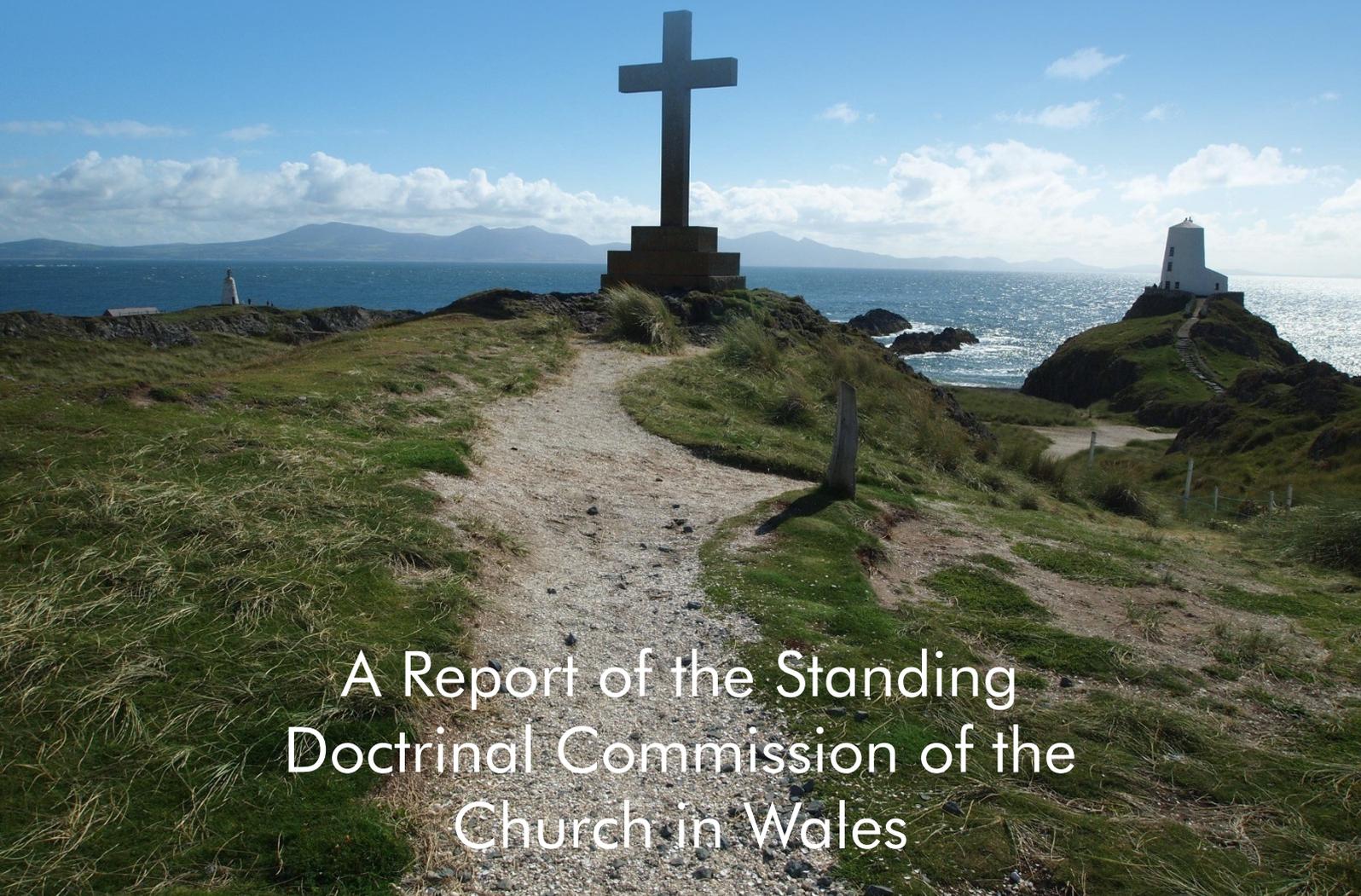


# FAITHFUL STEWARDS IN A CHANGING CHURCH

Understanding Ordained Ministry  
in Light of the 2020 Vision



A Report of the Standing  
Doctrinal Commission of the  
Church in Wales

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## Acknowledgments

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## Foreword

The Church is the body of Christ brought into being by the Holy Spirit and called to work with God in transforming the world. As members of the Church, disciples of Jesus Christ are called to be salt and light (Matthew 5.13-16) and to join in with God's mission to the world.

