Towards an Anglican theology of Laity

Ferns, Stephen Antony Dunbar

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

TOWARDS AN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY OF LAITY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF ARTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

THE DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

by

REVD. STEPHEN ANTONY DUNBAR FERNS

1993

ABSTRACT

'Towards an Anglican Theology of Laity'

by

Revd Stephen Antony Dunbar Ferns

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts
for the degree of Master of Arts

1993

This thesis undertakes two tasks. Firstly, it traces the development of an understanding of the role of the laity within the Church of England from 1530 until 1985. Secondly, in the light of the historical data it attempts to posit a theology of laity which would be sustainable within the Church of England. It will be shown that the Church of England has been operating two ecclesiological models: one which allows for the development of a strong theology of the laity, the other which allows for the development of a strong theology of holy orders (which has historically displaced the laity). At particular periods in its history the Church of England has witnessed the ascendancy of one or other of these models. This thesis will attempt to explain the reasons for these shifts in ecclesiological emphasis. From the historical analysis it will be argued that three significant issues arise which are pertinent to a theology of the laity: the worldly vocation of the laity and its relation to mission; the authority of the laity and its relation to decision-making within the Church; and the inter-relation between the laity and the ordained. Each of these issues will be explored as a basis for constructing a contemporary theology of laity. The thesis will also be concerned to acknowledge those restraints which have been operating within Anglicanism to constrict the smooth development of the laity. Chief among them is the professional reaction of the clerical profession. This thesis will in its advocacy of a sustainable theology of laity attempt to examine and overcome those restraints.

DECLARATION

None of the material in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this of any other university. This thesis is entirely my own work.

STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The principal concern of this thesis is to identify and explore the development of understanding within the Church of England of the roles and expectations of its laity. The issues raised and addressed are primarily ecclesiological in nature. They are to do with the distribution and exercise of power; how a church settles (or fails to settle) its organisational difficulties; the character of the dialogue between a Church's theory and practice, its theology and polity. How the laity have been perceived within the Church of England is traced through a long period of time and is set within the shifting contexts of English society. Most of this thesis consists of a broad chronological narrative, incorporating both how developing theology related to the laity and how the theological rhetoric related to practice.

Before examining in greater depth the content of this thesis and its focus, it is important to attend to some basic definitions of terms that will be used throughout the thesis and to acknowledge some of the widely recognized difficulties associated with them. The terms to be considered are 'laity', 'Anglican', 'Church of England' and 'Anglican theology'.

The term 'laity' can be confusing. For many the use of 'lay' carries a negative reference - 'only' a lay person.

The implication is that in the Church a lay person is unskilled, unknowledgeable and unqualified. It is often seen as a description of 'what is not' (that is, not an ordained person). Some stress that laity refers to 'the whole people of God' and suggest that a better word is simply 'Christian'. Others wish to use 'lay' simply as a distinction from the ordained so that the laity refers to everybody except the ordained, Christians and non-Christians alike. There is a proper sense in which the laity and the ordained ministry together make up the *laos* or the whole People of God, so that both participate in an mutually supportive partnership. For the purposes of this thesis, the word laity refers to those whose Christian discipleship does not take the form of the ordained ministry. The word 'laity' is not intended to diminish the value of people by defining them as lacking in expertise, but is used rather to point to people's discipleship as a participation in God's presence and action in the world. All clergy and laity together are to share in a discipleship of faithful obedience to God's will as discerned through the Church in each generation.

The terms 'Anglican' and 'Anglicanism' derive chronologically from the Latin *Anglicanus*, and the expression *ecclesia Anglicana* was commonly used to refer to the English Medieval Church. At the Reformation, the term was invoked to emphasise the Reformers' two-fold claim of continuity with the ancient church and independence of foreign (Papal) jurisdiction. Thus the Act of 1534

conferring Royal Supremacy spoke of the sovereign as 'the only supreme head of the Church of England called Anglicana Ecclesia'. By the nineteenth century the word Anglican began to shed its national connotations and began to refer more specifically to a distinct theological position. Thus Burke refers to 'Catholics, Anglicans or Calvinists', Macaulay to Anglican doctrine and discipline and Gladstone to Anglican orders.[1] For the purpose of this report the term Anglican will mean 'pertaining to the theology and practice of the Church of England'.

What is at issue with the term 'Church of England' is its origins. This thesis takes as its starting point the sixteenth century: the historical account of the Church of England is seen to begin at the Reformation. However this decision is not to rule out the claim of the Church of England that it was in continuity with all that preceded the sixteenth century and was in particular in continuity with the early church. But in order to do some justice to the issue at stake it is necessary to distinguish between claims and observations. It is indeed true that the Anglican reformers of the sixteenth century and the apologists of the seventeenth century went to great lengths to claim that the Church of England lived in continuity with the undivided church of the early centuries. It is also the case that many modern Anglicans claim that their Church does not

---

[1] P.D.L. Avis, 'What is "Anglicanism"?' in *The Study of Anglicanism* ed. S.W. Sykes and J. Booty (London 1988) p.406.

constitute or cultivate a separate denominational identity. Despite these claims one is bound to observe that the *de facto* distinctiveness of Anglicanism begins in the sixteenth century and that the seventeenth century apologists devoted strenuous efforts to distinguish their Church from both Roman Catholicism and the non-conformist Churches. Thus for the purpose of this thesis the Church of England refers to that institution which was established by Parliamentary Statute in the 1530's.

The term 'Anglican theology' as used in the title of the thesis is used simply to mean a 'theological understanding of the laity within the framework of the Church of England'. It is important to register that it is generally agreed among Anglican scholars that there is no such thing as an Anglican theology. This is for two reasons. Firstly, there is no one Anglican theological system that is normative for Anglicans as for instance Calvinism tends to be for some Protestants. Secondly, according to Anglican apologetics, Anglicanism has no theology of its own but simply accepts the theology of the creeds and of the General Councils of the first four centuries. However, while Anglican scholars might deny that there is in Anglican history no single system, they would affirm that there is a distinctive Anglican method.[2]

---

[2] D.R.G. Owen, 'Is there an Anglican Theology?' in *The Future of Anglican Theology*, ed. D. Bryant (New York and Toronto 1984) p.3.

This method is spelt out by Daniel Hardy in response to a statement from Richard Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. The characteristically Anglican method is practical. It is about taking present organized practice as trustworthy and subjecting it to rational enquiry:

> 'That "common practice" is itself a rich composite of life, thought and prayer, each comprised of the habitual or institutional and the creative. Its distinctive character can be seen by comparing it with the common alternative. It is commonplace for theology to be seen as a free-standing triumvirate of 'Scripture', tradition and interpretation in mutual correction. When suitably developed, such a free-standing 'theology' is then applied to common practice, telling it what it should be. But properly speaking English theology operates in a different way, beginning from practice and correcting it through historical and rational consideration referred to divine truth.'[3]

The process of examination and correction through historical and rational consideration is directed towards the goal of 'an agreement on the proper organization of common life which would actually promote the practice of society'. In this process Hardy underlines the need to engage with common practice historically:

> 'Common practice is as it is through having come to be in the realities of history and needs to be understood historically.'[4]

Thus on this understanding of Anglican theology as a distinctive method by which common practice is exposed to historical and theologically rational enquiry, this thesis

---

[3] D.W. Hardy, 'Theology through Philosophy' in *The Modern Theologians* Vol II, ed D. Ford (Oxford 1989) p.33.

[4] Ibid., p.34.

can be described as working towards an Anglican theology of laity.

In 1987, the Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry produced a discussion paper 'Education for the Church's Ministry'.[5] One of the central preliminary questions raised by the paper was 'What kind of ordained ministry does the Church of England require?' This thesis aims to redirect the question to the laity: 'What kind of laity does the Church of England require?', and as a means towards addressing that question the thesis is concerned with establishing 'what kind of laity has the Church of England required in the past?'.

The form of the thesis will be mainly historical in nature. An historical perspective on the subject is important because certain characteristically Anglican tensions are inexplicable apart from the context in which they are embedded. The main focus of the historical analysis will be the twentieth century, because it has been during this century that there has been within Anglicanism a heightened awareness and sensitivity towards the laity. However, there were significant theological insights and developments in preceding centuries and these will be duly highlighted. The historical analysis aims to provide a coherent and consistent picture of what the Church of England has

[5] Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, *Education for the Church's Ministry* (London 1987) p.19.

understood the task of the laity to be from the 1530's to 1985. It begins in the 1530's, as already explained, because that is when the Church of England was established by Parliamentary Statute; the thesis ends its historical analysis in 1985 because that is when the Church of England produced its last official report on the laity, *All Are Called*, published by a Working Party of the General Synod Board of Education under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Oxford.[6] This report is only the second report in the Church of England specifically on the laity. The first was produced in 1902 by the Joint Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury and was entitled *On The Position of the Laity*.

Since this thesis is (as far as is known) the first piece of work to address the role of the laity from the 1530's until 1985, the sources have tended to be widely scattered. Sources have had paragraphs or short sections on the laity, but rarely anything substantial. Consequently it has been necessary to consult widely. It has been interesting to note that very rarely did the laity receive a mention in the indexes of books before the 1960's, and it has been only in the mid-1980's that references to the laity have become more frequent in works on ecclesiology. The Church Commissioners' Archive in South Bermondsey has been helpful in providing some of the twentieth century material, as has the Central Board of Education based at Church House. All this archive material has been studied, as it relates to the

[6] General Synod Board of Education, *All Are Called* (London 1985).

laity, and when references are made to unpublished sources in footnotes, the bibliography will state from which archival source the material was gained.

This thesis will take the form of three chapters. The first chapter will review the Anglican understanding of the laity from the 1530's until 1914. The reason for 1914 being a convenient cut-off date is two-fold. Firstly, post-1914 and the First World War, the Church of England suffered numerical decline and seemed to be less central to the life of the nation. This process was compounded by secularism which gained ground after the First World War. Secondly, after 1914 the Church of England seemed to be more self-conscious of itself as an institution semi-detached from the state, an impression reinforced by the work of the Life and Liberty Movement (founded in 1917) and the Enabling Act of 1919. Consequently 1914 marks a natural break in the historical analysis. The second chapter will continue the historical analysis post-1914 through until 1985 (the date of the publication of *All Are Called*). The third chapter will attempt a further discussion of some of the main points and issues which have emerged from the historical reflection and move towards suggesting the shape and character of a future theology of laity.

What is clear from an historical analysis is that the Church of England's understanding of the laity has been largely historically conditioned: it has been developed in the light

of organizational pressures and society's expectation. Any specific theologizing about the laity has been done mainly *ex post facto*. There is a strong sense of ecclesiology done reactively and virtues being made out of necessities, rather than practice conforming, however inexactly, to a theological design.

This thesis will argue that the Church of England has been, throughout its history, working with two models for the understanding of the laity. The first model suggests that the ministry is the province of the whole People of God and that those in Holy Orders are responsible for helping, supporting and encouraging the People of God in their task. The second model suggests that ministry is the activity of those who are in Holy Orders and that those who are not (the laity) are expected to help the clergy in their task. The Church of England has oscillated between these two models. In the first chapter, the movement is from the first model (apparent in the sixteenth century) to the second model (present by the end of the nineteenth century). In the second chapter, the movement is from the second model early in the twentieth century, towards a re-affirmation of the first model after 1945. However despite the theological rhetoric, the first model has been slow in gaining currency at a practical level. Much of the most innovative and theologically lively work on the role of the laity was undertaken in the 1960's, but had had relatively little impact on the Church of England even in the 1980's. Part of the problem has been that the second model with its inbuilt

sense of clericalism has been stubborn in giving way to the first model. For both clergy and laity the second model has not been without its benefits. Consequently the third chapter will argue for a more thorough-going version of the first model. It will attempt to clear up some theological anomalies and inconsistencies and in particular will be concerned to mark out the boundaries between clergy and laity, which has been an important part of the difficulty. The Church of England for too long has attempted to support both the first and the second model (despite their contradictions) which has resulted in paralysis. Neither a robust theology of ordained ministry nor a robust theology of laity has been possible. This thesis, having taken into account the particular set of historical circumstances which has given rise to the situation, will attempt to suggest ways in which this tension can be, if not fully resolved, perhaps somewhat reduced.

CHAPTER I: AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND 1530-1914

The aim of this chapter is to trace the understanding of the role of the laity within the Church of England over a period of almost four centuries. The chapter will have four sections:

1. The grounds and tendencies of the Henrician Reformation and the Elizabethan settlement in relation to the role of the laity.

2. The 1662 Act of Uniformity and the Book of Common Prayer annexed to the bill, and the displacement of the lay Reformation.

3. The eighteenth century Church and the 'laicization' of religion.

4. The nineteenth century Church and its understanding of the role of the laity in the light of the triadic conflicts between Latitudinarians, Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics.

The focus for the discussion will be the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries in as much as these were periods of ferment and change in Anglican appreciation of the laity. Consequently particular emphasis will be placed on the first

and fourth sections of the chapter, which will receive longer treatment than the second or the third.

1. The Henrician Reformation and the Anglican Settlement

The establishment of the Church of England by Parliamentary Statute in the 1530's has been characterized as the coming of age of the English laity.[1] The historian G.R. Elton described the progress of the English Reformation as 'the unquestioned triumph of the laity over the clergy'.[2] However, talk of lay power in the sixteenth century Church of England needs careful qualification.

In effect power resided in the interaction between four major partners. The first, the Sovereign, was understood to have received a divine charism for the work of government and promised to 'study to preserve thy people committed to his charge'. The Acts of Supremacy establishing the sovereign's position as supreme governor of the Church of England were Acts of Parliament, which thus constitutes the second of the major partners. The third partner was the episcopate. Fourthly, a role was preserved for the bishops and priests in synodical association (known traditionally as Convocation). These four partners constituted for the

---

[1] P.D.L. Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* ((Minneapolis 1989) p.60.

[2] G.R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge 1972) p.336.

Church of England what have been termed the 'higher participants'[3] in its organization. For most of the history of the Church of England lay involvement was restricted to a governing class, that is members of the Houses of Lords and Commons and, throughout the country, prominent landowners who exercised considerable powers of patronage and control over the clergy. The mass of lay people have traditionally been exhorted to live quiet and godly lives. The Edwardian Homily on Obedience describes this version of social cohesion:

> 'Every degree of people in their vocation, call and office, hath appointed to them their duty and order; some are in high degree, some in low, some kings and princes, some inferiors and subjects, priests and laymen, masters and servants, fathers and children, husbands and wives, rich and poor; and every one have need of the other ... without the which no house, no city, no commonwealth can continue and endure.'[4]

Expectations of the role of the laity within the Church of England have differed according to the rank and status of the lay person.

a) The role of the monarch.

The central piece of evidence in Elton's 'triumph of the laity' is the rank and status of one lay person in

---

[3] S.W. Sykes, 'Power in the Church of England', *Concilium* 197 (1988) p.124.

[4] Cited in F.H. Thompsett, 'The Laity' *The Study of Anglicanism* ed. S.W. Sykes and J. Booty (London 1988) p.248.

particular: the monarch. The Henrician Reformation, though on the face of it a spiritualization of the authority of the King in substitution for the authority of the Pope, was in fact only consolidated by the act of a lay Parliament. 'Henry might claim to be a lay bishop inheriting the position occupied by Constantine the Great, a claim which effectively spiritualized kingship; in reality he and his subjects behaved as though authority in the church had fallen to a layman.'[5]

The writings of Christopher St. Germain reflect step by step every stage of Henry's breach with Rome and incorporation of ecclesiastical powers in himself. According to St. Germain, the authority to interpret scripture belongs to the Church as a body; the clergy are only a part of the Church. St. Germain writing in 1535 states that it is 'emperors, kings and princes with their people' who 'comprise the church catholic'. Since however it is obviously impossible to gather the entire Church together to expound the scriptures: 'it seemeth that kings and princes whom the people have chosen ... have the whole voices of the people' and may 'with their counsel spiritual and temporal make exposition of such scripture that is doubtful.'[6]

---

[5] G.R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation* (London 1977) pp.196-199.

[6] Cited C. Morris, *Political Thought in England, Tyndale to Hooker* (Oxford 1953) p.51.

By a series of measures from 1534 to 1545, Henry transferred to himself as sovereign all the powers and prerogatives of the Papacy within his realm. Significantly, the King had authority in matters of Christian doctrine. This was in line with the insight of St Germain and other Reformers that authority in doctrine ceased to be the exclusive preserve of the clergy and was shared with the laity, the King being their most eminent representative.[7]

However, later in the sixteenth century, there was a discernible shift of emphasis away from the caesaro-papism of Henry's reign. The Supremacy of Henry had been largely a personal attribute which Parliament had been merely called upon to endorse; that of Elizabeth was a corporate supremacy of the lay members of the Church of England represented by the Queen-in-Parliament. The Act of Supremacy of 1559 significantly gave Parliament the power to judge in matters of doctrine and to determine heresies.[8] The two views of the Supremacy contended for dominance in sixteenth century England: one claiming the Supremacy as a personal attribute of the monarch received directly from God; the other seeing it as derived from the whole body politic and exercised by the monarch-in-Parliament.[9] It was this latter view that ultimately triumphed in the Elizabethan period, most notably

---

[7] P.D.L. Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers* (London 1981) p.151.

[8] Ibid., p.136.

[9] Ibid., p.163.

in the definitive statement of the Anglican settlement of Church and State in Richard Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*.

b) Richard Hooker and the government of the Church.

For Hooker the ultimate authority to make laws for the external government of the church belongs not to the Sovereign alone, or even to the clergy alone, but to the whole body of the church, including the laity. It is this argument which underlies his claim that in England the authority to make laws for the church is vested in Parliament as well as Convocation.[10] Hooker bases his justification of Parliament's right to legislate for the church on three main principles: first, that in all 'politic societies' the power of making laws naturally resides in the whole body politic; secondly, that in so far as it is a temporal organization, the church is a 'politic society'; and thirdly, that in a Christian commonwealth, church and state constitute a single society. He states:

> 'It is undoubtedly a thing even naturall that all free and independent societies should them selves make their own lawes, and that this power should belong to the whole, not to any certaine part of a politique body, though happilie some one part may have greater sway in that action than the rest: which thing being generally fitt and expedient in the making of all lawes, we see no cause to think otherwise in lawes concerning the service of God, which in all well ordered States and commonwealths is the first thing that law hath care to provide for.'[11]

---

[10] R. Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiatical Polity* Book VIII, Chapter vi.

[11] Ibid., Bk VIII, vi.vi.

From this it follows that in a Christian commonwealth, the power of making ecclesiastical laws must by definition belong to the whole body of the people and not simply to the clergy, who constitute only one section of the church, or to the Sovereign acting alone, although Hooker is careful to emphasize that the assent of the 'highest power' is necessary for all ecclesiastical legislation:

> 'Till it be proved that some special lawe of Christ hath for ever annexed unto the clergie alone the power to make Ecclesiaticall lawes, we are to hold it a thing most consonant with equitie and reason that no Ecclesiasticall lawe be made in a Christian commonwealth without consent as well of the laitie as of the clergie but at least of the highest power.'[12]

But if this is so, then it is only logical that in England the power of making laws for the church should be exercised by Parliament, interpreted in its widest sense as including both Sovereign and Convocation:

> 'The parlament of England together with the convocation annexed thereunto, is that wherupon the very essence of all goverment within this kingdome doth depend. It is even the bodie of the whole Realme, it consisteth of the king, and of all that within the Land are subject unto him: for they are all present, either in person or by such as they voluntarily have derived their very personall right unto.'[13]

Given his basic assumptions, the logic of Hooker's argument is clear: since the church is a 'politic society' and since in a Christian commonwealth church and state are not two societies but one, Parliament must by definition represent

---

[12] Ibid., Bk VIII, vi.vii.

[13] Ibid., Bk VIII, vi.ii.

the people of the whole realm, not only in a civil capacity, but also in their ecclesiastical capacity as a church. Thus Parliament has the undoubted right to make laws for the external regulations of the church. On the other hand it was not Hooker's intention to exclude the clergy from all share in the making of laws for the church. On the contrary, in accordance with his general principle that 'none but wise men' should be admitted to the task of devising laws, he holds that, although the clergy have no power to impose laws on the church by their own authority, it is only proper that, where spiritual matters are concerned, the responsibility should be entrusted to the bishops and the clergy:

> 'The most naturall and religious course in the making of lawes is, that the matter of them be taken from the judgment of the wisest in those thinges which they are to concerne. In matters of God, to sett downe a forme of publique prayer, a solemne confession of the Articles of Christian fayth, rites and ceremonies meet for the exercise of religion, it were unnaturall not to think the Pastors and Bishops of our soules a great deale more fitt, than men of secular trades and callinges.'[14]

While at the same time he makes the point that ultimately the whole church has to give consent to laws if they are to be practicable:

> 'Howbeit, when all which the wisdome of all sortes can doe is done for devising of lawes in the Church, it is the generall consent of all that giveth them the forme and vigour of lawes, without which they could be no more to us than the Counseles of Physitions to the sick, well might they seem as wholesome admonitions and instructions, but lawes could they never be without the consent of the whole Church, which is the only thing

[14] Ibid., Bk VIII, vi.ii.

> which bindeth each member of the Church, to be guided by them.'[15]

Hooker's understanding and advocacy of this dispersed notion of authority within the Church of England is a fundamental feature of the Anglican understanding of the role of the laity: the laity have a part to play in both the constructing and affirming of ecclesial doctrine and practice.

c) The authority of the laity.

The most significant contribution made by the sixteenth century Reformers to an understanding of the laity in the Church of England was in what was said and implied about the authority of the laity. A good starting point for a discussion of this is the Good Friday Collect for the Church as prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer:

> 'Almighty and everlasting God, by whose spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified; Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before thee for all estates of men in thy holy church, that every member of the same in his vocation and ministry may truly and godly serve thee.'[16]

In accordance with this collect, authority within the Church of England is inherent in the ministry of every member of the church. If every Christian has his or her own special 'vocation and ministry' then the authority which belongs to

---

[15] Ibid., Bk VIII, vi.ii.

[16] *Book of Common Prayer*, Collect for Good Friday.

the act of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ inheres in each and every Christian person. There is a proper sovereignty which belongs to every member of God's people which constitutes them corporately as a royal priesthood.

The question is what is this ministry of the laity as perceived by the sixteenth century reformers? It seems to be connected with two major activities: those of praise and of evangelism. In general the offering of praise is provided for by a Book of Common Prayer in the vernacular in which the whole church, literate and illiterate alike, becomes a community of praise. Evangelism was construed within the context of sixteenth century Europe largely as a practical activity, the witness of a godly life;[17] and instruction in it was undertaken by means of the public reading of the Holy Scriptures and by the provision of a sermon or homily. Praise and evangelism are inseparably linked in the General Thanksgiving ('that we show forth thy praise not only with our lips, but in our lives') and in the first prayer of Thanksgiving after Communion which binds together 'this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving' (the whole Eucharistic action) with the sacrificial offering of souls and bodies in service to God.

The fundamental element in the Reformer's empowerment of the laity was giving the whole people of God access to the (vernacular) scriptures through the interpretive medium of

[17] S.W. Sykes, 'An Anglican Theology of Evangelism', *Theology* November/December 1991, p.409.

the liturgy. It was the reformers' conviction that knowledge of the scriptures was a necessary resource for the mission of the whole church. The Christian life was such that an uninstructed or passive laity was unthinkable. Although Cranmer acknowledged that scripture contained complexities, nevertheless he believed that its fundamental message was not too difficult for the uneducated:

> 'For God receiveth the learned and the unlearned, and casteth away none, but is indifferent to all. All the Scripture is full, as well of low valleys, plainways and easy for men to use and walk in; as also of high hills and mountains which few men can climb into.'[18]

The Reformers saw that the Church as a fellowship in which the active, conscious, informed and responsible collective judgement of the whole body of the faithful is an inseparable part of the process of authorizing. This idea is found in 1547 in the Address of the Canterbury Synod:

> 'The clergy desireth that such matters as concerneth religion, which be disputable, may be quietly and in good order reasoned and disputed ... in this house, whereby the verities of such matters shall the better appear. And the doubts being opened and reasonably discussed, men may be fully persuaded with the quietness of their consciences.'[19]

There is something more here than the conception that a properly constituted council or synod will be guided by the Holy Spirit; there is the expectation that every Christian mind individually will be 'fully persuaded', so that there

---

[18] T. Cranmer, *Second Homily,* 'To the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scriptures', cited in *By What Authority?*, ed. R. Jeffrey (London 1987) p.13.

[19] E. Cardwell, *Synodalia,* Vol II (London 1842, repr 1966) p.423.

be unanimity and the winning of minds, and so that those who take part in the decision-making can witness together. This is an early seeding of the concept of 'consensus fidelium' which became so important in twentieth century Anglicanism.[20]

The Anglican Reformers' action in identifying ministerial authority as a function of the reception of the gospel by the whole church is of profound significance. The locus of authority in Anglicanism is envisaged as the whole congregation empowered with the authority of the gospel and gathered in common prayer to confess their sins, to receive absolution, to pray for each other and for the world, to give praise to God and to receive the gospel sacraments. This is the basic event from which the People of God, both lay and clergy alike, take on their character as community.[21]

At the same time there is no reluctance shown, on the basis of this shared authority, to identify different gradations of authority within the community on a hierarchic pattern. But although the ordained apostolic ministry of bishop, priest and deacon is carried over into Anglicanism, it is set in a context which expresses, both in liturgical practice and in church government, the authority of the

---

[20] G.R. Evans, *Authority in the Church* (Norwich 1990) p.89.

[21] S.W. Sykes, 'An Anglican Response', *Concilium* 148, 1981 p.33.

whole People of God under the gospel. The place of the gospel is publicly expressed precisely in those parts of the Book of Common Prayer, Ordinal and Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion which explicitly refer to the authority of the ordained ministry. Articles VI ('Of the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation'), XX ('Of the authority of the Church') and XXI ('Of the authority of General Councils') deny to the ordained person, or body of such persons, the right to require any doctrine to be believed as necessary to salvation, which may not be read in Scripture, and since the Scriptures are read to the whole people in their own tongue, it is assumed that they will be in a position to judge. At the ordination of deacon, priest and bishop a Bible or New Testament is handed to the newly ordained and authority to read it, to preach or to administer discipline by means of it. All exercise of authority, therefore, is subject to the publicly available Scriptures and is bound to be exercised, therefore, according to open criteria.

In short, there are specific grades and functions within the authority-bearing community. There is a specific, ordained hierarchy and there is provision for the exercise of discipline. But there is also an awareness of the undesirability of clerical, especially episcopal, tyranny and a clear expectation that argument about the faith will be conducted openly on the basis of Scripture.

Early Anglicanism offers clear evidence for the advancement of the laity at the expense of diminution of clerical power. The evidence lies primarily in the position of monarch and Parliament in relation to the enactment of the Reformation; but it is strongly supported in the nature of Cranmer's eucharistic liturgy. Cranmer's own arguments against the sacrifice of the mass rest heavily upon the undesirability of the power it bestows upon the clergy.[22] The principle that the laity through access to and knowledge of the Scriptures read in their own language in the Church, may hear the gospel and respond fully to the grace of God, manifestly and significantly alters the position of the ordained minister, no matter how high the doctrine of the ministry or how conservative the doctrine of the sacraments may be.

2. The 1662 Act of Uniformity.

The resentments created by the overthrow of episcopacy in the Commonwealth period contributed directly to the amendment in the Ordinal, passed by Parliament in 1662, requiring episcopal ordination for any one to be 'accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest or Deacon in the

---

[22] R.T. Beckwith, 'The Anglican Eucharist to the Restoration' in *The Study of Liturgy*, ed C. Jones, (London 1983) p.267.

Church of England', and to the draconian terms of the Act of Uniformity. Norman Sykes commented:

> 'This statute thus laid down the same conditions for ministers of the foreign reformed church as for Protestant dissenters at home wishing henceforth to exercise the ministry of the Church of England ... The Act marked indeed the parting of the ways.'[23]

This was a development of great importance. Article XXXVI and the Elizabethan Ordinal had ratified episcopacy without stating whether or not this form was an integral part of the Church of England.[24] Now a step had been taken whereby it was no longer possible to regard this aspect of church order as part of the inessentials. Although it was by means of the concept of inessentials that Papal supremacy had been ended and a lay reformation began subject only to the Word of God, after 1662 it had to be argued that episcopacy did at least belong to the essentials. Indeed more than that: episcopacy was understood to be part of an unalterable divine law made manifest in the Scriptures; those churches which failed to maintain this order, howsoever they might claim to model themselves on the Word of God, were in serious breach of divine law.

The post-restoration Church faced Anglicanism with an acute dilemma. The dilemma can be put like this: the Henrician reformation was a lay reformation against clerical

---

[23] N. Sykes, *Old Priest and New Presbyter* (Cambridge 1956) pp.114-117.

[24] W.P. Haugaard, *Elizabeth and the English Reformation* (Cambridge 1968) p.272.

domination bringing to an end not merely the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome, but in Cranmer's liturgical work, the intercessory functions of the clergy. The Restoration, however, incorporated a wholly incompatible element into this fundamentally Lutheran picture by attributing to the act of episcopal ordination a potency separate from the reformed conception of the ministry of the word and sacraments. The view of episcopacy established at the Restoration allowed the clerical caste to maintain a central position in the Church of England, and paved the way for attempts in the nineteenth century to elevate the role of the clergy, at the expense of the laity, in the government of the Church.

Another significant shift in principle during the seventeenth century which had implications for the nineteenth century was the Toleration Act of 1689. This marked an important constitutional change as a movement towards the reversal of the Acts of Uniformity.[25] Although the Act of Toleration itself was relatively weak, dealing particularly with freedom of worship, according to strict parameters, for Protestant dissenters (it did not include Roman Catholics or non-Christian citizens), it did mark a shift of principle. The old ideal of the identity of Church and State which was enunciated by Richard Hooker, and which affected the civil and ecclesiastical history of the Reformation, was set aside. The role (envisaged by Hooker)

[25] *Report of the Joint Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury on the Position of the Laity in the Church* p.48.

for Parliament as a lay synod - a representative assembly of the laity of the Church of England - became increasingly unrealistic and was to be the source of much debate in the nineteenth century.

3. The Eighteenth Century Church.

The laity came into their own in the eighteenth century. As Norman Sykes has written:

> 'The eighteenth century witnessed a steady and progressive laicisation of religion ... Hostile critics have preferred to describe the process as the secularisation of the church; but it may be contended that the laicisation of religion is a more accurate phrase; for albeit the clerical order generally was characterised by a markedly unprofessional temper, the laity not only deemed themselves a proper and necessary part of the organisation of the Christian church but acted upon that persuasion with vigour and conviction.'[26]

Geoffrey Best has delightfully characterized the affinity of educated clergy and laity in this period:

> 'The clergyman unless he were seriously affected by evangelicalism could farm, shoot and fish like his lay neighbours and relations. If he could afford it he took his family to London in the season, or to one of the spas. He married and begot children and shared with his lay contemporaries that sacred regard for the promotion of family interests which marked the generations of Walpole and the Pitts.'[27]

---

[26] N. Sykes, *Church and State in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge 1934) p.379.

[27] G. Best, *Temporal Pillars* (Cambridge 1964) p.48.

The description of Parson Trulliber in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* is instructive as an example of the lay character of many of the clergy of the time:

> 'stript into his waistcoat, with an apron on and a pail in his hand, just come from serving his hogs; for Mr Trulliber was a parson on Sundays, but all the other six might properly be called a farmer.'[28]

The role of the parish church and its lay officials in village life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be reconstructed in detail, from the evidence of surviving churchwardens' accounts.[29] The churchwardens played a part in the parish in many ways more important than that of the parson. From the sixteenth century onwards they had heaped upon them a mass of secular duties relating to matters as diverse as the care of the poor, the maintenance of the highways and the control of vermin, all of these tasks having little relevance to their main and original function of maintaining the church and providing the things necessary for the conduct of services.[30] Vestry meetings commonly took place in churches and the principal officers of the parish - the churchwardens, the overseers of the poor and

---

[28] Cited in A. Armstrong, *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850* (London 1973) p.12.

[29] J.C. Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts* (London 1913) pp.195-210.

[30] D.M. Palliser, 'Introduction: The Parish in Perspective', in ed S.J. Wright, *Parish, Church and People* (London 1988) p.14.

the supervisors of the highways - were elected at the Easter vestry in the parish church.[31]

The control of the laity over the eighteenth century Church of England through patronage was extensive. Over half the livings in England were in the hands of lay patrons and the Crown alone held the appointment of all bishops and deans and the nomination of 1,048 livings in its gift.[32]

Thus there are two important trends within eighteenth century Anglicanism. First its engagement with the world:

> 'In a variety of ways the eighteenth century Church of England seems to have maintained her cultural and religious presence by succumbing largely to the prevailing concerns of the society of which she was a part.'[33]

Secondly, the absence, for the most part, of a professional divide between clergy and laity:

> 'The eighteenth century Anglican clergy's growing affinity with many sections of the English laity doubtless had some connection with the style and substance of their ministry.'[34]

Both of these trends were addressed somewhat differently in the nineteenth century. While there was concern for social welfare and reform within nineteenth century Anglicanism,

---

[31] J.H. Betley, *Church and Parish* (London 1987) p.123.

