objectives.'[34]

In the manner of broad-based committee reports it would seem that allusion to these varied images of the church and thus the acknowledgement of differing traditions of ecclesiology in the Church of England was deemed both necessary and adequate to commend certain changes to the church.

The section entitled 'The theology of gracious gift', and its exposition in the context of synodical government, was given twice the space of the previous section and was clearly more significant in the thinking of the Commission. This section began by stressing the quality of interpersonal relationships which reflected the 'radical equality of status'[35] of all members. It then moved carefully but swiftly into an exposition of hierarchy of both people and function, identifying the roles of bishops priests and deacons with that of St Paul and, later, St Timothy[36]. It affirmed that

'A principle purpose of what we now recognise as a special or 'ordained' ministry is to serve the continuity and effectiveness of witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.'[37]

The office of bishop was delineated in terms of the various modes of its exercise[38], as

'... at once personal (a God-give responsibility), collegial (a responsibility to be exercised together with those with whom the bishop shares the task

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[34] *Ibid.* p. 4.

[35] *Ibid.* p. 4. No distinction was drawn between the baptised and degrees of membership (shown, for example by confirmation or habitual worship) and so the value and implications of 'radical equality' are somewhat attenuated.

[36] *Ibid.* p. 5.

[37] *Loc. cit.* Although described as 'a', rather than 'the' principle purpose, the report does not specify other purposes.

[38] 'The conciliar model of the Bishop-in-Synod' is said to be basic to the exercise of ecclesiastical authority, although the phrase 'episcopally led and synodically governed', while a convenient description, is said to be an over simplification. *Ibid.* p. 7.

of oversight) and communal (that is, in unbreakable relationship to the whole community of the baptised).'[39]

Thus the claim that 'So far as status is concerned, there is none higher than that of being baptised into Christ.'[40] was contradicted by a careful description of roles of clergy and bishops and could only be sustained if status was regarded as distinct from function and honour in ecclesiastical society[41].

The language of 'gift' is a contemporary presentation of the indefectibility of the church and it is articulated in such a manner as to reinforce the existing patterns of authority in the church. Although all authority was of God, and was entrusted to the whole church[42], reference to the diversity of gifts was followed swiftly by a focus on 'the specific tasks of those who have received the gift of episcopal ordination'[43]. Amongst those tasks is the 'co-ordination' of the many gifts of the Spirit, which leads the report into a discussion of power and authority as exercised through constructive disagreement channelled in synodical structures[44]. This section draws on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* in a specific manner. The diversity and distribution of gifts is acknowledged, and 'clarity about the

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[39] *Ibid.* p. 6. This characterisation directly reflects *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* para. M26. However there has been a slight shift of meaning. In *Working as One Body* (and also in *The Porvoo Common Statement,* para. 44) the passage describes the exercise of the office of Bishop. In *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* it refers to the ordained ministry generally and is set in the context of the assertion that 'The threefold pattern [of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons] stands evidently in need of reform.' *Ibid.* para. M19.

Again, the smallest words convey so much. In *Working as One Body* the conjunction between bishop and clergy is 'with'; between bishop and people it is 'to'. A different relationship is implied: in the former the clergy stand alongside the bishop, in the latter the people are dependent on the bishop.

[40] *Ibid.* p. 6.

[41] *Working as One Body.* p. 6. That the Church of England is permeated by fine distinctions of status is visible every time there is a procession in a liturgical setting.

[42] *Ibid.* p. 7.

[43] *Ibid.* p. 6, and again, 'Ordination is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit,' p. 7. This theme is strong in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* where, 'Among these gifts a ministry of episkop [*sic*], is necessary to express and safeguard the unity of the body.' para. M23.

[44] *Working as One Body.* p. 7.

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objectives of the Church should never be bought at the cost of a suppression of variety'[45] but this theme is made secondary to the charism of leadership.

> 'It serves the Church well when those who recognizably have these gifts [of leadership], whether they are laity or clergy, are brought together to provide a coherent strategy for the Church as a whole.'[46]

The chapter concludes,

> 'The wisdom of the Church has been to require consultation between those to whom authority and power has been entrusted and those in relation to whom it is to be exercised.'[47]

Here the division between leaders and led is made explicit, and the relationship between them is hinted at: leaders initiate and consult, but the led have no power of veto. The seventeen year struggle for the closer association of the laity with the clergy was predicated on the belief that consultation was not sufficient, and made no-one vulnerable. Only the requirement to give assent[48] did that.

Earlier the same paragraph states that 'In a theology of gracious gift the first words must be gratitude, love, service, humility and trust.'[49] It is implied that these should be attitudes that characterise those who have received the gift of leadership, but the weight of the paragraph is to ascribe them as proper to those 'to' whom (not 'amongst' whom) authority and power are exercised. The focus of the report is on the creation of order in the church understood in terms of clear, strong leadership which the great majority of members will follow in trust. The egalitarianism implicit in baptism is subverted into a two-stage hierarchy of leaders and led. The claim of the leaders is to the authority and capacity to marshal and order the diverse gifts of God, and their expectation is that those who are led will conform.

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[45] *Loc. cit.* '... the ordained ministry, which is itself a charism, must not become a hindrance for the variety of these charisms. On the contrary, it will help the community to discover the gifts bestowed on it by the Holy Spirit and will equip members of the body to serve in a variety of ways.' *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* para. M32.

[46] *Working as One Body.* p. 8.

[47] *Ibid.* pp. 8-9.

[48] There is one reference to consent, '... leadership by an episcopate which has consulted with, and gained the consent of, both their fellow clergy and the laity.' *Working as One Body*, p. 6. There are several references to consultation. Cf. 'A synod is also a way of focusing debate.' *Op. cit.* p. 7.

[49] *Ibid.* p. 8.

Chapter 2, 'The mission of the Church and the task of this Commission' opens with a statement of the distinctive communal life of the Church which is described as 'fundamental to its identity.'[50]

> 'It is no accident, therefore, that the mission of the Church of England is most clearly and gloriously seen in the parishes.'[51]

The report seeks to make the support of the 'congregations and parishes' a test of its reforms at national level, though because it wishes to avoid the subordination of the proposed National Council to any other body in the Church, the mechanism by which that support is defined and given remains in the hands of the proposed Council. The mission of the church is defined in terms of worship, service to the community, and witness, in which holiness of living and teaching the faith issue in evangelism[52]. The resources of the church, people, buildings and money, are summarised, and the voluntary character of people's giving of money and skills (and thus the voluntary character of parochial life) is made explicit[53]. A whistle-stop tour of bodies with whom the church has partnership arrangements of varying degrees of formality brings the Commission to the heart of their task, the re-allocation of executive authority at a national level[54].

> 'The Commission believes that the Church should have a new National Council to provide a focus for leadership and executive responsibility. The Archbishop of Canterbury would be chairman of it and the Archbishop of York its vice-chairman. Most of the existing central bodies would disappear or be overseen by the National Council.'[55]

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[50] *Ibid.* p. 10.

[51] *Loc. cit.*

[52] *Ibid.* pp. 11-14.

[53] *Ibid.* p. 16.

[54] *Ibid.* p. 22.

[55] *Working as One Body*, p. 39. Powers and functions would be transferred to the National Council from General Synod, the Church Commissioners, the Central Board of Finance, and the Pensions Board. It would modify the functions of the House of Bishops, and establish a new set of working relationships with Dioceses.

The ecclesiological presumptions of chapter 1, and the missiological sections of chapter 2, were not followed through in detail through the report[56]. They were preludes to the detailed prescriptions of the report, elaborated (for the benefit of both Commission members and readers) to simultaneously affirm the inheritance of the Church of England and to justify change, and thus to satisfy the demands of conservatism and adaptation necessary to establish authentic continuity.

Insufficient precision and clarity obtained as to how the theological affirmation of the diversity of gifts, the radical equality of baptism, the gift of authority to the whole church, and the voluntary character of parish life may logically issue in the prescription for a National Council. Conversely, such a proposal was an entirely logical conclusion from the Commission's organisational analysis of the weakness[57] of General Synod and other national structures in the leadership of the church[58], and its desire to curtail the powers of the Church Commissioners. The National Council may in fact remedy many of the ills of the Church of England at a national level, but nonetheless there would appear to be a discontinuity between at least some of the threads of ecclesiological discussion and the proposals for organisational change.