Jesus, the apostles and teachers of the early Church speak of this in various ways. In the Gospel according to John, Jesus entrusts this mission – a mission begun with his own life and ministry – to his followers in the Upper Room on the day of his Resurrection: —“As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20.21). St Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, speaks powerfully of the many members of the Church being one body. Each member has an important function or purpose that no other member has, and all are called to work interdependently so that the body might work well and effectively. (1 Corinthians 12.12ff) In one of the so-called “pastoral epistles” late in the New Testament and ascribed by the early Church to the apostle Peter, the mission of the people of God is described using terms evocative of the vocation of God's people in the Old Testament: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (1 Peter 2.9) The people of God are commissioned to be heralds of God's reign in the world and to proclaim the advent of reconciliation, justice and peace.

In faith with this tradition, the Church in Wales sees mission as belonging to the whole people of God. “The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members” is the response enshrined in the Church's Catechism. One of the hallmarks of ministry in the Church in Wales from the late twentieth century has been the reaffirmation of discipleship and lay ministry; the recognition that God's gifts are not confined to the ordained, but that the whole people of God are called to witness to the totality of God's redemptive work. As we approached the centenary of disestablishment, our dioceses began a process of overhauling their structures and orienting them towards more overt mission and ministry through the discipleship and ministry of all God's people: lay and ordained.

Inevitably, however, such an emphasis raised questions about the place and role of ordination. As members of the whole congregation were encouraged to live out their calling more fully, the purpose of ordained ministry was questioned, even by the clergy, whose distinctiveness was perceived by some, at least, as being eroded. In all this development, the Church in Wales remains bound to its inheritance. The Preface to the Constitution reminds us that the Church in Wales “maintains the threefold order of bishops, priests and deacons which it has received,” while the ordination service is explicit:

Brothers and sisters, the Church is the Body of Christ, the people of God and the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. All who are united with Christ through baptism are called to serve him in the Church and in the world. Within this ministry, entrusted by Christ to his Church, deacons are called to assist the bishop and priests and, through loving service, to make Christ known by word and example. Priests are called to work with the bishop to sanctify, to teach and to exercise oversight within the community of faith.

So, what does this now mean in the twenty-first century of the Christian era? At a time when the Church in Wales is encouraging greater numbers of lay vocations and ministries, what role do those ordained have in the Church and how are they called to serve and bear witness to Christ?

In 2015, the Bench of Bishops asked its Standing Doctrinal Commission to reflect upon the nature of ordained ministry, and its context in contemporary Wales. It was invited to take up the challenge of articulating the way in which ordained ministry contributed to the well-being of Christ's Church and to its mission to witness to Christ's love and God's reign in a largely secularised and multi-faith nation

The commission's studies and deliberations, conclusions and presentations, compiled over the course of the last five years are brought to together in this volume. Each essay in this volume began its life as a preparatory paper for the work of the Commission. Their work was, in fact, wider but these papers were selected to reflect the essence of their thinking and response.

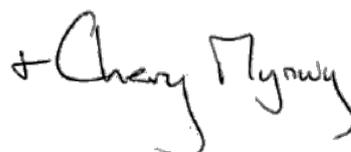
The bishops commend them now to wider study in the Church. We recognise that presenting the members of the Church in Wales with one hundred and forty pages of theology is not an easy ask. But we do believe that the distilled wisdom of the Commission's thinking has a lot of value and relevance for today's Church. We believe that if we are to understand both the burden and the joy of ordained ministry in today's Church, careful reflection will bear fruit. We trust that the arguments of these papers will stimulate, challenge and illuminate the way in which those ordained are called to be "faithful stewards in a changing Church" and take their proper place in encouraging and sustaining the life and witness of the whole people of God.

To aid the study and accessibility of this rich report, the bishops have commissioned this volume as a "Study Guide". We are grateful to the Revd Dominic Cawdell OGS, a young priest of the diocese of St Asaph, for providing what is effectively a tour guide's view of the essays, which will assist the reader in navigating the papers and identifying key questions for reflection and further thought. We have also commissioned a brief introduction, originally for members of Governing Body, which summarises some of the main ideas and points the reader to more extended thinking in the main text.