[32] Armstrong, *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850* p.11.

[33] J. Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England 1646-1689* (New Haven and London 1991) p.385.

[34] Ibid., pp.385-86.

there was also much attention devoted to the internal workings of the institutional church. As for the professional divide between clergy and laity, the nineteenth century witnessed a clerical renaissance in which the laity (not without a struggle) were demoted to the role of second class citizens within the Church of England.

4. The Nineteenth Century Church.

Nineteenth century Britain saw the established Church of England in the throes of a major crisis of identity. Christianity itself was threatened simultaneously by the alienation of educated people as a result of the spirit of free enquiry into science, history and theology; by the belief of many that the Scriptures were incompatible with new high moral standards; by the suggestion that the Old Testament did not represent literal truth; by the militant unbelief of the secularists; and by the failure to arouse the interest of the new urban working classes. All Christian denominations and sects were affected, but the Church of England more than any or all of the rest. The Church of England claimed to comprehend all the Christians of England and Wales, yet it patently did not do so in a Britain in which the existence and practice of other religious organizations were formally tolerated and, moreover, in which their members were accorded civil rights.

The crisis of the established church reached its climax with the repeal of the Test Acts (1828) and the emancipation of the Catholics (1829) but when this crisis was past, another presented itself - attacks upon the Church's temporal privileges. Militant dissenters assailed the Church's monopoly over rites of passage (births, marriages and deaths), demanded freedom from paying rates to support a state church, claimed control over the education of their own young and the right to university degrees. Such agitation fuelled the activities of the Libertarian Society, which campaigned for disestablishment.

Members of the Church of England reacted by attempting to locate afresh the source of authority of the established church. Broadly speaking, Evangelicals sought this authority in the Scriptures; Broad Churchmen in the individual conscience which interpreted the Scriptures; High Churchmen within the Church itself. This search for authority led to some rethinking of the relationship between church and state - a relationship which had been defined by the English Reformation of the sixteenth century and little refined since then; this had important implications for the way the role of the laity was envisaged.

The nineteenth century saw a shift, albeit largely in institutional terms, in understanding of the laity. To analyse this, this section will be divided into four parts:

a) The perceived role of the laity among the Latitudinarians, Evangelicals and Anglo-catholics.
b) The professionalizing of clergy and its effect on the laity.
c) The professionalizing of differentiated laity.
d) The development of the Church of England's organization.

a) The perceived role of the laity.

The Latitudinarian or 'Broad Church' strand within Anglicanism was concerned above all with toleration, an end to religious controversy, and the strengthening of the bond between Church and state as a means towards national unity. It stood aloof from the more heated matters of theological controversy and ecclesiastical order. The two most important contributors to the conception of the national church and the role of the laity within it were both laymen: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Arnold.

Precisely what was meant by the national church and what its essential function was, Coleridge attempted to make clear by adopting the terminology of medieval France, which divided the realm into three estates. The first estate, composed of the landowners, worked for permanence. The second estate, composed of the manufacturing and distributing classes, worked for progress. The third estate composed of the learned and teaching classes, worked for the spiritual and

cultural betterment of the people.[35] This last group was the national church which Coleridge liked to call the 'Clerisy'. It was a veritable 'Broad Church'. It included not merely the theologians but 'the learned of all denominations': 'the sages and professors of the law and jurisprudence, of medicine and physiology, of music, of military and civil architecture, of the physical sciences'.[36] For Coleridge it was an essential function of the state to promote the national Church and thereby educate its citizens.[37] A significant result of such education would be the promotion of intellectual, religious and social unity. Coleridge's 'Clerisy' made no differentiation between clergy and laity: it was a gathering of intellectual and moral elite within society who would work for the betterment of that society.

While Coleridge's vision of the national Church was a tolerant society of the intellectual elite whose role it was to educate and civilize, Arnold was concerned that the national church should have a popular base. Listing the faults of the Church of England he said first that since it was connected with the crown and the aristocracy and since its clergy were condescending superiors, the common people

---

[35] S.T. Coleridge, *On the Constitution of the Church and State according to the Idea of Each* (London 1830) p60 and passim.

[36] Ibid., p.53.

[37] R.C. Sanders, *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement* (Durham, North Carolina 1942) p.86.

could not regard it with affection; and secondly that its government was faulty in not being democratic enough.[38] To improve it he suggested that the laity be allowed a larger share in the Church government; that the constitution should be made more popular; and 'that the power of the bishops should be rendered more efficient by the institution of such checks as might allow of its exercise without danger'.[39]

One of the points on which Arnold insisted most was that not just the clergy but the whole body of the Church should have an active share in its concerns, and that the church should be 'a living society, not an inert mass of mere hearers and subjects ... authoritatively taught and absolutely ruled by one small portion of its members'.[40] The Church should be a society of Christians all of whom were active rather than a mere object for religious instruction, the business of which was particular and which rendered many people passive. However Arnold did not want the Church to become too democratic or to lose its dignity. Rather he searched for the ideal: 'to make the Church at once popular and dignified - to give people their just share in its government, without introducing a democratic spirit - to give the clergy a

---

[38] T Arnold, *The Miscellaneous Works* (New York 1845) pp.224ff.

[39] Ibid., p.121.

[40] T. Arnold, *The Christian Life, Its Course, Its Hinderances and Its Helps: Sermons Preached Mostly in the Chapel of Rugby School* (London 1845) p.xi.

thorough sympathy with their flocks without lowering their rank and tone'.[41]

For Arnold the object of the state was not merely that of conserving body and goods, but that of promoting the whole happiness of its people. Since the object of the state was the same as that of the Church, the two institutions should be one and the same:

> 'The only perfect and entirely wholesome freedom is when the Church and the State are both free and both one.'[42]
>
> 'Religious society is only civil society fully enlightened: the State in its highest perfection becomes the Church.'[43]

Thus the position of the Latitudinarians as evidenced in the thought of Coleridge and Arnold was to unite the Church with all forms of Protestant dissent and make it national. And within this national church to give the laity their just place as an essential component within the government of the Church.

The Evangelicals were more or less contented with the sixteenth century religious settlement and the position of the laity within it. They preferred to be active in the parishes than to be active in politics, but were dragged into the debates about Church organization, authority and

---

[41] Ibid., p.xlviii.

[42] A.P. Stanley, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold* Vol II (New York 1895) p.382.

[43] Arnold, *The Miscellaneous Works* p.125.

relations with the state in the 1860's by the position of the ritualists which seemed to threaten their own existence.[44] The growing power of 'sacerdotalism' (as Evangelicals termed it) caused the Evangelicals to oppose the revival of Convocation on the grounds that it would limit the power of the state, infringe the Royal Supremacy and subject the laity to clerical and episcopal domination.[45]

Evangelicals saw the relationship between Church and state as simply a matter of pragmatism: 'We consider the primary end of government as a purely temporal end, the protection of the persons and property of men.'[46] They had no definite political philosophy 'only a clear and consistent Christian philanthropy'.[47] They occupied a similar position with regard to the improvement and legitimation of the Established Church:

> 'The work of the Church of England was important to the Evangelical scheme, more for its diffusive contribution to the general righteousness than for its centrality as a divinely appointed vehicle of truth.'[48]

---

[44] R. O'Day, *The Debate on the English Reformation* (London 1986) p.85.

[45] K.A. Thompson, *Bureaucracy and Church Reform* (Oxford 1970) p.98.

[46] Lord Macaulay, 'Gladstone on Church and State', *The Edinburgh Review* April 1839, vol 69, p 273.

[47] D Roberts, *Victorian Origins of the Welfare State* (New Haven 1960) p.99.

[48] G.F.A Best, 'The Evangelicals and the Established Church in the Early Nineteenth Century', *The Journal of Theological Studies* vol x, pt 1 (April 1959) p.66.

They preferred to work through their own societies, although Bishop Law of Chester might brand these as 'dangerous to the State and Establishment' and Pusey attacked them vehemently.[49] The Evangelicals resisted the pressures generated by the Oxford Movement that they should allow their work to be done by the Church in her corporate capacity. The leaders of the Evangelicals of the nineteenth century, men like Lord Shaftesbury, were lay and were prepared to resist any change in church order which was detrimental to the laity.

The third strand within nineteenth century Anglicanism, the Tractarians, were far from content with the sixteenth century religious settlement. Unlike the old High Churchmen who had looked to the Reformation to delineate the nature of the church's authority in matters spiritual, Newman and others of the circle looked much further back to the powerful and authoritarian medieval church which had pronounced on all matters of doctrine and had directed the lives of all believers.[50]

The Oxford Movement had little interest in a state which had become secularized. Thus Pusey wrote to Gladstone in 1849:

---

[49] E. Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society* (London 1899) pp.134, 384.

[50] O'Day, *The Debate on the English Reformation* p.85.

> 'What the State is to do when it casts off the guidance of the Church and to act upon some heathen principle, I know not what.'[51]

The Tractarians advocated disestablishment and a return to Church government of its own affairs. The government envisaged had little place for the laity. Pusey makes this clear in his response to a suggestion that the laity be admitted to diocesan synods:

> 'The power of the laity is a growing power. To admit them into the Synods and then exclude them from what is to both parties of most real interest, will, I am persuaded never hold ... I look with terror on any admission of the laity into synods. It at once invests them with an ecclesiastical office which will develop itself sooner or later, I believe, to the destruction of the Faith.'[52]

Newman's first tract - Thoughts on the Ministerial Commission - asked the crucial question: 'On what are we to rest our authority when the state deserts us?' His answer came loud and clear: 'Our apostolic descent ... apostolic succession.' The Church was perceived as an autonomous institution and its authority was vested not in the state but in the episcopacy through apostolic succession. The authority of the ordained was clearly set up over and against that of the laity. The view of a 'high estimate of Episcopacy as God's ordinance' (Pusey's own analysis of Puseyism) had a long Anglican precedent.[53]

---

[51] H.P Liddon, *Life of Pusey* (London 1893) Vol iii, p.184.

[52] Ibid., Vol iii, p.342.

[53] Ibid., Vol ii, p.140.

b) The professionalizing of the clergy.

From the Reformation onwards, the relationship between clergy and laity was a vexed question. Was the relationship precisely equivalent to that of professional and client? There was conflict and confusion about the clergyman's place. Mixed expectations of the nature of ordained ministry were held by the Crown, rank and file clergy and laity. Part of the difficulty was embedded in the nature of the English Reformation itself. There was within Anglicanism both an understanding that the Reformation marked a return to the primitive condition of the New Testament church, a return to a priesthood of all believers which denied a mandatory priesthood between God and human beings; and also an understanding that the existence of an institutionalized clerical hierarchy who saw themselves as called by God to teach and preach the Word of God, to administer the sacraments and to offer pastoral care to God's people were experts in those fields.[54]

The Crown also had stated views on the relationship between clergy and the state. The clergy were the agents of law and order: they were the voices of the state church. The Crown preferred a clear line of separation between the professionals (the clergy) and their clients (the laity). Yet it was unwilling to permit the clergy the independence

[54] R. O'Day, *The English Clergy: the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession* (Leicester 1979) passim

and status which many coveted. The Church's ability to legislate for itself was severely restricted. Gradually Convocation's position as the Church's parliament withered away. Only nominally after 1717 was Convocation the mouthpiece and talking place of the clergy and the legislative body of the Church.[55]

These boundaries were those within which the clergy of the Church of England had to operate down to the nineteenth century. The clergy had organs of internal government (Convocations, synods) and of internal policing and discipline (the Courts Christian) which might have been expected to guarantee 'professional' independence. But the Crown, Parliament and individual laymen held their powers severely in check. However the clergy's position as an independent profession was not only politically but also financially weak. He who pays the piper calls the tune and maintains considerable influence. One of the fundamental difficulties which the ecclesiastical hierarchy faced stemmed from the fact that it did not pay the piper or even select who was to be paid.

It was against this background that a section of clergy developed an awareness of the urgent need for reform and of the need to define parameters of independence. The role of the clergy became increasingly defined over and against that of the laity. The Oxford Movement in particular took full

[55] R. O'Day, 'The Anatomy of a Profession: the Clergy of the Church of England', in *The Professions in Early Modern England* ed W. Prest (London 1987) pp.37-40.

advantage of the ecclesiological possibility within the Church of England for a strong development of the power of the Orders. Newman argued that it was time to return to the priesthood's 'apostolic descent' and the ordained were instructed to 'magnify your office'.[56]

However for many clergy the concern with occupational professionalism had less to do with theory and more to do with reform and improving their quality of their work. Clergy realised that if they were to fulfil their pastoral charge, they had need of expertise. Recent work has suggested that it was in the Victorian period that the need for a specific body of theoretical and practical expertise was both appreciated and answered.[57] The emergence of theological colleges, the burgeoning of clerical associations and the plethora of handbooks, journals and directories suggest that the Victorian clergy were aware of their corporate identity and their need to legitimize their professional role through possession of a common expertise.[58]

This clerical professionalism was seen particularly in the realm of public worship. While in the eighteenth century

[56] J.H. Newman, Tract I in *Tracts for the Times* Vol (London 1835) p.4.

[57] A. Russell, *The Clerical Profession* (London 1980) passim.

[58] R. O'Day, 'The Clerical Renaissance in Victorian England and Wales' in *Religion in Victorian Britain* Vol 1, Traditions, ed G. Parsons (Manchester 1988) p.194.

the laity had been directly involved in it with, for instance, the group of singers and musicians responsible for the Tate and Brady Psalm, in the nineteenth century the new standards of public worship which were insisted upon by the clergy radically altered the old pattern.[59] Thomas Hardy in *Under the Greenwood Tree* recorded the effect of these changes made by a new incumbent. Reluctantly one of the musicians was forced to concede that in changed times new attitudes had replaced those of former generations:

> 'Parson Maybold, every tradesman d'like to have his own way in his workshop, and Millstock Church is yours.'[60]

In his Preface, Hardy noted that whilst the quality of the music might be improved, this was achieved at the cost of 'an important union of interest' between parson and parishioners.[61]

Public worship is a good indicator of the way the role of both clergy and laity changed. By the late nineteenth century, the laity became increasingly consumers of professional services provided by the clergy. Like the services offered by other professional people, the services offered by the clergy were done to and for the individual by professional personnel. This accentuated the sociological gap between clergy and laity. Ironically, the control of

---

[59] Russell, *The Clerical Profession* pp.72-73.

[60] T. Hardy, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (London 1914) p.97.

[61] Ibid., p.v.

the profession over its own affairs arose in inverse proportion to the declining interest of the state and the laity as a body in the Church itself.

c) The professionalizing of differentiated laity.

The demographic and social changes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries meant an expansion of the pastoral ministry particularly in urban centres.[62] The clergy were forced to reconsider the effectiveness of parish organizations and the deployment of personnel, and they became increasingly aware that if they were to fulfil their pastoral charge, then they had need of additional help.[63] This had important consequences for the laity. With the state assuming many of the municipal duties traditionally undertaken by church parish officers, the role of the laity began to be envisaged as being a pastoral resource at the disposal of the clergy.[64]

Between 1830 and 1870, there developed two main types of parish lay worker within the Church of England: paid full-time lay helpers such as 'Scripture Readers' or 'Bible

---

[62] J. Grierson, *The Deaconess* (London 1981) p.16.

[63] G. Parsons, 'Reform, Revival and Realignment: The Experience of Victorian Anglicanism' in *Religion in Victorian Britain* ed Parsons, p.25.

[64] B. Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman* (Connecticut 1978) p.58.

Women'[65] and volunteer 'District Visitors'.[66] They were considered a pastoral necessity allowing the incumbent to concentrate on parts of his work which could not be delegated to anyone else. Their function was nicely summed up by the Revd. Harry Jones of London as 'sweeping the work up towards the chief'.[67] Their subordinate role to the clergy of the parish was always stressed. Indeed the district visitors and Bible women were more like amateur welfare officers under the control of the clergy than laywomen consciously exercising the priesthood of the laity. The district visitors were always the largest group numerically, there being just over seventy-four thousand of them in the year 1909-10.[68]

However one of the most significant developments during the nineteenth century, with important implications for an understanding of the laity within the Church of England, was the emergence of lay offices such as Reader, Evangelist and Deaconess. These mark an attempt by the Church to control and institutionalize particular ministries, and each of these three offices will be considered in turn.

With the office of Reader, great emphasis was laid upon the idea that it was a revival of an office operable in the

---

[65] B. Heeney, *The Women's Movement in the Church of England 1850-1930* (Oxford 1988) p.28.

[66] Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman* p.61.

[67] Heeney, *The Women's Movement in the Church of England* p.28.

[68] Ibid., p.27.

sixteenth century and ended in 1571. The sixteenth century Reader had apparently provided services in parishes where no clergyman was available.[69] The nineteenth century revival limited the scope of the office. In the Report on 'lay co-operation' of 1859, the Reader was to read lessons, say parts of Morning and Evening Prayer, say the Litany and visit the sick.[70] In 1866, a form of licence was agreed for the 'Office of Reader'. The Reader needed to be nominated by the incumbent of a parish, received a licence to exercise his office in that parish, and had to return his licence if he left the parish. No provision was made for public admission to the office, which was exercised by the granting of the bishop's licence.[71]

However, nearly twenty years later a new development took place. Resolutions passed by the Convocation of 1884 provided for the Admission of Readers to their office by the bishop, who should give to each newly admitted Reader a copy of the New Testament. In the Resolutions of Convocation in 1904, there was a requirement that readers give the same assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles as the clergy. Furthermore Readers were able to exercise their office in any parish to which they were invited.[72]

---

[69] R Martineau, *The Office and Work of a Reader* (London 1980) p.23.

[70] Ibid., p.24.

[71] Ibid., p.24.

[72] Ibid., p.25.

The significant aspect of the development of the Reader is the way in which it gradually conformed to clerical patterns. Ultimately the Reader's role was very much the NCO to the clergy officer.

In 1896, a committee was appointed of members of the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury 'to consider what steps may be taken to give a general recognition to the Order of Lay Evangelists founded in the diocese of Lichfield and similar organisations, and to extend and develop such work throughout the Church under episcopal authority and control'.[73] This latter phrase 'under episcopal authority and control' is crucial in understanding the development of the office of the Evangelist in the Church of England. The movement was towards professionalizing and employing those who performed such lay ministries.

The Report recognized that a lay ministry such as the office of Evangelist might be able to engage more readily with working class people than a highly educated clergy:

> 'An ordained ministry, drawn almost exclusively from the educated classes, seems to need supplementing for evangelistic effort by a lay ministry which, from actual experience of the manner of life of the working classes, is able to enter fully into their thoughts, their difficulties, and their requirements; and the want of such a ministry may be one reason for a certain

---

[73] Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, *Report of the Working Group on the Office of Evangelist* (1985) p.3.

> tendency on the part of the people to look on the Church as a class institution.'[74]

Furthermore the point is made that employment must be found for those engaging in Christ's work. The implication is that Christ's work within the Church needs not merely accreditation but also financial remuneration:

> 'There is a place and a vocation for every fruitful member of the Church in right of his baptism. We must make it clear to the people that we believe this, not only theoretically, but also practically. We must find employment for all those who appear to be called to give themselves to Christ's work.'[75]

The resolutions adopted by the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury in 1898 set in motion a complicated procedure for the training and certification of candidates before they would be admitted to the office of Evangelist.

The order of Deaconess was ambiguous in terms of lay ministry. First of all it was an 'order' rather than an 'office' which suggested that it had a place within the hierarchical order and yet it was always, from its first commissioning in 1861, considered a lay rather than an ordained ministry.[76] Secondly its form of commissioning was similar to an ordination with Deaconesses 'admitted in solemn form by the bishops with benediction, by laying on of hands'.[77] This lack of distinction between ordained and lay

[74] Ibid., p.3.

[75] Ibid., p.4.

[76] Grierson, *The Deaconess* p.21.

[77] Ibid., p.33.

is instructive. It seems that the Church of England wished to do one thing and say another. It did everything to a Deaconess that one would expect of an ordination, and yet it insisted on the lay character of the order of Deaconesses. This lack of clarity was also revealed in the way in which the order was justified. Much was made of theological and historical precedent. Scripture and the practice of the early church were cited; yet in reality the order was more carefully designed on the model operative at Kaiserswerth in Germany, than anywhere else.[78]

From an episcopal point of view, the order of Deaconess brought under the episcopal aegis women who would have worked in parishes in an *ad hoc* way without official ecclesiastical sanction. Episcopal control and centralization was the order of the day.

It is clear in analysing all three of the developments in lay ministry during the nineteenth century that the leitmotif throughout is the Church's institutionalizing and systematising of the spontaneous and the *ad hoc*. Lay ministry to be lay ministry had to be licensed and officially recognized and accredited. The differentiation of laity was being developed and finely tuned.

---

[78] Heeney, *The Women's Movement in the Church of England* P.68.

d) The development of the Church of England's organization.

The development of the Church of England's organization in the period 1850-90 can be seen as a search for an acceptable system of representative assemblies. The pressure to develop such a system came from many directions. Changes in the political power of the different social classes required the Church to seek to enlist middle class laymen to responsible positions in its organization if it was to influence public opinion in its favour, once it could no longer rely solely on its traditional ties with aristocracy and squires. This brought about a development of autonomous Church organizations and, consequently, a demand for representative diocesan and central authorities which could control that organization. However, it will be shown that the growth and structure of the various councils and conferences which appeared between 1850 and 1890 were not determined by any agreed theory in the Church. Rather, they were shaped by the defensive stand which the Church had to make against external attack whilst divided internally by party divisions.

The development of the Ecclesiastical Commission and Queen Anne's Bounty and the proliferation of voluntary societies had been required to meet the challenge presented by population increases and urbanization at a time when older sources of income and administrative provision were being eroded as the state became more secular and denominational equality was approached. Not only had Parliament ceased to

be the representative assembly of the laity of the Church of England but at the local level the ecclesiastical parish had ceased to be the civil parish in which the vestry, composed of all householders, undertook both the upkeep of the church and the general administration of the parish.[79] The passing of Gladstone's Compulsory Church Rate Abolition Bill in 1868 abolished the compulsory church rate and the church was thrown back on the voluntary system and endowments for its finances.

It seemed that the Church needed to organize itself and address these issues centrally. It was thought that the revival of Convocation, practically dormant since 1717, might provide the authoritative central policy-making and co-ordinate body for the Church. However, the Evangelicals were suspicious of a clergy-only synod. Lord Shaftesbury presided at a meeting in 1852 to protest against the revival of Convocation. He said that Convocation meant priestly despotism. He was not opposed to the plan which Gladstone put to him, of including laity in such a synod.[80] But this was not a plan which most High Churchmen would be prepared to support. However opinion on the issue of representation was not divided according to strict party lines. Pusey, for instance, argued for the representation of the laity and clergy upon a central Church Council that would be able to

[79] *Report of the Joint Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury on the Position of the Laity in the Church* p.50.

[80] Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society* p.11.

pressure the bench of bishops. Bishop Blomfield of London eventually changed his mind to support the revival of Convocation because of the evident opposition to a mixed clerical-lay assembly.[81]

Convocation was revived in 1852 and during the 1850's purely clerical diocesan synods were re-introduced. These developments were seen to form a movement to assert clerical control of church government and clerical affairs. They were generally welcomed by High Churchmen. But in the latter half of the century there were still many among the clergy and laity who saw exclusively clerical representation as undesirable, and who could not see a clear line dividing clerical professional concerns from those of the church as a whole. As Archdeacon Henry Hoare put it:

> 'This is the great defect in the constitution of our Convocation; it represents the conscience and will and expresses the voice of the clergy, not of the Church. This was suited to its original function of imposing taxes on the clergy, but unfits it for being the legislative council of the whole church.'[82]

Hoare's ideas (expressed in his *Hints on Lay Co-operation* of 1850) continued to influence opinion. In 1859 the Church Institution ('An Association of Clergy and Laity for Defensive and General Purposes') was begun. In Ely Diocese in 1864, Archdeacon Emery organized a system of ruridecanal,

---

[81] O'Day, 'The Clerical Renaissance in Victorian England and Wales' p.194.

[82] Hoare, 'Change 1841' quoted J.H. Rigg *A Comparative View of Church Organization* (London 1897) p.96.

archdiaconal and diocesan conferences with both clergy and lay membership. Church Congresses began in 1861. These attracted clergy and laity of all parties in a defence of the Church of England against external attack. However, there were considerable problems in developing any of these bodies as governing bodies of the church. For instance, Church Congresses and Church Institutions both lacked authority because they had no formal system of representation and no legal status within the church and state.

Even the Archbishops disagreed as to the best means of governing the church and its affairs. Archbishop Tait of Canterbury (1868-83) believed that the laity were best represented in Parliament but retarded the centralization of ecclesiastical representation and government. His successor, Archbishop Benson (1883-96), supported the growth of a centralized organization but wanted lay representation.[83]

In 1885 the clergy of the Lower House of Canterbury agreed to create a House of Laymen. As far as the clergy of the Lower House were concerned, the main function of the House of Laymen would be to influence the House of Commons in the Church's favour. However, as one speaker pointed out, because the House of Laymen was forbidden to discuss matters of faith and doctrine and was not able to debate and vote on

---

[83] Thompson, *Bureaucracy and Church Reform* p.118.

equal terms with the clergy and in the same chamber, it could not expect to possess much authority either in church or in the eyes of the House of Commons. Its status was that of a separate and subordinate debating forum for lay representatives elected by the diocesan conferences; Convocation alone possessed constitutional authority.[84]

The voluntary status of the House of Laymen convinced neither the laity nor Parliament that the lay voice was truly represented in the Church's internal councils. In 1901 a joint committee of Convocation was set up to look at 'The Position of the Laity'. The report was produced in 1902.

The Report 'On the Position of the Laity' is of significance because it was the first to focus exclusively on the laity in the Church:

> 'We have endeavoured to summarise the historical facts and phenomena which illustrate the part taken by Christian laymen in the administration of the Church from the day of Pentecost to our own times.'[85]

The report criticized the way in which nineteenth century legislation had systematically separated the ecclesiastical and the civil:

> 'The tendency of modern legislation has been uniformity in the direction of so separating ecclesiastical from civil offices and duties, as to destroy the old

---

[84] Ibid., p.123.

[85] *Report of the Joint Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury* p.3.

> hypothesis of the relation of the machinery of national government to the Church, to introduce some ambiguity into the status of Church officers, and to minimize almost to the point of obliteration, the direct influence of the Church laity, as such, upon the government of Church affairs.'[86]

The point is made that the terms 'citizen' and 'churchman' are no longer synonymous:

> 'Thus the legislature has withdrawn from the Church the responsibility, and to a large extent, the opportunity, for the performance of duties which of right come within the province of the Christian laity; and has by its legislative measures made it clear that in England 'citizen' and 'churchman' are no longer convertible terms, that a 'parishioner' is not now so called because he is a member of the Church within a given ecclesiastical area, but because he is a ratepayer in a particular locality; thus compelling the Church to readjust its relations to the civil power and to find a definition of membership which in this country was unnecessary before.'[87]

Although the Report is telling in what it bewails as having been lost, it is equally telling in its criticism of the position of the House of Laymen:

> 'Diocesan, Archidiaconal, Rurideconal Conferences, Parish Church Councils and Provincial Houses of Laymen have been called into existence, but they have failed to rouse enthusiasm for they have no legal status, they have no power to legislate.'[88]

The immediate result of the Report was the creation of the Representative Church Council in 1903. The new Council did not supersede Convocation, and it was a purely deliberative body composed basically of the House of Convocation and the House of Laymen meeting in joint session. But it was this

---

[86] Ibid., p.50.

[87] Ibid., p.53.

[88] Ibid., p.54.

Council which recommended the appointment of the Commission on church and state in 1913, which in turn produced the basic proposals for the subsequent constitution of the Church Assembly which came into being in 1919.

In retaining the relationship between church and state the hierarchy made it impossible to assert clerical control. The Church also continued to claim that it was the church for all Englishmen; in an age when Englishmen expected representation in civil life, representation was demanded in religion. The laity had of course always participated in Anglican religious life both in an institutional and a spiritual sense, but the nineteenth century saw intensified articulation of their desires, perhaps in reaction to revived clericalism. The exclusive professional spirit among the clergy had been, if not defeated, at least dampened and rendered ineffective by the outbreak of the First World War. Convocation - which was the nearest equivalent to a professional association of the whole clergy - was not allowed to become the sole governing body of the Church.

Thus from the 1530's to 1914, it is possible to discern the two recurring themes within Anglican ecclesiology: the recognition of the position and the authority of the laity; and the prosecution of a strong theology of orders and the displacement of the laity. The sixteenth century marks the theological base of the former theme, a theme which remains

the dominant leitmotif until the eighteenth century. However, in the seventeenth century a discordant note is sounded. With the post-Restoration understanding of the episcopate as an essential mark of the Church, the possibility of the advocacy of a strong theology of orders is presented. The possibility is realized and exploited by the Tractarians in the nineteenth century, and together with the concern among many clergy for professional status, it gives rise to clericalism. The shifting balance of power within the Church of England from the laity to the clergy is exemplified in the discussion about the role of the laity in Church government. The term 'lay ascendancy' used of the sixteenth century Church seems thoroughly misplaced when applied to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Church. By 1914, to all intents and purposes, there was a clerical ascendancy in the Church of England.

CHAPTER II: AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND 1914-1985

The aim of this chapter is to continue the historical survey of the Church of England's understanding of the role of the laity from 1914 until 1985 (the publication of *All Are Called*, the first official report positing a theology of laity). The survey will show an element of departure from the nineteenth century picture of the laity. The twentieth century (particularly post-1945) witnesses a change in theological climate away from a strong theology of orders towards the possibility of a theology of laity. The nature of this development and its causes will be examined in this chapter.

The chapter will be divided into eight sections, the number of sections revealing the extent of activity in thinking about the role of the laity. The first section will attempt an introductory oversight of the period, picking out particular historical and cultural trends. Thereafter the order of the sections is roughly according to chronology. The sections are:

1) Historical and cultural trends

2) Church government

3) Theological thinking on the role of the laity

4) Councils: Anglican, Catholic and Ecumenical

5) The differentiated laity

6) Liturgical developments

7) Educational developments

8) Recent Church of England Reports 1983-85.

1. Historical and Cultural Trends.

The accommodation of the Church to a world grown more secular - the secularisation of thought and patterns of behaviour within the religious culture itself - has been the dominant trend in twentieth century British religious history.[1] Organizational decline , measured by Sunday attendance figures, has been an important part of this trend. The Anglican Church, along with other churches, lost ground during the First World War. The decline was arrested in the 1920's but by the early 1930's indices of total membership and membership density (membership as a percentage of adult population) were again in decline. The Second World War exacerbated this trend and the recovery which followed in the late 1940's and early 1950's was minimal even in comparison with the shortlived

[1] A.D. Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain* (London 1981) p.105.

upturn after the First World War. Worse was to follow. Since the 1960's declining membership and attendance have presented a consistent picture of massive crisis.[2]

The Anglican Church linked consistently with the temporal authority of the state has always tended, however reluctantly, to come to terms with change in its cultural environment; and this instinct has in some cases been reinforced by an acute awareness of the alternatives. As early as 1936 for example, Bishop Barnes of Birmingham recognized that secularisation, with its 'new zeitgeist' of rationalistic humanism, had left Anglicanism facing the popular alternative of adaption or decline into sectarianism. Twentieth century Britain had become in Bishop Barnes' opinion a secular society. 'The historic churches - the Church of England included - must adapt themselves to this zeitgeist or become sectarian minorities, struggling, highly organized, probably waspish.'[3]

The theme of adaptation to and engagement with the secular world became an important generator in the development of thinking about the role of the laity. As Hans-Reudi Weber wrote:

> 'Never in Church history since its initial period has the role and responsibility of the laity in

---

2 Ibid., p.77.

3 Cited in G.L.M. Harvey, *The Church in the Twentieth Century* (London 1936) p.xv.

> church and world been a matter of so basic, systematic, comprehensive and intensive discussion in the total *oikoumene* as today.'[4]

The truth of this statement is reflected not only in the reports of the first three Assemblies of the World Council of Churches but also in the increased volume of literature on the subject. The new factor in all of this was not lay initiative; of that there was a great deal in the nineteenth century, as has been seen. It is the theological awareness of the laity and their significance which is new. The seeds go back at least to 1937 and the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State. In the preparatory volume for that conference, J.H. Oldham wrote that:

> 'if the Christian faith is in the present and future to bring about changes, as it has done in the past in the thoughts, habits and practices of society it can only do this through being the living, working faith of multitudes of lay men and women conducting the ordinary affairs of life.'[5]

Increasingly in the period after the Second World War, the laity were seen much more in terms of their potential for mission in the world: the potential for bringing Christ to bear upon the secular.

The reasons for this new understanding of, and emphasis on, the laity are not difficult to find. There had been the decline in attendance at churches. Life was being

---

[4] H.-R. Weber and S.C. Neill, *The Layman in Christian History* (London 1963) p.377.

[5] Cited in K. Bliss, *We the People* (London 1963) p.59.

increasingly secularized and the influence of bishops and clergy on public affairs accordingly diminished. At the same time modern Biblical scholarship had brought into the forefront of ecumenical thinking the image of the Church as God's people rather than as a hierarchical institution.