In General Synod there was a wide-spread sense of a need for organisational change, and the report clearly had the strong backing of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Criticisms of the proposals were largely focused on the linked

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[56] 'As the report went on, this theological, relational framework was increasingly replaced by a managerial model. The mission to the church was increasingly eclipsed by a perfectly proper and understanding [sic] concern for our own current difficulties.' **Revd Dr R. Burridge**, *General Synod Proceedings*, 1995, p. 582.

[57] 'The biggest inhibiter to a lean, efficient and effective administration in the Church of England is the over-emphasis of [sic] consultation and consensus. This had led to a proliferation of statutory and non-statutory boards, councils and committees on every conceivable subject, with membership drawn from every corner of the country geared to represent a balance of clergy and lay, female and male, deanery and archdeaconry, town and country parish. Such a structure, while being openly democratic, is not efficient in terms of decision making, is not economic in terms of the support systems it requires and is not effective in dealing market-place decisions.' **D. R. Phillips**, *Covering letter accompanying the submission of evidence to the Turnbull Commission from Diocesan Secretaries.* (Unpublished)

[58] *Working as One Body*, p. 24.

questions of the centralisation of powers in one single body[59] and the apparent lack of accountability of the Archbishops' Council (as the proposed National Council was named) to General Synod. Others explored worries about, for example, disestablishment[60], and the role of clergy in synod, and how a wider ecclesiology matched narrower finances[61]. There was relatively little discussion (at least in Synod) about the impact on the House of Bishops despite considerable ambiguity about its relationship with the Archbishops' Council, centred around which body was to be responsible for the 'vision' for the Church of England[62]. There was ambivalence as to whether the parish or the diocese was the basic unit of the church[63].

The question of accountability of the Archbishops' Council loomed large. In the course of consultation on the implementation of the Turnbull Report the number of elected representatives of General Synod on the Archbishops' Council was

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[59] **The Bishop of Hereford [J.K. Oliver]** *Ibid,* p. 841.

[60] **Dr. B. Thiede,** *Ibid.* p. 839.

[61] **Canon J. Sentamu,** *Ibid.* p. 830. He also doubted that the proposals would lead to effective leadership in mission, *ibid.* pp. 830-831.

[62] 'We believe the House of Bishops should in future play a more sharply focused and purposeful role among the national institutions of the Church. A key part of the role of the new National Council would be, under the guidance of the House of Bishops and subject to the strategic approval of the General Synod, to help the whole Church to develop its broad future direction.' *Working as One Body,* p. 75. This appears to make General Synod a consultative body to the House of Bishops which was in turn a consultative body for the Archbishops' Council.

In 1996 the Archbishop of York stated the need to review the relationship of the House of Bishops to the proposed Archbishops' Council. '... if the House of Bishops is to give the vision and leadership that is being asked of it then we shall need radically to rethink the nature of our meetings and, in particular, the content of our agendas.' *General Synod Proceedings,* 1996, p. 121.

[63] For the parish: '...the parochial system provides the theologically significant building blocks of the Church of England's strategy for service.' (though as this is in the context of 'dismantling' the parish system, this is a little ambivalent) *Working as One Body,* p. 13; '... the parish is in many practical senses the basic unit of the Church.' *Synodical Government in the Church of England* p. 12; and '... at the heart of our work is an understanding that the parochial system, the parish, is a primary unit within the life of the Church of England ...' **The Archdeacon of Sheffield [S. Lowe]** (a member of the Turnbull Commission) *General Synod Proceedings,* 1994, pp. 825-826.

For the diocese: 'In principle, ... the diocese is the fundamental unit of the Church ...' *Working as One Body,* p. 50; '... this report affirms the primarily [sic] ecclesiology rôle of the diocese.' **The Archdeacon of Sheffield [S. Lowe],** *General Synod Proceedings,* 1994, p. 599.

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increased[64], and members sought other powers of scrutiny[65]. A debate on who had what power over any future change to the composition of the Archbishops' Council brought out some of the tensions.

> '*The Archdeacon of Northolt (Ven. Pete Broadbent):* ... We need to understand the nature of the creature [the Archbishops' Council] which is being brought into existence. It is not a creature of Synod; it is a council which expresses something of a delicate balance between the power of the archbishops, ... and the power of Synod.
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> ...
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> 'The power of resolution remains with Synod, but we are asking that the Archbishops' Council should have the power to say what it wants about the matter. This is partnership.

> '*Mr John Bowen (Oxford):* ... He [Pete Broadbent] also told us that the Archbishops' Council was not a creature, a body, of this Synod; but it is being created by Synod: we are debating today the creation of that body. What it subsequently turns out to be we have yet to find out, but we are creating it, and we should reserve the right to change its composition, if we need to, to [*sic*] without there being the possibility of a veto.

> '*Canon Alan Hawker (Chichester):* ... This wording ... creates a veto. As long as it does that, the partnership is not as the Archdeacon presents it.

> '*The Archdeacon of Northolt (Ven. Pete Broadbent):* ... I see how members are worried by it, but there needs to be at least some prerogative for the archbishops to allow the council to work in a way which is amenable to them as well as to Synod. It is necessary for there to be a balance of power.'[66]

Against the wishes of the steering committee the amendment was passed, and a veto on future changes to the constitution of the Archbishops' Council was removed from the archbishops.

Relations between church and state were also involved in the proposed changes. The Church Commissioners answered to Parliament, not to the General Synod,

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[64] 'The Archbishops' Council itself has a majority of elected members. The Archbishops will be able to appoint people to the Council but Synod will have to approve the appointment.' **Mr. A. McLintock**, *General Synod Proceedings*, 1997, p. 554. The final composition was: 10 members elected by General Synod, 6 appointed, 3 ex-officio, and 2 Archbishops.

[65] 'We are hoping to arrange for there to be some participation by the General Synod in the membership of the Audit Committee of the Archbishops' Council and some mechanism to permit access to that committee and its reports by members of the General Synod.' **Mr A. McLintock**, *General Synod Proceedings*, 1998, p. 169.

[66] *General Synod Proceedings*, 1997, pp. 569-572.

and their assets were in part derived from state sources. Extensive discussions[67] between those concerned to create the Archbishops' Council and MPs led to agreement that the Church Commissioners would retain ultimate control over how their money was spent; that they would remain accountable to Parliament for the functions Parliament had given them; and the historic balance of church and state representatives in the membership of the Commissioners would be retained[68]. These points were included in the Measure[69]. In the course of these changes the Church Commissioners were stripped of almost all their functions, except the one for which they had initially been criticised, the management of assets[70].

Discussion on the theology of the report was a secondary but persistent thread to debate. Many of the references to theology were made by members of the Commission and others supportive of its proposals. More critically, Brother Bernard, SSF, drew from the trinitarian nature of God and the nature of the church as 'persons in relationship' to express considerable anxiety about the Commission's proposals. Alongside the leadership role of bishops was the representative role of clergy and laity in council, and he feared for the proposed 'central co-ordinating body' unless that model was retained and

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[67] **Prof. D. McLean,** *General Synod Proceedings,* 1995, p. 633; **The Bishop of Durham [M.A. Turnbull]** *General Synod Proceedings,* 1996, p. 134.

[68] **The Bishop of Blackburn [A.D. Chesters]** *General Synod Proceedings,* 1997, p. 553. This position was repeated almost verbatim by **Mr. S. Bell, MP,** *General Synod Proceedings,* 1997, p. 559.

[69] Clause 2 of the Measure was described as '... an elaborate provision designed to ensure, and to assure the State, that the historic trusts binding on the Church Commissioners will be honoured.' **Prof. D. McLean,** *General Synod Proceedings,* 1997, p. 581.

[70] **Mr. M. Alison** (Second Church Estates Commissioner), put the state's interest in the Commissioners' holdings at a third or more, with the implied threat that the state would reclaim this money should the Church of England seek to exclude Parliament. *General Synod Proceedings,* 1996, pp. 117, 119. Both the fact and the implication has been challenged. 'In fact, there can be no serious doubt that the Church Commissioners' assets belong to the Church.' K. Bladon, 'The Gracious Gift'; Church of England Finances and Resources in **R. Hannaford (ed.)** *A Church for the 21st Century. The Church of England Today and Tomorrow: An Agenda for the Future* (Leominster, Gracewing, 1998) pp. 37-77; p. 68. To test which opinion was legally correct could be an expensive gamble.

'... also unless there is some accountability which maintains the communion and stops the small group appearing to take the big decisions which it then sells to the rest of the Body of Christ.'[71]

The most explicit opposition to the entire direction of the enterprise came not from a theological perspective but from organisational theory. Mr Terry Berry asserted that, except in very limited circumstances, institutions do not follow strategies.

