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England: Historical Perspectives on Authority,
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Alternative Episcopal Oversight and the Church of England

Historical Perspectives on Authority, Identity and the Anglican Realignment

Aidan Robert John Hargitt

Abstract

This thesis will explore the historical roots of alternative episcopal oversight as it affects the Church of England in the form of Provincial Episcopal Visitors and the Anglican Realignment. This thesis will argue that these developments are the latest instalments in a cycle of conflict and adaption through which Anglicanism has consistently gone due to its non-specific and plural ecclesiology.

That non-specific ecclesiology, containing both Protestant and Catholic elements as a result of the Reformation, has been able to shift its emphasis in response to circumstances, from national Protestantism, with high- and low-church elements, to a global Catholic sacramental communion as the 19th century gave way to the 20th.

In the 20th century Anglican comprehensiveness, composed of Catholic and Reformed beliefs and practices balanced by latitudinarian tolerance, has broadened considerably with the inclusion of modernist theology grounded in contemporary experience. In a post-Christian and secular pluralist society, the breadth of belief and practice possible within that comprehensiveness has critically stretched the Catholic model of territorial bishops in sacramental communion both in England and the Anglican Communion.

On human sexuality and women's ministry the broadening of comprehensiveness has been further driven by a phenomenon this thesis will identify as social erastianism. This term describes the particular pressure felt by the Church of England as a national church to keep its doctrine and practice within the limits of what the post-Christian nation it represents considers acceptable.

The crisis of comprehensiveness and the Anglican Realignment are challenging but not unprecedented. On the contrary, as this thesis will demonstrate, they stand within a historical Anglican tradition of using the full range of Protestant and Catholic elements contained within its ecclesiology to adapt itself to the developing circumstances of each age whilst maintaining a recognisably continuous Anglican identity.

Alternative Episcopal Oversight and the Church of England
Historical Perspectives on Authority, Identity and the Anglican Realignment

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2013

Contents

Introduction: Alternative Episcopal Oversight	6
<u>Part 1: Doctrine, Crisis and Authority</u>	
1: A Crisis of Comprehensiveness	17
2: The High Church and the Anglo-Catholics	49
3: Episcopally Led, Synodically Governed	76
4: Anglican Authority and the Anglican Communion	101
<u>Part 2: the Anglican Realignment</u>	
5: Historical Precedents	128
6: Methodists, Tractarians and the Anglican Realignment	155
7: The Anglican Realignment and the PEVs	178
Conclusions	213
Bibliography	228
Appendix: Interview Methodology and Interviewees	237

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Dedications

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Introduction

Alternative Episcopal Oversight

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the historical origins, and the implications for the Church of England, of the late 20th and early 21st century Anglican phenomenon of alternative episcopal oversight. In addition to setting out the scheme and methodology for this investigation, this introduction will define the issue of alternative episcopal oversight and its implications for the Anglican ecclesiological claim to stand within the historic and apostolic episcopate as understood by the traditional Catholic churches of east and west.

The purpose of this introduction is firstly to set out the scheme of the thesis and the methodology, and secondly to broadly define the issue of alternative episcopal oversight in relation to the Anglican understanding of episcopacy and Anglican ecclesiology. Chapter 1 will examine what Stephen Sykes called a “crisis of comprehensiveness” within Anglicanism in order to understand the origins of the doctrinal disagreements which have led to the moves towards alternative episcopal oversight, and suggest that Sykes’ theory, expressed in his *The Integrity of Anglicanism* of 1978 but somewhat neglected in Anglican scholarship since, has much to offer in explaining the pressures behind alternative episcopal oversight. Chapter 2 will examine how, during the 19th century, the rolling back of state involvement in the Church of England and the gradual secularisation of ecclesiology, against the background of the Tractarian movement and the Catholic Revival, led to episcopacy being elevated above and beyond its original more Protestant understanding which characterised the Reformation period. This elevation of episcopacy produced an ecclesiology with bishops as the fundamental ecclesiastical validators, linking congregations to the whole church and vice-versa through sacramental communion, and with the diocese as the fundamental ecclesiastical unit. It is this ecclesiology which alternative episcopal oversight has the potential to undermine. Chapter 3 will examine the relationship between this development of episcopacy and synodical governance, and the ways in which the interaction

between the two have not led to greater doctrinal clarity. Chapter 4 will look at the development of the worldwide Anglican Communion, the implications which this globalisation of Anglicanism has for episcopacy and alternative episcopal oversight, and vice-versa.

The second part of the thesis will look at the historical precedents and roots of the Anglican Realignment, as the spread of alternative episcopal oversight within the Anglican Communion has come to be known. Chapter 5 will examine the non-jurors, particularly in Scotland and the United States where the principle of Anglican provincial independence enshrined in the Anglican Communion were first established, and the 18th century Methodists, whose development from the Evangelical Revival movement has close parallels with the contemporary situation. Chapter 6 will compare and contrast the differing experiences of the two principle offshoots of the Evangelical Revival, namely the Methodists and the Anglo-Catholics, exploring the reasons why the former group separated from the Church of England whilst the latter group were able not simply to remain within it but to impart a great deal of their character to it. Chapter 7 will examine in detail the creation, functioning and reception of the official system of alternative episcopal oversight adopted by the Church of England during the 1990s, the Provincial Episcopal Visitors, and its relationship to the Anglican Realignment process.

Whilst much of the methodology for this thesis is based upon the analysis and interpretation of written primary and secondary sources from the periods under consideration chapter 7 in particular, which deals directly with contemporary and on-going events, makes additional use of material derived from qualitative interviews conducted by me with key people directly involved in the issues surrounding alternative episcopal oversight and the Anglican Realignment. The interviewees were (in alphabetical order): Rt. Rev. Jonathan Baker (a PEV; at interview Bishop of Ebbsfleet, now Bishop of Fulham, Forward in Faith), Rev. David Banting (Reform, Anglican Mainstream), Rev. Jonathan Clatworthy (Modern Church), Professor Mike Higton (Church of England Faith and Order Commission), Rt. Rev. Martyn Jarrett (former Bishop of Beverley and PEV, Society of St. Wilfrid and St. Hilda (SSWISH)), Rt. Rev. Graham Kings (Bishop of Sherborne, Fulcrum), Rev. Rosemarie Mallett (Affirming Catholicism), Rt. Rev. Michael Nazir Ali (former Bishop of Rochester, now

Chair of Christian Concern for Our Nation), Monsignor Keith Newton (former Bishop of Richborough, now Ordinary of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham), Canon Chris Sugden (Reform, Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans).

The choice of interviewees was guided by the role which groups such as Fulcrum, Reform, Modern Church and Forward in Faith, as prime articulators of the different positions on doctrine and episcopacy found within the Church of England, have played in the events around the Anglican Realignment. As will be made clear through the course of this thesis, both historically and in the present day groups formed around particular issues or stances in the Church, particularly when their aims are not well received or frustrated, have played a key role as the basis for both breakaway groups and the new Anglican organisations being formed as part of the Anglican Realignment, and it is for this reason that representatives of these groups, which in consultation with my supervisors I have termed Para-Church groups, are heavily represented amongst the interviewees.

The choice of the term Para-Church groups was not without a certain controversy. In the course of my interview with Canon Chris Sugden he represented to me that because the term is generally used to refer to groups which cross denominational boundaries to undertake various activities it was not an appropriate term to use to refer to groups such as Anglican Mainstream. Whilst acknowledging this, it seemed to me that this term was indeed appropriate since the groups themselves represent different schools of churchmanship such as Anglo-Catholic and evangelical and contain within them the potential to act as the basis for new ecclesiastical groupings, as has effectively happened with the Anglican Church in North America, when they become aligned with particular issues and acquire their own episcopal representation, as has been the case with the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE); on the basis of this rationale, it was also represented to me by Bishop Graham Kings during the course of my interview that Para-Church group was precisely the correct term to use in this specific context. With all due respect for and acknowledgement of Canon Sugden's views I have decided to continue doing so.

Alternative episcopal oversight involves the transfer of a congregation or diocese in a historical geographical diocese or province to the oversight of another bishop in

another diocese or province of the Anglican Communion. Non-geographical oversight or peculiar jurisdictions have a long history in Western Christianity; Anglican military personnel on bases in a particular geographical diocese fall under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of the Armed Forces, for example, whilst historically churches associated with religious orders have come under the jurisdiction of that order rather than that of the bishop in whose geographical diocese they happen to be. These arrangements have not always been free of tension; the conflict between Jan Laski's stranger churches and the Bishop of London in the early 16th century having been a prominent early Anglican example. What differentiates the late 20th century phenomenon of alternative episcopal oversight from these historical anomalies in jurisdiction is that it has been undertaken due to fundamental disagreement over matters of doctrine or practice between the congregation and the bishop, or in rarer cases between the bishop and a substantial portion of the diocese with the province.

This has happened in two basic ways: with the cooperation and consent of the province and without it. The Church of England initiated the first of these: in 1992, in order to provide for those churches which could not in conscience accept the ministry of either women priests or the bishops who ordained them, the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod established Provincial Episcopal Visitors, colloquially known as Flying Bishops, to provide alternative episcopal oversight. In the United States and Canada, as concern amongst a number of clergy and laity grew, particularly about the attitude of their provinces to same-sex relationships, marriage and scriptural authority, individual congregations and groups of Anglicans began to drift away from the mainstream Episcopal Church. An example of the way in which this process worked can be seen in the first-hand account of St. Andrew's Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, where it began as a lay initiative:

For St. Andrew's, it began in February 1996 when 15 lay people began to share with one another that they thought God wanted them to start a new church. None of these people had ever been involved in such a project, but the experience of a common call was so unusual that they committed to a period of reflection and prayer.¹

¹ St. Andrews Little Rock website, "Who We Are" - <http://saclr.org/OurStory.php> (accessed 16/09/2013)

What had effectively begun as a disgruntled lay prayer group began to take on ecclesiastical characteristics, as it joined forces with similar groups including disaffected clergy:

During the same time, and unknown to the new Little Rock group, a number of priests in the Episcopal Church USA were growing dissatisfied with the direction of their denomination. They believed that direction was in conflict with the first promise they made upon becoming priests “to be loyal to the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ.” For these priests, the issue was one of being faithful to the gospel.

Out of this unrest, the First Promise movement began in September 1997, with a declaration by these priests of their intention to live with integrity concerning their first ordination vow. Rev. Shuler was one of the convening priests for the First Promise movement, and through that organization, he periodically asked other First Promise priests to travel to Little Rock to lead the monthly worship services for the newly formed group.

By now, the group considered themselves a new church, and they grew. In January 1998, the Right Rev. Thomas W. Johnston... became the first senior pastor and priest for St. Andrew’s Church. The first Sunday morning worship service was held in September 1998, at Pulaski Heights Presbyterian Church.²

These developments up to this point were not new. At various points in Anglican history, beginning with the non-jurors in the 1690s, Anglican groups have broken off and formed new ecclesiastical groupings outside of what would come to be known in the 19th century as the Anglican Communion. In the 1970s, the Continuing Anglican movement had begun in the USA in a very similar way and for very similar reasons to the groups forming in places such as Little Rock, and had broken away from the Anglican Communion. What happened as the end of the millennium approached, however, differentiated the latest events from what had happened before. The dissatisfied groups, as had happened before, were coming under increasing pressure to conform or leave from the existing provincial authorities; at this point, bishops from elsewhere in the Anglican Communion sympathetic to the disaffected Episcopalians broke with almost 150 years of Anglican convention regarding the independence of provinces, dating back to the first Lambeth Conference of 1867, and intervened:

² Ibid.

Rev. Johnston, an ordained Episcopal priest, was also a convening priest in the First Promise movement. When he moved to Little Rock in 1998, his denomination objected. The hierarchy notified Johnston that he would be brought before an ecclesiastical court and removed as a priest unless he abandoned the church in Little Rock and departed.

During this same time frame, unbeknownst to Johnston and the new church in Little Rock, leaders in the Anglican Church in Africa had a growing concern that without revival of the Christian faith in the West, the gospel witness in places like the United States would erode. These African evangelical leaders had been praying and seeking God's direction about how they could join in encouraging revival of the faith in the West.

In the spring of 1998, Bishop John Rucyahana of Rwanda learned of the pressure being placed upon Johnston to leave Little Rock, and he told Johnston that he would assume oversight of Johnston and the new church in Little Rock. With that action, St. Andrew's Church became the first missionary outreach to North America of the Anglican Province of Rwanda and was a foundational part of the creation of the Anglican Mission in the Americas [AMiA].³

Further disaffection and departures followed. In 2002 the Canadian diocese of New Westminster voted to approve a rite of blessing for same-sex couples; in 2003 the Episcopal Church consecrated Gene Robinson, a divorced man in a same-sex relationship, as Bishop of New Hampshire, and in 2010 it consecrated Mary Douglas Glasspool, also in a same-sex relationship, as suffragan Bishop of Los Angeles. At the time of writing five Episcopalian dioceses have voted to leave the Episcopal Church. Fort Worth, San Joaquin, Quincy and Pittsburgh have formed the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) in conjunction with the Anglican Network in Canada and under the oversight of the province of the Southern Cone. South Carolina has joined more recently. ACNA and AMiA, which co-exist but are functionally independent, have additionally been joined by individual Anglicans and parishes from across North America.⁴ The Episcopal Church's statistics suggest that between 2006 and 2010 it lost 300 parishes and 200,000 members from a total

³ Ibid.

⁴ The Anglican Church in North America, "Our Genesis" - http://www.anglicanchurch.net/media/Our_Genesis_revised_2.8_.13_.pdf (accessed 08/08/2013)

membership of close to 2 million, though not all individuals will have left for either ACNA or AMiA.⁵

This process has become known as the Anglican Realignment. The exact origin of the term 'Anglican Realignment' is somewhat obscure, and I have been unable to trace the point at which it was first used. It entered common parlance during the early 2000s, particularly in the aftermath of the consecration of Gene Robinson; an example the use of the term to describe it can be found at the website of Falls Church (Anglican) – so called to distinguish it from the Falls Church (Episcopal), as a result of the split which occurred in the aftermath of Bishop Robinson's consecration⁶ - but pinpointing a specific earliest example has proved impossible at the time of writing. The principle of alternative episcopal oversight as the solution to the difficulties caused by disagreements on matters of faith and morals within the Anglican Communion predates by a considerable distance the use of the term Anglican Realignment, however. The earliest reference to this which I have found is to be found in the highly controversial preface to the 1987 edition of *Crockford's Clerical Directory*, in which Canon Gareth Bennett identified both the fundamental problem and the proposer of the solution:

Bishop Graham Leonard [then Bishop of London] has recently been severely criticised for offering to take into his episcopal care a priest and congregation which had been excluded from the Episcopal Church.... What is important is the larger question which it raises: how far can a province go in changing its practice unilaterally while still demanding that other churches and other bishops should observe the strict rules of episcopal collegiality? In Dr. Leonard's view the Episcopal Church's treatment of its minority who held to the traditional practice of American Anglicanism justified his action. His colleagues in the English House of Bishops disagreed with him almost to a man, and in this they demonstrated the determination of the bishops of the Communion to maintain episcopal collegiality no matter what the cost in terms of theological and ecclesiological coherence.⁷

⁵ "Episcopal Church reports lowest membership in 70 years", from the *Catholic News Agency* website - <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/episcopal-church-reports-lowest-membership-in-70-years/> (accessed 24/09/2013)

⁶ "Anglican Realignment 1996-2003" from the The Falls Church Anglican website - http://www.tfcanglican.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=186266 (last accessed 23/08/2013)

⁷ Gareth Bennett, *Crockford's Clerical Directory 1987-88* (London: Church House Publishing, 1987) Preface, p. 67

In practice the most dramatic effects of the Anglican Realignment have been felt in the United States and Canada; it has only manifested itself in a so-far very limited manner in the Church of England, in the shape of the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE)⁸. This thesis will argue⁹ however that the 1992 decision to appoint Provincial Episcopal Visitors (PEVs) to oversee those parishes which could not in conscience accept the ministry either of women priests or of those bishops who consecrated them, by establishing the principle of alternative episcopal oversight, differs only from the Anglican Realignment as manifested in the United States and Canada in that it has been done with the co-operation of the existing province, rather than against its wishes, and should therefore be retroactively considered as the starting point of the Anglican Realignment principle in action – namely, that rigid geographical distribution of parishes between dioceses can be loosened (willingly or otherwise) to enable intractable doctrinal disagreements to be accommodated (somewhere) within the existing Anglican structures.

It is this principle which both differentiates the Anglican Realignment from previous examples of breakaway Anglican groups, who did not remain within the formal Anglican structures, and gives it far-reaching implications, if either left unchecked or actively endorsed, for the accepted Anglican episcopal polity, moving it away from the model of geographical episcopacy, found in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Mediaeval Western and pre-schism churches, which has been fundamental to Anglican identity since at least the 19th century¹⁰, and towards a more Protestant congregational polity. This development has profound implications, because (as will be explored in subsequent chapters) the development of Anglican comprehensiveness and the downplaying of systematic theology and confessional identity from the late 19th century to the present day has effectively left the historic episcopate as the only universally-agreed marker of Anglican identity in relation to the historic Catholic churches; a development such as the Anglican Realignment, with the potential to challenge that episcopal solidity, thus calls into question the integrity of Anglicanism as a whole.

⁸ See chapter 4

⁹ See chapter 7

¹⁰ See for example Michael Ramsey, “The Gospel and Episcopacy” in *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* 3rd edition (Cambridge MA; Cowley Publications, 1990) chapter 6 p. 68-85

The Anglican Mission in England was established in June 2011; Richard Coekin, of the Co-Mission partnership in the Diocese of Southwark, explains some of the background:

They [what Coekin and AMiE call “orthodox” Anglicans] are under-represented in the House of Bishops and their theological views seem to be largely ignored in the corridors of denominational power in the name of a never-ending listening and debating process that appears to be waiting for culturally popular liberal conclusions to prevail.

For example, in the liberal Southwark Diocese where I work as a senior pastor and director of the Co-Mission church-planting network, we have been pushed into “temporarily impaired communion” with our Diocesan Bishop since 2005. This is because, despite Lambeth Resolution 1.10 (declaring that homosexual activity is wrong) he would offer us no assurance that he would teach that homosexual practice is sin and therefore something not to be tolerated among the clergy. As a matter of conscience under the Biblical command to “contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” with those “who change the grace of our God into a licence for immorality”, we cannot accept the oversight of a Bishop who refuses to teach such fundamental Biblical doctrine.¹¹

The Anglican Mission in England is overseen by a panel of retired English bishops. The influence of the PEV system can be seen in this extract from AMiE’s website, in which it is implied that one of the reasons for the launch of AMiE was the refusal of the Church of England to provide alternative episcopal oversight for Conservative Evangelicals currently overseen by liberal bishops in the same way as has been done for Anglo-Catholics:

For four and a half years representations have been made to the senior leadership of the Church of England and discussions have been held with bishops appointed for the purpose by the Evangelical Bishops Meeting and by the Archbishop of Canterbury to find a way of providing alternative oversight for those who are in “temporarily impaired communion” with their diocesan bishop. Most recently a strong representation was made by a range of concerned people for there to be a Conservative Evangelical “PEV”. No proposal or response has been received.¹²

¹¹ Richard Coekin, “We rejoice in the emergence of the Anglican Mission in England” from the Co-Mission website - http://www.co-mission.org.uk/Groups/175156/Co_Mission/ABOUT_US/A_M_I/A_M_I.aspx (accessed 16/09/2013)

¹² The Anglican Mission in England website, “About the Anglican Mission in England” - <http://anglicanmissioninengland.org/about-anglican-mission-england-amie> (accessed 11/08/2012)

Now that the essentiality of the system of geographical mono-episcopacy has been called into question by the existence of the PEVs, the pressure to expand that system further to accommodate the extremely broad range of opposing views on a range of controversial issues has started to emerge. Normalising a system under which parishes can effectively choose their bishop based on their approval of his doctrinal stances, however, would be considerably more in keeping with an ecclesiologicaly looser Protestant system than with episcopacy as understood by the Catholic churches; as chapter 7 will explore, unease at this alteration in the ecclesiology of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion has led to a great deal of resistance to the PEV system and, in the most recent moves towards women bishops, a refusal to maintain the system on a statutory basis.

Even as the Church of England moves away from an established PEV system, however, the international Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, founded at the 2008 Global Anglican Future Conference¹³, continues to provide a network of overseas bishops willing to support alternative episcopal oversight for disaffected Anglicans, as it has done with AMiE:

AMiE is supported by the Primates Council of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda Uganda, Southern Cone of Latin America, West Africa, Tanzania who comprise 40 million of the world's 55 million churchgoing Anglicans). They wrote in May 2011: "We remain convinced that from within the Provinces which we represent there are creative ways by which we can support those who have been alienated so that they can remain within the Anglican family."¹⁴

Without the existence of a system for maintaining doctrinal and practical uniformity at some minimum agreed level, either across the Anglican Communion or within the Church of England, it seems that the concept of alternative episcopal oversight, now established, is unlikely to go away. If the Anglican Communion and the Church of England normalises this situation, it is erring on the Protestant side of ecclesiology; if it views it as a formal schism, it is erring on the Catholic side. It will almost certainly, in classical Anglican fashion, do some of each. The provinces of the Anglican Communion, including the Church of England, do not have the ability to prevent

¹³ Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans website - <http://fca.net/> (accessed 16/09/2013)

¹⁴ The Anglican Mission in England website, "About the Anglican Mission in England"

clergy ordained and/or overseen by retired or overseas bishops from ministering in their territory with a valid claim to be members of the Anglican Communion; given that, some form of compromise will need to be found, and one of Anglicanism's greatest strengths has been its ability to find a working compromise in situations which might have wrecked other denominations.

The purpose of this thesis is not to make predictions for the future; it is not to suggest what a working compromise might look like; it is not to assign responsibility for the incredibly complex situation of global Anglicanism to particular people, groups, or schools of theological thought, and it is not to suggest that particular views on issues such as sexuality are right or wrong. The aim of this thesis is to provide a historical perspective on the phenomenon of alternative episcopal oversight with a view to informing future scholarly and ecclesiological work.

Chapter 1

A Crisis of Comprehensiveness

Whilst expressions of dissatisfaction with the state of Anglicanism (and other churches) and even claims of crisis have been common throughout history, the first serious and reputable Anglican scholar to systematically attempt an academic, as opposed to a partisan, explanation of the general malaise of contemporary Anglicanism in the latter half of the 20th century, and to provide a warning as to the crisis it was facing, was Professor Stephen Sykes in his 1978 work *The Integrity of Anglicanism*. It is therefore with an exposition and exploration of this work that this chapter will begin, before working backwards chronologically to examine the circumstances of the 20th century which might have led him to reach that conclusion. Sykes identified what he termed 'a crisis of comprehensiveness'; before tackling the crisis aspect of Sykes' phenomenon, what is Anglican comprehensiveness? At its most basic level, Sykes identified it in this way:

Comprehensiveness in the context of the understanding of a church means simply that that church contains in itself many elements which are regarded as mutually exclusive in other communions.¹

He went on to point out that this in and of itself could be taken to apply to a variety of churches in different ways, and that further definition was needed to arrive at Anglican comprehensiveness:

All churches are comprehensive in certain other respects, for example, in their inclusion of members of both sexes and of all ages. But one would only speak of the 'comprehensiveness of the Anglican communion' if one had in mind some implicit contrast between the Anglican communion and other bodies. So comprehensiveness is most often and most naturally associated with the

¹ Stephen Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (London: Mowbray & Co, 1978) p. 8

inclusion of Protestant and catholic elements (and sometimes, as we shall see of other elements as well) in the one fellowship.²

In the Anglican context, Sykes provides comprehensiveness with several specific attributes. Firstly, the association of Anglican comprehensiveness with “Protestant and catholic elements” roots it firmly in the English Reformation and post-Reformation, when the desire for unity and uniformity in the Church of England in the face of Reformation controversy prompted English churchmen to follow a more conservative path of reform than was the case in places such as Scotland or Geneva. This relative moderation eventually gave rise to the idea of Anglicanism as a *Via Media* between Romanism on the one hand and more radical Protestantism on the other, as Sykes explains:

There can be no historical doubt that it was the intention of the architects of the Elizabethan settlement to provide a context in which men of widely differing theological conviction could co-exist. There was, of course, no disguising of the fact that the Church of England denied the Papal claims. But given that denial, the ‘golden mediocrity’ commended by Archbishop Parker, the first Elizabethan bishop, was supposed to be inclusive of conservatives in doctrine and polity as well as those who had learnt much from their years of exile in the Reformed lands of the continent. This inclusiveness is the basis of the attraction exercised by the idea of the *Via Media*.³

Moderation, golden mediocrity, *Via Media* – call it what you will – in practice meant creating a certain amount of space within which those conservatives and reformers could co-exist, and that meant carefully defining what was non-negotiable and what could be left to the individual conscience. Those things defined as non-negotiable could themselves be defined in a way which left a certain room for individual interpretation. Thus, a key aspect of comprehensiveness, both then and now, was the distinction made between fundamentals and non-fundamentals, a distinction which has been expressed in a variety of ways. Non-fundamentals have been variously described as being of the *bene esse* rather than the *esse*, things indifferent, adiaphorous, or simply non-essential. All these terms express the idea that certain doctrines must be believed, confessionally, by members of a church whilst others are seen as things on which latitude, tolerance and agreement to

² Ibid.

³ Sykes, *the Integrity of Anglicanism* p. 15

disagree can be legitimately exercised. Sykes cites Richard Hooker as the most influential Reformation-period exponent of this system in the Church of England:

[Hooker] speaks of the unity of the visible church as grounded in the outward profession of 'the essence of Christianity'...which profession is necessary in every Christian man. Furthermore, he makes explicitly clear that by the 'essence of Christianity' he means the articles of Christian belief given as the *regula fidei* in the works of Irenaeus and Tertullian. These fundamentals are, in effect, the propositions which go to make up the Nicene and Apostles' creeds minus some of the late attempts at precision deriving from the circumstances of the Arian controversy. They constitute, Hooker asserts, the faith which Jesus taught and which has characterised the visible church from that day to this.⁴

This relationship between fundamentals and comprehensiveness is echoed by a report of the 1968 Lambeth Conference which Sykes quotes:

Comprehensiveness demands agreement on fundamentals while tolerating disagreement on matters in which Christians may differ without feeling the necessity of breaking communion.⁵

There are, however, important differences between liberty of religious thought and practice in the 1590s and the 1960s. Richard Hooker was writing to justify a system which already existed, whose fundamentals were fixed by statute law and could be further interpreted and defined by the Crown in Parliament if the need arose; participation in that system was enforced by the courts, and defiance of the system could lead to severe penalties. Post-enlightenment thought, historical and literary criticism, post-modernity and an increasingly secular and humanist social background were not issues which Richard Hooker needed to take into account when he wrote of the essence of Christianity; what was and was not be considered fundamental, and the freedom to interpret those fundamentals in different ways, was considerably more restricted, by law as well as by prevailing social attitudes, and comprehensiveness therefore considerably less comprehensive in Richard Hooker's day than it was later to become. As Sykes points out:

⁴ Ibid. p. 11

⁵ Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* p. 9

...it will be obvious enough that in the form in which it is affirmed by Hooker, Chillingworth, van Mildert and Newman this tradition [“of theological distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals as a means of establishing limits to the comprehensiveness claimed for the Anglican Communion”] would not escape criticism at the hands of modern theologians. With what justice, it would be asked, can it be said that the faith taught by Christ is identical with that found in the *regula fidei* of the second century, or in the orthodox creeds of the fourth century? And there would be many who would question whether it is in any way conceivable that the faith of those early centuries could be understood and believed by modern man in the precise way in which it was understood and believed by Christians of those times. Even if the identical words were used, it would certainly be the case that their meanings would have changed.⁶

The fundamentals of the past, therefore, can potentially become unreliable when subjected to questioning by the methods, knowledge and mind-set of the present, and even when the wording of the fundamental formulae has not changed there is no guarantee either that they mean the same as they used to mean or that different people will not find different meanings within them.

In other denominations and other periods of Christian history, systematic theology has been the standard method used to bring order to such confused situations. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, for example, provides a systematic and up-to-date normative interpretation of Roman Catholic doctrine, which is considered binding upon adherents by the leadership of the church and which its personnel are obliged to uphold. On the Protestant side of the equation the Augsburg Confession, the 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith stand as similar examples of attempts to define the normative set of beliefs by which the members of an ecclesiastical group could be identified. In the Church of England, as noted above, the Crown in Parliament undertook the role of systematizing and enforcing normative beliefs during the Reformation, but during the 19th century this arrangement effectively collapsed, in a series of bitter conflicts and disputes which will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

By the first half of the 20th century, and reaching a crescendo in the aftermath of the 1927/28 Prayer Book Crisis⁷, the divisions between Anglo-Catholics and

⁶ Ibid. p. 12

⁷ See chapter 3

Evangelicals, which mirrored the disputes of the Reformation period, and the divisions between both those groups and a variety of liberals seemed sufficiently intractable that systematic theology no longer seemed to be a realistic option, and a subtly reworked theory of Anglican comprehensiveness began to gain ground. This theory of comprehensiveness is attributed by Sykes primarily to the 19th century Anglican scholar and theologian Frederick Denison Maurice:

Historically speaking the appeal of Maurice's proposal is obvious. Coined at a time when internal party strife was at its most acute, it apparently offered a non-partisan refuge for that large body of central Anglicans who properly speaking belonged to no party, neither evangelical, nor high church, nor yet in any committed sense to the more radical of the liberals.⁸

The original Anglican comprehensiveness can be described as a form of latitudinarianism: that within certain limits, Anglicans with different conceptions of truth can be enabled to co-exist within the same ecclesiastical body through the provision of space for differing beliefs. What Maurice proposed may have seemed at first glance to be a simple continuation of that classic Anglican comprehensiveness, but in reality was an entirely different animal; this distinction was to have profound consequences for 20th century Anglicanism.

Maurice reworked Anglican comprehensiveness by turning the existence and intractability of conflict within Anglicanism into a positive characteristic, rather than an unfortunate reality to be mitigated:

Maurice explicitly denied that the English church stood on 'an invisible equatorial line between Romanism and Protestantism.' Instead of this, he offers the view that the English church is a union of opposites, both of which are required for the completeness of truth, and for the practical tasks laid upon it.

It is not difficult to see why such a theory might have gained increasing acceptance in the strife-weary Church of England. It enabled Anglicans to paint Roman Catholic or Protestant criticism from within or without, such as that in the 1896 Papal bull *Apostolicae Curae*, as overly simplistic. Maintaining such simplistic clarity meant wielding authoritarian power such as Papal Infallibility or breaking apart into sects. It

⁸ Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* p. 19

was not that Anglicans were incapable of doing systematic theology and obtaining clear results, it was that Anglicans either deliberately chose not to do systematic theology, or when they did it they did it very slowly. They understood the complexities of the issues, respected individual freedom of conscience, embraced conflict and lived with it. Sykes quotes a statement from the 1948 Lambeth Conference, which demonstrates the extent to which this understanding of Anglicanism had been embraced at the highest level:

We recognise the inconvenience caused by these tensions [over differing views of episcopacy], but we acknowledge them to be part of the will of God for us, since we believe it is only through a comprehensiveness which makes it possible to hold together in the Anglican Communion understandings of truth which are held in separation in other Churches, that the Anglican Communion is able to reach out in different directions and so to fulfil its special vocation as one of God's instruments for the restoration of the visible unit of His whole Church.

It is difficult not to detect a distinct sense of self-satisfaction and condescension in this statement. It is remarkable that a denomination which had spent the last century and more riven by theological conflict and bitter disputes could now view itself as a special instrument for bringing unity to God's Church without resolving anything – or rather precisely because it had not resolved anything. Sykes's verdict is damning:

Theologically speaking...the effect of the proposal has been disastrous. It must be said bluntly that it has served as an open invitation to intellectual laziness and self-deception. Maurice's opposition to system-building has proved a marvellous excuse to those who believe they can afford to be condescending about the outstanding theological contribution of theologians from other communions and smugly tolerant of second-rate theological competence in our own; and the failure to be frank about the issues between the parties in the Church of England has led to an ultimately illusory self-projection as a Church without any specific doctrinal or confessional position.

The problem, as Sykes sees it, is that by portraying its historical conflicts as desirable and intrinsic the Church of England leadership has absolved itself of the need to actually deal with them. Unfortunately, calling the crack in the wall an essential ventilation duct will do nothing to stop the building from eventually collapsing:

All our previous discussion of the party situation in the Church of England has tended to show that there is within it a substantial quantity of contradictory opinion and conviction on major doctrinal matters. The various techniques employed by Anglican apologists to disguise the situation have been finally shown to be bankrupt...The integrity of the communion is in question, because it appears to be offering the propositions of the Christian gospel as topics for debate and discussion, rather than to be witnessing to the mighty act of God in Christ.⁹

Is this assessment by Sykes actually justifiable, however? It is demonstrably the case that over the 35 years which has followed the publication of *The Integrity of Anglicanism* the belief that conflict is inevitable, necessary, desirable and intrinsic to what it means to be Anglican has continued in its pre-eminent position within both the Church leadership and the Anglican academy. Sykes' work is an extremely rare example of an academic challenge to either the accuracy or desirability of this position. Two more recent works on Anglican ecclesiology and identity demonstrate this situation. Kenneth Locke's *The Church in Anglican Theology* contains the following passage, which demonstrates that the Mauricean tendency to portray Anglicanism as defined by the absence of doctrinal or confessional assertions of truth is alive and well in the Anglican academy:

The willingness to ignore institutional authority is shared either explicitly or implicitly by all Anglicans... They can do so because Anglicanism has developed a clear and consistent understanding of authority which allows for such actions. It is based on the idea of "probability," which argues that all human statements about the divine suffer from a provisionality which is open to future improvement and correction.¹⁰

In a similar vein, Paul Avis writes that:

...acceptance of pluralism as we find it in the Anglican Church denotes the eminent realism of Anglicanism. There is no need to apologize too much for the alleged defects of Anglicanism – its lack of discipline, its reticence where dogmatic definitions are concerned, its breadth of permitted opinion. Its pragmatism is not always born of a weary cynicism: at its best it is the product of sagacity, a sense of realism about the world as it is in the providence of God, a willingness to look facts in the face and to make the best of them. In other words, Anglicanism is not seduced by Utopian and perfectionist

⁹ Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism*, p. 44

¹⁰ Kenneth A. Locke, *The Church in Anglican Theology: A Historical, Theological and Ecumenical Exploration* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), p. 191

ecclesiologies. It takes seriously the fallenness of the world, the brokenness of the Church and the frailty of human nature.¹¹

The assumption in these works of ecclesiology seems to be that Anglicans accept the inevitability of conflict because as Anglicans they understand the provisionality of human statements about the divine. When they disagree, they accept that neither side of the disagreement is in full possession of the truth, and that the process of disagreement in and of itself constitutes Anglican systematic theology, working gradually towards a truth which includes the different sides. Thus for Anglicanism to be true to itself a wide range of opinions must be allowed to be voiced and explored through a process of dialectic, which is to be conducted on an eschatological timescale and excludes, within accepted social, cultural and legal limits, no possibilities. This is what Anglicanism is, and Anglicans are defined by their acceptance of this. The 1948 Lambeth Conference report quoted by Sykes supports this dialectical ecclesiology when it states:

If at the present time one view were to prevail to the exclusion of all others, we should be delivered from our tensions, but only at the price of missing our opportunity and our vocation.¹²

There is, however, something missing in this analysis, for if Anglicans accept that dialectical struggles are the path to discerning truth, and that none of the differing parties in that discourse is in possession of the whole truth, who has been engaging in all the conflict? If Anglicans accept that all human statements concerning the divine are subject to probability and future modification, at least until the Second Coming, who are the people now prepared to seek alternative episcopal oversight over the question of human sexuality? One possible, but unpleasantly self-serving, answer which has been given to this question is that they are in fact not 'proper' Anglicans. As will be seen in chapter 4, amongst other places, the tendency to portray Anglicanism as defined by the acceptance of provisionality can unfortunately lead to a tendency to portray only those Anglicans who accept provisionality as normative. The counter-balance to this is a tendency of some conservatives to portray modernists as atheists, apostates or heretics. As Sykes points out above,

¹¹ Paul Avis, *Ecumenical Theology and the Elusiveness of Doctrine* (London: SPCK, 1986) p. 116

¹² Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* p. 18

however, Anglicanism has adopted comprehensiveness through the desire to incorporate genuinely conflicting views, not because conflicting Anglican views do not in fact exist.

The 2008 Jerusalem Statement, issued following the Global Anglican Future Conference in Jerusalem which was organised by conservative Anglicans boycotting the Lambeth Conference of the same year over its attitudes to human sexuality, contained the following statement:

We regret the spiritual decline in the most economically developed nations, where the forces of militant secularism and pluralism are eating away the fabric of society and churches are compromised and enfeebled in their witness. The vacuum left by them is readily filled by other faiths and deceptive cults. To meet these challenges will require Christians to work together to understand and oppose these forces and to liberate those under their sway. It will entail the planting of new churches among unreached peoples and also committed action to restore authentic Christianity to compromised churches.¹³

There is nothing provisional about this statement. It stands as a direct challenge to the seeming consensus that Anglicanism is defined by the acceptance that truth is to be pursued through dialectic, rather than something which can be stated confessionally. Clearly, for some Anglicans there are some truths which are not up for discussion, but why does the dominant model of Anglican identity and authority seemingly find it so difficult to cope with them?

A possible answer can be seen through an observation made by an American Anglican priest as to the state of the Episcopal Church, which more than any other has been affected by the Anglican Realignment. Following the traditional division of Anglicanism into three broad streams – Evangelical, Catholic and Liberal – as suggested by the Church of England website¹⁴, he makes the following observation:

I suspect there is another challenge to real comprehensiveness. When one of the sub-traditions is dominate [sic] over a long stretch of time, as has been the case with the liberal tradition in the Episcopal Church for the last two or three

¹³ The Jerusalem Statement - http://www.fca.net/resources/the_jerusalem_declaration1/ (accessed 28/08/2013)

¹⁴ Detailed History of the Church of England - <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/history/detailed-history.aspx> (accessed 30/08/2013)

generations, it is easy for those whose primary identification is with that sub-tradition to begin to assume that it is actually the normative expression. The other sub-traditions are then treated as anomalous deviations. One does not have to look hard to find examples of this attitude. The result is that those whose primary identification is either Evangelical or Catholic - especially in their more traditionalist expressions - feel alienated.¹⁵

The suggestion here is that during the 20th century the leadership of the Church of England and other parts of the Anglican Communion have drawn the wrong lesson from the history of Anglican conflict. Following Maurice with the complacency decried by Stephen Sykes, they have concluded that to be Anglican means to accept the desirability of dialectical conflict as systematic theology in and of itself because Anglicans accept the provisionality of doctrinal truth statements; in actual fact, as this thesis will demonstrate, if the history of Anglican conflict teaches us anything it is that whilst Anglicanism may not possess clearly defined truths, individual Anglicans and groups of Anglicans certainly do – just not the same ones as each other, which is what has caused the conflict.

There is a great deal of difference between tolerating different conceptions of truth – which is latitudinarian liberalism – and agreeing that none of them is or ever can be, this side of the Apocalypse, certain what the truth is – which is modernist, pluralist liberalism. The former is the governing philosophy which enables Anglicanism to contain the latter alongside evangelicalism and anglo-catholicism. Where the former is perceived to have slipped into the latter, as has been particularly the case in North America, it is liable to alienate the other two. This drives the demands for alternative episcopal oversight. The situation created by the expansion of the limits of tolerable belief is described by the *Church of England Companion*, an unofficial web-based glossary of Church of England terminology, in the following terms in its entry for the term ‘comprehensive’:

It effectively means that its members – and even its clergy – can hold almost any belief or none, and still claim membership, and loyal membership at that. Thus an inability to accept the historicity of, for example, the Virgin birth or the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ has proved to be no bar to the holding of office, nor has a disbelief in His deity. The problem comes when

¹⁵ Rev. Matt Gunter, “Anglican Comprehensiveness”, *Into the Expectation* blog - <http://intotheexpectation.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/anglican-comprehensiveness.html> (accessed 30/08/2013)

one tries to agree on the limits of that comprehensiveness. The debate continues!

It would be easier to dismiss comments such as this as satirical, polemical and part of the perennial tendency to make fun of the Church, if it were not for the fact that the writer of this glossary entry was chairman of the Church of England's House of Laity for seven years during the 1980s. When senior Church of England personnel can make statements such as this it suggests that whether the statement is entirely accurate or not there is something going on with which the Church needs to engage.

If the limits of permitted belief have been allowed to expand to a point at which it can be believed that not just lay members but clergy at all levels can hold almost any belief loyally, it would suggest that a governing philosophy of latitudinarian liberalism, which attempts to balance the limits of the conservatives with the freedom of the modernists, is perceived to have slipped into a governing philosophy of modernist liberalism which does not. The church leadership needs to transcend the differing positions if it is to hold them in latitudinarian creative tension. A church leadership which is perceived to be partisan can create resentment, but as the quote suggests, the difficulty is where and how to define the practical limits of comprehensiveness.

The last time that action was taken against a cleric in the Church of England for what might be termed heresy was the case of Rev. Anthony Freeman, who was sacked in 1994 by the then Bishop of Chichester, Eric Kemp, as a result of his book *God in Us*, which argued that God was a creation of the human psyche and did not in any external sense exist. He is the only Church of England clergyman to have been dismissed for heterodox beliefs in the 20th century¹⁶. The point about Freeman's dismissal is the vanishing rarity of such an action; his views, for all their controversy, are clearly rooted in a stream of radical, modernist and humanist theology which the Church of England has very publicly tolerated for many years. Thus, an action which in other circumstances might have been taken as a demonstration of the limits of comprehensiveness and authority in action instead stands out both as a shining example of confusion and inconsistency. Working back through two key 20th century

¹⁶ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/unbeliever-priest-defiant-to-the-end-the-anglican-churchman-sacked-for-saying-god-did-not-exist-says-farewell----with-a-touch-of-humour-mary-braid-reports-1380634.html> - (accessed 01/09/2013)

crises helps to illustrate the way in which this stream of theology came to be tolerated.

This stream of theology became particularly prominent in the public perception of the church with the publication of *Honest to God* by John Robinson, the suffragan Bishop of Woolwich, in 1963. *Honest to God* can be seen as an attempt to reconcile Christianity with contemporary sensibilities by tackling the gulf which was appearing between God as presented by traditional religion – an external, super-natural being in heaven – with the scientific and humanist approach that had come to dominate Western society. Or it can be seen as an attempt to reshape Christianity into a form of pantheistic deism in which Jesus is human, God is internal, Scripture is uninspired and human morality can only be judged according to contemporary criteria. *Honest to God* has been described as either, neither and both in the fifty years since its publication; the book was remarkable not so much for what it said – which was rooted in and represented the ideas of a range of late 19th century/early 20th century Anglican and European modernist theologians¹⁷ - but for the storm of debate and controversy which it provoked.

Honest to God was sensationalised by the media, its publication preceded by an article in the *Observer* newspaper, penned by Robinson himself:

The as yet still obscure Dr. Robinson first submitted an article for publication in the *Observer* newspaper on 'A New Mutation in Theology'. Its wily editor substituted that title (apparently against the author's wish) with the rather more catchy 'Our Image of God Must Go'. This piece of occasional journalism became the hastily written *Honest to God*.¹⁸

Honest to God became a major best-seller, with the public controversy soon overshadowing anything which the book itself actually had to say:

It...caused such a furore that Robinson and his collaborator, David L. Edwards, issued a second, discursive, volume, *The Honest to God Debate*, the same year. The editors of *Theology* loftily remarked that this debate eventually 'proved of more intrinsic interest than the book itself'. But Bishop

¹⁷ S. J. D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change c. 1920-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 292

Cockin paid the author a greater compliment than he knew when, in discussing Robinson's initial salvo, he observed that it was by now 'well-nigh impossible to be sure whether one is reviewing the book or the controversy generated since its publication.'¹⁹

Its content was not entirely new but its publication was extremely well-timed, as the editor of the *Observer* evidently recognised, striking a chord with the social, moral and ideological iconoclasm of the 1960s. Robinson was not as obscure as Green suggests, having already entered the public consciousness several years earlier, when he spoke in court in defence of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, during an obscenity trial which became an icon of the new, free and permissive society sweeping away the taboos of the past.²⁰ With *Honest to God* he seemed to be following this up in a chapter entitled "The New Morality": the statement which seemed to chime with 60s *zeitgeist* perhaps more than any other, and which laid Robinson open to charges of abandoning accepted moral restraints, was the one in which he seemed to say that "All you need is love" four years before the Beatles did:

But love is the end of law precisely because it *does* respect persons – the unique, individual person – unconditionally. 'The absoluteness of love is its power to go into the concrete situation, to discover what is demanded by the predicament of the concrete to which it turns.' Whatever the pointers of the law to the demands of love, there can for the Christian be no 'packaged' moral judgements – for persons are more important even than 'standards'.²¹

Robinson, protesting against this notoriety and denying that he had meant anything like as sensational as endorsing the sexual revolution,

...complained that his argument had been misinterpreted. The phrase [the new morality], he suggested, 'has been bandied about in the wildest manner and has become an indiscriminate target of abuse among churchmen. It is applied to moral positions miles apart, Christian and non-Christian, and has simply come to signify an invitation to sexual licence – "the old immorality condoned," as Lord Shawcross tartly put it. And I am regarded as the author of it.'²²

¹⁹ S. J. D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England* p. 292

²⁰ George Austin, "All you need is love", *New Directions*, July 2005 - <http://trushare.com/0122JLY05/JY05GAUST.htm> (accessed 01/09/2013)

²¹ John Robinson, *Honest to God*, 2nd edition, (SCM Press: London, 2001) p. 83

²² George Austin, "All you need is love"

He protested in vain; the media and the public, having heard what they wanted to hear – which was, in effect, ‘Bishop denies God and declares moral free for all’ – were no longer listening, and both Robinson and the Church of England had lost control of the public discourse which *Honest to God* had created. One way to reassert some semblance of control might have been for Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, to take steps to remove Robinson from his post as Bishop of Woolwich, as the Bishop of Chichester would sack Anthony Freeman 30 years later. This was certainly the direction in which outraged conservatives were heading:

Feelings were running high; and Ramsey learned of an intention to have the book and its orthodoxy debated in the Convocation of Canterbury. Mervyn Stockwood, bishop of Southwark [and Robinson’s diocesan], feared a petition from within the diocese for proceedings against Robinson in Stockwood’s own court. There appeared to be a real threat of what would be widely viewed in the media as a heresy hunt, and in two forums neither of which were well constituted to do the job. This was to be avoided at all costs.²³

If the fear of adverse public and media reaction to a heresy trial, which would appear in the public eye as utterly inappropriate in the modern era, played a role in staying Ramsey’s hand, and saving Robinson, there were other factors involved with more profound implications. The first is that sacking a Church of England bishop is a lot more difficult than sacking a vicar (which is itself no quick or straightforward task). Suffragans, like diocesans, are appointed on Royal, not ecclesiastical, authority, and removing Robinson would have required the approval of the Prime Minister, which Ramsey may well have seen as unlikely to be forthcoming given the public climate. The second and most important factor was that decades earlier, the rug had effectively been pulled out from under Ramsey’s authority to take any practical action against Robinson.

It was certainly not that Ramsey tacitly agreed with Robinson’s stream of modernist theology, and only wished he had been less publicly sensational about it; he had warned of the potential consequences of this type of theology almost thirty years before Robinson put pen to paper in his seminal 1936 publication *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*:

²³ Extract from Peter Webster’s forthcoming book on Archbishop Michael Ramsey for Ashgate - <http://peterwebster.wordpress.com/2013/05/09/michael-ramsey-honest-to-god-and-the-edge-of-the-church-of-england/> (accessed 01/09/2013)

...his [the modernist theologian's] real quarrel is not with ancient thought but with the Gospel itself. For the characteristic note of "Modernist" theology in England is not its use of Biblical criticism... nor its attempts to relate Christianity to the fact of Evolution... nor yet a temper of free inquiry, but its dogmatic assertion of a humanistic axiom, which belittles the theme of sin and redemption. But while the Gospel can use as its handmaid both Platonism and Thomism and modern Humanism, it cannot succumb to the domination of any one of them; for by thus succumbing the Church limits its authority, mars its universalism and becomes too wedded to the "spirit of this present age" to bear witness to the Gospel which both scandalizes and uses the thought of every age.²⁴

15 years before Ramsey penned this, however, the Church of England had taken a momentous decision when confronted with a similar theological scandal. In 1921 the Modern Churchmen's Union had convened a conference of modernist theologians at Girton College, Cambridge. The published papers of this conference caused a similar level of outraged controversy to that which *Honest to God* would cause 40 years later. The President of the Anglo-Catholic body the English Church Union presented a petition to the Convocation of Canterbury, whilst several members of the Lower House of Convocation presented a Gravamen. The Gravamen stated that:

Inasmuch as certain erroneous interpretations concerning the Godhead of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and His Holy Incarnation, and concerning the doctrine of the Holy Blessed and Glorious Trinity as set forth in Holy Scripture and the Catholic Creed, have been advanced by certain Clergymen of the Church of England...

Inasmuch as these opinions have been published far and wide in the daily Press, and the minds of many have been deeply distressed thereby: the enemies of the Faith greatly encouraged, and the honesty of the Clergy as a body seriously called in question:

Reformandum: That this House humbly desires His Grace the President and their Lordships of the Upper House to declare that such opinions are contrary to the teaching of the Bible and the Church.²⁵

The English Church Union petition stated:

²⁴ Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 3rd (US) edition (Cambridge MA: Cowley Publications, 1990) p. 133

²⁵ *Bishops and Modern Criticism: Being the Report of Debates in the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury and the Upper House of Convocation of York, May 1922*. (London: SPCK, 1922) p. 5

Your Petitioners submit that such teaching is entirely subversive of the Christian Faith and the Christian Religion, and therefore calls for authoritative condemnation.²⁶

If nothing else, these two petitions help to further demonstrate that any attempt to portray the Church of England as a church in which the provisionality of all truth statements has always been accepted is an attempt to rewrite ecclesiastical history into a form more congenial to contemporary developments. The bishops, however, were considerably more equivocal than were the petitioners:

This House declares its conviction that adherence to the teaching of the Catholic Church as set forth in the Nicene Creed and in particular concerning the eternal pre-existence of the Son of God, His true Godhead, and His Incarnation is essential to the life of the Church, and calls attention to the fact that the Church commissions as its Ministers those only who have solemnly expressed such adherence.