This development of thinking about the laity was brought into sharper focus in the Church of England during the 1960's. The two key questions which fuelled debate were firstly, the place of the laity in the Church and in the world, and secondly the nature of ministry, ordained and lay. In 1962 the Keble Group, which believed that any scheme for pastoral reform and any reconsideration of the task of ministry 'which did not enlist the laity as equal partners was wrong in theory and useless in practice', held a conference, the papers of which were gathered and published as 'The Layman's Church'.[6] These papers represent a distillation of the very wide discussion of this topic under the leadership of people like J.H. Oldham, Kenneth Grubb, Kathleen Bliss and Ralph Morton, which was to result in a new understanding of the place of the laity in the Church.

However it is not only the Church which is concerned about the laity. The development of the professions over the last one hundred years has produced 'laity' in the

---

[6] J.A.T. Robinson ed, *Layman's Church* (London 1963).

fields of medicine, law and accountancy, to name but three. In each of these fields it is possible to discern changes in the way in which the laity see themselves and their relationship to the professionals. The Consumer Guide now publishes a do-it-yourself tax guide; attempts are made to break the monopoly of solicitors in the area of conveyancing, and increasingly the patient is seen as a collaborator with doctors and nurses in aiding diagnosis, monitoring progress and healing. In other more modern professions such as probation, youth work and social services, there have been moves to recruit, train and develop the use of volunteers.

There has also been a significant growth of voluntary organizations and self-help groups over the last twenty years. In many ways these are mirrored closely in the Church. Fundamental to this process of social change has been the provision of education in the community through adult education centres, university extra-mural departments, the Open University, the Workers Educational Association and the training offered for volunteers. Part-time voluntary youth workers, Samaritans, bereavement and marriage counsellors, to name but a few, all receive highly professional training and take their place, alongside the paid 'professional' staff in the leadership of their organizations.

This ferment of change has led to a surge of interest within the Church. Considerable attention has been given

to 'ministry', both its meaning and exercise. Ecclesiastical employment has been reduced because of lack of funds. The myth of the omni-competent, 'one-man-band' vicar has been challenged. Clergy, with increasingly large parish areas, are recognized as being unable to cope alone. Ecumenical discussions and questions raised by the consideration of the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate have sparked a major re-examination of 'ministry'. Indeed, most significantly, the renewed concern for ministry is the result of efforts to understand the mission of the church and to deliver renewed forms of life and ministry through which the church can become more alive for mission.

2. Church Government.

The church reform campaign entered a new and more dynamic phase during the First World War. The character of that campaign and the part played in it by the Life and Liberty Movement from its formation in 1917 until the passing of the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act - the Enabling Act - in 1919 provides an insight into how the Church of England perceived the role of the laity.

The Life and Liberty Movement was formed specifically to play the part of a pressure group. It announced its intention in its first public utterance, a letter published in *The Times* on 20 June 1917 which stated:

> 'Those who are promoting this movement are convinced that we must win for the Church full power to control its own life, even at the cost, if necessary, of disestablishment and of whatever consequences that may involve.'[7]

There were three factors which built up the pressure for reform and provided the impetus for the Life and Liberty Movement. First was the recognition that the working classes had been alienated from the Church, as had been suggested by the social surveys of Charles Booth[8] and the personal experiences of Christian Socialists, to say nothing of the experiences of army chaplains during the First World War. It was clear that the Church had been failing to make an impact upon the nation. The second precipitating factor was the existence of the Report of the Archbishops' Committee on Church and state[9] whose proposals for the establishment of a new central council of assembly had not been taken up since they were presented in 1916. Finally there was the difficulty of securing church legislation from Parliament (such was the burden of secular legislation) and the need to increase the Church's own capacity for governing itself and for controlling its administrative agencies.

---

7 Quoted in K.A. Thompson, *Bureaucracy and Church Reform* (Oxford 1970) p.156.

8 C. Booth, 'Religious Influences' series of the *Life and Labour of the People of London* (London 1912).

9 *Report of the Archbishops' Committee on Church and State* (London 1916).

It was the great achievement of the Life and Liberty Movement that it managed for a short period to ally members of different parties into a pressure group with one priority: the passing of an Enabling Bill to give the Church of England a source of self-government. There are no statistics available as to how many members it attracted, but it seems to have been in the region of 100,000. The leaders were both clergy (William Temple, Charles Raven) and lay (A.A. David, Headmaster of Rugby, A. Mansbridge, Secretary of the Workers' Educational Association).

The Life and Liberty Movement's success in attracting the support of different church parties was purchased at the high price of sacrificing some cherished hopes. One real hope was that the working-class would be substantially represented in the new assembly. The Selborne Committee had recommended that diocesan conferences should have a definite proportion of working class representatives so that some of these would then be elected to the new assembly. One member of the committee, H.E.Kemp, maintained that the new scheme of church finance based on diocesan and central finance boards, and the wider issues of corporate church life, would attract the interests of the workers only if they were represented in the central councils of the Church by some of their own class:

> 'Class consciousness is a very real sentiment, and the workers will not be satisfied with any administration in which they have not a voice; mere selection by the authorities of the Church of

> apparently suitable advisers will not meet the needs of the case. What is needed both in Church and State is not that brilliant or fortunate individuals may be lifted into another class, but that the working classes may be recognized through their representatives as an active, thinking part of the corporate whole, and this can only be done through some form of election.'[10]

However the Grand Committee of the Representative Church Council disapproved of the concept of class representation and the proposal for working class representatives was dropped.

The other concession that was dropped by the Life and Liberty Movement was that Confirmation should be a franchise qualification for those electing individuals to a Church Assembly. Originally the Movement had supported the recommendation that Confirmation should be the franchise qualification, but this offended many Broad Churchmen whose support was indispensable.

The Liberal Churchman's Union issued a memorandum in its publication *The Modern Churchman* in January 1918 which claimed that a Confirmation franchise would exclude millions of Church of England members, and added:

> 'Nor should it be forgotten that Confirmation is to some extent a class distinction. For the children of well-to-do churchmen are confirmed almost as a matter of course, whereas among the wage earners Confirmation is exceptional.'[11]

---

[10] *Report of the Archbishops' Committee on Church and State* p.258.

[11] Cited in K.A. Thompson, *Bureaucracy and Church Reform* p.172.

In November 1918 the Council of the Life and Liberty Movement announced that it now favoured the baptismal franchise. The effect of this on the Anglo-Catholic party who were committed to Confirmation as the basis for franchise was described by Henson:

> 'The latent discord within the autonomist camp was disclosed when ... the agitation had so far succeeded that its proposals had to be submitted to Parliament. Then the question of the franchise within the self-governing Church could not be avoided, and the contention between those who took with Gore their stand on Catholic 'principle' in requiring Confirmation as the basis and those who with the majority of the Representative Church Council were prepared to conciliate the 'national' feeling of Parliament by accepting Baptism was so strong that Gore 'shook off the dust off his feet', resigned his bishopric, and declined further concern with the Life and Liberty Movement.'[12]

The new constitution of the Church which was established in 1919 by the Enabling Act was designed to achieve three aims: firstly to relieve Parliament of the burden of ecclesiastical business and so give the Church a measure of autonomy in its government; secondly, to ensure that although the Church Assembly was to be given freedom and autonomy in discussion, final decisions on matters of import still lay with Parliament; thirdly, to give the laity a share in the government of the Church.

The new constitution was a complicated pyramid of elected bodies. Its basis was an electorate of laity in the parishes. The qualification for this electorate was broadly based. The parochial electors had to enter their

---

[12] H.H. Henson, *Retrospect of an Unimportant Life* (London 1942-3) Vol 1, p.210.

names on the parochial 'electoral roll' and had to be at least seventeen years old, baptised, and able to declare that they were members of the Church of England and not members of any body not in communion with the Church. They must either have resided in the parish or have been habitual attenders of worship at the Church where they wished to be on the electoral roll. The elector was not required to be confirmed or to be a communicant, unlike those who stood for election. The circle of laity who are eligible for election to parochial church councils and the other representative bodies of the constitutional pyramid was narrower than that of the primary electorate. Members of these bodies in addition to qualifying for admission to the electoral roll, must have been confirmed, be a communicant and be of twenty-one years and upwards. Thus built into the system was a differentiation between what constitutes an elector and what constitutes a candidate for election. A further distinction had also been made: between those who were nominal church members (who had been baptized and occasionally attended a church service) and those whose membership was habitual and regular. In defining and narrowing its electoral constituency, the Church did something to unchurch the outer circle of nominal members.[13]

---

[13] G. Mayfield, *The Church of England* (London 1963) p.58.

The system as established in 1919 was essentially this: parochial electors appointed the parochial church council and representatives to the ruri-decanal conference, who in turn elected members to the House of Laity of the Church Assembly. Obviously with this great element of indirect election, the healthiness of the constitution had to depend upon the vigour and effectiveness of the basic electorate. However this was the difficulty. Probably less than thirty per cent of the electorate attended the annual parochial church meeting. Thus the active electorate of the Church, far from being widespread, popular and interested, was far fewer than the numbers of Easter Communicants.[14]

The other aspect of the Enabling Act worthy of note is that Parliament did not altogether relinquish its role as a lay synod regulating the Church of England. Proposals which required statutory form were debated in the Church Assembly, but then had to be submitted to Parliament for approval via the Parliamentary Ecclesiastical Committee, which consisted of members of both Houses of Parliament. However, this degree of parliamentary control has not proved oppressive to the Church. Between 1921 and 1961, 131 measures became law. Only four measures were rejected by Parliament, the two most notable concerning the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer in 1927-28.[15]

---

[14] Ibid., p.59.

[15] Ibid., p.127.

Partly as a result of the Prayer Book controversies, there was a growing desire for further changes, and part of this movement for further change was an increased understanding of the part that laity could and should play in the process of church government. This point was made by Peter Whiteley as one of the contributors to *Layman's Church:*

> 'The Church is, among other things, a closely related body of separate but distinct elements and any system of church government must, in my view, recognize the existence of these separate elements, but also provide for their efficient functioning together. The place of the laity in church government does not depend on any theory of democracy, but on the fact that they are one of the essential elements. The Church consists, among other things, of bishops, clergy and laity: and I would suggest that any system of government that does not provide for proper representation of the laity is in fact defective. If it is true, as it obviously is, that the laity can err without the counsel of bishops and clergy, I think that it is also true that the bishops and clergy can err without the informed consent and understanding of the laity.'[16]

The Church Assembly as set up by the Enabling Act comprised the two Convocations of Canterbury and York (each with its House of Bishops and House of Clergy) and a House of Laity. The Convocations met separately and dealt with matters of doctrine and worship and debated moral, social and international issues. The laity were excluded from this discussion. The Church Assembly which did include the House of Laity dealt primarily with

---

[16] P. Whiteley, 'The Layman's Place in Church Government' in *Layman's Church* ed J.A.T. Robinson (London 1963) p.51.

administrative and financial matters and was a legislative body.

However it became apparent that there were serious weaknesses in this dual system. There was an increasing overlap and duplication of business transacted by the two bodies: time was wasted. The Church Assembly with some 750 members was too large for good debate and for efficient management of business. Above all there was the lack of full participation by the laity in discussions and decisions on the Church's doctrine and worship.[17]

The subject of synodical government with particular reference to the association of a lay element with the Convocations was raised in a series of debates in the Convocation of York in 1952. When the Archbishop of Canterbury, at an early stage in the process of canon law revision, assured the House of Laity of the Church Assembly that it would be consulted throughout the revision, he made it clear that this was a concession and was not founded on any constitutional right of the laity to participate in the making of canons. This brought home forcibly to the laity that in certain important areas of church government they had no established rights.[18]

---

[17] P.Welby, *A History of the Church of England 1945-1980* (Oxford 1984) p.146.

[18] Ibid., p.147.

In 1953 the Church Assembly requested the Archbishops to appoint a commission to consider how the clergy and laity could best be joined together in the synodical government of the Church. When it reported in 1958, the Commission took as its basis the conclusion of the Joint Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury of 1902, which it summed up as follows:

> 'Theology justifies and history demonstrates that the ultimate authority and right of collective action lie with the whole body of 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.'[19]

This was to be the theological basis of synodical government.

During the 1960's, there were a number of schemes and attempts to put this basis of synodical government into operation. It was not until 1969 that the Synodical Government Measure received the Royal Assent. The new General Synod, inaugurated in 1970, consists of three houses - bishops, clergy and laity. The clergy are not elected to General Synod but to the Lower Houses of their respective Convocations, which can meet separately if they wish. The Convocations have the right to withdraw certain matters of doctrine and worship for separate discussion. The General Synod is a legislative body with

---

[19] *Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Convocations and the Laity* (London 1958) p.32.

the power to make canons and to pass measures. It has the function of providing forms of service for use in the Church, it is responsible for financing the central administration of the Church and it is the forum for expressing the Church's views on public issues.[20]

The General Synod is a body considerably smaller than the Church Assembly and there are clear lines of communication between it and the Church in the dioceses. Elections to the House of Laity, for example, are made at deanery not at diocesan level, so that more people, closer to the parish situation, are involved. Moreover, any permanent change in the services of Baptism, Eucharist, Ordination and any scheme for the constitutional re-union of Churches in England must first have the approval of a majority of the diocesan synods; and consultation with the dioceses on other major matters can and does occur. In such ways the General Synod is considerably less remote than its predecessor.

Under the Synodical Government Measure, a diocesan synod was established in every diocese and a duty was laid upon each bishop to consult with his synod on matters of general concern to the diocese. Clear lines of communication were made between diocesan synods and deanery synods, which took the place of ruri-deconal conferences and which have their own constitutional

---

[20] P.Welby, *A History of the Church of England* p.149.

position in synodical government. The purpose of this new and comprehensive system was to ensure that there was widespread opportunity for bishops, clergy and laity at all levels to participate in discussions and decisions on church policy and then give substance to the basic concept that the co-operation of clergy and laity in church government and discipline belongs to the true ideal of the Church.

3. Theological Thinking on the Role of the Laity.

It was during the 1950's and 1960's that the ministry of the laity became a subject for intense theological reflection. The main generator for this reflection was the concern with secularism and how the Church could engage with it. As Bishop E.R. Wickham put it in *Church and People in an Industrial City,* 'It is surprising how little of the richness and variety of modern theological writing bites on the modern world'.[21] There was a cluster of publications on the role of the laity. The Catholic writer Yves Congar produced his seminal *Jalons pour une theologie du laicat* in 1953 (the English version *The Layman in the Church* was published in 1957). Hendrick Kraemer's *A Theology of the Laity* came out in 1957 and *God's Frozen People* by Mark Gibbs and Ralph Morton

[21] E.R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London 1957) p.222.

followed in 1964. Importantly from an Anglican perspective, the Bishop of Woolwich in the late 1950's and early 1960's was John Robinson who contributed substantially to the discussion with his *On Being the Church in the World* (1960), his editing of *Layman's Church* (1963) and his *The New Reformation* (1965).

This section will focus on the writings of Robinson, who was the most active advocate of a theology of laity within the Anglican hierarchy and so particularly important for an Anglican perspective, and it will also draw upon the writings of others in the course of the discussion. It is possible to discern two trends in the debate about the laity: the place of the laity in the Church, including the nature of ministry ordained and lay, and more importantly, the place of the laity in the world. Each of these threads will be discussed in turn.

a) The place of the laity in the Church.

The questions which dominated the discussions were threefold: what are the laity, how did they become laity and what is their relation to the ordained ministry. In 1958, the Catholic writer Ignatius de la Potterie suggested that the term 'laity' from the Biblical concept of the 'laos' (God's People) was theologically significant but both linguistically and historically

wrong.[22] He makes the point that the first time the laity is used to designate a group distinguished from ordained church officers is by Clement of Rome writing in AD.96 where he makes a brief reference to the participants in the liturgy with the assertion:

> 'The layman (ho laikos anthropos) is bound by the lay (laikos) ordinances.'[23]

The use of the word 'laikos' is significant. The word 'laikos' is the adjectival form of 'laos' but as Schillebeeckx pointed out in his article on 'The layman in the Church' in 1963:

> 'In profane Greek usage this (laikos) signifies the people as distinct from the leaders of the people, thus as distinct from the ruling and intellectual classes.'[24]

It became clear that in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, this term 'laikos' is never used. Only the term 'laos' is used and it refers to the distinction between Israel and other nations; as Yves Congar put it, the word lay

> 'is connected with a word that for Jew and then for Christians properly meant the sacred people in opposition to the people who were not consecrated'.[25]

---

[22] I. de la Potterie, 'L'origine et le sens primitif du mot "laic"', *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* Vol 80, no 8 (1958) pp.840-853.

[23] 1 Clement 40.1 in *A New Eusebius* ed J. Stevenson, (London 1957) p.11.

[24] E. Schillebeeckx, *The Layman in the Church and Other Essays* (New York 1963) p.9.

[25] Y. Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (London 1957) p.3.

The word 'laos' was associated with the whole Christian community and at no stage within the New Testament was the word 'laos' used to differentiate between different categories of Christians. The word 'laikos' was used in the early Church post-Clement and signifies in profane Greek usage a member of the common class, belonging to the people but set apart from the leaders of the people.[26]

The call during the 1960's was for the Church to rediscover the Biblical concept and meaning of 'laos', the whole People of God (including clergy) and to dispense with the early church differentiation expressed in the word 'laikos'. The call was to a doctrine of the whole People of God:

> 'We can see the true doctrine of the laity as the whole People of God in partnership together with no division into first-class or second-class or any other class.'[27]

John Robinson in *The New Reformation* advocated dispensing with the clergy-laity line as being not essential for the Church and an historical anomaly:

> 'We should be ready to recognize that this "clergy line" is neither native nor essential to the Church. It is indeed an alien importation, introduced from the difference between the plebs and the ordo, the commons and the senate in the administrative machinery of the Roman Empire. It was entrenched in the Church at the time of its establishment under

---

[26] E. Schillebeeckx, *The Layman in the Church* p.9.

[27] M. Gibbs and T.R. Morton, *God's Frozen People* (London 1964) p.13.

> Constantine when it became necessary to define the rights and benefits of clergy transferred to it from the heathen priesthood. I believe the whole thing could disappear without loss ...'[28]

Edward Schillebeeckx in his *Ministry: a Case for Change* was also concerned to establish the historical and sociological conditioning of the development of the clergy-laity line. He traced the division between clergy and laity back to the Roman concept of 'ordo' and in particular the way in which the clergy by being ordained into the order of office-bearers were set apart from the laity:

> '... after the time of Constantine the Church *ordinatio* or appointment to the office of office-bearers clearly became more attractive because the clergy were seen as a more exalted class in the Church in comparison with more lowly believers. The clericalization of the ministry had begun!'[29]

He saw this division being deepened further by the expansion of Christianity and the development of monasticism as a form of first-class laity:

> '... for Christians the boundary between the 'spirit of Christ' and the 'spirit of the World' lay in their baptism: their sense of being accepted into the elect community of God's ecclesia; now, with the massive expansion of the Church, this boundary came to lie above all at the point of the 'second baptism'. that of monastic life ... At a time when virtually everyone was baptized the boundary between the 'spirit of Christ' and the 'spirit of the World' came to lie with the clergy.'[30]

---

[28] J.A.T. Robinson, *The New Reformation* (London 1965) p.57.

[29] E. Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: A Case for Change* (London 1981) p.39.

[30] Ibid., p.56.

In the 1980's, the French Church historian Alexander Faivre examined in even greater detail the place of the laity in the early Church.[31] He established that the 'laity' as such were born in the second half of the second century and that this term laity was only applied to an elite group among the people.[32] The laity were only baptized men who were husbands of one wife. Women were not able to belong to this elite group, although they were able to perform their ministries within the Church such as that of deaconesses. This situation apparently pertained up until the fourth century when for the first time the term laity was generally applied to the faithful and began to include women also.[33]

However, almost more interesting than Faivre's historical research into the early Church are his reflections on the state of the present Church in the light of his findings. He sees the situation in which there were no clergy and no lay elite as being analogous to the contemporary situation where there are insufficient clergy for all parishes and not a strong, trained laity to lead:

> 'The life-span of what we call 'the lay ministry' proved to be but a short period of transition and unstable balance between the moment when the growth of the community created the need for a lay elite

---

[31] A. Faivre, *The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church* (New York 1990).

[32] A. Faivre, 'The Laity in the First Centuries: Issues Raised by Historical Research' *Lumen Vitae* Vol XLII, No 2 (1987) p.136.

[33] Ibid., p.137.

> and the moment when the clergy was sufficiently organized to claim that it could meet the community's main organic needs. In the history of the ancient Church, this period was, in fact, shorter than the early stage when there were neither clerics nor laymen. And it is that period which we often contemplate today, as if in a mirror.'[34]

The point which both Schillebeeckx and Faivre seem to be making is that once we are fully aware that there are no theological arguments against an expansion of the role of the laity, and indeed that the constraints upon the role of the laity are more dependent upon accommodation to Roman and feudal models of society, it is possible to forge afresh for today a new theology of laity.

Bishop John Robinson was also concerned with re-aligning the clergy-laity divide:

> 'The whole differentiation implied in the terms "sacred ministry" and "holy orders" is one that is now destructive rather than constructive of the body of Christ.'[35]

He was supported in his view by the Church Assembly Report *Gender and Ministry* produced in 1962:

> 'Many would receive fresh encouragement to be better people in their own spheres if the too prevalent attitude towards the clergy as the recipients of some magical status could be clearly and forcibly disclaimed, discouraged and discarded.'[36]

---

[34] Ibid., pp.138-139.

[35] J.A.T. Robinson, *The New Reformation* p.57.

[36] Church Assembly Report, *Gender and Ministry* (London 1962) p.11.

In his argument against the clerical-lay divide Robinson focussed upon a scriptural understanding of priesthood:

> 'It is at this theological point, at the heart of the matter, that I am convinced we have got to begin if we are going to try to reform the whole system. For unhappily or perhaps happily it will simply not stand up to a truly Biblical doctrine of the church.'[37]

He goes on to point out that while in the Old Testament the priesthood was vicarious in the sense that the priest did on behalf of the people what they could not do themselves, in the New Testament this kind of division was abolished:

> 'There is one mediator between God and man, the High Priest, Christ Jesus, and no priestly caste within the Body. The entire Body is a royal priesthood by virtue of his baptism.'[38]

However, Robinson did not dispense with ordained ministry altogether in his understanding of church order. He maintains it, but stresses that it is by nature not vicarious but representative ministry. What is given to the ordained person is formal authority to do in the name of the whole Church what every member has not only the right but the duty to do:

> 'He (the clergyman) is given formal authority to exercise the ministry of reconciliation and forgiveness which belongs by right to every member of the healing community. He is given formal authority to lead and preside at the celebration

---

[37] J.A.T. Robinson, 'The Ministry and the Laity' *Layman's Church* ed J.A.T. Robinson (London 1953) p.14.

[38] Ibid., p.14.

> which is the con-celebration of the whole people of God.'[39]

For Robinson the ministry of the ordained is a representative ministry of and to the whole people of God. This is for him the key to defining the tension between ordained and lay. There is nothing to be gained by having a high doctrine of the laity at the expense of a low doctrine of ordained ministry. The representative ministry must be rooted in servanthood:

> '... and there is for the clergy, as many of them are now finding, tremendous increase and release of their ministry as they discover themselves for the first time as the servants of the servants of God. And this conception of the ministry, which is after all the papal conception of the ministry ... is I believe the key to the whole revolution. For we can never hold too high a doctrine of the ordained ministry if we really see it, as the New Testament does, as the ministry of the servant, in direct extension of the ministry of the Son of Man who came not to be ministered unto but to minister.'[40]

The argument that was being advocated was that the laity regain consciousness of themselves as a priestly people served by its servant clergy who are there to help them to exercise their vocation in Church and world. Hans-Reudi Weber put it succinctly:

> 'The laity are not helpers of the clergy so that the clergy can do their job, but the clergy are helpers of the whole people of God so that the laity can be the Church.'[41]

---

[39] Ibid., p.14.

[40] Ibid., p.17.

[41] H.-R. Weber, quoted by J.A.T. Robinson, *The New Reformation* p.55.

b) The place of the laity in the world

Although it was during the 1950's and the 1960's that the concept of the laity and their engagement with the world in mission came to the fore, it has precedents in earlier writing. Anglican theologians from Richard Hooker in the sixteenth century to William Temple in this century have re-iterated the theme that the world is properly the Church's workplace. Hooker referred to the Church as a visible though mystical body marked by mutual fellowship in society.[42] For Temple, the Church, though at times an uninspiring spectacle, was the means by which Christ becomes active and carries out his purpose in the world. Temple attempted to repudiate two extreme views: that the Christian should have no concern for the world, and that Christians should be immersed in the earthly present. Instead he emphasised engagement on behalf of Christ:

> 'We are called as Christians to the service of God here and now; that on earth as in heaven his name is to be hallowed ... for that Christ taught us to pray; for that he has summoned us to work. Not there but here is the place of our spiritual concern; not then but now is salvation to be won and made manifest.'[43]

Similarly various continental theologians were emphasising the need for engagement with the world.

---

[42] R. Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* Chapter v.lvi.

[43] W. Temple, *Fellowship with God* (London 1930) pp.207-208.

Bultmann was convinced that the original Schleiermachian concern to adapt the gospel to a modern secular culture had once again become primary. Nor was Bultmann alone in his assertion. The same concern lay at the heart of Bonhoeffer's efforts to construct 'religionless Christianity'. For it was against a background shaped by secularisation that he sought to interpret 'the sacred in a worldly manner' and wrestled with the question 'how can Christ become the lord even of those of no religion?'[44]

It was after the Second World War that theologians began to turn their attention seriously to an understanding of the laity as agents of mission in the world. In his first articles on the subject,[45] Yves Congar considered the Christian laity in connection with the distinction between the Church as an 'institution' of salvation and the Church as a 'community' of salvation, and emphasised the laity's active participation in the life of the Church and in its priestly, prophetic and royal character. Above all, he developed the laity's non-official participation in the primary religious mission of the church.

---

[44] P. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (London 1969) pp.155-156.

[45] Y. Congar, 'Sacerdoce et laicat dans l'Eglise', *La Vie Intellectuelle* 14 (1946) pp.6-39; 'Pour une theologie du laicat', *Etudes* 256 (1948) pp.42-54.

Returning to the question in 1950,[46] Congar attempted to penetrate more deeply into the distinctive aspect of being a lay person. In this quest he concluded that the Christian laity are believers who take the secular structures and the inner nature of things seriously and whose contribution to the Kingdom of God is made in and through their commitment to the temporal, secular order.

This foundational work informed and influenced Anglican writing and thinking in the 1960's. In 1968, Douglas Webster produced his paper on 'Laymen in Mission' for a collection of *Lambeth Essays on Ministry*.[47] In it he defines the role of the laity as serving God in the secular world:

> 'But the people of God are concerned with serving him (God) in the secular world. They do this by their daily work and witness and to this extent are involved in his mission. This is the ministry of the laity.'[48]

Webster goes on to argue that if there is to be mission in the future an increasing share of it will have to be borne not merely by the laity as distinct from clergy but by 'laymen seeing their work in the secular world as itself a missionary vocation'. This point was made forcibly by Bishop Stephen Neill:

---

[46] Y. Congar, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un laic?' *Vie Spirituelle* (Suppl., 15 November 1950) pp.363-92.

[47] D. Webster, 'Laymen in Mission', *Lambeth Essays on Ministry* ed A.M. Ramsey (London 1969).

[48] Ibid., p.1.

> 'If the Church is ever to penetrate this alienated world and to claim it in the name of Christ, its only resources are in its convinced and converted laymen. There are vast areas, geographical and spiritual which the ordained minister can hardly penetrate; the laymen are already there, and are there every day. What happens to society in the future will largely depend on the use that they make of their opportunities, of their effectiveness as Christian witnesses in a new and as yet imperfectly charted ocean of being.'[49]

The practical question at the time was what did being a lay person in mission involve? What was its cash-value? Webster was clear that it did not involve church-related work. For him there was the need to:

> 'draw the necessary distinction between the Church doing its own household chores and the Church going out into the secular with its message and its willingness to serve.'[50]

However being world-centred did not mean that the Church should not be centred in God. The distinction was between being centred on the world or being centred in an introspective way upon itself. Hendrik Kraemer made the point:

> 'The Church by being World centred in the image of the divine example is really the Church. Being Church centred, regarding the World of the Church as the safe refuge from the World is a betrayal of its nature and calling. Only by not being or not wanting to be an end in itself, the Church arrives at being the Church.'[51]

---

[49] S.C. Neill, 'The Layman in Church History', *The Layman in Christian History* ed Weber and Neill, p.11.

[50] D. Webster, 'Laymen in Mission' p.6.

[51] H. Kraemer, *The Theology of the Laity* (London 1958) p.130.

This world-centred conception of the Church is Christologically based. Its key text is in the incarnation:

> 'God sent his son into the world not into an ecclesiastical situation or institution which made no room for him and in this world he lived as a layman by the norms of his day.'[52]

The mission of the clergy was defined as being three-fold. Firstly it was considered important to recognize that work itself and the work place has value. J.H. Oldham argues that it is at their places of work that the laity are partners of God:

> 'Why should a scientist or engineer or an administrator attach any great importance to religion unless it says to him: "In the work you are doing day by day you are a partner of God in his work of creation and the realization of his purpose for the family of the Sons of Men."'[53]

The witness of the majority of laity was seen as being about bringing integrity, conscientiousness and dedication to the job and by establishing good relations with it. Such an attitude to work was considered an essential precondition for laity in mission. So the first point is that the laity were understood to serve their vocation immersed in the world as they co-operate with the mission of God.

---

[52] D. Webster, 'Laymen in Mission' p.7.

[53] J.H. Oldham, *Life is Commitment* (London 1963) p.100.

Secondly there was perceived a need for the laity to be visible Christians in the secular world:

> 'For years talking about the laity has meant talking about their place in the Church gathered for worship, instruction and government: now it means talking about their calling to be the Church in the World.'[54]

There were situations where the Church could be hidden and its members incognito, but there were others where they must be seen and heard.

Thirdly the laity had an advantage over the clergy. They had access to areas of life in the world which were not available to the clergy, and the fact that they were not professionals paid to promote Christianity was considered important.

John Robinson, in considering a Church rooted in the world, talked about the 'laity of the priesthood'.[55] Being lay, he says, is about treating the things of the world as if they really exist for their own sake. Their truth is not established only when it can be referenced in or turned to the service of the Church. On this basis, the whole church must become a lay body:

> 'The whole Church, ordained and unordained alike, is called to be a lay body. By this I do not mean (as the Quakers would interpret it) that it is not to have its sacramental ministers but that it is

---

[54] K. Bliss, *We the People* (London 1963) p.29.

[55] J.A.T. Robinson, 'The Ministry and the Laity' p.19.

> essentially and always a body which is immersed in the World.'[56]

For Robinson, the model of the Church is that of a servant body in a secularized world, a body which is primarily lay, and whose ministry is essentially lay:

> 'The ministry is usually conceived today as the work of clergymen with auxiliary aids among the laity; ministry in the servant church is the work of the laity in the world with auxiliary help from theological specialists.'[57]

The Church envisaged is leaven within, rather than the institution alongside, the structures of the world. Thus the mission and ministry of the laity ought to be the primary and most widespread form of the Church's mission and ministry, and it is directed wholly to the world. The ecclesiastical structures are there to support, understand, and, through theological reflection, resource that mission and ministry.

4. Councils: Anglican, Catholic and Ecumenical

This section will consider the contribution made to the discussion of the role of the laity by the Lambeth Conferences, 1948-78, the Second Vatican Council, 1962-65, and the World Council of Churches, 1948-82.

---

[56] Ibid., p.19.

[57] J.A.T. Robinson, *The New Reformation* p.65.

a) **The Lambeth Conferences, 1948-78.**

The most significant aspect of the 1948 Lambeth Conference with regard to the laity was its statement on the nature of authority within Anglicanism. A Committee of Bishops understood this authority as being distributed or dispersed:

> 'Authority, as inherited by the Anglican Communion from the undivided church of the early centuries of the Christian era, is single in that it is derived form a single Divine source ... It is distributed among Scripture, Tradition, Creeds, the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, the witness of the saints, and the consensus fidelium, which is the continuing experience of the Holy Spirit through his faithful people in the Church. It is thus a dispersed rather than a centralized authority, having many elements which combine, interact with and check each other; these elements together contributing by a process of mutual support, mutual checking and redressing of errors or exaggerations to the many-sided fullness of the authority which Christ has committed to his Church.'[58]

The phrase 'dispersed rather than centralized authority' bears some examination. It would be mistaken to conclude from it that the church as a whole has no procedure by which coherent decisions may be made. Indeed in the passage which follows the one quoted there is a strong affirmation of the episcopate 'in synodical association with clergy and laity'. This would suggest an investment of authority within synodical government of the Church of

---

[58] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1948*: 'The Meaning and Unity of the Anglican Communion', cited in *Authority in the Anglican Communion* ed S.W. Sykes (Toronto 1987) pp.284-286.