The bishops are grateful for the seriousness and the lightness with which the Commission has approached this work and would like to thank all those who have worked hard to bring this current piece of work to fruition, especially Canon Mark Clavier as Chair of the Commission, and Dr Ainsley Griffiths, Director of Faith, Order and Unity for the Church in Wales. To all the members of the Commission and to those who have supported this work, thank you.



Bishop of St Asaph  
Holding the Faith, Order  
and Unity Portfolio



Bishop of Monmouth  
Holding the Ministry Portfolio

on behalf of the Bench of Bishops, January 2021

## Introduction: The Journey of Ordained Ministry

At the start of the Church in Wales's second centenary, we find ourselves on a threshold. During the past hundred years—and especially the last thirty—both the social landscape and the life of the Church have changed enormously. Thanks in part to decreasing numbers of clergy and lower attendance, the old parish system in which parish priests served much if not all of their ministry looking after a settled flock is now largely a thing of the past. In its place are a variety of experiments at developing ministry or mission areas in which churches of varying traditions, social and cultural contexts, and capacities for mission and ministry attempt to work together to proclaim God's Kingdom in Wales. In 1997, women were admitted into the priesthood and in 2016 the first female bishop was consecrated. Meanwhile, new forms of ordained ministry have been introduced, including non-stipendiary, ordained local ministers, and pioneer ministers.

In 2015, the Standing Doctrinal Commission was tasked by the Bench of Bishops with thinking deeply about the ways this new missional landscape is shaping, or should shape, the historic threefold ministry of deacons, priests, and bishops. The five years the Commission has now spent on this topic speaks to how difficult this has been. Indeed, it quickly became apparent that those changes brought by the adoption of Ministry Areas are too recent to reach the kind of firm conclusions the Bench may have originally sought. Given that the Commission is composed of theologians rather than prophets, we have elected instead to offer a series of papers that we hope can be a theological aid to thinking through how we reimagine the threefold ministry in 21<sup>st</sup> century Wales.

An analogy familiar to hillwalkers in Wales may help explain what we have sought to do. When walking in Snowdonia or the Brecon Beacons, it is wise to have some idea of your destination. You need to know at least in what direction you're hiking. During your travel, you must stop from time to time to take stock of where you are. This requires not only looking ahead of you but also all around to you. Where have you come from? What is the landscape like where you are now? What lies in front of you? You will also need to check your compass, look at your map, and take a bearing to make sure that you're not heading in a random direction or in circles. All of this is even more important when you're walking through a typical Welsh fog.

In *Faithful Stewards in a Changing Church: Understanding the Ordained Ministry in Light of the 2020 Vision*, you will find a collection of essays that are intended to help us to see from where we have come, to take stock of where we find ourselves in the present, and try to discern where we should be heading. These attempts at theological navigation are biblical, historical, doctrinal, social, and even speculative. Some even contradict each other in important ways like two or more navigators arguing about where they are or the best route to follow. But they all share an understanding that the Anglican tradition of appealing to Scripture, tradition, and reason means that our journey ought to result in a theological path: a clear trajectory from Christ's ministry as revealed in Scripture to our own time that points us in particular directions as we move forward. As any pathfinder knows, this need to cut a path that accounts for the landscape produces a creative tension between the work of earlier pathfinders and where the path now needs to go. While our own Christian path, now over 2,000 years in the making and comprising a rich variety of historical, social, cultural, and ethnic

landscapes, provides us with a rich tradition from which to draw, it also makes responding to the starkly different world in which we now live difficult.

But even this is not really new. When the Church had to respond to the collapse of the Roman Empire and the loss of cities, schools, and infrastructure, it had to think hard about how to conduct mission and ministry in new ways while remaining faithful to the past. When both Protestants and Catholics tried to work out how to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments in a post-medieval world, they also had to think creatively. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Anglicanism had to adapt its agrarian assumptions to the needs of people in industrializing cities and an increasingly pluriform religious landscape. Indeed, Anglicanism has often had to rethink basic assumptions about mission and ministry as it has settled in places around the globe entirely removed from British society. In each of these cases (at their best), people looked back to Scripture or the early church not so much in nostalgia as to take bearings as they moved forward. That this adaptation often took two or more generations should teach us patience; that it also has resulted in a variety of different answers should suggest that there may not, in fact, be a single response to our own situation—we may need to live with diversity, tensions and contradictions for some time.