Further, this House recognises the gain which arises from enquiry, at once fearless and reverent, into the meaning and expression of the Faith, and welcomes every aid which the thoughtful student finds in the results of sound historical and literary criticism, and of modern scientific investigation of the problems of human psychology; and it deprecates the mere blunt denunciation of contributions made by earnest men in their endeavour to bring new light to bear upon these difficult and anxious problems. At the same time it sees a grave and obvious danger in the publication of debateable suggestions as if they were ascertained truths, and emphasises the need of caution in this whole matter, especially on the part of responsible teachers in the Church.²⁷

The debates through which their lordships reached these conclusions are instructive, because they demonstrate how little some of the bishops actually understood what they were dealing with both in terms of the nature of theological modernism and the nature of society. The Bishop of Gloucester, who drafted the above resolution, set the tone early on:

In the first place, he would say, as had been repeatedly said on previous occasions, that argument must be met by argument, and learning confuted by learning. The authors of the papers must be shewn to be wrong, and as a matter of fact that was already being done. A member of the House, the Bishop of Ely, had already, in the opinion, he thought, of practically the whole Church, effectually answered some of the points in this controversy. Bishop

²⁶ Ibid. p. 6

²⁷ Ibid. p. 46

Gore was dealing with the matter by solid argument, and the Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford was doing it in an article in the January number of the Church Quarterly Review...

Indeed:

He would remind the House of the controversies of the 18th century, and the outbreak of Arianism early in that century. How was it met? How was it defeated? Not by prosecutions, but mainly, not entirely, through the work of one man. It was perfectly true, he thought, and all the history shewed it, that when Arianism endeavoured to find a home in the Church of England it was crushed out under God (to quote the words of Dr. Liddon) mainly by the genius and energy of the great Waterland. The same was true of the Deistic Controversy. The Deists were beaten out of the field in argument. While Tyndal's book, *Christianity as Old as Creation*, which was published in 1730, had sunk into oblivion, Butler's answer to it in 1736 had taken its place among the classics of the world's literature.²⁸

The Bishop of Norwich supported him:

There was a time to keep silence and a time to speak, and in practical life it was often a perplexity to know when to do the one or the other. He could advance cogent arguments in favour of the present being a time to keep silence, and if a cry of distress had not been addressed to the members of the House they might have wisely said nothing, and might have left all that was faulty in the special speculations under consideration to be driven off the field by better scholars than their authors in the way that, as the Bishop of Gloucester had reminded the House, had been done in earlier generations.²⁹

The late 19th century Church of England had been racked by a series of law suits and demands for disciplinary action against modernists, Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals alike. None of the bishops were likely to forget the fiasco of the 1874 Public Worship Act, which had seen several Anglo-Catholic priests imprisoned for ritualism, and which had created a storm of public outrage (see chapter 3). The spectacle of conscientious clergy being deprived of their livelihoods and even imprisoned for exercising the freedoms of thought and expression on which England prided itself was not acceptable to either the bishops or the public. The Bishops of Norwich and Gloucester were here expressing the need to deal with differences by reasoned debate, rather than harsh actions, which had characterised the bishops'

²⁸ Ibid. p.

²⁹ Ibid. p.

attitude to strictly enforcing the letter of church rules for the past 3 decades. The warfare had to stop, and tolerance was the only thing likely to make it.

The Bishop of Worcester gave a warning that if the church portrayed modernist and traditionalist views as complementary and the conflict as productive, that was not the picture which a cynical and sensationalist press would paint:

He could not help regarding it as a mistake to open the Sessions at Girton for the discussion of great subjects to the daily Press, which was as avid of sensation as it was innocent of theological acumen. Opening the Conference to the daily Press meant running the risk of misconstruction. The result of opening the Conference to the Press had been a number of spicy snippets from one essay and another which bore no right relation to the context in which the passages occurred, and which breathed no breath of the atmosphere of real devotion that existed in the Conference.³⁰

The media, then, in the 1960s, and now, was and is not interested in fairness, balance and theological context; its job has always been to sell stories. Where the bishops saw a church heroically wrestling with challenging questions in an Anglican spirit of truth, reverence and intellectual freedom, the press and the public opinion it influenced saw the far more interesting spectacle of a church which did not know the seat of its cassock from its elbow. Whilst it may have reassured the Bishop of Gloucester to know that the modernists were being thoroughly trounced in the “January number of the Church Quarterly Review”, his communicants were far more likely to be reading *The Daily Express* of a morning. The same failure to realise quite what the *Observer* and the media in general was likely to do with his complex and nuanced exploration of the nature of God led John Robinson to anguished but futile protests in 1963.

The fact was, and is, however, that the Church of England could not in reality win. Discipline or tolerance, the result would have been sensational press coverage that played to a growing sense of secularism and cynicism amongst the general public. The Church of England had little to gain, but much to lose in terms of internal peace and public perception, by knee-jerk disciplinary action. Such action was liable to seem, in the eyes of a still anti-Papist English public, like moving in the direction of

³⁰ Ibid.

the first Vatican Council and papal Infallibility. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, made it quite clear that the Church of England must place no restrictions on theological enquiry:

I have sometimes in private conversation used an analogy, it may be a rough and ready one, which I think brings the position home to people. I will use it now, because it emphasises a point which I think is constantly forgotten. Turning from the subject of religion and theology to science and medicine, a young doctor is encouraged to make every kind of inquiry he can possibly make into scientific subjects, and it may be that his experiments and his bacteriological research will lead him far away from the medical traditions in which he had been brought up. We should not say to him "Stop," but we should say "Go on; say exactly what you believe to be true, and be prepared to take the consequences."

The Archbishop's analogy with science and medicine is a helpful one, though possibly not for the reason he intended. The scientist could undertake his experiments and prove his findings to his fellow scientists because they possessed between them a shared understanding, which had taken centuries to develop, of the basic principles of physics and chemistry against which those findings could be objectively proved; generations of scientists from Newton onwards had done the groundwork for him. The whole point the modernists were making was that definitive religious truth statements were impossible, and that doctrinal authorities, including Scripture, and the formulae derived from them, including the Creeds, were human products of particular ages. This was Ramsey's "dogmatic assertion of a humanistic axiom". There could not, by definition, be a scientific equivalent of that attitude to truth without science itself ceasing to exist as anyone understood it.

If Davidson had continued his analogy far enough, he might have reached the point at which the scientist who publicly proclaimed scientific method to be intrinsically and inevitably incorrect would have been expelled from any and every reputable scientific institution on the face of the earth. When Davidson spoke of consequences, however, he had specifically, albeit for perfectly sound reasons, ruled out that sort of action. What did he envisage the consequences to be?

...if I was conscientiously led to conclusions contrary to teaching to which I had promised adherence, and if on the strength of that promise I held office in a body whose teaching was contrary to the conclusions to which I had been

led, I should no longer feel justified in holding a responsible position, whether high or low, in that body when I had found myself unable to adhere to what I had promised.³¹

Davidson seemed to be working on the basis that anyone reaching conclusions contrary to or outright rejecting church teaching would conscientiously resign. On one level this might seem the obvious thing for a cleric who rejected church teaching to do, but there were other factors at work. For one thing, there were perfectly understandable material reasons why a clergyman who depended upon the church for his livelihood, his abode and his sense of purpose might be reluctant to simply resign. Materialism aside, however, the modernists, like the Anglo-Catholics and Conservative Evangelicals, did not view the Church of England formulae as authoritative in a way which would create any clash of conscience. Anglicanism was, after all, comprehensive and the modernists were seeking space within that comprehensiveness. The Church of England was an organisation to which they were as conscientiously loyal as any other group was, and in supposing that they might resign when established teaching contradicted them Davidson rather underestimated them. After all, most Anglo-Catholics (Newman being a rare exception) had not resigned during decades of being told that their beliefs and practices contradicted church teaching, despite some of them even being imprisoned. They had fought to establish their interpretation of church teaching as legitimate and had succeeded; why should the modernists not be made of equally stern stuff?

In refusing to see the modernists pushed out of the Church of England, Davidson and the bishops were taking both a principled and a pragmatic decision, born of the bitter experience of 19th century conflict. Davidson himself had been chaplain to Archibald Tait, the Archbishop of Canterbury who had been pressured by the weight of controversy into supporting the disastrous 1874 Public Worship Act³², and was not about to make a similar mistake.

Their decision, however, was one with far-reaching consequences. To continue the scientific analogy, accepting the modernists as part of Anglican comprehensiveness was similar in principle to scientific societies accepting people who rejected scientific

³¹ *The Bishops and Modern Criticism* p. 144

³² Edward Carpenter, *Cantuar: the Archbishops in their Office* (London: Cassell, 1971) p. 348-349

methods. Once the Royal Society admitted members of the Flat Earth Society or the Royal Society of Astronomers people who produced horoscopes, they could never again be the same organisations that they had been before. Whilst the Anglo-Catholics, Evangelicals and even the Latitudinarians that previously formed the bulk of the Church of England might have disagreed about the sources of authority, the interpretation of those sources and the implications of what they said, they did at least acknowledge the possibility of definitive religious authority. These groups fitted the party model of differences within the church, as they were constrained within established boundaries of the traditions which defined them, whereas the modernists were not.

In accepting the modernists on principle, the Church of England was treating them as a party with established doctrines, but modernism is a method of systematic theology rather than a set of systematically-derived results. By unquestioningly accepting the method as legitimate within Anglican comprehensiveness, the Church of England was committing itself to a huge gamble on what the results of that method might be. Sykes' view of this tendency to treat modernists as a party is damning:

To accept the inevitability of some liberals, [sic] does not necessitate the toleration of all. Views are neither right nor wrong by being liberal in character. Only a church which had despaired of the possibility of rational argument about theology altogether could adopt such a stance.³³

Whilst there is truth in the first part of this quotation, the evidence from the debates of the 1922 Convocation presented above does not support the view that the bishops despaired of the possibility of rational argument about theology. On the contrary, they were dedicated to rational argument about theology as the way forward for the Church of England. Far from despairing of it, they were betting the house on it.

The problem was that the modernist method to which they had assured a place in the Anglican firmament was committed to subjecting traditional teaching to the scientific, social and cultural advances of the present age. In the 1920s and 30s that present age was calling into question beliefs such as the literal virgin birth and the

³³ Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* p. 35

physical Resurrection, but the results of modernist theology were still constrained by a basically Christian social milieu in which such things as pre- or extra-marital sex, contraception, abortion and homosexuality were viewed as profoundly immoral, and in the latter two cases were forbidden by law.

At the time of the 1922 Convocation, when Christian morality still underpinned society, the range of controversial results to which modernist theology might lead seemed confined to systematic theology. What no-one foresaw, or could have reasonably been expected to foresee, was that the range of results to which modernist theology could potentially lead was to expand as dramatically as it has done in decades to come, and come to include acceptance not just of controversial beliefs but acts which historical Christianity saw as sinful and immoral. The idea that modernist theology could lead the Church of England to re-evaluate its stance on such things as fornication and sodomy, as they were frequently referred to at the time, and could even lead to the acceptance of clergy and bishops who engaged in either, was far beyond the horizons of the 1922 Convocation.

Accepting the authority of a bishop you believe to have controversial views on the virgin birth is one thing. Accepting the authority of a bishop you believe to be engaging in sinful and immoral acts contrary to Christian ethics, and/or who teaches others that those things are not in fact sinful to the peril of their souls, is quite another. At this point rational argument about theology, which otherwise worked very well, begins for some Anglicans to break down and alternative episcopal oversight enters the picture. In 1922, however, all this was a long way in the future. The aftermath of the Girton conference convinced Randall Davidson of the need for a commission to hammer out the limits of acceptable doctrine. He had been under pressure to assemble one since before the First World War, but had resisted it until this point. Now, he could see the merits:

...he was at first suspicious of a proposal put forward by a number of theologians for a doctrinal commission to consist of Anglo-Catholics, Liberals and Evangelicals. For a group of men to get together, as in the case of the contributors to *Lux Mundi*, and to 'stand on their own merits as scholars' was one thing; for a body to be officially appointed and subsequently to issue an authoritative report was another.

After the Girton conference, he saw things differently:

The Archbishop was now slowly coming round to see some advantage in people of different schools of thought getting together, provided that they were temperamentally tolerant and inclined to be constructive; yet he still demurred at any attempt at 'securing a unity of belief' and any drawing up of 'an unambiguous statement of the doctrines [of the Church of England] to which they could give general adherence'. Finally, however, in co-operation with the Archbishop of York, he nominated a group of men of different schools of theological thought to meet as a commission 'to consider the nature and grounds of Christian Doctrine with a view to demonstrating the extent of existing agreement within the Church of England and with a view to investigating how far it is possible to remove or diminish existing differences.'³⁴

This commission represented the closest Randall Davidson ever came to an acknowledgement that any sort of practical action was needed on the limits of Anglican belief. He need not have worried about the report of the commission, however; the existing differences, being genuinely incompatible, were impossible to remove from the start, so the commission concentrated, not unreasonably, on creating space for them to co-exist without running the risk of law suits or disciplinary action. The contents of most of the document, finally published in 1938, 16 years after the commission had been convened, were relatively uncontroversial, as they were designed to be, and beyond the scope of this thesis. The most important section with regards to authority was the introduction, which seems to have been designed with the specific purpose of rendering anything which came after it moot:

...our aim is not compose a new *Summa Theologiae*, but to promote unity and mutual appreciation within the Church of England, partly by the interpretation of one school of thought to another, and partly by pointing to the fullness of a truth diversely apprehended in different quarters....

There are systems of Catholic Theology and of Protestant Theology. To them we have, of course, owed much. But there is not, and the majority of us do not desire that there should be, a system of distinctively Anglican theology....

The removal or diminution of differences within the Church of England can only be rightly effected by the discovery of the synthesis which does justice to all of these; and this is a task, not for a Commission, even though it sit many years, but for several generations.

³⁴ Edward Carpenter, *Cantuar* p. 429

This was in practice not a doctrine commission, but a commission set up to explain why the Church of England did not have any enforceable doctrines of its own. The sections on the specifics of authority were equally liberal:

...the authority of [the church's] doctrinal formulations ought always to be interpreted as resting, at least in part, upon the acceptance of these by the whole body of the faithful. This authority, in so far as it is derived from such as *consensus fidelium*... does not depend on mere numbers or on the extension of a belief at any one time, but on continuance through the ages and the extent to which the *consensus* is genuinely free...

This was very similar wording to that which the modernists had used in the counter-petition which they had submitted to the 1922 Convocation:

The question of essential truth can only be decided by the slow process of research, by the weighing of practical results, and by the growth of a *sensus communis*, which altogether constitute the test of truth in all branches of human knowledge.³⁵

The doctrine commission report contained the admonition that "All Christians are bound to allow very high authority to doctrines which the Church has been generally united in teaching..." was qualified by "Acceptance of the Church's authority by the individual must always rest on his own judgement." The Anglican formularies "should not be held to prejudge questions which have arisen since their formulation or problems which have been modified by fresh knowledge of fresh conceptions." The report's section on the all-important Creeds began:

The general acceptance of formulations drawn up in another age and another context of thought gives rise to special problems, especially when some of the phrases used are indisputably symbolic, and no clear distinction is drawn, or (perhaps) can be drawn, between these and others.

The section in the doctrine commission report on the declaration of assent which all clergy made can reasonably be interpreted as having been specifically designed to remove forever the possibility that any Anglican clergyman could ever be called to account for any belief:

³⁵ *The Bishops and Modern Criticism* p. 7

Assent to formularies and the use of liturgical language in public worship should be understood as signifying general acceptance without implying detailed assent to every phrase or proposition thus employed.

Subject to the above, a member of the Church should not be held to be involved in dishonesty merely on the ground that, in spite of some divergence from the tradition of the Church, he has assented to formularies or makes use of the Church's liturgical language in public worship.

The report ring-fenced this with the admonition that "the Church has a right to satisfy itself that those who teach in its name adequately represent and express its mind", but since the whole thrust of the document was that the church did not have a single mind but the collective minds of its members, this qualification carried no weight in practice.³⁶

The doctrine commission's report was emblematic of the thinking of the Church of England leadership, which after decades of struggles in church and civil courts over church teaching and practice had come to see liberalism as the only possible way to put an end to it. Trying to enforce even a minimum unity of doctrine and practice at the lower levels of the Church had failed. The only way the Church of England was ever going to be able to move forward was to stop using disciplinary action and rely on theological argument. That meant adopting classical Anglican liberalism as a guiding philosophy.

At parish level, where there was no longer any requirement for Anglicans to attend their local parish church, the diversity engendered by the removal of disciplinary restraints could be accommodated relatively easily. Conservative Evangelicals could go to their churches, Anglo-Catholics to theirs and liberals to theirs. The Anglo-Catholics and the Evangelicals had, by this time, fought each other to a standstill in any case, and the clear mood of the Church authorities was in favour of tolerance, as evidenced by the outcome of the 1922 Convocation. The Church of England leadership had effectively left dissatisfied parties with a choice - to tolerate each other or to leave - because there would be no official crackdowns or purges. The great majority chose toleration; there was no exodus of Anglo-Catholics or

³⁶ All the above quotations are taken from *Doctrine in the Church of England: the Report of the Commission on Christian Doctrine Appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 1922* (London: SPCK, 1938)

Evangelicals at this time. As Sykes points out, however, what this represented was not a Mauricean acceptance that truth was complementary, and therefore not worth fighting over. It was an armistice, not a permanent peace treaty:

It must be said bluntly that the militant tractarian and militant Protestant saw the matter more accurately. The painful series of law suits in which they engaged was the real battlefield where the future of the Church of England was decided; and if in the end they learned to co-exist, it was principally because, as many power groups have discovered before and since, the adverse practical results of judicial conflict were ultimately more detrimental to their respective causes amongst the uncommitted.³⁷

Because it was an armistice, it was vital to remember that each side still existed and was still armed. It might be possible for different parishes to ignore each other, and co-operate where theology was not an issue, but the Church of England was an avowedly episcopal church; it was in the figure of the bishop that this newly-permitted diversity was brought together into an episcopal church. There might be great diversity of theological opinion and practice between parishes, but in any given diocese there was only one bishop who stood in the same relationship of authority to all of them. A Church of England member who disliked a particular parish church's theology or practice could simply go to a different one instead, but all the congregations were tied to the same bishop and there was nowhere else for them to go. To make this work, it was vital that the bishops stood as far as possible above the party controversies, and this meant that the bishops could not be permitted the same near-absolute freedom of doctrine and practice that had been applied further down the line without inevitably alienating groups over whom they both wielded authority and represented to the wider church.

What authority remained, however, that could hold the bishops in check when they failed, as manifestly occurred with *Honest to God*, to remain aloof? In 1948 the Anglican Communion adopted the principle of dispersed authority, which embodied the principles in the 1922 doctrine commission report. Report IV of the 1948 Lambeth Conference defines the principle of dispersed authority:

³⁷ Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* p. 34-35

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 from a single Divine source, and reflects within itself the richness and historicity of the divine Revelation, the authority of the eternal Father, the incarnate Son, and the life-giving Spirit. It is distributed among Scripture, Tradition, Creeds, the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, 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. Where this authority of Christ is to be found mediated not in one mode but in several we recognize in this multiplicity God's loving provision against the temptations to tyranny and the dangers of unchecked power.³⁸

In addition to Stephen Sykes, Edward Norman, one time Canon Treasurer of York Minster, has identified Report IV of the 1948 Lambeth Conference as a pivotal moment in the development of Anglican identity and authority in the second half of the twentieth century. However the two scholars have reached very different conclusions as to its merits. Report IV deals specifically with the Anglican concept of authority; the question of authority is central to the crisis of comprehensiveness, because if comprehensiveness is not to be in practice limitless there must be some form of authority both to decide what those limits are and to police the boundaries. For Norman, however, the dispersal of authority as set out in Report IV went too far:

The manner in which doctrine is known to be authentic is dispersed in a fashion which embraces all the variants, individual and collective, which have presented themselves. There is no clue in the Report as to how it is possible to recognize legitimate interpretations from corruptions. What is envisaged is a spiritual free-for-all in which authority is derived from diversity and truth emerges through "elasticity".

This leads Norman to reach a rather damning conclusion:

The most telling difficulty about "dispersed authority" is that over four centuries of its operation in the Church of England has produced what most acknowledge: a crisis of identity, a crisis of unity, and an inability to adduce a coherent ecclesiology. It is hard to imagine that divine providence, disclosed in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can have entrusted the presence of Christ in the World to such an ideological shambles.

³⁸ Report IV of the 1948 Lambeth Conference from Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* p. 112

Norman is equally clear about where the original blame for such a situation lies:

So the search for an Anglican Doctrine of the Church must resume; "dispersed authority" is not satisfactory. In entrusting himself, not to a philosophy but to an organic people, Christ remained indivisibly a person - not a wide and dispersed range of inclinations. It is scarcely conceivable that a person should only be known about *via* a tortuous dialectic of truth alternating with error, and remain, still, identifiable through centuries of belief. The simple fact is also that at the time of the Reformation the question of an independent ecclesiology was not resolved when an independent Church was being set up.³⁹

For Norman, then, dispersed authority is little more than a complicated theological fig leaf to cover up the fact that at no point since the Reformation has the Church of England possessed a coherent ecclesiology. Sykes, however, takes what at first seems to be a completely different view:

This I believe to be the most satisfactory public statement of the Anglican view of authority, and while it, too, has to be expanded and elucidated in certain respects, it remains of lasting value. Especially significant, in my opinion, is the implicit recognition of the probability of conflict.⁴⁰

This final sentence provides the key. Where Sykes and Norman differ is not in their analysis of the effect of dispersed authority (conflict) but in the desirability of that effect. Where Norman sees an ideological shambles, Sykes sees the essence of Anglicanism:

The point which I am concerned to sustain is that it is of the essence of the Anglican view of authority that it should be maintained in principle that the means of judging matters concerning the faith are in the hands of the whole people of God by reason of their access to the Scriptures; and, further, that it is distinctively Anglican that this means is given to them in the liturgy of the church, backed by canon law.

Sykes' confidence in liturgy and canon law to provide the necessary limits to Anglican comprehensiveness, however, is dependent upon some form of

³⁹ Edward Norman, *Authority in the Anglican Communion: Ecclesiastical Law Society Lecture given during Lambeth Conference, 1998*, -

<http://justus.anglican.org/resources/misc/norman98.html> (accessed 15/07/2013)

⁴⁰ Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* p. 88

standardisation in the interpretation which that liturgy which canon law can provide. *Honest to God* and the acceptance of it as falling within the parameters of Anglican comprehensiveness as delineated by the 1922 doctrine commission report has contributed to a situation in which the literal words of Anglican liturgy and formulae can be seen as purely historical or metaphorical expressions with no bearing on the actual beliefs of the people using them.

The work of subsequent Anglican theologians and clerics has built upon this perception. The most prominent example in North America is John Shelby Spong, who saw John Robinson as his theological mentor. In her assessment of Spong's thought, Stephanie Monk notes that 'Bishop Spong consistently ranks Bishop John A.T. Robinson and his book *Honest to God* as one of the most important influences on the development of his theological ideas. As Spong states, "There is no doubt that John Robinson was my ancestor in faith. He was also my spiritual father in whose pathway I have deliberately tried to walk."⁴¹

In England, too, the perceived value of liturgical formulae as actually conveying the beliefs of the users was placed under further strain. A prominent figure in this was Don Cupitt, whose *Taking Leave of God*, published in 1980, built upon Robinson's work and presented God as essentially human creation.⁴² Cupitt, a senior ordained academic, later became one of the rare examples of clerics who followed Randall Davidson's principles and resigned his orders (though not his paying job, which was as an academic). At the same time as Sykes wrote *The Integrity of Anglicanism* Maurice Wiles, Chairman of the Church of England Doctrine Commission in the 1970s, played a major role in the production of an edited volume of essays questioning the Incarnation under the title *The Myth of God Incarnate*⁴³ (a choice of title which lends itself to more than a suspicion of deliberate sensationalism). These works, and more importantly the subsequent sensational publicity which surrounded them, have created the impression that there is no correlation between what Church of England clergy say in church and what they actually believe outside of it.

⁴¹ Stephanie D. Monk, "An Examination of the Theology of John Shelby Spong", *Global Journal of Classical Theology* 9.1 (2011) -

[http://www.phc.edu/UserFiles/File/ Other%20Projects/Global%20Journal/9-1/Stephanie%20Monk%20vol%209%20no%201.pdf](http://www.phc.edu/UserFiles/File/Other%20Projects/Global%20Journal/9-1/Stephanie%20Monk%20vol%209%20no%201.pdf)

⁴² Don Cupitt, *Taking Leave of God* (London: SCM Press, 1980)

⁴³ John Hick (ed.) *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977)

The most famous example of media sensation occurred in 1984, during a TV interview with David Jenkins, then Bishop-designate of Durham, when he appeared to deny the Resurrection. Whether he did, or in fact did not, actually do so (still disputed) was irrelevant. The case became a *cause celebre* for the media, and the way it was presented helped to further raise a question in the public mind: if the Bishop-designate of Durham, as Jenkins was at the time, could deny the Resurrection, the one fundamental belief upon which Christianity is predicated, without foregoing his appointment, what did that say about the Church of England? An unequivocal answer was perhaps best given by the hugely popular contemporary sitcom “*Yes, Prime Minister*”, in an episode clearly based on Jenkins. Faced with appointing a Church of England bishop, the Prime Minister James Hacker turns to his Cabinet Secretary, Sir Humphrey Appleby, for advice. One of the two candidates from which he must choose is described as a “modernist”; Hacker asks what a modernist in the Church of England is:

Sir Humphrey Appleby: Ah, well, the word "Modernist" is code for non-believer.

James Hacker: You mean an atheist?

Sir Humphrey Appleby: No, Prime Minister. An atheist clergyman couldn't continue to draw his stipend. So, when they stop believing in God, they call themselves "Modernists".⁴⁴

Anti-clericalism is in many ways as old religion, but here was a hugely corrosive and widespread cynicism about the Church of England. The most damaging impression which this negative coverage of the Church of England helped to further was that expressed by *Yes, Prime Minister*. This held that the only reason many Anglican clergy went into the church was not spread the faith or to save souls, but as a means of getting a salary and a house whilst being free to pursue their own political, social or even leisure interests.

⁴⁴ “The Bishop’s Gambit”, *Yes, Prime Minister*, dir. Sidney Lotterby (BBC, 1986), from the Internet Movie Database - <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0751836/quotes> (accessed 28/09/2013)

The caricature figure of the Church of England clergyman who does not really believe in anything has not gone away, either within the church or without it. As examples: in 1999 the BBC news website ran a story entitled “The vicars who don’t believe in God” profiling various serving and retired Anglican clergy who publicly expressed agnostic views,⁴⁵ whilst in 2002 the Daily Telegraph reported a survey, the findings of which were that:

A third of Church of England clergy doubt or disbelieve in the physical Resurrection and only half are convinced of the truth of the Virgin birth, according to a new survey.

The poll of nearly 2,000 of the Church's 10,000 clergy also found that only half believe that faith in Christ is the only route to salvation.

While it has long been known that numerous clerics are dubious about the historic creeds of the Church, the survey is the first to disclose how widespread is the scepticism.⁴⁶

It is not unreasonable to suggest that the difference between Edward Norman’s 1998 view of the success or failure of dispersed authority and Sykes’ 1978 view is prompted by 20 years’ experience of the embarrassment and lack of confidence which these developments have caused, and which dispersed authority is seen as having failed to prevent.

This sense of failure on the part of Anglican leadership, a sense of failure to stand up for basic aspects of Anglican theology and a sense of surrender in the face of social secular humanism have driven the calls for alternative episcopal oversight and the Anglican Realignment. The gradual but inexorable alteration of the church’s position on sexual morality and sexuality, perceived to be driven by secular society’s acceptance of same-sex relationships, may be the primary presenting issue, but the questions of comprehensiveness, authority and the need to maintain balance between differing theological viewpoints go much deeper into Anglican history. When the circumstances of the 20th century are examined it is difficult to see, at a strategic level, what the Church of England could have done differently without causing an equal or worse crisis. Its actions have been in keeping with its traditions; crisis and

⁴⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/393479.stm> (accessed 16/09/2013)

⁴⁶ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1403106/One-third-of-clergy-do-not-believe-in-the-Resurrection.html> (accessed 16/09/2013)

conflict are an intrinsic part of those traditions, but not because all Anglicans agree that truth is provisional. There is indeed a crisis of comprehensiveness within the Church of England, but as the remainder of this thesis will explore it is one which is in keeping with the nature of Anglicanism.

The widespread divergence of theological views within Anglicanism is putting tremendous pressure on a system of objective mono-episcopacy. In such a system the authority of the bishop is required to be respected and acknowledged on the basis of their orders and regardless of their personal beliefs. A shared set of theological boundaries and a common theological framework are required, both at present seen to be absent, for this to work. The purpose of the next chapter is to examine the rise of that system of mono-episcopacy, being brought under such pressure yet so central to Anglican ecclesiology, during the 19th century as the relationship between state and Church progressively altered and the Catholic revival changed the nature of Anglicanism.

Chapter 2

The High Church and the Anglo-Catholics – Erastianism and Sacerdotalism

During the 19th, 20th and early 21st centuries, the Church of England and the Anglican Communion have tended to adopt a definition of the nature, role and centrality of episcopacy which has moved further and further from that of the Reformers and ever closer to that advanced by the mediaeval western Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and also Eastern Orthodoxy. In Church of England reports and official documents, as well as in public statements by various bishops and archbishops, the impression is given that Church of England bishops are the direct Apostolic Successors of the mediaeval prelates, with the same spiritual authority and ecclesiological significance. An example of this process can be seen here, in *Episcopal ministry: the report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate* of 1990. Chapter 6, paragraph 173 states:

There was no intention in the Henrician, Edwardine or Elizabethan legislation to make any fundamental change in the understanding of the nature of episcopal ministry, or to allow any interruption in the succession, for the English Reformers believed they saw a clear Scriptural warrant for episcopal ministry. Henry VIII retained the three-fold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. The episcopate continued to be regarded, as it had generally been in the Middle Ages, as the perfecting and highest fulfilment of a priesthood which, although it must in practice be bestowed upon an individual before he becomes a bishop, remained in essence a deputed office under that of bishop.¹

The implication of this passage is clear: episcopal ministry in the Church of England is unchanged from its apostolic and mediaeval forebears. The bishops of the Church of England, however, do not possess the theologically unquestioned or legally defined right to exercise sole spiritual control of the Church in the same way that their Roman Catholic or Orthodox counterparts do. As discussed in the previous chapter, whilst they are expected to fulfil a similar ecclesiological function their authority functions as part of a dispersed authority system. This system is rooted in the attempts to find a compromise between Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals during the 19th century as the state role in church governance diminished.

¹ *Episcopal ministry: the report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate*, 1990 (Church House Publishing, 1990), Chapter 6, para. 173, p. 79

Until the late 1820s, only communicant members of the Church of England could hold a variety of offices related to the English/British state. In particular, only communicant members of the Church of England could sit in Parliament for English constituencies. The fact that the Crown in a Parliament composed solely of Churchmen was ultimately responsible for the organisation and doctrine of the Church of England provided for those concerned with the maintenance of reformed principles a guarantee of lay involvement and control in ecclesiastical matters. Parliament was effectively the Synod of the Church of England; in the late 1820s, however, the Catholic Relief Act and the Repeal of the Test Act allowed both Trinitarian Non-Conformists and Roman Catholics to sit in Parliament and hold most Government offices. For many English Churchmen the belief in Parliament as the Synod the Church of England was now unsustainable, and this precipitated a crisis of identity and purpose within the Church which has endured down to the present day and can be seen in the ecclesiological controversy over alternative episcopal oversight.

For the doctrine and liturgy of the Church of England to be determined by a body now composed of members of other denominations was intolerable. John Keble, a young Oxford cleric, expounded the problem:

Where is the competent authority for making alterations [to the Prayer Book]? Is it not also clear, that it does not lie in the British Legislature, which we know to be composed not only of believers, but also of infidels, heretics, and schismatics; and which for what we know may soon cease to be a Christian body even in formal profession? Can even a Committee of it, ever so carefully selected, absolve us from our subscriptions? Whence do the Laity derive their power over the Clergy? Can even the Crown absolve us? or a commission from the Crown? If then some measure of tyranny be ever practised against us as regards the Prayer Book, HOW ARE WE TO ACT?²

This sense of crisis was articulated most prominently by Keble, in a sermon which he preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, on July 14th 1833. The sermon was later published under a title which gave an even more ominous note to this sense of crisis: 'National Apostasy'. Keble did not directly state that this was what might be happening in

² John Keble, *Adherence to Apostolic Succession the Safest Course*, Tract 4 of *Tracts for the Times*, 1833, from Project Canterbury - <http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/> (accessed 18/09/2013)

England, but to anyone reading or hearing his sermon he did not need to; the implications were clear enough:

The case is at least possible, of a nation, having for centuries acknowledged, as an essential part of its theory of government, that, as a Christian nation, she is also a part of Christ's Church, and bound, in all her legislation and policy, by the fundamental rules of that Church—the case is, I say, conceivable, of a government and people, so constituted, deliberately throwing off the restraint, which in many respects such a principle would impose on them, nay, disavowing the principle itself ; and that, on the plea, that other states, as flourishing or more so in regard of wealth and dominion, do well enough without it. Is not this desiring, like the Jews, to have an earthly king over them, when the Lord their God is their King? Is it not saying in other words, 'We will be as the heathen, the families of the countries,' the aliens to the Church of our Redeemer?³

Others echoed Keble, and vice versa. Lord Colchester, former Speaker of the House of Commons, stated in a House of Lords debate on the Bill:

The danger is itself nothing less than what their own leaders proclaim; it is the plain drift and end of all their language and endeavours; and if they do not so intend, they would not be zealous and sincere Roman Catholics; namely, to begin with the destruction of our church property and its endowed establishment. Equality of rights they cry, but domination they mean. And nothing less can result, whatever they may profess to begin with, than the gradual re-establishment of their own church in Ireland; practically destroying that fundamental article of the union, which has established one Protestant Episcopal church for England and Ireland; and finally dissolving in both countries the whole connexion of a Protestant church and Protestant state, which forms an essential principle of the British constitution.⁴

Later in the same debate, the Bishop of Llandaff stated:

My lords, I think it clearly follows from hence, that, according to the fundamental principles of our Protestant constitution, no subject can be considered as paying full and undivided allegiance to the sovereign, whose notions of the regal supremacy do not come up to this standard. If spiritual jurisdiction or authority, in whatever degree, be acknowledged as the right of some other potentate, that, whether it be more or less, is so much subtracted from the supreme authority claimed, and justly claimed, by the head of the state; and the subject who is placed in such a predicament can pay only a

³ John Keble, "National Apostasy" (London: A.R. Mowbray and Co., 1833), from Project Canterbury - <http://anglicanhistory.org/keble/keble1.html>, (accessed 22/02/2012).

⁴ Charles Abbott, First Baron Colchester, House of Lords Debate on the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, 17th May 1825, *Hansard* - <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1825/may/17/roman-catholic-relief-bill> (accessed 15/03/2012)

divided allegiance to his rightful sovereign; an allegiance, which, however sincere and faithful as far as it extends, is avowedly imperfect in this respect; and, consequently, curtails his right to the same favour and privileges, the same degree of trust and power, which others may enjoy who submit to the state without any such reservations or restrictions.⁵

Several years after the passage of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill into law, the same sentiments were not just being expressed, but also considered as vindicated. In June 1839, the Earl of Winchilsea, a prominent and long-time campaigner against concessions to Roman Catholics, drew the attention of the House of Lords to a petition, signed by 3,000 English Protestants, for the repeal of the Roman Catholic Relief Act. He stated that:

Power given to Roman Catholics, their Lordships might depend upon it, would always be exerted against the security and interests of the Protestant Church; but this the Protestant people of England never would suffer; this the Protestant Dissenters to a man would join the members of the establishment in preventing, in defence of the rights of conscience and of that happy constitution which had given to us individually and nationally a greater share of liberty than had ever fallen to the lot of any other nation under the sun. That the people were rapidly approaching to a conviction that England must retrace her steps in this matter, he was fully convinced.⁶

Keble and the group of young Oxford clerics, including Richard Hurrell Froude, John Henry Newman and Edward Pusey, who gathered around him were therefore by no means alone in believing that the church could no longer count upon Parliament as a source of authority and governance. Where Keble and the Oxford movement, as it came to be known, differed from the others was in the nature of the solution to this problem which they proposed.

Keble and the Oxford movement, in order to assert the future independence of the Church of England, appealed to the Church as the continuous successor of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; as the inheritor of the rights and privileges of that Church. In his original sermon, Keble referred to this:

⁵ Bishop of Llandaff, *ibid.*

⁶ George Finch Hatton, 10th Earl of Winchilsea, House of Lords Debate on the Roman Catholic Relief Act, 21 June 1839, *Hansard* - <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1839/jun/21/roman-catholic-relief-act> (accessed 15/03/2012)

In speaking of the Church, I mean, of course, the laity, as well as the clergy in their three orders,—the whole body of Christians united, according to the will of Jesus Christ, under the Successors of the Apostles.⁷

Keble's statement on its own was not especially contentious; "Successors of the Apostles" could be taken to mean that the leaders of the Church were simply the modern equivalent of the Apostles, their successors in certain functions, rather than that they were directly possessed of their divinely-authorized spiritual authority. The High Church party within the Church of England had, since the 16th century, emphasised the distinctive nature of episcopal ministry and the connection of the office with apostolic and scriptural times. The Church of England, they avowed, was apostolic in nature. Even outside the High Church party, this view was prevalent; John Jewel, in his *Apology of the Church of England* stated:

Now, we have always thought, that the primitive Church of Christ and the Apostles and the Holy Fathers, was the Catholic Church. That Church we have always called the Ark of Noah, the spouse of Christ, "the pillar and the ground of the truth". That Church we have never forsaken. In that Church we are determined to remain, for we know, that it contains all things, which are necessary for our salvation.⁸

In 1604, canon number 3 of the Canons of the Church of England developed under the guidance of Richard Bancroft, future Archbishop of Canterbury, entitled "The Church of England, a true and Apostolical Church", stated:

WHOSOEVER shall hereafter affirm, That the Church of England, by law established under the King's Majesty, is not a true and an Apostolical Church, teaching and maintaining the doctrine of the Apostles; let him be excommunicated ipso facto, and not restored, but only by the Archbishop, after his repentance, and publick revocation of this his wicked error.⁹

The Oxford movement, however, in response to the perceived crisis in church-state relations, was advocating a doctrine of the church which rendered it completely independent of the State, as a continuous and visible manifestation of the One, Holy,

⁷ John Keble, *National Apostasy*, 1833

⁸ John Jewel, *An Apology of the Church of England* (London: R. B. Seely and W. Burnside, 1839) p. 93

⁹ Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical of the Church of England, 1604, from the Orthodox Anglican Communion website - <http://orthodoxanglican.net/downloads/1604Canons.pdf> (accessed 16/03/2012)

Catholic and Apostolic Church which had existed in England since the arrival of St. Augustine. The High Church school of Richard Bancroft, Lancelot Andrewes and, most notoriously, William Laud would have had little quarrel with that interpretation of the nature of the Church.

However, the Oxford movement asserted that the Church of England was spiritually absolutely independent, not just of the now troublesome and potentially dangerous Parliament, but also of the monarchy; furthermore, it always had been, at least in spiritual matters such as liturgy and doctrine. For this contention to be viable required a highly particular reinterpretation of the English Reformation, which the writers of the Tracts had little difficulty in providing. In 1833, Tract number 5 of the *Tracts for the Times* said that, as the Church had been permitted entry into the councils of the State, so

...the Church, on her part, the above principle having been adopted by the State, acknowledged the head of that State, the King, to be her temporal head; investing him with that general supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs, which he already possessed in civil. But we are not thence to infer that she gave, or that she could give, to an earthly monarch, or to his temporal legislature, the right to interfere with things spiritual, with her Doctrines, with her Liturgy, with the ministration of her Sacraments, or with the positions, relative to each other, of her Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.¹⁰

In saying this, the Oxford movement appears to be echoing Lancelot Andrewes. Paul Avis, in his *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*, states that Andrewes confined the powers of the King to externals, and not to spiritual matters:

...as Andrewes contends against Bellarmine, the authority of kings with regard to the Church is confined to its 'external government'. They merely do what the kings of Israel and the Christian emperors did. In rebutting Bellarmine's claim that the headship of the Church in England had been transferred from the successors of Peter to the successors of Henry VIII, Andrewes distinguished between *ecclesiastical* supremacy, which had indeed passed to the Crown, and *spiritual* supremacy, which had properly reverted from the Pope to the bishops.¹¹

¹⁰ John William Bowden, *A short address to his Brethren on the Nature and Constitution of the Church of Christ, and of the Branch of it established in England. By a Layman.* Tract 5 of Tracts for the Times, 1833, from Project Canterbury - <http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/> (accessed 13/07/2013)

¹¹ Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church: Theological Resources in Historical Perspective* (London: T&T Clark, 1989), 2nd ed. 2002, p. 133

Andrewes, however, assigns greater powers and responsibility to the King than the writings of Avis and the Oxford movement suggest:

The question is, whether the King may have the government of the Church. Well, if the King may appoint judges in Church causes (2 Chron. xix. 8), and determine who shall preside over those judges (Ibid. 1 1), and do away with abuses and corruptions in religion (2 Chron. xxiv. 4), and bring back the ark and make the arrangements necessary for bringing it back (1 Chron. xiii. 3), and dedicate temples and call assemblies for the purpose of doing so (1 Kings viii. 64), and after the reciting of the book of the law give orders to the high priest to cleanse the worship of God from its defilements (2 Kings xxiii. 4), and make a covenant afresh for the Reformation of religion (Ibid. 3 ; Nehem. ix. 38), and go into the Temple and break the brazen serpent (2 Kings xviii. 4), and send priests on missions (2 Chron. xvii. 8), and dismiss the chief priest so that he be no more high priest (1 Kings ii. 27) — if he may do all this, the government belongs to him. For how nearly do these things form the whole of such government! Hardly a point is wanting. Let the King do these things that I have enumerated, and he will want no more to make up his Supremacy. As to the function of teaching and the explication of doubtful points in the divine law, no question was raised among the Jews between king and priest, and none is raised among us.¹²

If the King can appoint judges for the Church, do away with corruptions and abuses in religion, and dismiss the high priest, his powers must extend considerably beyond the limited definition of temporal matters which the Oxford movement was (and Avis is) using.

The revelation that neither monarch nor Parliament had any right to interfere in matters of doctrine, liturgy, ministry or order would have come as something of a surprise to various monarchs and Parliaments of the Reformation period, who spent the better part of 200 years doing precisely that. Making that revelation to Henry VIII, to whom in 1532 Convocation had agreed to submit their deliberations on any ecclesiastical matters for approval, along with a committee of laymen from both House of Parliament¹³, would almost certainly have resulted in execution, and for some, such as Sir Thomas More, it did. So what, in the Tractarian estimation, were the powers which the monarch could and did exercise, with the consent of the church?

¹² Lancelot Andrewes in Frederick Meyrick (ed.), *The Limits of the Royal Supremacy in the Church of England by Bishop Andrewes and King James I* (London: Rivingtons, 1884) p. 15

¹³ "The Submission of the Clergy, 1532" in Henry Gee, and William John Hardy (eds.) *Documents Illustrative of the History of the English Church* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1914) p.176

When corruptions, prevalent among the professedly Christian world, render it necessary for her to state the substance of her faith in articles, (as was done in A.D. 1562,) or when circumstances appear to require any change or variation either in the forms of her Liturgy, or in her general internal government, the King has the constitutional power of summoning the houses of convocation, a sort of ecclesiastical parliament composed of Bishops or Clergy, from which alone such changes can fitly or legally emanate.¹⁴

This statement was historically highly contentious, to the point of being actually disingenuous. True, in the preface to his 1628 reprint of the 39 Articles Charles I, acting on the the advice of his Bishops, had declared:

That we are Supreme Governor of the Church of England; and that if any difference arise about the external policy, concerning injunctions, canons, or other constitutions whatsoever thereto belonging, the clergy in their convocation is to order and settle them...

However, the declaration also went on to make it abundantly clear that Charles was not simply the divinely-appointed enforcer of whatever Convocation decided, as the Tractarian statement would imply, for the above would only happen with the clergy

...having first obtained leave under our broad seal so to do: and we approving their said ordinances and constitutions, providing that none be made contrary to the laws and customs of the land.¹⁵

As had been asserted since the days of Henry VIII (albeit, in his case, somewhat grudgingly), the King was not a clergyman; he was a layman with divinely authorised responsibility for the Church. The 39 Articles, which Charles I did not attempt to tinker with even in the long years when he ruled without Parliament, stated very clearly, at number 37:

Where we attribute to the King's Majesty the chief government, by which Titles we understand the minds of some slanderous folks to be offended: we give not to our Princes, the ministering either of God's Word, or of the Sacraments, the which thing the Injunctions also lately set forth by Elizabeth our Queen do most plainly testify: but that only prerogative, which we see to have given always to all godly Princes in holy Scripture by God himself: that is that they should always rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge

¹⁴ Bowden, *A short address...*

¹⁵ "The King's Declaration Prefixed to the Articles of Religion, November, 1628" in *Documents Illustrative of the History of the English Church*, p. 519

by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil doers.¹⁶

If a layman, even a royal one, could exercise a veto over anything that came out of Convocation, including spiritual matters such as doctrine and liturgy, then the contention in Tract 5 cannot be considered as true. Thus, even in the early to mid-17th century, when the High Church, *iure divino* episcopacy doctrine was at its height, the claims that the Tractarians were making would have been considered untenable. The principle dispute of that period was not whether or not the clergy were able to govern the church exclusive of the laity, but which lay people the church was subject to – a royal one, Parliamentary ones, or a constitutional combination of the two.

Following the Civil War, the Restoration settlement had retained much of the Laudian, High Church system and appearances, but in the midst of this High Church triumph was a sting. Following the Restoration, the bishops may have been restored, the non-conformists expelled and the Prayer Book reinstated, but it was also abundantly clear that from this point onwards Parliament was in control. In his work on the Restoration Settlement and Laudianism, Robert S. Bosher makes the point succinctly:

Parliament lost no time in giving legislative sanction to the Laudian *fait accompli*, but did so with a discriminating and self-regarding zeal. Strict Anglican conformity should be imposed on the nation; but its enforcement was henceforth to be the affair of legislature, and not an independent prerogative of the Crown and the episcopate. The political strength of the High Church party was bought with a price – the Church surrendered to Parliament its last shred of independence.¹⁷

Parliamentary control, or royal control, of the church was not simply a matter of politics; it had profound theological implications, and the theological issue, as so often from the Reformation onwards, was the authority and the nature of the church and its ministers.

¹⁶ Article 37 of the 39 Articles

¹⁷ Robert S. Bosher, *The Making of the Restoration Settlement: The Influence of the Laudians, 1649-1662* (London, Dacre Press, 2nd ed., 1957) p. 281-282

Prior to the Reformation, throughout the Middle Ages, relations between the church and secular rulers had frequently been strained regarding the boundaries of their respective jurisdictions (particularly where clerical taxation, church lands, high church offices and clerical exemptions from national laws were concerned) but the right of the church to interpret scripture, define what constituted orthodox and heretical doctrine, and to minister the sacraments had never seriously been questioned. The exact rights of the Pope vis a vis other bishops and General Councils might have caused controversy, but the spiritual distinction between clergy and laity, and the right of the ordained clergy alone to minister sacraments, forgive sins via the power of the Keys, celebrate the Mass and to teach and define doctrine had never been seriously questioned, except by heretics such as the Lollards.

The Church was the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; its bishops were the successors of the apostles, consecrated by the church through the laying on of hands in continuous, unbroken succession. That succession was the guarantee of the right of the church to do all the things mentioned above; it made the church what it was. The rights of the clergy were ordained by God; they were a spiritually separate priesthood and only they, with God's authority, could minister. The mediaeval church would have agreed that secular rulers had a vital role in enforcing correct doctrine, but the idea that they had a right to dictate it to the church, or that the church was required to submit doctrines and liturgies to them for approval, would have been viewed as heresy.

At the Reformation, this situation changed drastically for the peoples affected by it. For all the Protestant reformers, such as Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, the locus of authority for Christian ministry was in the congregation; there was no spiritual order, uniquely possessed of the apostles' authority to appoint Christian ministers or to define Christian doctrine, but a Priesthood of all Believers, within which certain people were, by the consent of the people, appointed for the performance of certain tasks, especially that of teaching the people, which was the primary duty of the clergy by a considerable margin. Ministers were still required, and for at least some of the reformers they could still be called bishops, priests and deacons – titles for which there was a scriptural warrant. However, the locus of authority had changed – the clergy no longer possessed greater spiritual rights than the laity, and were not

spiritually different; they were set aside to perform certain tasks, not by their own divinely-mandated authority but with the authority of the congregation they ministered to, and to whom they were spiritually equal.

England was not a Swiss city state or a German principality, but a far larger and more complex kingdom, and the Church of England was a national Church. The sources of lay authority in England were the Crown and Parliament; the moment the episcopate of England lost the right to define liturgy and doctrine without reference to either the nature of episcopacy changed from what it had been before the Reformation. Thus it can be seen that the statement quoted on page 49 above, from the Archbishop's Council 1990 report *Episcopal Ministry*, that

There was no intention in the Henrician, Edwardine or Elizabethan legislation to make any fundamental change in the understanding of the nature of episcopal ministry...¹⁸

...is not tenable. Throughout the Reformation period, and to the present day, the episcopate and the church was subordinated to the authority of the laity of England, manifested by the Crown, Parliament or both, and this in and of itself represents a fundamental change to the nature of episcopal ministry as it had been previously understood. The doctrine of the Church of England was authorised by Crown and Parliament, and could not be altered without the consent of either. The liturgy of the Church of England was placed under the same constraints. Both still are; Parliament may have devolved those responsibilities to General Synod, but General Synod discharges those responsibilities under combined Parliamentary and royal authority.

In making their bid for total ecclesiastical independence, the Tractarians also denied the authority of the laity, not simply as manifested by Crown and Parliament but altogether, in the spiritual affairs of the church:

The duty of the state, and the purpose of the Royal Supremacy, was to create and maintain the conditions by which the Church could implement true doctrine and liturgy. "The Church", in this case, means the Bishops and

¹⁸ See note 1, page 49

Clergy in the Houses of Convocation, who alone can decide upon doctrine, liturgy or practice, in a manner practised continuously since Apostolic times.¹⁹

This statement was, however, equally historically inaccurate. This was not the manner in which doctrine, liturgy or practice had been decided upon continuously since apostolic times - at least, not in England. This can be demonstrated by both Acts of Parliament and the works of certain Anglican divines - not in themselves as authoritative as the Acts, but no less so than Bancroft, Andrewes or Laud – which contradicted the claims of the Oxford movement. The 1559 Act of Supremacy, still in force, stated:

Provided always, and be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that such person or persons to whom your highness, your heirs or successors, shall hereafter, by letters patent, under the great seal of England, give authority to have or execute any jurisdiction, power, or authority spiritual, or to visit, reform, order, or correct any errors, heresies, schisms, abuses, or enormities by virtue of this Act, shall not in any wise have authority or power to order, determine, or adjudge any matter or cause to be heresy, but only such as heretofore have been determined, ordered, or adjudged to be heresy, by the authority of the canonical Scriptures, or by the first four general Councils, or any of them, or by any other general Council wherein the same was declared heresy by the express and plain words of the said canonical Scriptures, or such as hereafter shall be ordered, judged, or determined to be heresy by the High Court of Parliament of this realm, with the assent of the clergy in their Convocation; anything in this Act contained to the contrary notwithstanding.