England. But in fact synodical government is only authoritative in as much as it accurately reflects opinion within the church at large. Authority is thus rooted not in synodical decrees, but in general acceptance and recognition of the part of bishops, clergy and lay people within the Church of England, not in the authority of an institution but in the *consensus fidelium*. Underlying this insight is a basic theological assumption that God gives his gifts to the whole Church. Consequently the gifts of the Holy Spirit cannot be controlled and manipulated by one part of the church; the clergy cannot control or lord it over the laity.

This understanding of the corporate authority of the whole people of God does not make for a quiet ecclesial life. An important part of the process of arriving at the *consensus fidelium* is conflict, disagreement and debate. This was recognized by the statement accepted by the Primates' Meeting in Washington DC in April 1981:

> 'In the continuing process of defining the *consensus fidelium*, Anglicans regard criticism and response as an essential element by which Authority is exercised and experienced and as playing a vital part in the working of the Holy Spirit in maintaining the Church in fidelity to the Apostolic Gospel.'[59]

Thus the concept of the distribution of God's gifts to the whole Church means that there are voices of authority, clerical and lay, not just one unambiguous

---

[59] Cited in S.W. Sykes, 'Authority in the Church of England' *By What Authority?* ed R.Jeffery (Oxford 1987) p.17.

voice of authority. It means also that sound decisions, if they are deemed sound by the whole church, have to be publicly evaluated. The laity as much as the clergy have to challenge, criticize and dispute so that out of the process the whole church may arrive at a common mind, or at least decisions which can be lived with.

The Lambeth Conference of 1958 pointed out that there was too sharp a division between clergy and laity and that the laity had a ministry as much in the world as in the Church:

> '... too sharp a distinction has been made between clergy and laity. All baptized persons have the priestly vocation of offering life as a living sacrifice acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. There is a ministry for every member of Christ; every man and woman who is confirmed: commissioned to this ministry in the Church in the home, the community, the world of business and social life.'[60]

There are two points of note in this statement. Firstly, the vocation of the laity is described as 'priestly' and the nature of that vocation is understood as 'offering life as a living sacrifice' (echoing Romans 12). The priestly nature of the laity is taken up again in the Lambeth Conference of 1988 and explored yet further.[61] Secondly the commissioning for ministry seems not to be baptism but confirmation, a point reinforced at the 1968

---

[60] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1958* (London 1958) 1.26.

[61] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1988* (London 1988) 1.102-105.

Lambeth Conference, but this is abandoned in favour of the primacy of baptismal commissioning in 1988.[62]

The Lambeth Conference Report of 1968 has a lengthy section (pp.93-100) on 'the laity'. It begins by emphasising that the People of God exist as the Church for God and for the world, not for the sake of the Church; and repeating the 1958 Lambeth Conference Report, it stresses the importance of Confirmation:

> 'Alike in Confirmation and at the ordering of deacons, priests and bishops, the gift of the Holy Spirit is invoked for the work of ministry to which the whole Body of Christ is called.'[63]

Confirmation is represented as being the lay equivalent of the receiving of the Holy Spirit at ordination. This point is underlined by the Report's concern to value the ministry of the ordained and lay as equal:

> 'The various patterns of ministry, ordained and lay are thus equal: we cannot rightly speak of an inferior office if that office is where God wants his servant to be.'[64]

Clergy and laity are seen to complement one another:

> 'The clergy and the laity complement each other. The laity in their daily work are generally in immediate contact with more of their fellows and therefore bear the greater responsibility.'[65]

---

[62] Ibid., 1.95.

[63] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1968* (London 1968) p.93.

[64] Ibid., p.94.

[65] Ibid., p.95.

The laity are presented as being responsible for making decisions as to how they are to minister in their own situations:

> 'The layman cannot look to priest or Church for ready-made answers or blueprints for action. The decisions can only be made by the layman in the situation. He cannot escape the burden of decision, nor the thought "Any change in this society must come, in part at least, from me".'[66]

Significantly the lay person is said to represent Christ:

> 'He represents the reconciling Christ, the listening Christ, the caring Christ, to those with whom and for whom he works. He himself has been accepted by God: he must accept others. In a dehumanized world, he bears witness to the infinite value in God's eyes of every human being.'[67]

This is an important statement because it assigns to the laity a representative ministry which in other Anglican documents is reserved for the ordained ministry.[68]

The Report goes on to root the lay vocation in missionary engagement with the world. Under a sub-heading 'Lay Action', it is hoped that the laity will be involved in some of the four areas outlined:

> '1. Bringing Christian insights to bear on the decisions he and others constantly have to make at work, in the home and in daily life.
> 2. Helping to formulate public and political opinion on the great social and moral issues of

---

[66] Ibid., p.95.

[67] Ibid., p.95.

[68] cf General Synod Board of Mission and Unity, *The Theology of Ordination* (1976).

the day such as war and peace, race relations, world hunger, social justice.
3. Using his knowledge and skills for the benefit of the whole community ...
4. Engaging in direct Christian witness. He has the responsibility of sharing with others the experience of God's love ...'[69]

For this pivotal role, as the Church in the world, the Report recognizes the importance of education and training for the laity. It calls for renewal of traditional methods of education such as sermons and confirmation preparation, and suggests the establishment of more lay institutes:

> 'Christian education is a continuing process. We particularly draw attention to the need for more lay institutes. Wherever possible they should be ecumenical since the layman in his place of work is always in an ecumenical situation. Often the best help the layman can receive is that given by other laymen facing the same problem. They should also be places where he can meet those of other faiths or none. In such centres the clergy will also find that they themselves learn from the laity how the gospel relates to real life.'[70]

Finally the Report tackles the issue of confirmation and commissioning:

> 'We are concerned at the lack of any form of commissioning for laymen analogous to the ordination of clergy ... We commend the following alternatives as possible lines of experiment:
> a) Admission to Holy Communion and Confirmation would be separated ... Confirmation would be deferred to an age when a young man or woman shows adult responsibility and wishes to be commissioned and confirmed for his or her task of being a Christian in society.
> b) Infant baptism and confirmation would be administered together ... In due course the bishop would commission the person for service

---

[69] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1968* p.96.

[70] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1968* p.98.

> when he or she is capable of making a responsible commitment.'[71]

This is of particular interest because it reveals that the Church of England is still uncertain in 1968 as to what constitutes the laity. The argument between Gore and the Representative Church Council of 1918 resurfaces: are the laity constituted by baptism or by confirmation. There is also the desire to differentiate the laity 'capable of making a responsible commitment' from those who are not. This marks an important attempt to institutionalize the laity.

The section on 'Lay Ministry' in the Report of the Lambeth Conference of 1978 is very short - running to little more than a page. There is little that is new and this is acknowledged:

> 'The section therefore re-iterates what has long been said on this subject because there are still many places in our Communion in which this complementarity of ministry of clergy and laity is not being demonstrated.'[72]

However, what is of interest is the note on Lay Presidency at the Eucharist:

> 'During the Conference an additional group of bishops from section 2 was formed "to look at the arguments for lay members of the Church being licensed to preside at the Eucharist in special circumstances". In their report they held that where it is not possible to provide a president the bishop is still responsible for making the sacrament

---

[71] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1968* p.99.

[72] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1978* (London 1978) p.82.

> of Holy Communion available, and they believed that there might be circumstances in which it would be justifiable for him to authorize a lay member to preside in his name, providing such a person had the support of the local congregation. They recommended that where there was need, particular members of local congregations should be authorized to preside at the Eucharist under certain specified conditions.'[73]

This indeed is a significant departure from previous understandings of the ministry of the laity and indeed of the ministry of the ordained. However, perhaps aware that such a statement raised many questions, 'it was decided that the subject should not be further discussed'.[74]

b) The Second Vatican Council 1962-65

That the laity was one of the main themes of the Second Vatican Council is a fact that cannot be too strongly emphasised. The Council devoted not just a few paragraphs, but whole chapters and even an entire decree to the laity. The Council exercised a considerable influence on Anglicanism and it is significant that is was at the 1968 Lambeth Conference that the laity was accorded so much attention.

The Council document which most explicitly formulates the Council's thinking on the laity is the Decree on the

---

[73] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1978* p.83.

[74] Ibid., p.83.

Apostolate of the Laity[75] promulgated in November 1965. This document, however, is but a decree with practical implications; it presupposes the theological reflections already developed in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*[76] on the Church, especially in its fourth chapter, and the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*[77] on The Church in the Modern World, especially in its paragraph 43. *Lumen Gentium* rediscovered the notion of the 'People of God' to describe the Church, which includes the laity; the second opened the Church to the world where the lay apostolate is specifically exercised.

Even before the Second Vatican Council, it was most probably the biblical renewal which enabled the Catholic Church to visualize itself as the People of God rather than as a society whose essential feature was its structure, the hierarchy. The very rich concept of People of God enabled theologians to set the Church in continuity with Israel and salvation history. It also highlighted baptism as being both the pre-requisite of membership of the People of God and the foundation, for all the baptised, of the Church's mission of salvation.

---

[75] Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity in *Vatican Council 11: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* ed A. Flannery (Dublin 1977) pp.766-798.

[76] *Lumen Gentium* in A. Flannery, *Vatican Council 11* pp.350-426.

[77] *Gaudium et Spes* in A. Flannery, *Vatican Council 11* pp. 903-1002.

The baptised are understood by the Council to participate in Christ's work as Prophet, King and Priest.

The baptised participate in Christ's prophetic mission through the witness of their life and speech.[78] Secondly, the baptised participate in Christ's kingly function, in the strict sense, that is to say by collaborating directly in the government of the Church in the manner established by canon law.[79] Lastly the baptised participate in Christ's priestly function, first by offering spiritual worship in all activities, including their mental and physical relaxation,[80] and then at a second level through participating in the Eucharist.[81]

The laity are defined as being the baptised who are not in holy orders or in a religious state:

> 'The term 'laity' is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in a religious state sanctioned by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are established among the People of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly function of Christ. They carry out their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and the World.'

In addition to their collaboration in the apostolate of the hierarchy, the laity have a specific apostolic action

---

[78] *Lumen Gentium* Section 35.

[79] Ibid., Section 36.

[80] Ibid., Section 34.

[81] Ibid., Section 11.

which flows from their secular situation. They live in the world with the citizens of the world. They are therefore expected to carry out their mission in the world by animating contemporary ways of thinking and secular structures with the gospel spirit.[82]

The model of the laity as the People of God was highly influential upon Anglican thinking on the laity, as was the Second Vatican Council's emphasis upon the lay apostolate to the world. The Vatican Council, along with the World Council of Churches, was of great significance as an influence in the Church of England's shaping of its understanding of laity. Anglicanism shared Catholicism's concern for stating positively a role for the laity within a theology of the Church which did not dilute or debase an understanding of the ordained ministry.

c) The World Council of Churches 1948-82

In 1948 the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam urged Churches to awaken to the importance of their lay members of both sexes, reminding them that the laity constitute more than ninety-nine per cent of the Church:

> 'Only by the witness of a spiritually intelligent and active laity can the Church meet the modern

---

[82] Ibid., Section 11.

> world in its actual perplexities and life situations.'[83]

The main significance of the laity in the Church was recognized as being not as a worker in the congregation but as a worker in the wider community. The Second Assembly at Evanston went further. It emphasised that the laity were representatives of Christ in the world and that the laity are front line soldiers in the battles of faith:

> 'The laity are not mere fragments of the Church who are scattered about in the world and who come together again for worship, instruction and specifically Christian fellowship on Sundays. They are Christ's representatives, no matter where they are. It is the laity who draw together work and worship; it is they who bridge the gulf between Church and the World, and it is they who manifest in word and action the lordship of Christ over the world ... The time has come to make the ministry of the laity explicit, visible and active in the world. The real battles of faith are being fought in factories, shops, offices ...'[84]

The Third Assembly at New Delhi in 1961 re-affirmed these conventions and wrestled with the term laity:

> 'Some say that laymen are those Christians who are not ordained; others maintain that baptism is an ordination and all Christians are therefore ordained for ministry. Some say that laymen are those who gain their livelihood in a secular occupation ... While acknowledging the fact that there is still no ecumenical consensus about the term laity, most of the committee members emphasised the wholeness of the laos, the laity.'[85]

---

[83] *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches: Official Report* (Geneva 1948) pp.153-56.

[84] *World Council of Churches: The Evanston Report* (Geneva 1954) pp.161,168.

[85] *World Council of Churches: The New Delhi Report* (London 1962) p.202.

But its main contribution was to point out that God is already there in the secular and in the darkness. The role of the laity is simply to reflect God's presence:

> 'Christ the light did not remain outside the world to illumine it from above, but entered into human life, conquered the darkness and radiates life from within. This says to us that wherever we are in the world, God is there before us - the light is already there. The responsibility of the laity is to serve as reflecting mirrors or focussing lenses, to beam the light into all parts of the life of the World. Every Christian carrying out this work is a ministry and using his particular gifts and opportunities afforded him can bring the light of God's truth to bear in the world where he is ...'[86]

These discussions contributed to the section on the role of the laity at the 1968 Lambeth Conference, although the New Delhi statement is more far-reaching. After all the Lambeth Conference did not examine the presuppositions contained within the very word 'laity', nor was there any suggestion of Christ being already present in the secular. The model used by Lambeth was the Church under the agencies of the laity bringing Christ to where he was not.

However, from an Anglican perspective the most significant statement which has emerged from the World Council of Churches in recent years has been the Lima Report: *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.[87] The first six sections of the Report on Ministry give a sturdy outline

---

[86] Ibid., p.203.

[87] *World Council of Churches: Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva 1982).

of the calling of the whole People of God to engage in ministry through the Spirit.[88] Ministry is set in the context of the mission to 'proclaim and prefigure the Kingdom of God'. The Report follows the Second Vatican Council in making the 'People of God' image the key ecclesiological concept. Ministry is seen as central to the being of the Church and not simply the presence of the 'gifted' people only. Because the whole people are chosen and called, all have a part to play in the reconciling and healing work of the Church. From this basic theological position, the Report goes on to affirm the gifts of the Spirit upon all the fellowship. None is 'gift-less', but each is gifted for the common good and for ministry to the Body and to the world.

The Report is important for developing an Anglican understanding of ministry. Anglicanism has inherited a theology of ministry which focuses on the ordained. The Lima Report stresses that unless our theology of ministry begins at the call to be a disciple and works up it will be deficient.

In 1985 the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Board of Mission and Unity of the Church of England produced a document entitled 'Towards a Church of England response to BEM and ARCIC'.[89] The document is interesting because

---

[88] Ibid., p.20.

[89] General Synod Board for Mission and Unity, *Towards a Church of England Response to BEM and ARCIC*. (London 1985).

it highlights some specifically Anglican characteristics. Within its section on 'The Calling of the Whole People of God', it insists upon discussion of the ordained ministry. It contrasts two views of the ordained ministry which it sees as being held together by the Lima Report:

> 'Within the context of the people of God two hitherto apparently contrasting views of the ordained ministry are held together. In one model this ministry is seen as derived from the common priesthood of all believers, a delegation to the few of functions which belong to the whole community of the faithful, while in the other model this ministry is seen as derived directly from the priesthood of Christ and itself forming a priesthood constitutive for the life of the Church. The Lima Text holds the two models together within the general concept of the calling of the whole People of God.'[90]

The concern is to define the laity in the light of the ordained ministry. The Anglican response is concerned with protecting above all the ordained ministry when it discusses the ministry of the laity. Furthermore the concept of 'the People of God' is very clearly applied in the Anglican response to the laity rather than its constituting both laity and the ordained:

> 'The "People of God" has a "fundamental dependence" on Jesus Christ and the ordained ministry has been from the first moment of the Church's existence constitutive for its life and witness.'[91]

It is instructive that even in its commentary on the section of the Lima Report which deals with the whole

---

[90] Ibid., p.33.

[91] Ibid., p.33.

People of God, the Anglican Response constantly refers to subsequent sections which deal with ordained ministry. It illustrates the point that the Church of England seems hesitant to talk about the ministry of the laity without carefully relating it to that of the ordained.

5. The Differentiated Laity

During the twentieth century the ministry of the differentiated laity such as readers, evangelists and deaconesses continued to grow and develop. Their roles were increasingly carefully assessed and their areas of responsibility expanded. This section will look at each ministry in turn and consider some of the questions differentiated laity raise for the Church of England.

a) Readers

Two important developments in the work of the Reader took place during the twentieth century. The first is straightforward. As a result of the growth in popularity of the parish communion during the 1930's, Readers were, in 1940, given permission to read the Epistle and to

administer the Chalice at the Eucharist.[92] The second development is more interesting. In 1978, the General Synod passed an amendment to allow a Reader to officiate at the Burial of the Dead. This may seem a small extension of a Reader's duties, but it is a significant step. It underlines the pastoral involvement of a Reader.[93] Some such involvement has always been mentioned in the Reader's licence, such as visiting the sick, but the teaching role has been foremost. Since the 1980's the pattern has been changing. Dioceses, and therefore parishes, are taking the role of Reader more seriously and the pattern of local training of Readers is being adapted to meet the new situation.

Thus since 1866 official documents regarding the Office of Reader have steadily increased the scope of the work which can be done by a Reader. The Reader is meant to be a regular assistant to the clergy and not a substitute for the clergy. In practice the official documents represent what has actually been happening in parishes. Permission to undertake particular tasks and responsibilities has been given because there has been a genuine demand that they should be done.

What kind of ministry do Readers exercise? As the Church has developed confidence in them and their training has

---

[92] R. Martineau, *The Office and Work of a Reader* (London 1980) p.26.

[93] Ibid., p.27.

been widely recognized, Readers have developed a particular preaching and teaching ministry with increasing opportunities to undertake leadership and pastoral work in parishes, hospitals, prisons and elsewhere. In rural areas Readers may have other responsibilities:

> 'Where the incumbent has a group of parishes and is non-resident, a Reader may undertake most of the pastoral work as well as the liturgy except the celebration of the Eucharist, in a genuinely shared ministry ... Many rural communities prefer the ministry of one Reader whom they come to know to a series of peripatetic ministers who remain virtual strangers.'[94]

However, it must be acknowledged that at present there is some confusion in the Church concerning the ministry of Readers. This confusion arises in part from the emergence of other forms of lay and ordained ministry encouraged by the dioceses. Non-stipendiary ministers, local non-stipendiary ministers (local ordained ministers), permanent deacons, pastoral assistants, lay pastors, elders and others represent patterns of ministry for which people have normally been trained and authorized in their respective dioceses.

The Reader ministry is the only lay ministry in the Church of England which is essentially voluntary, nationally accredited and governed by canon. In the mid 1980's there were over seven thousand Readers, more than

---

[94] Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, *The Ministry and Training of Readers in the Church of England* (1986, unpublished) p.1.

one thousand of them women and the number of people admitted each year approximated to the number ordained.

From being essentially a resource to help clergy, in 1984 Bishop A.A.K. Graham of Newcastle suggested a further role. He called upon Readers to be 'the Church's lay theologians - thinking, well-informed, articulate and theologically competent lay men and women ... theological resource persons'.[95] This was taken up by Canon Timothy Tyndale, then Chief Secretary of A.C.C.M. in addressing the Central Readers Council in 1986:

> '... the Reader has knowledge and is trained to communicate. And the knowledge that is communicated both leads people out to serve and witness in the world, and also back into the heart of the Church, being built up by liturgy.'[96]

The thrust of this insight of the Reader's ministry is important. Readers are primarily called to exercise a preaching and teaching ministry in the Church which may or may not involve pastoral and educational work, evangelism and other forms of lay leadership. But because Readers are lay ministers they are also implicitly involved as 'thinking, well-informed, theologically competent persons' in the world. More specifically, in the communities where they live and work, they are expected to bring a 'theological resource' to people whom the clergy seldom reach.

---

[95] Ibid., p.2.

[96] Ibid., p.2.

What is apparent is that the Reader Ministry has grown and developed and become increasingly clericalized. From being essentially an auxiliary to clergy, reading the lessons at Morning and Evening Prayer and preaching, the Reader's role is now envisaged as being a theological resource to the community. That which differentiates the Reader from other laity is increasingly perceived as being the level to which they have been theologically educated and the extent to which they make available their theological resoucefulness to others.

b) Evangelists

The Church of England's position of the Office of Evangelist is complicated. In theory any communicant lay person, man or woman, suitably trained and qualified, may be admitted to the Office by a bishop, and may thereby be recognized as one of the accredited lay workers of the Church. By implication the Office is not open to clergy. Though lay and accredited, it need not be stipendiary. However, in practice the Office seems to be confined to commissioned officers of the Church Army.

Following the House of Bishops' resolution in 1898 Captains were 'admitted to the Office of Lay Evangelist in the Church of God so long as he shall hold the

Commission of the Church Army'.[97] Individual bishops licensed those who had been admitted to the Office as Readers in the Dioceses. Although both houses of Convocation were anxious to change the name of the Church Army women from 'Mission-nurses' in 1906-07, they were not prepared to treat them in the same way as the men. Following the First World War change came and in 1920 women were admitted to the office of Mission Sister. The term 'Lay-Evangelist' was dropped for the men in 1963. For the first time in 1962, both men and women were admitted to the Office of Evangelist and from 1963 this practice has been followed, admissions being by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

There seems to have been little attempt to revive the Office of Evangelist outside the Church Army until relatively recently. The 1945 Church Assembly Report 'Towards the Conversion of England' mentions Bishop's Messengers but not Evangelists[98]; the BMU Reports of 1974 ('Evangelism and the Mission of the Church') and 1979 (Evangelism in England Today') are equally reticent. The former deals with 'professional evangelists'[99] and the latter calls for more training in evangelism for those

---

[97] Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, *Report of the Working Group on the Office of Evangelist* (1985, unpublished) p.6.

[98] Church Assembly Report, *Towards the Conversion of England* (1945 unpublished) Para.35.

[99] General Synod Board for Mission and Unity, *Evangelism in the Mission of the Church* (General Synod 1974 unpublished) Para 49.

preparing for 'various forms of ministry'[100]; but the emphasis in both is on evangelism as the work of the whole Church and the responsibility of every member.

This was further compounded by the Tiller Report in 1983 with its thesis depending greatly on the principles of every-member ministry and collaborative ministry. Tiller calls for a local presbyterate (assisted by various lay ministries) collaborating under the bishops with a more mobile task-force of 'diocesan priests', whose primary task would be evangelism. Again there is no mention of evangelists as such and in paragraph 150 Tiller distinguishes strongly between Orders which are representative of the Church's authority to minister Christ's Gospel and Charisms or gifts of the Spirit which may not be 'ordered' but merely recognized when they appear. So he says that 'there are no separate orders of teachers, pastors, evangelists, administrators, still less prophets'.[101]

Tiller highlights the problem. In admitting a person to the Office of Evangelist, the Church of England would primarily and essentially be recognizing a spiritual gift or charism. Seen in that context, the Office could hardly be said to be either permanent or temporary - it

---

[100] General Synod Board for Mission and Unity, *Evangelism in England Today* (London 1979) Para. 60.

[101] J. Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry* (London 1983) Para.150.

could only be recognized for as long as the gift itself is present and recognizable. If evangelism is basically a charisma, a gift of the Spirit given to certain individuals and not to others, it is questionable whether it can be satisfactorily 'domesticated'.

c) Deaconesses

The issue which dominated discussion of deaconesses for the most part of the twentieth century within the Church of England was whether deaconesses were an ordained or a lay ministry. The debate was not simply about ordained versus lay ministry, but the wider question of gender: was it possible for a woman to be ordained into the order of the diaconate.

At the 1920 Lambeth Conference, a committee of bishops made an unqualified affirmation:

> 'In our judgement the ordination of a Deaconess confers on her Holy Orders. In ordination she receives the 'character' of a Deaconess in the Church of God; and therefore the status of a woman ordained to the Diaconate has the permanence which belongs to Holy Orders.'[102]

This statement was circumvented by the 1930 Lambeth Conference which wanted to separate the male diaconate form the order of Deaconesses on the grounds that the

---

[102] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1920* (London 1920) p.102.

Deaconess was a primitive order, whereas the deacon had developed over the centuries:

> 'Once the principle is accepted that the Order of Deaconess is not simply the equivalent of the Order of Deacon, the way is open for a new consideration of the status, function and development of the Order.'[103]

The non-ordained status of the Deaconess was reinforced in 1952 with Deaconesses being considered eligible for election to the House of Laity of the Church Assembly and the Chamber of Laity at a Diocesan Conference. As one of the Deaconess canons puts it:

> 'The Order of Deaconesses is not one of the Holy Orders of the Church of England and accordingly Deaconesses may accept membership of any lay Assembly of the Church of England without prejudice to the standing of their order.'[104]

However the Lambeth Conference of 1968 recommended:

> 'That those made deaconess by the laying on of hands with appropriate prayer be declared to be within the diaconate.'[105]

It reaffirmed the statement of its 1920 predecessor: 'In our judgement, the ordination of a Deaconess confers on her Holy Orders...'.[106] The Order of Deaconess finally came to an end in 1987 when the Church of England

---

[103] *Report of the Lambeth Conference 1930* (London 1930) p.60.

[104] Cited in J. Grierson, *The Deaconess* (London 1981) p.63.

[105] *The Report of the Lambeth Conference 1968* p.106.

[106] *The Report of the Lambeth Conference 1920* p.102.

ordained women to the diaconate, abandoning the term 'deaconess' altogether. The story of the deaconess is that of muddle and uncertainty as to what constitutes a lay office and what constitutes an ordained order, further complicated by controversy over the role of women within the Church.

d) Questions raised by differentiated laity.

As the section on differentiated laity in the nineteenth century has shown, the differentiated laity developed to meet particular needs - in particular the need for additional help for hard-pressed clergy. The Church was concerned that these lay ministries were not merely *ad hoc* local peculiarities, and set about duly ordering and standardizing the phenomena. The most important aspect of this process of standardization was that the accreditation was episcopally authorized. Thus lay ministry was seen during the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth century as being part of a ministerial framework responsible and accountable to the bishop.

This hierarchical model worked successfully while the concept was that ministry was the preserve of those episcopally accredited. However during the 1960's and 1970's the emphasis tended to be that ministry was not conferred by episcopal accreditation but rather by

baptism. Ministry was something which every baptised lay person was supposedly engaged in both within the Church and more importantly within the world. This development raised question marks over whether the Church ought to have differentiated laity at all, and what the theological distinction between differentiated and undifferentiated laity could be. Indeed a further point was in what sense the differentiated laity represented the Church in its wholeness.

There seemed to be no theological distinction between differentiated and undifferentiated laity - both were commissioned for ministry through baptism. Furthermore the differentiated laity did not represent the Church in its wholeness - they were simply a category of convenience created by episcopal accreditation to which a variety of tasks and responsibilities were allocated. Because it appeared that certain tasks and responsibilities were the preserve of the differentiated laity that seemed to suggest that they were not open to the undifferentiated laity. Indeed the only distinction between differentiated laity and undifferentiated laity was the level of theological education and training which was invested in the differentiated laity. The question which can be raised is whether the presence of the differentiated laity does not lead to the general impoverishment and further paralysis of the undifferentiated laity. This question will be considered further in Chapter Three.

6. Liturgical Developments

The twentieth century has seen a marked increase in the practice and the ministry of the laity within Anglicanism. This section will consider firstly the influence of the parish and people movement on the Church of England. Secondly, it will examine the writings of Bishop John Robinson on liturgy and the laity. Thirdly it will review some of the more recent liturgical developments as they pertain to the laity. Fourthly the question of lay presidency at the Eucharist will be considered.

a) The Parish and People Movement

The origins of the Parish and People Movement lay with A.G. Hebert's emphasis in 1913 upon parish commission. This concern was given future publicity through his book *The Parish Communion: A Book of Essays* and generated a movement in the 1930's, with its own magazine 'Parish and People'. As Hebert wrote:

> 'By the Parish Communion is meant the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with the communion of the People in our parish church as the chief service of the

> day, or better, as the assembly of the Christian community for the worship of God.'[107]

This was an innovation in as much as the Eucharist as a central Sunday service for parishioners was up until the 1930's unusual. The theological basis for the movement was that full participation by the laity in the Eucharist was about full participation in the self-offering of Christ.

> 'The Eucharist sums up the whole Gospel of redemption as the sacramental showing forth of the one sacrifice of Christ and of the offering up of the members of Christ through union with him to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice to God.'[108]

Within the context of more frequent communion, the offertory began to be seen as an important way in which the laity could participate. The use of the laity at the offertory was seen as the revival of a practice within the early church in which the bread and wine were brought to the altar by the laity and this act clearly demonstrated their will to offer themselves. The modern equivalent, popularized by the Parish and People Movement, was for representatives of the people to carry the elements in procession from the back of the church as well as the collection 'each member of the congregation in some cases having placed a wafer in the ciborium or on the patten as they came to church'.[109] The whole theology

---

[107] A.G. Hebert ed, *The Parish Communion: A Book of Essays* (London 1937) p.3.

[108] Ibid., p.4.

[109] H. Davies, *Worship and Theology in England* Vol V (Princeton 1965) p.320.

of the movement became centred around this ceremonial act, giving it great emphasis. References to it as 'the layman's liturgy' were not altogether helpful because it suggested that everything else was the property of 'the priest's liturgy'.[110]

Later in the 1950's early examples of individual lay participation began to emerge - principally in reading the Epistle (but not the Gospel) and in leading intercessions (but not administering communion) - and these developed widely. The People and Parish Movement took care to involve the congregation actively and went a long way to dispel the old view that the Eucharist was a spectacle performed by liturgical experts in the sight of a largely silent and submissive people.

b) The writings of Bishop John Robinson

John Robinson was concerned to recover the Patristic understanding of the liturgy as quite literally the work of the 'laos' by which the 'laos' were made the very Body of Christ. In his book *Liturgy Coming to Life*, he states clearly his understanding of liturgy:

> 'this is the crucible of the new creation in which God's new world is continually being fashioned out

---

[110] C. Buchanan, *The End of the Offertory: An Anglican Study* (Bramcote, Notts. 1978) p.40.

> of the old, as ordinary men and women are renewed and sent out as carriers of Christ's risen life.'[111]

The Eucharist, for Robinson, is the supreme action of the whole Body of Christ. The whole church is the celebrant over which the bishop or priests preside.[112] However, the corporate character of the Eucharist does not consist simply in the fact that the action is done together. It is not a question of doing together what cannot be done alone, but rather by participation in the one bread, the 'laos' become the one body of Christ:

> 'It is the Pauline mystery so powerfully expounded by St Augustine of the double sense of 'the body' - that we are the body of Christ and we feed on the body of Christ ... (and) with this goes the corollary that we cannot receive his body in the Sacrament except that we are built up into his body the Church: we cannot have Christ without his members. And the implications of that - that there <u>is</u> no communion without community - are of unlimited consequence once we begin to take them seriously.'[113]

The liturgy as communal action of the whole people of God was emphasized by Robinson's understanding that any regular worshipper could be called upon to take part in the liturgy. People might be asked to read the Epistle, to intercede or to be involved in the offertory.[114] This was part of the responsibility of the laity in liturgy: there was to be an openness and a commitment to

---

[111] J.A.T. Robinson, *Liturgy Coming to Life* (London 1961) p.23.

[112] Ibid., p.26.

[113] J.A.T. Robinson, *On Being the Church in the World* (London 1960) p.70.

[114] H. Davies, *Worship and Theology in England* Vol V, p.331.

participate. Moreover that commitment was first of all to be present:

> 'To be a member of the Body and not to be <u>there</u> was *ipso facto* to be a sick member of the Body whether physically or spiritually. Not to take one's place at the family table was necessarily to side with the World.'[115]

For Robinson the Church is the pledge and instrument of the new creation. In the Eucharist the basic elements of the world are taken by Christ with all they represent of human life and over them are spoken the words of consecration. Outside the Eucharist, the division between holy and common, secular and sacred remains, but within the Eucharist this division is abolished. As Robinson wrote:

> 'I am interested in liturgy only as the clue to the transfiguration of life.'[116]

The Eucharist reflects the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ, the transfigured people of God. But the Eucharist also points, in Robinson's thought, to the mission of the Church in the world:

> 'The Communion is social dynamite, if we really take seriously the pattern of community known at the altar. The Church discovered that, in time, in the case of slavery. We have to discover it in terms of race and class and all that is involved for the distribution of the World's resources in the practice in which we indulge, so thoughtlessly each

---

[115] J.A.T. Robinson, *Liturgy Coming to Life* p.28.

[116] J.A.T. Robinson, *Liturgy Coming to Life*, Preface to the Second Edition (1963) p.xi.

> Sunday, of the absolutely unconditional sharing of bread.'[117]

'Liturgy coming to life' is not simply liturgical renewal for its own sake or even for the sake of the Church. Rather it is a question of liturgy coming uncomfortably close to life:

> 'For liturgy is nothing less than the Gospel of the Word made flesh in action, Christ through his body about his saving work, taking the things of this world and through the power of his sacrifice leaving none of them untouched.'[118]

Liturgy is linked to the mission of the whole People of God as its place of resourcing and reference.

c) Recent liturgical developments

Nearly all recent Anglican liturgical developments reflect one of the central concerns of both the Parish and People Movement and the theology of John Robinson, namely the Church as the body of Christ. One result of this concern has been a renewed emphasis on the general priesthood of the whole Christian community in worship. The restoration of a further liturgical role to the laity is reflected in the rubrics of the new Anglican liturgies.