We believe, however, that this conclusion is a source of profound hope. Anglicanism itself has lived with similar tensions and contradictions from its beginnings. Ours is a messy tradition that idealists define as ‘comprehension’, critics as ‘fudge’, and realists perhaps as the inescapable reality of a church marked by strong and often violent disagreements. Whatever one’s view, however, it is hard to argue with the results—the inherent tensions and contradictions of Anglicanism have borne astonishing theological and missional fruit over the centuries. This fact takes us then to our greater hope. Throughout the history of the church it has been precisely the moments of greatest tension and uncertainty about how to move forward faithfully that have compelled Christians to shake off their complacency, experience renewal, and be transformed into men and women who can ‘love and serve the Lord’ in their own times. *Faithful Stewards in a Changing Church: Understanding the Ordained Ministry in Light of the 2020 Vision* is offered, therefore, with our fervent prayer that this may also be true for us in our own time.

## Background:

Meetings of the Governing Body of the Church in Wales in 2009 and 2010 included discussions about how to adapt the Church’s ministry to the new circumstances we face in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Wales. While the value of the parish structure was affirmed, there was a strong call for deep and systemic change in order to address the many challenges the Church faces. These include ministering:

- Within an increasingly secularised society that includes a fast-growing number of people who identify themselves as having no religion;
- Within a society divided by age with the older population far more likely to identify as Christian than the younger generations;
- To an increasingly fractured and fractious society, hardly aware yet of how it is being shaped by new technology, social and environmental change;
- Within a nation that provides very diverse contexts for ministry, even within dioceses, with a largely rural West and North and a largely urban and post-industrial South East;
- To a population that has grown by over 15% since the Church in Wales was disestablished;

- With far fewer clergy than at disestablishment. There were in 2017 fewer than half the number of clergy than in 1927, (less than a third if only stipendiary clergy are considered).
- As a church where there are fewer committed lay people, at least if Easter Communicant figures can be taken as an indicator. The figures for 2017 were 26% of the total number in 1927.
- Within our financial resources. The Church in Wales is not significantly supported by external sources such as a state subsidy, tithe or church tax and suffered considerable disendowment at disestablishment. Careful husbandry of financial resource has led to a substantial central fund administered by the Representative Body but individual dioceses and churches struggle to meet the financial demands placed upon them.

In order to address these challenges, the then Archbishop of Wales, the Most Rev'd Dr Barry Morgan, appointed three commissioners to undertake an intensive and extensive study of the Church in Wales in order to recommend a way of addressing these issues. The commissioning document stated that:

'The Church is the Body of Christ. This means that it is called to be:

- A channel of God's grace, renewal and pastoral concern for the individual, who is called to faith and fullness of life in Jesus Christ.
- A source of fellowship and community in our society, as the Church calls people into renewed relationships with one another.
- An agent of change in the world, as the Church is called to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to bear witness to the justice and peace which are the marks of God's Kingdom'<sup>1</sup>

It asked the commissioners to assess if the Church in Wales was 'fit for purpose', particularly in the areas of structure, resources and leadership. The resulting document, variously referred to as the Church in Wales Review and the Harries Report, made fifty recommendations covering large areas of the church's life and work. Key among these was the proposal to replace parishes with Ministry Areas served by a team of clergy and laity. The commission's report was presented to the Governing Body in September 2012.

The Governing Body rebranded the Harries Report as *2020 Vision* and appointed a body to look at implementing its recommendation. Meanwhile, some dioceses undertook their own studies and subsequently began to create Ministry Areas. All of this work culminated in the 2014 Llandudno conference, 'The Time is Now,' that sought to present an inspiring vision of a Church in Wales newly structured for mission and ministry. In 2017, a symposium met in Cardiff to discuss progress, based on a report entitled 'Are We There Yet?'<sup>2</sup> that articulates each diocese's self-assessment of its progress in establishing Ministry Areas.

Since 2012, dioceses have moved at different speeds in implementing Ministry Areas. Bangor, St Asaph, and St Davids have generally been in the forefront of establishing new structures. Even in these dioceses, however, implementation has not been according to an overarching blueprint or agreed terminology. In the Diocese of St Asaph, the term 'Mission Areas' is used, while in St Davids they are called 'Local Ministry Areas'. Neither 'Ministry Area' nor any of these other terms has been formally recognized by the Constitution of the Church in Wales which still refers to parishes.