This Act reserves to Parliament the right to determine heresy, albeit with the consent of ‘the clergy in their Convocation’. If one determines what constitutes heterodox doctrine, one by definition also determines orthodox doctrine. “...the assent of the clergy in their Convocation” might be required, but firstly this body had barely met for over 100 years by 1833 (and would not meet again until 1854), leaving Parliament, composed almost exclusively of the laity, with the de facto control and secondly, the Act states that the two bodies must act together; neither can take the responsibility for determining doctrine solely upon itself.

The “authority aforesaid”, by which this is done, is not the clergy in Convocation, who have decided to allow this exercise of spiritual power by another body, but that of “this present Parliament”, the “Lords spiritual and temporal, and the Commons, in

¹⁹ Bowden, Tract 5.

this your [majesty's] present Parliament assembled". The source of authority could not be made clearer.²⁰

The space which the Restoration settlement had provided for a spectrum of theological interpretations of Anglicanism, of episcopacy and of church, from the (conformist but...) very Low Church to the very High, did not exist within the system which the Tractarians were proposing; Tract number 4 of *Tracts for the Times* made it abundantly clear what the position of the Oxford movement was on the relative status of clergy and laity:

For many years, we have been much in the habit of resting our claim on the general duties of submission to authority, of decency and order, of respecting precedents long established, instead of appealing to that warrant which marks us, exclusively, for GOD'S AMBASSADORS. We have spoken much in the same tone, as we might, **had we been mere Laymen** [my emphasis], acting for ecclesiastical purposes by a commission under the Great Seal.²¹

With reference to the history of the Church of England since the Reformation, it is my contention that this position is indefensible. However, it is not my intention, as stated in the introduction, to state that any Anglican school of thought is illegitimate. There was included in the statements of the Oxford movement a get-out clause, which would enable them theologically to hold the positions they did without inconsistency, which can be found in the passage already quoted above from Tract 5, on page 54, in which Bowden stated:

But we are not thence to infer that she gave, **or that she could give** [my emphasis], to an earthly monarch, or to his temporal legislature, the right to interfere with things spiritual, with her Doctrines, with her Liturgy, with the ministrations of her Sacraments, or with the positions, relative to each other, of her Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.²²

The implication of this statement is that, even if the church had willingly submitted control of doctrine, liturgy and other spiritual matters to lay bodies, or if those bodies had assumed that authority, it could not in fact be done. That spiritual authority did not belong to the Church of England but to God, and to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and it could not be given away or assumed by anyone else,

²⁰ *Documents Illustrative of the History of the English Church*, 79, p 442-443

²¹ John Keble, *Adherence to Apostolic Succession the Safest Course*, Tract 4 of *Tracts for the Times*

²² Bowden, Tract 5

regardless of Acts of Parliament, royal decrees or ecclesiastical statements. This radical statement renders, for those who accept it, invalid anything which had happened after the 1530s because, whether Crown or Parliament believed it or not, neither body could in reality exercise authority over the spiritual business of the Church.

To someone who accepted this, the English Reformation became effectively irrelevant, and meant that not only the doctrine of the church but myriad other doctrines and practices upon which the English Reformation had pronounced negative judgement were once again potentially legitimate. For the Oxford movement, interpretation of these doctrines was naturally drawn not from the Protestant reformers they were repudiating, but from the pre-Reformation Western Church, and included such Protestant *bêtes noires* as the Mass, transubstantiation, auricular confession, prayers for the dead and invocation of saints. The opposition, often virulent, which the ritualist aspect of Anglo-Catholicism aroused is, however, beyond the scope of this chapter and of this thesis.

One might have expected the embattled bishops of the 1830s and '40s to have supported with great enthusiasm a movement which aimed to put them front and centre in the church, to promote their indispensability and to claim for them the authority to shape the church but initially many bishops, far from endorsing the Oxford movement, rapidly put pen to paper to denounce almost everything the Tracts for the Times had proposed. By 1842, 29 individual bishops from England, Ireland, Canada, British India and Australia had delivered charges to their clergy warning against Tractarian theology, and in 1845 the charges were assembled and published in a single volume. The irony of the lack of episcopal support for the Oxford movement was not lost upon the compiler of the book, who seemed scarcely able to contain his glee:

The following Work was undertaken for the purpose of illustrating the important fact adverted to in a Charge of my own Ecclesiastical Superior, as a singular and significant circumstance in the history of Tractarianism,- that "in no one instance has the System which it is the great object of the Movement to advocate and restore, received the formal and avowed sanction and approval of any Member of the Episcopal Bench;"... but that "the Authors and Defenders of the *Oxford Tracts* are left destitute of that high and

contemporaneous and authoritative support of which, if deserved, no incidental considerations of propriety or expediency would have deprived them.”²³

Amongst the charges contained in this volume was one by the Archbishop of Dublin, in which he set out his objection to the Tractarian claims of apostolic succession:

Those who on such [i.e. Tractarian] grounds defend the institutions and ordinances, and vindicate the Apostolical character, of our own (or, indeed, of any) Church...do seem to me, in proportion as they proceed on those principles to be, in the same degree, removing our institutions from a foundation on a rock, to place them on sand.

He then proceeded to set out the conventional sense in which the Church of England intended apostolic succession to be viewed:

For, in those Scriptures we find a Divine sanction clearly given to a regular Christian community — a Church; which is, according to the definition in our Nineteenth Article, "a congregation (i.e. society or community; Ecclesia) of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things which, of necessity, are requisite to the same. Now since, from the very nature of the case, every society must have officers, appointed in some way or other, and every society that is to be permanent a perpetual succession of officers, in whatever manner kept up, and must have also a power of enacting, abrogating, and enforcing on its own members, such regulations or bye-laws as are not opposed to some higher authority, it follows inevitably (as I have above observed) that anyone who sanctions a society, gives, in so doing, his sanction to those essentials of a society, its government — its officers — its regulations.

This, which I have called a foundation on a rock, is evidently that on which (as has been just observed) our Reformers designed to place our Church.²⁴

Systematic theology aside, the Tractarians were by no means the only ones to whom the notion that the Bishops should run the Church of England without reference to the state was appealing. Anxious to escape what they saw as increasing and unwarranted encroachments of the state on what should be a matters for the church alone, many bishops also pressed for church independence. To support their claims, they too embraced the narrative that during the Reformation there had never been

²³ W. Simcox Bricknell, *The Judgement of the Bishops upon Tractarian Theology*, (Oxford: J. Vincent, 1845), Advertisement p. i

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 251-252

any intentional state encroachment on spiritual matters, despite the fact that, as demonstrated above, they quite clearly had. They wanted to ensure that spiritual matters were decisions for the church alone - by which they meant the bishops – and like the Tractarians, they took the High Church doctrines of the 17th century out of their political, royalist, context and used them to advocate episcopal control of the church.

This was not to say that they were not in favour of the royal supremacy and establishment; they were, but they were coming to view it in the same way as the Tractarians, who thought that establishment should exist to protect the independence of the church, but had never had and could never have any role in spiritual matters. The Tractarians had claimed that during the Reformation the intention was that the monarch enforced doctrines and liturgy decided upon by the church. In the 16th and 17th centuries, with direct, personal and decisive intervention by the monarch a very real possibility, not to mention Parliament vying for supremacy, this had been neither the intention nor the effect of Reformation church legislation.

By the mid-19th century, however, the ability of the monarch to intervene personally in anything, spiritual or temporal, was considerably more limited than it had been two centuries before, and the political climate was so different that no one seriously advocated any alteration in that situation. Placing committees of senior clerics, instead of judicial and/or Parliamentary ones, in charge of the Church would create exactly the situation which the Tractarians had envisaged; the Church (i.e. the bishops) would make the decisions and the Crown would enforce them. The Tractarians and the High Church Protestants, and especially the bishops amongst them, were approaching much the same conclusions, albeit from different angles.

A key event in bringing about about this doctrinal rapprochement was the case of George Gorham, a cleric whose views on certain aspects of doctrine, particularly baptismal regeneration, were considered suspiciously Calvinist by some within the Church. In 1847 Gorham was offered a parish in the diocese of Henry Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter, by the Lord Chancellor, in whose patronage the cure lay. Bishop Phillpotts objected to the appointment on the basis that Gorham's views were

doctrinally unsound and refused to permit the appointment, a decision which was supported by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Court of Arches. Gorham then appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, as was his right, which accepted his arguments that his views were in keeping with Anglican doctrine, overturned the decision and ordered the Archbishop and Bishop to accept the appointment; this they reluctantly did.²⁵

To many Tractarians and High Churchmen, this seemed like an exact vindication of everything they had been arguing for years about the dangers of state interference. By 1850 the Bishop of London was attempting to steer a Bill through Parliament which would reserve judgement in any cases involving doctrine to a new committee composed entirely of senior clergy. As the Bishop explained to the House of Lords:

...it was therefore thought fit to substitute for the Court of Delegates the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council [prior to 1833, the Court of Delegates would have heard such a case]. That tribunal, however, was not a proper one in questions of church discipline, and was evidently not within the contemplation of those who had constituted it. But it had been found that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, of which he [the Bishop of London] desired to speak with the utmost respect, as now constituted, was not a suitable tribunal for the decision of such questions.²⁶

Beyond the fact that the Bishop of London had not got out of the committee the decision that he wanted, however, it is difficult to support his conclusion that the committee was not working as intended. Indeed, to a neutral observer the committee had done exactly what it had been set up to do, in keeping with the royal supremacy and establishment since the days of the Reformation. The Bishop did raise the spectre of non-churchmen being on, and even forming a potential majority on, the Committee:

It might happen that the majority of the members of that tribunal might be dissenters from the Church; and in that case, which he admitted was not very likely, they would have to decide whether the teaching of a clergyman was

²⁵ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Part I, 2nd ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1970) p. 250-269

²⁶ The Bishop of London, House of Lords Debate on the Proceedings against Clergy Bill, 5th February 1850, *Hansard* - http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1850/feb/05/proceedings-against-clergy-bill#S3V0108P0_18500205_HOL_7 (accessed 13/07/2013)

conformable to the doctrines of a church from which they themselves dissented.²⁷

However, he also disclosed the principal reason for his objection:

With regard to appeals under the Clergy Discipline Act, no objection could be taken to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council; but with respect to the discussion of questions affecting matters of religion, it was quite clear that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council was not the most fitting tribunal. It was not a clergy tribunal.²⁸

It was left to the Archbishop of Canterbury to spell out definitively why the bishops objected to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council so much:

The present state of the law on the doctrine and discipline of the Church was acknowledged to be excessively defective; and he [the Archbishop of Canterbury] must say that it was chiefly owing to the defective constitution of the court of appeal that the Church now stood in a position of some difficulty. It could never be satisfactory that questions relating to the doctrines and discipline of the Church should be submitted to a tribunal of laymen. They ought to be submitted to a tribunal of ecclesiastics, and such would be the constitution of the tribunal proposed by the present Bill.²⁹

It can thus be seen that the primary concern of certain senior clergy was not, by this stage, that Parliamentary control of the church could be exercised by non-churchmen, but that control of the church in spiritual matters could be exercised by laymen at all. Whatever other differences existed at this time between Tractarianism, or Anglo-Catholicism as it was becoming known, and High Church bishops, with regards to sacerdotalism in governance the gap between them had closed.

These bishops would seem to be taking much the same line that scholars such as Paul Avis would take, when he asserts that according to Lancelot Andrewes, at the Reformation, spiritual supremacy had reverted from the Pope to the bishops.³⁰ First of all, as noted on page 55 above, there is some doubt as to whether what Avis and these bishops are defining as spiritual supremacy was the same thing for Andrewes,

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The Archbishop of Canterbury, *ibid.*

³⁰ See note 11, p. 54

for as we have seen Andrewes reserved considerable doctrinal authority to the King, including correcting abuses in the church and appointing judges in church cases.

There is also the question of the different political climate between Andrewes' day and the mid-19th century. Andrewes, as Avis notes, has a very exalted view of royalty, as did many of his contemporaries, most importantly Kings James I and Charles I themselves:

The royalty of Christ comes to be applied to kings. They represent and recapitulate their people, serving as a model, exemplar and pioneer of the sacred calling and destiny of the nation.³¹

Andrewes was also writing in a period when the link between commonwealth and church were seen as absolute. Neither of these things could be said to have been true of the mid-19th century, by which time the powers claimed by Andrewes for the Crown (see p. 55 above) were entirely exercised by Parliament in the name of the Queen. In the Gorham case, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council had done, in the name of the Queen, nothing which Lancelot Andrewes had earlier suggested that the Monarch could not personally do. The fact that Andrewes did not believe Parliament should exercise any spiritual control of the Church cannot be used as evidence that he believed that such control should be exclusively exercised by the bishops independent of the commonwealth.

His fellow Anglican divine, Richard Hooker, had written of the link between church and commonwealth in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, the classic defence of the Protestant nature of the English church. In Book 8, in which he dealt comprehensively with the royal supremacy and church-state relations, he stated:

The Church and the Commonwealth are in this case therefore personally one societie, which society being termed a Commonwealth as it liveth under whatsoever forme of secular lawe and regiment, a Church as it hath under the Spirituall lawe of Jesus Christ; forasmuch as these two lawes containe so many and so different offices, there must of necessitie be appointed in it some to one charge, and some to another, yet without dividing the whole and making it two severall impaled societies.

³¹ Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*, p. 133

The difference therefore either of affayres or offices Ecclesiasticall from secular, is no argument that the Church and Commonwealth are alwayes separate and independent the one from the other...³²

The reserving of spiritual control to the church during this period is often presented as the escape of the church from erastianism. This is certainly how Paul Avis interprets the periods which preceded and followed the beginning of the Oxford movement:

In the first part of this book I show how a distinctive Anglican ecclesiology was formed through the work of the Anglican Reformers followed by Hooker and Field – though it is complicated for us by the now anachronistic identity of Church and society in a single Christian commonwealth, ruled by ‘the godly prince’. I call this ‘the Erastian paradigm’ because the State was the dominant partner in oversight of doctrine, liturgy and discipline.³³

This was also the view of the Tractarians, and others with a particularly high view of the church and ordained ministry, that removing Parliamentary and Judicial control meant giving back the church her independence, and was thus a purely positive step. In 1863 Samuel Wilberforce, then Bishop of Oxford, wrote in an essay for the *Quarterly Review* that:

Few can doubt that, in the last sixty years, there have passed over it many marked and important changes. At the commencement of the century it seemed as if the Church was passing rapidly and hopelessly into a mere department of the State, touching public worship. The suppression of her Convocations had proved a great step in this direction. She had lost all power of corporate action and, as must be the result, the loss of the power of corporate feeling had certainly and not slowly followed.³⁴

J. R. Pretyman, an Anglican vicar, was even more explicit in his 1854 work *The Church of England and Erastianism since the Reformation*:

...it will be requisite to point out the manner and degree in which the civil power in this country, both in theory and practice, deals with certain of the essential functions of the ecclesiastical power. Among these functions (to

³² Richard Hooker, “Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity” in P. G. Stanwood (ed.) *Richard Hooker: Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Books VI, VII, VIII*, volume 3 of the Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 1981), the Eighth Book, Chapter 1.4, p. 323

³³ Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*, p. xiv

³⁴ Samuel Wilberforce, *Essays Contributed to the Quarterly Review* (London: John Murray, 1874) p. 281-282

judge by the teaching and records of Holy Scripture, and of the apostolical age, the very notion and nature of the Christian Church as a divinely-instituted Society for the maintenance and extension of Christian religion, and the general tenor of ecclesiastical usage and precedent, and the common consent of Christians in general), the following are clearly to be discerned: — 1, government; 2, the holding synods or deliberative councils for authoritatively determining any questions of doctrine or discipline that may arise in the Christian community, and for making rules and laws for the regulation of its affairs, and for taking common counsel for its welfare and interests ; 3, the obliging, by sanctions purely of a moral and spiritual nature, the conformity of the members of the community to the laws of the Gospel, and to its own rightful ordinances; 4, the election of its own spiritual governors. In every one of these particulars it will appear, by reference to facts, that the essential functions, with which the Christian Church was originally endowed, have in this country either been assumed, impeded, or altogether suppressed by the State, so indeed as fully to justify the implied admission of Bishop Warburton, in stating the terms of the alliance which he supposes, that the Anglican Church has lost her proper independence, self-action, and authority.³⁵

Pretyman, it should be noted, does not support the line taken by the Tractarians and other High Churchmen that the Reformation only ever gave Crown and commonwealth temporal power, and that the contemporary situation constituted the misuse of temporal power for spiritual ends:

...the assumption by the State of the government of the Church in spirituals, and the consequent loss of that authority by the latter, is plainly declared, or clearly implied, in a variety of unrepealed statutes of the realm, especially in those of Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Elizabeth.³⁶

Avis outlines the beginning of the movement away from this situation following the Restoration:

...in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries...a consensus prevailed as to the character of Anglicanism as both and Catholic and reformed [sic]. At this time we see the Erastian model beginning to fail and an alternative conceptuality for Anglicanism, based on an appeal to the inalienable apostolicity of the Christian Church, beginning to emerge. Though the Church of England remains at this time a church in which monarch and Parliament continue to play a major role in its outward government, a higher ecclesiology is beginning to take shape. The Church is a society with its own integrity. Its essential ministry of word and sacrament are not derived from the State...but

³⁵ J. R. Pretyman, *The Church of England and Erastianism since the Reformation* (London: Hope and Co., 1854), p. 21-22

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22

from the apostles via their successors, the bishops....I call this the 'apostolic paradigm'.³⁷

He proceeds to

...trace the final demise of the Erastian model and the development of the apostolic model by the various High Church groups that we carelessly tend to lump together as 'the Tractarians'.³⁸

The biggest problem with Avis' assertions is that they give far too much weight to the Tractarian and High Church accusations of erastianism, which are in fact highly subjective and partisan claims. For large numbers of Protestant-minded churchmen, the establishment of the Church of England was never about ensuring that the 'state' controlled the church, but about ensuring that the bishops did not.

The Protestant objection to *iure divino* episcopacy and sacerdotalism in church governance was clearly expressed in the first Admonition to Parliament in 1572:

Then [i.e. in the earliest Christian Church] election was made by the common consent of the whole church; now everyone picketh out for himself some notable good benefice, he obtaineth the next advouson, by money or by favour, and so thinketh hymself to be sufficiently chosen. Then the congregation had authoritie to cal ministers; in stead thereof now, they runne, they ryde, and by unlawful sute and buying, prevent other suters also. Then no minister placed in any congregation, but by the consent of the people, now, that authoritie is given into the hands of the bishop alone, who by his sole authoritie thrusteth upon them such, as they many times aswel for dishonest life, as also for lacke of learning, may and doe justly dislike.³⁹

The impression created by scholars such as Paul Avis, and others who give too much weight to the High Church, Anglo-Catholic viewpoint, is that they tend to portray anything other than *iure divino* episcopacy as un-Anglican. Thus, the Admonition to Parliament is presented by 'Puritans'; the High Church party of Andrewes and Laud become the 'Anglicans', who struggled with the 'Puritans' and the 'Presbyterians'. Whole books have taken this as their premise. In his 1964 book *Anglican and Puritan*, John New states:

³⁷ Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*, p. xv

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ "First Admonition to Parliament" in W. H. Frere and C. E Douglas (eds.), *Puritan Manifestoes: A Study of the Origin of the Puritan Revolt* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1907) p. 10

The word Anglican is used here to include those generally satisfied with the Church's doctrine, organization, and ceremonial. It excludes those Puritans who, though members of the Establishment, wanted alterations in Church ritual, or Church government, or both.⁴⁰

This definition rather neglects the fact that many of those who opposed the doctrine, organization and ceremonial in the Caroline church had supported it as it was established in the Elizabethan church. They turned to Parliament not through erastianism, but because Parliament was the only lay body in existence which could possibly prevent the bishops of the day from doing exactly what the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council had thought they were doing in the Gorham case – misinterpreting and then enforcing non-Protestant doctrine. 'Puritan' was a derogatory term, not a badge, and pinning down who was and was not one at any given time is not a simple matter.

Many Anglicans accepted episcopacy, but they did not endow it with anywhere near the same significance as the Tractarians and High Church groups did, nor would they, in keeping with Protestant theology, accept the claims of these groups that spiritual control of the church could only properly be exercised by the bishops and clergy, to the exclusion of the laity. Thus, in the 17th as in the 19th century, with Parliament being the only lay body to which the Bishops and Clergy could be obliged to pay attention, Parliamentary control of the church in spiritual matters was not the intolerable result of erastianism, but the only guarantee of Protestant governance. The fact that were Parliament to abandon this control without substituting an alternative source of lay authority the bishops would be in *de facto* complete control of the church did not go unnoticed. In his *Parliament and the Church of England* of 1875 Montagu Burrows, Professor of Modern History at Oxford, noted that if Parliament was to alter its role in church governance, control should not simply be handed to Convocation:

Parliament would seem more than ever concerned to restrain its share in fresh ecclesiastical legislation (over and above its functions of protection and vigilance), within the bounds of simple assent or dissent. And if so — if at the same time it desires to work on the lines of the Constitution, and to refer all

⁴⁰ John New, *Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of Their Opposition, 1558-1640* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1964) p. 2

fresh proposals for legislation to Convocation before they come into Parliament — it must do one of two things: either it must be satisfied that the views of the laity of the Church have been thoroughly represented and respected before measures reach Parliament, in which case it can fairly give assent or dissent, or it must refuse to entertain any change whatever.⁴¹

The importance of Parliament in this role can be seen in the first *Admonition*:

Your wisdoms have to remove Advousons, Patronages, Impropriations, and bishoppes authoritie, claiming to themselves thereby right to ordayne ministers, and to bring in that old and true election, which was accustomed to be made by the congregation. You must displace those ignorant and unable ministers already placed, and in their rownes appoint such as both can, and will by God's assistance feed the flock.⁴²

The attitude displayed by Tractarians and High Church groups, however, has been that these views were held by Puritans; Puritans were ejected in 1662; therefore, Anglicans do not hold these views. This position has also unfortunately been perpetuated in 20th century scholarship and Church statements.

The result of this has been a tendency to identify Anglicanism, a term which emerges long after the Great Ejection, by default with the acceptance of a considerably more pre-Reformation, post-Oxford movement and High Church definition of episcopacy than can actually be justified either by historical evidence or in the minds of many Anglicans themselves. The Puritans are lumped together with the reformed view of English episcopacy as having been removed from the Church of England altogether. Some modern scholars have portrayed Puritanism and Anglicanism as essentially separate Christian denominations from the beginning. For example, Paul Avis writes:

The claims that Anglicans over the centuries have made for their church have not been made, needless to say, in a supposedly timeless realm of abstract truths, but in response to the challenge or threat of the moment – over against the Roman Catholic Church, or the Puritans, or modern science...⁴³

⁴¹ Montagu Burrows, *Parliament and the Church of England* (London: Seely, Jackson and Halliday, 1875) p. 131

⁴² First Admonition, *ibid.*

⁴³ Paul Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), p 21

The criterion for membership of the Church of England during the period between the 1559 and the Act of Toleration was not a person's theological position but their Englishness. The Puritans, therefore, were as much a part of Ecclesia Anglicana as Richard Hooker, John Jewel, Matthew Parker and any others of the conformist clergy who have come to be known in much later scholarship as the "Anglicans".

The tendency to treat the "Puritans" or non-conformists as a group who were from the very beginning separate from the Church of England, and therefore Anglicanism, creates a false and misleading distinction; the theology which the Puritans represented continued to exist within the Church of England after the Great Ejection and continues to this day. It cannot be airbrushed out of considerations of the nature of Anglican authority and identity, as if the basic premise of the Oxford and High Church movements had been accepted by the Church of England unchallenged from the beginning. To view the "Puritans" as a threat to Ecclesia Anglicana is to manifestly distort the reality of the situation. They were not a threat to the Church of England; they were a threat to those (including the Crown and its ministers at various times) who had a different vision of how the Church of England should be ordered.

As Kenneth Locke points out in *The Church in Anglican Theology*:

This conflict has often been described as a struggle between "Puritans" and the Church of England, but the description is misleading. Not only is the term difficult to define, it also suggests the existence of a radical Protestant force that threatened the Church of England from the outside. The late sixteenth and seventeenth century English Church does not lend itself to such a differentiation: the dispute was within the Church of England, not between it and a separate body. Furthermore, it is incorrect to claim that the "Puritans" represented a strong Calvinist wing in the Church, since a number of the so-called "Anti-Puritan" bishops and clergy embraced many of Calvin's basic tenets.⁴⁴

There existed within the Church of England, before and after the Great Ejection, a body of people who believed that the settlement of the Church embodied true, reformed, Protestant principles. In the mid-19th century, that body of people, who became known as the Evangelicals, were not prepared to see spiritual control of the

⁴⁴ Kenneth A. Locke, *The Church in Anglican Theology: A Historical, Theological and Ecumenical Exploration* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009) p. 25-26

church, which they saw as a fundamental responsibility of the laity as well as the clergy, removed from Parliament, where the laity had the final say, and handed to the bishops or Convocation, so that the Crown would in future rubber-stamp whatever the bishops decided.

John Charles Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool and a leading Evangelical, stated the views of the Evangelical movement with regards to church governance in 1892. Like the High Church group and Tractarians, he felt that Parliament was no longer fit for purpose:

But some one, again, will remind me that the House of Commons represents the laity of the Church of England. Surely the less we say about that the better! The man who talks in this way must be a second Rip Van Winkle, and has been asleep for two hundred years. We are not living in 1685 but in 1892. The pleasant old theory that Church and State are co-extensive and identical has long since vanished into thin air, and is a thing of the past. The House of Commons is a powerful body, no doubt, and “monarch of all it surveys.” But it is no longer an assembly of none but “Churchmen.” Moreover, it is notorious that there is no subject the House of Commons cares so little to discuss as religion, and that there are no religious interests which fare so badly in its hands as those of the Church of England!⁴⁵

Ryle was equally clear that the position of the laity was far short of what it should be in the church, and in no doubt as to the cause:

Now, what is the true cause of this anomalous state of things? It is one which may easily be detected. The position of the English laity is neither more nor less than a rag and remnant of Popery. It is part of that “*damnosa haereditas*” which Rome has bequeathed to our Church, and which has never been completely purged away.... To make the clergy mediators between Christ and man,—to exalt them far above the laity, and put all ecclesiastical power into their hands,—to clothe them with sacerdotal authority, and regard them as infallible guides in all Church matters,—this has always been an essential element of the Popish system.⁴⁶

Ryle was also clear as to how reform of church governance must proceed:

I plead for the general recognition of the mighty principle that nothing ought to be done in the Church without the laity, in things great or in things small. I

⁴⁵ John Charles Ryle, *Church Reform and the Position of the Laity*, Church Association Tract no. 191, 1892, from the Church Society website -

http://churchsociety.org/publications/tracts/CAT191_RyleLayReform.pdf (accessed 13/07/2013)

⁴⁶ Ibid.

plead that the laity ought to have a part, and voice, and hand, and vote, in everything that the Church says and does, except ordaining and ministering in the congregation. I plead that the voice of the Church of England ought to be not merely the voice of the Bishops and Presbyters, but the voice of the Laity as well, and that no Church action should ever be taken, and no expression of Church opinion ever put forth, in which the laity have not an equal share with the clergy. Such a reform would be a return to New Testament principles. Such a reform would increase a hundredfold the strength of the Church of England.⁴⁷

The opposition of the Evangelical movement to the Tractarian and High Church groups, and their determination to prevent what they considered un-Protestant sacerdotalism in all parts of the Church, not just in matters of governance, coloured the remainder of the 19th century debate on the reform of Church polity and eventually led to the development, during the 20th century, of the present system of synodical governance, which forms the subject of the next chapter. This attempt to balance Protestant and Catholic systems of governance in turn fed into the dispersed authority model described in chapter 1. The focus within the Church of England and the Anglican Communion on episcopacy over the last century, as this chapter demonstrates, must be balanced by remembering that the Protestant aspects of Anglican ecclesiology have as much right to be there. The Church of England's flexibility and ability to adapt is based upon its non-specific doctrine of church. If the pressures behind alternative episcopal oversight are here to stay, it will be as well to remember that.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 3:

Episcopally Led, Synodically Governed

The purpose of this chapter is to examine way in which the governance of the Church of England was reformed at the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century, to produce the Synodical system in place today. As the 1997 report *Synodical Governance in the Church of England* states:

Government by synods or councils goes back to the earliest days of the universal Church. In the Anglican Communion, however, it has, for more than 100 years, taken a particular form, in which representatives of clergy and laity have joined with bishops in overseeing the affairs of the Church.¹

“Episcopally led, Synodically governed” is the phrase commonly used to sum up this peculiarly Anglican form of church governance, in which bishops, representative clergy and representative laity are brought together in a form of ecclesiastical parliament, known as General Synod. The origin of this oft-quoted phrase is obscure, but by the late 20th century it had come to express, through its use in many church documents and statements, the system of creative tension through which the church is governed.

Synods, as the above quote from a General Synod report points out, are a tradition with a time-honoured place in ecclesiastical history, but these Synods did not permit the inclusion of members of the laity as voting members, with direct influence on doctrinal and liturgical decisions. Lay people were present as expert witnesses and specialist counsellors, but the decisions were taken by the bishops; lay people had influence but no authority. This situation reflected the catholic doctrine of the church, in which the authority to make doctrinal and liturgical decisions was restricted to the bishops and, in the West, to the Pope. The teaching authority of the church in matters of faith and morals rested with the successors of the Apostles.

¹ *Synodical Government in the Church of England: A Review – the Report of the Review Group Appointed by the Standing Committee of the General Synod* (London: Church House Publishing, 1997) p. 1, para. 1.2

In the Church of England, by the 19th century, the exercise of doctrinal and liturgical authority rested with Parliament and the Judiciary, under the Crown. As discussed in the previous chapter, this situation was no longer satisfactory to many people, and the development of the English model of synodical governance during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was an attempt to create a system of Ecclesiastical governance around which the Church of England could unite. The Church of England was not the first to embark upon a synodical journey; in the wake of the American Revolution, synods were established, followed during the 19th century by others in what would become known as the Anglican Communion, such as New Zealand, Canada and Australia. These, however, primarily concerned themselves with regulation and discipline, and were not doctrinal bodies.²

The review of synodical government quoted above goes on to describe the General Synod as a "...continuing experiment in vesting significant authority in a body or bodies consisting of bishops and representative clergy and laity" which "...is of great significance not only to the Church of England but to all other Churches"³ The report acknowledges that the results of this experiment are open to question:

Views within the Church of England about Synodical Government cover a wide spectrum. For some, it is one of the touchstones of a Church which gives all its members a say in the management of its affairs. For others, it is a recipe for disaster, licensing the proliferation of ecclesiastical talking shops and encouraging religious busybodies.⁴

This chapter will examine the development of synodical governance out of the Anglo-Catholic versus Evangelical disputes of the 19th century, with a view to explaining the role it came to play in the dispersed authority model described in chapter 1, and the ways in which its division of responsibility with the bishops has not always produced clear authority.

The most infamous modern critique, not just of General Synod but of the whole operation of the Church of England, came from Canon Gareth Bennett. In his

² Edward Norman, "Authority in the Anglican Communion: Ecclesiastical Law Society Lecture given during the Lambeth Conference, 1998" from the Society of Archbishop Justus website – <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/misc/norman98.html> (accessed 13/07/2013)

³ *Synodical Government in the Church of England* *ibid.*

⁴ *Synodical Government in the Church of England* p. 1 para. 1.1

excoriating and bitterly controversial preface to the 1987 edition of *Crockford's Clerical Directory*, Vaughan Bennett wrote:

...for the most part the Synod is virtually powerless and consistently ineffective. Its strings are pulled from elsewhere. At least the members of the House of Commons have a Government which in extreme circumstances they can vote out of office and the daily operations of which they can influence. The General Synod, by contrast, finds itself faced with a government of the Church which is almost wholly independent of it. The irritation which many bishops feel at having to spend so much time at synod meetings, and their desultory contribution to its debates, is founded on their knowledge that nothing the Synod does has much effect on them, the administration of their dioceses or the work of the leadership groups within it.⁵

As for representation of the Laity, which had been a key bone of contention during the 19th century, Vaughan Bennett was equally scathing of the effectiveness of General Synod:

The House of Laity is a set of men and women who are dubiously representative of anybody. They are not elected by all the people on the electoral rolls but by the lay members of deanery synods. They have to be the kind of person with the time and disposition to serve on deanery synod, diocesan synod and General Synod and do the committee work involved in all these. They must be able to spend almost three weeks in the year in London or York. And the result is what might be expected. The members of the House of Laity are rarely in regular employment; they are professional people, the self-employed or retired; and many women among them are widows or clergy wives. It is a system which makes it almost impossible for young people, working-class men and women, or those bearing responsible positions in business or public life, to participate. When such do become members of Synod it is at great cost to themselves. The overall result is a House which is not very impressive.⁶

In chapter 1, the dispersed model of authority spoke of the *consensus fidelis*, or 'consensus of the faithful'. If any particular body of authority has a claim to be able to give substance to the consensus of the faithful, and to make its presence in the dispersed authority system a reality, it should be the General Synod, but it can only do that firstly if one accepts its authority in spiritual matters on a par with the bishops, and secondly if it is felt to genuinely represent the consensus of the faithful. Vaughan

⁵ Gareth Bennett, *Crockford's Clerical Directory 1987-88* (London: Church House Publishing, 1987) Preface, p. 69

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 69-70

Bennett identified the House of Bishops as the real source of power within the Church of England, and he accused the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, and the then Archbishop of York, John Habgood, of systematically stuffing it with like-minded liberal modernisers – and of deliberately excluding more conservative Anglo-Catholic and Evangelicals – most of whom were personal friends and acquaintances of Runcie:

With the arrival of Dr Runcie and Dr Habgood at Canterbury and York there were in the two archbishoprics men who shared the same basic outlook and worked closely together to create a new kind of episcopate. The result has been a virtual exclusion of Anglo-Catholics from episcopal office and a serious under-representation of Evangelicals. There have been Evangelical appointments, though often from the more liberal wing of the movement...

A brief biographical study will reveal the remarkable manner in which the careers of so many bishops have crossed the career of Dr Runcie... Though one may accept that an archbishop should have an influence on appointments, it is clearly unacceptable that so many are protégés of one man and reflect his own ecclesiastical outlook.

The blame for enabling Runcie, as Vaughan Bennett saw it, to turn the House of Bishops into his own liberal Curia, was attributed to the system of Episcopal appointments:

Those who speak so glibly of the Crown Appointments Commission as designed to allow 'the Church' to have a decisive voice in appointments should ask themselves some pertinent questions as to whose voice the commission does actually represent.⁷

A system of checks and balances as envisaged by the dispersed authority model needs all its elements to function; if General Synod cannot represent the consensus of the faithful, an element is seriously lacking. For Vaughan Bennett the way in which the Church was actually governed did not match the official presentation; all the Lay Readers and Lay Synod members in the world could not mask the reality that, in his view, when it came to actual power and authority 'the Church' meant the bishops, and particularly the archbishops, as much in the 1980s as it had done in the Middle Ages.

⁷ Ibid.

In earlier times Protestant-minded Anglicans, for whom the control of the church by a cabal of bishops was a problem, could comfort themselves that, by virtue of the establishment, Parliament and Crown had the final say. However, if Vaughan Bennett's assessment was accurate, the all-but-total removal of Parliament and Judiciary from the process had simply cleared the field for the episcopate, leaving a serious gap in the dispersed authority system.

The idea that the Church Assembly/General Synod system enhances, rather than subtracts from, the power and influence of the episcopate (and the church bureaucracy) was not new. During the Parliamentary debates on the Church of England Assembly Powers Bill, the passage of which at the end of 1919 had created the Church Assembly, Viscount Haldane, the former Lord Chancellor stated directly and bluntly that the Bill would take effective control of the national church away from the nation and hand it to the episcopate:

...this unfortunate Assembly is to have no chance of interfering in matters of doctrine. There will be no Privy Council in these days, no guardianship. There will be a Church vested with the powers to which I have now come, and we have to trust to the wisdom of the distinguished men who occupy the positions of right rev. Prelates of the Church who, I am sure, will do their best for all of us. But I have a strong dislike to putting my neck into a running noose and then handing the rope to somebody else....

...I am not done with this Bill. The last part that I have dealt with seems to have been framed in a spirit which was a very fine spirit in days gone by, the spirit of the martyr Bishop St. Cyprian who held *Ecclesia est in Episcopo* as a maxim. If ever there was a Bill which accepted that doctrine handsomely and gave handsome effect to it, it is this Bill...

...This Bill proposes to set up an Episcopacy as the dominant factor, with very slight Parliamentary control.⁸

Haldane pointed out that there would be a great deal of difference between the potential of a layman in the proposed English assembly compared with his lay counterparts in the assembly of the Scottish Kirk, which had been advanced as an example against those who claimed that an assembly independent of Parliament

⁸ Richard, Viscount Haldane, House of Lords Debate on the National Assembly of the Church of England Powers Bill, 3rd June 1919, *Hansard* – http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1919/jun/03/national-assembly-of-the-church-of#S5LV0034P0_19190603_HOL_28 (accessed 28-05-2012)

must lead to disestablishment. This point was echoed by the Bishop of Manchester, as were concerns that the actual representation of the laity would be less than adequate, directly foreshadowing Vaughan Bennett's criticism:

As to the laity, about whose presence in this Assembly so much has been said, no doubt it is satisfactory that they should be there; but if any one imagines that they are going to sit there with any of the rights or privileges which belong to the Scottish laymen in the National Assembly he grossly deceives himself. In the first place, this laity will go through a very careful process of purgation....But if the election is to be the election of laymen who depend for their appointment upon, so far as I can make out, about 100,000 out of the millions of the laity of the Church of England, then they are not democratically elected, but they are a very close oligarchy; and, somehow or other, it often works out that they are laymen rather more ecclesiastically-minded than the clergy themselves.

The possibility of the House of Laity being a self-perpetuating and ecclesiastically minded or, worse, ecclesiastically subservient, oligarchy, rather than a truly representative and independent lay movement, was potentially greater than the Bishop of Manchester realised, for the problem was not just a narrow franchise; many of those lay people who did make it into the Synod were either on the church payroll or closely involved with the clergy. In 1986 Hugh Craig, a long-time lay member of General Synod, and of its Standing Committee, calculated that if one excluded lay people on the church payroll and clergy wives, both of whom he assumed (perhaps unfairly in the latter case, and certainly controversially) were likely to be possessed of an institutional, ecclesiastical mind-set, from the House of Laity total it meant that 99% of the Church of England was represented by 37% of the Synod members (rising to 45% if the excluded categories were returned to the fold), which adds weight to the claims that lay representation and influence is not all that it could or should be.⁹

The exact truth of Vaughan Bennett's criticisms, and the fears of others – that the House of Bishops effectively governs the Church of England, that the laity is under-represented – is, however, very difficult to establish for any given time, since the groups making such criticisms are invariably the ones who feel that Church policy is

⁹ Hugh Craig, "A Question of Confidence" in Peter Moore (ed.) *The Synod of Westminster: Do We Need It?* (London: SPCK, 1986) p. 33

not what it should be, whilst those getting the decisions they want rarely if ever complain about the decision-making process. The perception that this could be and is the case, however, has existed at various times during the Synodical period. Synods only have authority, however, if they are believed to be representative of the relevant people outside them; they have no authority in and of themselves. The existence of the perception that General Synod is not representative is considerably more important than its actual veracity, since it consistently undermines its authority and provides those who disagree with church policy a reason for rejecting it as invalid.

A relatively recent example of this, as well as a counter-example to fears of an all-powerful archiepiscopate, can be found in the rejection by General Synod of the compromise agreement on women Bishops, backed by Archbishops Rowan Williams and John Sentamu, and many other Bishops, which took place at the 2008 meeting of General Synod in York. This incident suggests that the House of Bishops is not necessarily all-powerful, though the fall-out from it does, however, tend to confirm that at least some members of the Episcopate give considerably more weight to the Episcopal aspect of Church governance than to the Synodical, and that the defeat of a measure backed by both Archbishops came as a considerable surprise:

The Bishop of Ripon and Leeds rose to suggest that since the stronger protection [for traditionalists] would have passed had that rule [the rule that the measure must be passed by each House separately, rather than by a simple majority of all 3 Houses] not been invoked, the Church should not consider itself bound by the actual vote. Reportedly, the Bishops 'morning after' breakfast boiled over with indignation. Later in the session, the Archbishop of York declared that General Synod should 'forget governance', that General Synod was 'just a group of pilgrims'. He quipped, 'See what happens when you try to govern with 500 people! You get a mess!' Later, the Bishop of Chichester was heard to remark, 'General Synod sounds like a good idea, but in fact it's a mistake.'¹⁰

An archiepiscopal attempt to use the bureaucracy to ignore the Synod vote was similarly rebuffed:

¹⁰ Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Episcopacy of all Believers" in *Modern Believing: the Theological Journal of Modern Church*, vol. 51:4, (Modern Church: 2010) p. 9

In late 2009 or early 2010, the legislative drafting committee was hard at work formulating the Code of Practice version voted by Synod, when the archbishops intervened and asked them to draft legislation for the stronger parliamentary protection instead. After consultation and protests by members of parliament, the committee reported itself unable to do this and is still at work.¹¹

This incident demonstrates the sense of confusion as to where authority actually lies, and this confusion has been crucial to undermining the system of dispersed authority. Does this mean, however, that the system is not working? After all, the whole purpose of a parliamentary system, after which the synodical system is evidently modelled, is to prevent domination of the corporate body by any individual group or minority interest. A further feature of parliamentary governance is the acceptance of the principle that the legislature does not simply exist to do the will of the majority: Parliamentary, representative democracy is not direct democracy. It could, therefore, be said that the existence of the criticisms and difficulties outlined above stands as positive proof that the system is working. In order to determine whether or not the system of synodical government is in fact working, it is necessary to analyse what it was originally designed to do. Unfortunately, when General Synod's predecessor, the Church Assembly, was set up, there was no agreement as to what it was supposed to do.

The individual pieces of the Church Assembly were all already in place by 1919. The Convocations had been revived in 1861, and had passed some new canons; the House of Laymen had been created in 1886, amid the ever-present concerns that in the process of improving Church governance the Laity would be left out. The Convocations, however, were the only bodies which could actually achieve anything, because the House of Laity had no formal, legal stature, and this constituted a stumbling block:

The voluntary status of the Houses [York and Canterbury] of Laymen convinced neither the laity nor Parliament that the lay voice was truly represented in the Church's internal councils. In 1902 a Joint Committee of Canterbury Convocation reported that the Houses of Laymen had 'failed to

¹¹ Ibid.

rouse full enthusiasm for they have no legal status, they have no power to legislate.¹²

Following this report, the Convocations and the Houses of Laymen had then been brought together in 1903, forming the Representative Church Council (RCC), which possessed exactly the same structure as the Church Assembly would possess – Houses of Bishops, Clergy and Laity. The major difference between the RCC and the Church Assembly which succeeded it was that the RCC could do almost nothing without going through the whole Parliamentary process, which for a variety of reasons was a long and cumbersome business. The 1919 Church Assembly Powers Bill proposed to constitute the RCC on a statutory basis, with legally defined powers and functions.

The confusion as to the purpose of the Assembly manifested itself early. At the Second Reading of the Bill in the House of Lords, which under Parliamentary procedure was the first occasion on which the Bill was actually debated, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, laid out his conception of what the Bill would achieve.

The way in which the Church was currently governed, he said, had worked well until the early 19th century. The massive expansion in the population caused by the Industrial Revolution, and in particular the urban population, had both changed and increased the tasks facing the national Church. At the same time, Parliament was no longer a body of Churchmen, and had vast new demands upon its time, causing a massive bottleneck for Church legislation, with the result that the large amounts of legislation needed to change the Church from a 17th century organisation into one which could cope with the new demands and concerns of the 20th century would take generations to enact under the present system.

The Church Assembly would take upon itself the work required from White Paper through First Reading, Second Reading, Committee stage and Report stage of both Houses of Parliament, and would present to Parliament a fully-fledged Bill, which a

¹² Kenneth A. Thompson, *Bureaucracy and Church Reform: the organizational response of the Church of England to Social Change, 1800-1965* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. 125

simple debate and vote in each House of Parliament could then either send on its way for Royal Assent or return to the Church Assembly for further work. As he set out, in essence, the design specifications for the Church Assembly, the Archbishop was also very clear as to what the new Assembly was not designed to do:

May I say at once, in order to clear the ground, that we are not dealing at all with deeper spiritual things. Doctrines of our faith, the duties of the Christian ministry, the help we can render publicly or privately to the souls of men—these are spiritual fundamental things, the very essence of our work, and with them we are not dealing directly, or I think hardly even indirectly, in this Bill in any way. We are speaking here of the framework, the outer secular rules, within which our work has to be done. Such framework is needed by every law-abiding Christian community, whatever its character, but the Church of England framework has a distinctive and a peculiar relation to the State and to the national life.¹³

The Archbishop could not have been clearer: the Church Assembly was a bureaucratic mechanism to speed up reform of the church's structures and governance. It was not a doctrinal body; it was not concerned with the fundamentals of Christian faith, scriptural interpretation or ministry.

This was not exactly the vision, however, of the second speaker for the Bill - Sir Charles Cripps, Lord Parmoor. Cripps was Chairman of the House of Laity for the Province of Canterbury, and a prominent member of the Life and Liberty Movement, which had recently been campaigning for greater Church independence in all matters, not simply those related to administration and reform. Quoting from the 1917 Selborne Committee Report, which had provided the impetus for the 1919 Bill, his speech focused on the issue of spiritual independence:

"That there is in principle no inconsistency between the national recognition of religion and the spiritual independence of the Church." What we have striven for throughout is to combine those two ideas. We have not desired to make the control of Parliament less effective but more effective by putting it into a form in which it can be exercised as a reality. On the other hand, in matters purely spiritual—matters not of organisation but of the spirit and faith of the Church—we have claimed, and we do claim, both as an historical fact and as

¹³ Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, House of Lords debate on the National Assembly of the Church of England, 03 June 1919, *Hansard* - http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1919/jun/03/national-assembly-of-the-church-of#column_975 (Accessed 04-06-2012)

an incident in this Bill, that the Church in spiritual matters ought as far as possible to be an independent body.¹⁴

Cripps set out in detail what spiritual independence was not: it was not removing parliamentary, judicial, or royal oversight, nor a move towards disestablishment, nor an episcopal *coup d'eglise*. He did not, however, set out in any way, shape or form what he thought that it actually was. So what did he, and the Life and Liberty Movement, mean by 'spiritual independence'?

The Life and Liberty Movement, for which Cripps was effectively the House of Lords spokesman and to which Cripps referred, was the prime mover in the campaign for the creation of the Church Assembly, and on the Church side was led by Charles Gore and William Temple. Charles Gore and William Temple were both prominent figures – Gore was then the Bishop of Oxford, whilst Temple was the future Archbishop of Canterbury – but it can be seen that, if parliamentary and judicial influence was to be maintained, then their vision of spiritual independence was not the same as that advanced by their Anglo-Catholic forebears in the Tractarian movement (see previous chapter).

The break between the Anglo-Catholicism of Newman and Froude and that of Gore occurred with the publication in 1889 of *Lux Mundi*, a collection of essays edited by Gore himself. The original Tractarians had been diametrically opposed to liberalism and modernism within the Church of England, and opposition to the perceived liberal tendency to discard, downplay and rewrite those aspects of traditional, scriptural and/or dogmatic Christianity which conflicted with contemporary secular experiences and priorities had been a major motivating force behind the Oxford movement:

The conscientious endeavour of liberal theologians to overcome the problems presented by modern, scientific knowledge, by reducing the distinction between the sacred and the secular, ran the risk of seeming to equate religious values with secular values. The Oxford Movement arose to combat that trend in the Church.¹⁵

¹⁴ Sir Charles Cripps, Lord Parmoor, *ibid.* - http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1919/jun/03/national-assembly-of-the-church-of#column_1016

¹⁵ Kenneth A. Thompson, *Bureaucracy and Church Reform*, p. 131

The *Lux Mundi* group, by contrast, attempted to reconcile liberalism, modernism and catholicism by focusing on the Incarnational nature of the church as found within catholic theology: through Christ's Incarnation, the church is the Body of Christ; in consequence of that very imminence of Christ in the present day, the church has a duty not simply to pass on the theological statements of past epochs but to reconsider those in the light of new knowledge and new experience (which in this context referred primarily to Biblical Criticism and the Theory of Evolution):

The real development of theology is rather the process in which the Church, standing firm in her old truths, enters into the apprehension of the new social and intellectual movements of each age: and because 'the truth makes her free' is able to assimilate all new material, to welcome and give its place to all new knowledge, to throw herself into the sanctification of each new social order, bringing forth out of her treasures things new and old, and shewing again and again her power of witnessing under changed conditions to the catholic capacity of her faith and life.¹⁶

This liberal catholicism, which Gore pioneered and others, such as Archbishops Cosmo Gordon Lang, William Temple, Michael Ramsey, John Habgood, David Hope, Robert Runcie and Rowan Williams have developed and implemented over the course of the 20th century and into the 21st, may have been liberal where the interpretation of certain doctrinal and dogmatic positions was concerned, but it differed from Broad Church liberalism in that its doctrine of church and authority was both specific and traditional. Whatever else might need to be re-evaluated in the light of modern understanding, it was not, especially for Gore and Ramsey, episcopal ecclesiology, the nature of the threefold ministry or the authority of the college of bishops over the visible church; on that particular doctrine, Newman, Gore and Ramsey were as one:

The acceptance of corporate discipline in each local society is plainly made to be a normal and necessary element of Christian life...The Catholicism of the church means the obligation of people of all sorts to receive one another, as Christ also received them into practical fellowship. This discipline of individuals is a matter for the local societies or churches of Christ. But each local church made up of more or less worthy members is the embodiment of the one church of Christ or of God which exists in no other way on earth than as embodied in particular churches. And the authority of the apostle, whether

¹⁶ Charles Gore, "The Holy Spirit and Inspiration" in Charles Gore (ed.), *Lux Mundi: a Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation* (London: John Murray, 1890, 10th edition) p. ix

in doctrine or morals, embodies the principle that the particular churches are not independent units. The apostolic authority represents a central control.¹⁷

Whilst not all liberal catholics may have been as strident as Gore on behalf of episcopal claims, the difference was in the level of emphasis; episcopacy was the focus of unity, the fount of apostolic authority and the guarantor of catholic ecclesial validity. Cripps, however, had denied that Life and Liberty wanted to supplant parliamentary control with episcopal; so what did it want to do?