---

[117] Ibid., p.37.

[118] Ibid., pp.43-44.

In the Alternative Service Book of 1980, a distinction is made in the offices of Morning and Evening Prayer between minister, priest and people. Minister may be lay, male or female. Only the absolution is assigned specifically to the priest, although provision is made for the adaption of the text ('you' is replaced by 'us') for use by others than the priest.

More illuminating for the concept of the body of Christ is the Eucharistic liturgy. Here the rubrics distinguish between the president, who must be a priest or bishop, and a minister. Note 2 before the service observes that the president presides over the whole service and says the opening greeting, collect, absolution, peace and blessing as well as the Eucharistic prayer.[119] The remaining parts of the service he may delegate to others. In many parishes this is precisely what happens. The laity read the lections and may preach; they may lead intercessions, introduce the confession and share the peace. The Offertory procession is quite common, with members of the congregation bringing up the bread and wine. In comparison with the Book of Common Prayer of 1662, there is much more dialogue in the service.

Thus far so good. But what of the role of the laity at baptism? Here we find a desire to make the baptism of infants a public ceremony that takes place during the

[119] ASB, *The Alternative Service Book* (London 1980) p.115.

normal worship of the congregation. In an Established Church like the Church of England many baptisms of the unchurched take place and the congregation do not necessarily appreciate what becomes a regular disruption of Sunday worship. Perhaps the corporate responsibility of the church is still a far too clerical concern and as yet unappreciated by many of the laity.

The ASB valiantly attempts to involve the laity. At the signing of the cross all join in; there is a response at the beginning of the blessing over the water and the congregation again joins in the confession of faith of the Church at the giving of a candle and a welcome. But is this enough? The Roman Catholic RCIA sees initiation as giving liturgical expression to a gradual ongoing process, combining liturgical celebration with pastoral and catechetical work and presupposes the involvement of the laity. Perhaps the Church of England has something to learn here concerning the interaction of the liturgical ministry of the laity and the general ministry of the laity.

What of marriages and funerals? The former is usually a semi-private occasion, and although people are given responses, their main function is as witnesses. This may well be their legal function, but there should also be a celebratory dimension. However the western pre-occupation with vows and valid marriages would seem to militate against a move to give the laity a greater role

in this area. But then what is the role of the laity at funerals? Often these are little more than clerical monologues.

The new Anglican liturgies appear to represent a partial response to the concern of the liturgical movement to exploit the concept of the body of Christ and restore active lay liturgical roles. The ordained clergyman is increasingly becoming a 'master of ceremonies', presiding over different parts of worship. It may therefore be the task of the ordained to help the laity to make best use of their new liturgical roles. Much more has yet to be done to articulate the many ministries of the body of Christ, but as Robin Green notes:

> 'Most Christian congregations are a long way from this vision, and it will require at least another decade of consciousness-raising through lay-training programmes and reformed theological education before we see this vision become a reality.'[120]

So far the liturgical ministry of the laity has been looked at from the point of view of the activity of the laity vis-a-vis rubrics and prayers. But it is important not to overlook another dimension of worship, which might be called the passive liturgical ministry. Robin Green in *Only Connect* writes:

> 'Liturgy is an activity through which a community celebrates its values, passes on its norms and recreates a sense of its own identity through memory and forgiveness. Liturgy can be described therefore

---

[120] R. Green, *Only Connect* (London 1987) p.129.

> as an activity tied up with the complexities of human needs and emotions.'[121]

These words 'human needs and emotions' are crucial in, for example, the case of funerals. It has already been asked what is the role of the laity at funerals. The Funeral Liturgy has responses and readings in which the laity can participate and assist. But there is more to it than that:

> 'A funeral is not only a therapeutic experience for the grieving family. It is also an opportunity for others within the congregation to prepare for their own future grief situations. The person who has never attended a funeral until he experiences acute grief is at a great disadvantage in not knowing how people are to act, think and feel at the time of grief. To remind us again, liturgy is education. The funeral liturgy is a vitally necessary part of our preparation for death and bereavement before they occur. Every person's funeral, whether the person is close to us or not, provides an occasion for all of us to think about a life crisis that, without our participation in the funeral, we might not think about at all.'[122]

Thus the laity's liturgical ministry at a funeral includes coming before God with grief, sadness, loss, faith and defiance. It may include guilt. Thus in a sense a private emotional response is quite rightly joined with the liturgy of the Church. But more than that, liturgy provides a vehicle for people to express their humanity to God. As Green notes:

> 'Jesus freed people to take their humanity to God. Could there be a better definition of Christian

---

[121] Ibid., p.17.

[122] W. Williamson, *Worship as Pastoral Care* (Abingdon 1979) p.133.

> liturgy? The freedom to take our humanity to God.'[123]

Perhaps in the end that is what is the important liturgical ministry of the whole 'laos' of God, clergy and laity alike.

d) Lay Presidency at the Eucharist

As has already been seen in the context of the Lambeth Conference of 1978,[124] lay presidency was raised simply to be laid to rest. This was the pattern of the 1950's and 1960's. However as an idea it has stubbornly refused to go away. An important part of the reason for this has been the success of the parish communion: increased frequency of celebrations of the Eucharist has required an increased number of presidents. At a practical level the falling numbers of clergy at a time of increased demand for the Eucharist at each local parish church has kept alive the call for lay presidency as one solution to the problem.

It has been argued by Evangelicals[125] and by others[126] that since the fundamental ministry of Christ was

---

[123] R. Green, *Only Connect* p.101.

[124] *The Report of the Lambeth Conference 1978* (London 1978) p.83.

[125] cf. T. Lloyd ed., 'Lay Presidency at the Eucharist?' *Grove Litugical Studies No 9* (Bramcote, Notts 1975).

committed to the whole People of God and not to a priestly caste separate from the laity, so there was no theological necessity for an ordained person to preside at the Eucharist. It follows (so the argument runs) that although presbyteral presidency at the Eucharist was clearly a matter of good order to be practised wherever possible, in priestless communities the sacrament might still be celebrated with a lay person presiding.

However, it is a line of thought which is unlikely to gain a consensus agreement in the Church of England. This was recognized by the Faith and Order Group of the Board for Mission and Unity in *The Theology of Ordination*:

> 'such an action (i.e. lay presidency at the Eucharist) would undoubtedly bring strong protests from some quarters in the Church of England and be a real cause of division. Even where the principle was accepted, presidency by a layman would undoubtedly be regarded as second best and a deviation from the norm, and therefore only to be adopted when no other course was available.'[127]

More hope of consensus agreement within the Church of England lay in proposing the ordination to presbyteral orders of suitable local leaders in priestless communities. It was this course of action which the Church elected to follow in ordaining local Non-Stipendiary Ministers (LNSMs).

---

[126] cf. A.E. Harvey, *Priest or Presbyter* (London 1975).

[127] General Synod Board for Mission and Unity, *The Theology of Ordination* (London 1976) p.20.

Thus to sum up there has been a considerable increase in individual lay participation in liturgical activity in the last few years within the Church of England and a considerable diversity about the theology undergirding its action. Frequently various lay activities are understood in a different way in different Anglican parishes. Much still needs to be done to explore this area, but broadly three main positions may be discerned. Firstly lay ministry may be seen as 'delegation through necessity', a temporary expedient brought about if there is a shortage of ordained ministers. Thus the activity does not properly belong to lay people and will, it is assumed, cease when a sufficient supply of ordained ministers is again available. In other words, through force of circumstance the laity are seen as doing the clergy's work for them.

Secondly, the lay ministry may be seen as representative of the community. The lay person is understood to be performing the activity not because of any particular qualities or gifts, but simply in the name of the whole congregation, and the activity is regarded as something which belongs to the laity as of right. For example, the public reading of Scripture has often been described in this way in Anglican circles and the call for lay presidency at the Eucharist has had this as its theological presupposition.

Thirdly, the lay ministry may be seen as 'the exercise of an individual gift', something bestowed by God upon one particular individual and not resulting from his or her status as a baptized person nor as a consequence of any office held; not something bestowed by the Church either from below or from above, but simply discerned and recognized by the Church. This last is the newest of these three discernible options, which calls into question traditional assumptions about ministry and ordination and makes neat and clear-cut divisions less possible.

All of this seems to illustrate the inescapable conclusion that the time is far distant when it is possible to say with any degree of common agreement what it is to be a lay person in the Church, and what liturgical participation really means. Old patterns are certainly showing signs of cracks and crumbling, but the shape of the new cannot yet be distinguished.

7. Educational Developments.

The call for adequate education and training for laity has been continuous from the 1960's. Lay education has been understood as pivotal if the laity are to be empowered for mission and if a theology of the laity is

to be realized. As Mark Gibbs and Ralph Morton put it in the 1960's:

> 'The fundamental training on which the future of the Church depends is the training of the laity ... and the training of the clergy has to be seen as fitting into and serving this.'[128]

As Stephen Sykes put it in the 1980's

> 'In the now social conditions of the twentieth century Western culture, talk about the theology of the laity becomes a mockery if no attempt is made by the leadership of the Church to ensure lay education in the faith.'[129]

The fact that a similar call for lay education came in both the 1960's and in the 1980's suggests that very little was achieved in between. This is largely the case. The Church of England continued to place emphasis upon its traditional method of lay education: the Sunday School, sermons and confirmation and wedding preparation. The two celebrated developments in the 1960's and early 1970's were St George's House at Windsor (established in 1966 as a place where laity of influence from different aspects of society could meet and share insights) and the Institute of Christian Studies at All Saints, Margaret Street, London (established in 1970 'to provide the necessary resources to begin the task of lay education in

---

[128] M. Gibbs and R. Morton, *God's Frozen People* (London 1964) p.179.

[129] S.W. Sykes, 'Authority in Anglicanism, Again', *The Future of Anglican Theology*, M.D. Bryant ed (New York and Toronto 1984) p.190.

the Church of England')[130]. The fact that both of these establishments were considered pioneers suggests that very little was happening elsewhere.

This section will consider firstly some of the innovative and creative thinking during the 1960's, and in particular some of the ideas of Mark Gibbs and John Robinson. Secondly it will review some of the developments of lay educational practice during the early 1980's.

a) The 1960's

Both Mark Gibbs and John Robinson start from the presupposition that the priority of the laity is engagement with the world and so any programmes of education and training have to help the laity in that engagement:

> '... all of us accept that the chief vocation of the laity is in the World. If we do, we have to think very hard about training the laity for that job.'[131]

The model which Mark Gibbs commends is the Kirchentag Movement in Germany, which is a forum for laity which started meeting after the Second World War every two

---

[130] P. Welby, *A History of the Church of England* p.142.

[131] M. Gibbs, 'Laity Training', *Layman's Church* J.A.T. Robinson ed p.75.

years. Certainly in the 1960's it was very popular, attracting forty to fifty thousand people together for four or five days. What Gibbs finds so appealing is the Kirchentag's concern with the world:

> 'It is because they offer a kind of education for the layman in the world that I think they are important for us to know something about.'[132]

For Gibbs the principle of lay education is for Christians to try and find the mind of Christ for their jobs as Christians in a worldly environment. To do this people must know their context and learn the skills by which they can interpret and make sense of their context:

> 'If we want to understand how Christians must live as second-hand car dealers in east Manchester, or as teachers in a secondary modern school in Leicester, or as housewives in Stepney, one of the things that we must do is to learn all the new sociological knowledge that we have about life in those areas, and the new psychological knowledge we have about how informal groups operate in these areas. And the mind of Christ will be found in such a group of Christians who come together and study and who are committed to that kind of life.'[133]

The mind of Christ is discovered by people in their particular contexts and the pastoral and priestly work of the Church is done by the laity committed to those contexts. Those who live and work in situations are the ones best able to reflect upon those situations:

> '... neither the clergy nor the teachers can talk effectively about the compromises necessary to

---

[132] Ibid., p.78.

[133] Ibid., p.78.

> survive in ... politics: this is a job for those Christians who are <u>involved</u> in political life.'[134]

For Gibbs lay education is helping people to reflect theologically upon the situations they encounter in the places they find themselves.

Robinson describes this process as attaining 'worldly divinity'. Lay theology must start from the perspective of the world:

> 'By it (lay theology) I mean a theology which starts from Christian involvement in the world <u>now</u>. It means thinking theologically about <u>this world</u>. This is its point of departure, wherever subsequently it may be led.'[135]

Robinson is interested in issues of curricula, of attempting to assess what it would be useful for people to learn:

> 'How can we help them, whatever their subject, to see the world they are going to serve in some depth and perspective before they are thrown into it? Can their training to think theologically take its start from the world, rather than from the literary sources and historical origins of Christianity.'[136]

His concern is two-fold: firstly, to encourage the doing of theology from a lay perspective in which lay people's interests are explored with theological seriousness; the coping with the complex task of being a Christian in different roles such as the family and employment and

---

[134] Ibid., p.79.

[135] J.A.T. Robinson, *A New Reformation* p.67.

[136] Ibid., p.70.

unemployment; and secondly in encouraging a non-professional approach to theology. Some of the tasks that this entails are linguistic: freeing theology from the technical jargon used by academically trained theologians. This involves re-working theological concepts in ordinary language. As far as Robinson is concerned, lay theology is to be the pace-maker of academic theology:

> 'For as Mr Howard Root says in his opening essay in *Soundings*, "academic theology has lived on its own fat. The supply of fat is running out". I do not in the least want to see the classical disciplines of theology discredited - that would be disastrous for lay theology as much as for any other. But if we are not to retire to the ark or die of inanition, we must find new sources of nourishment.'[137]

Robinson's concept of lay theology was about theological rigour and discipline, but about taking theology's agenda from lay concerns in the world.

b) The early 1980's

Aspects of the thinking of both Gibbs and Robinson can be discerned in the development of various lay projects in the early 1980's. These projects arose for a variety of reasons: as diverse initiatives (often allied to the need for Reader Training) or responses by particular geographical areas (for instance the inner city) to

---

[137] Ibid., p.73.

perceived needs. The projects fall into two distinct categories working with their own theological models.

The first model is concerned with imparting knowledge to the laity. Often it is clergy-taught and the laity learn. The curriculum resembles a watered down university theology course. The style is lecturing and occasional seminars, with assessed essays and tutorials. Theologically this model suggests that God is concerned foremost with religion: individuals are rooted more securely into aspects of ecclesial doctrine. The laity know the tenets of their Christian faith and are more able to communicate them to others. Educationally, the model stresses that the clergy lecturer has 'the knowledge' and the laity are simply filled with the knowledge. An example of such a model was the West Oxfordshire Christian Training Scheme. This was set up in 1984 in response to a request from the Diocesan Synod. It was designed for lay people who were interested in exploring their faith further and encompassed Reader Training. As the WOCTS prospectus stated:

> 'Our courses are open to all. You can use them for general interest, to gain a skill or to prepare for accredited ministry.'[138]

The curriculum was very much geared towards enlarging people's knowledge. Thus there were courses on 'The Letter to the Hebrews in Greek', 'The Pentateuch', and

---

[138] A.J. Barnet, *West Oxfordshire Christian Training Scheme Prospectus* (1985 unpublished) p.2.

'Why do we hold our beliefs?' (a patristic course from the Apologists to Chalcedon). The need for such courses was carefully explained:

> 'Christians need to understand what others believed in the past, and why those beliefs have endured. Doctrine developed as people worked to bring order to experience of the world and prayer. Those teachings continue to develop and we need to know why.'[139]

This first model has less to do with lay theology and more to do with a lay version of a theological college curriculum.

The second model from the point of view of the thinking of Mark Gibbs and John Robinson is more interesting. According to this model, theological education of the laity is understood as seeing the whole of life in the light of Christian faith and the Christian faith in the light of the whole of life. The concern is to help people to reflect upon their experience and to provide them with tools and methods by which they can do their own theology. In this model, God is to be found as much in the world as in the Church and God is concerned with all things and all people. Educationally in this model the laity learn from each other because they all have a wealth of knowledge from their experience of life. The aim of such lay theological education is the radical transformation of society through the laity being 'salt, light and leaven' in the world.

---

[139] Ibid., p.2.

An example of this second model is the Stepney Area course for lay people called 'Step by Step'. The course was started in 1981 as a Diocesan Board of Education initiative. Its objective was to enable existing or potential lay readers to develop their leadership skills and the experience they already had in lay ministries in church and community and preferably both. The central concern is to encourage people to ask questions about their faith as a result of their life experience. The curriculum is a programme of theological development that begins where people are, helping them to help each other, making available resources of the Christian tradition in such as way as to help them face their own questions, calling out from each person his or her specific skills and putting them to use to help others. Although certain aspects are suggested as subjects for units for discussion, the curriculum is sufficiently flexible to allow people to explore their own concerns. It is a good example of people learning to theologize from and about their own experience.

However, examples of the second model of lay education are not plentiful. In 1987, the Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of England gathered together a list of lay educational projects which it considered exemplified good practice (that is, conformed to the second model). Only thirty-four projects are listed. The reason these are so few is quite simple:

lack of money. The Church of England does not invest in the laity as it does in the clergy. Indeed the true theology of a church, a denomination, a synod or a parish can always be deduced from its budget. The operational theology of a church is tested by its budget. If this is so, the current theology of the laity in the Church of England is derisory.

8. Recent Church of England Reports 1983-85

During the 1980's, the development of the laity featured as a theme in a significant number of disparate reports which came before the General Synod of the Church of England. This section will focus in particular on three of these reports - The Tiller Report: A Strategy for the Church's Ministry (1983)[140], The General Synod Board of Education Report: All Are Called (1985)[141], and The Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas Report: Faith in the City (1985)[142].

---

[140] J. Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry* (London 1983).

[141] General Synod Board of Education, *All Are Called* (London 1985).

[142] The Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas: *Faith in the City* (London 1985).

a) The Tiller Report: A Strategy for the Church's Ministry.

The central concern of the Tiller Report is to make mission rather than maintenance the explicit strategy against which proposals for changing the structure of ministry are to be measured. Within this scheme, the ministry of the whole people of God is a fundamental theme. Tiller acknowledges a lay role in the world but his main concern is with the institution. He advocates that the laity must no longer be seen as a clerical support system, but rather that there must be collaboration. His vision is for the stipendiary clergy to become the laity support system with the local ordained priest as *primus inter pares*.

The strategy is concerned with mission to the nation and how best and most effectively and efficiently to achieve it. The laity are targeted as fundamental for that task:

> 'The vitality of the laity is evident. The Holy Spirit is at work renewing the Church, whatever difficulties there may be with the structures. This applies to any age, but the experience in the Church of England amounts to what may be described as <u>the emergence of the laity</u>. This raises questions as well as hopes. What is the real sphere of lay ministry? Some would say 'in the world' not 'in the Church' ... Others today would not want to make this distinction, but see clergy and laity together in the Church enabling it to be the Body of Christ fully involved in the world.'[143]

---

[143] J. Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry* p.27.

Tiller does underline the ministry of the Church in the world, most notably by quoting an unpublished paper by Ruth Etchells:

> 'To be called to lay service is to be called to live in the secular world, to be at ease in it, to know its idioms and its assumptions, to engage in its arguments and affairs, because one's centre is there. It is not to sally out from one's "real" centre, the parish church and its affairs or the diocesan structures, for sorties into industry or trade or education or politics or whatever.'[144]

It is clear that for Tiller the primary focus is lay ministry as assistance for the clergy in the running of the parochial organization.[145] This lay ministry is understood as being not an inferior ministry beside the ordained ministry: both lay and ordained are equally called to ministry:

> 'This totality of the Christian ministry is obscured not only by its traditionally restricted reference in the Church of England to those who are in orders, but also by the contemporary social context in which public service is "normally paid, professional and highly organized. No such qualifications are necessary for the exercise of Christian ministry".'[146]

Tiller roots the authorizing or commissioning for ministry which is the responsibility of the whole People of God in baptism:

> 'In the New Testament the significance of baptism includes authorization for ministry because it includes the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians

---

[144] Ibid., p.62.

[145] Ibid., p.63.

[146] Ibid., p.52.

> 12:1-13; Ephesians 4:1-7). Every baptised Christian has been called to and authorized for Christian service in Christ's name as a member of the body of Christ, the people of God.'[147]

This establishes a universal franchise for ministry, but as Tiller himself acknowledges, it raises questions about the purpose of confirmation and indeed the baptism of infants. The omission of confirmation is indicative of the Church's unease about it and was one of the reasons behind the Knaresborough Report *Communion Before Confirmation* (1985).[148] This basically sees baptism as the sole and complete rite of initiation into communicant membership of the Church. Confirmation is affirmed as a 'sacramental means of grace to accompany an adult profession of faith',[149] but is given further significance as a kind of commissioning for the exercise of mature lay responsibility within the Church's life and ministry.

For Tiller, baptism as the commissioning of the whole People of God for ministry is practically worked out through shared ministry. He takes up the point made by the Partners in Mission Consultation which took place in the Church of England in 1981:

> 'We are still dominated by the false view that the ministry of the Church is confined to bishops, priests and deacons. The whole people of God share

---

[147] Ibid., p.63.

[148] The Knaresborough Report, *Communion Before Confirmation* (London 1985).

[149] Ibid., p.49.

> in ministry, and clergy and laity alike must be trained for this shared ministry.'[150]

In his understanding of the 'shared ministry', Tiller draws upon biblical images such as those found in Ephesians 4:1-7 and in 1 Corinthians 12 which speak of mutual interdependence of service in the Body of Christ:

> 'Baptism does therefore include an authorization to minister as a Christian and ministry is in fact more than a role; it is a way of being the Church, the means of expressing that care for others which is the true agape at the heart of the Christian life. There is mutual interdependence in Christian ministry because God has given us each different gifts. This is the whole point of St Paul's analogy of the human body (1 Cor.12). The total ministry of the Body of Christ includes the response of every member to a call to share in the service which Christ himself gave to others.'[151]

The recognition that the ministry of the laity is the ministry of the Church and the nature of that ministry is shared is understood by Tiller as one of the renewed emphases as a result of modern biblical scholarship. The second is that lay ministry is priestly ministry and he draws upon biblical images in 1 Peter 2:9 and Romans 12:1:

> 'Lay ministry is priestly ministry! All Christian ministry is offered first and foremost to God, so scripture speaks of the calling of every Christian in priestly and sacrificial terms ...Christian social action, concern for justice, acts of compassion, building of community are all priestly in character, not just because they are dedicated to

---

[150] The Commission on the Deployment and Payment of Clergy, *Partners in Mission* (London 1967) p.47.

[151] J. Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry* p.66.

> God but because they witness to God's own activity.'[152]

Tiller roots the priesthood of the whole People of God rightly in the priesthood of Christ, and that reconciling, sacrificial ministry in the world can only be undertaken if the whole People of God are abiding in Christ and living in the power of his Spirit.[153]

Having established that ministry is the activity of the whole People of God and that the nature of that every-member ministry is connected with a sharing interdependence within the Body of Christ and with priestly sacrificial reconciling in Christ, Tiller is also careful to preserve a role for the ordained ministry. His doctrine of lay ministry does not displace the ordained. Holy Orders exist in Tiller's scheme to represent the laity:

> 'Orders exist to be a representative focus of the Church's authority to minister the Gospel in Christ's name. The ordained ministry is therefore composed of members of the laity who are authorized to represent the whole Church, but in their public ministry and in their representative functions within the Christian community ... As representative ministers bishops are a sign of the apostolate of the laity; priests are a sign of the priesthood of all believers; deacons are a sign of the call to servanthood of all who are "in Christ".'[154]

This statement makes an important point. The ordained are essentially lay. They are authorized in their

---

[152] Ibid., p.68.

[153] Ibid., p.68.

[154] Ibid., p.84.

representative functions to recall the laity to its apostolate, its priesthood and its diaconate in Christ. It is there primarily to serve the laity in their realization of their calling in Christ.

Tiller is not only clear on the nature of holy orders but he is also clear on the nature of gifts and charisms. Ministry is something which the whole People of God engage in, and gifts belong to that realm. They are given to the whole People of God for mission and ministry:

> 'Orders exist to serve and to represent the whole laity, whereas the separate ministries within the laity are expressed by the due recognition of gifts.'[155]

Gifts for ministry emerge from baptism and so belong to the ministry of the laity, in which both the ordained and the non-ordained share.

Tiller's vision for the role of the laity in the Church of England is an extensive one. The criticism that could be levelled against it is that it is too church-based and not sufficiently directed towards the world. However his vision is for a laity involved in both Church and world:

> 'The function of the laity as the Body of Christ is neither to be excluded form the sanctuary nor to take over the role of the clergy. It is to serve God <u>both</u> in the liturgy <u>and</u> in the world.'[156]

---

[155] Ibid., p.110.

[156] Ibid., p.68.

The usefulness of the report is Tiller's clarity about the role of the ordained vis a vis the non-ordained, and this theme will be examined further in the next chapter.

b) The General Synod Board of Education Report: *All Are Called* (1985)

All Are Called is the first major study by the Church of England on the place and work of the laity within the whole People of God:

> 'As far as we can see, this is the first Church of England document to address the question of theology and the laity.'[157]

Produced by a working party of the Church of England Board of Education, the Report was published in 1985. The Working Party was chaired by Patrick Rodger, Bishop of Oxford, and included clergy and laity, women and men. The format of the Report consists of a Common Statement, a series of nine essays signed by individual members of the working party (which develop some special concerns) and a concluding essay.

The Common Statement begins boldly with a clear affirmation of God's calling to all:

> 'The Working Party wishes to affirm very strongly certain Biblical and theological insights about the

[157] General Synod Board of Education, *All Are Called* (London 1985) p.75.

> role of the laity within the whole Church of Jesus Christ. Because all human beings are made in the image of God they are called to become the People of God, the Church, servants and ministers and citizens of the Kingdom, a new humanity in Jesus Christ ... God leaves everyone free to refuse this call, but the call is there for all without exception.'[158]

It goes on to stress that God's calling to all is rooted in baptism. It is baptism which is the commissioning for lay vocation:

> 'Nor does our calling - our vocation - depend on any kind of ordination. There are still many deep controversies about what ordination may signify in many churches and within our own Church of England. But it certainly does not indicate any special grade of Christian, more holy than laity. And for everybody, bishops, priests and laity together, the great sacrament of our common calling is our baptism, which signifies our glorious new life in Christ.'[159]

The Common Statement continues to spell out that this call comes to us all in all our activities, whether they be church-based, work-based or leisure-based:

> 'It is for our churchly activities, for the work of both clergy and laity in worship and witness ... It is for what have been called our "Monday morning" ministries ...For the great majority of Christian people (whether they are in paid work or not) they will be ministers within the structures of the secular world - political, industrial, business, professional, social, educational ... And this calling is also for our "Saturday night" ministries for our lives in leisure and hospitality and entertainment and sports...'[160]

---

[158] Ibid., p.3.

[159] ibid., p.3.

[160] Ibid., p.4.

The lay vocation is not restricted to the Church or to the world but is about engaging with every aspect of human life.

The Common Statement then addresses head on the 'unresolved theological division in the Church of England which seriously affects our understanding of the Church and the position of the laity within it'.[161] The problem is the continuing disagreements about the nature of ordained priesthood and its relationship to the priesthood of all believing Christians:

> 'This concerns a differentiation between the priesthood of all believers, into which all Christians enter through baptism and the sacramental priesthood which is the special calling of some particular members of the Church.'[162]

The Common Statement raises the issue to acknowledge its presence and then duly sets it aside unresolved. However, the point is made that if a theology of the laity is to be realized within the Church of England, this issue has to be faced and theologically worked through:

> 'It is not the task of this Working Party to settle this long-standing controversy, nor have we any mandate to do so. Yet it has of course been reflected in our discussions; and it is necessary to acknowledge that it exists, and that it has very great implications for an understanding of the role of the laity within the whole People of God.'[163]

---

[161] Ibid., p.5.

[162] Ibid., p.5.

[163] Ibid., p.5.

The Common Statement then goes on to identify equally bluntly a number of specific obstacles which still hamper the laity.

In the first place there are those laity who would prefer to collude with the status quo, who feel unfamiliar with the language of lay vocation:

> 'It has to be admitted that very many of our lay people would frankly "rather not be called". When they are told that they are "ministers", and a "royal priesthood" they are not only uncomfortable with such language, they do not wish to be committed to such responsibilities.'[164]

Secondly, there are laity who prefer not to engage their Christian faith with secular structures, who prefer to keep their religion and other aspects of their lives separate:

> 'There is a special unease about relating our Christian faith to questions of structural change in modern society. There are worries about matters of compromise and controversy; and Christians feel - wrongly - that to be involved in such entanglements means that they "can't be a Christian" in their daily lives. There is a failure to understand the dimensions of Christian courage in ambiguous situations and structures, and that to refuse to wrestle with such hard questions often simply means voting for the status quo.'[165]

Thirdly, the laity are understood to be hampered in their development by a lack of educational opportunity,

---

[164] Ibid., p.6.

[165] Ibid., p.6.

compounded by insufficient funding for educational programmes:

> 'Many more lay people have not yet developed either the theological or the secular understanding which together make for an effective involvement and witness in these areas of life. They are still ill-equipped to join in dialogue and discussion with fellow Christians ... Church funding for all this is often pitiful compared indeed with the budgets for clerical education and in-service training. Even when money is made available, laity education often concentrates on "Sunday ministries", on training for church work of various kinds. It neglects the responsibilities of the laity outside parish life.'[166]

Fourthly, the laity are not encouraged to develop because of the inherent tensions between the laity and the clergy. The word which the Common Statement uses to sum up these tensions is 'clericalism':

> 'The underlying factor here seems to be that within our Church of England structures and regardless of churchmanship, there is a persistent clericalism. This clericalism is at bottom a confusion between the status of individuals and a theological understanding of their calling. It has been historically formed and embedded in social life; and our forms of clergy training have evolved from it.'[167]

Having identified the four main obstacles to the practical working out of a theology of laity, the Common Statement comments on two further areas which in its opinion need attention. The first is worship. While some churches reflect faithfully in their worship the concerns and activities of the laity from their

---

[166] Ibid., p.6-7.

[167] Ibid., p.7.

experience of the world, other churches seem to deny the role of the laity in worship:

> '... there are others which almost seem to deny the calling and the work of the laity in the world by their concentration on in-church matters. And the customs of traditional Anglican worship can stress a division between clergy and laity which is distinctly unhelpful.'[168]

The second area of concern is the consultation of the laity. While affirming the Church of England's Synodical structures which involve the laity at every level, the Common Statement recognizes that many laity are excluded form the process because of the commitments and nature of their secular employment:

> 'Our Church's structures have not yet found good ways of taking many of its clergy and laity into an effective partnership for learning the will of God for our day. Our synods should find new ways to consult the kind of laity who are simply not able to become members.'[169]

Of the nine essays two in particular seem to capture the difficulties associated with the task of the laity. Antony Dyson's contribution, 'Clericalism, Church and Laity' makes the distinction between the visible church and the invisible church:

> 'A useful working distinction may be drawn between the "visible" and the "invisible" Church which may serve to remind us that the sociological, institutional reality which we call the Church is different in many respects from the theological, spiritual reality we also call the Church.'[170]

---

[168] Ibid., p.9.

[169] Ibid., p.10.

[170] Ibid., p.13.

For Dyson, the visible Church is a 'powerful Church and a clericalist Church'.[171] The invisible Church is where the creative and redemptive acts of God are to be found. The visible Church defines the laity in terms of a clericalist spirit:

> 'A deeply flawed definition of laity begins to emerge as those who, led by the clergy, are particularly active in church affairs.'[172]

To counter the falsehoods of the visible Church, Dyson advocates the development of a dissident tradition. He highlights three questions which the dissident tradition raises with regard to the laity:

> 'First the dissident tradition challenges head-on the view that the formation and history of the Christian ministry is a process directed and providentially protected by God. Second, the question is vividly exposed of the relation of the clergy as a caste, and clericalism as a system, to the holding and wielding of power in the Church. Third, the Church is criticized not simply for negative reasons, but for the sake of humanity, whose renewal and progress is inhibited by the false defensiveness of the "visible" Church.'[173]

In Dyson's view the dissident tradition ought to redirect us to the doctrine of the 'invisible' Church as the primary category, and then the values of clericalism would be inverted. The laity are encouraged to spend more time outside the 'visible Church' attending to the

---

[171] Ibid., p.14.

[172] Ibid., p.15.

[173] Ibid., p.15.

concerns of the 'invisible Church': 'the task of searching for, holding to, living, struggling and dying in, the creative centre of the culture ... to which we belong' and being 'where God's creativity and redemptive acts are contending with forces of meaninglessness, dispersion, disorder and despair'.[174] For Dyson, the invisible, hidden Church active in the world is the true home of the laity.

Ruth Etchells in her essay 'Notes towards a Theology of Laos' also stresses the paradox of the visible and the invisible Church - the paradox of the works of God proclaimed and the works of God hidden and in secret:

> 'One is the paradox of the work of our God which is hidden - the secret power of the Kingdom: and this is set in contrast to the openness of the proclamation to which we are called ...'[175]

For Etchells the task of the laity is caught up with the hidden work of God and proclaiming it:

> '... So a People of God rooted in the secrecy of God's hidden work and yet in the open glory of our salvation, our very identity as his people comes both by believing in that secret labour of God, and by declaring its glory through our own hearing.'[176]

But as co-workers with God in his hidden work in the world, the laity challenge 'recognized' ministries. And they in their turn when they are aware of the richness

---

[174] Ibid., p.16.