'In what we are pleased to call "human service organisations" or, like this one, spiritually led and directed and purpose-centred organisations, strategies follow structures and they do so in a very deep and subtle way. They follow structures of social form and they follow structures of cultural form. When we see the four elements of a functionalist analysis (goals, integration, adaptation and social structure) being presented, which seems to concentrate on machinery and focus on administrative tidiness and efficiency, while also having somewhere behind it some notion of purpose, I want to put the point to the commission that the central purpose will not be achieved through notions of structure.'[72]

Mr Berry had not asked the questions of ecclesiology, whether the proposed changes were authentically continuous with inherited faith, but the organisational question of would the proposed National Council work? Yet his argument had immediate ecclesiological implications, in that a significant shift in structures would be followed by a shift in identity, and that a church which defined itself in organisational terms may be judged by those goals. He said that the kinds of structures he encountered in everyday life were not those for which administrative tidiness seemed designed, and questioned whether geographically limited parishes were the appropriate location of mission, and therefore the appropriate test of change[73]. His points were not picked up as debate proceeded.

The only substantive alternative to the Turnbull proposals was suggested by Dr Philip Giddings who proposed to reform the Standing Committee of the General

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[71] *General Synod Proceedings*, 1994, p. 829.

[72] *Ibid.* pp. 827-828.

[73] *Ibid.* p. 828.

Synod[74]. His argument was based on a view of the church which was 'federal', 'pluralist' and 'comprehensive'.

> 'In such a Church, a voluntary association of people with Christ in common but different understandings - sometimes very different understandings - of how to serve him, effective representation in our governance is essential because lay involvement in decision-making at that level is a theological principle we should affirm. because of the need.'[75]

This was essential for effective accountability, and the National Council had to be widely 'owned' in order that its decisions would be implemented. Issues

> '... need to be taken up, legislated here [i.e. in General Synod] taken to the dioceses, deaneries and parishes and implemented, and the parishes need to be willing to pay.'[76]

In his view the Commission partly based their conclusions on a negative view of representativeness and the elected component of Synod[77]. He was not successful in opposing the National Council but, following publication of the report, the '... process of reflection, discernment and seeking guidance of the Holy Spirit - also known to some of those involved, I gather, as horse trading ...'[78] strengthened the accountability of the Archbishops' Council to General Synod, though without subordinating the Council to the Synod.

Despite the general, if wary, acceptance of the proposed Archbishops' Council, the theology of the report was not felt to be adequately integrated with its proposals. In 1996 a small group of members of the House of Bishops was set up under the Archbishop of York (David Hope) '... so as to ensure that organisational

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[74] This had been the thrust of the Infrastucture Review in 1988. They noted weaknesses in the working of the Standing Committee, but accepted its proper role in synodical government. They recommended greater opportunity for policy making, careful delegation of powers to sub-committees, and clear responsibility for the Synod's financial affairs (i.e. the Central Board of Finance, not the Church Commissioners). *General Synod Infrastructure Review,* (GS 827) (London, The General Synod of the Church of England, 1988) pp. 100-101.

[75] *General Synod Proceedings,* 1995, p. 581.

[76] *Loc. cit.*

[77] 'It is not easy to produce clear evidence, but it has often seemed to me that the growing strength and independence of lay opinion has, in the past ten years or so, begun to be looked on askance by some bishops and clergy.' M. Furlong, *CofE The State It's In,* p. 178.

[78] *General Synod Proceedings,* 1997, p. 579.

arrangements fully reflect theological and ecclesiological principles.'[79] The Bishop of Guildford (John Gladwin) opined that 'The reform of the Church can only progress in response to serious, deep and persistent theological work. We are not addressing simply pragmatic issues.'[80] He summarised aspects of contemporary culture and returned to the role of theology in organisational change.

> 'If ... we use the opportunity in front of us, in the way in which we address these matters, to model what we think the Church ought to be, not only will we be doing something of significance for the future mission of the Church, we will also be saying something to our nation and our culture at this time of great change and need.

> 'The theology that we need to work with is essentially dynamic, relational and mission-orientated, which means that, in terms of the issues in front of us, we ought to be talking about the bishop in communion with the whole people of God serving the Kingdom of God in our history.'[81]

He noted that this approach was somewhat in tension with the model of Bishop-in-Synod in the Turnbull Report.

> 'This sort of theological reflection about the nature of the Church affects the structural outcomes. The structures that we create both in church and in state have openly and justifiably to reflect the core values to which all members are committed.'[82]

Proposals for change had been informed by theology (alongside management theory), and had spurred further theological reflection. The Archbishop's group

> '... is seeking to advise the Steering Group and to feed into it a continual process of theological reflection. ... it is a discursive issue; a teasing-out of issues is going on.'[83]

In fact theological reflection in the House of Bishops' group proceeded in parallel with negotiation with Parliament's Ecclesiastical Committee, representatives of General Synod, lawyers and others. Through this process the organisational proposals were refined and translated into the *National Institutions Measure* and *Amending Canon 21*.

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[79] *General Synod Proceedings*, 1996, p. 121.

[80] *Ibid.* p. 127.

[81] *Loc. cit.*

[82] *General Synod Proceedings*, 1996, p. 128.

[83] **The Bishop of Guildford** [J.W. Gladwin] *General Synod Proceedings*, 1996, p. 313.

The report of the Archbishop of York's group[84] was divided into two sections. The first looked at a some ecclesiological issues, including criticisms made of the *Turnbull* report. They emphasised diversity as a quality of the church, drawing on images of the church as the Body of Christ (as had *Turnbull*) but adding images of the Church as Communion; as Pilgrim; and as Herald, before returning to the idea of the Church as a Learning Community. The second part of the report flagged up a number of unresolved questions concerning the role of the House of Bishops both in general terms, and also in the light of the proposal of the Turnbull Commission that it had a central role '... in developing a coherent vision of the Church which, subject to its testing and discussion in Synod and dioceses, might help guide future policy and strategy.'[85] The report was welcomed by the Bishop of Durham (Michael Turnbull) as giving

> '... breadth and clarity ... to our theological understanding of the Church. The attention now given to it is now more catholic and fully scriptural than in the original report.'[86]

However little attention was paid to the report in debate. In part this may reflect the fact that, although the report sounded a different theological note from that of *Working as One Body* it did not make specific, public recommendations; and perhaps in part because by the date of publication General Synod was discussing the Draft Measure and Canon and it was too late to make anything other than minor amendments.

Despite the attention given to the issue in the Turnbull Report, ambiguities concerning authority remained. The drift of the report was perceived to be to give much greater authority to bishops[87], however it may prove also that power is redistributed amongst the bishops, with those sitting on the Archbishops' Council

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[84] *Working as One Body: Theological Reflections Discussion Document by the Archbishop of York's Group* (GS Misc 491) (London, the General Synod of the Church of England, 1997).

[85] *Ibid.* p. 2.

[86] *General Synod Proceedings*, p. 557.

[87] 'That the proposals will bring a fundamental change to the current administrative structure of the church cannot be doubted. The balance of power within the church is swinging evermore towards her bishops.' L. Leader, *New Wine in Old Skins: an Examination of the Legal Position* in R. Hannaford (ed.), *A Church for the 21st Century* pp. 80-111; p. 84

having greater power than other colleagues on the bench. Similarly there is likely to be a redistribution of powers between national and diocesan structures. It will, however, take some years before the pattern and extent of change becomes widely visible.

An element of authority new to the Church of England was introduced by the report, in keeping with its organisational thinking,

> 'The Council's authority would derive from its effectiveness in undertaking the work entrusted to it.' [88]

There is an implicit conditionality in this approach but no measurable criteria, nor means of evaluation, nor consequences of failure have been proposed[89]. More mundanely, given the occasion for the reform, no evidence was offered that the Archbishops' Council was more likely to manage the church's assets better than its predecessor bodies[90].

The Turnbull Commission overtook and largely subsumed the Bridge Commission's enquiry into synodical government, though the latter retained a separate identity and timetable. There was no significant difference of analysis or prescription between two reports[91], though there was a difference of focus and of reaction.

The Bridge review of General Synod found broad support for synodical government[92] and proposed a number of relatively minor changes. The report built on the same theological principles as those of the Turnbull Report They also noted a number of pertinent changes which had come about since the advent of General Synod. The parish had come to be perceived as the basic unit of the

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[88] *Working as One Body*, p. 53.

[89] '... real accountability carries with it the possibility of being dismissed.' **The Provost of Wakefield [J. Allen]** *General Synod Proceedings*, 1996, p. 1043.