The meaning of spiritual independence for the Life and Liberty movement was to be found, not in the struggles over doctrinal interpretation which characterised the late 19th century Church of England, but in the social concerns of men like Cripps, Gore and Temple. Cripps became a Cabinet Minister in Ramsey McDonald's first Labour government; Charles Gore was a founding member of the Christian Social Union, a leading organisation promoting gospel-based social reform and to which many Christian Socialists belonged; William Temple famously said that "Socialism is the economic realisation of the Christian Gospel"¹⁸. All three, devoutly religious Liberal Catholics, were part of the Christian Socialist movement, associated particularly with Anglo-Catholicism, and for all three their religion was nakedly political; socialist principles were for them the Gospel message of Christ translated into political and social action.

Political and social action by the Church, at least of the sort envisioned by the Christian Socialists, was difficult in the late 19th century. The Church of England was bound to a Parliament dominated by Tories and old-school Liberals, and represented in Parliament by bishops drawn primarily from the ranks of the Edwardian establishment. The landed gentry still possessed enormous powers of clerical patronage, ensuring that clergy with socialist leanings, or any views not congenial to patrons from the gentry, could be excluded from a wide range of possible livings. Establishment-minded bishops, who owed their positions to political patronage, were disinclined to promote radical clergy, whilst conservative (Tory and Liberal)

¹⁷ Charles Gore, *Orders and Unity* (London: John Murray, 1909) p. 42-43

¹⁸ Bernard Murchland, "The Socialist Critique of the Corporation" in Michael Novak and John Wesley Cooper (eds.) *The Corporation: a Theological Enquiry* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1981) p. 157

politicians were equally disinclined to give those that did make it a seat in the House of Lords by making them bishops (at least in the dioceses with such seats attached); Gore himself remained a notable exception, prior to the First World War.

All of this meant a perpetual brake on the radical campaigns for social and political justice which they felt was the natural job of the Church. Cripps' and Gore's and Temple's concept of spiritual independence was not the freedom for the Church of England to decide its own doctrine and forms of worship, as it had been for Newman, Pusey and Froude, but the freedom to interpret for the modern world the doctrine they believed it already had (and would always have, in the shape of scripture, tradition, creeds, 39 Articles and the Prayer Book), and to put it into social practice.

Christian Socialism in the Church of England, of which William Temple was the leading early 20th century exponent, owed its existence in large part to Frederick Denison Maurice, whose tendency to downplay systematic theology in favour of social action was seen in chapter 1 as an influential factor in the seeming lack of an Anglican systematic theology:

Christian Socialism originated with Frederick Denison Maurice, along with his friends J M Ludlow and Charles Kingsley, in the 1840s. Its theological foundations begin with Maurice's work in *The Kingdom of Christ*, published in 1837. In this work he claimed that the common ground of human existence is the Catholic Church, which is the Kingdom of Christ on earth. We do not have to labor to build a common ground; it is already given in the Kingdom, and we need but recognize and accept it.¹⁹

Temple had chaired the 1922 doctrine commission seen in chapter 1, and had written the extremely liberal interpretations of doctrinal authority given in the introduction to its report. Through Temple and the Life and Liberty movement, the same belief in systematic theology as irrelevant compared to the Gospel in social action was included in the rationale behind the Church Assembly alongside Davidson's view of it as a bureaucratic simplifier.

¹⁹ Robert Rea, *Was Father Field a Socialist?* from Project Canterbury - <http://anglicanhistory.org/essays/field/field2.html> (accessed 18/09/2013)

The belief that the Church of England was used by the propertied classes to make entrenched privilege and the unequal distribution of wealth seem divinely ordained was tackled explicitly in Appendix 9 of the 1917 Selborne Report, entitled “Memorandum on the Church in its relation to lay feeling as evinced amongst the working classes, students, etc.”, which stated that, for many working class people:

The Church is the Church of a class which is antagonistic to the democracy, i.e. it is the moral policeman used in the temporal interests of the propertied classes.²⁰

This appendix was approved by Gore, amongst others, and is the primary statement in the Selborne report of anything which could be called a Christian Socialist position. Temple viewed the Church Assembly as a means to bring the working classes into the Church and to make it the vehicle for their ambitions and aspirations. This vision explains the Life and Liberty movements keenness to maintain the establishment – how else could they act as the official Christian conscience of the Government? – but it was not to be realised. As explored in chapter 1, Temple shared the complacent assumptions of late-Victorian Mauriceans like Tate and Davidson that the English public was practically Christian but was simply not interested in systematic theology:

Life and Liberty reflected a complacent feeling that educated Christians had only to exert themselves to cross a communication gap, and the working classes would cheerfully embrace Christianity. The Army chaplains [during the First World War] had encouraged the view that the mass of ordinary soldiers were ignorant about religion; they did not suspect that late Victorian working-class culture had understood what the Christian churches taught and had rejected it, partly on the ground that the moral teaching of the church was against progress for the poor...and partly on the ground that the Christian dogmatic system was obsolete. Anglican intellectuals like Temple thought that they could persuade the churches to support the social and political advance of the working classes, and so conciliate them, but they paid little attention to the dogmatic issues, preferring to attribute the existence of a critical attitude towards Christianity to ‘the materialistic education of the people since 1870...’²¹

²⁰ *The Archbishops Committee on Church and State: Report with Appendices*, (London: SPCK, 1916) p. 253

²¹ John Kent, “William Temple: Church, state and society in Britain, 1880-1950” in Maurice Cowling and John Vincent (eds.) *British Lives* series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 76

The British working classes and the labour movement in Britain was already moving away from Maurice, Gore and Temple's Anglo-Catholic Gospel in social action as the 19th century drew to a close:

...between roughly 1880 and 1906 the religious dimension of socialism was as powerful as any other. However, the inability of Christian Socialists to make strategic alliances with trade unions and the unwillingness of most Protestant-reared labour leaders, like Keir Hardie, to reach out to the Anglo-Catholic Socialists led to the demise of Christian Socialism as a dynamic wing of British socialism. While many Christian Socialists remained active in the Labour Party, they did so as labour activists, not as Christian Socialists *per se*.²²

By the 1940s, shortly after his death, the failure of the Church of England to be the working classes' vehicle for social reform was complete; the National Health Service and the Welfare State, for which Temple had campaigned vociferously, were brought to the people in association with Atlee's Labour Party and the trade unions, not the Church of England. The role which for many like Temple the Church Assembly was designed to fulfil no longer existed.

Within the church Archbishop of Canterbury Randall Davidson and many other bishops and leading churchmen did not share Temple's sense of radical social purpose:

It was only in a few passages like this [from the Selborne Committee Report – see above], however, that the 1917 report showed any trace of Temple's desire to convert the Church of England from a comfortable and comforting partner of government into a body which would feel free to act as a social critic. His suspicion that Archbishop Davidson was manipulating the wartime reform movement in order to prevent any such outcome explains the fury with which he occasionally attacked the episcopal leadership during the Life and Liberty Campaign.²³

Temple and Gore had not sought the inclusion of the laity in the Church Assembly because they believed, as Evangelicals like J. C. Ryle believed²⁴, that the laity

²² Kilcrease, Bethany, *The Mass and the Masses: Nineteenth-Century Anglo-Catholic Socialism* (Conference of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, 11th March 2011) - http://aquinas.academia.edu/BethanyKilcrease/Talks/46748/The_Mass_and_the_Masses_Nineteenth-Century_Anglo-Catholic_Socialism (accessed 14/06/2012)

²³ John Kent, "William Temple..." p. 170

²⁴ See chapter 2 p. 74-75

should have a share of spiritual authority. In their vision of the Church Assembly, the laity would provide the impetus to modernise the Church – i.e. to make it more socially and politically radical – whilst the Convocations would handle, through Canon Law, anything with doctrinal or liturgical implications, and Parliament would acknowledge the will of the church by dutifully putting the Assembly’s decisions onto the Statute Books. They were to be disappointed in three ways. Firstly, as Kent succinctly puts it, “It was not Temple’s fault if the Church Assembly’s first generation Laity turned out to be conservative.”²⁵ Secondly, Parliament did not turn out to be the dutiful enactor of Assembly decisions that they had hoped for. Thirdly, even as it was being created, there was never any prospect that the Church Assembly would not be drawn in to doctrinal and liturgical matters. What the Church of Assembly did do, however, was embody within itself the divisions of purpose and authority already found within the church at large between Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical and liberal, with dire consequences for its role in the dispersed authority system.

As a means of speeding up procedure (which is what it was designed to be), the Church Assembly did enjoy some success – in its first ten years of operation, to 1930, forty measures were placed on the Statute Books²⁶ - but Davidson’s 1919 Parliamentary assertions that the Assembly would confine itself to matters of organisation, administration and other temporal concerns in reality stood very little chance of being true. This was due to two related factors.

The first of these was that since the mid-19th century pressure had been steadily growing for reforms to the Church of England’s authorised services, as contained in the Prayer Book. This pressure came largely from the Catholics within the Church (both liberal and Tractarian, and notwithstanding the fact that Evangelicals had also opposed aspects of the Prayer Book since 1549); Newman may have attempted, in Tract 90, to reconcile Anglo-Catholicism with the 39 Articles, but even he could not disguise the fact that the Prayer Book, as enforced by law, placed serious restrictions on catholic ritual practices. From the earliest beginnings of the Anglo-Catholic movement, Anglo-Catholic priests had introduced, by varying means, various elements of Roman Catholic worship such as incense, vestments, gestures

²⁵ Ibid., p. 171-172

²⁶ Kenneth Thompson, *Bureaucracy and Church Reform*, p. 201

and words which had not been since in most English churches since before the Reformation and which were, under the Act of Uniformity, illegal. A combination of Protestant outrage and the failure of Church courts to prevent illegal ritual led to the Public Worship Regulation Act, 1874, under which several Anglo-Catholic priests were imprisoned for their refusal to conform to the prescribed services.

The negative publicity which the imprisoning of priests in modern Britain generated ensured that very few bishops, who had the power to stop proceedings under the Act, were prepared to allow cases of ritualism to proceed, and by 1906 the Act was dead in the water. In that year, a Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline reported that:

...the law of public worship in the Church of England is too narrow for the religious life of the present generation. It needlessly condemns much which a great section of Church people, including many of her most devoted members, value; and modern thought and feeling are characterised by a care for ceremonial, a sense of dignity in worship, and an appreciation of the continuity of the Church, which were not similarly felt at the time when the law took its present shape... The result has inevitably been that ancient rubrics have been strained in the desire to find in them meaning which it has been judicially held they cannot bear; while, on the other hand, the construction placed on them in accordance with legal rules has sometimes appeared forced and unnatural. With an adequate power of self-adjustment, we might reasonably expect that revision of the strict letter of the law would secure the obedience of many, now dissatisfied, who desire to be loyal, and would justify the Church as a whole, in insisting on the obedience of all.²⁷

This report launched the revision of the Prayer Book as a serious project, and in doing so brought about the second factor. Canon law, which concerned doctrine and liturgy, was theoretically the province of the Convocations, and not the Church Assembly; in reality, however, any practical change in doctrine and liturgy, as contained in the Prayer Book, would require a change in Statute Law; this could only be brought about by means of a Measure, not a Canon, which would have to be passed by all three Houses of the Church Assembly. When the crisis came, however, in 1927 and 1928 the issue was not that the Church Assembly was so hopelessly divided that it could not agree on the revised Prayer Book, with its extra

²⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline* (1906), Chapter 11, from Project Canterbury - <http://anglicanhistory.org/pwra/rced11.html> (accessed 10/07/2012)

scope for Catholic ritual; it did. The problem was that the House of Commons, which had to ratify the resulting Measure, refused to do so.

When he spoke in the House of Lords in 1919, as quoted above (p. 9-10), and denied any intention that the Church Assembly would tackle matters of faith and doctrine, the Archbishop of Canterbury Randall Davidson was well aware of this looming situation. This was not a period in which Parliamentarians tended to openly accuse one another of dishonesty, or deliberate conspiracy to deceive Parliament; nevertheless, the notion that what the Archbishop had suggested Prayer Book reform would consist of in 1919, when he had convinced Parliament to pass the Enabling Act, was not what he was now presenting to Parliament, in the form of the 1927 and 1928 Prayer Book Measures, was raised in the House of Commons during a debate on the 13th of June 1928. Sir Samuel Roberts quoted from a reply of the Archbishop's in the House of Lords, given in 1919 in answer to a direct question as to whether or not the Church Assembly would attempt to revise the Prayer Book; the Archbishop had said:

I should be deceiving the House if I were to accept for a moment the proposition that we do not intend in any case to touch anything connected with the Rubrics of Common Prayer. One of the very reasons why we find the present position so difficult is that in small matters, but matters which are nevertheless of practical importance, we want to facilitate sometimes an abbreviation, sometimes an adaptation of the existing form to slightly different circumstances, sometimes even the addition of extra Collects on particular occasions...²⁸

As Roberts went on to point out:

It appears to me that to bring in such questions as legalising vestments, the Consecration Prayer and Reservation is rather stretching the words of the Archbishop when he said: "...Sometimes adaptation of the existing form to slightly different circumstances, sometimes even the addition of extra Collects on particular occasions."²⁹

²⁸ Randall Davidson, quoted by Sir Samuel Roberts, House of Commons Debate on the Prayer Book Measure 1928, 13th June 1928, *Hansard* - http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1928/jun/13/prayer-book-measure-1928#column_1028 (accessed 10/07/2012)

²⁹ Sir Samuel Roberts, *ibid.*

In his defence, Davidson could have pointed out that he was introducing the Measure as voted for by the Assembly, and that he personally was not responsible for its content. Nevertheless, the common thread running through the opposition to the Measures in the Commons was that the new Prayer Book was being foisted on a reluctant Church of England by Liberal Catholics (more hard core Anglo-Catholics had openly declared their intention to ignore the new book in exactly the same way they had the old one), whose predominance within the Episcopate and the Church Assembly was by no means matched by their support from ordinary Anglicans. Roberts could not reconcile the voting figures within the newly-established diocesan conferences (or synods – essentially the Church Assembly in miniature within a diocese) with his experience of ordinary Anglicans:

It has been said that the Church people are in favour of this Book. It is very difficult to set off one's own personal opinion against a definite statement of that sort. I can only say that since this Book was rejected I have knocked up against all manner of people, and I have found that its rejection was extraordinarily popular with the majority of Church people with whom I have talked. When we consider the figures which were obtained in the diocesan conferences and in the Church Assembly, one ought to realise something about those bodies and about the atmosphere in which they work.³⁰

He went on to describe, from experience, the way in which diocesan conferences tended to approve whatever the Bishop wanted them to. In addition, the members of the House of Laity were elected by diocesan conferences, whose members were chosen from by parochial church councils:

The method by which the parochial church councils elect their representatives to the diocesan conferences is not what one would call a keenly-contested method. In most cases, the matter rests very much in the hands of the vicar of the parish. He has made up his mind whom he would like to go. He suggests that Mr. So and So should go, that Mr. So and So would be a suitable person to go to the diocesan conference. It is in that way that the diocesan conferences are elected, and they elect the Church Assembly.³¹

This eye-witness evidence is very much anecdotal, and its exact truth is impossible to confirm or deny at this remove of time – doubtless there were parishes where this happened, but equally doubtless there were also parishes where it did not – but

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

coupled with the testimony of William Joynson Hicks, who led the Protestant charge against the Prayer Book Measures in the Commons, it demonstrates the sense that the governance of the Church had been 'captured' by Liberal Catholics, thus undermining its authority – the existence of this perception, not its absolute veracity, was sufficient to accomplish that in the minds of many.

Joynson Hicks, the Home Secretary at the time, forcefully rejected claims that the Catholicisation and Liberalisation of the Church of England was simply the natural result of the spirit of the times and the nature of Anglicanism; the situation in which the new Prayer Book was being brought forward was, he argued, the result of many Bishops failing to enforce the rules of the Church of England:

We are asked to trust the Bishops. Therein lies the difficulty. It is not a question of trust. It is a question how so many of them can possibly deal with these offences when they have connived at their existence for 20 years past, and from time to time, have appointed men who they knew to be guilty of these illegalities to offices in the Church.

When I was a witness before the Royal Commission [on Ecclesiastical Discipline 1906] the Archbishop asked me: "Do you want wholesale prosecutions in the Church?" I said, "No." Then he asked, "What then do you suggest?" I said: "My Lord Archbishop, I would not promote these men." That is a suggestion I have been making for years past. There is a vast amount of patronage in the hands of the Archbishops and Bishops. Why appoint to livings in the Church of England men who are guilty of practices and doctrines which the Royal Commission, the late Archbishop [Frederick] Temple, and the Archbishop of York, have declared to be not merely illegal in law but against the doctrines of the Church? The Bishop of London has filled the Diocese of London with these men, and how can he turn round in a fortnight's time and say to them, "You must give up incense, give up adoration and all these practices." He knows what the answer will be; and not merely the Bishop of London either.³²

Joynson Hicks did not state it openly – in fact, he said "I absolve the Bishops from any intention deliberately not to deal with them" during the same speech – but the implication is surely clear: various bishops were not just impotent in the face of growing catholic tendencies, but were sympathetic to them and actively promoting

³² Joynson Hicks, Sir William, House of Commons Debate on the Prayer Book Measure 1927, 15th December 1927, from the Hansard 1803-2005 website - http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1927/dec/15/prayer-book-measure-1927#column_2546 (accessed 11/07/2012)

them, and their practitioners, whatever their protestations to the contrary. The new Prayer Book was simply designed to put a legal gloss on this process, would not actually be enforced any more than the old one had been, and would in fact give the Bishops wide-ranging official powers to authorise such departures from the authorised liturgy³³. Joynson Hicks was effectively saying that episcopal authority, where it had not actually imploded, was being systematically misused to undermine the Church of England's Protestant character. This combination of Protestant mistrust of the bishops' intentions and the effective collapse of episcopal authority where matters of doctrine and practice were concerned, when combined with the divisions and confusions over the Church Assembly and the wholesale adoption of liberal principles in governance with the 1922 doctrine commission report (see chapter 1) was to set the scene for the collapse of the dispersed authority system over the course of the late 20th century.

The accusation, that bishops were for their own reasons trying to de-Protestantise the Church of England, was as old as the Reformation itself.³⁴ Of course, the Bishops and other supporters of the Prayer Book Measures furiously denied these suggestions; this was not the 17th century, the 1662 Prayer Book was out of date and did not reflect the modern Church of England, the Church must broaden its outlook to be effective in the modern age. Joynson Hicks carried the day in the Commons however, and the Prayer Book Measures were defeated, 230-205 in 1927 and 266-220 in 1928.

As in the Gorham case³⁵, this was not a case of the state usurping powers it was not supposed to have; in the Prayer Book controversy Parliament had, once again, used its lawful authority under the Crown to prevent the Bishops from Catholicising the Reformed Protestant settlement of England. If this resembles not only the 19th century controversies but also seems eerily similar to those of the 16th and 17th centuries, that is because it is. The system had worked, and in turn precipitated, if not exactly a crisis in the Reformation period sense, a watershed moment for the Church of England.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ See for example chapter 2, p. 72, note 42

³⁵ See chapter 2 p. 64-65

In the immediate aftermath of the new Prayer Book's rejection by the House of Commons, the bishops made clear their attitude to the authority of Parliament over the church by proceeding to publish and distribute the new Book regardless. The attitude of most bishops to the catholic practices in the new Prayer Book (including reservation of the Sacrament, chasubles for celebrants and diluting the wine with water) can be gauged by the fact that 24 of the 26 Lords Spiritual (Worcester and Norwich being the exceptions) had voted in favour of the Book. Cries for disestablishment were once again raised – Hensley Henson, Bishop of Durham, was prominent among those raising them – but it was never a realistic prospect, and neither Temple nor Archbishop of Canterbury Cosmo Gordon Lang (Davidson had resigned in the aftermath of the Prayer Book fiasco) had any time for it. As John Kent points out in his biography of Temple:

Between 1930 and 1944 'independence' was no more than a distraction, a clerical way of blaming on the House of Commons the disunity of the Church of England.³⁶

It was not the first time that this had been pointed out; in 1919 Viscount Haldane had stated in Parliament, arguing against the Church Assembly Powers Act, that the main thing slowing up Church legislation in the late 19th and early 20th century was not Parliamentary inefficiency but Anglican division:

With the Victorian Era there came an era when you could not pass legislation with the same ease, because the Church was riven by this Tractarian movement from top to bottom and split into three sections, broad, high, and low, which could not agree upon measures which were to be got through Parliament. If there has been delay in passing Church measures through Parliament no doubt it is due to some extent to the block of Parliamentary business, but mainly and primarily it is due to dissensions within the Church itself...³⁷

This lesson seems to have been absorbed, and absorbed thoroughly; in future, new orders of service would be introduced alongside the Book of Common Prayer, and

³⁶ John Kent, "William Temple...", p. 173

³⁷ Viscount Haldane, Hansard, House of Lords Debate, 03 June 1919, vol. 34 c996 - http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1919/jun/03/national-assembly-of-the-church-of#column_996 (accessed 05/06/2012)

would contain a range of possible options from traditional Anglo-Catholic to modern Evangelical. 1927-28 was the last time the Church of England would try to enforce even a semblance of uniformity in liturgy; by 1928 the point at which such uniformity could have been successfully enforced had long passed in any case. It was also the last occasion on which Parliament (and more specifically the House of Commons since both Prayer Book Measures had passed the Lords without difficulty) would assert its position as the true voice of the Anglican laity; from 1928 onwards the voice of 'the laity' would mean in practice (if not in reality, given the massive doubts about how representative it actually was, of which more anon.) that of the House of Laity within Church Assembly and General Synod, since Parliament was the only other organised body of lay authority which the Church of England possessed.

These events were to have two very specific impacts on Church of England governance and authority for the rest of the 20th century and up to the present time. The first was that classical latitudinarian liberalism became the dominant philosophy within Church of England governance - by default as much as by design, since the lesson the Church (rightly) took from the Prayer Book fiasco was that anything other than such liberalism would result in institutional schism; finding 'compromise candidates' for positions of authority, who would not alienate Anglo-Catholics or Evangelicals, became paramount, as did pursuing broad, tolerant ecclesiastical policies. The second was that, from this point on, Anglican authority and governance meant the bishops and the Church Assembly/General Synod (with all the flaws discussed above); the effective absence of Parliament as a restraint on both of these groups meant that their attitudes, and any flaws in the constitution of either, took on considerably greater importance.

It is here that we can begin to see how this liberal, and particularly liberal catholic, dominance of governance and the episcopate that was so heavily criticised by Vaughan Bennett under Robert Runcie, actually came about. An already liberally-sympathetic episcopate (see chapter 1) saw liberal bishops as essential to maintaining moderation in dioceses. For the archiepiscopate, it began in earnest with the resignation of Randall Davidson in 1928; liberal catholic Cuddesdon alumnus Cosmo Gordon Lang succeeded Davidson as Archbishop of Canterbury; liberal Catholic William Temple succeeded him as Archbishop of York; liberal catholic

Cuddesdon alumnus Cyril Garbett succeeded Temple at York, when Temple replaced Lang at Canterbury in 1942; liberal catholic Cuddesdon alumnus Michael Ramsey, translated from York where he had replaced liberal catholic Cuddesdon alumnus Garbett, replaced Geoffrey Fisher (Temple's successor) in 1961. In the 85 years following Davidson's resignation, only 6 of 17 Archbishops of Canterbury and York have not been liberal catholics. 2 of those (Donald Coggan and Stuart Blanch) were liberal evangelicals, whilst neither George Carey nor Justin Welby (so far) wore/wear their conservative credentials on their sleeves. Whilst not accepting Gareth Bennett's claims at face value, one can certainly see where he might be coming from.

This liberal catholic influence on the episcopate was also to have specific consequences. As discussed on pages 87-88 above, Liberal Catholicism may have been broad and tolerant in many areas of faith and morals but it continued to lay very heavy emphasis on the traditional catholic doctrine of the ministry, Apostolic succession and Apostolic authority. In the atmosphere which followed the Prayer Book crisis of 1927-28, with Parliamentary authority being rejected by the bishops, the status of the Church of England as a branch of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, transcending any mere 'national Church', and under the authority of the Bishops as the guarantors of that ancient catholic unity, became increasingly fundamental to the way in which the bishops conceived of themselves and of their role in holding the Church together; ancient, traditional, catholic unity became significantly more important in the governance of the Church of England, for the first time, than the national unity which had prevailed since the Reformation, and making this tenable required ever greater emphasis being placed on the catholic traditions of the Church of England, and on the unique unifying role of the episcopate.

The combining of this with the ever-widening Anglican comprehensiveness discussed in chapter 1, the elevated role of the episcopacy discussed in chapter 2, and the global Anglican Communion which perpetuated this ecclesiology but omitted any Communion-level systems of checks and balances from the dispersed authority equation, and which is the subject of the next chapter, was crucial in the journey to the Anglican realignment and alternative episcopal oversight.

Chapter 4

Anglican Authority and the Anglican Communion

In the last chapter, I examined the development, more or less simultaneous, of the system of synodical governance within the Church of England and the rise of liberal catholicism to a dominant position which it has held from the middle of the 20th century until the present day.

The development of the global Anglican Communion was both part of, and essential to, the rise of catholic sentiment within the Church of England from the mid-19th century onwards – a sense of true catholicity being much easier to sustain as part of a global fellowship, rather than as a purely national church. The existence of the Anglican Communion has also had a major impact on the doctrine and exercise of authority within both Anglicanism and the Church of England, which from the mid-19th century began to take on increasingly distinctive and separate identities. The instruments of the Anglican Communion – in particular the decennial Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting – have provided an extra forum for decision-making which, whilst not binding on the independent Provinces, can nevertheless be highly influential in defining Anglican positions. Also, as the bishops of the Church of England increasingly rejected the influence of the state (see chapter 3) within England, the global Anglican Communion has provided them with an alternative forum and sense of purpose which transcends the state.

In more recent years, the authoritatively separate yet sacramentally linked provinces of the Anglican Communion have been both major players in and the battleground for the Anglican Realignment. It is in fact that peculiar combination of sacramental communion and functional independence which has made alternative episcopal oversight possible. The first decade of the 21st century has seen the development, in response to the controversies of same-sex unions and homosexual ministry, of new organisations within the existing Communion structure which are prepared to act

across Provincial boundaries, and are enabled in doing so by sympathetic bishops from across the Communion, who are willing to provide groups dissenting from their own provincial authorities with the alternative episcopal oversight, and thus the sacramental and ecclesiological legitimacy, required to remain connected to the Anglican Communion.

One result of these developments has been the creation of a new, international para-church group, the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, and the issuing of the Jerusalem Statement and Declaration in June 2008. The Jerusalem Statement begins by stating the nature of the problem which has led to this situation:

...we grieve for the spiritual decline in the most economically developed nations, where the forces of militant secularism and pluralism are eating away the fabric of society and churches are compromised and enfeebled in their witness. The vacuum left by them is readily filled by other faiths and deceptive cults.¹

It then makes clear what needs to be done about this situation:

To meet these challenges will require Christians to work together to understand and oppose these forces and to liberate those under their sway. It will entail the planting of new churches among unreached peoples and also committed action to restore authentic Christianity to compromised churches.

The Statement goes on to define the crisis within the Anglican Communion in terms of three “undeniable” facts:

The first fact is the acceptance and promotion within the provinces of the Anglican Communion of a different ‘gospel’ (cf. Galatians 1:6-8) which is contrary to the apostolic gospel. This false gospel undermines the authority of God’s Word written and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the author of salvation from sin, death and judgement. Many of its proponents claim that all religions offer equal access to God and that Jesus is only a way, not the way, the truth and the life. It promotes a variety of sexual preferences and immoral behaviour as a universal human right. It claims God’s blessing for same-sex unions over against the biblical teaching on holy matrimony. In 2003 this false gospel led to the consecration of a bishop living in a homosexual relationship.

¹ This, and all subsequent quotations from the Jerusalem Statement and Declaration, are taken from the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans website - http://fca.net/resources/the_jerusalem_declaration1/ (accessed 18/09/2013)

The 2003 consecration referred to here is that of Gene Robinson, Bishop of New Hampshire, a divorced man in an open and active homosexual relationship. The accusation of promoting a false gospel has, naturally, been vigorously denied by those within and without the Episcopal Church of the USA [then ECUSA; now The Episcopal Church – TEC] who sympathise with or actively advocate these developments in relation to homosexuality, and these more liberal positions with regards to other faiths. It is not the purpose of this thesis to adjudicate between liberal and conservative interpretations of Anglicanism, or to pass judgement as to the ‘correctness’ of either; for the purposes of this thesis, the fact that the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans holds this view to be ‘undeniable’ is the relevant point. The first fact leads directly on to the second:

The second fact is the declaration by provincial bodies in the Global South that they are out of communion with bishops and churches that promote this false gospel. These declarations have resulted in a realignment whereby faithful Anglican Christians have left existing territorial parishes, dioceses and provinces in certain Western churches and become members of other dioceses and provinces, all within the Anglican Communion. These actions have also led to the appointment of new Anglican bishops set over geographic areas already occupied by other Anglican bishops. A major realignment has occurred and will continue to unfold.

Following the 2002 decision by the Diocese of New Westminster (Anglican Church of Canada [ACC]) to approve a rite of blessing for same sex unions, and the 2003 decision to consecrate Bishop Robinson referred to above, individual parishes and clergy in both the United States and Canada have decided to leave ECUSA and ACC. These parishes and clergy have been offered, and have accepted, alternative episcopal oversight from bishops from elsewhere in the Anglican Communion, primarily Africa and the Southern Cone (South America). In December 2008 a new group, the Anglican Church in North America [ACNA] came into being, whilst the conventions of four other ECUSA dioceses voted to leave and join the Province of the Southern Cone. ACNA has since sought, but has not (yet) received, recognition as a Province of the Anglican Communion in its own right.

These are by no means the first Anglican groups to have parted company with their dioceses or Provinces. The 1689 Act of Toleration enabled Trinitarian Protestant groups to exist outside the Church of England. Later in the 17th century the Non-

Jurors parted company with the Church of England, followed by many Methodists in the 18th century. In the 1960s, in protest at the ordination of women by ECUSA, the Continuing Anglican Movement was formed by various clergy and laity leaving the Church. In none of these cases, however, did these groups remain part of formal Anglicanism, or in direct sacramental communion with it.

For the first time in the history of the Anglican Communion, a situation has arisen in which two doctrinally different Anglican groups, which do not recognise each other but which are variously recognised by other parts of the Communion, exist side-by-side within the same geographical area. Individual parishes are able to choose which Anglican province or diocese to belong to on the basis of which set of doctrines they agree with.

This is not a situation which sits at all easily with the conception of episcopal authority which has prevailed within Anglicanism since the mid-19th century. Since that time, the geographical diocese with one bishop exercising sole authority over it has been the basic, indivisible and indissoluble unit of Anglican authority; this episcopal sacramental and juridical system is in marked contrast to other Protestant churches, including episcopal Lutheran ones, in which the individual congregation is the fundamental ecclesiastical unit. This process began with the Lambeth Conferences and the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, which cemented a traditional 'one Bishop, one diocese' catholic ecclesiology as the basis for the nascent Communion:

The earlier Lambeth conferences were concerned to lay down guidelines for the maintenance of an episcopal system within a Communion which was still growing in the mission fields and in what was still conceived of as a 'colonial' framework. The Conferences emphasised repeatedly the fundamental character of the relationship between a Bishop and his diocese and upheld the principle of one Bishop in one diocese. In 1867 it was allowed that there might be 'peculiar cases' of race or language, but 1920 maintained that difficulties should not be allowed to interfere with the principle that there can be 'but one Church and one Authority'. In 1930 there was a clear statement of 'the ancient Catholic principle that the fundamental unit of Church organisation is the territorial Diocese under the jurisdiction of one Bishop' with an assertion of the ecclesial completeness and authority of such a local church. 'A duly organised Diocese under its Bishop has the right, subject

always to its duty to the whole fellowship of the Church, to decide and act for itself in its own affairs.²

In England this policy entailed no practical change, since the bishops and dioceses had been the fundamental units of Church polity before, during and ever since the Reformation. This was also effectively the case in the United States and the more settled colonies such as Australia, and the immediate practical effects of the policy were aimed at areas of ad hoc missionary activity such as Africa and India. These and other 19th century developments (see previous chapters), however, produced a marked change of emphasis in large parts of the Church of England (particularly Anglo- and liberal Catholics), shifting the basis of episcopal authority away from the mandate of Crown in Parliament and towards the possession of valid orders in Apostolic Succession, conveyed by the church (and, secondarily, where necessary recognised by the state), as was the case in both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

The Church of England, even with its peculiarly rigid basis in national law, has not been immune from the Anglican Realignment, however. In July 2011 the Anglican Mission in England was established, with the express purpose of providing alternative episcopal oversight for parishes which could not accept the teachings of their diocesan bishops. Overseen by a council of retired English bishops and ultimately by the Primates' Council of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, this Mission Society:

...stands for promoting mission, biblical church planting and the selection, training and deployment of ordinands for mission and ministry authentically based upon the Bible and our Articles of Religion in the Church of England.

AMiE is about protecting unity with those Anglicans looking in on the Church of England and assuring them that they can still maintain unity with us. It also enables Anglican ministers to remain within the Church of England, and gives a true basis for unity among evangelicals within the Church of England and across the Anglican Communion in the Jerusalem Statement which is the basis of AMiE.³

² *Episcopal Ministry: The Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate, 1990* (Church House Publishing, 1990) para. 267 p. 121

³ "About the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE)" from the Anglican Mission in England website - <http://anglicanmissioninengland.org/about-anglican-mission-england-amie> (accessed 11/08/2012)

The basis of the problem can be seen in the quotation on page 104-105, and in the liberal catholicism which underlies it. The catholic aspect of liberal catholicism elevates the office of bishop to a central and indispensable position within the visible One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, of which it considers the Anglican Communion to be a visible branch. At the same time as it emphasises and augments the authority and role of the bishop, however, the liberal side of the equation provides the bishops themselves with considerable liberty of doctrinal interpretation (see chapter 1), which can in turn place great strain on the objective view of episcopal authority, as found in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, when those doctrinal interpretations are considered unacceptable by congregations within their dioceses.

What facilitates the system of objective episcopal authority in these other Churches is the knowledge that all bishops are constrained (perhaps with varying degrees of local success, but the principle is clear) by Magisterial or Conciliar authority to teach and to uphold particular defining doctrines. An objective view of episcopacy is made easier by the fact that the teachings are those of the whole church, not the personal beliefs of the bishop. No commensurate theological authority to define the boundaries of acceptable doctrine exists within the Anglican Communion, which is nonetheless expected to operate on the same theological basis. The evident yet unspoken question of what happens when the way in which a “duly organised Diocese under its Bishop” exercises its enshrined right “...to decide and to act for itself in its own affairs” in a way which is incompatible with its “duty towards the whole fellowship of the Church”, or even who could decide when that had happened, is thus never satisfactorily answered.

In the context of the late 19th century, with a considerably more uniform Christian social and moral sense at work in society, this was less of a problem than it would become in the period from the 1960s to the present day (see chapter 1). Pioneers of Liberal Catholicism such as Charles Gore can be forgiven for not having foreseen a world in which homosexuality, the presenting issue in the current crisis, was not only tolerated but actively endorsed as an ethically equal lifestyle choice by secular society. Equally, they could not have been expected to predict the almost total collapse of traditional Christianity as a basis for ethical and moral positions in the

contemporary Western World (for all that Gore despaired of both contemporary ethics and future ethical trends⁴), which is precisely what the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans and other Realignment groups believe the Churches of the Western World have not only accepted, but normalised and participated in (see page 102).

That Gore, however, was by no means unaware of the scope for ever-broadening doctrinal interpretation and practice which liberal theological principles allowed to the more radical elements, and that he reacted against it in his later years, is alluded to by Paul Avis:

At the height of his influence, as Bishop of Oxford in 1914, Gore reiterated this position. Anglicanism has stood since the Reformation for a 'liberal or scriptural Catholicism' in which Scripture constitutes 'the sole final testing ground of dogmatic requirement'. The characteristically self-assured and autocratic way in which Gore attempted to freeze this synthesis in order to prevent further development – in particular to inhibit Eucharistic intercommunion with non-episcopalians, critical positions that went beyond those of *Lux Mundi* (1889), and unauthorized liturgical innovation – is not our concern here.⁵

It is, however, very much mine, since the implication of this is that Gore was encountering the perennial problem of liberal Christianity – that once the traditional boundaries of acceptable doctrine and authority have been successfully challenged, it is exceptionally difficult to restore them. That there must be some limits as to what beliefs are acceptable within Anglicanism is generally acknowledged; who decides what those limits are, and how, and who enforces them, and how, is a trickier question, since it speaks to the root divisions over church doctrine which characterised both the Reformation period and the 19th century (see chapter 2), and which resulted, when combined with liberalism, in the system of dispersed authority. Alternative episcopal oversight has arisen because that system is perceived to have failed in establishing acceptable limits to Anglican comprehensiveness (see chapter 1). This issue was stated at the 1998 Ecclesiastical Law Society lecture, given during the Lambeth Conference, entitled 'Authority in the Anglican Communion':

⁴ For example, see Gore, *Belief in God* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1922) p. 19-20

⁵ Paul Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London: T&T Clark, 2007) p. 27

...Anglicanism has unquestionably lived off the fat of pre-Reformation accumulations and has, since the sixteenth century, been in a kind of doctrinal limbo. A Doctrine of the Church *is* required.... It is unlikely [...] that the main concepts...which have determined the development of Christ's revelation will persist forever, and the Church will then need to bring forth treasures new and old in a much more radical fashion... The means by which truth is known to be true, the question of authority in teaching, will then be absolutely crucial. This is not a problem for the historic Churches, which have dynamic Doctrines of the Church. But Anglicans have a real issue to address. **The basic division remains: do Christians have access to an infallible teaching office, as the historic Churches have always claimed, or are the Protestants right in supposing that only Scripture is indefectible? There is no *Via Media* here...** [my emphasis]⁶

The Anglican Communion has, however, continued to avoid a clearly defined Doctrine of the Church along conventional lines; it has opted instead, from the mid-20th century, to present Anglicanism's inability to define a Doctrine of the Church as a virtue and defining characteristic, rather than as an unintentional and intractable problem.

Disregarding the amount of revisionism required to make this viewpoint historically tenable (see chapters 1, 2 and 3) it is undeniable that this position has considerable strengths. Its openness to new ideas, its willingness to withhold judgement and admit uncertainty, and its ability to contain within itself an extraordinary diversity of viewpoints and practices have contributed to the endurance of Anglicanism, the tenacious affection which many of its adherents have for it, and to its positive image as enlightened, tolerant and welcoming. As also discussed in the previous chapter, the reason liberalism became dominant within the Church of England was due to its unique ability to hold together a church which under any other guiding philosophy would almost certainly have sundered; that so many people were willing to embrace, or at least tolerate, this liberalism and concomitant diversity for the sake of preserving Anglicanism speaks volumes for the centripetal force of Anglican tradition, liturgy and faith.

⁶ Edward Norman, *Authority in the Anglican Communion: Ecclesiastical Law Society Lecture given during Lambeth Conference, 1998* from the Society of St Justus website: <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/misc/norman98.html> (accessed 15/07/2013)

This decision was expressed in the concept of dispersed authority, most clearly defined in Report IV of the 1948 Lambeth Conference as seen in chapter 1:

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 from a single Divine source... It is distributed among Scripture, Tradition, Creeds, the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, the witness of saints and the *consensus fidelium*... It is thus a dispersed rather than a centralised 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. Where this authority is to be found mediated not in one mode but in several we recognise in this multiplicity God's loving provision against the temptations to tyranny and the dangers of unchecked power...⁷

This statement has a very Anglican feel to it, rooted in Richard Hooker's classic exposition of the three Anglican pillars – Scripture, Tradition and Reason – and in Gore's 'Scriptural Catholicism' (see note 5, p. 107). With its reference to the dangers of 'tyranny', it also resonates well with Anglicanism's long rejection, rooted in the Reformation, of Papal power. All in all, it is very modern, very reasonable, very traditional – very Anglican. It does, however, rather depend upon the dispersed sources of authority being able to reach a consensus amongst themselves. The huge risk and gamble with this policy is that decisive authority may become not just dispersed but homeopathically diluted, with the result that if a major doctrinal controversy, requiring a clear and binding decision, actually arises, it is suddenly discovered that no one possesses any. There are two possible solutions to this problem – the first is to bite the bullet, accept that some form of division and separation is inevitable, and opt for doctrinal clarity; the second is to try to ensure that such a controversy will never reach crisis point, which is the path Anglicanism has followed.

Its chosen means of doing this has been the concept of provisionality; since controversy, backed up by opposed theological certainties, would inevitably stretch the system of dispersed authority to its limits by requiring a clear decision, the purpose of provisionality is to ensure that such a controversy does not arise. What

⁷ *The Lambeth Conference, 1948. The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops; together with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1948) Report IV, p. 84

began in the 16th century as a liberal and reasonable acknowledgement of the potential for human fallibility in certain religious matters has, over the course of the 20th century, been developed into a position whereby theological certainty itself is portrayed as both impossible and un-Anglican; to be an Anglican means being willing to admit that any and all theological positions and doctrines will always carry with them a level of uncertainty. Kenneth Locke writes that:

Anglicans exercise a method of authority that does not strive to achieve a uniform consensus or to enforce particular doctrinal positions. Rather, it functions under the belief that truth is best perceived by safeguarding constant debate within the Church. Anglicans, therefore, lack the predisposition to put an end to disagreement through authoritative pronouncements. All decisions are provisional and open to further criticism and debate.⁸

Paul Avis writes that:

...acceptance of pluralism as we find it in the Anglican Church denotes the eminent realism of Anglicanism. There is no need to apologize too much for the alleged defects of Anglicanism – its lack of discipline, its reticence where dogmatic definitions are concerned, its breadth of permitted opinion. Its pragmatism is not always born of a weary cynicism: at its best it is the product of sagacity, a sense of realism about the world as it is in the providence of God, a willingness to look facts in the face and to make the best of them. In other words, Anglicanism is not seduced by Utopian and perfectionist ecclesiologies. It takes seriously the fallenness of the world, the brokenness of the Church and the frailty of human nature.⁹

Unfortunately Avis' statement is not based upon the world of Anglicanism as it actually exists. True, for some Anglicans, particularly those of a liberal persuasion, and on some issues, pluralism and provisionality are standard procedure. The mistake which Avis and Locke, and others within the Anglican Communion, have consistently made, however, is to follow the early 20th century Church of England leadership in failing to distinguish between two very different types of liberality: modernism, the primarily 19th century development of theology which actively rejects the possibility of absolute divine revelation and therefore underpins provisionality, and latitudinarianism, the classical Anglican liberalism which acknowledges a wide

⁸ Locke, Kenneth A., *The Church in Anglican Theology: A Historical, Theological and Ecumenical Exploration* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), p. 115

⁹ Avis, Paul, *Ecumenical Theology and the Elusiveness of Doctrine* (London: SPCK, 1986) p. 116

range of positions and attempts to create space for them by restricting confessional specifics to a minimum without actually abolishing them.

Modernism did not prevail within Anglicanism because all Anglicans agree, in modern liberal fashion, that absolute theological truth is undiscoverable and all doctrinal statements are consequently provisional. Classical latitudinarian liberalism prevailed because it created space for various groups who did believe that they were in possession of divine truth, but did not agree with each other, to co-exist. As chapter 1 demonstrated, however, and as Stephen Sykes suggested, the blending of modernism with liberalism in the early to mid-20th century, coupled with the problems of the dispersed authority system in not actually providing checks and balances, has expanded Anglican comprehensiveness at global, as well as local level, to a point at which catholic ecclesiology is struggling to cope.

It is simply not true to imply that for all Anglicans divine truth statements are accepted as provisional. For most Anglicans the literal divinity of Christ is non-negotiable; for some, such as Bishop John Spong, it is impossible. For many Conservative Evangelicals, the inerrancy of Scripture is not provisional; for conservative Anglo-Catholics the tradition of the Church and the Apostolic Succession is not provisional. For many conservative Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals, the nature of the ordained ministry as open only to men is not provisional, whilst for many supporters of female ordination its rightness is not provisional either. For many conservative Anglicans the world over the nature of marriage, between one man and one woman, as the only place for sexual activity, is a biblical standard, neither provisional nor up for discussion; for many others, the rightness and necessity of homosexual ordination and the blessing of same sex unions is not open to question. Whilst it may suit certain ecclesiastical and political agendas to portray those with theological certainties, one way or the other, over issues such as female ordination, divorce, homosexuality and scriptural inerrancy as un-Anglican fundamentalists, it is a manifest distortion of the truth. Anglicanism contains a great diversity of opinions because different people have different conceptions of truth, not simply because everybody accepts that they do not know what it is. If they did, there would not be a crisis in the first place.

The conservative side of this tendency to portray opposed theological certainty as un-Anglican, when wanting to close down debate is to portray either controversy about, or outright disagreement with, their position as un-Christian or un-Scriptural. This has already been encountered in the Jerusalem Statement, which is quoted from on pages 102 and 103 above and is a prime example of this.

An example, albeit an extreme one, of Anglicans who reject the combined provisional and liberal catholic narrative being painted as un-Anglican fundamentalists comes in the form of Muriel Porter's monograph *Sydney Anglicans and the Threat to World Anglicanism*. The Diocese of Sydney has, in recent years, become a bastion of Conservative Evangelical thought and practice, has contributed significantly to the development of the Anglican Realignment through the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans and the Global Anglican Future Conference [GAFCON], and is strongly opposed to the ordination of women and changes to sexual moral teaching, whilst its theology and practice tends strongly, and controversially, towards the Calvinist end of the spectrum.

Seemingly impervious to the irony of attacking "fundamentalists" by explaining why they are 100% wrong and your own position is 100% right, Porter demonstrates her agenda by spending much of the book explaining why ordaining women is right and opposing homosexuality is wrong. The 1998 Lambeth Conference was the result of the Bishops being 'shanghaied' by a vocal anti-gay lobby;¹⁰ opponents of women's ordination are motivated by latent, or explicit, misogyny rather than any form of Scriptural or traditional concerns, which have been incontrovertibly refuted anyway.¹¹ She describes Sydney Diocese as:

...a closed entity operating by its own increasingly idiosyncratic rules and codes, and displaying many of the characteristics of a sect instead of the openness characteristic of historic Anglicanism.¹²

Porter herself, however, is far from open to any position which does not align with her own views. Additionally, as far as one can gather, Porter seems to believe that

¹⁰ Muriel Porter, *Sydney Anglicans and the Threat to World Anglicanism: The Sydney Experiment* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2011) p. 53

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 118

¹² *Ibid.* p. 9

“conventional” Anglicanism began in the late 19th century; she attacks the simple worship style, the length and centrality of sermons and the lack of priority given to the Eucharist in Sydney diocese, seemingly unaware that such things were standard procedure in the Church of England prior to the Catholic revival.

She criticises Sydney Diocese for not ‘valuing the devotional tradition of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*’¹³ whilst failing to acknowledge that one can also travel the length and breadth of England, for example, and barely find a single BCP service, whilst many Anglo-Catholic parishes have been using the never-authorized English Missal as the basis of their worship for a century. Finally, she criticises the isolation and sect-like stance of Sydney diocese, yet fails to acknowledge, for example, that only one Anglican province – ECUSA – has ever consecrated openly gay non-celibate bishops (Gene Robinson and Mary Douglas Glasspool), and that it caused a serious split in its own ranks by doing so. The actions of the Diocese of Sydney are hardly typical and by no means uncontroversial, but it must be pointed out that this is not impartial scholarship so much as partisan polemic. Within the Church of England this polemical attitude, conservative or liberal, has been considerably more restrained than within the North American provinces in particular, and this has helped to keep the impact of the Anglican Realignment minimal thus far.

A further problem with the dispersed authority-provisionality model of Anglican authority which must be tackled is that authority is by no means always as dispersed as the descriptions of that model seem to imply. The decision to approve a rite of blessing for same-sex unions was taken, unilaterally, by the Diocese of New Westminster, and the relatively small number of Anglicans within it who are directly involved in its Synodical governance. Similarly, Gene Robinson was elected by the Synod of New Hampshire, and his election ratified by members of the ECUSA General Convention. The fact that the Instruments of the Anglican Communion were completely unable to prevent these actions, despite their being in contravention of the 1998 Lambeth Conference Resolutions on sexuality, does not mean that authority is “dispersed”; it simply means that the Instruments of the Anglican

¹³ Ibid.

Communion have very limited decisive power to turn their global consensus into a reality at local level.

Within their own Provinces and Dioceses, however, a relatively small number of Bishops and Synod members do possess the power to make practical decisions with immense doctrinal consequences, as they both authorise liturgy and decide what beliefs are compatible with ordination and preferment (to varying extents, depending on Provincial governance arrangements and personal leadership styles). The authority to make a binding doctrinal decision for the whole Anglican Communion is not dispersed; it does not exist – not even on paper, for since 1867 the Lambeth Conferences and other Communion Instruments have denied any claims to such an authority¹⁴. That the Anglican Communion and Instruments do possess soft power, exercised through influence and depending on the desire for unity, is demonstrated by the fact that ECUSA/TEC and ACC accepted a moratorium on same-sex consecrations and liturgy in the wake of the 2004 Windsor Report, passing Resolution 2006-B003, which stated:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention receive and embrace The Windsor Report's invitation to engage in a process of healing and reconciliation; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention therefore call upon Standing Committees and bishops with jurisdiction to exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.¹⁵

The limit of that power is demonstrated by 2009-D025, which stated:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention recognize that gay and lesbian persons who are part of such [committed and exclusive] relationships have responded to God's call and have exercised various ministries in and on behalf of God's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and are currently doing so in our midst; and be it further

¹⁴ Archbishop Benjamin Nwankiti, *The Lambeth Conferences and the Growth of the Anglican Communion* (Owerri, Nigeria: Springfield Publishers, 2000) p. 10

¹⁵ Resolution 2006-B003 of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, from the Archives of the Episcopal Church website - http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution-complete.pl?resolution=2006-B033 (accessed 15/07/2013)

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention affirm that God has called and may call such individuals, to any ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church, and that God's call to the ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church is a mystery which the Church attempts to discern for all people through our discernment processes acting in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church.¹⁶

In March 2010, less than a year after the passing of this Resolution, Mary Douglas Glasspool, an openly gay cleric, was appointed Suffragan Bishop of Los Angeles.