<sup>1</sup> <https://cinw.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Church-in-Wales-review-English.pdf>, 42

<sup>2</sup> <https://s3.amazonaws.com/cinw/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Diocesan-perspectives.pdf>

One area of coordinated reflection and action has been the revitalization of lay ministries. The Commissioners took note of frustrations expressed by many lay ministers who felt under-utilized within an overly clericalized Church and concluded ‘that the church can only continue into the future if it taps into this human resource’.<sup>3</sup> In response, the ministry officers of the Church in Wales produced a paper in 2015 on lay ministry which was adopted by the Bench of Bishops. This provided a framework undergirded by a theological rationale for lay ministry.

It should finally be noted that amid all these proposals and changes, a new theological training institute for Wales was being established. St Padarn’s, which was formally inaugurated in 2016, was intended from the start to provide training for both lay and ordained ministry, and to be a ‘community of formation for mission’. Serving the whole of the Church in Wales, it needed to find an understanding of what the Church in Wales considered ministry to be within the context of Ministry Areas and how to negotiate diocesan differences and priorities. The work of St Padarn’s was aided by the production of a paper in 2016, entitled ‘*Church Serving God’s World*’, that sought to bring together previous work on ministry and provide the necessary scaffolding of learning outcomes, assessment criteria and professional guidelines to allow for discernment and training. This paper was approved by the Bench as ‘a work in progress’.

Finally, the experience of reconfiguring the Church into Ministry Areas, the practicalities that have arisen through this new sharing of ministries, and especially the work on lay ministries has highlighted the need for re-examining the ordained ministry. The ministry officers recommended that this work be undertaken by the Standing Doctrinal Commission, and this decision was endorsed by the Bench of Bishops. The Commission was asked to address the question *What is our understanding of ordained ministry in light of the 2020 vision?* It began its work in 2015 under the chairmanship of the Revd Dr Ainsley Griffiths and completed it under the current chairmanship of the Revd Canon Dr Mark Clavier.

The papers in this collection represent the fruit of extensive theological discussions about how the ordained ministry needs to be reshaped for the present and the future in ways that remain obedient to the will of God as we know it in Christ Jesus our Lord. The Standing Doctrinal Commission meets by invitation of the Bench of Bishops to consider and advise the Bench and the wider church on such theological issues as are brought to it. It largely consists of people active in ministry within the Church in Wales, the other members being ecumenical observers. As such, the writers of these papers are people who have been caught up in the changes in their church. Our experiences have underpinned our understandings of the task of the ordained ministry in Wales and our part within it.

### *Faithful Stewards in a Changing Church: Understanding the Ordained Ministry in Light of the 2020 Vision*

In general, we have adhered to an agreed theological process to research, compose, and refine our work. First, we discussed what we felt were the areas of theological concern, each member offering a theological reflection on aspects of ordained ministry. Next, members authored or co-authored papers on the agreed upon topics that arose from our discussions. These were each presented and discussed in subsequent meetings. In the process, some papers were discarded or dramatically reworked while new papers were added as new members brought fresh insights. In May 2018, the papers were presented at a day conference to the Ministry Officers’ Group, some of the Bishops, and other guests. A summary presentation was also given to the Directors of Ministry and the Bench of Bishops in June

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<sup>3</sup> <https://cinw.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Church-in-Wales-review-English.pdf>, 4

2018. Feedback was taken from all these forums that enabled us to revise our work further and to address areas that ministry officers and bishops felt warranted deeper reflection.

In 2019, we decided to nominate ten of the papers we thought were most helpful in addressing the question *What is our understanding of ordained ministry in light of the 2020 vision?* These have been arranged to facilitate a movement from considering the ministry as a whole through more focused examinations of priests, deacons, and bishops before concluding with two essays that address the Welsh context specifically. Our conclusion attempts to draw these essays together by returning to the metaphor of a journey in order to challenge and inspire further thought. We offer them to you in the hope that they will stimulate discussions as they have among us. To this end, each paper has an initial summary describing how it may contribute to the on-going debate and the conclusion includes some suggested questions for further consideration. As such it is not a complete theology of ordained ministry, nor does it deal with lay ministry (which is discussed in the 2015 paper) but it is a collection of viewpoints that have helped us navigate the changing church in which we live.