[90] **Revd. S. Trott,** *General Synod Proceedings*, 1996, p. 129.

[91] Lord Bridge was a member of the Turnbull Commission, and cross-references are made by both reports.

[92] *Ibid.* pp. 3, 110.

contemporary church, and mission its primary focus[93]. A greater proportion of the income of the Church came through the parish, and less from historic resources. Social change, and change in organisational theory, were also important, not least the rise in the perceived value of subsidiarity; the desire for and fact of increasingly flexible organisations; a diminution in the demand for uniformity; and the claim to greater participation of members of organisations in their respective decision making processes[94].

The Commission proposed to remove Deanery Synods as a level of church government altogether, accepting their legal vacuousness, but commending local voluntary associations of parishes for the furtherance of mission[95]. Some small changes were proposed for Diocesan Synods and Boards of Finance[96]. The place of the Convocations, their rights and privileges, which had caused so many difficulties in the creation of General Synod were scarcely defended in submissions to the review[97]. Consequently

> 'We have concluded that the Convocations no longer perform a necessary or useful legislative function and that their valuable deliberative and consultative function can be performed equally well and more economically by informal *ad hoc* meetings of the representative clergy of each Province.'[98]

The provisions under Article 7 of the Constitution of the General Synod, reserving to the Convocations a particular role on matters of doctrine and worship, would be replaced by the requirement for a vote by separate Houses on any such issue[99].

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[93] *Synodical Government in the Church of England* p. 12.

[94] *Ibid.* pp. 14-15.

[95] *Ibid.* pp. 34; 112-113.

[96] *Ibid.* pp. 38-49; 113-114.

[97] *Ibid.* p. 51.

[98] *Ibid.* pp. 114-115.

[99] *Ibid.* pp. 53; 115.

The question of democracy was raised and dealt with ambiguously[100]. Two matters converge in this question: the participation of all members of the church in its governance by representation, and the discernment of truth. The two concepts are separable but intimately linked:

> 'The Church of England believes it important to include all its members in the discernment of Christian truth and in the government of the Church. Synodical government is an attempt to seek and find the mind of Christ, as well as consensus in the ordering of the Church's life.'[101]

However the Report also declared that synodical government was not about democracy but was rather about reconciliation and the promotion of consensus, safeguarding minorities without according them a veto[102]. Accordingly the Review Group shared the desire to distance the style and procedures of General Synod from those of the Westminster Parliament, particularly in so far as these were deemed to encourage conflict. They recommended no change to the objects of General Synod, but a significant diminution of its overall size and a reduction in the number and proportion of special constituencies[103].

The authors demurred at the possibility of the ecclesiastical equivalent of a universal franchise[104], arguing that it was not safe to draw analogies with parliamentary elections, not least because of the absence of media coverage and the evidence of a lack of interest in the pews. Furthermore the organisation of

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[100] *Synodical Government in the Church of England* pp. 78-79. However they had earlier accepted that taking counsel together in synod reflected 'the expectations of members of the Church at grass roots level in a democratic society.' *Ibid.* p. 7.

[101] *Ibid.* p. 10. Historically synodical government has not been a search for consensus ('the collective unanimous opinion' *OED*) but has sought to establish a mechanism which will both contain disagreement, and enable sufficient agreement to effect change.

[102] *Ibid.* pp. 79-80.

[103] *Ibid.* pp. 115-118.

[104] *Ibid.* pp. 81-82. Although not alluded to in their report, the rejection of direct lay suffrage by General Synod in 1993 had also influenced their thinking. The Chairman of that debate called a vote by houses although only 22 members had requested it (25 were necessary to require such a vote). The result was: Bishops: 17 for, 4 against; Clergy 107 for, 60 against; Laity 75 for, 129 against. In a vote of the whole Synod, therefore, the motion would have passed. *General Synod Proceedings*, 1993, pp. 559-560.

The arguments for direct lay suffrage stated in the report were, first, to enhance the credibility of elected representatives and, second, that '... direct elections, coupled with universal suffrage, are the only method acceptable in a modern democratic society.' *Ibid.* p. 94.

effective hustings would be difficult and expensive. It also suggested that a low level of interest in Church affairs would lead to low percentages voting, and that many parishioners would be happy to state their views in general terms[105], adding, somewhat patronizingly,

> '... they would be glad to entrust to others the translation of those views into effective votes if the means of doing so were available.'[106]

Accordingly, and in the anticipated abolition of Deanery Synods as a tier of government, the Commission proposed that each parish elect certain 'synodical electors' (the number to reflect the size of the electoral roll) who would elect representatives to both Diocesan and General Synod on the behalf of the parish[107]. This, they suggested, would address what the review group perceived as an 'unhealthy gap' between synodical bodies and those they are supposed to represent[108]. They believed that

> 'Having electors in each parish who will be informed about issues at diocesan and General Synod level should, we believe, help increase accountability through interchange with elected representatives.'[109]

The reception accorded the Bridge report was hostile. Its proposers were nonplussed as members of General Synod stood to condemn proposals to abolish Convocations, to reduce the size of General Synod, to remove deanery synods as a tier of church government, or to pick other holes in the report[110]. General Synod

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[105] *Ibid.* pp. 94-95. They ignored their earlier sociological perception that people generally desired a greater say in the affairs of organisations to which they belonged. (See above, p. 156).

[106] *Ibid.* p. 95.

[107] *Loc. cit.*

[108] *Ibid.* p. 104.

[109] *Ibid.* p. 108. The Report recognised an argument that its proposals for a smaller General Synod and fewer special constituencies might have a deleterious impact on communications. *Loc. cit.*

[110] Amongst other charges, **The Archbishop of York [D.M. Hope]** complained about the absence of weight given to provincial difference in both *Bridge* and *Turnbull. General Synod Proceedings,* 1997, p. 671-672. **The Bishop of Stafford [M.C. Scott-Joynt]** said that the Commission had not understood that General Synod had no authority over the Channel Islands, where Canon Law does not automatically apply. *Ibid.* p. 684. **The Bishop of Birmingham [M. Santer]** described the report as confused in its understanding of authority. *Ibid.* p. 677.

voted to 'take note' of the report by a very small margin[111]. Perhaps what had happened was the Turnbull report. Discomfort with the giddying speed of change and residual opposition to the Turnbull reforms was directed at the Bridge Commission proposals. Certainly the language critical of the Bridge Commission's proposals could be, and in some cases was, directed at the proposals of the Turnbull report.

> 'Of course if you want a Synod which will roll over at the Archbishops' Council's *fiat* then Bridge is just the ticket. However, there is a far more ancient and English principle than subsidiarity, "no taxation without representation", which we would do well to remember and defend.'[112]

The first conclusion I would draw from this examination is that, by comparison with earlier reports, the Turnbull report put much greater emphasis on theology for its rationale. In so doing it exposed some of the limitations of ecclesiology in the processes of organisational change. Ecclesiology was necessary, but not sufficient, for the justification of change[113]. The logic of the connections between ecclesiological principles and specific policy proposals were not made explicit. It was, however, evident that ecclesiology could only be one part of the process and

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[111] *General Synod Proceedings*, 1997, p. 704. As a 'take note' motion did not imply approval of the report, the relatively close margins were a considerable rebuff. (House of Bishops 24:21 in favour; House of Clergy 111:92 in favour; House of Laity: 114:102 in favour.)

[112] **Canon H. Wilcox,** *General Synod Proceedings,* 1997, p. 667. Canon Wilcox was later to become an elected member of the Archbishops' Council. His choice of ancient English principle is unfortunate. The phrase 'Taxation without representation is tyranny' was coined by James Otis and became the watchword of the American Revolution. *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (3rd edn. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979) p. 365.

[113] *Working as One Body: Theological Reflections* p. 4.

not determinative[114]. There was no causal relationship between theology and organisational outcomes, and theological principles were not straightforwardly transferred into the structures of the church. Some bishops, speaking as guardians of faith and interpreters of theology, may well have had an influence in the processes of negotiation[115] but politics rather than the theology was dominant.

There were also hints that theological exposition might reflect a desire to preclude or at least curtail debate. The report stated that the 'fundamental task and aims' of the Church of England 'are given by divine commission' and were by implication beyond discussion[116]. The Bishop of Durham described how the Commission both worked in the context of prayer, saw themselves as 'something that represented a community of people listening to God,' and signed the report 'in the context of a Eucharist and laid it before God.'[117] While not the intent, this does tend to claim sacral authority for the report and to raise the threshold of engagement in debate.