Cultural and ecclesiastical context is important in this situation, as bishops must work their way up through the ranks, and function in their broader social milieu. In Uganda, for example, where homosexuality is harshly proscribed, it is extremely unlikely that an openly gay-friendly person would ever be ordained, let alone become a bishop. In the USA, where attitudes vary from gay-friendly New York or California to highly conservative Bible-belt areas, for example, with further variations at local level – not all New Yorkers are pro-gay, not all people from the Mid-West are theologically conservative – a very broad range of opinions are possible within one Province or Diocese, as evinced by the split in TEC.

In the Church of England, however, a combination of the desire to maintain a broad national church and the fact that bishops are appointed by small committees tends to produce an episcopate which is more uniform than the Church of England as a whole, and broadly liberal. Whereas in a province like TEC, where bishops are elected and represent, after a fashion, the variety of their dioceses, in the Church of England there is the opposite tendency, with clergy of a particular churchmanship or disposition displaying a tendency to homogenise as they approach the episcopate – or, more likely, with only those thought to be sufficiently homogenised making it through the Episcopal selection process.

The danger of this situation producing an effect of episcopal cloning, in which the bishops become effectively self-selecting and are considerably more representative of each other than of the wider Church of England, is recognised not just by

¹⁶ Resolution 2009-D025, *ibid.*, from the Episcopal Church General Convention 2009 website - http://gc2009.org/ViewLegislation/view_leg_detail.aspx?id=986&type=Final (accessed 12/08/2012)

individual critics such as Gareth Bennett (see chapter 3). A 2001 report on Episcopal selection published by the Archbishop's Council stated:

The preponderance of suffragan bishops among those who become diocesan bishops is problematic... Suffragan bishops are appointed by diocesan bishops. The appointment is **usually** [my emphasis] made after consultation, as **recommended** [my emphasis] by the report *Senior Church Appointments* (GS 1019, 1992) but diocesan bishops differ as to the degree which they consult and the extent to which their decision is affected by the views of others. While some diocesans appoint as suffragans those who complement them in terms of experience, skills, opinions and personality type, some believe that other diocesans are inclined to appoint people like themselves.

It is difficult to see how diocesan bishops appointing people who “complement them” is any more likely to ensure variety than appointing people “like themselves”, especially since, as the passage admits, the existence of consultation, its breadth, and whether or not any attention is paid to the results, is entirely discretionary. The report continues:

If a significant proportion of the pool of candidates consisted of suffragans similar to the diocesan who appointed them, this could produce a ‘cloning’ effect. Furthermore, the principal (and only named) source of ‘reference’-type material about each candidate considered by the CAC [Crown Appointments Commission] is his current diocesan bishop.

The report continues in a way which makes it abundantly clear that the scenario described is, in reality, far from hypothetical:

Thus, 90% of those who now become diocesan bishops are selected, largely on the basis of a reference from a diocesan bishop, from a pool created by diocesan bishops.¹⁷

On this evidence it would seem that, if anything, Vaughan Bennett understated the problem. Once sympathy for modernism and liberalism combined became embedded in the episcopate in the early 20th century (see chapter 1) it has proved essentially self-replicating.

¹⁷ *Working with the Spirit: choosing diocesan bishops; a review of the operation of the Crown Appointments Commission and related matters* (London: Church House Publishing, 2001) p. 18 para. 2.9

The report goes on to propose means of increasing diversity within the episcopate, and of ensuring that the episcopate is more representative. This is highly laudable, if one is in a reformed church where congregational approval is essential to validate ordained ministry. It is highly counter-productive if one is operating an Apostolic episcopal college as a guarantee of Catholic sacramental and doctrinal unity. It is completely bewildering if one is, like the Church of England, attempting to do both at the same time. In the Catholic case, in which the job of the episcopal college is to convey the sacramental and doctrinal authority of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, via episcopally-conferred Apostolic Succession, to its local dioceses, there is a need for more episcopal cloning, in the shape of adherence to agreed church teaching, not less, as the Anglican Communion has recently tried to ensure (see discussion of the Anglican Communion Covenant, below p. 120-127). If the Church of England can be genuinely described as ‘Catholic and Reformed’, it is not a uniform mixture; it is Reformed from the diocese down, Catholic from the diocese up, and the bishop in the middle must juggle these contradictory requirements (see chapter 1).

This institutional schizophrenia, in which the bishops are required to be ever-more representative and varied at local level but ever-more uniform and collegiate at Province level, has been replicated at Communion level. A damning verdict on the effects of this situation is provided by Edward Norman, as also seen in chapter 1:

The most telling difficulty about “dispersed authority” is that over four centuries of its operation in the Church of England has produced what most acknowledge: a crisis of identity, a crisis of unity, and an inability to adduce a coherent ecclesiology. It is hard to imagine that divine providence, disclosed in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can have entrusted the presence of Christ in the World to such an ideological shambles.¹⁸

It must be noted that this is not a piece of anti-Anglican polemic by an embittered outsider. This is a frank opinion of the state of Anglican authority delivered at the Lambeth Conference, by invitation, by the Canon Treasurer of York Minster.

¹⁸ Edward Norman, *Authority in the Anglican Communion*, 1998

The impact of the ability of Anglican bishops across the Communion to hold an immense range of opinions, has recently placed great strain on the catholic sacramental ecclesiology of the Communion:

Within the wider context of the mission and ministry of the whole Church, the local diocese is often seen as basic to the life and unity of the local Church. This unity is personified and symbolised in the person of the Bishop. Under God, the bishop leads the local Church in its mission to the world. Among other things the bishop is:

- a) a symbol of the Unity of the Church in its mission;
- b) a teacher and defender of the faith;
- c) a pastor of the pastors and of the laity;
- d) an enabler in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments;
- e) a leader in mission and an initiator of outreach to the wider world surrounding the community of the faithful;
- f) a shepherd who nurtures and cares for the flock of God;
- g) a physician to whom are brought the wounds of society;
- h) a voice of conscience within the society in which the local church is placed;
- i) a prophet who proclaims the justice of God in the context of the Gospel of loving redemption;
- j) a head of the family in its wholeness, its misery and its joy. The bishop is the centre of the family's life and love.¹⁹

In light of the 25 years subsequent to this statement being put out, with the rise of the Anglican realignment and calls for alternative episcopal oversight, it would be all too easy to dismiss this statement as wishful thinking. After all, how can the Bishops be symbols of unity, and teachers and defenders of the faith, when many of them have broken Communion with each other and are in disagreement with each other, with their clergy and with their flocks as to what the doctrines and practical implications of the faith are?

¹⁹ *The Truth Shall Make You Free, Report of the 1988 Lambeth Conference* (London; 1988) p. 61, quoted in *Episcopal Ministry*, 1990

The problem, however, does not lie with the theory of what a bishop should be *per se*, but with the absence of any theological authority to ensure the reasonable level of uniformity between the Bishops that is required *given that theory*; the expectation that Bishops and Archbishops can be regarded by their clergy, by their flocks and by each other in this exalted manner (virtually) regardless of their actions or their doctrinal positions is what is unreasonable and unrealistic. Anglican episcopacy is geographic, and objective; a bishop is a bishop, regardless of controversial views, and the system obliges parishioners, clergy, bishops and other provinces to acknowledge the authority of Anglican Communion bishops, as individuals and as a collegiate sacramental body, whilst placing little or no commensurate obligation on the bishops and provinces to uphold an agreed minimum standard of doctrinal teaching. The sheer amount of cultural, moral, philosophical and theological variety being squeezed into a sacramental system predicated on relative uniformity meant difficulties were inevitable, but there is no built-in flexibility for when they arise.

The fact that individual Anglican congregations, unlike their counterparts in other Protestant denominations, do not possess the right to dissociate themselves from their geographical diocese or province in the event of doctrinal disagreement is further demonstrated by the fact that the ownership of the property which makes the functioning of a congregation possible is generally in the hands of the diocese, not the congregation. A series of increasingly acrimonious legal proceedings in the United States have found in most cases that church real estate belongs to the diocese; congregations considered to have left the church can therefore be required to leave their buildings. The bishop and the diocese, not the congregation, is the basic legal, financial and operational entity of Anglicanism, as much as it is the basic sacramental and doctrinal entity.²⁰

The Anglican Realignment and alternative episcopal oversight provide a solution, of sorts (since departing parishes must still abandon their churches and chattels), to this uncomfortable situation, but it is one with serious implications for the episcopal

²⁰ For example, in Virginia, in May 2012, 11 congregations who left ECUSA over its stance on homosexuality were evicted, after years of legal proceedings, from their churches - <http://www.christianpost.com/news/breakaway-anglican-congregation-has-its-last-sunday-at-va-property-74927/> (accessed 18/09/2013)

ecclesiology of the Anglican Communion. To normalise a situation in which dissenting parishes and dioceses can transfer their allegiance to a different bishop whose doctrinal principles they are more comfortable with, regardless of geography, would effectively change the polity of the Anglican Communion, and its individual member Churches, from episcopal in the sense understood by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches to a congregational polity, in which the fundamental unit of worship and Church life is the congregation. The Anglican Communion would effectively change from a Catholic sacramental union to a conventionally Protestant grouping of churches, more loosely bound together by shared heritage and liturgy, in which the validity of ordination and episcopacy is based upon the teaching of the individual pastors and bishops, as judged by the members of congregations, rather than on a single standard of Apostolic Succession and Orders.

This situation would be more congenial to some parts of the Anglican Communion than to others. It aligns more naturally with the evangelical conception of what a bishop is, and how the church should be organised, than it does with the conservative or liberal catholic position; the Diocese of Sydney, for example, already emphasises the congregation as the most important unit of Christian worship and organisation.²¹ Changes such as these could also have potentially worrying implications for some bishops, and Church of England bishops in particular. English bishops are currently appointed by the Crown, on the advice of a small committee, to dioceses whose boundaries and parishes are fixed by national law. Bishops are neither appointed by nor answerable for their remaining in office to, the people they oversee. Only 4 members of the Diocesan Vacancy in See Committee, chosen by that Committee, have a direct role in the appointment. A system which normalises dissatisfied parishes walking away from one bishop and moving to another could open up a more competitive episcopal marketplace, potentially end the notion of being a bishop as a 'job for life', and transfer considerable power away from the episcopate to local level.

Is there another solution to these problems, however, which does not involve such a radical change to Anglican polity? The obvious solution, if one can neither prevent

²¹ Porter, *Sydney Anglicans*, p.17-18

controversy from arising nor make the system flexible enough to get around it, is to bite the bullet and provide a system by which the Anglican Communion can set and apply minimum standards of doctrinal uniformity – to give it, at last, the higher level ecclesiology which it has lacked since the first Lambeth Conference's declaration of absolute provincial autonomy. This is by no means an easy option; persuading churches and provinces, used to great liberty of action and interpretation, to abandon these freedoms and submit to Communion judgement would not be easy. Such an effort would also be open to the charge that it is creating a curial and magisterial authority for the church which is incompatible with the reformed nature of Anglicanism. It would also be opposed by the more radical liberals, against whom it would clearly be directed, and any concessions to them would ensure conservative opposition in turn.

If it was easy to provide Anglicanism with an ecclesiology it would have had one by now, and the most recent attempt, in the form of the Anglican Communion Covenant, was always going to face an uphill struggle. It had its origins in the 1998 Lambeth Conference, and the subsequent New Westminster and New Hampshire decisions. The Archbishop of Canterbury (Rowan Williams) requested the Lambeth Commission on Communion:

1. to examine and report to him by 30th September 2004, in preparation for the ensuing meetings of the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council, on the legal and theological implications flowing from the decisions of the Episcopal Church (USA) to appoint a priest in a committed same sex relationship as one of its bishops, and of the Diocese of New Westminster to authorise services for use in connection with same sex unions, and specifically on the canonical understandings of communion, impaired and broken communion, and the ways in which provinces of the Anglican Communion may relate to one another in situations where the ecclesiastical authorities of one province feel unable to maintain the fullness of communion with another part of the Anglican Communion.

The Commission was further requested:

2. within their report, to include practical recommendations (including reflection on emerging patterns of provision for episcopal oversight for those Anglicans within a particular jurisdiction, where full communion

within a province is under threat) for maintaining the highest degree of communion that may be possible in the circumstances resulting from these decisions, both within and between the churches of the Anglican Communion.

3. thereafter, as soon as practicable, and with particular reference to the issues raised in Section IV of the Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998, to make recommendations to the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council, as to the exceptional circumstances and conditions under which, and the means by which, it would be appropriate for the Archbishop of Canterbury to exercise an extraordinary ministry of episcopate (pastoral oversight), support and reconciliation with regard to the internal affairs of a province other than his own for the sake of maintaining communion with the said province and between the said province and the rest of the Anglican Communion.²²

The results of the Commission's deliberations were produced in the Windsor Report, paragraph 118 of which stated:

This Commission recommends, therefore, and urges the primates to consider, the adoption by the churches of the Communion of a common Anglican Covenant which would make explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection which govern the relationships between the churches of the Communion.²³

This recommendation was taken up as the Anglican Communion Covenant, the final text of which was approved and distributed by the Anglican Communion Standing Committee in November 2009.²⁴

The most controversial part of the Covenant was contained in Section IV, which dealt with the maintenance of Communion relationships:

(4.2.4) Where a shared mind has not been reached the matter shall be referred to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee shall make every effort to facilitate agreement, and may take advice from such bodies as

²² From the Mandate of the Lambeth Communion Commission, *The Windsor Report 2004* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004) p. 8

²³ *Ibid.* p. 48

²⁴ "An Anglican Covenant" from the Anglican Communion website - <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/index.cfm> (accessed 15/07/2013)

it deems appropriate to determine a view on the nature of the matter at question and those relational consequences which may result. Where appropriate, the Standing Committee shall refer the question to both the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting for advice.

(4.2.5) The Standing Committee may request a Church to defer a controversial action. If a Church declines to defer such action, the Standing Committee may recommend to any Instrument of Communion relational consequences which may specify a provisional limitation of participation in, or suspension from, that Instrument until the completion of the process set out below.

(4.2.6) On the basis of advice received from the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting, the Standing Committee may make a declaration that an action or decision is or would be "incompatible with the Covenant".

(4.2.7) On the basis of the advice received, the Standing Committee shall make recommendations as to relational consequences which flow from an action incompatible with the Covenant. These recommendations may be addressed to the Churches of the Anglican Communion or to the Instruments of the Communion and address the extent to which the decision of any covenanting Church impairs or limits the communion between that Church and the other Churches of the Communion, and the practical consequences of such impairment or limitation. Each Church or each Instrument shall determine whether or not to accept such recommendations.²⁵

The effect of these clauses would have been to give the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion, in consultation with the other Instruments, the ability to recommend that a province engaging in teaching or practice deemed "incompatible with the Covenant" be suspended from Communion Instruments and, in effect, declared to be in a state of impaired communion. Whilst still stopping far short of Conciliar or Magisterial authority, this would have created a Communion-wide ability to rule on the legitimacy of actions by hitherto autonomous national or territorial provinces for the first time.

When the Covenant came before General Synod in November 2010, arguments were made for and against. The focus of the arguments against was that the centralisation of authority which the opponents believed the Covenant to represent was out of kilter for a church which had been built on resistance to central authority,

²⁵ "The Anglican Communion Covenant" from the Anglican Communion website - <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/final/text.cfm> (accessed 15/07/2013)

and which was supposed to be a voluntary union of independent churches. Rev. Mark Beach stated:

At the heart of my concerns lies the distinction made by Roman Catholic ecclesiologists between a top-down and a bottom-up ecclesiology. The former is represented by an authoritarianism which seems to me to be contrary to the spirit of Anglicanism. However, it is precisely what I see in the Covenant. The latter, the bottom-up approach, listens carefully to the local Church, to its narrative, to its culture, to see how the whole can best respond. I have already referred to the importance of listening, and acknowledge that the Covenant does indeed encourage this; but the encouragement is, in my view, outweighed by the heavy-handedness of the rest of the document.²⁶

This stance was echoed outside Synod by Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch, on becoming patron of the 'No Anglican Covenant' Campaign, who stated:

Anglicanism was born in the Reformation's rejection of an unwarranted and unhistorical over-centralization of ecclesiastical authority... This pernicious proposal of a Covenant (an unhappy choice of name if you know anything about our Church's history) ignores the Anglican Communion's past, and seeks to gridlock the Anglican present at the cost of a truly Anglican future.²⁷

The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke in favour of the Covenant; he denied that a new central authority was being created:

I sometimes use the phrase for the Anglican aspiration as looking towards 'consensual Catholicism', that is, a genuinely global and coherent fellowship of Churches which exists by people being willing to bind themselves to one another and to be accountable to one another rather than be subject to one central authority, and I do want to resist very strongly the suggestion that Covenant proposes or creates a central authority. The organs that attempt through the Covenant to discern the status of various questions, the seriousness of various traditions, are all of them organs that exist through election by the provinces of the Communion, including this one. So we are not suddenly creating an ecclesiastical authority in mid-air, completely separate from the ways in which local Churches, including ours, work.

The Archbishop also acknowledged the tensions between the global scope of the Anglican Communion and the nature of local Churches:

²⁶ *Report of Proceedings 2010, General Synod, November Group of Sessions*, p. 84, from the Church of England website - <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1178990/november%202010.pdf> (accessed 15/07/2013)

²⁷ Press Release of January 31 2012 on the No Anglican Covenant website - <http://noanglican covenant.org/pr9.pdf> (accessed 15/07/2013)

As we have been reminded, context is vastly important, but at the same time our context in the Communion is a global one, not merely a local one. Naturally the tensions between global and local are real, and they are not going to get any easier; but we do not, I think, solve our problem simply by appeal to context while forgetting the global context in which we as Anglicans here seek to be part of, responsible to, the mission of Anglicans elsewhere, as they seek to be part of and responsible to the mission we seek to exercise.²⁸

The Bishop of Blackburn, also speaking in favour of the motion, referred to the gap in Anglican doctrinal authority:

I believe that the Anglican Communion has needed a... solution for some time now, to enable us not least to decide which of our differences may need to divide us and which of those differences clearly do not need to divide us. As we have heard, many Churches do have a mechanism for making such decisions but, with no Petrine ministry, no curia, no hierarchical decision-making structure, how do we do it?

What do we have instead? Perhaps only the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates' Meeting, which together with the Archbishop of Canterbury make up, as we have heard, our four instruments of unity – all of which are essentially consultative. We are therefore left with a real gap and, frankly, saying that that does not matter and therefore doing nothing is just not an option.²⁹

Further concerns were raised about stifling innovation and local mission, but the main thrust of the debate was between strengthening the bonds of Communion on the one hand and opposition to a central doctrinal authority as un-Anglican on the other – as tried and tested an Anglican dispute as could be.

With the greatest of respect to the Archbishop, it is difficult to see how giving the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion the right to bring 'relational consequences' to bear on Provinces can be interpreted as not creating a central authority, even if the emphasis is on mutual accountability – to hold a Province accountable would require authority. However, the motion to approve the Covenant text and send it to Diocesan Synods for consideration passed without difficulty; a division by Houses produced the following results:

²⁸ *Report of Proceedings* p. 87

²⁹ *Report of Proceedings* p. 96

	<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>	<u>Abstentions</u>
House of Bishops	39	0	1
House of Clergy	145	32	11
House of Laity	147	25	8 ³⁰

At this point one could be forgiven for thinking that the Anglican Communion Covenant would be relatively uncontroversial, at least in the Church of England. Despite the voices raised against it, it passed General Synod by an overwhelming margin; it may be suggested (as it was during the debate) that the motion was purely procedural – to send the Covenant texts to the Dioceses for approval – but it seems unlikely that, had the text been disapproved of by Synod, the members would not have rejected it there and then.

The same expectation had prevailed in 1927/28, however, when the revised Prayer Book had passed the Church Assembly. However, as was discovered then, what seemed reasonable within the Church Assembly/General Synod, looking at the wider picture at provincial level, did not seem as reasonable when laid before the lower echelons of the Church of England, represented in 1927/8 by the House of Commons³¹, and in 2011 by the Diocesan Synods. In the Diocesan Synods, 88% of the Bishops voted for the Covenant, but 59% of the Synods rejected it. Diocesan Synods have already acquired a reputation for supporting their bishop (as discussed in chapter 3), but in this case they did not. At a more local level, the Protestant (even if not portrayed as such) emphasis on localised authority seems to have prevailed, whereas at the higher, institutional level, the more catholic position of strengthening sacramental unity carried the day.

As in 1927/8, with the more liberal and catholic revised Prayer Book, the desire to strengthen the basis of sacramental unity by ensuring a level of doctrinal uniformity ran full tilt into Anglicanism's Reformation-rooted emphasis on the local church, and the Anglican Communion Covenant ultimately failed to be adopted. The problem is neither the looseness of Protestant scriptural and congregational ecclesiology nor the level of uniformity required by catholic sacramental ecclesiology, but the attempt

³⁰ Ibid. p. 108

³¹ See Chapter 3

to combine them across a bewildering geographical, cultural, philosophical and theological range.

The result of this situation leaves the Anglican Realignment, or at least the principles which it represents, very much leading the field in the race to provide a solution to this crisis. Alternative episcopal oversight is not without precedent as an approved, official procedure: the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993 provided for the appointment of Provincial Episcopal Visitors, otherwise known as Flying Bishops, to provide alternative episcopal oversight to those Church of England parishes who could not accept the oversight of their geographical bishop if he ordained women to the priesthood.

If the disagreements over sexuality, and the broader divisions between traditional Christian doctrines and the influence of secular society which underlie them, are to prove too intractable for the system of geographically-defined episcopacy and sacramental episcopal collegiality, it would seem that either the Anglican Communion finds a way to move forward, and voluntarily adjust its polity to match the level of unity it is able to achieve, or groups like FCA will do it for them. This prospect was alluded to during the Anglican Covenant debate in General Synod by the Bishop of Blackburn:

Looking back at our history over the last 20 years, particularly the last ten, it is abundantly clear that we need something further. That something, of course, cannot be anything that will change the nature of the Anglican Communion; but if we do not have that something further, we will change the nature of the Communion because we will almost certainly find parts of the Communion re-grouping into a looser federation, and that is not the Anglican Communion.³²

With this, we arrive at the Anglican Realignment and alternative episcopal oversight. Having now examined the crisis of comprehensiveness in the 20th century, the development of episcopacy, synodical governance and the issues of wide variety at Anglican Communion level, the task for the next 3 chapters, which form part 2 of this thesis, is to examine the historical precedents for the Anglican Realignment and the development of alternative episcopal oversight up to the present day.

³² *Report of Proceedings* p. 99

Part 2 – The Anglican Realignment

Chapter 5

Historical Precedents

As was established in the previous chapters, the Anglican Communion is dealing with a major crisis in faith and morals, identity and doctrinal authority, which has manifested itself most obviously in the Anglican Realignment and demands for, and unilateral moves to create, alternative episcopal oversight. The term Anglican Realignment describes not only the realignment of authority and power within the Anglican Communion away from the previously dominant and relatively liberal Western Churches, such as the Church of England and The Episcopal Church in the United States, towards the more populous (in terms of practicing Anglicans) and as a rule more conservative Global South, but also the trend for conservative parishes, dioceses and individual Anglicans in the West to abandon their historical and geographical provinces and dioceses and turn to the Global South for leadership and oversight – a trend exemplified by the Anglican Church in North America and potentially by the nascent Anglican Mission in England (AMiE).

The roots of this identity and authority vacuum in global Anglicanism can, as previous chapters have demonstrated, be traced directly to the English Reformation and the reopening of those divisions in the 19th century which, due to its preoccupation with national unity and the divisions between Catholics and Protestants, produced a Church of England in which authority and identity were wielded by and related to the nation state, produced the system of doctrinal liberalism, dispersed authority and elevated but unclear episcopacy described in the first 3 chapters. Whilst the relationship between the nation and the Church was giving way during the 19th century, and the Church of England was enduring a renewed period of controversy between those who regarded the Church of England as fundamentally Protestant and those who regarded it as fundamentally Catholic, the Anglican Communion was born, which placed an absolute emphasis on the independence of each province but somewhat counter-intuitively emphasised the Catholic notion of sacramental unity and ecclesiological inter-dependence between bishops of different provinces at the same time, as discussed in chapter 4.

By the mid-20th century, the Catholic Revival pioneered by the Oxford movement had come to dominate Anglican attitudes to ecclesiology, but without solving the on-going problem that a catholic sacramental communion requires a certain level of uniformity of teaching on faith and morals, or at least a shared willingness to agree that different stances on contentious attitudes do not impair communion; the first the Anglican Communion has never possessed and is never realistically likely to possess, and the second has proved elusive where the issue of sexuality is concerned. To put it simply, a global sacramental communion needs some sort of criteria, some sort of fixed doctrinal reference point or shared exegetic principles, by which these disputes can be resolved one way or another; without one, there is no way to prevent the sort of crisis which has occurred and is still occurring over the issue of homosexuality, both across the Communion and in individual provinces.

Attitudes towards, and the practice of, homosexuality is an issue which for many Anglicans validates or invalidates an individual's ministry, but there is no agreed mechanism to either define an Anglican position on homosexuality to which Anglican ministers must adhere or to decide that the issue is actually not a matter of faith; for some people it is, and for some people it is not, and there is no method of deciding who is right and wrong beyond personal opinion. As a result of this, there exists a state of impaired communion (i.e. provinces, dioceses and congregations with conservative views on human sexuality and morality have declared that they no longer recognise the ministry and authority of those provinces and dioceses who have taken a progressive stance on the issue, and in particular The Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada).

It is within this context that the Anglican Realignment must be viewed, and the purpose of this chapter is to examine that movement and its historical origins in detail. Since the focus of this thesis is the implications of these global developments for the Church of England, the first question which must be tackled is whether or not these developments actually have any. After all, the relationship between the Church of England and the state is unique within the Anglican Communion. The Church of England is established, maintained and governed by English statute law under the authority of the Crown in Parliament, and whilst that situation remains unchanged, so

does the Church of England; thus theoretically, whilst its external relations with the other independent provinces of the Anglican Communion might change, the internal order, existence and purpose of the Church of England is protected by the establishment.

Legally, this is undeniably true. In practice, however, it depends upon the legally-regulated and structured Church of England remaining the only large-scale and viable expression of Anglicanism within its own territory, and it is precisely that which the Anglican Realignment has the potential to challenge. The law regarding the Church of England as the established church may still be in place, but the law which prevented dissenting churches from setting themselves up as direct rivals to it and placed non-members under a variety of interdictions has been gradually replaced, since the early 19th century, with freedom of religion. If disaffected Anglicans wish to set up rival Anglican churches alongside the official Church of England ones, the law will no longer discriminate between them.

The Non-Jurors

Anglicanism, as an 'ism', has long ceased to be the exclusive property of the Church of England under the Crown in Parliament. The first group to attempt it following the Great Ejection were the Non-Jurors, who from the late 17th century to the mid-to-late 18th century maintained a separate Church structure still loyal to the ousted Stuart royal line. Approximately 400 Church of England clergy and 9 Bishops began the Non-Juring movement when they refused to swear the oath of allegiance to William and Mary after the 1688-9 revolution, and were thus deprived of their sees and livings. The Non-Jurors, whilst the cause of their schism was effectively political rather than an issue of faith or morals, do provide an early example of the possible fate which awaits small breakaway groups from the Church of England; they never captured the attention of a sufficient number of Church members in England to make much of an impact on the established Church. As the eighteenth century progressed they dwindled, and with the final defeat of political Jacobitism at Culloden in 1745 they more or less vanished entirely. When Charles Edward Stuart died in 1788 the Jacobite claim to the thrones of Britain passed to his younger brother Henry, who as

a Roman Catholic Cardinal dropped the claim, and thus doomed English Non-Juring to the pages of history.¹

Whilst in England Non-Juring was bound up with Jacobitism, and thus failed to make a great impact from the start and dwindled with it, in Scotland the effect was seismic. The Scottish Episcopal Church, largely composed of Non-Jurors, found itself disestablished in favour of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1690, and thus became the first viable and enduring branch of Anglicanism to exist entirely independently of the Crown. It brought with it a distinctive national identity, fixed geographical boundaries, and an enduring sense of independence and purpose separate from that of the Church of England. It can thus be claimed as the precursor of the Anglican Communion system which would be adopted during the 19th century, and which has such significance for the Anglican Realignment; the complete independence of Provinces, insisted upon by the first Lambeth Conference in 1867 (see Chapter 4) was thus an established fact long before the Anglican Communion itself existed, and the mode of its existence and function was effectively imposed upon it by default. This was not the first time that an Anglican institution would be arranged to fit around a set of existing circumstances, rather than in accordance with long-standing theological and doctrinal clarity and nor would it be the last (see previous chapters). The saying goes that if one marries a child of the times one becomes a widow within a generation; can the same be said of the Anglican Communion, designed in the mid-19th century and struggling to function in the early 21st?

Thus to the Scottish Episcopal Church goes the credit of having been the first independent Anglican 'province'; it would not, however, recognise itself as simply a province but as an independent national church in the episcopal Protestant tradition (hence the inverted commas). The very word episcopal speaks volumes in this context, born as it was in the context of a desire to assert independence from England both politically and religiously; thus whilst in Canada there is the Anglican Church in Canada, in the United States there is very definitely the Episcopal Church.

¹ Alice Shield, *Henry Cardinal Stuart and his Times*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1908)

In the wake of the American Revolution, Anglicans in the former 13 colonies faced a similar issue. Whilst the Scottish Non-Juring Bishops had been created before the disestablishment, and could thus maintain an Episcopal line without further reference to the Church of England and its Bishops, Anglicans in the new United States were under the Episcopal oversight of the Bishop of London, who at that time had responsibility for all the members of the Church of England dispersing across the growing Empire. Since Church of England Bishops were obliged to administer the Oath of Allegiance to the Crown, which the United States had just overthrown, upon anyone they consecrated, some of the American Anglicans turned to the independent Scottish Episcopal Church to create an Episcopal line for the Episcopal Church in America; Samuel Seabury was consecrated as the first American Bishop, of the see of Connecticut, by John Skinner, Bishop of Aberdeen, in 1784². In England, meanwhile, the problem of Bishops in the new United States being required to swear the Oath of Allegiance to the English Crown was resolved by the passage through Parliament of the 1786 Consecration of Bishops Abroad Act, allowing Anglican bishops in the United States to be consecrated by the Church of England without their having to take the oath³. Non-Juring may have died out in England, but in those states not subject to the British Empire (the Scots were partners in it, rather than subjects of it) it became the norm, and thus established the principle of national independence within the sphere of Anglicanism which the much later Anglican Communion Covenant would seek (unsuccessfully at the time of writing, and in all likelihood in perpetuity) to reign in. With the permanent establishment of Non-Juring churches, the only body with the ability to definitively establish doctrine and practice for all Anglicans – the English Crown in Parliament – was reduced to one body amongst many.

At the same time as it unravelled this aspect of Anglican identity and authority, however, the establishment of the Non-Juring Churches in this way helped to cement another – episcopacy – and it is here that direct connections to the Anglican Realignment can be found. When the Episcopal Church in the United States needed to establish itself as an independent body, the first thing it did was to request

² Edgar Legare Pennington, *Scottish Bishops and their Consecrators from the Restoration of the Scottish Episcopate (1661) to the Consecration of Bishop Seabury (1784)* (Hartford, CT: Church Missions Publishing Company, 1941) p. 3

³ See Chapter 1, p. 10

Episcopal oversight from overseas Bishops, about whose Episcopal validity there was no question. To do without bishops, or simply to create its own from amongst its Presbyters without the need for any further validation, did not cross its mind:

He [Rev. Dr. William Smith, later consecrated Bishop in England] called it the "Protestant Episcopal Church." This name, which still obtains, does not seem to have been the result of any special thought or deliberation, but was adopted unconsciously as the title which best expressed the fact...

...in common with all the Churchmen of their time, they assumed that they were Protestant; – Episcopacy was their differentiate. They combined the two facts and gave the Church its present name.⁴

Seabury, elected as a prospective Bishop by a convention in Connecticut in 1783, sought consecration first in England, and having been thwarted by the Oath of Supremacy, was consecrated by the Scottish Episcopal Church in Aberdeen; it was not until 1787 that American Bishops were consecrated in England by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The determination of the first American Bishops to seek what they saw as valid Episcopal consecration from overseas (the only place they could seek it, given the way they defined it), even from the Imperial power they had just thrown off, speaks volumes about episcopacy as the single greatest sign of valid and authentic Anglican identity. Predictably, this was not accepted by everyone; if the Southern States, where a lower church outlook prevailed than in high church New England, had had their way the independent successor to the Church of England might have looked very different. But they did not, and the importance of a valid Episcopal succession as a marker of legitimacy was assured.

Moving forward in time, we can see a similar dynamic at work in the Anglican Realignment. The first steps towards an Anglican Realignment along North American lines were taken with the creation of the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) in July 2011. This organisation describes itself as:

⁴ McConnell, S. D., *History of the American Episcopal Church* (London: A. R. Mowbray and Co., 1916) p. 220

...a society within the Church of England dedicated to the conversion of England and biblical church planting. There is a steering committee and a panel of bishops. The bishops aim to provide effective oversight in collaboration with senior clergy.⁵

Given that the churches and people associated with the Anglican Realignment are mostly set firmly within the Conservative Evangelical tradition, which more than any other stream within Anglicanism downplays the importance and sacramental nature of episcopacy, and even the need for it at all, this desire to identify itself with episcopacy seems all the more remarkable. Nevertheless, the crucial issue for the Anglican Realignment is alternative episcopal oversight. They do not want simply to ignore the bishops they disagree with (which many people, including many Conservative Evangelicals, would say they have been doing for decades anyway; see quotation from Canon Chris Sugden, chapter 7. P. 194) and set up a more conventionally Protestant, congregational alternative to the Church of England, as the Puritans might have done prior to 1662. They want a system of episcopacy which is free from the modernising and liberal tendencies which they repudiate.

AMiE churches have not been planted with the agreement, let alone the collaboration, of either the relevant diocese or the existing parish incumbent. This suggests that the claim of AMiE to be “within” the Church of England in the quote above does not seem to include the formal operational and organisational structure. The immediate response of Lambeth Palace to the formation of AMiE makes the sense of unease at the actions of the new society clear:

The announcement of the creation an 'Anglican Mission in England' prompts concern for a number of reasons.

... it is not at all clear how the proposed panel of bishops relate to the proper oversight of the diocesan bishops of the Church of England. Nor is there any definition of what the issues are that might be thought to justify appeal to such a panel rather than the use of normal procedures.⁶

⁵ “New Anglican Mission Society Announced” from the Anglican Mission in England website - <http://anglicanmissioninengland.org/new-anglican-mission-society-announced> (accessed 15/07/2013)

⁶ Rowan Williams, *A Statement from Lambeth Palace* from the Lambeth Palace website - <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/2117/a-statement-from-lambeth-palace> (accessed 15/07/2013)

The Lambeth Palace communique can be forgiven for exercising a certain diplomatic language; it can be seen from the actions of AMiE that the proposed panel of bishops does **not** relate to the proper oversight of the diocesan bishops of the Church of England, in any way currently recognised by Canon Law, as the communique goes on to hint:

Furthermore, the ordination of three English candidates to the diaconate in Kenya with a view to service in England is problematic. It is not clear what process of recognised scrutiny and formation has taken place and how, in the absence of Letters Dismissory (the relevant formal letters from the sponsoring bishop), they have come to be recommended as candidates for ordination by the authorities of another province.

The Lambeth Palace communique suggests that there is uncertainty as to what issues would justify side-stepping the accepted procedures of the Church of England in this way; established procedures for missionary planting would normally involve going through the Fresh Expressions initiative, an interdenominational programme launched by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, which has encouraged and established church plants across the country:

The Fresh Expressions organisation exists to encourage and support the fresh expressions movement, working with Christians from a variety of denominations and traditions. The initiative has resulted in hundreds of new congregations being formed alongside more traditional churches. It was started in 2004 by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York with the Methodist Council, but now involves an unparalleled range of partners.

The team has worked at grass roots level with dioceses, districts synods and groups of churches and has played a leading role in the formation of national policy in a number of denominations.⁷

The issues which would justify the actions of AMiE in acting outside established church protocol and structures are quite clear, however, from their own statements, even if they do not use the word ‘homosexuality’:

The AMiE has been encouraged in this development by the Primates’ Council of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (GAFCON) who said in a communiqué from Nairobi in May 2011: “We remain convinced that from

⁷ “About Us” from the Fresh Expressions website - <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/about> (accessed 15/07/2013)

within the Provinces which we represent there are creative ways by which we can support those who have been alienated so that they can remain within the Anglican family.”⁸

This quote demonstrates the crucial issue – remaining within the Anglican family. The Anglicanism of AMiE is made much more difficult to deny because AMiE and its churches, like those of the Anglican Church in North America which began in much the same way, retain an undeniable link through the support both of bishops from foreign provinces and through retired bishops closer to home. Whilst the support of bishops from overseas provides an immediate link to the Non-Juring origins of the Episcopal Church in the USA, the issue of retired bishops brings out the uniquely English dichotomy which exists within Church of England episcopacy.

According to AMiE:

Episcopal oversight is provided by a panel of bishops who include Bishop John Ball, an assistant bishop in the Diocese of Chelmsford and former suffragan bishop in Tanzania, Bishop Colin Bazley, assistant bishop in the Diocese of Chester, former Bishop of Chile and former Presiding Bishop of the Southern Cone, Bishop John Ellison, an assistant bishop in the Diocese of Winchester and former Bishop of Paraguay and Bishop Michael Nazir Ali, former Bishop of Rochester, originally from Pakistan.⁹

What all these bishops have in common is the fact that they are retired; as they are no longer serving diocesan or suffragan bishops of the Church of England (and in two cases never were), they no longer hold the office in order to perform which they swore the Oath of Allegiance and the Oath of Due Obedience. Whilst the Canons state that...

Where any bishop, priest or deacon ceases to hold office in the Church of England or otherwise ceases to serve in any place he continues to owe canonical obedience in all things lawful and honest to the archbishop of the province or the bishop of the diocese (as the case may be) in which he resides for the time being.¹⁰

⁸ *New Anglican Mission Society Announced*

⁹ “About the Anglican Mission in England” from the AMiE website –

<http://anglicanmissioninengland.org/about-anglican-mission-england-amie>

¹⁰ Church of England Canons, 7th edition, Section C1.4 - <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/canons/section-c.aspx>

...there remains the undeniable fact that a retired bishop is effectively immune from whatever sanctions such as censure or loss of office that his superiors might once have been able to apply to him. He no longer holds office from the Queen as a bishop, in the state Church of England, but owing to this clause...

No person who has been admitted to the order of bishop, priest, or deacon can ever be divested of the character of his order, but a minister may either by legal process voluntarily relinquish the exercise of his orders and use himself as a layman, or may by legal and canonical process be deprived of the exercise of his orders or deposed therefrom.¹¹

...retains the ability to carry out valid ordinations, and to participate in valid consecrations, unless and until he has been deprived of those orders by due process – something which is unknown in the 20th century Church of England and is in any case now easily circumvented by appeal to an overseas province to restore the lost status. (This has taken place in the Anglican Church in North America, whose presiding Archbishop Robert Duncan was deposed by the Episcopal Church on 18th September 2008 and promptly reappointed as a Bishop-at-Large of the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone.) With that, the offending bishop can be immediately restored to the status within the Anglican Communion that has just been removed, whether his original province likes it or not – Q.E.D the implications of alternative episcopal oversight.

This places the AMiE panel of Bishops in an eerily similar position to the Non-Jurors who helped to establish the Episcopal Church in the USA in the first place. The originals may have done so with the blessing and assistance of the Church of England, once the Consecration of Bishops Overseas Act had been passed, but the consent or otherwise of the Church of England is, theologically, irrelevant.

The fact that the AMiE panel of Bishops, providing alternative episcopal oversight, just happens to have 3 members seems unlikely to be a coincidence either; Section C2.1 of the Canons of the Church of England states:

¹¹ Ibid. Section C1.2

No person shall be consecrated to the office of bishop by fewer than three bishops present together and joining in the act of consecration, of whom one shall be the archbishop of the province or a bishop appointed to act on his behalf.¹²

Thus, not only does AMiE have the ability to offer alternative episcopal oversight at the present time, it can, through its links elsewhere in the Anglican Communion, perpetuate itself as independent of the Church of England by establishing an indisputably valid but entirely independent line of episcopal succession within England, just as the original Episcopal Church did in the United States, and as the Anglican Church in North America has recently done, with the Non-Jurors providing a water-tight theological precedent; when the Consecration of Bishops Overseas Act was passed in 1786, two more American bishops were consecrated to join Samuel Seabury, thus establishing the requisite 3 bishops in America to perpetuate an independent Episcopal succession. AMiE has not at the time of writing moved to establish itself in this way (i.e. as a separate province, rather than a mission society), and its clergy have been ordained by the Archbishop of Kenya; nevertheless, the potential for a unilateral declaration of independence with a theologically valid and independent episcopacy of its own exists.

The Anglican Realignment would thus seem to have absorbed and internalised a key lesson from history: that, for an independent or breakaway branch of Anglicanism to maintain its identity as Anglican over time, a historically valid episcopate, providing a link to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of which Anglicanism identifies itself as a legitimate branch, is essential, whether the definition of that episcopate be low church, high church or essentially Roman Catholic/Orthodox; in fact, the more of all 3 that that episcopate can accommodate, the better. So far, I have examined manifestations of this phenomenon outside England; expressions of what is claimed to be authentic Anglicanism have, however, existed **within England**, not only outside the legal, financial and theological control of the established church but in direct opposition to it, for over two centuries, and it is to those which I must now turn to continue the search for the roots of the Anglican Realignment.

¹² Ibid.

The Evangelical Revival and the Anglican Realignment: Origins

The Evangelical Revival began as an attempt to make up the spiritual deficit perceived to be at the heart of the established church caused by both extensive latitudinarianism amongst the clergy and by the perceived worldliness of the senior clergy and bishops, many of whom were seen to be living lives of gentrified contentment, protected by the establishment from any form of competition.

Latitudinarianism was founded upon reason, and particularly the work of the Cambridge Platonists, who viewed reason as the most important element within religion. There is no denying that, in the years after the English Civil War and the turmoil of the Reformation, a religion based upon reason and permitting a broader latitude of belief and practice resonated well with a strife-weary church; during the late 17th century latitudinarianism helped to shape the Church of England's perception of itself as a reasonable and reasoned *Via Media* between the excesses of both Popery and radical Protestantism. However, it had the unfortunate and unintended side-effect of producing a Christianity which many felt became, over time, insipid, lazy, uninspiring and, in all senses of the word, uninspired. The two principle products of the Evangelical Revival were Methodism and Tractarianism, with Methodism historically the earlier of the two by approximately a century.

Both the Evangelical Revival and the Anglican Realignment have their roots in the sense that instead of taking its teachings and beliefs from the Gospel and proclaiming them to the world, the institutional church is doing the exact opposite; constantly watering down the message and teaching of Christianity until it accords with prevailing secular views on faith and morals. It should once again be noted that my purpose is neither to prove nor to disprove this view of contemporary Christianity. Its existence, and not its accuracy, is the material point here.

William Wilberforce, the prominent Evangelical and campaigner against the slave trade, expressed the situation in the 18th century thus:

...the fatal habit, of considering Christian morals as distinct from Christian doctrines, insensibly gained strength. Thus the peculiar doctrines of Christianity went more and more out of sight; and, as might naturally have

been expected, the moral system itself also began to wither and decay, being robbed of that which should have supplied it with life and nutriment. At length, in our own days, these peculiar doctrines have almost altogether vanished from the view. Even in many sermons, as we have formerly noticed, scarcely any traces of them are to be found.¹³

A lack of confidence in revealed and traditional Christian teaching on the part of the church, expressed in the rise of latitudinarianism, had led to a focus on the moral and practical outcomes rather than the doctrinal reasons for them; but without the doctrinal reasoning, the moral outcomes began to be shaped by the desires and sensibilities of the World, leading to a vicious circle in which Christian doctrine became less and less important.

Essentially the same criticism, repackaged and re-worked for the contemporary preoccupation with liberal secular values and sexual morality, is expressed in the core document of the Anglican Realignment, the 2008 Jerusalem Statement of the Global Anglican Future Conference:

...we grieve for the spiritual decline in the most economically developed nations, where the forces of militant secularism and pluralism are eating away the fabric of society and churches are compromised and enfeebled in their witness. The vacuum left by them is readily filled by other faiths and deceptive cults. To meet these challenges...will entail the planting of new churches among unreached peoples and also committed action to restore authentic Christianity to compromised churches...¹⁴

The issue of authenticity and compromise is crucial to both the original Evangelical Revival and the Anglican Realignment; the title of Wilberforce's book alone makes clear the ultimate issue: "A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Middle and Higher Classes in this Country, **Contrasted with Real Christianity**" [my emphasis]. For Wilberforce, the established Church of England had become so comfortable, so conformist, so shaped by the world and so dedicated to co-operating with the existing social order of the country that it had effectively ceased to count as an authentic expression of Christianity. Throughout his

¹³ William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Middle and Higher Classes in this Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity*. (Dublin: B. Dugdale, 1797) p. 276

¹⁴ "The Full Jerusalem Statement" from the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans website - http://fca.net/resources/the_jerusalem_declaration1/ (accessed 15/7/2013)

book he highlights the distinctions he sees between the “professed” or “nominal” Christians and Christianity produced by this comfort and prosperity, and “real”, “vital” and “authentic” Christians and Christianity, like those which developed in times of persecution and adversity:

If, in general, persecution and prosperity be productive respectively of these opposite effects; this circumstance alone might teach us what expectations to form concerning the state of Christianity in this country, where she has long been embodied in an establishment, which is intimately blended, and is generally and justly believed to have a common interest with our civil institutions; which is liberally, though by no means too liberally, endowed, and, not more favoured in wealth than dignity, has been allowed “to exalt her mitred front in courts and parliaments:” an establishment—the offices in which are extremely numerous, and these, not like the priesthood of the Jews, filled up from a particular race, or, like that of the Hindoos, held by a separate cast in entailed succession; but supplied from every class, and branching by its widely extended ramifications into almost every individual family in the community: an establishment—of which the ministers are not, like the Roman Catholic clergy, debarred from forming matrimonial ties, but are allowed to unite themselves, and multiply their holdings to the general mass of the community by the close bonds of family connection; not like some of the severer of the religious orders, immured in colleges and monasteries, but, both by law and custom, permitted to mix without restraint in all the intercourses of society.¹⁵

Whilst the Church of England is no longer be the ‘state’ church in the absolute sense that it was in the 18th century, those behind the Anglican Realignment express a related belief – that substantial parts of the Church of England, and the Anglican Provinces in Canada and the United States, have become so inculturated, so comfortable in the post-modern, post-Christian, liberal and secular societies in which they exist that they have effectively abandoned vital, authentic and Scriptural Christianity. The way in which a religion forged in the white heat of persecution, resistance and disapproval from all sides can maintain authenticity whilst being tolerated and even co-opted by the state has been controversial since the days of Constantine, but the criticism of Wilberforce and the pioneers of the Anglican Realignment is in one sense fundamentally the same: the established and institutional Churches have gone native in a secular world. Rev. David Banting, of the Conservative Evangelical group Reform and the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans said to me during my interview with him:

¹⁵ Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians*, p. 267-8

I find it astonishing, almost unbelievable, that in the last 18 months [from] people in high places, not just bishops but them and others as well, [has come] the statement that the role of the Church of England is to serve the nation by reflecting it and therefore accommodating its new ideas and including them. We are in that language now and I didn't believe I'd hear it in the Church of England. In previous generations, and centuries indeed, the church has been able to serve the country by reflecting it because the state was then essentially Christian – it had a shared framework of beliefs and morality and practice, but that is not [the case] now – we are sharply post Christian and part of it for me is how the church must learn, even as a national church, to be counter cultural, which we have not had to be before.

One difference between the two complaints is that the state in Wilberforce's day possessed significant hard power over the Church – the direct involvement of Parliament and the civil courts in church matters, legal disabilities imposed on non-members, the exclusion of non-churchmen from participation in numerous state offices and the universities – as well as the soft power of influence and inculturation possessed by society then and now. Today, however, that soft power has taken on a harder edge than in Wilberforce's time, because then the law itself ensured the relevance of the church; then, people were registered to a parish and legally obliged to attend, unless they registered as Dissenters and then faced a wide range of legal impediments and social difficulties. Today, "society", in terms of the population of Britain, can simply choose to ignore the church if it does not like what it is hearing; if the church becomes 'out of touch' with contemporary society it will wither and become 'irrelevant'. The contention that the Church of England has no choice but to pay attention to, and be receptive to, the values of secular society if it wishes to remain a genuinely national church is and has been routinely expressed, both inside the church and out of it. Following the defeat of the Women in the Episcopate measure in General Synod in 2012, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams said:

We have, to put it very bluntly, a lot of explaining to do. Whatever the motivations for voting yesterday, whatever the theological principle on which people acted and spoke, the fact remains that a great deal of this discussion is not intelligible to our wider society. Worse than that, it seems as if we are wilfully blind to some of the trends and priorities of that wider society. We have some explaining to do. We have, as a result of yesterday, undoubtedly lost a measure of credibility in our society. I make that as an observation as objectively as I can because it is perfectly true, as was said yesterday, that the ultimate credibility of the Church does not depend on the good will of the

wider public. We would not be Christians and believers in divine revelation if we held that, but the fact is as it is.¹⁶

Public opinion cannot simply be ignored, either by a church which sees its role as the propagation of the faith or by a church which sees itself as a national church: if few people are willing to go to the church because it is seen as completely out of touch, then the church cannot possibly carry out its divine mission in a pluralistic and secular society. The church may not be comfortable with this reality – the Archbishop’s tone suggests that he is clearly not – but it still has to face it. In the past the complaint against the church from the disaffected was that of straight forward erastianism; today, the church is generally left alone by the actual government, as far as its doctrines of faith and morals are concerned, but it is not immune from what might be termed Social Erastianism; the soft power of pressure exerted by the prevailing social attitudes and the climate in which church members and clergy are raised, the need to keep in touch with the people the Church must attract or obsolesce, and the tendency towards inculturation which these trends create.