[175] Ibid., p.29.

[176] Ibid., p.31.

and depth of lay experience will draw upon it all the more:

> 'The more hidden the co-partnership of such laity with their God in proclaiming the day of liberation, the more challenging that *laos* is to the "recognized" ministry. And the greater the duty and need of the visibly recognized to seek the hidden richness of such People of God.'[177]

Both Etchells and Dyson draw upon images of hiddenness - the 'invisible church', the 'hidden work of God' - as a way of understanding the ministry of the laity in and to the world. This will be an important feature in developing a theology of laity.

All are Called is an important report, not only because it is the first of its kind in the Church of England, but because it addresses clearly some of the obstacles to the development of the laity in a practical realistic way, while also maintaining a vision of what the role of the laity ought to be. It recognizes that the primary setting of the Church is in society at large and that it is in the midst of society that the Church cooperates with God's Spirit already present in society, in transforming human life into the life of the Kingdom of God. It also recognizes that if all of that is true then the carrying out of the Church's task in the world is mainly the task of the laity:

> 'Thus the primary location of the laity is in society at large. It is important that clergy and

---

[177] Ibid., p.34.

> lay officials of the Church should understand and respect the truth that most laity are only secondarily located in the institutional Church.'[178]

The issue which *All Are Called* skirts round is the one which it declared beyond its brief because it calls for a dramatic rethink of our understanding of ministry within the Church of England. The issue is that if the norm for mission and ministry in the world is lay mission and ministry, what weight do the structures of the Church place upon it and what resources are made available to facilitate it? This question will be addressed in the next chapter.

c) The Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas Report: *Faith in the City* (1985)

Faith in the City was published in 1985 by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas. The Commission was made up of both clergy and lay people, men and women. For our purposes of attempting to understand the Report's view of the laity, Chapter 6 on 'Developing the People of God' is insightful, even though it is in the main taken up with issues associated with ordinary ministry.

The central insight in *Faith in the City* is that the Church must be more aware of and prepared to listen

---

[178] Ibid., p.67.

carefully to, the needs of context. So in the case of Urban Priority Areas, the Church must pay attention to the local (lay) people:

> 'The structure of local churches should be more related to the tasks they have to undertake, which must be discerned and decided locally. The question is not so much "How is the Church to be run here?" but rather "What are God's people called to be and do here?.'[179]

It was recognized that local lay people are best able to further the Church's mission in a given area because they know instinctively how to communicate effectively with the local culture:

> 'There was a particular stress on the need for a laity in the UPA's committed to making Christianity take shape in the local culture. We strongly affirm that lay people have an important role in developing the mission of the local UPA church. They can present the Gospel to others in a way that will make them feel "this is for our sort of people". Only those who are in, and of, a local area can say how God is speaking there. They can tell each other and the wider Church.'[180]

The laity are envisaged as being pivotal to the mission of the Church, relating the Gospel to local culture; but importantly they are also envisaged as communicating what God is about in a local area to the wider church. The laity's engagement with the world within their own locality is perceived as being a source for enriching the whole People of God.

---

[179] The Archbishop of Canterbury's Report on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the City* p.106.

[180] Ibid., p.106.

This important role suggested the need for the development of local lay leadership and of training:

> 'There was a general recognition in the evidence submitted to us that "the potential for local leadership is there and it needs to be sought, nurtured and encouraged". A major emphasis in virtually all the submissions we have received is on the need for lay leadership to be developed systematically. Parishes repeatedly asked for training designed to reflect the experience, skills and cultures of local people.'[181]

This need for local leadership which was trained locally was underlined by the Commission. There was a call for local education courses:

> 'It would be a new experience for most Christians from UPA's to find themselves in a Church group where the great majority shared their culture and experience of life in city and town.'[182]

Faith in the City's vision is of a strong laity rooted in the culture and traditions of their own area, and able to be co-workers with the activity of God in their locality. The strength of the laity is recognized: they are God's People in the area where they live and have been brought up and they are the ones best able to engage with that world in the mission of God.

Thus the latter part of the twentieth century has witnessed a considerable shift in the perception of the role of the laity. The 1960's saw the opening up of a

---

[181] Ibid., p.107.

[182] Ibid., p.108.

rich ecclesiological seam which yielded a strong theology of laity. It was recognized that the laity were on the front-line of the Church's engagement with the world in mission and that in the face of secularism the future hope for the growth and well-being of the Church rested largely with the laity. These convictions were carried forward into the 1970's and 1980's, but with considerably less enthusiasm. Recent reports like *All Are Called* affirmed earlier insights but did little to advance the argument or to suggest a practical working out of the theology in terms of structural reform. Thus presently within the Church of England, a theology of laity seems to have been put on hold. There is plenty of rhetoric but little action. The task of the next chapter will be to find ways of advancing the argument for a theology of laity in the 1990's and so to direct it back into the mainstream of Anglican ecclesiology.

CHAPTER III: A CONTEMPORARY AGENDA

The aim of this chapter is to identify a theology of the laity which would be sustainable within the Church of England. The character of this chapter will be different from the previous two chapters. While the previous chapters have been largely historical and descriptive, this chapter will be largely programmatic in form. It will be concerned to carry the discussion forward and to sketch in outline a contemporary theology of laity, to commend it and to show its advantages. The chapter will have four sections:

1. A review of the historical evidence picking out the central themes which affect a theology of the laity.

2. Towards positing a contemporary theology of the laity.

3. The implications of a contemporary theology of laity.

4. Towards a justification of the contemporary theology of laity posited in the light of Anglican sources of authority.

1. A Review of the Historical Evidence.

It is significant that the first official report which attempted to suggest a theology of the laity was not published until 1985.[1] An analysis of the history of the development of understanding of the laity within the Church of England makes it clear that although the Reformation of the 1530's may have established a lay ascendancy of sorts, it was a lay ascendancy which was highly socially specific. For most of its history, the Church of England has been directed by politically and economically powerful laity and has been ultimately governed by the constitutional arrangement of the Sovereign-in-Parliament. This situation had less to do with a theology of the whole People of God than with political power. It has only been in the twentieth century (most notably after 1945) that a theology of the laity has been given serious attention. One of the central generators of this shift has been the decline in influence of the Church of England within the nation in the face of secularism. In response the emphasis has been upon mission in the world and the laity's responsibility as vehicles of that mission. Thus there has been, as one would expect, quite a substantial change in thinking within the Church of England on the role of the laity.

---

[1] General Synod Board of Education, *All Are Called* (London 1985).

However, although the circumstances of the twentieth century have facilitated the emergence of a theology of the laity it would be wrong to concentrate wholly on twentieth century developments to understand the position of the laity. The theology of the laity as it is emerging in the twentieth century has its roots and antecedents in the sixteenth.

The purpose of this section of the chapter is two-fold: to locate themes and strands of thinking within the historical evidence which would be positive for the development of a contemporary theology of laity; and to highlight those aspects of the historical evidence which are pathological for the development of a contemporary theology of laity and which would need careful addressing if such a theology was not to be impaired. The themes which emerge from the historical evidence are three-fold: the relation of the Church to the world; the place of the laity in the decision-making processes; and the relation of the ordained to the unordained. The positive aspect of these themes will be considered first, followed by the negative aspects.

The first important theme is the worldly vocation of the laity. This is present in the Edwardian Homily on Obedience, with its emphasis on social cohesion.[2] It is also to be seen in the role of the parish church and its

---

[2] cf. above p.13.

lay officials from the sixteenth century through until the nineteenth century in their engagement with secular matters in the parish from the care of the poor to the maintenance of the roads.[3] In the twentieth century the concept of the world being properly the Church's workplace was given theological warranty. From William Temple through to John Robinson through to the Report *All Are Called* the insight has been affirmed. To it was allied an understanding of mission as a necessity for all Christian people (and not simply for those set aside and designated 'missionaries') and a theology of the Kingdom of God which placed the locus of God's activity beyond simple identification with the work of the Church. God was recognized as being active in the world and the impetus was upon the People of God to discern God's activity and to co-operate with it. Thus any theology of laity would require a strong emphasis upon the worldly vocation of the laity and the attendant themes of mission and the Kingdom of God.[4]

The second theme to emerge from the historical evidence is the matter of the authority of the laity in decision-making. This is established at the outset of the Reformation. Authority in decision-making is vested in one layman, the Sovereign. Later in the sixteenth century this shifts to the Sovereign-in-Parliament. This

---

[3] cf. above p.28.

[4] cf. above p.83f.

situation is underlined by Richard Hooker in his *Ecclesiastical Polity*, although significantly he includes clergy within the decision-making process.[5] For Hooker, authority is dispersed among all those of wise counsel but in his scheme the clergy are not dominant.

However it was Cranmer who most established the concept of the authority of the laity. He did so by giving the whole People of God access to the vernacular scriptures. The education of the laity in knowledge of the scriptures would (ideally) produce an active, conscious, informed and responsible collective judgement of the whole People of God. Decision-making was to be made on the basis of a consensus of the godly.[6]

This was taken up again at the 1948 Lambeth Conference in its statement of authority.[7] The phrase that is used is 'dispersed rather than centralized authority' and the understanding is that authority is not rooted in synodical decrees primarily but in the general acceptance of measures or doctrines on the part of the whole People of God: a *consensus fidelium*. Underlying this insight was the basic theological assumption that God gives his gifts to the whole Church. The laity as much as the

---

[5] cf. above p.16f.

[6] cf. above p.20f.

[7] cf. above p.90f.

clergy have to challenge, criticize and dispute so that the Church can arrive at a common mind.

The third theme is the relation of the laity to the ordained. This again is carefully established in the sixteenth century. The Collect for Good Friday in the Book of Common Prayer talks about the 'vocation and ministry' of every Christian person.[8] This suggests that it is proper to talk about a lay vocation and a lay ministry. However, the question is how that lay ministry should interact with the ordained ministry. The clue lies in the order of service for ordination, as established by the Book of Common Prayer. At the ordination, the deacon, priest and bishop receive a Bible or New Testament and are given authority to preach from it and to administer discipline by means of it.[9] Thus all exercise authority, subject to the publicly available scriptures and so according to open criteria. Thus there is within Anglicanism a specific, ordained hierarchy and there is provision for the exercise of discipline. But there is also an awareness of the undesirability of clerical tyranny and a clear expectation that argument about the faith will be conducted openly on the basis of scripture which is open to all.[10]

---

[8] *Book of Common Prayer*, Collect for Good Friday.

[9] *Book of Common Prayer*, The Ordering of Deacons, The Ordering of Priests and the Consecrating of Bishops.

[10] cf. above p.23.

The issue of clerical tyranny and clericalism were recognized in the twentieth century as being oppressive to the development of the laity. Arguments against clerical dominance were made on the basis of the New Testament understanding of the Church. The kind of clergy who are argued for within the writings of John Robinson as well as *All Are Called*, are clergy who will be servants of God and enablers of the laity, not stifling lay development but encouraging its flourishing.[11]

Thus one would expect in any theology of the laity which took into account the historical understanding and development of the laity within the Church of England, these three themes. However, there is also within the historical evidence material which would run counter to any development of a strong theology of the laity. Much that is pathological to a theology of laity has its roots in the nineteenth century and it is important to locate these negative trends.

Firstly there has been a tendency in both the nineteenth and twentieth century Church of England to be overly concerned with the Church as an institution. The Church has sometimes wished to define itself over and against the world and certainly 'lay ministry' has been

---

[11] cf. above p.89.

understood in 'churchy' terms such as work within the local church or alternatively as helping the vicar.[12] There goes with this a theological perception that God is more active in the life of the Church than in the world. This again is a subtle form of clericalism in which Christian discipleship is primarily exercised in the domain where the clergy are dominant (namely the institutional church) rather than the world where the clergy hold relatively little sway.

Secondly there is the issue of the authority of the laity in decision-making. With the role of Parliament as a 'lay synod' (as understood by Hooker) becoming increasingly a matter of dispute in the nineteenth century, so the Church (in consultation with Parliament) took it upon itself to order its own affairs, while still maintaining a high level of responsibility and accountability to Parliament. However this change was significant. It meant that the business and decision-making of the Church was directed mainly by the clergy (through Convocation). The creation of the House of Laity in 1885 improved the situation by giving the laity a voice, but essentially (and significantly) the balance of power had shifted within the Church from the laity to the clergy.[13] Although technically Parliament was ultimately responsible, nevertheless in reality

---

[12] cf. C.F. Garbett, *The Claims of the Church of England* (London 1947) pp.110-115.

[13] cf. above p.49f.

Parliament was content to defer business to Convocation. This was particularly the case after 1919 (the Enabling Act). In the twentieth century forms of Church government, first the Church Assembly and then its successor since 1970 the General Synod, the laity have been a minority within the voting structures and matters of doctrine and liturgy are technically still not matters on which the laity can vote.[14] The official structures of the Church of England's government do seem to have fallen into the hands of the clergy.

Thirdly there is the issue of holy orders. During the sixteenth century the three-fold orders of bishop, priest and deacon were maintained more out of convenience that out of conviction.[15] At the end of the sixteenth century, Hooker emphasised holy orders as one of the 'givens' of Church Order, but it was not until after the Restoration that holy orders were an assured part of the structure of the Church of England. However if the evidence of the eighteenth century is indicative, then it appears that those in holy orders did not unduly prosecute notions of distinction between themselves and the laity on the grounds of ordination. Often the ordained and the unordained alike were engaged in worldly pursuits.[16] This

---

[14] cf. above p.72.

[15] S.W. Sykes, 'Anglicanism and Protestantism in England and Germany' in *Studies in Theological Diplomacy* ed S.W. Sykes (Frankfurt 1982) p.121.

[16] cf. above p.27.

seems to have been less the case in the nineteenth century. Various pressures seem to have congregated to encourage the clergy to 'magnify their office' and to see their clerical profession as something which separated them form the generality of laity.[17] Forms of clericalism which informed the life of the Church became antipathetical to any development of the laity which seemed to threaten clerical control and privileges.

Furthermore there is the issue of clergy expectations of the laity. The laity throughout the nineteenth and for much of the twentieth century, have been identified as being responsible ultimately to the clergy. This was highlighted by the lay parish volunteers, whose work was not perceived as being a ministry in its own right but only as an extension of the clergyman's ministry.[18] The case of the differentiated laity is of particular interest in as much as their office was designed on clerical lines and their roles were quasi-clerical. This became the basis for clericalizing and institutionalizing in one selected group of the laity the ministry which in fact belonged properly to the whole People of God.

These issues run counter to the development of a strong theology of laity. Consequently, if such a theology were to be posited it would have to argue against an

---

[17] cf. above p.38.

[18] cf. above p.43.

understanding of the Church as an introspective institution caught up in its own concerns rather than engaged primarily in God's mission in the world; against an understanding of authority and decision-making within the Church that simply allots to the laity a marginal role; and against an understanding of holy orders which turns the laity into second class citizens within the Church.

2. Towards a Contemporary Theology of Laity.

The aim of this section is to sketch out and examine some of the necessary elements in the development of a contemporary theology of the laity. The historical analysis has pointed out that although the Church of England has long emphasised the importance of lay representation within the Church of England (and indeed ultimate lay control of the Church through the Sovereign-in-Parliament), nevertheless a full and thorough-going theology of the laity has been slow in coming. The first such report, *All Are Called*,[19] published only in 1985, left by its own admission a number of fundamental issues unattended to. For instance the report acknowledges the diversity of opinion within the Church of England on the subject of the relatedness of the laity and the ordained,

---

[19] General Synod Board of Education, *All Are Called* (London 1985).

and accepts that the tackling of such an issue is beyond its own terms of reference:

> 'There remains an unresolved theological division in the Church of England, which seriously affects our understanding of the Church and the position of the laity in it. This concerns a differentiation between the priesthood of all believers, into which all Christians enter through baptism, and the sacramental priesthood which is the special calling of some particular members of the Church. Some Anglicans hold firmly to a belief that the Church of Christ is a Mystical Body, into which we are incorporated by baptism, and in which priests are sacramentally distinct from other members of it. Others hold, with the same strength of conviction, that clergy differ from laity only in function: they are simply set apart by the Church as teachers and pastors of the Christian community, equipping it for its ministry in the world. Again, some believe that priests depend for their call and for their authority solely upon God, while others maintain that the authority for priesthood comes not only from God, but derives also from the members of the Church in whose name such individuals are set apart. Still others would take an indeterminate position. They believe both that ordained priests are fully part of the common royal priesthood of all the People of God, and that they also receive a call to exercise a particular and sacramental priesthood. The authority for this special priesthood rests partly on a call from God, but also on a clear recognition of this call by the general members of the Church, who acknowledge representative authority in particular people from amongst their number.
>
> It is not the task of this Working Party to settle this long-standing controversy, nor have we any mandate to do so. Yet it has of course been reflected in our discussions; and it is necessary to acknowledge that it exists, and that it has very great implications for an understanding of the role of the laity within the People of God. Although none of the positions we have outlined necessarily imply that the laity are second-class Christians, in practice such a misunderstanding has often arisen from all of them. We welcome present moves within the Church of England towards a careful and frank discussion on these points. For such conflicting theories of priesthood inevitably raise deeper questions about the nature of the Church, and about authority, power and structure. These underline

> many present problems about the theology of the laity.'[20]

What is clear from this statement is that the Church of England is in need of an agreed theology of the Church and that such an agreed theology of the Church must precede a full theology of the laity. However, the difficulty is that an agreed theology of the Church cannot yet be presupposed. Work has been undertaken to help clarify the theology of the Church most notably in recent documents like *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry* report of 1986,[21] the General Synod debates of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission's *Final Report*[22] and the World Council of Churches' Report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* of 1986.[23] But the problem of a systematic Anglican theology of the Church is bound up with the nature of the Church which historically and characteristically has held together in tension diverse theological viewpoints. Within Anglicanism, ecclesiology has been a highly controversial subject and in the past comprehensiveness and unity have been emphasised over against conflict and systematics.[24]

---

[20] Ibid., p.5.

[21] General Synod Board for Mission and Unity, *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry* (London 1986).

[22] Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Final Report* (London 1982).

[23] World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva 1982).

[24] S.W. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (London 1978) pp.76-77.

However if a theology of laity is to be posited, it will require a total ecclesiology.

The kind of ecclesiology for which this thesis will argue, as being the necessary undergirding for the kind of theology of laity it wishes to suggest, takes its starting point from the subordination of the ordained ministry to the Church and of the Church to the Kingdom of God. This movement runs counter to the approach which has largely shaped the priorities of most theological writing and thinking on the theology of the Church.[25] This has been governed by the simple fact that the vast majority of those who have been engaged in it have not only been Church people, with a primary interest in life inside rather than outside the Church, but also have been clergy. Starting from where they are, their way in (almost inevitably) has been through a concern with the ordained ministry - witness the dominant pre-occupation in Anglican reports and ecumenical discussions with questions of ordained ministry that have left the laity largely untouched.

Although discussion has broadened over the last thirty years to a rediscovery of the *laos* or whole People of God and their part in the Church's liturgy and mission, and there has been a significant insight into the role of the

---

[25] M. Kane, 'Theology and the Laity' in *A Conference on Theological Education* (unpublished 1990) pp.28-29.

laity in society and with the secular, nevertheless in most theological writing or ecclesiastical debate, one would never guess that the laity constituted ninety-nine per cent of the Church. They appear much more like a penumbra occupying the area between the clerical nucleus and the outside world.

It is important, at this stage, to assess the current state of debate within the Church of England on the role of the laity so that the kind of contemporary theology of laity which will be sketched may be seen within a wider context. If the material produced in official reports since 1985 is surveyed, there is a sense of the debate having reached stalemate. There has been little development. This is recognized in the report produced in 1991 by the Mission Theological Advisory Group of the Board of Mission and Unity *Good News in Our Times*:[26]

> 'If we are to progress further we shall need to clarify the nature of ministry and the theological and organizational boundaries between the general ministry of all the baptised and that of the ordained.'[27]

The reason for the stalemate is identified: the difficulty is that presently the Church of England is unable or unwilling to clarify the central issue of how the ministry of the whole People of God relates to that of the ordained.

---

[26] General Synod Board of Mission and Unity, *Good News in Our Times* (London 1991).

[27] Ibid., p.109.

There is within the Church of England potential for both a development of a theology of laity and for the development of a strong theology of orders. However if both theologies are to be rightly affirmed there has to be a recognition and a fruitful interaction between the two theologies. So far there has been little of such interaction.

The theology of laity seems to have progressed very little since 1985. Admittedly the General Synod Board of Education produced in 1987 a response to *All Are Called* entitled *Called to be Adult Disciples*.[28] However this latter report was concerned principally with the educational implications of developing the laity and with identifying good educational practice. The issue of the relation of the ordained to the unordained remained unaddressed.

In 1987 the Faith and Order Advisory Group to the Board of Mission and Unity produced an embryonic report *The Ministry of the People of God*.[29] Part of its remit was:

> 'To respond to concerns voiced by many Christians within our own communion and more widely about: a) the place and role of the laity and the relationship

---

[28] General Synod Board of Education, *Called to be Adult Disciples* (London 1987).

[29] General Synod Board of Mission and Unity, *The Ministry of the People of God* (unpublished 1987).

> of the priesthood of the ordained ministry to the priesthood of the People of God.'[30]

However, despite its remit it too failed to broach the central issue of the relatedness of the ordained and the unordained. Furthermore it contributed nothing of significance to the debate on the role of the laity and its disappointing character is reflected in its remaining in draft form, unpublished. Thus little of substance seems to have been produced at an official level on the theology of laity, and what has been produced has avoided looking at the question of the ordained.

There has been more activity in the area of a theology of orders, but it too has avoided taking seriously a theology of laity. In 1986 the Faith and Order Advisory Committee of the Board of Mission and Unity produced a report *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry*.[31] Within that report the role of the laity is completely overshadowed by that of the ordained. While the whole People of God are recognized as being a priestly people, it is the ordained who give cash value to that priesthood in their role as *alter Christus*:

> 'Within this priestly people with its variety of ministries the risen Christ has appointed and maintains a specially ordained ministry for the building up of his people for keeping them in the unity of faith, hope and love and for leading them in mission in the world. Throughout this ministry Christ as shepherd and king continues to care and

---

[30] Ibid., p.2.

[31] General Synod Board of Mission and Unity, *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry* (London 1986).

> govern his people; as prophet he bears witness to the Gospel; as priest he makes the fruits of his reconciling sacrifice present and effective in the Church.'[32]

The question which arises from such a statement is what value does that leave to the ministry of the laity, the ministry of the whole People of God? Such a statement is a good example of a theology of orders claiming too much for itself.

Two questions emerge from all of this. First, why have the two theologies - of laity and of orders - been allowed to develop in parallel rather than in close association? Secondly, why has the theology of laity been so slow in coming?

The answer to the first question is probably connected with the delicate constitution of Anglican ecclesiology. Each theology perceives the other as a threat to its well-being and each theology has its supporters in different sections of the Church. Consequently there seems to be a reluctance to bring the two theologies together because of the potential fall out. The 'consequential untidiness' and 'attendant anomalies' seem preferable.[33]

---

[32] Ibid., p.99.

[33] P.K. Walker, *Rediscovering the Middle Way* (London 1988) p.109.

The reason for the theology of the laity being so slow in coming is connected with ecclesiological attention being distracted elsewhere and in particular to the issue of orders. The ordination of women to both the diaconate and the priesthood has shifted discussion into the area of ordained ministry.[34] Consequently the last six years have not been an altogether appropriate time to re-assess the relationship between orders and the laity. The question of the moment has been 'why ordain women?' rather than the fundamental question of 'why ordain anybody?'.

In proposing a sketch of what might form the main elements in a contemporary theology of laity, this thesis is attempting to re-open the debate on the laity. The main concern will be to address the central issue which has been effectively skirted around in every discussion on the laity: how the ministry of the laity relates to that of ordained ministry. It will attempt to bring together a strong theology of laity and a strong theology of orders. The history of an understanding of the laity within the Church of England reveals that at certain stages in the Church's history the theology of the laity has been advanced and at others the theology of orders has been developed. This thesis will suggest that in any

[34] General Synod, *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood. A Second Report by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England* (London 1988).

future theology of laity there has to be some kind of congruity between the two theologies.

The sketch of what a contemporary theology of laity might look like will start with a consideration of mission. It will be concerned to establish that God's mission is to the world and that it is the Church's task to co-operate with God in this mission. That part of the Church which is most immersed in the activities of the world is the laity. Thus the point being made is that concerns of the missionary task of the Church is an important starting point for a theology of laity. This was the basis for thinking about the laity in the 1950's and 1960's.[35]

The second part of a programmatic theology of laity will be to establish the two contexts in which the Church operates. The first context is as the Church gathered (for worship and fellowship) and the second context is as the Church dispersed (for mission in the world). This particular way of talking about the Church has been derived from two sources: the General Synod Board of Education's report *Called to be Adult Disciples*[36] and an unpublished paper prepared by Keith Lamdin and Lois Smith entitled *Towards an Understanding of Ministry*.[37]

---

[35] cf. above p.85f.

[36] General Synod Board of Education, *Called to be Adult Disciples* (London 1987) pp.12-13.

[37] K. Lamdin and L. Smith, *Towards an Understanding of Ministry* (unpublished 1987).

The first two parts on mission and Church are by way of preparation for the central third part on the relatedness of the ordained and the unordained. This will be the longest part because it brings together a theology of laity and a theology of orders. The concern is to establish an important role for the laity while not disturbing the role of orders. This is done by confining the role of orders to the context of the Church gathered (for worship and fellowship) and by suggesting that the role of the whole People of God (the ordained and unordained alike) is exercised in the context of the Church dispersed (in the world for mission). This concept has emerged from reflection on how the roles of the ordained and the unordained operated in the two Church contexts and (as far as is known) has not before been put forward explicitly as a means of differentiating between the ordained and the unordained, although it is hinted at by John Robinson.[38]

The fourth part acknowledges the deep seated perception in society's consciousness of the division between the sacred and the secular. However it also recognizes the Church's task of making the secular sacred. The laity have a significant part in this task. A useful model for expressing this role of the laity is the phrase the priesthood of the whole People of God. This model was

---

[38] cf. above p.88.

reflected upon and developed at the Lambeth Conference of 1988.

Thus the central concern in the sketching of a possible theology of laity will be to grasp the issue of the relatedness of the ordained and the unordained. The sections on mission, the nature of the Church and the understanding of the sacred and secular are present because they are recognized as being important themes in any fully developed theology of the laity within the Church of England in the future.

a) The involvement of God in the world.

The nature of God's involvement in the world is God's mission, the activity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit throughout the world from the beginning of time, helping to bring the Kingdom of God into existence. When the Kingdom already inaugurated in the coming of Jesus Christ finally reaches its consummation, every opposing tendency will have been erased and God's liberating acts will have reached their final goal. The fullness of mission depends upon God and his nature as revealed in word and deed, supremely so in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

It is on this revelation and activity of God that the nature of the Church as a missionary body is founded.

The first apostles were chosen by Jesus as symbolic of a new Israel inaugurating the Messianic age of justice and peace. The Church today is that body of people which knows itself to have been called to participate in the initiatives which God takes in the world. It is called to be an effective sign and provisional embodiment of the Kingdom wherein the sovereignty of Christ is acknowledged through the Holy Spirit.[39]

God's mission encompasses all that God does in furtherance of God's ultimate goal, which can be summarized by such key words as redemption, salvation and liberation. If the Church is to be the Church, it has to take part in God's mission of witnessing, embodying love in action, serving, seeking peace and justice and suffering in the process, as it seeks the fullness of humanity revealed in Christ.

The foundation and motivation for mission is the sending of the Son by the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. 'God so loved the world that he sent his Son' (Jn 3:16). The Church's involvement in mission is there to be measured against that of Jesus Christ. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you' (Jn 20:21). The question is where are the disciples sent? They are sent into the world.[40] In the New Testament there are two distinct

[39] J. Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry* (London 1983) p.53.

[40] *Report of the Lambeth Conference* 1988 (London 1988) p.32.

meanings of the 'world' (kosmos). The 'world' on the one hand is recognized as God's world which has been created and continues to sustain. On the other hand, generally in Johannine theology, kosmos has a bad connotation: it means human society organized in contradiction to God's will. It is for this reason then that the disciples of Jesus are said to be 'in the world' (Jn 17:11) but 'not of the world' (Jn 17:14). And yet having been sent 'into the world' (Jn 17:18) they are sent as was Jesus right to the very depths of human life.[41]

Thus God's mission is to the world and it is the Church's task to co-operate with God in that mission, the goal of which is the realization of God's kingdom. This is well expressed in 'Salvation and the Church', *An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission of 1986*:

> The source of the Church's hope for the world is God, who has never abandoned the created order and has never ceased to work within it. It is called, empowered and sent by God to proclaim this hope and to communicate to the world the conviction on which this hope is founded. Thus the Church participates in Christ's mission to the world through the proclamation of the Gospel of salvation by its words and deeds. It is called to affirm the sacredness and dignity of the person, the value of natural and political communities and the divine purpose for the human race as a whole; to witness against the structures of sin in society, addressing humanity with the Gospel of repentance and forgiveness and making intercession for the world. It is called to be an agent of justice and compassion, challenging and assisting society's attempts to achieve just

---

[41] J. Macquarrie, *God and Secularity* (London 1968) p.68.

> judgement, never forgetting that in the light of God's justice all human solutions are provisional. Whilst the Church pursues its mission and pilgrimage in the world, it looks forward to "the end, when Christ delivers the Kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power".'[42]

It is clear that the Church's primary arena for mission and ministry is the world.

b) The nature of the Church.

It is almost impossible to speak of the Church without confusion. The Church is the mystical body of Christ, the communion of saints past, present and to come. It is the undefinable collection of all those alive today who God knows are part of the body of Christ, whether or not they belong to any formal groupings of Christians (these people are referred to in *All Are Called* as the unattached laity).[43] It is a collection of more or less inter-relating institutions called churches and denominations. It is both world-wide and local.

Within this confusion it is possible to think of the Church as gathered and dispersed; gathered for worship and community, and dispersed for mission wherever individual Christians find themselves in the world. The

---

[42] Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* (London 1986) para.31.

[43] *All Are Called*, p.24.

Church is gathered for a tiny fraction of its life and dispersed for most of it. Gathered and dispersed the Church finds its life as the call to be the body of Christ.[44] The Church is the whole People of God called to service in the work of God. As the report *Education for the Church's Ministry* puts it: 'The Ministry of the whole People of God in the service of the mission of God in the world'.[45]

However there is a tension which exists in the Christian understanding of the nature of the Church and its mission. The distinctiveness of the apostolic community is not in doubt:

> 'Jesus' life of service, his death and resurrection, are the foundation of a new community which is built up continually by the good news of the Gospel and the gifts of the sacraments. The Holy Spirit unites in a single body those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world.'[46]

There is no dispute either that membership of the Christian community is by baptism, expressed through the bestowal of a sacramental sign on those who make an individual decision to turn to Christ or in the case of infants where they are accepted upon the profession of faith of those responsible for their Christian nurture.

---

[44] General Synod Board of Education, *Called to be Adult Disciples* (London 1987) pp.12-13.

[45] Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, *Education for the Church Ministry* (London 1987) p.23.

[46] *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* P.20.

The crucial question is the relationship between the Church and the world: whether there is confrontation between Church and world or whether there is interpretation of Church and world so that the world is found in the Church and the Church is found in the world. To be faithful to the Gospel, the Church has to declare the separation of those called out of darkness into light. As John Austin Baker put it in *The Foolishness of God*:

> 'It is by separation that the Church preserves - no, not her own identity, that is insignificant - but the identity of Jesus and his Gospel.'[47]

But he goes on to refer to Jesus' description of his disciples as the 'salt of the earth':

> 'Just as there is no point in having salt unless you put it into cooking, so there is no point in the Church's separateness unless she is also united with the world, integrally involved with it. Her separateness and her involvement are totally different in kind.'[48]

The member of the Christian community has to accept that he or she remains a member of the 'worldly' community. Likewise there is a good reason, if contact is essential to the Christian mission, why the world should be welcomed into the Church. John Austin Baker's plea is for an 'open' Church:

---

[47] J.A. Baker, *The Foolishness of God* (London 1970) p.337.

[48] Ibid., p.337.

> 'If the truth is to reach men through the spirit of the Christian community, then the organization and structure of that community must be adapted to establish a living continuity with them.'[49]

This emphasis makes it clear that any view of the Church, of its clergy and laity, that concentrates solely on the institutional life of parish, church, church-building, worship and organization is profoundly misshapen. For the vast majority of its life the Church as Christ's body is dispersed throughout the fabric of society as individual Christians seek to respond to God's call: to be salt, leaven and light. It is in dispersion that lay ministry finds its specific lay vocation. The task of the Church is to serve the mission of God in the world. It is a worldly vocation and the task is undertaken primarily by those who are already embedded in the societal structures of the world, namely the laity.