By comparison with the debate over *The Apostolic Ministry*, and with the weight of arguments made in Church Assembly reports in the 1950s, there has also been a shift in which ecclesiological categories are deemed persuasive. Historical

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[114] **Revd. Dr. R. Burridge** complained that attempts to contribute critical theological reflections had been dismissed and 'rubbished'. The progress report they were considering [*Working as One Body, Progress Report No. 2. Report for the Steering Group appointed to follow up the Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Organisation of the Church of England* (GS 1232) (London, Church House Publishing, 1996)], despite stating that theology was central was in fact proceeding without it. 'If theology is central it must be all the way through, not shunted into a siding.' *General Synod Proceedings*, 1996, p. 1052.

The same criticism was made of *Working as One Body, Progress Report No. 5. Report for the Steering Group appointed to follow up the Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Organisation of the Church of England* GS 1277 (London, Church House Publishing, 1998). 'I do not see any [theology] really, or very little. There is a nod to the Archbishop of York ... and his group, but I do not think that they have heard what he has been trying to say.' **Revd B. Hopkinson** *General Synod Proceedings*, 1998, p. 196.

[115] In 1996 the focus of discussion was said to have shifted slightly to 'the concept of Bishop-in-Synod and Bishop-in-Communion'. **The Bishop of Guildford [J.W. Gladwin]** *General Synod Proceedings*, 1996, p. 322.

[116] *Working as One Body*, p. 3 (See above, p. 141.)

[117] *General Synod Proceedings*, 1998, p. 178.

arguments appear to have less influence vis-à-vis biblical arguments; the historic formularies of the Church of England are likely to be given little normative weight; and questions of establishment have become more peripheral whilst ecumenical debate has moved towards the centre of the stage. Furthermore, because the balance of commitment and therefore political power in the church has shifted, groups pressing for a narrowing of the definition of the nature of the church are now more likely to be conservative Evangelicals. Conservative Anglo-Catholics who have remained in the Church of England have largely separated themselves from debate.

There are also some suggestions that the context for ecclesiological discussion may be changing in ways that are not matters of deliberate decision. Beneath the surface of the Turnbull and Bridge reports, and in subsequent debate, were suggestions of a new tension centred on the polity of the church. A recurrent motif of debate in Church Assembly and General Synod has been a disavowal of the idea that the church was a democracy. Too often democracy was denied by the rejection of one or other of its features as experienced in contemporary British politics[118]. To the best of my knowledge this negative assertion was never followed by a designation of the polity of the church, except for the claim that the polity of the Church of England was *sui generis*.

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[118] The Bridge Commission, for example, appears to dismiss democracy, at least in part, on the curious grounds that '... the discernment of where consensus lies is more important than the views of majorities.' *Synodical Government in the Church of England*. p. 79.

David Held listed nine major models of democracy and variants, and elaborated them according to their justifications, key features and general conditions. Perhaps the underlying reason for the blanket rejection of democracy in the church is their common feature (however widely interpreted in practice) of 'rule by the people'. D. Held, *Models of Democracy*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987) p. 2.

A debate in General Synod in 1993 touched on this issue directly, but did not pursue it in detail.

> 'Democracy is government by the people. The doings of Synod are not government by the people. I do not need to be reminded of this, and I will thank you in advance for not doing so.'

Mr. J. White, *General Synod Proceedings*, 1993, p. 542, introducing a Private Member's motion for direct suffrage for the House of Laity.

I suggest that the metaphor of a constitutional monarchy accurately matches the traditional polity of the Church of England. Episcopal authority appears to have been understood as permitting the bishops to act, corporately or individually, with only limited control or restraint[119]. The concept of bishop-in-synod has been construed as a limitation of episcopal power rather than an expression of mutual dependence. Diocesan Synod and the Bishop's Council constitute outer and inner courts, though a bishop may use his staff meeting as an alternative inner court[120]. Clergy are bound by oaths of fealty first to the monarch, and then to the diocesan bishop. Canon Law governs all those who owe allegiance to the bishop[121]. In this polity divine power and authority is mediated through the bishop and exercised in consultation with the members of the court meeting in council[122]. Accordingly the assent of the council may be deemed sufficient expression of the *consensus fidelium*. Once a decision is reached it is legitimate to seek compliance from all those within the polity (and they alone), by the use of coercion if necessary, although the only sanction is expulsion from court[123].

I suggest also that the Church of England contains a second polity of the church as a voluntary society. The voluntary society co-exists with the constitutional

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[119] It was precisely the proposal for effectively unfettered power to dismiss churchwardens which led the Ecclesiastical Committee to reject the Churchwardens Measure 1999 as inexpedient. '... MPs expressed strong concern that the proposed legislation was undemocratic, and opened the door to an abuse of power.' *Church Times*, No. 7111, 28 May 1999.

This was the first occasion when a Measure had been declared inexpedient, not least because informal communications had generally pre-empted any potential rebuff. **Lord Bridge of Harwich,** *The Ecclesiastical Committee,* in *Synodical Government in the Church of England,* pp. 180-181.

[120] 'There appears to be a widespread feeling that the senior staff meeting is where key policy decisions affecting the diocese are taken. The question of who attends meetings of the senior staff is entirely a matter for the diocesan bishop; ...' *Synodical Government in the Church of England,* p. 42. The report determined that staff meetings were primarily concerned with pastoral matters (though this did not resolve their constitutional ambiguity) and recommended the capacity but not a requirement to separate Bishop's Council from the Diocesan Standing Committee should a diocese wish. *Ibid.* pp. 42-44.

[121] Lay people are included in this category in specific terms: churchwardens are 'officers of the Ordinary' (canon E1.4), Readers and Lay Workers are to be licensed by the bishop (Canons E6 and E7).

[122] In a church characterised as an absolute monarchy the bishop commands and can demand obedience, if necessary with force.

[123] Subsidiary sanctions, such as inhibition, may be derived from the threat of expulsion.

monarchy, but in significant respects is opposed to it. I suggest that ambiguity as to whether the parish or the diocese was the basic unit of the Church of England[124] is a part of this emerging tension, as was the closeness of the vote on the direct suffrage of the laity[125].

The polity of the parish church, to which the overwhelming majority of the members of the Church of England belong, is that of a voluntary society[126]. This is not a metaphor, but a characterisation of the nature of the relationships between members, and of the relationship of members to the church as a social institution[127]. Lay members participate in a church entirely voluntarily. There is no demand of fealty, nor credal test or requirement for any acceptance of conditions of membership[128], nor even an annual subscription.

Membership of a voluntary community carries associative obligations[129]. All members share certain ideas of mutual obligation which are distinctive and

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[124] see above, page 148.

[125] see above, page 157.

[126] Legally the Church of England has been a voluntary body for nearly 200 years. In 1828 the Test and Corporation Acts removed the requirement of all members of municipal corporations to receive Holy Communion according to the rites of the Church of England.

> The repeal meant the abandonment of the theoretical basis of the establishment that Church and State were identical.

R.P. Flindall (ed.), *The Church of England 1815-1948: A Documentary History.* (London, SPCK, 1972) p. 27.

[127] A Church is a body '... which has a fundamentally sacred *raison d'être* and is made up of volunteers (lay people) and staffed by vocational officers (clergy).' **P. Avis,** *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church* (London, Mowbray, 1992) p. xii.

[128] Confirmation and reception into the church may have some of the character of criteria for membership. However, neither is now necessary to receive Holy Communion and neither has ever been a condition for recognition as a member of the church in terms of the electoral roll, nor to receive the ministrations of the church.

The conditions for entry onto a parish church's electoral roll are that a resident in the parish 'declares himself' (sic) to be a member of the Church of England, and '... is baptised, of sixteen years or upwards, [and] has signed an application form for enrolment'. Non-residents and members of another denomination seeking dual membership are required to have habitually worshipped at the relevant church for a minimum of six months. *Church Representation Rules* (London, Church House Publishing, 1996) Para. 1(2), p. 1.

[129] This paragraph is derived from R. M. Dworkin *Obligations of Community*, in , J. Raz (ed.), *Authority* pp. 224-226.

special to the group, though they may be complex and vary between communities and over time. Obligations are personal to each member, not merely belonging to the community in abstract terms; and they are expressed in the particular actions of members. The group's practice must be deemed to show an equal concern for all members[130]. This does not exclude hierarchy[131], but,

> '... the structure and hierarchy must reflect the group's assumption that its roles and rules are equally in the interests of all, that no-one's life is more important than anyone else's.'[132]

In a voluntary society power and authority rest on the consent of the members. In the context of associative obligations authority may be a personal characteristic, vested in rules and customs, and comprises 'weight relative to free decisions'[133]. The determination of the *consensus fidelium* would imply the potential participation of all members in debate[134], though not necessarily the agreement of all. Decision making in a voluntary society is no less conflictual than in any other polity, but its means of coming to a decision are persuasion and education. The capacity for coercion is severely constrained and although not necessarily absent it cannot be justified. Again, expulsion from the community is the only sanction.