Social Erastianism in action can be seen in the public reaction to the failed attempt to pass the Women in the Episcopate Measure by General Synod in 2012. The mood of press, public and Parliament alike was almost universally hostile, and suggested that society might be rapidly running out of patience with an intransigent Church. One Parliamentary exchange between a member and the Prime Minister on 21st November 2012 ran thus:

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): Following the Prime Minister’s answer to the hon. Member for Banbury (Sir Tony Baldry) a moment ago, and given that the Church of England is the established Church, will the Prime Minister consider what Parliament can do to ensure that the overwhelming will of members of the Church and of the country is respected?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly look carefully at what the right hon. Gentleman has said. The Church has its own processes and elections. They might be hard for some of us to understand, but we must respect individual institutions and the decisions they make. That does not mean we should hold back in saying what we think. I am very clear that the time is right for women bishops—it was right many years ago. The Church needs to get on with it, as

¹⁶ Rowan Williams, from a speech to General Synod: *Report of Proceedings 2012, General Synod November Group of Sessions*, Volume 43. No. 3 - <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1634223/report%20of%20proceedings%20nov%2012.pdf>

it were, and get with the programme, but we must respect individual institutions and how they work, while giving them a sharp prod.¹⁷

On December 6th of the same year, the Second Church Estates Commissioner Sir Tony Baldry participated in the following exchange:

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): It is 46 years, almost to the day, since I raised in a debate the difficulties faced by those with colour in trying to get jobs—before the Race Relations Act 1976 was passed. I did not believe that nearly half a century later I would be on my feet protesting against discrimination against women. Is it not absolutely essential that there should be the utmost sustained parliamentary pressure to change a situation in which women are discriminated against in such a blatant manner in the Church?

Sir Tony Baldry: I entirely agree. Everyone in the Church of England needs to understand that, so far as Parliament and the wider community are concerned, this issue is increasingly seen as the Church of England discriminating against women. That is fundamentally wrong and fundamentally bad for the image and work of the Church.¹⁸

Parliament will in all likelihood stop short of actually abandoning its long-held principle of not interfering in the doctrinal affairs of the Church of England and forcing through the appointment of Women Bishops against the wishes of the Church at the present time. Then again, it is very unlikely that it will actually have to. The debate within the church about the correctness of allowing women bishops is to all intents and purposes over, with all sides acknowledging that it is inevitable and the only issue still at stake is what provision, if any, is made for those who cannot accept it. This in and of itself marks a sea change from the debates on women's ministry of the early 1990s; no new remarkable theological advance has been made since then, but the culture in which the Church of England must do business, and from which its members are drawn, has changed dramatically in its attitude to female equality since the earliest Anglican debates on women's ministry in the 1940s.

This goes beyond receptionism. The Church of England itself now readily acknowledges that it cannot afford to be so at odds with the society which surrounds

¹⁷ *Hansard*, 21st November 2012, c.579 - <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm121121/debtext/121121-0001.htm#12112171000010>

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6th December 2012, c.995 - <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm121206/debtext/121206-0001.htm#12120640000033>

and forms it as to continue to discriminate against women. The clearest acknowledgement of that was the immediate decision by the Church authorities to bring forward to the soonest possible opportunity a further attempt to pass the Women in the Episcopate Measure, which should by tradition and procedure have had to wait until after the next General Synod is elected in 2015. It is not the fact that there was pressure from without the church to do this that marks this out as Social Erastianism, because there was a great deal of pressure from within the church too. It is the fact that there was essentially no difference between the two, the reason being the inbuilt determination of the Church of England to live up to its claim of being a national church. This, like much else related to contemporary difficulties in Anglicanism, can be traced back to Frederick Maurice and his Victorian followers (see chapter 1). As was further stressed in Parliament, echoing the points made during the Women in the Episcopate debate in General Synod:

Mrs Eleanor Laing (Epping Forest) (Con): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the whole House has sympathy with his position and great respect for the hard work that he has done in trying to resolve this matter. Does he agree that when the decision-making body of the established Church deliberately sets itself against the general principles of the society that it represents, its position as the established Church must be called into question?

Sir Tony Baldry: The hon. Lady makes a perfectly good point, and it is one that I have repeatedly made. As a consequence of the decision by the General Synod, the Church of England no longer looks like a national Church; it simply looks like a sect, like any other sect. If it wishes to be a national Church that reflects the nation, it has to reflect the values of the nation.¹⁹

There is a difficult-to-define, but still easily identifiable, sense of ownership of the Church of England within the public discourse, which manifests itself as the sense that for the Church of England to maintain its position as the religious provider of choice to the Crown and to the State, as a result of the fact that a huge proportion of the people of England consider themselves to be culturally Anglican, and as a result of the Church's unique legal and cultural obligation to provide all the people of England with religious services – even if many of them never avail themselves of those services beyond the proverbial “hatch, match and despatch”, and many not

¹⁹ Ibid., 22nd November 2012, c.719 - <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm121122/debtext/121122-0001.htm#12112237000010>

even that – the Church of England has a duty to render itself open and acceptable to the people of this country, and that sense of ownership by the people, and thus a duty to them which means never becoming a dreaded ‘sect’, pervades the Church itself. In Wilberforce’s day the people of England belonged to the Church; today it is largely the other way around.

It should be stressed that this sort of inculturation is by no means simply a bad thing. All churches are to some extent products of the cultures in which they subsist and from which they draw their members and staff; so far, so post-modern. There is, however, only a certain amount of variation which a religion supposedly revealed by God for all times and all places can admit of in the areas of faith and morals before tensions start to emerge, and as David Banting pointed out in his quotation above, there is a difference between inculturation in a Christian society and in one which is to all intents and purposes post-Christian and secular. As Graham Kings, Bishop of Sherborne and Chairman of the Open Evangelical group Fulcrum put it during my interview with him:

There are limits [to inculturation] and very early on, when I wrote for Fulcrum I did a one page piece against David Jenkins [former Bishop of Durham] – he did an article for the Times saying the Church of England should concentrate on this nation and ignore the rest of the world; I took him on on that and said there are limits to inculturation.

Bishop Graham went on to suggest that such a boundary had been crossed, in terms of inculturation, by the more liberal wing of the Episcopal Church in the USA:

I think the ultra-liberal gay inclusion model of integrity in North America is so inculturated in wanting to bring the gospel to the gay culture – in a good way; I think that is a great thing bringing the gospel – but they are over-inculturated and haven’t got a critique of that gay culture.

In the actual article to which he referred in the above quotation he wrote:

The good news does need to be earthed deeply in local cultures, so that people feel at home and that they know that the good news comes from God rather than from another country. However there are limits, and often these limits are best seen by outsiders. A woman once entered a committee room where people had been smoking for many hours and said: 'It's smoky in here'.

She was asked: 'how do you know, you've only just come in?' In engaging with gay cultures in the USA, it is appropriate that Anglicans from other cultures, as well as from the USA, question whether the consecration of an actively gay bishop goes beyond the limits of inculturation.²⁰

What Bishop Graham does not specify here is the potential consequences of going beyond the limits of inculturation, and what such differences would actually mean in theological terms. Wilberforce makes clear, however, in his book what he felt the consequences of such inculturation to the laissez-faire, comfortable and latitudinarian milieu of 18th century England were in his own time:

It seems in our days to be the commonly received opinion, that provided a man admit in general terms the truth of Christianity, though he know not or consider not much concerning the particulars of the system; and if he be not habitually guilty of any of the grosser vices against his fellow creatures, we have no great reason to be dissatisfied with him, or to question the validity of his claim to the name and consequent privileges of a Christian. The title implies no more than a sort of formal, general assent to Christianity in the gross, and a degree of morality in practice, but little if at all superior to that for which we look in a good Deist, Mussulman, or Hindoo.²¹

The implication Wilberforce makes here is that the latitudinarians of his own day, by failing to maintain sufficient focus on the unique claims and specific revealed truths of Christianity, had allowed mainstream Christianity in England to broaden out to the point at which it was effectively indistinguishable in practice from a variety of other religions or even no religion at all; it had moved beyond what Wilberforce and his fellow Evangelicals were able to recognise as “authentic” Christianity, and become a general philosophy of living roughly based on Christian tradition. He goes on to confirm the accuracy of this impression:

If any one be disposed to deny that this is a fair representation of the religion of the bulk of the Christian world, he might be asked, whether if it were proved to them beyond dispute that Christianity is a mere forgery, would this occasion any great change in their conduct or habits of mind?²²

²⁰ Kings, Graham, *Anglican Communion: Long Term Solutions Not Dissolution*, 14th October 2003 from the Fulcrum Website - <http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/news/2003/anglicancommunion.cfm?doc=65> (accessed 15/07/2013)

²¹ Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians*, p. 102

²² Ibid.

...It were needless to put these questions. They are answered in fact already by the lives of many known unbelievers, between whom and these professed Christians, even the familiar associates of both, though men of discernment and observation, would discover little difference either in conduct or temper of mind.²³

Wilberforce and the 18th century Evangelicals thus can be seen to be proceeding on the basis that what was in grave danger of becoming, by their conception of Christianity, a different religion; nothing that the great bulk of the members of the established Church did or believed could be seen, by them at least, to differentiate it from either other religions or Christian-derived Deism. They would not be the last people to reach this conclusion. The former Bishop of Rochester, and a member of the panel of Bishops providing alternative episcopal oversight for those churches affiliated with AMiE, Rt. Rev. Michael Nazir Ali, has articulated what is seen to be at stake here in theological terms perhaps more than any other. He has also suggested that, rather than this being about the existence of differing strands of teaching or practice within Anglicanism, the problem here is the effective existence of two different religions. Bishop Michael described to me the moment at which he reached these conclusions:

I spent the afternoon sitting with the Episcopal Church's House of Bishops and I was very grateful for their hospitality which I have experienced on many occasions but in the afternoon the debate was about gay marriage – civil gay marriage – in different states of the US being allowed and there was not a single theological argument; it was all about culture and experience and the political situation, and I said this to them, and their response was “This is the way we do things here.”

...it looks like two religions to me, because the point of departure, not just the point of arrival, is so different. I then heard various homilies and lectures by various people and read material which seemed to me to suggest that the kind of world-view some of the revisionists were working with is nearer the monistic Vedanta type of view, in which different religions are simply manifestations of the Philosophia Perennis, and that the experience, the particularity of experience becomes important – ‘this is how I am experiencing the ultimate reality’ – rather than revelation, rather than the historicity of the church's teaching, the unanimous witness, for example, of scripture and the fathers, and anything sinful; those fall into the background.

²³ Ibid. p. 103

Whilst that is a highly subjective claim, and one which would certainly be disputed by many within the Church of England, as with many aspects of the current difficulties it is not so much the veracity of a claim which gives it its importance but that it is perceived by a certain group to be true. There is, however, certainly no shortage of evidence for strains of belief within liberal Anglicanism which regard the figure of Christ as, in effect, first century Judaea's answer to the Buddha or Gandhi: a wholly human figure possessed of a uniquely powerful connection to the Divine. Writing for Modern Church, leading Anglican theologian Paul Badham states:

Hence Archbishop Temple argued that: "All that is noble in the non-Christian systems of thought, or conduct or worship is the work of Christ upon them and within them. By the Word of God – that is to say by Christ - Isaiah, and Plato, and Zoroaster, and Buddha, and Confucius conceived and uttered such truths as they declared. There is only one divine light; and everyman in his measure is enlightened by it." This comment highlights one of the greatest strengths of what I see as this family of incarnational theories. This strength is that it places the incarnation of God in Christ as different in degree, but not in kind, to the indwelling of God in other human beings.²⁴

There is no denying that this type of Christology would have been considered utterly heretical for the great majority of Christian history, and by the great majority of historical Christians (which is presumably why the quote Badham reproduces from the former Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple, liberal as he was, does not actually admit of the interpretation Badham puts upon it), and it is this reduction of Christ from the wholly human and wholly divine Word of God to a divinely-inspired historical prophet, and this perceived portrayal of Christianity as one equally-valid philosophical path amongst many to the one true God as any other, which the Jerusalem Statement, seen also in chapter 4, page 102 above, picks up on:

The Global Anglican Future Conference emerged in response to a crisis within the Anglican Communion, a crisis involving three undeniable facts concerning world Anglicanism.

The first fact is the acceptance and promotion within the provinces of the Anglican Communion of a different 'gospel' (cf. Galatians 1:6-8) which is contrary to the apostolic gospel. This false gospel undermines the authority of God's Word written and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the author of salvation from sin, death and judgement. Many of its proponents claim that all

²⁴ Paul Badham, *A Christianity that can be believed in* (MCU Forewords) - <http://www.modernchurch.org.uk/file/publications/fw1.pdf> (accessed 18/09/2013)

religions offer equal access to God and that Jesus is only a way, not the way, the truth and the life.²⁵

There is a perceptible difference in tone here, however, from that of Wilberforce, and that slight difference in tone provides a crucial limit to the comparison between the contemporary Anglican Realignment and the Evangelical Revival: that of intent.

For Wilberforce, the problem was that latitudinarianism (and the general comfortably established and indifferent nature of the Church of England in his own time) was making possible a slide towards something which to the Evangelicals bore little resemblance to fire-in-the-belly authentic Christianity; it was their attempts to propagate this Christianity to the nation without reference to the established Church's procedures, and in the teeth of its opposition, which would lead to the parting of ways (see below). For the Evangelical Revival movement, the sign and seal of this transformation was the comfortable, insipid and generally contra-Scriptural way in which they believed the established church to be acting; if it truly believed Christian doctrine, it would act on it, as Wilberforce pointed out with rhetorical flourish, and thereby distinguish itself from unbelievers and practitioners of other religions:

Was it then for this, that the Son of God condescended to become our instructor and our pattern, leaving us an example that we might tread in his steps? Was it for this that the apostles of Christ voluntarily submitted to hunger and nakedness and pain, and ignominy and death, when forewarned too by their Master that such would be their treatment? That, after all, their disciples should attain to no higher a strain of virtue than those who rejecting their Divine authority, should still adhere to the old philosophy?²⁶

The Anglican Realignment, however, perceives something very different; something which has its roots in the latitudinarian refusal to take a stand on exact, dogmatic definitions of what is and what is not permissible, and something which many Anglicans are apt to mistake for the aforesaid, but which in the final analysis is of an order of magnitude more serious: the deliberate and intentional propagation of a false and anti-Christian gospel by sections of the Anglican Communion. The actions of the western Anglican provinces, in ordaining gay clergy and moving to accept gay

²⁵ *The Full Jerusalem Statement* from the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans website -

http://fca.net/resources/the_jerusalem_declaration1/

²⁶ Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians*, p. 104

marriage or civil partnerships, have made indisputably clear, for the Anglican Realignment, the difference between latitudinarianism (which they have put up with for a very long time) and the far more serious, and more insidious, process which they have for a very long time seen as hiding behind it:

It [the false gospel] promotes a variety of sexual preferences and immoral behaviour as a universal human right. It claims God's blessing for same-sex unions over against the biblical teaching on holy matrimony. In 2003 this false gospel led to the consecration of a bishop living in a homosexual relationship.²⁷

The Anglican Realignment therefore, in contrast to Wilberforce and the 18th century Methodists, sees the problem as not simply the failure to live up to the Gospel of Christ but a deliberate attempt, under the cover of provisionality, latitudinarianism, tolerance (call it what you will) and the traditional Anglican avoidance of absolutes, to supplant it with something entirely un-Christian in origin.

There are, of course, always two sides to every story; whilst an exploration of the reality, as opposed to the Evangelical portrayal, of the 18th century Church of England is outside the scope of this thesis, the presentation by Wilberforce and other 18th century Evangelicals of the Church of England having slipped into hopeless and debilitating lassitude was one which many 18th century clergymen and lay people challenged with gusto, and which has been extensively challenged in scholarship. Likewise, the portrayal of the Church of England as bringing in a false gospel arouses considerable opposition, and in considering the future prospects of an English Anglican Realignment, it is necessary to ask how much weight such an accusation can reasonably be seen to carry. It is certainly the case that the Church of England has not gone nearly as far as the Episcopal Church in the USA or the Anglican Church in Canada towards recognising and including same-sex unions, whether by acknowledging them as marriages or by blessing civil partnerships. In his quotation above, the former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams was explicit that the Church of England will not simply follow whatever direction the secular wind blows it, and under the present Archbishop Justin Welby the Church of England has

²⁷ *The Full Jerusalem Statement*

been steadfast in its opposition to the legal redefinition of marriage to include same-sex couples, at least where the Church of England is concerned:

2. The Church's understanding of marriage

1. In common with almost all other Churches, the Church of England holds, as a matter of doctrine and derived from the teaching of Christ himself, that marriage in general – and not just the marriage of Christians – is, in its nature, a lifelong union of one man with one woman.²⁸

Graham Kings, Bishop of Sherborne, also gives a very different view of the Church of England's situation than that which could be inferred from the actions of AMiE. According to him, the problem lies with two extreme wings of the Church – one made up of groups such as Inclusive Church that are determined to push for full inclusion at any cost, the other made up of groups such as FCA, pushing towards a Realignment – which both, therefore, have an interest in casting the situation in terms of an existential dividing line between those who accept the changing realities and those who view them as a false gospel, in order to further their own objectives. For the liberal wing that objective is to convince the conservatives to give up and leave, and for the conservatives that is to rid Anglicanism of the liberals; thus, their interests effectively coincide.

According to Bishop Kings, were a practising gay Bishop to be appointed as happened in the United States there could well be a split of some sort, but there is very little likelihood of that actually happening with Justin Welby as Archbishop of Canterbury and John Sentamu at York, neither of whom would be prepared to consecrate such a Bishop. Kings also contrasts the more extreme position of those involved with Gafcon, such as Eliud Wabukala (Archbishop of Kenya), and the more moderate influence of those such as Mounir Ali of Egypt and John Chew of Singapore, who joined those not attending the 2008 Lambeth Conference (in protest at the presence of the Bishops of the Episcopal Church) but did not go so far as to attend GAFCON or support direct interventions in other provinces. The Global South is reasonably united in its negative response to trends within the American and Canadian churches – as Bishop Graham points out, it is in fact these churches which

²⁸ *A Response to the Government Equalities Office Consultation - "Equal Civil Marriage" - from the Church of England*, June 2012, from the Church of England website - <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1475149/s-s%20marriage.pdf> (accessed 15/07/2013)

are the isolated and embattled minorities, in contrast to image given by the conservatives of a false gospel marching unchecked through the Anglican Communion – but it is less united in its willingness to participate in the creation of alternative structures. Thus, for Graham Kings, the risk of any meaningful conservative Anglican Realignment in England in the immediate future is considerably moderated, rather than boosted, by a combination of the Communion-minded Global South (as exemplified by Mounir Ali and John Chew, and as opposed to what he terms the more federally-minded Gafcon bishops) and an increasingly conservative bench of Bishops under Welby and Sentamu.

Indeed, in recounting these developments Bishop Kings raised the possibility that, rather than the Anglican Realignment in England consisting of the most conservative Churches leaving the Church of England, the polarity could become completely reversed, and we would see the most radical end of the Church aligning itself with TEC, in protest at the intransigence of the Church of England:

I think that TEC were ready to start up their own liberal networked communion and realignment – then liberal churches in England, Anglican churches in England were talking about realigning with the TEC rather than what they saw as mercurial-based Anglicanism.

This comes as a direct contrast to the image of the Anglican Realignment presented by groups such as FCA and AMiE. It is certainly true that the wing of the Church of England pushing for the full inclusion of gay people on equal terms is as committed to its cause, both in terms of effort and emotional investment, as the conservative end is to its cause, and therefore it would be unwise to discount the possibility that, if they perceived the pendulum to have swung as decisively against them as some conservatives tend to suggest it has swung against them, the Anglican Realignment in England could be led by them. The issue would then become the denial of equal rights and social justice, which the liberal wing would see as no less unpalatable and un-Christian than the conservative wing would see full inclusion. There has been little suggestion of such a liberal-led Anglican Realignment coming to pass, but nevertheless the fact that it has been discussed, along with the other evidence above, suggests that, at least where the Church of England is concerned, the actual situation in terms of more radical liberal theology is considerably less advanced than

that which prompted the split in the United States and Canada. Whilst there are individual Anglicans who espouse such liberal theology, of the sort which could go so far as to question the uniqueness of Christ as the path to salvation and place him in a line of human prophets, the actual reality of their impact on the Church of England has been considerably less than it has been on the Churches of North America, and considerably less than it has been popularly portrayed by a media interested in sensation and crisis (see chapter 1).

Understanding the difference between classical latitudinarian liberal and modernist liberal theology is crucial to understanding this situation and the future prospects of an English Anglican Realignment. In chapter 4 I noted the tendency in contemporary Anglican scholarship, such as that of Paul Avis and Kenneth Locke, to confuse modernist liberalism, in which the possibility of absolute divine revelation is denied and our relationship with God can, nay should, be redefined according to our experience of the modern world, and classical latitudinarian liberalism, which holds that the differences between different interpretations of divine revelation should be accommodated as far as possible in the interests of Christian unity and harmony. Whilst the modernist liberal stance of ECUSA/TEC, which is what has prompted the claims of a false gospel, has been made very clear, such a charge is much more difficult to substantiate against the Church of England as a whole, which remains considerably more classically liberal in outlook than the existence and actions of groups like AMiE would suggest. Whilst the first steps towards an English Anglican Realignment have been taken it remains very much at an embryonic stage compared to ACNA precisely because the Church of England has not gone as far, and neither is it certain to do so.

Whatever the theological niceties may be, however, there are clearly some within the Church of England who believe that it is already modernist liberal enough, or heading in that direction with sufficient determination, for them to cease being classically liberal and latitudinarian about it, and as was once the case with the movements spawned by the Evangelical Revival this decision has set in motion a potential transformation from Para-Church campaigning groups to a separate ecclesiastical identity, through the new opportunities provided by alternative episcopal oversight.

Chapter 6

Methodists, Tractarians and the Anglican Realignment

The Tractarian movement was, like Methodism, a child of the Evangelical Revival in that it deplored the latitudinarianism of the church, re-emphasised mystical, sacramental and inspirational devotion, and played down the church-state link, but unlike the earlier Evangelicals it looked much more to the mediaeval and patristic past to do these things. The ways in which the Tractarian movement and the Catholic Revival it produced impacted theologically and institutionally upon the Church of England and the Anglican Communion have been explored in an earlier chapter; here it will suffice to point out that, as explored in chapter 2, the Oxford Movement of the 1830s and 1840s had a vision of the Church of England – of its doctrines, its practices and its very *raison d'être* – which was at best not shared by large numbers of its fellow religionists, and was at worst viewed by some of them as a threat to English Protestantism.

The Tractarians clearly had their work cut out if the naturally suspicious English people were ever to be brought around to viewing the Reformation, and the subsequent struggle against 'roman' doctrines and practices which was a deeply ingrained part of the English psyche, as little more than a regrettable misunderstanding – a simple clearing out of a few mediaeval excesses from an English church which remained fundamentally unaltered – yet by the middle of the 20th century the level of success that they and their descendants had achieved was such that most of the Church of England had changed beyond recognition from that of the early 19th century, with many of the doctrines and practices which had caused so much controversy now seen as standard and defining Anglican features since time immemorial – the Eucharist has replaced Morning and Evening Prayer as the main service, whilst vestments such as the chasuble are commonplace, for example. By anyone's standards this must count as a remarkable success. The Methodists, by contrast, whilst they began as a reviled minority in much the same way as the Tractarians, never managed to exercise anything like the level of influence over the Church of England that they did, and were, over the course of the 18th century, forced further and further apart from the Church of England until in the early 19th

century what little pretence there might still have been that the Methodists could be considered meaningfully Anglican was dropped by both sides. What could account for this difference in outcome?

It is not as if either the Methodists or the Tractarians intended separatism to be the result from the outset; on the contrary, both movements identified themselves firmly as renewal and revival movements within the Church of England. Neither movement initially admitted of any inclination towards separatism. For the Wesley brothers' part, John Wesley, who of the two was the more relaxed about the possibility of separation from the established church, went so far as to write a short treatise in 1758 entitled "Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England". His brother Charles' last words to his local parson were reported to have been:

Sir, whatever the world may have thought of me, I have lived and I die in the communion of the Church of England, and I will be buried in the yard of my parish church.

He was, his coffin borne by 8 ordained Church of England ministers.¹

On the Tractarian side Tract 30, entitled *Christian Liberty or Why Should We Belong to the Church of England* and written in the form of a dialogue between John Evans and Dr. Spencer, sees the aforementioned John Evans guided inexorably by Dr. Spencer's logic to the following conclusion:

I understand you, Sir: but you shall hear me use the words in this improper sense no more. The true liberty where with CHRIST has made us free, is theirs alone, who in reverencing His ministers, walk in the way of His commandments. Admitting, as I now do, the force of what you have said; convinced, as I now am, that the Church of England is the Apostolic Church of CHRIST, established by our LORD Himself, I cannot but see that their sin is indeed great, who wilfully reject and despise it.²

The same too can be said of the Anglican Realignment; the first section of the Jerusalem Statement reads unequivocally:

¹ D. M. Jones, *Charles Wesley: A Study* (London: Skeffington & Sons, 1919) p. 259

² John William Bowden, "Christian Liberty or Why Should We Belong to the Church of England", Tract 30 of *Tracts for the Times* (1834) from the Project Canterbury website - <http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/tract30.html> (accessed 15/07/2013)

The Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), which was held in Jerusalem from 22-29 June 2008, is a spiritual movement to preserve and promote the truth and power of the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ as we Anglicans have received it. The movement is global: it has mobilised Anglicans from around the world. We are Anglican: 1148 lay and clergy participants, including 291 bishops representing millions of faithful Anglican Christians. We cherish our Anglican heritage and the Anglican Communion and have no intention of departing from it. And we believe that, in God's providence, Anglicanism has a bright future in obedience to our Lord's Great Commission to make disciples of all nations and to build up the church on the foundation of biblical truth (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 2:20).³

The three movements have also organised themselves along similar lines. As mentioned above, the Tractarians stirred up an immense controversy; as often happens in these situations both sides of it felt that they were the aggrieved party, and the battle lines between were rapidly drawn, through publishing and the formation of societies. In addition to the Tracts themselves, the leaders of the Oxford movement produced a whole series of new editions of those authors thought to best represent the continuity of the English church with the early and patristic Church - primarily the Caroline divines, the first of whom was Lancelot Andrewes - which was published serially for subscribers between 1841 and 1853 as "The Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology". A series of Patristic works entitled "The Library of the Fathers" was produced around the same time.⁴

The opponents of the Tractarians did not simply sit back and let this happen; they too organised themselves and produced a counter-blast of information and campaigning. The Parker Society, named in honour of Matthew Parker, Elizabeth's first Archbishop of Canterbury, was founded in 1840 "For the Publication of the Works of the Fathers and Early Writers of the Reformed English Church". In 1855 a General Index to the Society's publications was produced which spelled out in no uncertain terms what the purpose of this effort to distribute the works of the Reformers was:

They contain proved weapons for the whole encounter with popery, and maintain the doctrine and order of the Church of England against those who afterwards rose up from her own bosom to assault her. They have shed light

³ *The Full Jerusalem Statement*

⁴Chapman, Mark, *Anglican Theology* (London: T and T Clark International, 2012) p 12-13

upon contemporary history. They are documents, which have already been frequently appealed to in the Ecclesiastical Courts, and which will ever remain as evidences of Reformation truth.⁵

The battle between Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics for the soul of the Church of England during the 19th and early 20th century saw the creation of a constellation of new societies dedicated to fighting it; to name but a few – the Protestant Association (1835), the Society of the Holy Cross (1855), the English Church Union (founded as the Church of England Protection Society in 1859; renamed in 1860), the Church Association (1865), the National Protestant Church Union (1893), the Christian Social Union (1889), the Churchmen’s Union for the Advancement of Liberal Religious Thought (1898; renamed the Modern Churchmen’s Union in 1928). The purpose of these societies was not to represent differing points of view in a joint quest for truth; they existed to defend the truth, including ecclesiology, which they already possessed, and the potential for such frustrated societies to form their own churches, if pushed, had already been demonstrated by the Methodist societies of the 18th century.

These societies I have termed Para-Church groups because they contain within them this sense of truth independent of the church institution and thus contain the potential for separation. They have already demonstrated that potential for separation in North America through the Anglican Realignment and have been accused of preparing to do much the same thing in England. The first movements towards the Anglican Realignment of today began in the 1960s and 1970s. As the Episcopal Church in the United States, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Church of England began to reform themselves in the 1960s, moving towards new liturgies and the ordination of women, a number of disaffected conservative groups broke away and formed themselves into a variety of separate jurisdictions in the Anglican tradition. These groups are generally referred to collectively as the Continuing Anglican Movement, although some of them, such as the Orthodox Anglican Communion, predated the official beginning of the Continuing Anglican Movement, at the 1977 Congress of St. Louis, by several years.

⁵ Gough, Henry, *A General Index to the Publications of the Parker Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1855) p. ii

The Congress of St. Louis was the result of work by a Para-Church group, the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen. This Fellowship, this ecclesiastical society, created a network of clerical and lay people concerned at the direction the Episcopal Church was taking; following the 1976 decision of the Episcopal Church to authorise a new Prayer Book and to ordain women, but on the back of various moves by ECUSA to change its positions on a variety of issues, including homosexuality, the Fellowship gathered together 2,000 bishops, clergy and lay people in St. Louis, and established a separate Anglican body, the Anglican Church in North America (Episcopal). The Affirmation of St. Louis declared:

The Dissolution of Anglican and Episcopal Church Structure

We affirm that the Anglican Church of Canada and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, by their unlawful attempts to alter Faith, Order and Morality (especially in their General Synod of 1975 and General Convention of 1976), have departed from Christ's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.⁶

The English Anglican Realignment of today is rooted primarily in Anglican Mainstream, which was itself developed from two Para-Church groups which began in the 1990s: mainly Reform, which was Conservative Evangelical, but also with input from Forward in Faith, which was Anglo-Catholic. As quoted above, the formation of AMiE was encouraged by the Global Anglican Future Conference, itself a product of the Communion-level Para-Church group the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans. Canon Chris Sugden, secretary of AMiE, is also on the Council of Anglican Mainstream, and further personnel overlaps between the groups are neither uncommon nor coincidental – Rev. David Banting, formerly Chairman of Reform and now a senior member of FCA, for example. Whilst the greater and more immediate impulse of the American groups towards separatism can be at least partially explained by the greater tendency towards implementing modernist liberal theology which the original North American Provinces displayed (see above and below), that still leaves the question of what the Tractarians did or had which the Methodists did not, and which of them the Anglican Realignment in England is more likely to follow.

⁶ “The Affirmation of St. Louis” from the website of the Fellowship of Concerned Anglicans - <http://www.anglicanchurches.net/texts/affirmation2.html> (accessed 15/07/2013)

One factor in the differing fates of these two movements lies in their respective attitudes towards bishops and the structures of the Church of England. Providing sufficient numbers of regularly ordained clergy to cater for the growing numbers of Methodists proved difficult; Methodist ministry tended to be itinerant, which meant both sympathetic clergy having to choose between livings and Evangelical preaching, and the need for those that did travel the preaching circuits both to preach and administer the Sacraments in places where they had no authority from the bishop to do so, and even less prospect of actually getting it. As more Methodist ministers were needed, and bishops were disinclined either to ordain people or to license them for Methodist ministry, the Methodists were confronted with a problem.

There were two possible solutions to this problem. John Wesley's solution, against the advice and wishes of his brother Charles, was to bypass the episcopal system altogether and to take the right to ordain and license Methodist ministers into his own hands. Since the Methodists were drawn unashamedly from the Protestant tradition, and had a Protestant view of what ministry was, this was not theologically a particular problem. It did, however, mean that Wesley and his followers had thrown down a gauntlet to the established church which, if the established church wanted to maintain its authority and control, it had to pick up; the Wesleys could not be permitted to establish a precedent of ignoring the authorities or the Church would simply fall apart, and a direct confrontation and separation was, from that point onwards, inevitable. There was no space within the established Church of England of the 18th century for an alternative version of Anglicanism, playing by different rules, to exist. From the Methodist point of view what had caused the separation was not their being schismatic, but the intransigence and intolerance of the Established Church, which had used its legally-protected monopoly of resources and appointments to squeeze out the competition.

The second possible solution was the one tried by the Calvinist Methodists under George Whitefield and Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon. Lady Huntingdon, in contrast to much of the rest of the British Establishment and aristocracy of the time, was an ardent supporter of the Evangelical Revival and of Mr Whitefield's Calvinist branch of it in particular. In promoting and sustaining Methodism, the Countess of Huntingdon had an advantage which the Wesleys did

not; as a noble lady she was entitled by law to establish her own chapels and to employ her own chaplains to staff them.

The Methodists had already begun to open their own chapels, as they were either expelled from livings or banned from preaching on account of their Evangelical leanings, paid for by subscriptions; they had to be careful, however, as there were legal restrictions on any preaching or religious activity either not registered as dissenting or without the permission of a Bishop, which was rarely, if ever, forthcoming. A benefactor of Lady Huntingdon's financial clout and social standing might be able to put things on a more regular and sustainable footing, but there were rules. An Archbishop or a Duke (the highest grade of the peerage, and thus above the Countess) was restricted to a maximum of 6 household chaplains by law.⁷ Also, there were restrictions on how private chapels could operate without being regarded, for the purposes of the law, as public places of worship; George Whitefield wrote to Lady Huntingdon in 1756, regarding a new chapel in Tottenham Court Road, at which he (an ordained Church of England minister) preached with the assistance of 3 dissenting ministers:

We have consulted the Commons about putting it under your Ladyship's protection. This is the answer: — 'No nobleman can license a chapel, or in any manner have one, but in his dwelling house; that the chapel must be a private one, and not with doors to the street for any person to resort to at pleasure, for then it becomes a public one ; that a chapel cannot be built and used as such, without the consent of the parson of the parish, and when it is done with his consent, no minister can preach therein, without license of the Bishop of the diocese.'⁸

Protection was an apt term. Whitefield had been prompted to establish this permanent chapel following his earlier experiences, when he had been invited to preach at a Dissenting Chapel, but had been threatened by a mob and refused permission to preach by the bishop. If the Countess of Huntingdon could promote, protect and provide for Methodist ministers then they stood a much better chance of success and she did this with gusto, establishing a network of chapels and

⁷ John Fenwick, *The Free Church of England: Introduction to an Anglican Tradition* (London: T&T Clark, 2004) p. 20

⁸ Alfred New, *Memoir of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* (New York: Protestant Episcopal Society for the Promotion of Evangelical Knowledge, 1858) p. 161

chaplains beginning in Brighton in 1761, and using her social standing to defy the rarely-enforced rules on private chaplains.⁹

The methods employed by both the Wesleyan Methodists and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, as the society which grew up around her became known, paid scant regard to the existing system and structures of the Church of England, and particularly to that part of it which, as the experience of the Non-Jurors around the same time suggested was most crucial to Anglican identity – episcopacy. William Dodd, a leading opponent of the Methodists within the Church of England, wrote in 1761:

I cannot for my own part conceive what sophistry of argument can be sufficient to disprove their separation, who have broken loose from all obedience to their ordinary; entirely leaped over all parochial unity and communion;... who preach in all places without reserve; and... who employ and send forth laymen of the most unlettered sort, to preach the gospel, without any authority or commission from God or man.¹⁰

Doing an end-run around the existing church structure in the way which both the Wesleys and the Countess did was not just controversial, however; it was also illegal, and the Countess's aristocratic status could only muddy the waters for so long. The crunch finally came in 1782, when the Countess, with the help of a group of Evangelical businessmen, attempted to establish a new chapel at Spa Fields in London. The vicar of the local parish strenuously objected, with the support of his bishop (London). The Consistory Court of the Diocese of London ruled that such appointments were illegal, and that the Countess must restrict herself to the number of chaplains permitted by law. The Countess of Huntingdon and her Ministers were forced to choose between their Evangelical Revival work and remaining within the Church of England:

If her chapels were still to be regarded as belonging to the Church, then the laws of the Church must be obeyed. If not, and they were to be sheltered

⁹ Fenwick, *the Free Church of England*, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Dodd, William, quoted in Gibson, William, *The Church of England 1688-1832: Unity and Accord* (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 206

under the Toleration Act, then they must be registered as dissenting places of worship. And so against her will she found herself a dissenter.¹¹

Whilst the Countess had great sympathy for, and had directly supported the cause of, dissenters with whom she felt she shared a theological common ground, she had herself possessed no intention of actually becoming one, and the final separation was very difficult for her:

I am to be cast out of the Church now, only for what I have been doing these forty years — speaking and living for Jesus Christ; and if the days of my captivity are now to be accomplished, those that turn me out, and so set me at liberty, may soon feel what it is, by sore distress themselves for these hard services they have caused me.¹²

The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion continued as an independent, dissenting body, and still exists to this day. It held on to the Book of Common Prayer and Church of England liturgical dress longer than the Wesleyan Methodists did, but like Wesleyan Methodism it gradually developed as a distinctive Protestant denomination. Some of the Countess's chaplains, who were parochial ministers in the Church of England, were forced to choose between following the Countess into an uncertain future, with few resources and all the associated disabilities and stigma which Dissenting status brought at that time, and remaining in the Church of England, for which they still felt great affection. For most, there was only one choice: "At this juncture all but one of Lady Huntingdon's chaplains ... withdrew from her service and continued to minister within the Church of England."¹³

The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion was too small, relative to the vast mass of the established church, and the gulf between being a Churchman and being a Dissenter too great in 18th century England, for it to ever be seen as a genuine rival to the Church of England, and after 1782, and the death of the Countess in the years following, it never achieved in independence the prominence that it had had as a rogue part of the Church of England. However it and the Wesleyan Methodists had – precisely because so many of their sympathisers remained within the Church of

¹¹ John, Henry Overton, and Frederick Relton, *The English Church from the Accession of George I to the end of the 18th century* (London: Macmillan, 1906) p. 89

¹² *Ibid.* p. 88

¹³ John Fenwick, *The Free Church of England*, p. 23

England – created a lasting legacy of evangelicalism within that Church, and the divisions between Evangelicals within and without the Church would never be as absolute as the divisions between Churchmen and Dissenters had been in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Evangelicalism had begun as a movement within the Church of England; part of it moved outside, and part of it remained within, but the borders would always be porous.

The potential for frustrated renewal and revival societies to separate from the Established Church had been clearly demonstrated. For all the protestations against separatism, separatism had eventually become inevitable because the Methodists could not operate within the legal and procedural system of the established church. Unbeknownst to the 18th century Methodists, however, the Church of England was about to enter a phase in which the number of societies based around promoting and defending various strands of Churchmanship would explode, and the reason for this was the final, most bitterly controversial, and ultimately most successful off-spring of the 18th century Evangelical Revival: the Tractarians and the Oxford movement.

In contrast to the Methodists, who downplayed and flouted the existing structures of the Church of England in a way which made it impossible for all of them to remain within the church, it was the Tractarians' very emphasis of the importance of that system, and the stratospherically high level of their churchmanship, which would simultaneously be the cause of controversy and their route to acceptance. As explored in Chapter 2, the Tractarian solution to the problems of the Church of England was an evangelical revival in the direction of the mediaeval and patristic past; far from marginalising and ignoring the episcopate, they placed it at front and centre of their bid to establish the same sense of independent ecclesiology, and to create distance from the suffocating embrace of the English state, which the Methodists had sought. Whatever the Tractarians could be accused of, it was not marginalising or downplaying episcopacy. Dr. Evans, in the same Tract 30 quoted above, explained Episcopacy and the English Reformation thus to the errant John Evans:

But about three hundred years ago, the Bishops of the Church of England saw these errors in their true light; they saw that the Pope's authority was not

founded on Scripture, and they consequently refused to acknowledge it, while they at the same time corrected, upon scriptural principles, the other errors and evil practices which I have alluded to. These changes did not make the Church of England a new Church, nor prevent that body which was CHRIST'S true and original Church before from being CHRIST'S true and original Church still. Some Bishops of that day, it is true, disapproved of these changes, and refused to accede to them; but as, when they died, they providentially appointed no successors, there has never since been any real ground for doubt which was the true Church of CHRIST in this favoured land. The Bishops of the Church of England, and they only, are the representatives by succession of those who, more than a thousand years ago, planted the Gospel on our shores.

However theologically controversial and historically contentious this explanation might be, from the point of view of many embattled English bishops of the early to mid-19th century it was undeniably attractive, and chimed conveniently with the high church view of episcopacy which most English bishops had held to since the early 17th century. By the early 20th century this view of episcopacy had become standard issue within the Church of England, the opposition of a small number of Conservative Evangelical bishops such as J. C. Ryle notwithstanding (see chapter 2), to the point at which, during the Prayer Book controversy of the 19th century, William Joynson-Hicks could more or less directly accuse sympathetic Church of England bishops of deliberately facilitating the spread of Anglo-Catholicism by refusing to enforce the measures which Parliament had passed against it (see Chapter 3). This leads directly into the second factor which enabled the Tractarians to successfully remain within the Church of England where the Methodists did not: impeccable timing.

The Tractarians began their movement in the exact same period, and indeed precisely because, the link between Parliament and the Church of England was beginning to give way (see chapter 2). Whereas the Methodists ran full tilt into the laws protecting the establishment, the Tractarians faced the wrath of Parliament at a time when neither public nor political opinion was seriously prepared to stomach legal action against churchmen which, combined with episcopal unwillingness to impede their progress as much as they might, ensured that whilst some Anglo-Catholic clergy suffered punishment under the strictures of the Public Worship Reform Act the overall effects were very much mitigated, and the Tractarians never

faced the absolute obstruction of the church authorities which confronted their Methodist forebears.

These two factors combined ensured that when a split did occur as a result of the Tractarian movement, it was Protestants who went first. It took 11 years from the publication of the first Tract in 1833 for a group of concerned Protestants to break away from the Church of England; they were given the impetus by Henry Phillpotts, the High Church and Tractarian sympathising Bishop of Exeter, whom we first met in the Gorham case discussed in Chapter 2¹⁴, whose attempts to make surplices during Prayer services compulsory provoked the 'Surplice Riots' in his diocese, and they were aided by the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. For 19 years from 1844, when the first break-away congregation was formed with the backing of the Duke of Somerset, matters were unsettled, but in 1863 the Conference of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion voted to inaugurate the Free Church of England as a separate denomination.

Despite being a product of the Connexion, the Free Church of England was distinctive. The Connexion had gravitated away from the Church of England over the years; it had a congregational polity, had abandoned the Book of Common Prayer and with it Anglican ecclesiastical dress. Despite its Anglican origins, and the intentions of its founder, the Connexion had never been established specifically as an Anglican alternative, and had always felt like a reluctant Dissenting group. The Free Church of England, by its very name, was staking a specific claim to Anglican legitimacy. It used the same doctrine, the same liturgy, the same dress and the same polity as the Church of England. Thomas Thoresby, who drew up the Free Church's Constitution, understood full well the value of this in marketing terms:

To the question why should the Free Church succeed while the Free Church 'is now more feeble than ever'? Thoresby listed what he saw as the weaknesses of the Constitution [of the Connexion]: 'The name, The fact of its being a mere Connexion, The lamentable division between the trustees and its ministers, The want of government; and consequent want of enterprise.' All of these the proposed Constitution would overcome. The proposed name 'has the great merit of a title of being not only accurate in itself, but clearly understood. Everyone knows what you mean by it, so far as the general idea

¹⁴ See Chapter 2, p. 19

is concerned; and it is distinctive; it would never be confounded with the Church itself, nor with any of the Dissenting bodies.¹⁵

The new church was not a Dissenting or, even worse, a radical body, the very thought of which could send shudders down the spines of respectable Georgian and Victorian gentlemen. The new church was Anglican from the crown of its head to the tails of its surplice; it was a place where Anglicans concerned at the (supposed) Papist direction of the established church could feel free, but also secure and at home.

In terms of the later Anglican Realignment, this is a watershed moment. This is the first attempt to establish an authentically and explicitly Anglican alternative to an institutional church which is perceived on doctrinal grounds to have itself departed from the path of true Anglicanism. This is not the stated intention of those behind the Anglican Realignment today, but it is the issue to which they see themselves as responding and the theoretical possibility and the theological potential for such a move has been established since the days of the Non-Jurors.

To return to Thoresby's question, however, why does the Anglican Realignment pose a greater potential threat to the institutional Church of England than the Free Church of England would ever do? After all, one does not need to be an ecclesiastical historian to realise that the Free Church of England never became in any way, shape or form a serious alternative to the Church of England. John Fenwick, author of one of very few contemporary books on the Free Church and Bishop of its northern diocese in England, has on the back of his book:

Most Christians are completely unaware that for over two hundred years there has existed in England, and at times in Wales, Scotland, Canada, Bermuda, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and the USA an Episcopal Church similar in many respects to the Church of England...

This does rather suggest that neither the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion nor the Free Church of England produced a revolutionary and lasting upheaval in English and global Anglicanism.¹⁶ If that is the case, why have these earlier

¹⁵ Fenwick, *The Free Church of England* p. 50

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

manifestations not threatened the Established Church in the way in which it has just been claimed that the Anglican Realignment has the potential to?

The answer lies in relative numbers and resources, coupled with the validation which the establishment in earlier centuries definitely brought, but which in the contemporary, globalised setting of Anglicanism – a setting in which the Archbishop of Canterbury himself can downplay the effects of disestablishment¹⁷ – cannot be relied upon to the same extent. In the 17th and 18th centuries, moreover, neither the Scottish Episcopal Church nor the Episcopal Church in the United States (the only legitimately independent Anglican groups in existence at the time) were willing to lend the break-away societies their protection and legitimacy by recognising them as authentically Anglican missionary groups, as parts of the Anglican Communion have done with both ACNA and AMiE.

Relative numbers have always been crucial to the Christian sense of identity, which is a corporate one, and provide a certain validation in and of themselves. Theologically speaking, from the point of view of a neutral observer, the Society of Saint Pius X, formed after the Second Vatican Council, has a not unreasonable claim to Catholic legitimacy; if you accept their claim that the Second Vatican Council was heretical, the rest of their actions make sense. The fact that SSPX members number in the thousands, however, whilst the Roman Catholic Church which they left numbers in excess of a billion, renders any claim they might make to not being a fringe sect seem utterly ludicrous in the eyes of the world. If, on the other hand, they had taken a substantial portion of the world's Roman Catholics with them when they swept out of the church, the perception would have been very different, and they would have been much more difficult to ignore.

In the early to mid-19th century the Church of England vastly outnumbered any other religious group in England, and was spreading across the growing British Empire. This was the age of muscular Christianity, and in England the Church of England had far more muscle than all the other religious groups combined, dominating Parliament, the Universities, the Public Schools and the establishment in general. Its

¹⁷ See Chapter 1, p. 11.

parish system rendered it ubiquitous. Any small group leaving it and claiming to be an alternative was always going to be found wanting in comparison.

The same cannot today be said of the Church of England, whose hold on the psyche of the nation has slipped considerably over the course of the 20th century. The figures quoted by different surveys vary, but the snapshot they provide is clear. An April 2007 survey by Tearfund suggested that only 15% of the population attended Church (any Church) at least once a month.¹⁸ *Church Attendance in England 1980-2005*, published by Christian Research, suggests that around 1 million people regularly attended an Anglican church by 2005, roughly the same number as attend mosques and Roman Catholic churches, and around 50% less than the combined number that attends other Christian Churches, including Methodist, Pentecostal, Independent and Orthodox.¹⁹ Whilst a sense of cultural Anglicanism continues to exercise an influence on the nation, practising Anglicanism within the Church of England is now very much one religion amongst many, competing for the attentions of a society which is, to all intents and purposes, secular.

How could the Anglican Realignment, a fundamentally conservative movement which is even more out of tune with the broadly liberal and secular trends of British society, expect to make a major impact in this milieu? The answer is that it would not have to. All the Anglican Realignment would need to do, were it to embark upon a course of separatism, would be to convince a sufficient number of the practising Anglicans that they provide a realistic alternative; the days when a rival to the Church of England would need to inspire defections in the millions, not to mention a dramatic cultural shift, to have any serious impact are well and truly over.

The Anglican Realignment has been further helped by a trend which has developed within Anglicanism since the 19th century. As described above, the Tractarian Movement, which became the Catholic Revival, and the reaction against it, led to a lengthy battle for the soul of Anglicanism, and societies, with the resources to campaign, to publish, to fight lawsuits and to offer mutual support came into their

¹⁸ "Trends in UK Church Attendance" from the Why Church? website - <http://www.whychurch.org.uk/trends.php> (accessed 15/07/2013)

¹⁹ "Church Attendance in England 1980-2005" from the British Religion in Numbers website - <http://www.brin.ac.uk/news/2011/church-attendance-in-england-1980-2005/> (accessed 15/07/2013)

own. As the Catholic Revival spread, and the Evangelicals marshalled to meet it, it became rapidly clear that the numbers involved were sufficiently great, and the polarisation within the church sufficiently stark, that the solution the church had found to the original Methodist problem – close ranks, enforce the rules of the church as written, and wait for the troublesome Evangelicals to leave – was not going to be an option this time. The institutional Church of England now had an awful lot more to lose by forcing either the Anglo-Catholics or the Evangelicals out of the Church; the difference between a small group of troublesome radicals and an outright schism was numbers. If it could not squeeze either group out, it would have to create space for them; the only way to do that was to effectively internalise sectarianism.

By the end of the 19th century, and for the rest of the 20th, Anglicanism had effectively divided itself into different strands, each with their own societies, churches, clergy, laity, theological colleges, traditions, worship styles, and doctrines of church. But whilst the church itself became ever-broader, more tolerant of difference and less specific as to its confessional identity (for the sake of survival, if for nothing else – see chapter 1) these strands of churchmanship began to fill the confessional vacuum which that trend created.

Thus, by the end of the 19th century a situation had arisen in which, for those concerned with controversial matters, for a clergyman to identify himself simply as Anglican or Church of England was not specific enough. If you wanted to know what a clergyman actually believed and did, beyond the most basic requirements of the law, the description "Church of England" did not really help, because the boundaries of tolerated belief and practice were growing wider. How, for instance, would an Evangelical Anglican of the late 19th century know that the preaching to which he was about to submit himself and his family was neither the closet Papism of the Tractarians nor the near-blasphemous claims of the liberal modernisers?

Help was, however, at hand for the confused Victorian or Edwardian church-goer, for the basic theology and praxis of a cleric, or of any associated person, could swiftly be determined with reference to which, if any, society they belonged to. Thus, if the unidentified person belonged to the English Church Union, it was immediately clear where they stood, more or less, on a wide range of ecclesiastical and doctrinal

matters. Likewise, if they belonged to the Modern Churchman's Union or the Church Society, their positions on potentially controversial matters were much more readily apparent. These societies were not completely uniform in all areas, and neither were all clergy affiliated to one or another. The societies did, however, have the ability to define the fault lines within the church, the ability to bring together like-minded Anglicans in defence of their beliefs (to **defend** their beliefs, not negotiate new ones) and the resources to lead the internal debates in a way which individuals outside of such societies, and at least below the rank of bishop, did not.