Finally, it is the shared conviction of all the members of the Standing Doctrinal Commission that one of the most urgent needs of the Church in Wales is the renewal of the ordained ministry. This belief has only grown stronger as we have researched, written and discussed our papers. To that end, we hope that those who carefully study *Faithful Stewards in a Changing Church: Understanding the Ordained Ministry in Light of the 2020 Vision* will be both challenged and inspired to rediscover the shared ministry of deacons, priests, and bishops in all its fulness within the love and unity of Christ Jesus our great, High Priest.

# Ordained Ministry

# Models of Ministry

The Revd Dr Rhiannon Johnson

**Abstract:** This paper uses a simple model of six underlying images of church – ark, light, crown, heart, ladder, sheepfold – to examine how ministry has developed within the church. It then examines the assumptions of the Harries Report, arguing that it sees Church in Wales as a ‘crown’ church that needs to become a ‘ladder’ church. The paper notes the changes in self-understanding involved in moving from one to the other but questions whether the characterisation of the Church in Wales has been too simplistic and whether this is leading to variations in implementing 2020 vision.

The 2020 Vision asks the Church in Wales to consider seriously the type of church it is and to make a fundamental change. The commission that led to the Harries Report was formed in order to consider whether the Church in Wales was ‘fit for purpose’ in the areas of structure, resources and leadership. When the commission reported it argued that much of the church’s structure and administration was outdated and actually frustrated the fundamental purpose of being a church. The theological basis of this assertion in the report was only sketched in the briefest of terms. This chapter is an attempt to fill out the understandings of church and ministry in order to throw light on the path that the Church in Wales is being asked to take. It will do this by exploring six paradigms or models of church life.

There are many models available Bunting states that there are almost a hundred in the New Testament alone.<sup>1</sup> To give this discussion structure, however, it uses the paradigms of Christian mission suggested by Hans Kung and David Tracy<sup>2</sup>, elaborated by David Bosch<sup>3</sup> and popularised for a generation of students by Stephen Spencer<sup>4</sup>. This model suggests that there are six models of mission which have given rise to particular ways of being church, each of which has shaped a particular epoch of church history. This chapter explores how each pattern has also shaped the expectations on those who minister in the church. These patterns do not completely die in church life and can be reinterpreted in new generations, often cross-fertilizing with each other. Some models never sit comfortably together. Where different groups within the church assume different models of Christian mission, individual ministers can feel very uncertain of what their role might be or burdened by the weight of other people’s expectations.

The six models are:

1. The apocalyptic model of early Christianity (The Ark)
2. The Hellenistic model of the patristic period (The Light)
3. The medieval Catholic model (sometimes called the Christendom model) (The Crown)

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<sup>1</sup> Bunting, I. 1996. *Models of Ministry: Managing the Church Today*. Cambridge: Grove, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Kung, H. and Tracy, D. 1989. *Paradigm Shifts in Theology*. London: T&T Clark.

<sup>3</sup> Bosch, D. 1991 *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in the Theology of Mission*. New York: Orbis, 181ff.

<sup>4</sup> Spencer, S. 2007. *The SCM Studyguide: Christian Mission*. London: SCM Press.

4. The protestant reformation model (The Changed Heart)
5. The enlightenment modern model (The Ladder)
6. The emerging post-modern ecumenical model (The Sheepfold of the Good Shepherd)

This approach is open to charges of vast oversimplification, historical distortion and a tendency to make it seem as if later models are somehow superior. Nonetheless, its clarity makes it a useful tool for investigating our current situation and it also can clearly tie expressions of Christian ministry to the church's self-understanding and its understanding of the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.