Acceptance of the voluntary nature of church membership also requires a different response from the leadership of the church. In the context of an image of the church as a pilgrim body, the Archbishop of York's Group said,

> 'Active participation in the journey is voluntary. No one has to join in ... So the institutions of the Church have to recognise both its need for order

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[130] Cf. 'Membership [of the body of Christ] is given at baptism, and from baptism derives the radical equality of status enjoyed by all the baptised.' *Working as One Body*, p. 4.

[131] Stephen Sykes saw hierarchy as a social necessity, and as less than ideal:

> 'The Christian Church is a Spirit-led community of equal brothers and sisters in the Lord; but in order to realise its radical potential in the context of a secular, stratified society it is obliged itself to become stratified.' **S.W. Sykes**, *Authority in the Church of England* (1987), in: *Unashamed Anglicanism*, p. 173.

[132] *Ibid.* p. 226.

[133] **G.E.M. Anscombe, in, J. Raz (ed.),** *Authority* p. 143.

[134] The Bridge Commission asserted that 'All decisions require eventually to be received by the whole Christian body and to achieve the status of *consensus fidelium*, an agreement amongst the faithful.' *Synodical Government in the Church of England* p. 8. However, the indirect electoral system and consequent two-tier structure of membership of the church militate against such a goal.

and the essentially voluntary nature of active participation. It is a critical test to apply to the institutions of the Church that they should not only be efficient but also foster mutuality of relationship and trust.'[135]

It may be, however, that this is only the beginning of extensive change that will be demanded of leaders as tension between the two polities grows.

The boundary between the two polities is the boundary between those who are eligible to form part of the court and those who are not. All ordained clergy, but only some of the laity, are included. Clergy have a system of universal suffrage for the election of representatives, whilst the laity are divided by a system of indirect voting[136]. The government of the church at every level wider than the parish is thus separated from all but a small minority of its membership.

Growing demands for money from members and for lay leadership are likely to lead to increasingly insistent conflicts over the ordering of the church which may not be contained within its present polity. In the Turnbull report the divide between clergy and laity had been relocated and redefined as a divide between leaders and led, but the underlying, monarchical, pattern of relationships has been much less affected. It is probable that the Church of England will seek to defend this basically monarchical relationship, whilst reluctantly allowing change to its constitutional expression.

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[135] *Working as One Body: Theological Reflections.* p. 8. This is the most explicit recognition of the voluntary character of the church I have seen in an official document (albeit as part of one image of the church).

Elsewhere the report states that 'Anglican Synods are not just about democracy in the Church, not only about votes and voting.' *Ibid.* p. 11. This would appear to contradict the statement of the Bridge Commission that 'While synodical government is built on the theological principle that all God's people should be represented in the government of the Church, it is not about democracy.' *Synodical Government in the Church of England*, p. 79.

[136] **Mr. J. White,** *General Synod Proceedings,* 1993, p. 543.

Chapter 6

The Role of Ecclesiology in the Contemporary Church of England

'Wanted. Crew required to sail brand-new ship with precious cargo through uncharted waters, with occasional squalls ahead. No previous experience of sailing required, though a knowledge of navigational skills and radio skills highly desirable. Passion for the sea is essential. Shipmate must pay his own passage, and no life-jackets are provided.'[1]

In the context of unending change, uncertainty, and a divided church the central problematic of ecclesiology, the question of how a church can legitimately claim and give substance to authentic continuity with Jesus Christ, remains as acute as ever.

> '... the challenge to any denomination is not merely to preach the Gospel in words, but to live and exemplify the Gospel in its structures and disciplines. Every part of the life of the Church, the totality of the system of communication by which it promotes its own coherence and effectiveness, ought to stand for a facet of the Gospel. There should not be a sharp distinction between what a Church teaches and how it manages its institutional arrangements. A denomination is bound to teach a theology of the Church, and that theology has necessarily to refer to its own institutional being as church. The truth about the Church has to be done as well as spoken.[2]

The dual task of ecclesiology is substantiated in the local and immediate processes of ecclesiastical politics. By such means the church mediates unplanned change, effects deliberate change, seeking to do both in a manner which expresses its

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[1] **Miss J. Ozanne**, describing 'with a bit of poetic licence' how she first read the advertisement in the *Sunday Times* for prospective members of the Archbishops' Council. *General Synod Proceedings*, 1999, p. 335.

[2] **S.W. Sykes**, *Introduction*, in *Unashamed Anglicanism*, p. xi.

nature as a divine creation, and enables it to undertake its mission effectively in novel circumstances.

Following a brief restatement of the communitarian and historicist theoretical position of the thesis, this chapter summarises some of the changes in the Church of England since the second World War and surveys ways in which ecclesiology has been used in that period. I suggest that, with a stronger hermeneutic structure, ecclesiology could be used still more effectively in the decision making of the church. I conclude that the determination of authentic continuity with Jesus Christ will not be found in the articulation and application of propositional divine truths, but in a constant, creative, dynamic engagement with God expressed and embodied in the community of the Church.

Despite the attractiveness of an essentialist or absolutist theology I assert that no claim to know the truth can be verifiable; that such a claim requires an 'isomorphic' epistemology which (given the difference between a transcendental God and limited humanity) is implausible; and that the claim conceals a further and unjustifiable claim on the part of the theologian to authority over the social and ecclesiastical application of the word of God.

The neo-Thomist theologians whose work I examined revealed a number of ambiguities and contradictions which were, I suggest, inherent in an essentialist approach. First, the concept of an apprehensible absolute truth (in the case of *The Apostolic Ministry*, the changeless continuity of the episcopate as the *esse* of the church) was an ahistorical concept designed to affirm a particular character of the historical church. In fact, because they were dislocated from the course of history, the substance of the truth-claims became no more than a matter of asseveration. The use of the credal 'notes' as ontological descriptions of the church, bench marks by which to judge the church, and aspirations for the church, was deeply ambiguous. Different meanings or connotations of the same words were not sufficiently distinguished for constructive debate. In the end, however, it was

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clear that the historical church was not accorded a theological value, but was being judged against *a priori* and ahistorical criteria. The writing of Michael Ramsey provided a counter-balance to the neo-Thomist approach with his emphasis on the spiritual significance of the whole church, including its failures and weakness.

There was also a contradiction between the absolute claims expounded by the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry* and the limited and divided community against and for whom the claims were made. Finally, there was a logical discontinuity between the claim to authority to expound divine truth, and the only possible process of reception of that claim, which was assent by the whole people of God.

In the end, I suggest, essentialism is a tragic conception of Christianity. John Milbank overtly affirmed the spiritual significance of the mundane, historical church[3] whilst ultimately preferring an idealised vision of the church by which to judge and (with one limited and tentative exception[4]) condemn the historical church.

> 'In the midst of history, the judgement of God has already happened. And either the Church enacts the vision of paradisal community which [God's] judgement opens out, or else it promotes a hellish society beyond the terrors known to antiquity: *corruptio optimi pessima*. ... Insofar as the Church has failed, and has even become a hellish anti-Church, it has

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[3] In discussing the Church as a 'reading' of other human societies, and ecclesiology as a 'sociology', Milbank says,
> 'But it should be noted that this possibility only becomes available if ecclesiology is rigorously concerned with the actual genesis of real historical churches, not simply with the imagination of an ecclesial ideal.' J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* p. 380.

His focus remained on the genesis of churches, not on their real historical development.

[4] The exception is an idealised version of Christian Socialism. *Ibid.* p. 432. Yet although Milbank discusses the ideas of some nineteenth century socialists (*ibid.* pp. 197-202) specifically Ruskin (for the significance of his ideas to socialism, rather than his own allegiance); and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and asserts that the group around Pierre Buchez '... were arguably the first *proper* socialists *tout court* ...' (*ibid.* p. 408, emphasis in original) he does not define or systematically describe the nature of Christian socialism, nor give examples of their practice, nor discuss their limitations. It would appear that this is Christian socialism as an utopian ideal, albeit located on earth rather than in heaven.

confined Christianity, like everything else, within the cycle of ceaseless exhaustion and return of violence.'[5]

By implication this crisis is repeated for each individual Christian offering an impossible choice between perfection or utter failure.