As explored in Chapter 3, this situation ensured that when the Church Assembly was created in 1919 the Church already possessed a fully-fledged system of parties, each determined to defend their own pre-existing versions of truth and to stand up for the interests of their own members. Instead of serving as a forum in which Anglican truth could be decided by debate and prayerful contemplation, the Church Assembly became a parliamentary-style court of arbitration, in which already established truth claims and ecclesiologies, entirely independent of the church leadership and largely unaffected by anything which it might have to say – neither Anglo-Catholics nor Evangelicals, nor anyone else for that matter, had any intention of altering their theology or praxis because of anything which might be claimed by the church's instruments of governance – thrashed out a *modus vivendi*, refereed, within very broad limits, by Canon Law. Answering Pilate's question "What is truth?" became a job which the Church of England had effectively delegated to its members, with the earnest hope that whatever they decided it was would not be so unpalatable to those who disagreed as to cause an outright schism.

This remarkable devolution of doctrinal authority was not without its benefits. It created the space for both Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics and others to co-exist within the existing structure; tolerance, freedom of conscience and the ability to adapt have all been seen as Anglicanism's strong points, when contrasted with, for example, Roman Catholic dogmatism or the fissiparous sectarianism of more radical forms of Protestantism. In reality, however, no amount of rationalising can disguise the fact that the institutions of the Church of England have, by the late 20th century, become akin to one massive exercise in internal ecumenism; with different doctrinal

and ecclesiological traditions competing – generally, though not always, good-naturedly – for a fair slice of the pie.

Which pie?

As discussed above, the world into which a break-away Anglican group would have to go is a considerably colder and harsher one than that which persisted in early to mid-19th century England – and it was not particularly welcoming then. The Church of England retains two key advantages which work in its favour, the most immediately obvious of which is the Establishment. True, the Establishment is not what it once was. It does, however, give the Church of England a sense of national importance and purpose which no other Christian group can claim. Walk away from the Church of England – with its prominent Cathedrals, ceremonial duties, opportunities for addressing the nation and the Government, military, school and University chaplaincies, hospital chaplaincies, commissions, committees, ecumenical organisations, charitable organisations and endowments, and its possibilities for advancement, through Archdiaconates, Cathedral Canon positions and Royal Chaplaincies all the way to the House of Lords – and those opportunities will evaporate. The possibilities of advancement, influence, ecclesiastical challenges and a fulfilling career are considerably greater with the Church of England than they would be in a small Anglican sect. The Church of England, as the national Church, with its 13,000 parishes, 43 cathedrals and cornucopia of non-parochial posts, will offer far more opportunities than a small group with a few parishes scattered across the country.

The second key advantage lies in the Church of England's resources. Clergy are not supposed to be motivated by money, and it would be fair to say that most of them are not. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury's salary is a pittance compared to what a senior politician, financier, lawyer, industrialist or even academic could earn. Many clergy have families, however, and children to support, and the need for security is very important even for those who do not. The Church of England, with its vast portfolio of property, its resources of potential appointments and its general ability to provide security for clergy and their dependents, makes it a considerably safer bet

than a small break-away group, without secure sources of funding and with few, perhaps no, opportunities for full-time paid ministry.

The Church of England raises £750 million a year from its parishes, towards total running costs of approximately £1 billion; a further £160 million comes from the Church Commissioners, who manage £4.4 billion worth of assets and investments on behalf of the Church, with the remainder coming from a variety of other fund-raising initiatives.²⁰ No small Anglican sect can hope to compete with that, and in a society considerably less amenable to wandering ministers of religion than that of either Apostolic Palestine or the early Victorian period, the sense of security that comes with belonging to a large, established and wealthy organisation will inevitably be a powerful motivating factor when considering whether or not to break away. It will inevitably take an awful lot to persuade a priest to leave a secure and well-resourced parish ministry for an organisation which offers little prospect of job security, has few members, and lacks the reach and resources to make an impact, or even to survive in the longer term.

None of this is designed to suggest that the Church of England is only held together by the threat of hardship on the outside. Throughout this thesis I have referred to the tenacious affection which many of its members feel for the Church of England, and the determination to remain within the Church of England which even the most dissatisfied of Anglicans have expressed. That does not alter the fact, however, that there is a considerable sense of disgruntlement and pressure for change expressed by the Anglican Realignment, and we have already seen what happened when that same sense of the need for change and renewal possessed by the Methodists was thwarted. For those deeply unhappy with the Church of England as it currently stands, the possibility of joining a large, prominent and secure, yet authentically Anglican, alternative could change the whole balance of the equation. This is where the Para-Church groups and the Anglican Communion re-enter the story, because the two working together have the potential to bring the weight of numbers, the sense of authenticity, the sense of true catholicity and the financial resources to bear at just the right time and in just the right place.

²⁰ All figures are taken from "Funding the Church of England" from the Church of England website - <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats/funding.aspx> (accessed 15/07/2013)

The Continuing Anglican Churches of North America, like the Free Church of England and the Reformed Episcopal Church before them, have survived, and some have prospered. None, however, has developed into a serious rival to the Churches of the Anglican Communion, either in North America or in England. They are small and divided. The Church of England (Continuing), formed in 1994, has 4 parishes across England, for example, whilst the Evangelical Connexion of the Free Church of England, which formed in 2003 after disagreements with the Free Church of England over ecumenical engagement, has 6. Although the Churches in North America have a wider presence, none of these Churches can be considered a serious rival – unlike the Anglican Church in North America, which can.

If neither the Evangelical Revival, nor the disputes of the 19th century, nor the Continuing Anglican movement of the late 20th century has succeeded in creating a sufficiently authentic alternative and a serious rival to the Church of England, the question must once again be asked – why should the Anglican Realignment be any different this time around?

It should be said that we do not know for certain that it will, and it is beyond the scope and possibility of this thesis to prove it either way or to make predictions. There are reasons, however, why the Anglican Realignment of the early 2000s may have better prospects than its predecessors. Firstly, whilst it is undeniable that groups considering walking away from the Church of England face considerable potential difficulty, it is also the case that many of the Churches likely to part with the Church of England are large Evangelical churches in relatively affluent areas. These churches attract a following from considerably beyond their parish boundaries, and are net contributors to diocesan funds – the congregation would be financially better off if they left. The Church of England Newspaper reported in 2004 that Conservative Evangelical parishes were considering withholding their parish share:

The Rev David Banting, Chair of Reform... stressed the reality of the threat. “I have never known it as clear in some people’s minds as an active option as it is now,” he said. “People are not prepared to fund a Church that doesn’t seem to have any sense of discipline or restraint. We are considering playing the money card with a heavy heart. We don’t want to do this, but there comes a stage where enough is enough.”

The potential of the action is made clear elsewhere in the report:

In 2003 on average evangelical churches had over double the income of non-evangelical churches, according to Christian Research, and their financial leverage was reported as one of the main reasons for Jeffrey John's [who would have become the Church of England's first openly gay, albeit celibate, Bishop] withdrawal from the Reading post.

A church such as Christ Church, Clifton, pays around £350,000 to central funds each year, only £90,000 of which is returned to pay for the three clergy members. Losing contributions from such large churches would be a serious blow to the Church, which is struggling to overcome the current financial crisis.²¹

Even when account is taken of the fact that Christ Church, Clifton, is an exception, rather than the rule, the gulf in resources between the potential breakaways and the dioceses they would leave behind is not as wide as the one which faced the earlier groups, even those which enjoyed the support of a Duke and a Countess.

Secondly, the Anglican Realignment, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is about more than just breakaway parishes in England and North America. The Global South, which now represents the largest parts of the Anglican Communion in Africa and Asia, is seeking to realign power and influence away from the demographically declining traditional Churches of the West; many Primates of the Global South have been vocal in their condemnation of the Western churches liberal attitudes towards homosexuality, and Anglican Churches in Africa have broken Communion with TEC and ACC, replacing it with relations with the breakaway Anglican Church in North America. The Church of England itself, even as the mother Church of Anglicanism, is not immune from this demographic shift, and shift of power. The Jerusalem Declaration of 2008 stated that, as far as it was concerned:

While acknowledging the nature of Canterbury as an historic see, we do not accept that Anglican identity is determined necessarily through recognition by the Archbishop of Canterbury.²²

²¹ "Parishes plan to turn the financial screw", 01/07/2004, from the Church of England Newspaper - <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/1164669/posts> (accessed 15/07/2013)

²² The Full Jerusalem Statement from the FCA website - http://www.fca.net/resources/the_jerusalem_declaration1/

Very recently, when the Church of England announced that it would appoint partnered gay men to Bishoprics, provided they were celibate, the Primates of the Global South issued a warning:

Sadly, both the decision to permit clergy to enter civil partnerships and this latest decision which some call it a “local option,” are wrong and were taken without prior consultation or consensus with the rest of the Anglican Communion at a time when the Communion is still facing major challenges of disunity. It is contrary to “the inter-dependence” which we try to affirm between churches within the Communion. Moreover, it does not only widen the gap between the Church of England and Anglicans in the Global South, it also widens the gap between the Anglican Communion and our ecumenical partners...

We strongly urge the Church of England to reconsider this divisive decision.²³

If enough of the Global South is willing, in the event of the Church of England pushing as far on the issue of homosexuality as far as TEC and ACC, to back those Churches which break away in England and end relations with the Church of England, as large parts of it have done with the established Provinces in the United States and Canada, the whole demographic equation has the potential to suddenly change. In terms of the worldwide Anglican Communion, the numbers will be much more evenly distributed on each side, and the break-away Churches in England would have a much stronger claim to legitimacy than their predecessors have done. Unlike in the past, it would require a considerably smaller number of concerned members of the Church of England to break away to have a much greater impact on the remaining population – particularly if many of those were wealthy congregations.

The possibility exists. Those groups, such as Anglican Mainstream and the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, which are the most likely to depart, have been accused of bluffing, but the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen was not bluffing, and nor was the Free Church of England. The Church of England has been here before, but never before have the odds so favoured the potential separatists as they do at the moment; if the separatists reach a demographic tipping point, and create a

²³ “12 Jan 2013: Statement from the Primates of the Global South of the Anglican Communion” from the Global South Anglican Online website - http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/comments/12_jan_2013_statement_from_the_primates_of_the_global_south_of_the_anglican (accessed 15/07/2013)

sufficiently sizeable alternative to Anglicanism, the nature of the Church of England as the only effective expression of Anglicanism in this country could change.

It was stated above that “By the end of the 19th century, and for the rest of the 20th, Anglicanism had effectively divided itself into different strands, each with their own societies, churches, clergy, laity, theological colleges, traditions, worship styles, and doctrines of church.” The only element missing from that list of ingredients necessary to shift from Para-Church groups and ecclesiastical schools of thought to fully fledged ecclesiastical groupings of their own is bishops, and it is precisely that which alternative episcopal oversight and the coming together of para-church groups and bishops seen in the Anglican Realignment has the potential to supply. The purpose of the next and final chapter is to examine the effects of alternative episcopal oversight and the Anglican Realignment on the Church of England.

Chapter 7

The Anglican Realignment and the PEVs: Flying by the Seats of their Copes

As explored above, the solution to the conflict between Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals during the 19th and early 20th centuries saw the Church of England create space for the two parties to continue within it by retreating, albeit not always willingly, into a guiding policy of classical, latitudinarian Anglican liberalism. As also explored above, the bringing into existence of the Anglican Mission in England and its alliance with the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans suggests that for some Anglicans, at least, the boundaries of latitudinarianism have either been passed or are rapidly approaching. What, therefore, could the Church of England do to create further space in the present situation?

The Church of England, as discussed in the previous chapter, has considerable pull factors to balance the push factors working on its members: its extensive resources, its still-considerable interweaving with the national psyche, its presence in every parish, its ability to provide a secure future and fulfilling career path for ordinands and the enormous affection which many of its members hold for it. On the other hand, there exists within Western Anglicanism (particularly in the USA and Canada but also in Britain and Australia) a significant number of people for whom the established Anglican churches, in adapting their teaching and practice to reflect the increasingly liberal and secular societies around them, have strayed sufficiently far from traditional Christian doctrine as to render invalid their ministry and authority. These Anglicans have been clear that their patience and forbearance cannot be taken permanently for granted; they will neither share ecclesiastical communion (however they define it) with, nor submit to the ecclesiastical authority of, those whom they perceive to be in grave doctrinal and moral error. As the Methodists discovered during the 18th century, it is very difficult for those who are not prepared to follow the procedures of the church to remain within its organisational structure.

This does not represent the first occasion on which an alternative structure for the practice of Anglicanism, separate from the authority structure of the established Church of England has come into existence. It is, however, the first time that such a

development has been, in effect, sponsored by another part of the global Anglican Communion, which lends it a potential legitimacy, authenticity and ministerial validity (at least, for those Anglicans for whom valid episcopal ordination is a matter of importance) which its predecessors struggled ever to accumulate in the minds of English Anglicans. It also exists in contrast to an established Church of England which is considerably weaker, in terms of public prominence and participation, considerably more diverse on a wide range of moral and doctrinal issues, and considerably less willing or able to enforce a more strict conformity on its clergy than its 18th or 19th century predecessors (see chapters passim).

Jonathan Clatworthy, General Secretary of Modern Church, expressed the situation succinctly at the very beginning of his book *Liberal Faith in a Divided Church*:

Threats to split the Church, Archbishops refusing to share communion with each other, new bishops being appointed specifically to rival existing bishops. Western Christianity seems to be separating into two increasingly hostile camps of 'liberals' and 'conservatives'.¹

In England, where a single national Church (albeit one with widely variable levels of uniformity) has existed since the 16th century, such a separation, and the establishment of a viable alternative ecclesiastical organisation for Anglicanism, could have seismic effects on the religious landscape. Because the Church of England has historically been considered the mother church of the Anglican Communion, the recognition of that alternative church by a substantial portion of the Communion, could change the nature of one of the world's largest Christian denominations from a unified sacramental communion to a much looser grouping of smaller geographically-based churches. These would still be interrelated, and share a common heritage, but would be in a relationship to one another which would best be described as ecumenical, rather than sacramental. The prospect would also open up of alternative expressions of Anglicanism competing directly with each other for the attentions of worshippers on a relatively (relative, that is, to the Free Church of England and the established church during the mid-19th century) equal footing. Clatworthy continues:

¹ Jonathan Clatworthy, *Liberal Faith in a Divided Church* (Winchester: O Books, 2008) p. 3

Talk of a split has been rife in the Anglican Communion for a number of years. Its leaders are struggling to keep it together. In practice this means looking for compromise while giving ground to those who threaten to cause most havoc; so short-term expediency takes priority and the search for good long-term solutions is postponed.²

The use of alternative episcopal oversight to solve issues of conscience was pioneered by the Church of England in the wake of the 1992 acceptance of women priests, in a development which has been seen by many as an example of such short-term expediency in action. For some Anglicans, priestly ministry is to be exercised only by men, and they were unable in conscience to accept the episcopal oversight of those bishops who were prepared to ordain women. As previous chapters have demonstrated, from the 19th century, as the state gradually divested itself of doctrinal and disciplinary responsibility for the Church of England, the maintenance of doctrinal uniformity, once so important during the 16th and 17th centuries, has been effectively abandoned in favour of organisational unity. This entails “creating space” for differing doctrinal positions to coexist within the organisation but, as the Methodists were early demonstrators of, there is only so much space within which different groups can be allowed to act in different ways to the others, to play by different rules, before the organisation begins to fragment. Then, the church compelled the Methodists to conform or separate. Now, to avoid the threat of a larger and more damaging schism, attempts to create space must become ever-more inventive.

The means devised in the early 1990s was the Provincial Episcopal Visitor, colloquially known as the Flying Bishop, an office created by the 1993 Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod. The idea was that a PEV would be assigned to provide Episcopal oversight to those parishes which could not accept the oversight of their diocesan Bishop. This did solve the presenting problem, for the time being at least, of providing acceptable Episcopal oversight to opponents of women priests. Even so a number of Anglo-Catholics have left the Church of England for the Roman Catholic church (approx. 1,500 for the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, including 5 bishops and 61 clergy as of April 2011, according to research by the

² Ibid.

BBC³; others have left since 1993, but the numbers are harder to gauge as they have gone in dribs and drabs). It has also caused considerable disquiet and controversy.

The 1993 Act of Synod creating PEVs was ringed around with safeguards to prevent such a situation:

“Whereas... (2) The bishop of each diocese continues as the ordinary of his diocese;”

“5 (3) - Each provincial episcopal visitor shall be commissioned by the archbishop of the province to carry out, or cause to be carried out, for any parish in the province such episcopal duties, in addition to his other duties, as the diocesan bishop concerned may request. The provincial episcopal visitor shall work with the diocesan bishop concerned in enabling extended pastoral care and sacramental ministry to be provided.”

The Act did not, however, make clear how, despite all the good intentions, precisely the same theological tensions, boundary disputes and sense of rebuke which affected the Methodist preachers of the 18th century were to be avoided by the Anglo-Catholic Flying Bishops of the 20th. Ultimately, it is not possible to legislate against resentment. Paul Avis, quoted in an article by Jean Mayland, pointed out in General Synod at the time that:

...it was 'really, theologically and canonically impossible for a priest to be out of communion with his diocesan bishop and to continue to function in his parish; the bishop is the principal minister of the sacraments in his diocese and it is the ancient teaching of the Church... that the parish priest celebrates the Eucharist on behalf of the bishop.'⁴

The fact that the existence of PEVs sits uncomfortably with the theology of the very constituency within the Church of England which it was intended to placate adds weight to Clatworthy's characterisation of the move as short-term expedience rather than a good long-term settlement. Jonathan Baker, who was at the time of interviewing Bishop of Ebbsfleet and one of two Episcopal Visitors in the Province of

³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13153316>

⁴ Jean Mayland, "When Will They Get It?" in *Signs of the Times* No. 30 (Modern Church Newsletter, July 2008 - <http://www.modernchurch.org.uk/publications/st/jul2008/4.htm>)

Canterbury, echoed this sense of ecclesiological unease and incompleteness during my interview with him:

In terms of the Church of England...one of the difficulties is that we have developed an increasingly self-conscious catholic ecclesiology in terms of the communion of bishops – which is good – but that has been inhabited by these liberal doctrinal developments [see chapter 1], so that one of the issues around provision for people who cannot accept the ordination of women is the sense that the PEVs...are contrary to catholic ecclesiology; but, of course, the people who are defending the catholic ecclesiology in that context [i.e. those supporting women's ordination but opposed to PEVs] have themselves stepped outside the consensus of the catholic tradition on holy orders.

Martyn Jarrett, recently retired as Bishop of Beverley and Episcopal Visitor for the Province of York, spoke in a similar vein:

I think that for parishes to choose their own bishop is profoundly uncatholic; you can only justify it as a bearable anomaly in so far as the church has already done something even more uncatholic, and this is a way to cope with it.

The system of PEVs, as Bishop Jarrett went on to point out, is operated under the authority of the church, and does not permit parishes simply to choose who their bishop is; parishes can choose between systems, rather than between individuals. Nevertheless, the system of PEVs does give parishes the right to choose who their bishop is NOT, and it is arguable that this 'right to reject' represents just as profound an alteration to the established episcopal system as a 'right to choose' would do. Clause 5.1(c) of the draft measure to approve the consecration of women bishops, which was rejected by General Synod in November 2012, was added by the House of Bishops to the original draft, and was intended to reinforce the system of alternative episcopal oversight and provide sacramental assurance for those who could not accept women Bishops. Writing about this amendment in a report for *Modern Church*, Jonathan Clatworthy stated:

In Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy there is no process for parishes to seek and secure alternative episcopal oversight; nor was there in the Church of England before 1993. The proposed clause would not only make this change permanent, but would extend it by subordinating the bishop's role to the PCC's declared convictions.

The role of bishops has varied but the most persistent elements have been two. Firstly the bishop has been the chief representative of the Church within the diocese, with authority to administer the diocese and declare the Church's teaching within it. Secondly only bishops have had authority to ordain priests and consecrate other bishops.

With the 1993 Act Resolution C parishes were granted the legal right to reject the authority of their diocesan bishop with respect to both. The [new] Clause would extend this right of rejection, thereby shifting ecclesial authority decisively away from bishops and towards PCCs. The Church of England would become a bit more like Baptist Churches, each of which is free to join or leave the Baptist Union as it sees fit.⁵

Clatworthy here links the concept of alternative episcopal oversight specifically and directly with a potential change in the ecclesiological nature of Anglicanism, from the geographical model of 'one bishop, one diocese' – the traditional catholic ecclesiology practised by Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy – to the ecclesiology which was demanded by Protestants and Puritans during the English Reformation and finally rejected at the Great Ejection. As demonstrated elsewhere in this thesis, the Tractarian contention that the system of mediaeval episcopacy was retained without theological alteration in the Church of England is not sustainable; the 'one bishop, one diocese' model served the purpose of ensuring uniformity just as well for the Elizabethan and Jacobean governments (the Caroline less so) as it had for the mediaeval papacy but it did so on a different theological basis, and with the Crown in Parliament and in the Courts able to enforce compliance.⁶ That same Tractarian contention has, however, become so central to the Church of England's theological conception of itself during the last two centuries that to unpick the system of geographical dioceses can be seen by many as changing Anglicanism itself. As Graham Kings, Bishop of Sherborne and founder of the Open Evangelical group Fulcrum said during my interview with him:

...my fundamental position – and that of Fulcrum – is that you don't choose your bishop. That would be a congregationalist model of leadership, and it buys into a post-modern pick and mix thing. I do think the philosophical air we breathe is affecting our ecclesiology.

⁵ Jonathan Clatworthy, *When is a bishop not a bishop* (Modern Church: June 2008) - <http://www.modernchurch.org.uk/resources/mc/2012-9.htm> (accessed 16/09/2013)

⁶ See Chapter 2.

Not all evangelicals are so supportive of the catholic model of episcopacy, however, either now or during the past centuries. It should also be pointed out that there is a perfectly understandable interest in someone who holds the office of bishop supporting a theology with a higher understanding of episcopacy. It would be very surprising indeed if the current and aspiring holders of episcopal office within the Church of England were unable to reach for themselves the same conclusion which Jonathan Clatworthy and Modern Church have reached here:

Baptists have no bishops. If the Church of England is indeed to move in this direction questions will increasingly arise as to why we need bishops at all. The current proposal stipulates that the only basis for requesting an alternative bishop would be opposition to women's ministry. However the direction of travel will be clear: the diocesan bishop's authority to administer the diocese, declare the Church's teaching and ordain priests will be subjected to formally authorised opposition from within the Church itself. Unless a consensus develops about a clear limiting principle, the trend is unlikely to stop there.⁷

For many evangelicals, however, the catholic model of episcopacy is neither essential nor necessarily even desirable. They would be considerably more comfortable with a more congregationalist model than Bishop Graham would be, and this is where the PEV system creates new opportunities. Andrew Goddard, writing for Fulcrum, states:

As a number of evangelicals have pointed out, a large part of the problem here is related to the insistence on a model of mono-episcopacy in which overall oversight and legal jurisdiction is focussed in one bishop rather than, for example, shared between a number of bishops. This form of church order, though well-established in tradition, is not required by Scripture and is not unchallenged either historically or in the contemporary church. The Archbishops' proposal, in talking of "concurrent jurisdiction", begins to challenge the mindset that insists on such mono-episcopacy.

Many hope that introducing women bishops will lead to changing understandings of episcopacy and new patterns of episcopal oversight, including perhaps more collaborative and collegial forms.⁸

⁷ Jonathan Clatworthy, *When is a bishop not a bishop* (Modern Church: June 2008) - <http://www.modernchurch.org.uk/resources/mc/2012-9.htm> (accessed 19/09/2013)

⁸ Andrew Goddard, *Evangelical Opponents of Women Bishops: What is Sought and Required?* (Fulcrum: July 2010) - <http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/page.cfm?ID=547> (accessed 19/09/2013)

Within the wider Anglican Communion, Goddard sees a definite willingness to put doctrinal consistency before catholic ecclesiological rigor:

For those in Kigali [at the 2006 gathering of the Global South primates] (and those in England who, to varying degrees, share their concerns and vision), there is little doubt that 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' will be considered more fundamental to Anglican polity and identity than 'one church, one bishop, one territory'. What many still have clearly failed to acknowledge is that, in the words of the Windsor Report, "The overwhelming response from other Christians both inside and outside the Anglican family has been to regard these developments [in North America, especially GC 2003 [author's addition]] as departures from genuine, apostolic Christian faith" (para 28). Whether or not one agrees with it, that is the judgment of the Communion and the Communion and the provinces within it cannot continue as if that made no difference to its life.⁹

The existence of the Anglican Mission in England suggests that the Church of England will not be able to remain aloof from what is happening in the rest of the Communion, and the PEV system presents a possible method of managing the implications of these events. To those who have never been particularly comfortable with catholic mono-episcopacy as the criterion for sacramental and ecclesiological validity in the first place, the system of PEVs created to assuage Anglo-Catholic fears about episcopacy thus represents a clear opportunity to reform the catholic implementation of episcopacy – a situation which adds weight to Clatworthy's accusation above that well thought-out long-term theological solutions have been sacrificed to preserve unity at all costs.

This is not to say that the evangelicals have a problem with bishops per se, but they do have a conception of them which is better served by a more flexible and collegial approach – particularly in the absence of agreed and enforced limits on the doctrines which the bishops themselves can subscribe to and promote. As discussed in chapter 2, and as referred to by Jonathan Baker in the interview quote above, the combination of liberalism and catholicism which over the 20th century has been the overwhelmingly pre-eminent theological stance of the Church of England creates a situation in which the bishops are the key figures in the Church, to whom canonical

⁹ Andrew Goddard, *Fulfilled or Finished? The 'End' of the Anglican Communion* (Fulcrum: October 2010) - <http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/news/2006/20061006goddard.cfm?doc=144> (accessed 19/09/2013)

obedience is due, but with very little practical restraint on what doctrines the bishops can hold. This might be more tolerable if one subscribes to the catholic view that the office is more important than the person, and that the sacraments are not invalidated by the defects of the person, but the Protestant end of the spectrum in the Church of England does not now, and has never, held to that position.

This difficulty was clearly expressed during my interview with David Banting, former chairman of Reform and now a senior member of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans. He pointed out that, along with other Conservative Evangelicals, the recent difficulties within Anglicanism had actually given him a much greater sense of regard for the office of bishop and for what it was supposed, in the evangelical conception, to do:

One of the things he [John Gladwin, former Bishop of Chelmsford] used to say was that his job as a Bishop was to do theology on the margins, and we said “Where do you get that from?” I look at your charge and your consecration and it does not say you are to be a theologian and certainly not on the margins, constantly pushing at the boundaries. Your job is to teach the faith and refute error, and be a guardian of it [the faith], not to be a theologian. If you want to do that exploration go and be a theologian; there is a role for them but as a bishop you are a guardian of the faith and must guard it against error, and that’s why I think I have become a lot more admiring and respectful of the role of the bishop. It is a truly exalted office; “He who desires to be an overseer desires a noble thing” says the Apostle himself, and I am so glad that we are an Episcopal church run by bishops and not by a committee. But when I see people with the freedom to interpret and then apply and act on it – I despair at that sort of liberty and this creates real problems of confidence for unity. Are we in the same team anymore?

If bishops are to be allowed a wide degree of latitude in their moral and doctrinal positions then it makes sense for those who object to those positions to be able to secure alternative episcopal oversight, but it is not possible to do this without shifting the understanding of what episcopacy is away from the traditional catholic understanding which Anglicanism has spent much of the last two hundred years constructing within itself. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, the point at which the Church of England could adopt a more confessionally rigorous stance, and set out significantly tighter boundaries of acceptable belief than have hitherto existed, is long past.

The document which did so much to signal the end of attempts to define the Church of England confessionally, the report of the 1922 doctrine commission (see chapter 1) stated with what may now seem like remarkable foresight:

The institution of Episcopacy – that is, of oversight exercised under a continuously given commission – has taken a variety of forms, and it cannot be maintained that any one particular form of it is necessary. So, for example, the monarchical diocesan episcopate might conceivably be changed to a collegiate episcopate if this seemed likely to render better service...¹⁰

The report went on, however, to reject this notion, due to its view of episcopacy, as not being the right one: "...we shall give reasons shortly for supposing that this would not be so...."

The Bishop in his official capacity represents the whole Church in and to his diocese, and his diocese to the Councils of the Church. He is thus a living representative of the unity and universality of the Church....

Inasmuch as the unity of the Church is in part secured by an orderly method of making new ministers and the Bishop is the proper organ of unity and universality, he is the proper agent for carrying on through ordination the authority of the apostolic mission of the Church.

It is, as had been said, the coalescence of all these elements in a single person that gives to the Episcopate its peculiar importance. Such coalescence could not effectively take place in a coalition or assembly.

In the Church, the household of God, the Bishop should represent in his own appointed area the principle of Fatherhood. An assemblage of persons cannot be a "father in God"; and the lack of this element is an impoverishment of the Church's spiritual life.¹¹

As discussed in previous chapters, the development of Anglican comprehensiveness over the 20th century, particularly as it has been applied North America, coupled with the independence of the provinces and the system of dispersed authority, has created a situation in which, at Communion level, this conception of episcopacy has come under increasing strain; the differences of opinion on faith and morals have grown too wide for all the bishops to be viewed in this way across the Communion. As observed above, the Anglican Communion through alternative episcopal

¹⁰ *Doctrine in the Church of England: the Report of the 1922 Doctrine Committee* (London: SPCK, 1938) p.121-122

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 122-123

oversight and the Anglican Realignment is taking concrete steps away from it. The PEV system which might enable the Church of England to move with these developments is, as also observed above, not without considerable controversy.

A further complication created by the system of Provincial Episcopal Visitors is that, due to the circumstances in which they are created, they are at present exclusively Anglo-Catholic. The intention in creating them may have been that they were to solve a very specifically delineated problem, to operate only under very specific circumstances, and to cater for a very small constituency, but having established the principle of alternative episcopal oversight for those who disagree with their Bishop over one issue it then becomes very difficult to argue that it should not be made available for those who reject their diocesan Bishops over other issues.

Monsignor Keith Newton, a former PEV as Bishop of Richborough and now Ordinary of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham (established in 2010 for Anglo-Catholics wishing to convert to Roman Catholicism) said to me:

One of the dangers with the PEV system – I could understand the criticism levelled at it – [is that] if you can choose your bishop over that issue why can't you choose over other issues, and that is what has happened in the Resolution C [i.e. the Episcopal Act of Synod 1993] Anglo-Catholic parishes. people chose to be under the PEV over the issue of the ordination of women to the priesthood, but then a number of evangelical parishes passed Resolution C. Although they were opposed to the ordination of women to the priesthood it really didn't impact on them, but what initiated them to move towards the PEV system was the whole question of same sex relationships, so people started to choose bishops – although they wouldn't say it publically – for their moral and doctrinal stance, and not just the lesser matter of order. And so the criticism of how you can possibly have a system and keep choosing your bishop is a real one, and it takes away from the unity of the church. As I said before, the PEV thing was a pragmatic thing designed to keep people together, it was time limited and it could not go on forever there had to be a solution.

Many conservatives believe that it is only a matter of time before the Church of England consecrates its first openly homosexual bishop; the only question is how long it will take – and on the basis both of what Bishop Graham Kings has said and the increasingly conservative-seeming stance of the Church of England described above, the answer to that question is likely to be “Quite some time yet”, but beyond

that it is not possible to specify. The Church of England announced at the beginning of 2013 that it would not object to the appointment of a partnered gay man as a Bishop, providing he undertook to remain celibate, and in doing so provoked a deeply unhappy response from the primates of the Global South (see Chapter 5, p. 26). It is very difficult to see why alternative episcopal provision should be made for Anglo-Catholics who object to the stance of their bishops on women's ministry but not for those (Evangelicals or Catholics) who object to the stance or practice of their bishop on sexual ethics. It is not difficult to argue against further use of PEVs and alternative episcopal oversight – many have, vehemently, as I shall demonstrate – but it is very difficult to suggest that it would be entirely fair. AMiE and the Anglican Realignment suggest, however, that the even if the Church of England rejects PEVs it will not be immune from alternative episcopal oversight in a more contentious form.

All the reasons which made it seem a good idea to provide Anglo-Catholics opposed to women's ministry with PEVs can be applied to those opposed to other controversial actions or beliefs on behalf of diocesan bishops. Roger Beckwith, a member of Reform and their representative on the council of the Anglo-Catholic group Forward in Faith, wrote on this subject:

It would be logical to extend the grounds on which parishes may request the ministry of a PEV from the fact that the diocesan bishop ordains women priests to the fact that he engages in other controversial forms of teaching and activity which are widely regarded by Anglicans as being in conflict with Holy Scripture, and which cause deep offence at the parochial level. Typical examples concern sexual morality and multi-faith worship. (One notes that it was homosexual permissiveness and not the ordination of women which motivated the appointment in January of "missionary bishops" for the USA by the Archbishops of Singapore and Rwanda.) Frivolous or trivial objections to the diocesan bishop's ministry would of course be rejected. But sadly we live in a generation when the grounds for complaint about bishops are sometimes anything but frivolous or trivial.¹²

The question of who would decide, and how they would decide, what constituted a frivolous or trivial objection is left unanswered. The reference to the Anglican Church in North America again serves as a reminder that if alternative episcopal oversight is

¹² Beckwith, Roger, "Evangelicals, Flying Bishops and the Future" in *New Directions* magazine no. 66 (Forward in Faith, November 2000) – accessed via the Trushare New Directions archive: <http://trushare.com/66NOV00/NO00BECK.HTM>

not provided willingly, it can nonetheless be acquired. The problem for the institutional Church of England, however, is that whilst PEVs for one small constituency and over one small issue may be tolerable as an expedient, to permit an ever-widening range of issues on which a parish could reject the ministry of their diocesan bishop and join up with a non-geographic Flying Bishop would effectively give the green light (or white flag) to a shift towards the congregational polity which the authors quoted above warned against.

Clatworthy, in particular, has warned against precisely this phenomenon. Continuing directly on from the quote on page 184 he wrote:

Opponents of gay bishops have already seized on the precedent set by the 1993 Act to demand their own bishops and other lobbyists will no doubt do the same. If additional controversies over new issues add to the pressure for alternative episcopal oversight the authority of bishops is bound to decline. If the ministry of bishops is to depend on personal approval by each PCC, in the long run the bishop could end up becoming just one more diocesan officer.¹³

It should be noted at this point that Modern Church and many Anglicans of a similar modernist liberal persuasion in fact take a similar position to the Evangelicals when it comes to bishops: they are not essential. The objection of Modern Church is based not upon a desire to see the existing theology of bishops retained but upon the contention that PEVs will enable the creation of a conservative 'church within a church' and enshrine in Church of England legislation the principle that there is a distinction between the ministry of men and women. It is not bishops becoming just one more diocesan officer which they are objecting to, but why and how. One of the reasons given for opposing the Archbishops' 2008 amendment on alternative oversight in the same article is as follows:

As long as there is no proposal to abolish bishops or to abandon the diocesan structure [my emphasis], the legislation should retain the authority of bishops without any distinction between men and women. Any decision to limit the authority of bishops should be based on a consistent principle (e.g. greater accountability), not on special concessions to a specific lobby - least of all one which rejects the Church's authority structure...

¹³ Jonathan Clatworthy, *When is a bishop not a bishop* (Modern Church: June 2008) - <http://www.modernchurch.org.uk/resources/mc/2012-9.htm>

It would weaken the authority of bishops, **not out of a considered decision to do so** [my emphasis] but as a by-product of a dispute about women's ministry.¹⁴

One irony amongst the many surrounding the PEV system is that if one wanted to limit the authority of Bishops and provide for greater accountability, as Modern Church suggests, some form of system in which parishes can choose to opt out of the oversight of one bishop and replace it with that of another would in fact, as has been pointed out elsewhere in this thesis (see chapter 4), be an extremely effective way to do it, particularly if, like both Evangelicals and liberals one did not place any great value on the sacramental communion of bishops as the guarantor of ecclesiastical validity. The fact that a diocesan bishop is appointed on behalf of the Queen by a small committee, and cannot be removed from office barring some form of extraordinarily gross misconduct, is the precise thing which ensures that they are not accountable to the people they minister to. Allowing parishes to walk away from unpopular or incompetent bishops and choose more congenial ones would end that level of episcopal job security at a stroke.

In Kenneth Locke's *The Church in Anglican Theology*, he wrote:

Because the Reformation placed fidelity to the Word ahead of all Church structures, it introduced a separation between truth and institutional authority that cannot be resolved. No longer were people expected simply to obey their religious superiors, but were now accorded an active role in discerning and evaluating religious issues. This meant that, at least in theory, the faithful were given a right and a duty to question the existing institution if they believed that it had fallen into heresy.

This is what unites the disparate groups within Anglicanism.¹⁵

If this contention were actually true, or if the words "at least in theory" were not very much the key words in the passage, the system of PEVs should be the natural and accepted Anglican solution to the present difficulties. Those like Locke who argue that a central plank of Anglicanism and Anglican ecclesiology is the willingness to put truth before institution must explain why anyone who actually does put the truth as they perceive it before the institution either leaves Anglicanism or precipitates a

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kenneth A. Locke, *The Church in Anglican Theology: A Historical, Theological and Ecumenical Exploration* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009) p. 189

crisis. The system of PEVs has been consistently opposed throughout the Church of England, and is recognised as far from ideal even by those who derive the most benefit from it, yet it facilitates precisely what Locke is suggesting is a key characteristic of Anglicanism – providing people who have been accorded an active role in discerning and evaluating religious issues, and who have a right and duty to question the existing institution if they believe it has fallen into heresy, with the ability to put truth before institution **without** actually having to leave that institution altogether.

Nor can this simply be dismissed as a result of the unique and anomalous legal set-up of the Church of England, rather than being a characteristic of wider Anglicanism. In the United States, where the opposition to any form of state religion and established church is arguably stronger than anywhere else on earth, many of those who felt strongly that ECUSA/TEC's actions in not just permitting but actively promoting same-sex relationships were contrary to Gospel truth as they perceived it have felt that they had no choice but to leave TEC and have been involved in highly acrimonious and controversial legal battles with TEC over property rights.

Locke's suggestion that the ability of individuals to not simply obey religious superiors, question institutions believed to have fallen into heresy, and to put truth before institution is a unifying characteristic of Anglicanism only holds true if the individuals in question reach the conclusion that the institution is right, and has not fallen into heresy after all. Otherwise, all bets would appear to be off. If provisionality (see Chapter 4 p. 10-12) were indeed to be the bed-rock of Anglicanism, as Locke, Paul Avis and others have suggested it is, then those Anglicans who questioned the truth could never be entirely certain that they had found it, and the problem would never arise, but this is demonstrably not the case. The Anglican Realignment and the pressures for alternative episcopal oversight give weight to Stephen Syke's contention, seen in chapter 1, that the tendency to insist that upon differences within Anglicanism being complementary views of a single truth in this way has been untenable all along; as Sykes, quoted in chapter 1, said:

All our previous discussion of the party situation in the Church of England has tended to show that there is within it a substantial quantity of contradictory

opinion and conviction on major doctrinal matters. The various techniques employed by Anglican apologists to disguise the situation have been finally shown to be bankrupt...The integrity of the communion is in question, because it appears to be offering the propositions of the Christian gospel as topics for debate and discussion, rather than to be witnessing to the mighty act of God in Christ.¹⁶

All this opposition and controversy around the system of PEVs is ironic in a further way, namely that, as presently constituted, it does not and ultimately cannot actually serve the purpose for which it was created – of providing on-going sacramental assurance to enable those who are opposed to women's ministry to remain within the Church of England. For all the complaints of separation and division, and of creating a church within a church, all the documentation around the operation of the PEV system is very clear that those parishes accepting the ministry of a PEV do not escape either the ministry or the jurisdiction of their diocesan bishop entirely. The position which Anglo-Catholics had consistently called for to provide sacramental assurance in the event that the church consecrated women bishops was for a completely separate jurisdiction – in effect a third province of the Church of England for traditionalists – and it was for this reason, not because the archbishops' controversial amendment would crystallise the PEV system and fundamentally alter the nature of the Church of England, that the Measure to permit women bishops was narrowly rejected by the General Synod in November 2012. The PEV system would seem to be a remarkable demonstration of the adage that a good compromise satisfies no-one.

Are there more positive aspects of the PEV system, however? Jonathan Baker gave me this account of his experience as a PEV:

I have been a PEV now for 16 months. As I go around I see churches and parishes which are very rooted in the life of their geographical deanery and local community and diocese. This is true in many cases especially those who are really flourishing. It is true there are some churches and some priests who, shall we say, take a more isolationist line and I think that's a characteristic of the Church of England. There are churches and parishes of every tradition that do not like playing the team game for whatever reason, and plough a very lonely furrow, but at the moment I see most of the parishes

¹⁶ Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism*, (London: Mowbray & Co, 1978) p. 44

who look to me as contributing to the life of the church of England as a whole and not trying to do something separate. There is the odd occasion when there is a regrettable sense of separation but on the whole I see my parishes as very much committed to, as far as they possibly can be, to working with and collaborating with others.

This positive account suggests that the PEV system is, as uncomfortable anomalies go, one which may be more bearable than other accounts, such as this one given by Jean Mayland of Modern Church, suggest:

The effect of the Act of Synod has been... to divide the church and to raise serious issues about the position of diocesan bishops who have ordained women. The style of the Provincial Episcopal Visitors has not developed in the pastoral way the Archbishop of York [John Habgood] said it would. In spite of his words to the contrary, the effect of 'flying bishops' rushing around conducting services has been to foster division instead of creating unity.¹⁷

It should also be borne in mind that the existence of a system of alternative episcopal oversight is, as has already been noted, more congenial to some than to others. Canon Chris Sugden, the executive secretary of Anglican Mainstream stated that:

...the thing people don't realise is that the evangelical members have had an alternative leadership for the past 100 years; we have had networks of leaders that that produce and train new ministers, and hold conferences that have their leaders. For example last year John Stott died; he was the de facto Bishop for the evangelicals in the Church of England. People listened to what he said and took their lead from him, not from the diocesan bishop, and so we have networks and we know how to survive in an unfriendly political atmosphere. We have networks, organisations, leaders and institutions within the Church of England in order to survive.

Having looked throughout this thesis at groups such as Reform, Anglican Mainstream, the Anglican Mission in England and the global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, this is certainly a claim which deserves to be taken seriously, according as it does with the evidence of organisation on the ground. Alternative episcopal oversight would allow Conservative Evangelicals to formalise the relationship with bishops other than their diocesan which Canon Sugden suggests has existed informally for years.

¹⁷ Jean Mayland, "When Will They Get It?" in *Signs of the Times* No. 30 (Modern Church Newsletter, July 2008 - <http://www.modernchurch.org.uk/publications/st/jul2008/4.htm>)

Furthermore, one concern for Conservative Evangelicals has been the lack of representation which their point of view has in the college of bishops as a whole (see also chapter 3), and if the system of PEVs were to be expanded in future for a Conservative Evangelical constituency it might be a way of solving this perceived imbalance. David Banting recounted a conversation with Caroline Boddington, the Archbishop's Appointments Secretary:

We said to Caroline Boddington "How is it that there are no conservative Anglican bishops appointed? We are so out of balance; no conservative has been appointed since Wallace Benn in 1997, and he has retired now, so there are none and can you not see how unfair that feels?"

Rev. Banting further pointed out that there is a sense amongst younger Conservative Evangelicals, with traditional views on both women's ministry and sexuality, that their ministry will not have a secure place within the Church of England going forward, and amongst some that they will find it difficult even to be ordained, since so many of the bishops and other senior clergy who would have to approve them for ordination or for appointment either do not share their views or actively find them objectionable:

...we are losing an awful lot of what I call gospel people even before they get near the starting blocks of ordination – they are just going off into independent Christian ministry... We have asked the bishops if they realise how many good people they have that they have expensively trained [that] are leaving. The ordinands have 30 years ahead of them and they are thinking "Am I going to have to fight for the faith that I hold or will I be blackballed as I am not seen as a modern Anglican" so he feels it is his option to find a non-Anglican ministry...

Of course the institution being licensed to make appointments is another great gate – [on] the issue of women's ordination, which is one of the great issues, the Episcopal act of ministry in 1993 said that integrity and tradition were not to be seen as a bar to office, but there are two integrities – one position held in two integrities, both loyal Anglicans – and what we have seen is bishops or their henchmen (the archdeacons) being involved in interviews and appointments where they will either veto a person or not accept their application for a parish on grounds of them not fitting, and that they are inappropriate for this parish – "We understand your theology doesn't fit".

Whilst creating what has been described by opponents as a conservative church within a church through the use and expansion of PEVs might be able to address this issue, as far as the discontented Conservative Evangelicals are concerned, and help to assure both them and the conservative Anglo-Catholics that they have a

viable future within the Church of England, the potential of the PEVs to do just this is one of the key reasons why their opponents within the Church of England oppose it. The sense that they are no longer wanted within the Church of England, and/or that whilst they may be tolerated for the present they are not considered to be part of its future, may not simply be paranoia on the part of the conservatives, Anglo-Catholic or Evangelical.

Rev. Rosemarie Mallett, Chairman of the liberal catholic group Affirming Catholicism (which both Rowan Williams and Jeffrey John were associated with), said to me:

...it is one thing to keep people and provide oversight for those whom this [conservative beliefs on women's ministry] is their reality, and we should give them their respected place – but how much does the church continue to grow people with these views? That's where the difficulty is for me, that is my challenge; I can understand providing oversight or care for those who have the traditional catholic position but I cannot come to terms with how we can continue to train new ordinands and enable them to have a belief that women have no place in the leadership of the ministry of the church.

Clatworthy provides further evidence in his article that attitudes towards the conservatives are hardening, and that the will to continue the struggle to assure them of an honoured place within the Church may not be what it once might have been:

We therefore believe that if there is to be a permanent group repudiating the validity of the Church of England's sacraments, it should be independent of the Church of England, receiving no support from it and owing nothing to it. We suspect that the number of people who would leave the Church for this reason as a matter of conscience is far smaller than the number of Christians who have already decided to have nothing to do with an institution so determined to discriminate against women.¹⁸

The approach of allowing the Conservative Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics an honoured place in the Church on condition that they have the courtesy not to propagate themselves and pass quietly into history is one which is hardly likely to be accepted by either of those traditions and, given the statements above, it is difficult to believe that it is in fact supposed to be. The sense from certain liberals in the

¹⁸ Clatworthy, Jonathan, *When is a bishop not a bishop* (Modern Church: June 2008) - <http://www.modernchurch.org.uk/resources/mc/2012-9.htm>

Church of England that they have won the battle, and that their opponents should surrender gracefully or leave, is palpable. It is for this reason that the more liberal end of the Church of England spectrum views the PEV system as a retrograde step; an attempt to create a ring-fenced conservative church within a church, and one which will see the discriminatory conservative values which they believe have no place in the church protected and perpetuated. This inevitably sets up an existential clash with the Anglo-Catholic traditionalists, who are looking for:

A Measure that gives to those bishops who will care for traditionalists proper authority in their own right, and the tools of the trade to enable them to be true leaders in mission and ministry.¹⁹

If those bishops for Anglo-Catholic traditionalists are to have permanent authority to minister to and care for traditionalists without existing on the sufferance of the wider church, it is difficult to see how that would not constitute a church within a church in all but name; the only thing which will allow them that permanent sense of security is a form of autonomy, and many of their opponents, as the quotes above suggest, are reluctant to allow them either. If, as some Conservative Evangelicals have suggested, that principle of autonomy were to be expanded to apply also to those Anglicans who could not support their bishop's views or actions with regard to sexuality, the potential for the Church to dissolve into a of autonomous and independent ecclesiastical franchises is evident. The system of PEVs was developed to enable the opponents of women's ministry to remain within the Church of England, at least in the intermediate term, but to maintain that position once women bishops become a reality would require the creation of a separate episcopal jurisdiction sufficiently insulated from the existing one to ensure that the traditionalists' conception of the historic episcopate is protected; in an episcopal church, a separate episcopacy is a separate church.

Is that, however, what the Church of England is, or ever was, in the traditional catholic sense? As discussed from the outset of this thesis, a part of the problem in trying to reach a permanent solution to these disagreements is the lack of an agreed

¹⁹ The Catholic Group in General Synod, *Women Bishops: Moving Forward – Together* from the Forward in Faith website - <http://www.forwardinfaith.com/news/docs/wbd-cgigs.pdf> (accessed 27/09/2013)

doctrine of the Church upon which to base such a solution; what to some Anglicans seems the natural solution is to others the end of the church as we know it. If the system of PEVs demonstrates anything, it is that the honest answer to the question “Can we create enough space within the church to accommodate differing views on women’s ministry, sexuality and Scriptural authority?” is “We don’t know; it depends what you mean by ‘the church’”. The resistance to the PEV system is not uniformly ecclesiological, as Clatworthy’s comment suggests; if the PEV system were part of a series of reforms to make the episcopacy more accountable, they would not oppose it, but because as currently conceived it would provide for the safety and continuity of ideas and practices which they find objectionable, they do. In spite of all this, however, can the PEV system be considered a practical and pragmatic means of avoiding the fate of TEC and an English Anglican Realignment?

The development of the system of Provincial Episcopal Visitors within the Church of England has potential ecclesiological implications – namely a progressive fragmentation of English Anglicanism into two or more separate ecclesiastical groups, each with a valid claim to Anglican legitimacy, and possessing more ecclesiological in common with a union of functionally independent Protestant churches like the Baptist Union. In this scenario, the ability of parishes to reject the authority of their diocesan bishop in favour of an alternative, as enshrined by the PEV system, would effectively shift the locus of power away from the bishops as a college, as in traditional catholic ecclesiology, and towards the congregations (themselves largely no longer based upon traditional geographical parishes but upon the decision of congregation members as to which local church best suits them, regardless of which parish they actually live in).

The inherent risks of the system of PEVs have been explored above, as was the opposition which the system has provoked from various quarters. The system of PEVs does represent, however, a means of the institutional Church hierarchy taking ownership of and managing the transition towards this type of ecclesiology – effectively acknowledging that the traditional system of authority being distributed by accident of geography can no longer contain the level of controversy generated by differing positions on women’s ministry and, particularly, sexuality and marriage; that too much diversity of views has crept in for that system to survive unchanged. Whilst

there is considerable opposition to any expansion of the current system of PEVs, and even to its continued existence, it might actually represent the best case scenario for the future of English Anglicanism.

Adopting the position of the Church of England hierarchy with regards to homosexuality, one can see that the theological and doctrinal options are relatively limited. The polarisation between the supporters of the full inclusion of gay people in all aspects of church life and those who maintain the traditional position that any sexual activity outside heterosexual marriage is prohibited by Scripture is sufficiently developed and entrenched that there is little realistic possibility of this issue simply going away – at least, not in the sort of time scale that might allow the issue to be parked. Groups such as Changing Attitudes, Modern Church and Inclusive Church are no more likely to repent of their pursuit of full inclusion than groups such as Reform and Anglican Mainstream are likely to repent of their adherence to the traditional interpretation of Scripture. The pressure of social erastianism would make turning the clock back with regards to its stance on sexuality or women’s ministry particularly difficult for the Church of England, even if it could be certain that was the right thing to do.