## The Six Models

### 1. The Ark: The Apocalyptic Model of Early Christianity 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation' (Acts 2:40)

In this model the church was understood as the ark of salvation (Hebrews 11.7). The flood of God's judgement is expected soon, and the task of Christian mission is to get people onto the ark and encourage them to stay there. Other metaphors are used: the church is the household of God (1 Tim 3.15, Eph. 2.19, 1 Peter 4.17, Gal. 6.10), the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12.27, Eph. 4.12), the new Israel (Gal. 6.16), the new Jerusalem (Gal. 4.26). In each case, this model insisted on a strong threshold between those inside and out, with the mission of the church being to bring people in and keep them safe from the destruction outside.<sup>5</sup>

Ministries were described as gifts of the Holy Spirit that could take a variety of forms: such as apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle-workers, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in tongues, widows, evangelists, exhorters, givers, those who give aid and those who do acts of mercy.<sup>6</sup> The term *presbuteros* (elder) may have been borrowed from synagogue organisation where they managed the synagogue, distributed charity on its behalf, acted as judges in disputes within the community and dealt with gentile authorities on the community's behalf. There is some evidence that they were commissioned by a laying on of hands and prayer.<sup>7</sup> Those who minister 'help the Christian community to gather the resources it needs to be the colony of God's righteousness'.<sup>8</sup> Spencer sees the model enduring in in some Anabaptist communities, the documents of Vatican I and the teaching of Stanley Hauerwas.<sup>9</sup>

The diverse language for Christian ministry in the primitive church has been mined by successive generations who have often read into it their own structures and assumptions. Later generations, for example, saw a continuity between the role of apostle and of bishop. Norris notes a 'general agreement' among Anglican thinkers that the role of a bishop is a partial continuation of the role of an apostle. For example, John Pearson, Bishop of Chester (1673-1686) argued that 'an apostle is an extraordinary bishop' and 'a bishop is an ordinary apostle'. Lancelot Andrewes saw 'the chief part of this apostolic function' as 'the oversight of the church; and the power of commanding, correcting and ordaining'. Richard Hooker was

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<sup>5</sup> In sessions using the Godly Play meditation derived from this paper with parish groups, lay people commonly chose this paradigm as the one that best describes their churches.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 12: 28, Romans 12:6, 1 Timothy 5:9.

<sup>7</sup> Martos, J. 1981. *Doors to the Sacred*. London: SCM Press, 459-460. This is disputed by Bradshaw, Bradshaw, 2014 *Rites of Ordination: Their History and Theology*. London: SPCK, 6-16.

<sup>8</sup> Spencer, S. 2007. *The SCM Studyguide: Christian Mission*. London: SCM Press, 63.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

more nuanced suggesting that while apostolic authority continued in the church's bishops, the ministry of word and sacrament continued in the presbyters.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The Light: The Hellenistic Model of the Patristic Period

'Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven' (Matt. 5.16)

During the early centuries of the Church, its language began to adapt to speak to Greco-Roman culture. This process encouraged developments in theology that shaped the Church's ministry. According to the Kung/Bosch/Spencer model, the church came to see itself as shining the Divine Light into the world and teaching Divine Truth. Crucial to this was the liturgy which both enacted and prefigured God's engagement with the world. As Spencer puts it, the task of ministry was 'to enact the liturgy of the church so that the whole community might see and know the divine light and love of eternal knowledge'.<sup>11</sup> Spencer sees this model still at work in the Orthodox churches, in the teaching of Michael Ramsey, and in the ministry of the Taizé community.<sup>12</sup>

Discussions of ministry in this model often focused on the roles and responsibilities of various ministers within worship, both functionally and in how they symbolize the Kingdom of Heaven. There was also a concern with proper authorisation. So, for Ignatius writing in around A.D. 110, the bishop symbolises Christ both in worship and teaching. Nothing, he says, should be done in the church without the bishop's permission: 'Whatever has his approval also has God's approval so you can be sure that it is proper and true.'<sup>13</sup> This was justified by the role bishops played in an on-going tradition; for example, Irenaeus of Lyons believed he was passing on what he had received from Polycarp of Smyrna who had received it from the apostle John.<sup>14</sup>

Bishops also had responsibility for maintaining the order and discipline needed for God's light to shine into the world. They were the guardians of the faith through their unbroken succession from the apostles. Polycrates of Ephesus defends his knowledge of ancient tradition by pointing out he was the eighth member of his family to serve as a bishop in that region.<sup>15</sup> The bishop guaranteed the orthodoxy of the church in his care. As Cyprian of Carthage famously remarked, 'You must realise that the bishop is where the church is and the church is where the bishop is, and that whoever is not with the bishop is not in the church.'<sup>16</sup> The bishop, therefore, acted as a focus of unity both for those under his care and with the ongoing tradition.