In posing this choice I believe Milbank has faithfully expounded the theological implication of essentialism. Transcendence was located in an ideal ontology, an ultimate truth adjacent only to God. Its exponents narrated varied accounts of the beautiful vision, offering hope of divine purity in profound contradistinction to this transient, fragmented, grubby world. But the vision was always held beyond the grasp, guaranteeing that no person or human institution, could ever attain it. All are judged and all condemned. The very aspiration which evoked the best of religious sensibility is seduced by the unattainable dream. In the longing for perfection, the faithful are led only to failure, judgement and death.

In its communitarian and historicist affirmations the 'postliberal' approach to ecclesiology expounded here is, I believe, both more prosaic and of more practical help to the church than essentialism. Its ontological conviction is that a church, as both idea and social entity, is a creation of its members in active engagement with God. The manner in which a church is sustained and continuously re-created is through the ineluctably conflictual and political processes of the contested exercise of power and authority. In this activity church members do not merely argue amongst themselves. The process is also a spiritual engagement with God, in which the struggle to realise in contemporary practice the will and nature of the transcendent God forms part of the continuous self-disclosure of God. This is not a tidy process, but in the deeply held and widely divergent convictions of God's faithful people ecclesiastical politics finds both vitality and trenchancy.

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[5] *Ibid.* p. 433.

It is not necessary, however to accept this theoretical exposition to follow through many of its implications for ecclesiology. In practice both neo-Thomist theologians and the business managers of Church Assembly assumed a plural church[6], and the attempt by the authors of *The Apostolic Ministry* to mould Anglicanism in a manner which would have excluded many Evangelicals was firmly resisted. Both groups also presumed the incessant conflicts of the church, and regarded those conflicts as of spiritual seriousness. Those who participated in the labyrinthine detail of ecclesiastical politics did not do so merely as technicians. They did so as devout disciples of Jesus Christ, seeking to effect their perception of God in the ordering of the church, and thus to both shape and equip the contemporary church for its spiritual purpose. Whilst issues varied in the significance accorded to them, no working difference was made between a set of matters that were regarded as of fundamental importance and other concerns which were *adiaphora*. In practice the details were always important, and decisions were always provisional.

Since the second World War the Church of England has undergone deep and extensive change in its self-perception and its structure as a social institution. To the extent that ecclesiology is done 'backwards', beginning with our present circumstances, so the experience of change in the church alters the starting point of ecclesiological reflection, changing both the questions that are asked, and the relative weight given to different questions. Similarly the different constitutional arrangements in the church, and even more strongly any shift in its underlying polity, greatly affects the context in which ecclesiological questions are formulated and the means by which ecclesiological proposals are pursued and implemented.

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[6] 'General Synod is unique in the history of the world ... because there is no other arena where every notion that has ever been held in christendom is held under one roof. Where else do we have a place where people who believe in the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and those who hold dear to them the Five Points of Calvinism are all under the same roof?' **Mr. J. Redden** *General Synod Proceedings*, 1993, p. 549.

The recognition of both divergent views, and the faithfulness of all those espousing opposing views, was perhaps acknowledged by the fact that few if any members of Church Assembly or General Synod claimed that their's was the word or will of God, and that the views of others were not.

In the 1950s the idea of divine law provided for many members of Church Assembly a conceptual framework which seamlessly integrated conceptions of the nature of God with the presumption of a stable social hierarchy and the appropriate means for effecting God's will in the face of the reality of human sin. Dissonance between the desire for ordered conformity with God's will and the perceived disorderliness of the church provided a significant motivation for reform. The use of law to order and re-order the church was entirely congruous with this approach, as was the use of courts of law as the proper means by which to enforce doctrinal conformity. Thus theological ideas and ecclesiological expression formed a single coherent entity, even if the linkage was provided by ideas that were seldom explicitly articulated. By the start of the twenty-first century, however, there remains no single unifying paradigm which can be appealed to in the same way. The presumption of lawful stability as the God-given nature of the universe and social life, has been replaced by a presupposition that flux and difference are the nature of physical, social and spiritual reality. The 'medieval family mansion'[7] has been submerged by the dangerous uncertainties of 'uncharted waters'.

Many of the preoccupations of the church after the second World War, beyond the immediate needs for reconstruction, have also vanished. The campaign to step out of the shadow of parliamentary control, without becoming disestablished, was very largely successful. The strings of the establishment remain, and in some instances such as the appointment of senior clergy, they remain in central and highly symbolic aspects of ecclesiastical life. But the balance has tilted. Instead of pre-judging almost every venture according to the anticipated response of Parliament's Ecclesiastical Committee, the Church of England has now assumed an ability to act on its own volition in almost all its activities[8].

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[7] **The Archdeacon of Wisbech** *Proceedings*, 1950, p. 237 cited above, *Introduction*. p. 1.

[8] Given the experience of the Ecclesiastical Committee finding the Churchwardens' Measure 'inexpedient' (see above, page 162), this assumption may have proceeded further than the reality.

The change in the relationship with the state has been echoed in the church's altered constitutional arrangements. In 1970 Church Assembly and Convocations gave way to General Synod. Although this was a relatively small change in legal terms, it enabled delegated powers to be passed from Parliament to the Church of England over the critical areas of worship and doctrine. Both Church Assembly and General Synod were designed to govern the church by containing disagreement and establishing procedural mechanisms which would enable sufficient agreement to make corporate decision making possible. In the 1990s a desire for greater executive control led to the modification of General Synod's powers with the creation of the Archbishops' Council.

Throughout this period the Church of England has been actively and officially engaged in ecumenical discussions, but the tenor has changed. The casual assumption of superiority, and the conviction that Anglicanism had so much to offer other churches, which was audible in the 1950s, has been displaced by a more open, participatory stance. The desire of church leaders to incorporate convergent ecumenical thinking and phraseology into its decision making was evident in the Turnbull report.

The underlying polity of the church, has, until recently experienced relatively little change, but has survived through the expedient of relatively minor constitutional adjustments. However, the traditional polity, of the church as a constitutional monarchy, is now increasingly challenged by a newly burgeoning polity, centred in the parishes, of the church as a voluntary society. Tension between the two polities, or more probably clashes between assumptions and programmes grounded in the different polities, is likely to result in new possibilities in ways of being the church, and also to in damaging and divisive conflicts.

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In this context of change and the prospect of change, I suggest that ecclesiology may continue to play a significant role in challenging and legitimating both change and the *status quo,* as it has done over the last half century.

Ecclesiology has informed and justified demands for change. The campaign for General Synod and for a greater role for the laity, the movement for liturgical reform, and *The Apostolic Ministry*, were each informed by a vision of what the church might be in contrast to its present reality. In justifying change ecclesiology was predicated on a denial of validity to some aspect of the existing church, its clericalism, for example, or its spiritual laxity, or its willingness to compromise the essential principle of the episcopacy. As a mode of discourse, ecclesiology could not itself cause change, but in articulating a motivating dissonance between an ideal and the actual ordering of the church, ecclesiology could encourage and canalise the pressure for change. By the same coin, it was equally utilizable in the opposition to change, for example, in the disavowal of 'egalitarianism'.

Ecclesiology was expounded within and against the existing polity of the church, and written and read with existing ecclesiastical conflicts in mind. By the construction of ecclesiologies in contradistinction to those of other parties within the church, each sub-tradition could assert its distinctiveness and set itself in opposition to others. Ecclesiology thus proffered a shared discourse which bound church members together, and simultaneously gave a language (and sometimes slogans and rallying cries) with which to dispute. It has also provided a framework by which to sustain campaigns over the long periods that organisational change has sometimes taken in the Church of England.

The capacity of ecclesiology to articulate a case for change also, as in the Turnbull report, served to legitimate change proposed on other grounds. Ecclesiological concepts and language acted as ideology in providing an all-embracing ethos by which novelty and the *status quo* were simultaneously justified by the same criterion of authentic continuity with Jesus Christ. I suggest that this is a

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necessary role of ecclesiology in a church, and in its absence no church could justify either adaptation or continuity. However, while necessary, ecclesiology is not sufficient.