The Church is thus a secular community in as much as it exists in the world and for the world; but of course ultimately the work of the Church is for the sake of the Kingdom - that the reign of God in Christ might extend to and be acknowledged by all creation. However, to say that the Church is the instrument of the Kingdom and the servant of God in the world is not to assert that the Church is the only agent of God in the world. It is the perennial temptation of the Church to assume that what God is doing in the world God must be doing through the Church.

---

[49] Ibid., p.337.

However, the life of the Church at its most basic is to do with an active listening and a sensitive response to the movements of the spirit of God within the world and within the Church. The Church is the servant of God within the world. It must take seriously the incarnational and sacramental principles which are about God's activity within and through worldly matter. This is why the ministry of the laity, set as it is primarily within the structures of the world, is of such crucial importance. The establishing of the Kingdom of God, the fruit of God's already active mission, is already happening in the world. The task of the laity is to co-operate with God's mission in the world by being oriented to the world and attempting to be aware of God's activity in secular structures; while at the same time recognizing the lay task of 'promoting a pattern of common life within society that will provide a point of entry into, and an eschatological sign of, the Kingdom'.[50] The lay task is both one of recognizing and working with the Kingdom of God already being realized within society and also recognizing that the laity themselves may well have to be 'salt, light and leaven' in the world and be themselves the vehicles or 'encouragers' of that Kingdom.

---

[50] Advisory Board of Ministry, *Ordination and the Church's Ministry: A Theological Evaluation* (London 1991) p.9.

c) The relatedness of the ordained and the unordained.

Within the Church of England, discussions of the role of the laity have more often than not evolved into discussions on the distinctions between the ordained and the unordained, often to the detriment of the latter. This section will attempt to clarify the situation by discussing the ordained and unordained within two specific categories: the ecclesial community dispersed and the ecclesial community gathered.

The ecclesial community dispersed is the whole People of God (including the ordained) active in and engaged with the world. This is supremely a lay vocation and ministry. It is about individuals representing Christ in the world, by virtue of their baptism and ministry in Christ's name, according to each individual's gifts and callings. This is the primary context for the whole People of God because this is the context in which all people live. In this context, both ordained and unordained exercise the ministry of the *laos*.

The commissioning for this ministry of the *laos* is baptism, which is the means by which individuals are incorporated into the body of Christ as one people of God. It is God's gift to which individuals make a known response not only on the occasion of baptism itself but throughout a lifetime. It is a continuing relationship of the individual with Christ and at the same time a

participation in the common life of worship and service within the gathered ecclesial community. However its effects reach out beyond the community into the world. God calls individuals and groups to follow Christ in what they are and in what they do as they are sent out to minister in the world.

A central conception of *koinonia* in the New Testament is of a communion of individuals with a relationship to Christ as its head and a relationship to one another which is dependent on that primary relationship. Out of this *koinonia* proceeds all Christian ministry. That is to say all Christian ministry is rooted in the work of God. Its source is God's own ministry among people in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. The gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism and throughout life is a sending of every Christian out into the world to continue Christ's ministry until death in everything he or she does, with the confidence to be courageous and flexible in engagement with the needs of the world.

Often the words 'representation' and 'focussing' are used exclusively of the ordained ministry. For instance the report *The Theology of Ordination* says:

> 'Within the total ministry of the Church, the purpose of the ordained ministry is to represent in person and in function the ministry of Christ in the Church and in the World.'[51]

---

[51] The General Synod Board for Mission and Unity, *The Theology of Ordination* (London 1976) p.34.

This seems to be a particularly intemperate piece of writing that effectively disenfranchises the whole People of God in their ministry by virtue of baptism of representing Christ in the World. The theology of representative persons within the new covenant of Christ needs a good deal more thought. According to *The Theology of Ordination*, it is ordination which confers this representative character. A full and thoroughgoing theology of the laity would dispute such a claim. It is baptism which confers this representative character in the world.

Within the category of the ecclesial community dispersed, the relationship between the ordained and unordained is very clear. All are lay and all engage with the world by virtue of their common baptism. There is, in other words, no distinction. The only distinction that could be drawn would be on the basis of particular gifts and the kinds of ministries these gifts give rise to. But that distinction is made not on the basis of ordination but on the basis of giftedness.

However, the situation is rather different when the category of the ecclesial community gathered is considered. The ecclesial community gathered is the whole People of God gathered in community for worship and fellowship. Within this category certain individuals from among the *laos* exercise particular sacramental

functions within the community, having discerned a calling to a particular sacramental function, having had that calling examined and tested by representatives of the community and having received authority to exercise those particular sacramental functions through ordination. The sacramental functions recall the community gathered to what it ought in itself by its nature to be about and to resource the whole *laos* for renewed engagement with the world.

It is worth noting how the Church as a gathered community developed differentiated ministries in the first place. In any organization or society where the purpose of the society generates demands which are beyond the scope of the individual members of that society, then there has to be some organized response by the society. So when the tasks are too many for any one person to perform there has to be a differentiation and distribution of tasks. This is true for any society or organization developing in sophistication and it is true of the Church.

The responsibilities which early Christians discovered after Pentecost in their missionary task outstripped the capacities of any one individual or social group and required them to agree to respond by a differentiation of tasks: 'some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers' (Eph.4:11). But the interesting point is this: although there is a differentiation of tasks, each individual as Ephesians

puts it 'shares in the bounty of Christ' (Eph.4:7). So whatever the task performed, each shares in the spirit of Christ, each shares in the responsibility of showing forth the characteristics of Christ - ie. humility, gentleness, patience, peace-making etc.

According to this model, structures of ministry are purpose-generated; needs are fulfilled by people with a variety of gifts and skills; and importantly no one ministry is any better or any worse than other ministries, since everyone shares in the bounty of Christ. However, there are good historical and sociological reasons why the New Testament model in Ephesians came to grief. For example, structure and expertise began to take on their own importance. Attention legitimately given to structures and expertise in responding to the wider tasks became a preoccupation with organization, maintenance and differentiation, and with professional status for its own sake. Task-orientated and gift-orientated ministry gave way to the clustering of ministerial tasks into particular ordained orders.

In terms of orders of ministry, the first two centuries were developmental and only gradually did a pattern emerge which by the fourth century had been institutionalized into what we now know as the orders of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. The New Testament witnesses to a process as yet incomplete that certain

lines have been established which will eventually converge towards the stabilized institutions of the patristic church. This has been the position of Anglicanism and the three fold orders of ordained ministry are part of the tradition within Anglicanism. The concern in this section is not to overturn or even question that givenness of holy orders, but to argue that orders do not have to stifle or absorb to themselves all ministerial activity within the gathered ecclesial community; indeed to argue that their *raison d'etre* within the community is not principally concerned with ministry at all. Ministry is purpose-generated, exercised according to gifts and both within the gathered community and the dispersed community, is entered into by virtue of baptism. Holy orders have a different function within the community gathered.

However, before looking at the distinction between ministry and orders, it is important to address the issue of where the perceived distinction between the ordained and the unordained actually lies. Obviously the distinction is marked by the episcopal laying on of hands at ordination. But the question is what does ordination actually confer. Within Anglicanism the answer seems to be that, the distinction conferred at ordination is in the realm of 'being' (what an ordained person is) and in the realm of function (what an ordained person does). Both these perceived distinctions are worth examining to see how far they hold up to scrutiny.

An understanding of ordination as effecting change in a person's essential being or as it has been described conferring character, has been surrounded by some confusion. In origin the term 'ministerial character' had an impersonal meaning; it was thought to be an indelible seal by which the ministry of word and sacrament was to be guaranteed despite the personal unworthiness of the ordained person. However, alongside this has grown up a more personal sense of the word relating to the moral rectitude and general quality of life displayed by an individual. There is clearly a danger of confusion here since the (impersonal) character of the first case is expressly distinct from the (personal) character of the second.[52] Moreover, both understandings of 'character' need to be questioned. Talk of 'indelible seals' suggests that there is a gift of grace which affects the character of ordinands, summoning them to a new status in Christ. Yet a theology of baptism establishes that the only kind of new status in Christ is entered into on a once for all basis at baptism. On the second understanding of 'character', there seems to be an understanding that essential to holy orders is a quality of commitment which is different in essence from that of any other Christian. However, it is evident that the development of Christian character and spirituality varies not only greatly among the ordained

[52] General Synod Board for Mission and Unity, *The Theology of Ordination* (London 1976) p.13.

but is as much evident among the unordained. The fact is that there is not, nor ought to be, any qualititative difference in commitment to discipleship and ministry between the ordained and the unordained. However, the clericalism which has generally been associated with holy orders has led to a view that gives the impression that the ordained have offered themselves more fully to ministry than has the majority of the membership of the Body. Yet in reality it is Baptism which is the primary and probably the only 'character' forming sacrament. Christian personhood, Christian 'character', is the result of Baptismal grace.

The argument that ordination makes a difference on the level of function is one which will be argued for, although rather differently from the present state of the argument which simply leads to yet further confusion. Traditionally a number of ministerial functions have been associated with the ordained offices: administering the sacraments, preaching, teaching, pastoring, prophecy, healing, evangelism, as well as the care of the poor, oppressed and outcast.[53] Yet each of these except the administration of the sacraments can be and is in fact performed by the laity. In Anglican practice only preaching requires a special licence but all the ministries except those related to the sacraments can be

---

[53] Alternative Service Book, *The Ordination of Deacons, Priests and Bishops*.

and are carried out by virtue of baptism and the God-given gifts of individuals.

This brings us to some central questions. Are the offices and work of Bishops, Priests and Deacons made up of particular ministries among the many ministries in the Church? If so, what makes them so inherently different as to require ordination? It may be that the term 'ministry' should not be applied to holy orders as such at all, but rather speak of the office of each as the Book of Common Prayer does. It is such questions which must be considered if the ministry of the laity within the gathered ecclesial community is ever to become significantly possible without destroying the traditional and historic three-fold orders.

The way through is to separate ministry (which is conferred by baptism, is gifted by God through the Holy Spirit and is the responsibility of the whole People of God, ordained and unordained alike) from orders (which are conferred at ordination and which are concerned with a sacramental, symbolic function within the ecclesial community gathered). It is by considering their sacramental function within the community that holy orders will be recognized as having a unique contribution to make. Indeed it will be in an understanding of their uniqueness that it will be possible to point to the relationship of Orders to all of ministry in such a way

as to free the whole People of God for engagement in the fullness of ministry.

It is important to make a clear distinction between orders and ministry. Ministry is about undertaking and accomplishing a particular task whether that job be teaching, healing, leading, caring or whatever. Ministry involves talents, aptitudes, gifts and the enabling grace by which the Holy Spirit moves them all towards accomplishments. However, talk of orders may not involve any talk of particular gifts. People in orders cannot be said to accomplish, after all, the major part of their job. The major engagement of those in orders lies in recalling the Church to a truth already established by the Word made flesh. They deliver the word that the Word has already delivered. They make a sign of something the Word has already made present. Bishops, Priests and Deacons may indeed accomplish many tasks but those tasks are not accomplished necessarily through the presence of orders. Rather they are the result of their individual presence of certain didactic, critical or political gifts of ministry. Ministry by definition means rendering some kind of service. It is a highly transactional notion. By that fact, it is not the best means for making sense of the non-transactional matter of holy orders.

Thus it is possible to understand the three-fold orders in terms of their sacramental function within the ecclesial community gathered rather than in terms of

ministry they perform or accomplish. The idea of 're-presentation' is a useful one for understanding the function of those in orders. The ordained re-present the Church to itself. They both sum up and facilitate the ministry of the whole People of God which is the continuation of Christ's ministry as servant (deacon), as mediator (priest) and as overseeing shepherd (bishop). Each order re-presents, holds up to the Church for the Church one of the centralities of its life and mission.

The Episcopate re-presents to the Church its unity, its apostolicity, its universality. The Bishop is the focus for unity among the People of God; ultimately those in a diocese are in communion with their Bishop. The Bishop is the one who oversees and maintains the Apostolic life, doctrine and order of the Church and recalls it to its mission, its 'sentness'. The Bishop is also the one who re-presents to the local church the needs and concerns of the wider universal Church and re-presents to the wider universal Church the needs and concerns of the local church.

The Priest re-presents to the Church its life of worship and community, the life of reconciliation and healing. The Priest mediates the life of God in forming the Church through the celebration of the two 'church-forming' sacraments - baptism and eucharist. The Priest facilitates the diversity of ministries within the

ecclesial community and recalls them to the life of self-offering and sacrifice.

The Order of Deacons re-presents to the Church its life of servanthood. The Diaconate stands for servanthood not to deprive the rest of the ecclesial community of servanthood in and to the world, but to sacramentalize it as central to the Christian life and mission.

Holy orders have a sacramental function which is about re-calling the Church to essential aspects of its character. They are about ordering the Church that it may be what it is - the Body of Christ. Those in orders are not about imposing an alien character upon the ecclesial community gathered, they are about drawing out what is already there. The Diaconate, the Priesthood and the Episcopate belong properly to the whole People of God. Those in orders simply underline those tendencies within the community.

Those in orders provide a public and declared basis for the distribution of authority with the purpose of forming, sustaining and preserving the Church in its traditional four marks: namely its character as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. Ordination is the public identifying of those who carry particular responsibility, under authority and with accountability to maintain the character of the Church. The ordained are not the sole means of achieving this, and indeed they work closely

with the unordained whose task it is also to maintain the character of the Church, but it is the particular responsibility of the ordained to hold up to the Church, to represent to the Church, its true nature and calling.

The New Testament points us to Christ as the one who sums up and models perfectly the totality of ministry in the life of the Church: in Christ, different ministries are given. Thus in Christ there is a distributing of ministries to others, and the ordained have a responsibility to participate in this distribution (though without implying that they are the sole or primary imitators of Christ). There is a sense in which the ordained interpret other ministries so that the whole Church is established in the four marks of unity, holiness, authority and apostolicity.[54]

Thus the ordained have a crucial role, but not at the expense of the unordained. The categories of ecclesial community dispersed and ecclesial community gathered allow a distinction into two separate and distinct contexts of activity. The world is where the ministry of the laity is principally exercised. Those in orders when they minister in the world are drawing upon their baptised inheritance, as are the unordained. The ecclesial community gathered is where those in orders come into their own. They exercise particular

[54] Advisory Board of Ministry, *Ordination and the Church's Ministry* (London 1991) pp.36-43.

sacramental functions which re-call the gathered community to essential characteristics of its life. However, for non-sacramental ministerial responsibilities and tasks the ordained are in the same boat as the unordained. Both minister within the gathered community on the basis of their common baptism and the extent of their God-giftedness.

d) The sacred and the secular: The priesthood of the laity.

The whole Church, ordained and unordained, is called to be a lay body. By this it is not meant, as has already been shown, that it is not to have those in holy orders, but that it is essentially and always a body which is immersed in the world. It is about being rooted in the world and recognizing the importance of the secular in its own right rather than simply as a vehicle to be turned into the service of the Church or violently baptized into Christ. However, this division of the world and the church, of the secular and the sacred, is deeply ingrained within society's consciousness. Often the ordained are associated with the world of the 'holy' and deal with 'holy things' while the unordained are understood as belonging to another category altogether. James Mark makes the point well:

> 'It has to do with the Christian mysteries, in a sense that lies beyond and below the use of words: and the role of priesthood is ultimately based on

> it. We have seen this in other religions: it is, after all, this distinctive function of the priesthood in the Judaism of the Old Testament. We see it in the correlation between the emphasis that individual denominations place on the sacraments and that which they place upon the priesthood, so that the Society of Friends which has no sacramental ministry, has no separate priesthood. Where there is an emphasis on sacred things there is a corresponding emphasis on the choice and the control of those who themselves control sacramental actions - a choice and control which are expressed in ordination to the priesthood. This is thought to be necessary so that due order and reverence may be ensured. The actual skills involved are not hard to learn, but the actions have to be performed by a limited number of people whom it is, in theory, possible to control. Hence in the Middle Ages, there was the concept of the massing priest who was trained to say masses and to do little else: but such a notion would be unacceptable nowadays. We expect the person who celebrates to understand in some measure what he is doing and what underlies it. He must therefore also be able to exercise the ministry of the Word. But responsibility for the sacraments remains the peculiar function of the priesthood in most Christian traditions, including the Anglican: that responsibility rests with people set aside for the task: ordained to it, in fact. So long as the Anglican tradition remains rooted in this kind of folk experience and in the feelings to which it gives rise, the situation is unlikely to change.'[55]

In referring to 'folk experience', James Mark has hit upon something extremely important, namely that there may be a deep-lying tension between Christian and folk concepts of holiness. Christian ideas and institutions do not exist within a kind of spiritual vacuum. Popular expectations of ministry are as relevant to its exercise as are theological definitions.

---

[55] Cited in P. Baelz, 'Taking Stock' in P. Baelz and W. Jacob eds. *Ministers of the Kingdom* (London 1985) p.85.

Underlying this clear demarcation of the ordained and unordained categories is the feeling that the world of ordinary everyday life and the world of the holy are two different worlds with a power and a reality of their own, and that it is not only confusing but also dangerous to remove the boundary lines and allow a free and unregulated association between them. The holy has to be handled with caution and care. It must be kept in its place and may not be familiarised or treated casually.

Christian theology cannot but be critical of this deep human feeling about the holy. Of course, God is holy, transcendent and totally other. In a sense, God is not part of the ordinary world. Yet, on the other hand the story of the incarnation within Christian theology is one of God becoming immanent, the transcendent within our midst. God's holiness does not keep God away from the world: God's holiness is communicated through the structures of the world. Thus the secular does not necessarily exclude the holy. On the contrary the holy can transfigure the secular.

This was a point at issue in the debate on the sacred and the secular in the 1960's. The concern was how to live a Christian life within the world without compromising too much to the values of the world. John Macquarrie in *God and Secularity* advocated maintaining a tension between the sacred and the secular:

> 'The Christian attitude in the face of the contemporary world may very well be described in a phrase of Alec Vidler's - reflecting in turn the thought of Bonhoeffer - "holy worldliness". This means the acceptance of and involvement in the world - this material world where God has been pleased to set us. Yet always there must be a searching below the surface of things for the holy depths that give meaning to this whole worldly existence.'[56]

This tension must be maintained, as Michael Ramsey put it, 'in costly interrelation'.[57] To talk about the worldly vocation of the laity is not to suggest the immersion in material pursuits. As John Macquarrie argues:

> 'But if we say that the Church must serve the world we must also say that it would serve the world ill if it merely conformed to the world's ways. To say "yes" to the world does not mean becoming the world's "yes-man", so to speak. The Church says "yes" to the world in the context of God's action in the world, an action which transfigures the world.'[58]

It is this transfiguration of the world which Macquarrie advocates which is the central task of the laity in their mission in the world. That transfiguration is about discovering the reality of God in the reality of the world and co-operating with God's hope for the world. As Bonhoeffer put it:

> 'In Christ we are offered the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and in the reality of the world, <u>but not the one without the other</u>. The reality of God discloses itself only by setting me entirely in the reality of the world, and when I encounter the reality of the world, it is always

---

[56] J. Macquarrie, *God and Secularity* (London 1968) p.66.

[57] A.M. Ramsey, *Sacred and Secular* (London 1965) p.70.

[58] Macquarrie, *God and Secularity* p.68.

> already sustained, accepted and reconciled in the reality of God.'[59]

There is a dialectic here that takes us beyond any naive world affirmation, just as it rules out any false religiosity. God is met in the world, but the world is known in its reality only as God's world.

This making holy of the secular, this transfiguring of the world, is what the priesthood of the whole People of God is about. The model of the 'priesthood of all believers' is of course a biblical one. In the New Testament Jesus is seen as the great High Priest (Heb.3:1) in whom his followers in their entirety become a holy nation, a royal priesthood (1 Pet.2:9). As has already been argued the characteristics of priesthood which belong to the whole People of God are recalled and re-presented by the ordained priest within the ecclesial community gathered. It is when the People of God are dispersed in the world that they have to exercise their royal priesthood. The Lambeth Conference of 1988 in its Report attempts to analyse what is at the heart of priesthood and then attempts to relate it to the ministry of the whole People of God:

> 'What is implied by this description of the Church as "a priesthood of believers"? ... in expressing divine dealings with humanity priesthood has always done three things: it blesses, it absolves and it sacrifices. This holds true for all sorts and conditions of priests in all times and in all places. We believe it is possible to expand our more narrow understanding of blessing, absolving and

---

[59] D. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans. N. Horton Smith (London 1955) p.61.

> sacrifices to include the work of all believers who are ministering at the world rather than at the altar.'[60]

Thus for the Lambeth Conference of 1988 the ministry of the laity was about blessing in God's name, absolving in God's name and to celebrate the sacrifice of Christ. The context for such ministry is the world. However, the question is how the Report envisages the three characteristics being lived out:

> 'It is the particular vocation of the Christian laity to declare by word and silence, by action and suffering, that the world is God's, created by him and redeemed by him. This is the nature of "blessing" lay Christians bestow in the context of their secular callings. Similarly their "priestly absolution" is in the quality of costly forgiving they live out in their encounter with the world in the name of Jesus and the power of the Spirit. Their celebration of the sacrifice occurs whenever in sharing the tragedy and suffering of the society around them they draw it in to the costly forgiving they live out in their encounters in the world in the name of Jesus and the power of the Spirit.'[61]

The central concept is one of sacrifice. Sacrifice is a Latin word and means simply 'to make holy'. The primary vocation of the whole People of God is to co-operate with the Spirit of God to realize the Kingdom of God; this task is about making the world holy, making the secular sacred.[62] Thus from being something which the ordained do as the handlers of holy things, the process of making the

---

[60] *The Report of the Lambeth Conference of 1988* (London 1988) p.52.

[61] Ibid., p.52.

[62] C. Longley, 'The Priestly Work of the Laity' in *The Times Book of Clifford Longley* ed. S. Powling (London 1991) pp.197-200.

secular holy is what God is about in the world; and the laity as they co-operate with God's mission in the world are engaged also in making holy the secular.

3. The Implications of a Contemporary Theology of the Laity.

This section will be concerned with two tasks. Firstly it will summarise in three brief points the understanding of the laity as outlined in section 2. Secondly, it aims to draw out the implications of that understanding of the laity and to commend it by highlighting its advantages.

a) Summary of the contemporary theology of laity

Firstly, the context of all Christian ministry is God's world. Christians have tremendous potential to transform the lives and places with which they are in touch. The vast majority of those Anglican Christians are lay (unordained) men and women. Renewed and equipped these Christian laity could have power to bring a Christian quality of life into all their human relationships.

Secondly, God equips every Christian for their ministry through baptism and through God-given skills and gifts. The context of that ministry is the world because ministry is part of that continuing great movement of God

into the world in Christ. Lay men and women can individually and corporately through the relationships they form in their everyday lives mediate the power of Christ to change the world. That service in Christ takes place in every sphere of human life. The task of each Christian is to work with the spirit of God active in the world realizing God's kingdom. This is the task of the Church dispersed in the world. Part of the task of the Church gathered in worship and fellowship is to provide an environment in which men and women can reflect upon their experience of the world - to reflect on their problems and joys, their own understanding of mission and to renew their resources for Christian living.

Thirdly, there is also a ministry to be shared within the gathered Christian community. A mutual ministry in which the gifts of each Christian are recognized. The gifts are a sign of humanity being renewed and fulfilled by Christ. The authority for ministry both for the dispersed and the gathered Christian community is baptism. When the Christian community is dispersed in the world it ministers by virtue of baptism and God-given gifts. When the Christian community is gathered for worship and fellowship, it also ministers by virtue of baptism and God-given gifts. Yet in the context of the gathered Christian community, so that the whole People of God may be ordered and renewed and recalled to particular reference points, there are those in orders who order and allocate tasks and responsibilities within the context of

the gathered community and recall it to its essential nature. The ministry of Christ is the ministry of the whole Church. Ministry has been confused with orders - bishops, priests and deacons - for too long. Ministry is the continuing expression of Christ's work. It is the responsibility of every Christian. Orders are the means by which the Christian community recognizes that responsibility. Episcopacy is a sign of unity and universality. The Order of Deacons represents to the Church the life of servanthood. The Order of Priests represents to the Church the responsibility to be a sign of mediation and sacrificial reconciliation. Each recalls the whole Church to the central character of its life and mission.

b) The implications

The implications of a thorough-going theology of the laity for different aspects and structures of the Church's life are considerable. The most obvious casualty is the kind of theology of ordained ministry which has been in the past ecclesiologically imperialistic, owning for itself more than its fair share of tasks and responsibilities and leaving a theology of laity severely undernourished and undervalued. If it is to be accepted that the norm of Christian discipleship is the lay state, then theologians of ordained ministry have to be rather less ambitious in what they claim for it.

For instance, the understanding of the ordained as 'representative persons' as enunciated in the *Theology of Ordination* has to be rethought:

> 'Within the total ministry of the Church, the purpose of the ordained ministry is to represent in person and in function the ministry of Christ in the Church and in the world.'[63]

Such statements leave little room or scope for the development of the role of the laity. If the ordained are busy representing Christ in the Church and in the world, one wonders what the role and the purpose of the laity might be. A thorough-going theology of laity will prevent too much being claimed on the part of the ordained.

It will also render the laity more theologically visible. In *Call to Order*,[64] the Report of the Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry of 1989, there is a section on lay vocation, in amongst the material on vocation to ordained ministry. The length of the section on lay vocation is two pages,[65] in a report of 78 pages. A subject so lightly treated is a subject lightly regarded.

However even more glaring is when the report comes to consider what it calls 'the kingdom order'. One would

---

[63] *The Theology of Ordination*, p.34.

[64] Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, *Call To Order* (London 1989).

[65] Ibid., pp.49-50.

have expected the laity to have featured prominently in such an order. The astonishing revelation is that they do not:

> '... the kingdom order grounded in the triune being of God is to be found neither in the episcopate, nor in the presbyterate nor in the diaconate, taken separately and in isolation of each other, but in the interdependence of all three taken together.'[66]

It is clear that in this report the laity are outside 'the kingdom order' despite the fact that it is the laity who are immersed in the world and actively engaged in promoting the kingdom of God.

One of the advantages of a clear theology of laity will be a clarification of the role of those in orders. In the past, there has been confusion over, for instance, the role of the deacon within the life of the Church. In 1974 the Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry produced a report *Deacons in the Church*.[67] The report advised the abolition of the diaconate as a part of the three-fold order of ordained ministry and suggested its being considered as a 'lay ministry':

> 'We hope that the abolition of an anomaly (sc. the diaconate) will result in lay people having a clearer picture of their role and work in the Church. When lay people have a clearer picture of diaconal responsibilities which are theirs as members of the Church, we expect that their diaconal work will be strengthened and developed. It may also happen that a clearer picture of the work and

---

[66] Ibid., p.33.

[67] Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, *Deacons in the Church* (London 1974).

> functions of the ordained ministry will also emerge.'[68]

The ACCM Report recommended that the Church of England discontinued the diaconate largely on the grounds that its existence obscured the true nature of lay ministry. However the subtext was that the diaconate was to be 'downgraded' to a lay ministry because the report was unable to make sense of the diaconate theologically as a Holy Order. A clear theology of laity would set the demarcation between the role of the laity and the role of those in orders and would be careful to explain the complementary rather than the competitive nature of their relationship.

However, it would also help to clarify a significant anomaly within current Anglican practice, namely the ordained industrial mission worker. The fact that it is currently assumed that industrial mission is a task for the clergy does considerable damage to any theology of the laity, whether industrial missions are regarded as theological enablers of the laity within industry or as neutral (because of their ordination) arbitrators, or because stereotypes of ministry are such that it is usually assumed that paid Church work is done by the ordained. Either way ordained industrial mission workers seem to be working in the world on the basis of being in orders, while in reality the basis of work in the world is not orders but baptism. The work of industrial

---

[68] Ibid., p.24.

mission is properly left to the ministry of the laity active in the world.

There is also the point raised by Mark Hodge in his report *Non-Stipendiary Ministry in the Church of England*[69] about what difference if any results from the ordination of a lay person in secular employment. Do Non-Stipendiary Ministers (NSMs) or what are currently called in the Church of England Ministers in Secular Employment (MSEs) disable or enable the laity as sharers in the ministry of the whole People of God? On the basis of the theology of the laity posited, NSMs or MSEs will not disrupt the ministry of the whole People of God in any way. In their work in the world they exercise the ministry of all the baptised; it is only within the gathered ecclesial community that the fact that they are ordained becomes significant in their task of 'ordering' the Church.

Thus a clear theology of the laity would clarify the blurred distinctions between the ordained and the unordained and would neatly demarcate tasks and responsibilities. However it would also serve to question whether it is appropriate within the Church of England to have differentiated laity.

---

[69] M. Hodge, *Non-Stipendiary Ministry in the Church of England* (London 1983).

The point made by John Habgood when he was Bishop of Durham is an apposite one:

> 'The growth of lay ministries raises questions about the sense in which these represent the Church in its wholeness and I believe that the heart of the theological problem lies there - not so much in the theology of baptism nor in the theology of ordination, but in the almost totally unexplored theology of lay ministry.'[70]

The differentiated laity have no representative function over and above the representative function which belongs to the whole People of God by virtue of their baptism. The only way in which individual members exercise lay ministry is by virtue of their gifts and the way in which these gifts are exercised within the contexts of different tasks and responsibilities. It is not by being licensed to particular offices that some laity are separated from the rest.

The differentiated laity as developed in the nineteenth century in the Church of England was simply an attempt to clericalize certain members of the laity - to apply some of the practice of orders and ordained ministry to selected laity, which actually displaced those selected laity from the generality of the laity and created a new, unwarranted distinction within the whole People of God. The place of differentiated laity such as Readers or

---

[70] Cited in 'Theology and Practice of Lay Ministry': *A Paper to the Committee for Accredited Lay Ministry of the Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry* by H. Randall and C. Howard (unpublished, 1975) p.1.

Evangelists simply blurs the clear distinction between the ministry of the whole People of God exercised in Church and world by virtue of baptism, and the role of those in Orders within the gathered Christian community, the Church. Readers and Evangelists appear quasi-clerical and serve only to confuse the picture.

However, a theology of laity obviously has most significant implications for the practice of the responsibilities of the whole People of God. There are a number of points which emerge. The first is baptism. In the New Testament authorization for ministry is given through baptism. Every baptized person has been called and authorized for Christian service in Christ's name as a member of the Body of Christ. This must be the starting point of any theology of laity. However, baptism as currently practised in the Church of England does not make that clear; nor indeed is it easy for it to do so in the case of infants (the largest proportion of baptisms within the Church of England are infant baptisms). In fact for the most part within the Church of England, baptism is understood as being less about church membership and more about being a rite of passage clearly associated with the expectations of 'folk religion'. If anything confirmation rather than baptism emphasises adult discipleship, but nevertheless there seems little agreement at present about the significance and timing of confirmation. Certainly it would be wrong

to institute a new form of commissioning for ministry which was unrelated to baptism.

If the Church of England retains the practice of infant baptism readily available (if not always indiscriminately) to all who desire it, then for the most part the laity of the Church of England will continue to be baptised at birth. Consequently since baptism as the means of incorporation into the life of the Church is unrepeatable, the Church has to find a way of re-activating the authorization for ministry as part of baptism. This can probably be done most conveniently through the current practice of renewal of baptismal vows which happens liturgically on Easter Eve. This would seem to be an obvious way of keeping the ministerial responsibilities of the laity in view.

The second point raised by the theology of the laity is the level of co-operation and support within the gathered Christian community between the ordained and the unordained. It has already been established that as a dispersed community in the world, all Christians, ordained and unordained alike, exercise their ministry by virtue of baptism. Within the gathered community all continue to exercise their baptismal ministry and the gathered community after discerning its particular needs and requirements harnesses the gifts of the baptised and allocates to the baptised particular tasks which will utilize those gifts for the benefit of the gathered

community. That is true again for the benefit of the ordained and the unordained. The specific role of the ordained is to recall the Church to its unity, its holiness, its catholicity and its apostolicity and to order and form the Church in such a way that these marks become the hallmarks of that local church. If this theology is to be realized in practice then there has to be considerable collaboration between the ordained and the unordained. The unordained must no longer be seen as a clerical support system. If anything the ordained are to become the support system of the unordained with the local ordained person as *primus inter pares* within the gathered community.

The third point raised by a theology of the laity is the need for adequate provision for lay education and development. If the ordained and unordained together are equal members of the Body of Christ then the provision and commitment to the growth and development of the laity must be as important and as encouraged by the Church as the continuing ministerial education of its clergy. This growth and development must be about the whole of people's lives and not narrowly related to training people for official or recognized roles within the gathered community. Many lay people 'do theology' without recognizing that that is what they do. They have wisdom and valuable experience about God's action in the world which needs to be recognized and reflected upon by the gathered community. The Church must learn how to

enable and encourage theological reflection which is contextual and relates to those involved in it. Essentially there are three things which are needed. First the enabling of the whole People of God to articulate their perception of God and what God is doing in the world. Second, the provision of contexts in which this lay voice can be heard. Third, the development of the skills which lay people can bring to the ministry of the whole People of God. If the lay task is primarily rooted in the world, attempting to work with and realize the Kingdom of God, then the laity need equipping for such a ministry and most importantly need opportunities to reflect with others upon their experiences and the difficult dilemmas they often face.