Whilst the Church of England laid the groundwork for the future appointment of a celibate-but-partnered gay bishop early in 2013 (see above), no definite moves towards such an act have as yet been made. What is more certain is that what happened to Jeffrey John 10 years ago – being forced to withdraw from an episcopal appointment on the grounds of homosexuality – would be much more difficult to bring about in light of the statement from the Church of England referred to above. If it were to be attempted then legal action, with a judgement against those attempting it, would be a possible outcome. Whilst any attempt to predict when the Church of England will appoint its first openly gay bishop is at present pure speculation, what is certain is that the Church has declared itself willing to do so under certain conditions.

Those conditions are unlikely to satisfy all conservatives. The problem with swearing partnered gay bishops to celibacy is that there is no realistic means of enforcement, as has been pointed out by activists on both sides of this argument. Leading Conservative Evangelicals are clear that they see this celibacy rule as a “Don’t ask,

don't tell" policy, which will be widely flouted and intentionally left unenforced. Its purpose, they believe, far from being to enforce a biblical standard of sexual conduct amongst the bishops, is to facilitate the removal of any such standard without the need for any formal announcement or change of policy. David Banting said:

I am astonished at what the bishops have done. With all the checks, and their statement in 2005 about vicars in civil partnerships – that was very close to the mark – and then the 2007 General Synod debate revealed just how flawed the 2005 statement was. They said they would conduct a review which has still not been completed, and slipped in that vicars in civil partnerships could be considered to be bishops, knowing that the statement was flawed, confusing and unenforceable. Who is kidding who? We don't ask questions about civil partnerships and vicars in civil partnerships refuse to answer them! The nerve of the bishops is astonishing!

The bishops so accused would, naturally, deny any such intention of deliberately trying to muddy the waters in the hope of bringing about a change in church rules and teaching by the back door, but as with so many things in this debate the perception, and suspicion, can be more important than the actual veracity; there is little trust between either side in evidence. If a bishop in a civil partnership (or civil marriage) were subsequently to reveal that he was in fact not celibate, or be discovered to have violated the rules, there would be little prospect of his removal from office. Unless he tendered his resignation voluntarily it is difficult to envisage the Church proceeding through the steps of the Clergy Discipline Measure to remove the errant Bishop in the teeth of internal and public hostility. The supporters of gay inclusion would thus be able to present a *fait accompli*. The rule is likely to eventually, even if enforced, turn the presence of openly gay people at all levels of the church into an unchangeable reality.

Women bishops constitute a further reality with which the Church of England will have to deal. The great majority of the church at all levels sees no impediment to women bishops, and whilst the Women in the Episcopate Measure failed by the narrowest of margins to pass General Synod in November 2012 even the opponents of that measure concede that it is only a matter of time before the first female bishop is consecrated. The only question is what provision will be in place for those who cannot accept a female bishop when the time arrives, and on the answer to that question will depend what they do next.

In order to understand the likely future progression, it is necessary to understand the position that those conservatives are coming from in these matters. At first glance, it might seem strange that those behind the Anglican Realignment should be preparing a bid for independence now; even the notorious Twelve Theses of Bishop John Shelby Spong (John Robinson's disciple – see chapter 1), widely regarded as symbolic of the tendency in the American church towards a modernist theology which was incompatible with Anglicanism, did not cause the sort of controversy that the election of Gene Robinson, a non-celibate gay man, or the attempted appointment of Jeffrey John, a celibate gay man, to the Episcopate managed to generate. If the complaint of the conservatives is that the liberals have abandoned Christianity as they understand it for a form of Deism, the question of why they actually should quit now when they have complained but put up with it for so long still remains – as demonstrated in chapter 1, this theology has a decades-long history of being publicly tolerated by the Church of England.

The role of social erastianism is important here. Social erastianism is a term which I have coined to express the unique combination of the pressure from broader society felt to some extent by all churches with the particular requirement of the Church of England to be a national church (see chapter 5 p. 142-147). One criticism of the Church of England routinely made by both Conservative Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics is that the Church of England follows where secular society leads, rather than defending the truth of Scripture and/or tradition. The overwhelming majority opinion in Parliament, press and wider society is that the Church of England should make sure that, as the national church, whatever it presents as Christian teaching and practice is in tune with what “the nation” already believes to be acceptable. If it does not, the nation can choose to walk away from it. Whilst not suggesting that this should be a deciding factor, Archbishop of Rowan Williams, as seen at chapter 5 p. 142 above, made this point following the defeat of the Women in the Episcopate measure:

We have, to put it very bluntly, a lot of explaining to do. Whatever the motivations for voting yesterday, whatever the theological principle on which people acted and spoke, the fact remains that a great deal of this discussion is not intelligible to our wider society. Worse than that, it seems as if we are

wilfully blind to some of the trends and priorities of that wider society. We have some explaining to do. We have, as a result of yesterday, undoubtedly lost a measure of credibility in our society. I make that as an observation as objectively as I can because it is perfectly true, as was said yesterday, that the ultimate credibility of the Church does not depend on the goodwill of the wider public. We would not be Christians and believers in divine revelation if we held that, but the fact is as it is.²⁰

His successor, Justin Welby, demonstrated the same pressure from social erastianism with regards to gay rights and equality being accepted by wider society. His speech at the dedication of the new Evangelical Alliance headquarters was reported by the *Daily Telegraph* thus:

He went on to describe the shift in public attitudes to homosexuality as one of the biggest social changes of recent history.

“I’m continuing to think and listen very carefully as to how in our society today we respond to what is the most rapid cultural change in this area that there has been, well, I don’t know if ever, but for a very long time,” he said.

“And we have seen changes in the idea about sexuality, sexual behaviour, which quite simply [mean that] we have to face the fact that the vast majority of people under 35 think not only that what we are saying is incomprehensible but also think that we are plain wrong and wicked and equate it to racism and other forms of gross and atrocious injustice.

He added that polling suggests that the majority of Christian young people, including born again evangelical young people, also disagree with the Church’s traditional line on homosexuality.

“We have to be real about that, I haven’t got the answer and I’m not going to jump one way or the other until my mind is clear about this...”²¹

The pressure of social erastianism long predates the current debates, and is partly rooted in the Mauricean ideals of the late Victorian church, as seen here at work upon Archbishop of Canterbury Archibald Tait, who as was seen in chapter 1 proved so influential to Randall Davidson in his handling of the controversies of the 1920s: “...he [Tait] was against anything that tended to withdraw this Church into a sectarian

²⁰ Rowan Williams, Report of Proceedings, 2012 General Synod, November Group of Sessions, Volume 43 No. 3 p. 158-159 -

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1634223/report%20of%20proceedings%20nov%2012.pdf>

²¹ “Archbishop urges Christians to ‘repent’ over ‘wicked’ attitude to homosexuality”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 28th August 2013 - <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10271438/Archbishop-urges-Christians-to-repent-over-wicked-attitude-to-homosexuality.html>

ecclesiastical enclave, thus removing it further from the life of the nation.”²² For the Church of England to avoid being a sect, the reasoning went, it cannot define itself in so confessionally rigid a way that the bulk of the nation, which Tait viewed as essentially but generically Christian (see chapter 1) becomes alienated. The Church of England, as suggested by the two Archbishops above, is still working under the unavoidable pressure to reflect the nation; the problem is that that nation is now accepted to be in a post-Christian state. The Church of England feels it cannot simply turn the clock back to the 1950s in its attitudes to sexuality and gender but the totemic nature of human sexuality and sexual practice, seen by conservatives as a symbol of the final capitulation of the church to secular humanism, makes alienation of conservatives by not doing so inevitable. As seen in chapter 5, p. 142 above, David Banting of FCA stated:

I find it astonishing, almost unbelievable, that in the last 18 months people in high places – not just bishops, but them and others as well – [have made] the statement that the role of the Church of England is to serve the nation by reflecting it, and therefore accommodating its new ideas and including them. We are in that language now and I didn’t believe I’d hear it in the Church of England. In previous generations and centuries indeed the church has been able to serve the country by reflecting it because the state was then essentially Christian – it had a shared framework beliefs and morality and practice but that is not [the case] now – we are sharply post Christian and part of it for me is how the church must learn, even as a national church, to be counter cultural, which we have not had to be before.

Hang on to the faith but, in that lovely language of every ordination, it must be presented afresh to each new generation, but it is how it is presented that matters, how it is explained, rather than the faith being reworked, which is what we fear is going on.

The issues driving alternative episcopal oversight, human sexuality in particular, go beyond controversy over the perceived morality or doctrinal correctness of certain actions by individual clerics, and speak to the whole attitude of the Church to the Word of God, as Dr. Mike Higton of the Church of England Faith and Order Commission pointed out during my interview with him:

...the reasons why these issues have become so divisive is because they do have roots deep in the faith, truly fundamental aspects of faith, whether it be

²² Edward Carpenter, *Cantuar: The Archbishops in their Office* (London: Cassell & Co., 1971) p. 340

the place of the bible in the life of the church, what obedience means in faith, where authority lies; all those unavoidable questions are expressed in the sexuality and gender issues, so I don't think they are going to go away. I think it's hard to imagine but if we were to get past these issues other questions would come up which would focus on fundamental differences on those questions of authority, so I don't imagine the time is coming when we will get past the controversies.

Of particular import is the question of obedience and authority. Individual clerics within the church holding controversial beliefs about Christology or Soteriology may be uncomfortable and elicit complaints from conservatives, but the general public, the media and Parliament are fundamentally uninterested in these issues (see chapter 1). One would have to go back to at least the 19th century to find any branch of the Government taking a deep interest in arcane theological issues, and no Church of England cleric has been compelled, within living memory, to alter their position on the nature of Christ or the real presence in the Eucharist, for example, by the sheer weight of public opinion, secular or lay. Equality on the basis of gender and sexual orientation are, however, topics which the media, the public and Parliament have demonstrated particular interest in and commitment to. To accept the practice of homosexuality at all levels in the Church and without restriction (remembering that for many conservatives the rule that openly gay and partnered bishops must be celibate is effectively worthless) would for the conservatives be openly and irreversibly to accept, in a way not encountered during the lifetimes of any of the participants, that the church takes its lead from civil and secular society, rather than Scripture or tradition. The issue of homosexuality, therefore, becomes a question of obedience to God or man, and not simply a question of what consenting adults get up to in the privacy of their own homes.

The willingness of conservatives to go beyond protest, and into alternative episcopal oversight, in response to these concerns is partly due to a changing power dynamic within the global Anglican Communion. The emergence in the 1990s and early 2000s of a group of Primates, bishops and others from the Global South willing to openly oppose the actions of the ECUSA and the Church of England, and to intervene on behalf of disaffected Anglicans in other provinces by offering alternative episcopal oversight, has created a sense amongst some conservatives that they are not isolated, and that a sufficiently large part of global Anglicanism will back them up

if they were to form a new Anglican body. The inability to do anything more than protest without running the risk of oblivion, in a social and political climate which is far from friendly, acted as a restraint on conservatives in the United States, but with the backing of a substantial part of the Anglican Communion they became empowered to make a stand, effectively using the Lambeth Conference as a venue in which their otherwise intransigent province could be compelled to listen to them. Miranda K. Hassett explains in her work, *Anglican Communion in Crisis*, how, at meetings in the run-up to the 1998 Lambeth Conference held first in Kuala Lumpur and then in Dallas an alliance was formed between American conservatives and representatives from the Global South with precisely this purpose in mind:

American conservative leaders knew from long experience how easy the rest of the Episcopal Church found it to ignore their opinions. But if Southern Bishops could be mobilized to speak out at Lambeth against tolerance of homosexuality, Episcopal leaders might feel more obligated to listen.²³

Bishops of the Anglican Communion stand in sacramental communion to one another in a way which priests and theologians in individual provinces do not. By escalating the dispute to Communion level, the American conservatives ensured that their opposition to the liberal tendencies of their province could not simply be ignored because it had now had direct implications outside America. This escalation has coincided with the rise of a new assertiveness amongst Global South leaders, such as Peter Akinola of Nigeria and Eliud Wabukala of Kenya, to such an extent that the previous direction of mission, from America to Africa and the South, has effectively been reversed by the creation of African-sponsored Anglican structures within America. The Anglican Church in North America, according to 2010 statistics, has 952 member churches and 103,940 regular worshippers²⁴; it is not a member of the Anglican Communion, but is in full communion with the Churches of Nigeria, Uganda and Sudan.

Since these attitudes and tensions driving the Anglican Realignment are unlikely to go away, the PEV system offers a way for the Church of England to co-opt

²³ Miranda K. Hassett, *Anglican Communion in Crisis: How Episcopal Dissidents and their African Allies are Reshaping Anglicanism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007) p. 59

²⁴ 2010 Anglican Church in North America Statistics from the Stand Firm in Faith website - http://www.standfirmfaith.com/media/2010_ACNA_Statistics.pdf

alternative episcopal oversight to itself and thus avoid the confrontational realignment which has characterised North America. Recent developments have, however, cast a shadow over its future. Following the defeat of the Women in the Episcopate Measure in November 2012, the conventional Anglican ability to compromise might seem to have been borne in mind by the House of Bishops in the legislative proposals for a new Measure in 2015 (brought forward rapidly and under intense public pressure) which were voted on in July 2013:

13. The mandate given to the Working Group in December reflected the House of Bishops' view that, to command assent, new proposals would need both greater simplicity and a clear embodiment of the principle articulated by the 1998 Lambeth Conference that "those who dissent from, as well as those who assent to, the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate are both loyal Anglicans".

14. This mandate did not simply reflect the House of Bishops' assessment of what was achievable. It also reflected its considered view of what was desirable, namely that **the Church of England should retain its defining characteristic of being a broad Church, capable of accommodating a wide range of theological conviction** [original emphasis].²⁵

Whilst this may seem reassuring from the traditionalist point of view, it must be tempered by the fact that it is contained within a section entitled "The limits of diversity", which goes on to point out that:

24...

- **Once legislation has been passed to enable women to become bishops the Church of England will be fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and will hold that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are the true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience;**
- **Anyone who ministers within the Church of England must then be prepared to acknowledge that the Church of England has reached a clear decision on the matter;** [original emphasis]²⁶

²⁵ *Women in the Episcopate – New Legislative Proposals*, from the papers for the July 2013 Group of Sessions, Church of England website -

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1771468/gs%201886%20-%20women%20in%20the%20episcopate%20-%20new%20legislative%20proposals.pdf> (accessed 16/07/2013) Annex p. 8

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 9

It is not possible, in their own terms, for traditionalist Anglo-Catholics to render due canonical obedience to someone whom they believe, by the standards of the historic and apostolic Churches of East and West, is not a bishop. The PEV system could provide a way around that, by ensuring that they do not have to render canonical obedience to someone whose episcopacy they do not recognise. Conservative Evangelicals have also been campaigning for PEVs to be created for a broader variety of issues than simply womens' ministry, but any prospect of the PEVs, should they survive at all, becoming an alternative and integral jurisdiction of the Church of England for either party is rendered highly unlikely:

33. Simplicity will mean that the existing, already complex, structures of the Church of England will not be changed. **There will continue to be one General Synod, one House of Bishops and two provinces. There will be no additional dioceses. The position of each diocesan bishop as Ordinary will remain unaltered. All licensed ministers will continue to owe canonical obedience to the diocesan bishop in all things lawful and honest and take an oath to acknowledge this duty.** [original emphasis]²⁷

As if this were not sufficiently clear, a more explicit warning is delivered – an official acknowledgement of the problems of the PEV system referred to throughout this chapter, and a determination to ensure that they will be neither repeated nor reinforced:

28. There is a determination among the majority to prevent any reappearance of the tendency shown in the past by some traditionalists to use the provisions of the 1993 Measure and the Act of Synod [i.e. the PEV system] to create as much distance as possible from the rest of the Church of England. And there is a concern that whatever arrangements are made for the minority should not call into question the continuation of a single episcopate, the unity of which has traditionally been manifested visibly during episcopal consecrations.²⁸

In this Legislative Proposals document were a series of more concrete options as to which basis the drafting group should proceed on when drafting the new Women in the Episcopate Measure for vote in 2015. The Synod voted for Option 1, which proposed “the simplest possible legislation”:

²⁷ Ibid. p. 11
²⁸ Ibid. p. 10

79...What was meant by that was:

- A measure and amending canon that made it lawful for women to become bishops; and
- The repeal of the statutory rights to pass Resolutions A and B under the 1993 Measure, plus the rescinding of the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod.²⁹

In plain terms, the effect of this vote means that the legislation to be drafted for final approval by General Synod in 2015 will contain no statutory right to alternative episcopal oversight (currently provided by the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod), or even to a male parish priest (currently provided by Resolutions A and B):

88. So, in summary, of the options discussed in this paper, this is the one that would rely least on law and place the greatest emphasis on trust. It would allow a diversity of belief about gender and ministry to continue in the Church of England but it would mean that how that was worked out in practice would be dependent on the discretionary decisions of individual bishops, clergy, PCCs, patrons and parish representatives.³⁰

The issue of womens' ministry has seen a bitter and protracted battle fought by both sides, with trust and good will between them frequently being conspicuous by its absence, as the quotes from Rosemarie Mallett and Jonathan Clatworthy above suggest. It would seem, therefore, that trusting to the good will of supporters of women bishops to permit alternative arrangements at parish level for the traditionalists they have opposed for more than two decades is, for the traditionalists, risky in the extreme. It potentially leaves them at the mercy of people who may not be at all sympathetic to them and who, like Rosemarie Mallett, believe that they should not possess a permanent future in the Church. In response Forward in Faith stated:

We feel bound to reiterate that, while we are not trying to prevent women from becoming bishops in the Church of England, we cannot support any legislation which removes the existing rights of the laity to a ministry that they can receive in good conscience and which fails to offer the minority what the working group termed 'a greater sense of security' than the previous draft Measure.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 16

³⁰ Ibid. p. 17

We are unconvinced as to how a 'mandatory grievance procedure' binding on bishops can deliver this in respect of parochial appointments by lay patrons and incumbents. We question whether replacing Resolutions A and B with this is the right way of going about the rebuilding of trust.³¹

I asked Bishop Jonathan Baker, chairman of Forward in Faith during my interview with him, what might provoke a further exodus of traditionalist Anglo-Catholics from the Church of England. He replied:

I think if the Church of England reached a point where it really said "There is no room for you in this church and we crucially cannot provide Episcopal ministry for you, and we cannot provide a succession of bishops, it will be very difficult then. But as long as there continues to be an Episcopal ministry and those bishops are continuing to ordain priests for parishes I think there will always be, for so far as I can see, no reason why there should not be a continuing presence of the traditional catholic view...in the life of the Church of England.

The question which must be asked is whether the July 2013 General Synod decision on the basis for new legislation in 2015 suggests that we are now approaching that point. The Anglo-Catholic position has traditionally been that the episcopate of the Church of England stands in the same unbroken tradition Apostolic Succession as those of the other historic branches of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches; if, as would seem to be the case, they will have no choice but to accept the ordinary jurisdiction of female diocesan bishops, and of male diocesan bishops originally ordained or consecrated by female bishops, that stance will be ever harder to sustain. Whilst the Church of England proclaimed in the legislative proposals that

Since it will continue to share the historic episcopate with other Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and those provinces of the Anglican Communion which continue to ordain only men as priests or bishops, the Church of England will acknowledge that its own clear decision on ministry and gender is set within a broader process of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God³²

³¹ "Women Bishops: Forward in Faith responds to July 2013 General Synod Debate" from the Forward in Faith website - http://www.forwardinfaith.com/artman/publish/article_597.shtml (accessed 16/07/2013)

³² *Women in the Episcopate*, Annex p. 9

...this is not actually tenable. Firstly, as the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches have made clear, as far as they are concerned there is no “broader process of discernment within the...whole Church of God” – they do not consider that the sacramental priesthood can be opened to women, and therefore if the Church of England consecrates women bishops any prospect of it sharing in the historic episcopate as defined by Anglo-Catholics will be gone for as long as that situation persists. Pope John Paul II stated in 1994 that:

Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church's judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force.

Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.³³

That the Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England was accepted by the Oxford movement, which was Catholic but also anti-Papist in its origins. Anglo-Catholics have often looked to the Orthodox, impeccably Catholic but also anti-Papist, to shore up their belief in the Church of England as an equal branch of the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church as they, the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics define it. After all, the Roman Catholic Church has proclaimed **all** Anglican orders to be null and void since 1896, yet that opinion has not caused an Anglo-Catholic exodus. Unfortunately, the Orthodox Churches have not supported female ordination either. Metropolitan Hilarion of the Russian Orthodox Church wrote to Justin Welby on his enthronement as Archbishop:

Regrettably, the late 20th century and the beginning of the third millennium have brought tangible difficulties in relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Churches of the Anglican Communion. The introduction [sic] female priesthood and now episcopate, the blessing of same-sex 'unions' and

³³ *Apostolic Letter Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* from the Vatican website – http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_22051994_ordinatio-sacerdotalis_en.html (accessed 16/07/2013)

'marriages', the ordination of homosexuals as pastors and bishops – all these innovations are seen by the Orthodox as deviations from the tradition of the Early Church, which increasingly estrange Anglicanism from the Orthodox Church and contribute to a further division of Christendom as a whole.³⁴

If neither the Roman Catholic Church NOR the Orthodox Churches recognise Anglican women bishops as standing in the historic episcopate, and the fully realised PEV system of an alternative jurisdiction (which might have been able to preserve an episcopal succession on Roman Catholic and Orthodox terms) has been closed down as an option, it is difficult to see the traditionalist catholic position of a male-only priesthood surviving permanently within the Church of England.

At the time of writing, however, one thing seems clear: the Church of England has come down unequivocally on the side of maintaining a single episcopal structure, including both men and women, with no exemptions made to the canonical requirement to recognise the appointed diocesan bishop regardless of gender or doctrinal position on sexuality. The system of Provincial Episcopal Visitors, which represented a way adapting the Church of England to the pressures of the Anglican Realignment, will not be entrenched, expanded or even continue to be available as a statutory option. The acceptance of the PEV system would have amounted to a permanent alteration in church doctrine, and would have altered voluntarily the nature of Anglicanism in England in the same way that the Anglican Realignment has done contentiously in Canada and the United States. The Church of England has instead decided to reinforce the single episcopate which must be accepted as valid by all members of the church.

Although it is impossible to make predictions for the future, and it is possible both that the new legislation will fail again in 2015 or that the church will look again at PEVs, at the time of writing the tensions behind the Anglican Realignment, and the possibilities afforded by it, remain very real. One way or another alternative episcopal oversight is a response to a situation in the Anglican Communion which shows no signs of going away, and the ending of the PEV option will leave the field clear for groups such as AMiE and the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans to supply

³⁴ "Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk congratulates newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury" from the Official Website of the Department for External Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church - <https://mospat.ru/en/2012/11/13/news75434/> (accessed 16/07/2013)

disgruntled conservatives with what the Church of England seems unwilling to provide.

Conclusions

This thesis has argued that the phenomenon of alternative episcopal oversight, as manifested in the recent Anglican Realignment, represents the latest chapter of cyclical conflict and compromise within Anglicanism that can ultimately be traced back to a non-specific doctrine of church adopted at the Reformation. Precisely how the compromise aspect of the Anglican Realignment will play out is not possible to ascertain at the time of writing, but an understanding of the way in which the Anglican Realignment sits in Anglican tradition may aid in the search for that compromise, which will likely define the next phase of Anglican history in the same way that the 16th and 17th century Reformation, the 18th century Evangelical Revival, the 19th century Catholic Revival and the 20th century debates around modernism and liberalism have come to define theirs.

In recent years theologians such as Paul Avis and Kenneth Locke have supported an Anglican ecclesiology in which the results of having such a non-specific doctrine of church are presented as defining Anglican characteristics. They and others have interpreted the ever-increasing latitude of belief within Anglicanism as the result of a deliberate doctrine of “provisionality”, in which being Anglican is defined as the acceptance of the belief that the doctrinal positions of any man-made church is provisional, and that Anglicanism has avoided implementing a strict confessional identity because it has, from its earliest days, accepted the impossibility of such absolute doctrinal positions, which must always be tempered by human reason.

As this thesis has demonstrated, however, if the Church of England and later Anglicanism have been unable to adopt a more strict confessional position with regards to a variety of historically contentious issues, including doctrine and liturgical practice but especially church doctrine, it is not in reality for want of trying. A near-continuous thread of controversy and adaptation runs through the history of Anglicanism and continues to the present day – the Anglican Realignment stands firmly in that tradition, despite the contemporary nature of its presenting issues. The Anglican Realignment and the tradition of conflict and compromise it stands in demonstrate that a defining characteristic of Anglican identity and authority is not the willingness to recognise the impossibility or absence of truth but the ability to

accommodate differing conceptions of the truth whilst preserving a form of unity through the inevitable conflict which makes Anglicanism greater than the sum of its parts.

A non-specific doctrine of the church has often led the leadership of the Church of England to be reactive rather than proactive; developments in the church have been geared around accommodating and adapting to existing conflict rather than producing a single coherent and permanent solution. This has both advantages and disadvantages. It has given the Church of England great flexibility, but it has also meant that any adaptations tend to become obsolete as the circumstances around which they were designed have changed. In observing this state of flux, a general pattern emerges in which conflict produces compromise and compromise produces further conflict. The conflicts of the Reformation period produced the state-sponsored latitudinarian tendency of the 18th century, which in turn produced the Evangelical and Catholic Revivals; these revival movements did much to precipitate, when confronted with the gradual secularisation of the state, a withdrawal of Parliament and Judiciary from a disciplinary and doctrinal role within the Church of England. Without the enforcement power of the state the Church of England felt unable to maintain its nature as a national church without considerably expanding the boundaries of permitted doctrine and practice to accommodate Catholics, Evangelicals, and the growing numbers of modernists shaped by the latest developments in science, historical and literary criticism. If marrying a bride of the times makes one a widow within a generation, Anglicanism could be described as a serial monogamist.

It is against this background that what Stephen Sykes would define, in the late 1970s, as a “crisis of comprehensiveness” within Anglicanism, began to come about. As explored in chapter 1, the desire to resolve the damaging series of legal battles between differing sides of the late 19th century conflict led the leadership of the Church of England to adopt a policy of what might best be described as vigorous latitudinarianism. This was defined particularly by *Doctrine in the Church of England*, the report of the 1922 doctrine commission, and the system of dispersed authority given shape by Report IV of the 1948 Lambeth Conference. In doing so however they blurred the boundaries between modernist liberal theology, with its refusal to

acknowledge the possibility of absolute truth being realisable by humanity on anything other than an eschatological timescale, and the classically Anglican latitudinarian liberal *modus operandi*, which recognises the existence of different interpretations of truth and creates space for them.

In their desire to bring the damaging 19th century conflicts to an end, the Church of England leadership of the early 20th century created a system which guaranteed Anglican modernist theologians, including serving clergy, the freedom to explore and report their findings without fear of disciplinary consequences. These actions have served the Church of England well in some respects, giving the Church of England a reputation for tolerance, freedom and diversity. This appears particularly when contrasted with the much stricter approach adopted by the Roman Catholic church through Vatican I and Papal Infallibility, which preserved doctrinal coherence at the cost of appearing authoritarian. Both approaches had their good and bad sides. Their actions were, however, predicated on the belief of Frederick Denison Maurice, which had become predominant in the late Victorian period, in the national Church of England as the product of an innate and enduring non-systematic Christianity within the English public. Within this romantic nationalist conception, the parties to the systematic theological conflicts represented different aspects of a complementary truth which could only be realised by moving beyond systematic nit-picking and putting the Gospel into social action.

As Stephen Sykes pointed out, this vision of the English national church did not reflect the reality on the ground. At the root of the conflicts between Anglo-Catholics, Evangelicals and modernists were beliefs, particularly around the nature of the church and doctrinal authority, which were not complementary but genuinely incompatible and contradictory. Maurice's vision of an innate romantic national Christianity (most prominently represented in the early 20th century by Randall Davidson) did not survive the early 20th century. Neither did his vision of the Church of England as the means to unite the working classes in a Gospel-based Christian socialist movement (primarily represented in the same period by William Temple) come to pass. As explored in chapter 1 and chapter 3, by the 1920s the labour movement in Britain had moved decisively away from direct association with Christianity in the face of working-class scepticism about organised religion –

something which Temple in particular was reluctant to acknowledge. The vision of Britain as a fundamentally, almost sub-consciously, Christian nation was on the brink of obsolescence when the church leadership relied on it in the 1920s and 30s; the vision of the Church of England as the vehicle for working-class social reform was arguably obsolete two decades before.

The de-systematisation of the Church of England over which Temple and Davidson presided from the 1920s to the 1940s was in response to the circumstances of the late 19th and early 20th century, and succeeded in delivering the Church of England from the seemingly endless lawsuits and court cases which had dominated the late 19th century. The changes they made were, however, informed by the circumstances of those periods, and those circumstances changed dramatically with the coming of the 1960s when Britain came to see itself as a post-Christian, secular humanist and pluralist society, and the Church of England once again needed to adapt.

As the previous example demonstrates, adaptation has tended to be a slow and incremental development in reaction to the progression of circumstances, but in the second half of the 20th century that progress has been particularly swift and dramatic. The Church of England is by no means the only church or religious organisation which has struggled with the rapidly changing social and moral values of the late 20th century, particularly in the Western world, but the de-systematisation and deconstruction of doctrinal authority in the 1920s and 30s, predicated on a Christian society, has hampered its ability to distinguish itself from secular society and its plural, humanist values in a post-Christian one. In these circumstances, the incompatible aspects of evangelicalism, catholicism and modernism have re-emerged as the assumptions which earlier leaders were relying upon to keep them in check have crumbled. This is Sykes' crisis of comprehensiveness, to which alternative episcopal oversight and the Anglican Realignment has given more weight than when it appeared in the late 1970s.

The Church of England, along with the Anglican Communion, has entered into a further cycle of adaptation in which alternative episcopal oversight has acted as both catalyst and potential solution. As was established in chapter 2, through the 19th and 20th centuries the Church of England and the Anglican Communion have committed

to a defining ecclesiology in which bishops play the pivotal role. Anglican ecclesiology as presently conceived depends upon the bishops to convert the diversity of their local churches and provinces into the sacramental and ecclesiastical unity of the global Anglican Communion, and to reflect that unity back to their dioceses as the principle minister of word and sacrament. It is on the basis of their sacramental and teaching authority, recognised by the Anglican Communion, that the sacramental and teaching activities of local parishes are validated. Given the fundamental differences between the groups within the Communion, carrying out this role successfully requires a level of unity within the episcopal college, transcending the conflict, which the dispersed authority model, particularly when operated across the wide cultural range of the Communion, has proved unable to provide in the face of the circumstances described above. Bishops able to loyally hold a range of positions on faith and morals which other equally-loyal Anglicans believe invalidates their ministry has stretched the system of mono-episcopacy to the breaking point of alternative episcopal oversight and the Anglican Realignment.

The ecclesiology outlined above is shared with the historic Catholic churches of Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, alongside which the Anglican Communion views itself as a branch of the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church instituted by Christ and given sacramental and doctrinal validity by the bishops as successors of his Apostles. This shared ecclesiology of bishops in communion constitutes the primary means by which the Anglican Communion is able to identify itself with these historic churches and distinguish itself from other Protestant denominations, with which it otherwise has much in common both historically and theologically. Hence developments which could undermine this system of episcopacy have profound implications for the way in which Anglicanism is perceived both by the other historic churches, Protestant denominations and by itself.

In the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches this mono-episcopal ecclesiology is facilitated by systems of magisterial or conciliar authority which establish the core teaching of the church. Dispersed authority, which as described in Report IV of the 1948 Lambeth Conference was conceived as the alternative and characteristically Anglican means of providing an equivalent system of checks and balances, has not succeeded in preventing doctrinal and practical differences within the Anglican

Communion from reaching the point at which mono-episcopal ecclesiology is threatened. As discussed in chapter 4, whilst the Lambeth Conferences and other Communion instruments are influential, they have no equivalent international authority to either the Magisterium or ecumenical councils. Where provinces such as The Episcopal Church in the United States or the Anglican Church of Canada choose to pursue policies and doctrines unacceptable to other parts of the Communion there is no system of restraint and compromise to which either party is obliged to submit. A recent attempt to provide something along those lines, the Anglican Communion Covenant, failed to be adopted by the Church of England because it undermined both the principle of national independence and the Protestant aspects of ecclesiology which exist alongside the Catholic ones in the non-specific church doctrine.

The problems with the dispersed authority system did not just manifest themselves at the highest level of the Anglican Communion. Within the Church of England General Synod (preceded by the Church Assembly), under the terms of dispersed authority set out in Report IV of the Lambeth Communion, is a key plank of the system of checks and balances. As discussed in chapter 3, however, the way in which the Church Assembly was created in the early 20th century ensured that instead of transcending the divisions over doctrine and authority it embodied them within itself.

The inclusion of the laity within the Church Assembly/General Synod as voting members differentiated it from the historical synods which the historic Catholic churches had periodically convened. This was a result of both Protestant and liberal resistance to the assumption of responsibility for doctrinal and practical discipline by the clergy-only Convocations which had been revived as Parliament and the Civil Courts withdrew from that traditional role in the late 19th century. Protestant resistance was based upon the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which saw the clergy as laymen with specific responsibilities and gave the laity a crucial role in spiritual, as well as temporal, matters as articulated in chapter 3 by John Charles Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool. Liberal resistance was based particularly upon the belief of Christian socialists such as Charles Gore and William Temple, who led the Life and Liberty movement, that by bringing the laity, and particularly working-class laity, into

church governance they could further their goal of making the Church of England a vehicle for social reform. Anglo-Catholics, represented at the time primarily by the English Church Union, supported the Church Assembly on the basis that spiritual matters would remain reserved to the House of Bishops and the House of Clergy (to wit, the Convocations). These differences as to what the Church Assembly/General Synod was supposed to do, and on what basis it was supposed to do it, have undermined the authority of its subsequent actions.

The Church Assembly succeeded in speeding up the process of getting church administrative reform through Parliament, as Randall Davidson had told Parliament it was intended to do, but it was soon drawn into spiritual matters by the desire to reform the Book of Common Prayer in a way which rendered it more acceptable to the large numbers of Anglo-Catholics and liberals. Prayer Book reform could not be accomplished by legislating by Canon, which remained the preserve of the Convocations, but only by Measure, which required the full Assembly to approve what was placed before Parliament. On two occasions the House of Commons rejected the revised Prayer Books which the Assembly had approved, prompting Davidson to resign amidst calls for disestablishment. The issue for the House of Commons, as explored in chapter 3, was that it saw the Church Assembly as not representative of lay opinion in England. Rather, it saw it as an ecclesiastically subservient body which was trying to change the nature of the Church of England to suit the preoccupations of the liberally- and Catholically-inclined bishops.

This perception of the General Synod as unrepresentative and dominated by (particularly liberal) bishops has persisted, as can be seen in Gareth Bennett's bitterly controversial Crockford's preface discussed in chapter 3. This combined perception of the Church Assembly/General Synod as neither representative nor authoritative has hampered its function as part of the dispersed authority system. Like the instruments of the Anglican Communion, the Church Assembly/General Synod statements on doctrine and practice tend to be seen as in some way instructive but not authoritative. Where decisions on controversial issues are to be given the force of Canon or statute law, such as the decisions around women's ministry, the perceived lack of spiritual authority underpinning its decisions adds further acrimony to the process.

Ultimately, the Anglo-Catholics and Conservative Evangelicals do not accept the authority of either the Church of England or the Anglican Communion to make decisions which they believe contradict the traditionally accepted teaching of the historic church or Scripture. The Church of England has been consistently more conciliatory towards these groups than either The Episcopal Church or the Anglican Church in Canada, which have moved in a much more definite modernist direction. The Church of England is under pressure, however, both from modernisers within its own ranks and from broader society to adapt its traditional teachings to the circumstances of the modern world. The pressure from broader society, for the Church of England, goes beyond that exerted on other churches by modern developments because of the Church of England's role as a national church, directly connected with the state, and therefore a church in which the nation as a whole has an interest and a stake. As discussed in chapter 5, this social erastianism is highly potent and informs the actions of a church which sees itself as more than a sect.

Given these circumstances, the intrinsic vagueness of Anglicanism's non-specific doctrine of the church, containing elements of Catholic and Protestant ecclesiology, can permit the Church of England to adapt itself and create space for those who cannot accept modern developments, where a more rigid church doctrine might founder. The system of Provincial Episcopal Visitors was conceived as a means to do just that: a means of enabling opponents of womens' ministry to remain within a wider church which had decided to support it by altering the strictly geographical nature of episcopacy and permitting a form of alternative episcopal oversight. Within the wider Communion, however, towards the end of the 1990s, conservatives in North America were coming together with sympathetic bishops from other provinces in what was, in effect, a unilateral declaration of alternative episcopal oversight. These developments have provided disaffected conservatives in England with a way to distance themselves from modern trends in the Church of England without having to cooperate with the system. Within England, in part due to the more conciliatory manner in which modern pressures have been accommodated, the numbers of conservatives prepared to go to this extent are very small, but the Anglican Realignment provides them with the ability to form part of something much larger, with the commensurate sense of safety in numbers.

The first precedent for members of the Church of England breaking away from the church structure without disowning Anglicanism itself (though the term had not come into use at that point), as the Dissenters had done/been compelled to do at the Great Ejection, were the Non-Jurors who refused to abjure their Oath of Allegiance to King James following the Glorious Revolution. As discussed in chapter 5, whilst their small numbers and association with Jacobitism condemned them to obsolescence in England by the end of the 18th century, in Scotland they formed the disestablished Scottish Episcopal Church and became the first group to establish an “Anglican” (they naturally preferred the term Episcopalian) identity independent of the monarchy. The Scottish Non-Jurors also played a key role in establishing the Episcopal Church in the United States. A valid historic episcopate had by this time become the key feature which distinguished Episcopalians (hence the name) from other Protestant groups, such that when the United States was created, and threw off its connection with the British monarchy, the first thing which the Anglicans in the new USA needed was their own bishops, who could not simply be appointed without a valid link to the historic episcopate. British law at that time prevented Church of England bishops from consecrating other bishops who could not take the Oath of Allegiance, so in the first instance the American episcopate drew its validity through the Scottish Non-Jurors. These two churches influenced the development of the Anglican Communion provinces by establishing the principle of sacramentally linked but otherwise independent national or territorial churches.

With the passage of the Consecration of Bishops Abroad Act allowing the Church of England to dispense with the oath for bishops in independent countries, this Scottish line of succession was joined by an English one, and the Episcopal Church now had 3 bishops. In establishing an independent episcopate 3 was the magic number as this was the minimum number of bishops required to validly consecrate further bishops, including their own successors. 3 valid bishops acting in concert are able to create a valid independent episcopal organisation without further reference to other authorities; it is surely not coincidental, and indeed can be seen as a statement of intent, as observed in chapter 5, that the Anglican Mission in England is overseen by a panel of 3 retired bishops (though all of its irregular ordinations have so far taken place in Kenya).

As explored in chapters 5 and 6, the 18th century Evangelical Revival provided further developments along the route to alternative episcopal oversight and the Anglican Realignment. The Non-Juring developments were, thanks to the decline of Non-Juring in England, conducted on territorial lines. The rise of evangelicalism and the Methodist societies in England, in response to the perceived latitudinarian worldliness of the established church, brought the system of ecclesiastical authority within England into a sustained period tension. In a situation which closely resembles that of the Anglican Realignment, the Methodist societies felt that they could not provide the authentic evangelical Christianity they represented in the face of bishops and church authorities which closed ranks against them, and in the 18th century could use the power of the state to suppress their activities. They too sought a way to bypass the system of geographical mono-episcopacy without leaving the Church of England. The Wesleyan Methodists eventually began appointing their own ministers, including laymen, in violation of church discipline, whilst the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion attempted to use the rights of appointing chaplains enjoyed by the aristocracy, through their patron Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, to staff a network of chapels which cut across existing diocesan and parish boundaries.

In the face of growing resentment from existing incumbents who felt their authority and integrity undermined, the Church of England exercised the considerable hard power it enjoyed through its legal establishment and forced the Methodists to conform or leave. A similar resentment, and unease at the circumvention of rules, can be seen at work, as explored in Chapter 6, in response to the church plants undertaken by AMiE, such as Christ Church, Walkely in the Diocese of Sheffield, where a new congregation was established under a minister ordained in Kenya. With the power of the civil courts behind it in the 18th century, in contrast to today, the Church of England was able to take much more decisive action against the Methodists but, as discussed in chapters 1, 2 and 3, throughout the 19th century that power was lost. Whilst the Methodists could be barred from the Church of England and forced to register as Dissenters, with all the civic impediments which that entailed, their 21st century counterparts, still linked to the Anglican Communion by virtue of alternative episcopal oversight, face no such equivalent.

Whilst the Methodists swiftly became, after the final separation, a distinctive denomination, the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion would go on to play a key role in a new development of the 19th century, brought about by Protestant disquiet at the Tractarian Movement and the Catholic Revival. The 1840s saw the launch of the Free Church of England in response, in the first instance, to the Bishop of Exeter's insistence on what some felt was un-Protestant clerical dress. Aided by the Connexion, the Free Church of England established itself as an independent and supposedly more authentic alternative to the established Church of England, uniting in the 1870s with the Reformed Episcopal Church, an American breakaway group formed under similar circumstances. Unlike the Wesleyan Methodists, or the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion which helped to create it, the Free Church of England became the first breakaway group within England to successfully maintain an alternative Anglican identity independent of the Church of England structure. Together with the Reformed Episcopal Church it provided a precedent for the Continuing Anglican movement of the 1960s and 70s. Someone had to be first, and the Free Church of England provided proof-of-concept that it was possible for Anglicanism to exist in England outside the Church of England, even though by comparison it remained very small.

These 18th and 19th century developments saw the rise of a further trend which was to affect the development of alternative episcopal oversight and the Anglican Realignment: the rise of Para-Church groups. The key point to understand here is that whilst Anglicanism may not have a specifically defined doctrine of church, or depend on a confessional list of doctrinal statements for its identity, many Anglicans do – they are just not the same as each other's. In contemporary Anglican ecclesiology there has been a tendency, demonstrated by scholars such as Kenneth Locke and Paul Avis, to view as normative only those Anglicans who share the doctrinal tolerance and willingness to compromise in almost all areas exhibited by Anglicanism as a whole. Particularly in North America, but arguably to a lesser extent in the Church of England during the 1960s, 70s and 80s, this misunderstanding has led church leaders on occasion to act as though liberal theology is the normative basis for Anglican decision-making without taking sufficient account of alternative perspectives. This in turn has alienated groups such as the Conservative Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics, who feel treated by liberal church

leaders as though they are not 'proper' Anglicans, considerably more than might have been done given a more balanced ecclesiological perspective. As recognised in chapter 4, however, this is balanced by a tendency amongst some hard-line conservatives to treat modernists as atheists, heretics or apostates.

During the 18th century the Evangelical Revival had seen the Methodist societies come together to promote their own particular vision of the Church of England, then be forced out into a new denomination. During the 19th century, as the legal and propaganda battle between Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics and modernists was joined, members of these groups came together both to promote their respective visions and for mutual protection. New societies came into being – the English Church Union for the Anglo-Catholics, the Church Society for the Evangelicals, the Modern Churchmen's Union for the modernists being the most prominent, but by no means the only examples. These groups possessed doctrines of church and other confessional doctrinal stances which defined them in contrast to each other. These beliefs were not subject to alteration by the authorities of the Church of England, whose role gradually became to adjudicate between different existing confessional identities rather than to define a unified one for the Church of England.

As the Church of England de-systematised and de-confessionalised itself during the 19th and 20th centuries, the diversity permitted at parish level in terms of teaching and practice meant that Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical, modernist and unaligned parishes had much more in common, theologically and practically, with parishes of a similar persuasion in other dioceses and even other provinces than they did with their neighbours in their home diocese. The identity of these parishes found expression through the Para-Church groups that they were affiliated with due to their churchmanship. As alternative episcopal alignment has become a possibility during the late 20th century, these networks of concerned parishes and church groups formed around Para-Church organisations have coalesced into the new ecclesiastical groupings receiving alternative episcopal oversight, a primary example being the First Promise group in the United States. Whilst the boundaries do not exactly map onto each other, networked groups of parishes and clergy with common doctrinal and confessional stances represented by Para-Church groups have formed

the basis for what, when alternative episcopal oversight is applied, becomes the Anglican Realignment.

Ever since the days of the Methodist societies the potential for groups of worshippers following their own particular doctrine and practice, and prepared to operate across diocesan boundaries, to take on a quasi-ecclesiastical identity of their own has been apparent, and hence they are crucial to understanding the Anglican Realignment movement which has grown out of them both in Britain and America. The Calvinist Methodists of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion became the prototype Para-Church group during the 18th century, developing under the Countess's patronage their own independent network of chapels and preachers with their own theological college to train them; possessing all these things, they resembled at the time a church of their own, and that is what they eventually became when the authorities enforced the church's rules on unlicensed preaching, forming a new denomination which maintained an Anglican identity. In years to come they helped to form the Free Church of England, the first dissenting group to assert itself as a direct and authentic rival to the existing church.

Even before then, however, the principle that Anglicanism had no central authority which could define its doctrines and practices across provincial boundaries had been established with the formation of the Non-Juring Scottish Episcopal Church in 1690. This prototype for the Anglican Communion established the principle that Anglicanism was composed of independent geographical provinces, and that the Anglican Communion possessed no equivalent to the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, or the Ecumenical Council of the Orthodox.

It was these independent provinces which would come together with Para-Church groups in the Anglican Realignment movement, and which would provide the patronage required for Para-Church groups to move not just from quasi-ecclesiastical groups to independent churches, as the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion had done, but to churches whose ecclesiastical and Anglican validity is established according to the Anglican Communion's own terms.

It is this development which is both unprecedented and which brings this thesis full circle. The Anglican Realignment movement presents Anglican congregations with the unprecedented ability to substitute, for reasons of disapproval of their doctrine or practice, their geographical bishop for an equally valid Anglican alternative.

As discussed in chapter 7, from 1993, in the wake of the decision to ordain women as priests, the Church of England has seemed to be adapting itself to the same pressures driving the Anglican Realignment voluntarily by creating the system of Provincial Episcopal Visitors, allowing parishes to substitute their diocesan bishop for a PEV on the basis of their attitude to women's ministry. This decision has, however, proved controversial with almost all parties, including the one it was most intended to placate – the traditionalist Anglo-Catholics – who see it, for these very reasons, as irrevocably altering the nature of episcopacy from the Catholic version, in which episcopacy is an objective reality conferred by orders and Apostolic Succession in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, to the Protestant version in which ministerial validity is subjective and based on perceived fidelity to Scripture. The Conservative Evangelicals, who already hold that definition of episcopacy, have supported PEVs and suggested that they be made available for reasons beyond women's ministry.

In the course of 2013, however, the Church of England seems to have taken a decisive stand against the PEV system (although it will not be possible to know for sure until 2015). In doing so, it has not just stated that it sees its bishops in the Catholic sense (it has stated that for years) but has arrested the loosening of that system which might have created space for those conservatives unable to accommodate modern developments to remain within the Church of England. This leaves the Anglican Realignment as the most likely alternative for the (albeit small number of) conservatives for whom this is the case.

The ability of the instruments of the Anglican Communion to put a definitive stop to the Anglican Realignment does not exist as long as independent provinces are prepared to cross provincial boundaries in offering dissenting groups a link to the Anglican Communion through alternative episcopal oversight. The pressures which have led them to do that in the first place show no sign of being resolved any time

soon, which suggests that the Anglican Realignment, and the principle of alternative episcopal oversight upon which it is based, are realities with which the Anglican Communion will need to deal in future.

These difficulties, whilst prompted by specifically modern circumstances, are as this thesis has suggested part of the same historical development process by which Anglicanism has been able to adapt to the changed circumstances in which it has found itself. The lack of a rigid and specific doctrine of church, containing both Catholic and Protestant elements, provides the flexibility required to make this happen; history suggests that Anglican flexibility, resilience and the tenacious affection of its adherents will enable Anglicanism to deal with the pressures behind the Anglican Realignment in classical Anglican fashion, by finding the space to incorporate the new realities into a historically recognisable but flexible ecclesiology. As chapter 2 demonstrated, whilst sacramental episcopal ecclesiology has become and remained predominant during the 19th and 20th centuries there remains a strong and legitimate well of Protestant ecclesiology upon which the Church of England and the Anglican Communion can draw to help them adapt. This is more likely to happen if the parties involved recognise the Anglican Realignment, whatever size or shape it reaches in future, as a result of Anglican flexibility rather than a schism being forced upon the church by hostile or external influences. As such it can help Anglicanism to do what it has become most recognised for: adapt itself to the circumstances which confront it. Seen that way, the Anglican Realignment could, in true Anglican fashion, help the church out of what seems at present like a terminal crisis. The key conclusion of this thesis is that the Anglican Realignment is precisely that: Anglican first, realignment second.

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Appendix

Interview Methodology and Interviewees

Those interviewed for this thesis were selected on the basis of their involvement with the issues surrounding alternative episcopal oversight and the Anglican Realignment, either directly or as spokespeople for organisations. Interviews were semi-structured; a set questionnaire was distributed in advance of the interview, but the semi-structured format allowed room within each interview for the interviewee to focus on aspects of particular interest to them or within their area of expertise. Interviews were conducted in person at a time and location of the interviewee's choosing.

In chronological order of interview, the interviewees were:

- Rt. Rev. Martyn Jarrett, Bishop of Beverley (ret.), Society of St. Wilfrid and St. Hilda – 11th December 2012
- Professor Stephen Sykes, Bishop of Ely (ret.) – 12th December 2012
- Canon Christopher Sugden, Anglican Mainstream/AMiE – 19th December 2012
- Rev. Jonathan Clatworthy, Modern Church – 3rd January 2013
- Rev. Canon David Banting, Reform – 23rd January 2013
- Monsignor Keith Newton, Bishop of Richborough (ret.), Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham – 24th January 2013
- Rt. Rev. Jonathan Baker, Bishop of Ebbsfleet (at time of interview; now Bishop of Fulham), Forward in Faith – 29th January 2013
- Professor Mike Higton, Church of England Faith and Order Commission – 31st January 2013
- Rt. Rev. Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester (ret.), Christian Concern for our Nation, AMiE – 4th February 2013
- Rev. Rosemarie Mallett, Affirming Catholicism – 20th February 2013
- Rt. Rev. Graham Kings, Bishop of Sherborne, Fulcrum – 26th February 2013