> 'While sound theology must be at the heart of the Turnbull exercise, this will not of itself ensure sound organisation. Even a perfect theology could not yield a perfect structure, but in its search for the structure best suited to its task at this particular moment, the Church must ensure that the favoured structure is consonant with its theology.'[9]

Ecclesiology was only one of the many discourses deployed in the course of debate. Secular expertise, such as organisational theory, was sought; legal advice was invariably taken; parliamentarians were consulted; and in an earlier generation the contribution of historians was considered essential[10]. Pastoral need; ecumenical considerations; public opinion; the imperatives of mission; managerial insights; fear of communism; and biblical exposition[11] have all been pressed into service. Nor did any single argument or piece of evidence determine a decision in Church Assembly or General Synod. On the contrary different disciplines, opinions and types of evidence were generally piled one upon another to sway a debate. Furthermore, all debates were conducted in the consciousness of a variety of constraints, amongst them law and legal procedures; political impossibilities; the establishment and fear of disestablishment; the weight of history; and finance. In the midst of the swirl of debate on the organisation of the church ecclesiology was pervasive but far from decisive.

I conclude from this brief survey that ecclesiology is a necessary but not sufficient part of the deliberate decision making processes of the church. It is a descriptive

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[9] *Working as One Body: Theological Reflections* p. 4.

[10] In *The Canon Law of the Church of England,* for example, the great bulk of the report, other than the proposed new Canons themselves, comprised an historical study of Canon Law. *Synodical Government in the Church of England* included a brief historical note on the government of the Church of England as an Appendix (pp. 121-130) whilst *Working as One Body* contained no historical exposition.

[11] It is my impression that the use of biblical exposition has become more frequent and more sustained in recent debates than it was in the 1950s.

and a normative discourse, and is one discourse amongst several. It is a discourse amongst causal forces such as finance and social change, all of which help to shape the ordering of the church. Ecclesiology serves to legitimate and inform change, but it is also integral to the conflicts of the church and not set over against them.

Furthermore, I suggest that the potential for ecclesiology to inform and legitimate change, and to contribute to the management of change, would be considerably enhanced by broadly debated, rigorous and critical meta-theoretical apparatus[12].

Such an apparatus will require a systematic approach to theology, including a clear exposition of the ontological and epistemological assumptions in the underlying doctrine of God and understanding of the nature of faith. However, within a plural church, and between churches, it is probable that such foundational expositions will be as varied as their ecclesiological outcomes. There is no logical reason why a greater level of abstraction in debate should necessarily result in more extensive agreement. Greater precision and clarity may, however, both engender a greater level of mutual openness and disagreement, and provide a more solidly argued basis for the legitimation of change.

Accepting the assumption of continued divergences of view, it may be that wider ecumenical debate will nonetheless encourage a greater consistency in the definition of terms, and wide critical debate on the selection, interpretation and use of biblical, historical, experiential and other evidence[13]. It does, however,

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[12] See *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics* (Geneva, WCC, 1998) para. 9.

[13] *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* observed that the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order at Montreal (1963) avoided such criteriological questions. It outlined work subsequent to that Conference. *Ibid.* paras. 15-20. Whilst as a consequence light was shed on disagreements, this '... did not prevent continuing conflicts, whether these were between the traditions themselves, between the inherited traditions and newer contexts, or between various contextual approaches within each church or within the relationships of churches to one another.' *Ibid.* para. 20. Absence of agreement on the 'rules of the game' does not stop people participating. **S.W. Sykes,** *The Identity of Christianity,* p. 256.

increase the risk that agreement can only be found in broad generalisations. There is also a risk that terms central to ecclesiology, such as 'apostolicity' or the notes of the church, become synonyms for authenticity and thus tautologies. Instead of the notes of the church acting as tests of the validity of a church, the presumption of each church that it is valid guarantees its interpretation of the notes of the church. There is also a danger that, if churches are not sufficiently self-critical, the idea of indefectibility, or 'the theology of the gracious gift', will be deemed to encompass the whole inheritance of each church. The validation of a church, and the legitimation of change, is much stronger when options that each test excludes are made explicit.

Greater precision and transparency may also be necessary in the determination of what constitutes a sufficient test of legitimacy within ecclesiology. In so far as a proposed change is legitimated by being said to be in accordance with the nature or will of God, a self-authenticating claim is made to authority to speak for God. I suggest that, in seeking to conform the church to the will and nature of God as we best understand it, we should locate the legitimation of the exercise of authority in a careful distinction between God, the apprehension of God, and the expression of God. Thus, for example, in seeking to promote aspects of the dynamic and communal nature of the church, legitimation may be found in the concepts of *koinonia* and *perichoresis* attributed to the Trinity. Yet at the same time, there needs to be an acknowledgement that human society is characterised by impersonality, division, the use of coercive power, and miscommunication. Consequently the legitimation of a particular decision would be greatly reinforced if it was specified by reference to human limitations, as well as by reference to the qualities of God. I suggest that an exploration of the notion of engaging with God at once agonistically and harmoniously, may offer a framework within which to address this tension.

Whilst '... it is right to begin with the assertion that all authority and power ... is to be ascribed to God.'[14] it is also true that the exercise of authority and power in the church is mediated and channelled in different ways. At the broadest level the distribution and exercise of power and authority in a church draws on and reflects the ordering of the society in which the church exists. Ecclesiology therefore has a political dimension which is wider than internal ecclesiastical politics, which has been the limited focus of this thesis. A fuller 'hermeneutic of suspicion'[15] would evaluate the Church of England within the power structures of British society; would locate the processes of change in the wider context of social and economic change; and would propound an ethical framework by which to evaluate the structuring and exercise of power and authority.

Because ecclesiology is one discourse amongst others influential in shaping decisions in the church it must also be capable of relating theology to other disciplines in systematic dialogue. Some of the criticism of the use of managerial theory by the Turnbull commission focused on a perceived conflict between 'managerialism' and theological principles. To make these connections explicit may strengthen the contribution that ecclesiology can make to decision making and lessen the risk, as with the theological contributions to debate following publication of the Turnbull report, of being sidelined in the political processes of organisational change. Theoretical and practical concerns constitute a single focus, and a theoretical framework has to be sufficiently robust to accommodate both different disciplines and also the exigencies of events.

Because the Church of England is beginning to define itself in terms other than its establishment in the British state; because it is bringing ecumenical discussion into the mainstream of its decision making; and because of the possibility of a clash of

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[14] *Working as One Body*, p. 7.

[15] 'This means that the interpreters should also be interpreted' in particular to identify the 'time-bound character of traditional forms and formulations as well as any ambiguous or vested interests on the part of the interpreters both past and present.' *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, para. 6.

polities which may well be expressed in debate concerning the nature of the church; I predict that the status and significance of ecclesiology will grow in the next few years. The central role of ecclesiology in the Church of England since the second world war has been to inform the demand for change, and to legitimate change as authentic both to Christianity, and to the Anglican tradition. But because, although there have been exceptions, there has not been a strong tradition of ecclesiological debate in the Church of England there is a need to reinforce such debate with a more rigorous critical apparatus.

A reinvigorated ecclesiology will not lead to an increase in agreement as to the nature of the church, or to greater agreement on the way in which authentic continuity with Jesus Christ may be maintained. On the contrary, different traditions, political circumstances, and theological approaches both within a church and between churches will continue to be reflected in different ecclesiologies. Ecclesiology is a discourse by which differences may be articulated and reinforced yet, although there is always a risk of schism, ecclesiological conflict may also serve to keep the disputants within one community.

The central problematic of ecclesiology is the means by which a church can legitimately claim and give substance to authentic continuity with Jesus Christ, in the face of the fact that churches are manifestly divided, sinful, limited and variously ordered. I suggest that authentic continuity is not to be found by measurement against certain divine truths stated in propositional form, but in the ceaseless, creative and dynamic engagement of the Christian community with God, which is given changing form and expression in the living church.

I suggest that faithful human making is the site of divine revelation[16], and that arguments about the nature, shape and ideals of the church, and the expression of disagreement in differing practices, are means by which God is made visible. The

[16] J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* p. 425.

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reception of faith is not so much a matter of agreement to certain tenets, but the continuous engagement of the whole church with God, in faithful disagreement with one another.

Engagement with God may take the form of an agonistic struggle with God, or may at its most harmonious be a never ending dance. It is always, however, undertaken within a particular culture and inherited church polity, using the imagery and conceptual limitations of the age, and is simultaneously personal and corporate, spiritual and political. The task of faith is not to transcend the age, but to meet the incarnate God within the limitations of human society. It is to seek to express divergent apprehensions of God as fully as possible in the church, not by narrowing the possibilities down to a single correct option, but by celebrating the open-ended possibilities of creative engagement with God who is always transcendentally greater than the wildest aspirations of the human imagination.

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