This kind of lay education programme was set up by Margaret Kane in the mid-1970's in the North East of England in the form of Theological Development Groups. These groups were an opportunity for both the ordained and unordained to reflect together on their experience of life in the light of faith. The programme began where people were, and helped them to help each other to make available resources of the Christian tradition in such a way as to help them face their own questions.[71] The so-called Frontier Groups which flourished in the immediate post-war period were a similar idea in bringing together lay people with similar skills and interests to work out

---

[71] M. Kane, *Theological Development* (Manchester 1980).

together the implications of Christian faith in their particular secular contexts.[72] The important point about these educational programmes is that first they took the experience of the laity seriously and that secondly they recognized the importance of the world as the arena of God's activity.

The fourth point raised by a theology of laity is the matter of the structures of decision-making within the Church; the workings of Church government. Stephen Sykes characterises the role of the laity as essentially conservative:

> 'an element checking the power of Church leaders and theologians or at most sharing (as in contemporary synodical government) in the process of decision making on a carefully restricted basis.'[73]

There is no doubt that decision making in the Church is strongly biased towards the minority who are ordained. For instance, in the General Synod when voting happens in Houses, decisions are made on the basis of two thirds ordained to one third lay. The message of this is that the ordained members have more power, are wiser and know more than the lay members.

Moreover, the timings of General Synod (mid-week) and its length (normally four or five days) make it very

---

[72] J. Habgood, *Confessions of a Conservative Liberal* (London 1988) p.213.

[73] S.W. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (Oxford 1978) p.49.

difficult for lay people other than the retired or those not working to attend. This does not make for a representative sample. Indeed the lack of representiveness is a criticism of the whole synodical structure.[74] Even at deanery and diocesan level it is not well supported by a broad cross section of laity. It tends to attract a group of lay people who enjoy 'churchy' matters. The comment in the Report *All Are Called* is apposite:

> 'The Church talks about every member ministry and the priesthood of all believers, but it fails to structure itself so as to make either a reality.'[75]

A theology of laity as outlined in its skeletal form would prosecute the case for involving the laity in every aspect of decision making of the Church. And not simply the institutionalized laity, but a broad representative cross section. But of course strictly speaking within the Church of England's government there is one province which is out of bounds for the laity and that is doctrine. Constitutionally, this is considered beyond the competence of the laity. This seems to be an extra-ordinary situation. In a Church which describes itself as 'The People of God', all the People of God must play their part in all aspects of Church life, including the definition of doctrine. A church in which definition of

---

[74] L. Francis, 'The Secular Evaluation of the Sacred Institutions: Synods and the Social Sciences', in *The Modern Churchman* New Series, Vol 22 Number 1 (1978/79) pp.12-17.

[75] *All Are Called*, p.52.

doctrine is left to the ordained is a church which seems to be saying that theological expertise is the preserve of the ordained. The Church of England lays stress on the 'Consensus Fidelium' in official documents and in theory, but does seem to fall short of the theory in practice.

The doctrinal role of the laity is a crucial part of the process of decision making within the Church as understood by a theology of laity. It is the reflection of the laity on their secular experience in the light of Christian faith which will make a critical and necessary contribution to the Church's thinking. Thus it is not merely the extent of lay involvement in the governmental structures of the Church, it is also the contribution of the experience and expertise of the laity which is at issue. The role of the whole People of God and their engagement with the world is a primary resource for the Church, as it reflects on the needs of the world.

The fifth point raised by a theology of laity is in the matter of the implications for liturgy. Currently, liturgy is still an area in which the unordained and the ordained most readily experience their differences and limited mutual comprehension. The primary task for the whole People of God in liturgy is to enable all participants to take responsibility for their worship as a whole, not only for particular restricted roles in it, with the aim of reducing the tensions of power that

sometimes threaten the liturgical community. The indispensable basis of a Christian worship in which all the members of the body grow in full exercise of their varied gifts is a lived-out Trinitarian theology. Thus it is important that liturgy expresses and realizes the calling of the laity and that it recognizes that their roles are essential to its wholeness.

This will involve liturgy which significantly acknowledges the demands of the mission of the laity in the world. The distance between the worlds of worship and work has to be lessened. There needs to be emphasised that God is in all material existence and in all situations in which human beings are involved: that the holy is to be met in material things. Furthermore, because the world is the primary arena for the mission of the People of God, liturgy and worship must take into account the tensions, the compromises, the dilemmas and cruelties of that world. The needs of the world and the needs of those who serve those needs of the world must be acknowledged and wrestled with at least in the contexts of sermons and intercessions. There has to be something of a rediscovery of some of the liturgical insights of the 1950's and 1960's. The affairs of this world including the processes of economic production should be recognized as being at the centre of the most sacred act of Christian worship. The elements of bread and wine should be seen as the products of human labour. This would help break down received ideas about the division

between sacred and secular through the powerful medium of community ritual.

4. Towards a Justification of the Contemporary Theology of Laity Posited in the Light of Anglican Sources of Authority.

The aim of this section is to clarify what are understood to be the sources of authority from which the Church of England seeks guidance and to assess the credibility of the theology of laity outlined above. For members of the Church of England, the statements of Canon A5 and the Declaration of Assent provide important affirmations. Canon A5 states:

> 'The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the holy Scriptures and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal.'[76]

This needs to be understood further in relation to the Declaration of Assent:

> 'The Church of England is part of the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit is has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic

---

[76] *The Canons of the Church of England* (London 1986) Canon A5.

> formularies, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.'[77]

It is to be noted that the Declaration of Assent refers to the faith 'uniquely revealed in the holy scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds'. This faith has to be proclaimed afresh in each age.

Anglicans point to scripture, tradition and reason as the sources needed for coming to an understanding of the faith of the Church.[78] They affirm the controlling authority of scripture; there is an obligation within Anglicanism to base theology upon the main witness of Scripture. But the Bible is not a handbook of theology and it is important to discern what is central and what is peripheral in biblical testimony. There is here a problem of method to consider. It can best be described as the relation between the biblical text, the subsequent tradition of the Church and the place of human reason in discerning what is true and what is false in belief and practice.[79]

A host of related issues are involved in this problem, but perhaps two are of outstanding importance in the context of our particular discussion. The first has to

---

[77] Ibid., Canon C15.

[78] The General Synod, *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood: A Second Report by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England* (London 1988) p.85.

[79] Ibid., p.87.

do with the implications of asserting the normative authority of Scripture. This has been interpreted in two ways: either the text as it stands is wholly adequate to resolve all questions of faith and order; or, the Church may draw on other sources to explicate its beliefs and practices, as long as they are consonant with the apostolic Gospel found in Scripture.

In the first case, every development beyond Scripture is viewed as, at best, ambiguous, and at worst as a likely distortion of the plain sense of Scripture. In the second case, developments may be legitimate as long as they do not expressly contradict what Scripture affirms. This latter conclusion was the one adopted by the Anglican Reformers. The Thirty-nine Articles (Article XX) lays down that, subject to consonance with Scripture, the Church has authority in controversies of faith:

> 'The Church hath power to decree Rites or ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.'[80]

The second issue springs inevitably from the first: how do we decide what Scripture affirms and allows and what subsequent developments it contradicts? In forming its

---

[80] *Book of Common Prayer*, The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, Article XX.

judgement the Christian community relies on the divine promise that the Holy Spirit will lead it into a full discernment and possession of truth, which is given in Christ. This truth is discerned in the interplay between our reading of the Bible, our understanding of the faith of the Church through the ages, and Christian experience.

Disputes arise, however, over the way each functions. One crucial question relates to the possible cultural relativity of certain biblical teaching and practice. As the meaning of the text is clarified it becomes clear that it cannot always be applied to circumstances. It is necessary to discover principles to make it possible to relate to the present day texts and situations separated by a gap of nearly two thousand years.[81]

A further question concerns the way in which later tradition interprets apostolic doctrine and practice. The Church is always operating within the context of contemporary culture, and tradition is concerned with the discerning and re-affirmation of the rule of faith in terms which are intelligible within changed cultural circumstances.

A third question concerns the partiality as well as the distortions of human reasoning when an attempt is made to assess different interpretations and faith commitments.

---

[81] The General Synod, *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood* p.88.

By reason Anglicans understand the continuing reflection upon Scripture and Tradition in the light of contemporary experience.[82] Such reflection belongs to the whole community of Christians, ordained and lay; the authority of Scripture and Tradition stands in relation to the community.

The question is 'how well does the contemporary theology of laity identified fare when it is assessed in the light of the criteria of the New Testament, Christian experience and rational enquiry?'

It seems to fit well with the New Testament pattern. The contemporary theology of laity posited argues for the lay state as being the norm for Christian discipleship. It argues for holy orders within the Church but holy orders which encourage, understand and facilitate the ministry of the whole People of God.[83] This seems to be very much (as far as it is possible to judge) in accord with the New Testament evidence. There appears in the New Testament to be no hierarchical distinction within the People of God. The word *laos* is never used to distinguish one group of Christians from the generality of the Christian community. The *laos* is the People of God in contrast with those who are not the People of God.

---

[82] Ibid., p.93.

[83] cf. G.J. Brooke, 'A Biblical Perspective for a Theology of "The People of God"' in *The Modern Churchman* New Series, Vol 32 Number 3 (1990) pp.32-40.

Within the *laos* there is a distribution of tasks or ministries according to particular gifts (1 Cor 12; Eph 4). However there is also evidence particularly in the Pastoral Epistles of the emergence of embryonic 'orders' in the form of *episkopoi, presbyteroi* and *diakonoi*. Almost certainly the way in which these orders would have functioned and operated would have been very different in New Testament times from the way in which they subsequently developed. However, as far as it is possible to judge, the New Testament seems to bear witness to the ministry of the whole People of God (activated by virtue of baptism) while at the same time suggesting the possibility of provision for orders which do not displace or eclipse the ministry of the baptised.

As has been shown, Anglican Christian experience since the 1530's has worked with two models of the laity. One adheres to the New Testament model and conceives of 'ministry' as being the province of the whole People of God by virtue of baptism (with Holy Orders encouraging and supporting that ministry). The alternative adheres more closely to the late Patristic and medieval model, which conceives of ministry as being (essentially) the responsibility of the ordained, with the unordained as extra voluntary help. This latter model enjoyed its apogee in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, post-1945 a theology of the church which emphasises corporateness based on the biblical images of 'the body of Christ' and 'the People of God' have become

more prominent within Anglicanism and in other main denominations. Anglican Christian experience suggests that the first model, which has its roots in the sixteenth century, is the one which has gradually asserted itself in the life of the contemporary Church of England. A balanced theology which would resonate with Anglican experience would include a mutually supportive and creative role for both the ordained and the unordained. This has been a central concern in the theory of the laity posited.

Exposing a contemporary theory of laity to rational enquiry is primarily about assessing whether such a theology is coherent, whether it accords with both the New Testament evidence and the subsequent Christian experience. It has been argued that on all these counts the theology of the laity as outlined is acceptable. However there is the further point of how far such a theology helps the Church in its engagement with current society.

A theology of laity of the kind suggested is concerned foremost with mission in the world. It recognizes that the arena for God's activity is wider than the institutional Church. It accepts that the task of the laity is to work with the mission of God which is the realization of the Kingdom of God. This shift of emphasis and focus from the institutional Church to the world is timely. The numerical decline of those

attending worship in their local parish churches suggests that if people will not come to the Church, then the Church must go to where people are. Furthermore with the fewer numbers of those in ordained ministry, it is clear that the responsibility for mission cannot simply rest with those who are ordained. It is the task and responsibility of the whole People of God.

Thus the late twentieth century seems particularly well suited to the development of a strong theology of laity within the Church: a theology of laity with its sense of engagement with the world, a dispersed notion of authority and an inter-relatedness between ordained and unordained which is mutually supportive and concerned with equipping for mission in the world.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to trace in detail the development of an understanding of the laity in the corporate consciousness of the Church of England from the 1530's to the 1980's and to discover how a variety of individuals and groups have contributed to that development. The thesis has also attempted to move the discussion on by suggesting a contemporary theology of laity which is consonant with Anglican self-understanding and continuous with previous theological insights. The task of this conclusion will be to limit itself to an assessment of the necessary conditions which will have to prevail within the Church of England of the 1990's if the kind of theology of laity advocated is to gain currency and support.

Historically, the most creative and dynamic thinking on the laity happened in the late 1950's and the 1960's. This was a period of considerable crisis as Adrian Hastings has commented:

> 'The social, intellectual, religious crisis of the 1960's was specific to no one particular religious tradition, not to say one part of the world. More widely still, it was not even a specifically religious crisis, it was rather one of the total culture affecting many secular institutions in a way comparable to its effects on the churches. It was a crisis of the relevance (or capability for sheer survival) of long-standing patterns of thought and

> institutions of all sorts in a time of intense, and rather self-conscious modernization.'[1]

The Church's openness to radical change was a product of its time; it was culturally driven. It is not surprising that radical notions of the laity were being discussed at a time when so many other structures of church and state were being remoulded. But Hastings also notes that by the end of the sixties, the earlier mood of excitement began to give way to disillusion. By the end of the decade it was becoming increasingly clear that the churches had set their faces against any real 'radical change' of almost any sort.[2]

Hastings was referring to the failure of the Anglican Methodist re-union scheme (1969) and the disintegration of such movements as *Parish and People*, the Student Christian Movement and publications like *New Christian*. But his analysis could equally account for discussion of the role of the laity progressing little beyond theological rhetoric. The failure to proceed with the development of the laity in a radical way seems all of a piece with the general 'loss of nerve' within the Church at large. If a theology of laity is to have any cash-value within the Church of England, then there has to be a recovery of nerve and a commitment to considering developing patterns of ministry in response to cultural

---

1 A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*, (London 1986) pp.580-81.

2 Ibid., p.548.

context. The insights of the 1950's and the 1960's with regard to the role of the laity as missionary engagement with the world is as accurate and clear-sighted in the 1990's as it was in the 1960's. It may well require another period of great social and cultural upheaval akin to the 1960's to galvanize the Church into action.

The end of the 1960's may have witnessed a ripe theology of laity allowed gently to wither; however, as has been seen, it did not die altogether, but continued to hover in the background. The laity were referred to in discussions and official reports, almost more out of respect than out of conviction. The 1960's had unearthed the laity and it was recognized that consideration of the laity was here to stay. But consideration of them tended to be marginal. This seems to have been a strategy of the Church: to refer to the laity, but not to read too much into the reference. When of course a theology of laity was commissioned in the form of *All Are Called* in 1985,[3] it was first of all handled under the aegis of the General Synod Board of Education rather than for instance the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Board for Mission and Unity which is usually responsible for discussion documents on church order. This gave the impression that the main focus for a theology of laity was education rather than the more substantial matter of a balanced theology of the Church. The theology of the

[3] General Synod Board of Education, *All Are Called* (London 1985).

laity had been effectively side-tracked. But secondly and more importantly *All Are Called* had a limited remit. It was unable to grasp the central question which underlay so much of the discussion of the role of the laity, namely the relatedness of the ordained and the unordained. The result was a report effectively emasculated in its recommendations. The impression was that lip-service had been paid.

> Since the publication of *All Are Called* in 1985, there has been no follow up report nor further official development of a theology of laity within the Church of England. This is not for a lack of interest in the matter.[4]

It is clear that if a theology of laity is to become a serious proposition within the Church of England, then there will have to be a concerted political will to bring it into being.

As has been suggested, a shift in society's attitudes may prompt a sea-change in the Church's political will. But the major shift will have to be internally generated. It will involve the clergy and a revision in their understanding of their own theological and professional status. This alone will free the understanding of the laity within the Church of England from its present log-jam. The clergy (understandably) are reluctant to change a situation which could endanger their status at a parochial level and their influence and power at Church

---

[4] General Synod Board of Mission and Unity, *Good News in Our Times* (London 1991) p.109.

government level. Moreover talk of the role of the laity is often perceived as a threat. Consequently clergy generally prefer to talk about 'lay ministry' as either a means of supporting the parochial system by 'helping the vicar do what he would normally do if only he had the time'; or alternatively as something which happens in the world a long way from the parochial setting and thus something which does not impinge on the life of the Church. On the one hand lay ministry is side-tracked into an institutional *cul de sac* overseen by the clergy; on the other hand, lay ministry is kept a safe distance from the church and does not interfere with the parochial clerical domain. As has been emphasised, the kind of theology of laity advocated would challenge both of these presuppositions.

However, encouraging a mood of change in clerical attitudes where they touch upon the ministry of the whole People of God is only part of the problem. Another major shift would be to redirect the focus of attention from various mutations of ordained ministry to proper discussion of the laity. With the emergence of Non-Stipendiary Ministers (NSMs) and Ministers in Secular Employment (MSEs) and Local Non-Stipendiary Ministers (LNSMs) over the last twenty-five years, the debate has firmly centred on ordained ministry. One could be forgiven for concluding that the Church of England has for too long been pre-occupied with the minutiae and fine-tuning of a priority of secondary importance, whilst

leaving the priority of primary importance (a theology of laity) virtually untouched and unexplored. There needs to be a considerable will and resolve among the clergy at a theological level if there is to be the significant breaking of new ground necessary for a theology of laity.

Therein lies the difficulty. A thorough-going theology of laity as a matter of theological principle seems unlikely. For this thesis has consistently demonstrated that the decision making processes of the Church of England are not governed by theological principles as much as by pragmatics. Consequently it seems likely that only through internal (church) or external (societal) pressures will equipping the laity for mission in the world will become a primary objective of the future Church.

This thesis has argued that a theology of laity has for far too long been the Cinderella of Anglican ecclesiology. The Church of England needs to develop a robust and thorough-going theology of the laity of the kind advocated in this thesis. Such a theology is overdue; it is time for this particular Cinderella to assume her rightful place.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1.UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

Church Commissioners Archive, South Bermondsey, London

Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry:

The Ministry and Training of Readers in the Church of England: Report of the Warden's Working Group. 1986.

Report of the Working Group on the Office of Evangelist. 1985.

'Theology and Practice of Lay Ministry': *Paper to the Committee for Accredited Lay Ministry*, by H. Randall and C. Howard. 1975.

Church Assembly Report:

Towards the Conversion of England. 1945.

General Synod Board of Mission and Unity:

Evangelism in the Mission of the Church. 1974.

General Synod Board of Education Archive, Church House, Westminster, London.

Barnett, A.J. West Oxfordshire Christian Training Scheme Prospectus. 1985.

General Synod Board of Mission and Unity:

All Are Called: Report to BMU of the Working Group set up to examine the Report and comment on the issues it raised. 1987.

The Ministry of the People of God. London, 1987.

Gibbs, M. *The development of a strong and committed laity.* 1981.

-------- *The signs that they take the laity seriously*. 1982.

-------- *Yes - All of us Are called*. 1985.

Graham, A.A.K. *The place of the laity in the Church*. (Shortened version) 1980.

Ineson, H. *All Are Called*. 1987.

Kane, M. 'Theology and the Laity' in *A Conference on Theological Education*. 1990.

Lamdin, K. and Smith, L. *Towards an Understanding of Ministry*. 1987.

Saxbee, J.C. *The Development of the Laity*. 1987.

2. CHURCH REPORTS

Advisory Board of Ministry:

Ordination and the Church's Ministry: A Theological Evaluation. London, 1991.

Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry:

Call to Order. London, 1989.

Deacons in the Church. London, 1974.

Education for the Church's Ministry. London, 1987.

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission:

The Final Report. London, 1982.

Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anclican-Roman Catholic International Commission. London, 1986.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas:

Faith in the City. London, 1985.

The Archbishop's Committee on Church and State:

Report of the Archbishop's Committee on Church and State. London, 1916.

The Archbishop's Commission on the Convocation and the Laity:

Report of the Archbishop's Commission on the Convocation and the Laity. London, 1958.

Church Assembly Report:

Gender and Ministry. London, 1962.

The Commission on the Deployment and Payment of Clergy:

Partners in Mission. London, 1967.

General Synod:

The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood: A Second Report by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England London, 1988.

General Synod Board of Education:

All Are Called. London, 1985.

Called to be Adult Disciples. London, 1987.

General Synod Board of Mission and Unity:

Evangelism in England Today. London, 1979.

Good News in Our Times. London, 1991.

The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry. London, 1986.

The Theology of Ordination. London, 1976.

Towards a Church of England Response to BEM and ARCIC. London, 1985.

Joint Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury:

Report on the Position of the Laity in the Church. 1902.

The Knaresborough Report:

Communion before Confirmation. London, 1985.

Lambeth Conference Reports:

Report of the Lambeth Conference, 1920. London, 1920.

Report of the Lambeth Conference, 1930. London, 1930.

Report of the Lambeth Conference, 1958. London, 1958.

Report of the Lambeth Conference, 1968. London, 1968.

Report of the Lambeth Conference, 1978. London, 1978.

Report of the Lambeth Conference, 1988. London, 1988.

World Council of Churches:

Baptist, Eucharist and Ministry. Geneva, 1982.

The Evanston Report. Geneva, 1954.

The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches: Official Report. Geneva, 1948.

The New Delhi Report. London, 1962.

3.PUBLISHED WORKS.

ASB — *Alternative Service Book 1980*. London, 1980.

Armstrong, A. — *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society, 1700-1850*. London, 1973.

Arnold, T. *The Christian Life, Its Course, Its Hinderances and its Helps: Sermons Preached Mostly in the Chapel of Rugby School*. London, 1845.

Arnold, T. *The Miscellaneous Works*. New York, 1845.

Avis, P.D.L. *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*. Minneapolis, 1989.

---------- *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers*. London, 1981.

---------- 'What is Anglicanism?' in Sykes, S.W. and Booty, J. eds. *The Study of Anglicanism*. London, 1988.

Baelz, P. 'Taking Stock' in Baelz, P. and Jacob, W. eds. *Ministers of the Kingdom*. London, 1985.

Baker, J.A. *The Foolishness of God*. London, 1970.

Beckwith, R.T. 'The Anglican Eucharist to the Restoration' in Jones, C. ed. *The Study of Liturgy*. London, 1983.

Berger, P. *The Social Reality of Religion*. London, 1969.

Best, G.F.A. 'The Evangelicals and the Established Church in the Early Nineteenth Century'. *Journal of Theological Studies* Vol X pt 1. April 1959, 63-78.

---------- *Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Church of England*. Cambridge, 1964.

Betley, J.H. *Church and Parish*. London, 1987.

Bliss, K. *We the People*. London, 1963.

BCP *Book of Common Prayer*. London, 1662.

Bonhoeffer, D. *Ethics*. trans. N. Horton Smith. London, 1955.

Booth, C. *Life and Labour of the People of London*. London, 1912.

Bradshaw, P.F. 'Patterns of Ministry'. *Studia Liturgica* Vol 15 no 1. 1982-1983, 49-64.

Brooke, G.J. '*Laos*: A Biblical Perspective for a Theology of "The People of God"'. *The Modern Churchman* New Series Vol XXXII no 3. 1990, 32-40.

Bryant, D. ed. *The Future of Anglican Theology*. New York and Toronto, 1984.

Buchanan, C. *The End of the Offertory: An Anglican Study*. Bramcote, Notts, 1978.

Canons. *The Canons of the Church of England: Canons Ecclesiastical promulgated by the Convocations of Canterbury and York in 1964 and 1969 and by the General Synod of the Church of England from 1970*. 4th ed. London, 1986.

Cardwell, E. ed. *Synodalia* Vol II. London, 1842, repr. 1966.

Cargill Thompson, W.D.J. 'The Philosopher of the "Politic Society": Richard Hooker as a Political Thinker'. Speed Hill, W. ed. *Studies in Richard Hooker* Cleveland and London, 1972.

Coleridge, S.T. *On the Constitution of the Church and State according to the Idea of Each*. London, 1830.

Congar, Y. *Lay People in the Church*. London, 1957.

--------- 'Qu'est-ce qu'un laic'. *La Vie Spirituelle* Suppl. 15. November 1950, 363-92.

--------- 'Sacerdoce et laicat dans l'Eglise'. *La Vie Intellectuelle* 14. 1946, 6-39.

Cox, J.C. *Churchwardens' Accounts*. London, 1913.

Davies, H. *Worship and Theology in England*. Vol. V. Princeton, 1965.

Dickens, A.G. *The English Reformation*. London, 1964.

Draper, J. ed. *Communion and Episcopacy*. Cuddesdon, 1988.

Dunn, J.D.G. 'A Call to Reassess once more our doctrine of ordination'. *Epworth Review* Vol 10 no 1. Jan 1983, 44-49.

Elton, G.R. *Reform and Reformation*. London, 1977.

---------- *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary*. Cambridge, 1972.

Etchells, R. *Readers and the Ministry of the Church*. London, 1986.

Evans, G.R. *Authority in the Church*. Norwich, 1990.

Faivre, A. *The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church*. New York, 1990.

---------- 'The Laity in the First Centuries: Issues Raised by Historical Research'. *Lumen Vitae* Vol XLII no 2. 1987, 129-139.

Flanney, A. ed. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Dublin, 1975.

Ford, D. ed. *The Modern Theologians* Vol II. Oxford, 1989.

Francis, L. 'The Secular evaluation of Sacred Institutions: Synods and the Social Sciences'. *Modern Churchmen* New Series, Vol 22 no. 1. 1978-79, 12-17.

Garbett, C.F. *The Claims of the Church of England*. London, 1947.

Gibbs, M. 'Laity Training' in Robinson, J.A.T. ed. *Layman's Church*. London, 1963.

Gibbs, M. and Morton, T.R. *God's Frozen People*. London, 1964.

Gilbert, A.D. *The Making of Post-Christian Britain*. London, 1981.

Green, R. *Only Connect*. London, 1987.

Grierson, J. *The Deaconess*. London, 1981.

Gunton, C.E. and Hardy, D.W. eds. *On Being the Church*. Edinburgh, 1989.

Habgood, J. *Confessions of a Conservative Liberal*. London, 1988.

Hardy, D.W. 'Theology through Philosophy' in Ford, D. ed. *The Modern Theologians* Vol II. Oxford, 1989.

Hardy, T. *Under the Greenwood Tree*. London, 1914.

Harvey, A.E. *Priest or President*. London, 1975.

Harvey, G.L.M. *The Church in the Twentieth Century*. London, 1936.

Hastings, A. *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1985*. London, 1990.

Haugaard, W.P. *Elizabeth and the English Reformation*. Cambridge, 1968.

Hebert, A.G. ed. *The Parish Communion: A Book of Essays*. London, 1937.

Heeney, B. *A Different Kind of Gentleman*. Connecticut, 1978.

---------- *The Women's Movement in the Church of England 1850-1930*. Oxford, 1988.

Henson, H.H. *The Church of England*. Cambridge, 1939.

---------- *Retrospect of an Unimportant Life*. 3 Vols. London, 1942-43.

Hodge, M. *Non-Stipendiary Ministry in the Church of England*. London, 1983.

Hooker, R. *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Folger Library Edition ed. W. Speed Hill. 3 Vols. Harvard, 1977.

Jeffrey, R. *By What Authority?* London, 1987.

Jones, C. ed. *The Study of Liturgy*. London, 1983.

Kane, M. *Theological Development*. Manchester, 1980.

Kraemer, H. *The Theology of the Laity*. London, 1958.

Liddon, H.P. *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*. 3 Vols. London, 1893.

Longley, C. 'The Priestly Work of the Laity' in *The Times Book of Clifford Longley* ed. S. Powling. London, 1991.

Macaulay, T.B. 'Gladstone on Church and State'. *The Edinburgh Review* Vol 69. April 1839, 221-280.

Macquarrie, J. *The Faith of the People of God*. London, 1972.

---------- *God and Secularity*. London, 1968.

Martineau, R. *The Office and Work of a Reader*. London, 1980.

Mayfield, G. *The Church of England*. London, 1963.

Morris, C. *Political Thought in England, Tyndale to Hooker*. Oxford, 1953.

Neill, S.C. 'The Layman in Church History', in Weber, H.R. and Neill, S.C. eds. *The Layman in Church History*. London, 1963.

Newman, J.H. *Tracts for the Times*. Vol 1. London, 1835.

Northcott, M.S. *The Church and Secularization: Urban Industrial Mission in North East England*. Frankfurt, 1989.

O'Day, R. 'The Anatomy of a Profession: the Clergy of the Church of England' in Prest, W. ed. *The Professions in Early Modern England*. London, 1987.

----- 'The Clerical Renaissance in Victorian England and Wales' in Parsons, G. ed. *Religion in Victorian Britain*. Vol I. *Traditions*. Manchester, 1988.

------ *The Debate on the English Reformation*. London, 1986.

O'Day, R. — *The English Clergy: the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession.* Leicester, 1979.

Oldham, J.H. — *Life is Commitment.* London, 1963.

Owen, D.R.G. — 'Is there an Anglican Theology?' in Bryant, D. ed. *The Future of Anglican Theology.* New York and Toronto, 1984.

Palliser, D.M. — 'Introduction: The Parish in Perspective' in Wright, S.J. ed. *Parish, Church and People.* London, 1988.

Parsons, G. — 'Reform, Revival and Realignment: The Experience of Victorian Anglicanism' in Parsons, G. ed. *Religion in Victorian Britain.* Vol I. *Traditions.* Manchester, 1988.

Paton, D.M. — *Reform of the Ministry.* London, 1968.

Potterie, I. de la — 'L'Origine et le sens primitif du mot "laic"'. *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* Vol 80 no 8. 1958, 840-853.

Powling, S. ed. — *The Times Book of Clifford Longley.* London, 1991.

Prest, W. ed. — *The Professions in Early Modern England.* London, 1987.

Ramsey, A.M. ed. — *Lambeth Essays on Ministry.* London, 1969.

--------- — *Sacred and Secular.* London, 1965.

Richardson, A. — *History Sacred and Profane.* London, 1964.

Rigg, J.H. — *A Comparative View of Church Organization.* London, 1987.

Roberts, D. — *Victorian Origins of the Welfare State.* New Haven, 1960.

Robinson, J.A.T. ed. — *Layman's Church.* London, 1963.

---------- — *Liturgy Coming to Life.* London, 1961.

Robinson, J.A.T. 'The Ministry and the Laity' in Robinson, J.A.T. ed. *Layman's Church*. London, 1963.

---------- *The New Reformation*. London, 1965.

---------- *On Being the Church in the World*. London, 1960.

Rupp, E.G. *Religion in England 1688-1791*. Oxford, 1986.

Russell, A. *The Clerical Profession*. London, 1980.

Sanders, R.C. *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement*. Durham, North Carolina, 1942.

Schillebeeckx, E. *The Layman in the Church and Other Essays*. New York, 1963.

---------- *Ministry: A Case for Change*. London, 1981.

---------- *The Mission of the Church*. London, 1973.

---------- *World and Church*. London, 1971.

Sheils, W.J. and Wood, D. ed. 'The Ministry: Clerical and Lay'. *Studies in Church History* Vol 26. Oxford, 1989.

Spurr, J. *The Restoration Church of England 1646-1689*. New Haven and London, 1991.

Stanley, A.P. *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*. Vol II. New York, 1895.

Stevenson, J. *A New Eusebius*. London, 1957.

Stock, E. *The History of the Church Missionary Society*. London, 1899.

Sykes, N. *Church and State in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge, 1934.

------- *Old Priest and New Presbyter*. Cambridge, 1956.

Sykes, S.W. 'An Anglican Response'. *Concilium* 148. 1981, 32-37

Sykes, S.W. 'An Anglican Theology of Evangelism'. *Theology* November/December 1991, 405-414.

---------- 'Anglicanism and Protestantism in England and Germany' in Sykes, S.W. ed. *Studies in Theological Diplomacy*. Frankfurt, 1982.

---------- 'Authority in Anglicanism, Again' in Bryant, M.D. ed. *The Future of Anglican Theology*. New York and Toronto, 1984.

---------- ed. *Authority in the Anglican Communion*. Toronto, 1987.

---------- 'Authority in the Church of England' in Jeffery, R. ed. *By What Authority?*. Oxford, 1987.

---------- *The Integrity of Anglicanism*. London, 1978.

---------- 'Power in the Church of England'. *Concilium* 197. 1988, 123-128.

Sykes, S.W. and Booty, J. eds. *The Study of Anglicanism*. London, 1988.

Temple, W. *Fellowship with God*. London, 1930.

Thompsett, F.H. 'The Laity' in Sykes, S.W. and Booty, J. eds. *The Study of Anglicanism*. London, 1988.

Thompson, K.A. *Bureaucracy and Church Reform*. Oxford, 1970.

Tiller, J. *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry*. London, 1983.

Walker, P.K. *Rediscovering the Middle Way*. London, 1988.

Weber, H.R. and Neill, S.C. *The Layman in Christian History*. London, 1963.

Webster, D. 'Laymen in Mission', in Ramsey, A.M. ed. *Lambeth Essays on Ministry*. London, 1969.

Welby, P. *A History of the Church of England*. Oxford, 1984.

Whiteley, P. 'The Layman's Place in Church Government' in Robinson, J.A.T. ed. *Layman's Church*. London, 1963.

Wickham, E.R. *Church and People in an Industrial City*. London, 1957.

Williamson, W. *Worship as Pastoral Care*. Abingdon, 1979.

Wright, S.J. ed. *Parish, Church and People*. London, 1988.