The role of presbyters at this time is contested. In some places, where they were elected by the community, they stood a little outside the symbolic hierarchy. They would sit alongside the bishop in the liturgy as a mark of honour but tended to take little role within it. In other places the presbyters were viewed as another type of bishop's servant, appointed by him. Increasingly, liturgical roles were delegated to them, but the pattern is not clear and varies from place to place in the early period.

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<sup>10</sup> Norris, R. 1988. 'Episcopacy' in *The Study of Anglicanism* eds. Sykes, Booty and Knight. London: SPCK, 333-348, 338.

<sup>11</sup> Spencer, S. 2007. *The SCM Studyguide: Christian Mission*. London: SCM Press, 86.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> *Letter to the Smyrneans* 8 quoted in Martos, J. 1981. *Doors to the Sacred*. London: SCM Press, 466.

<sup>14</sup> Martos, J. 1981. *Doors to the Sacred*. London: SCM Press, 467.

<sup>15</sup> Martos, J. 1981. *Doors to the Sacred*. London: SCM Press, 482.

<sup>16</sup> Martos, J. 1981. *Doors to the Sacred*. London: SCM Press, 467.

Documents of the third century *The Apostolic Tradition* and *The Instructions of the Apostles* portray deacons and deaconesses as the bishop's servants, who are delegated tasks in the Eucharistic and baptismal liturgies, given responsibility for the care of the community, and employed as channels of communication between the bishop and the people of the church. As a bishop's servants, they were directly appointed by him and his hands alone were laid on them when they were ordained.

### 3. The Crown: The Christendom Model of Medieval Catholicism

'The authorities are in God's service and to this they devote their energies' (Rom. 13.6)<sup>17</sup>

A shift in the church's self-understanding came about when Constantine the Great made Christianity licit within the Roman Empire. Church structures had to cope with an influx of converts and with a new relationship with secular power. Spencer summarised this as 'A priestly ministry of promoting the sacraments, teaching and discipline of the church within the laws of the state'.<sup>18</sup> When the Roman Empire collapsed in the West, the church in many areas undertook the functions of the civil state. Many bishops had been civil magistrates and so were well-positioned to step in as governors with the consent and support of local leaders. But they also offered a connection to a wider society beyond the tribe or nation.<sup>19</sup> This model has had a hugely long life and Spencer sees it still with us in establishment Anglicanism and some other forms of magisterial Protestantism.<sup>20</sup>

Parallel to this development and perhaps in reaction to it was the world-denying ministry of monasticism. Monks and nuns often served the community by withdrawing from the world to focus on prayer. In some ways, they preserved aspects of the previous model, concentrating on shining the Divine light through their worship and preserving the Divine knowledge in their scriptoria and their schools. This parallel pattern seems to have been influential in Wales during the Age of the Saints, the parish system only slowly establishing itself later during the Middle Ages.<sup>21</sup>

To cope with the much larger congregations and the spread of Christianity out of major cities, many of the bishop's liturgical functions were delegated to presbyters. This is when the language of a sacrificial priesthood was most strongly developed. Priestly ordination was seen to confer the authority to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice and absolve the penitent. Gregory of Nyssa in *On the Baptism of Christ* states that the words of the ordination ceremony bestow 'a special dignity on the priest, and the blessing separates him from the ranks of the people. Yesterday he was but one of the crowd, but now he has been appointed to govern and preside, heal and instruct. Outwardly he looks like he did before, but inwardly he is transformed by an invisible power and grace'.<sup>22</sup>

During the Middle Ages, priests were expected to be the 'one stop shop' for the liturgical, social, and pastoral needs of their communities. The division of the countryside into parishes placed some limits on the scope of the priest's ministry. Many clergy, however,

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<sup>17</sup> Own translation. The NRSV is 'the authorities are God's servants busy about this very thing'

<sup>18</sup> Spencer, S. 2007. *The SCM Studyguide: Christian Mission*. London: SCM Press, 108.

<sup>19</sup> Martos, J. 1981. *Doors to the Sacred*. London: SCM Press, 478, 485-86.

<sup>20</sup> Spencer, S. 2007. *The SCM Studyguide: Christian Mission*. London: SCM Press, 108. To anticipate the argument a little, this is the model of church that the Harries report believes the Church in Wales to be following despite the fact that modern Wales is a highly secularized society.

<sup>21</sup> Dewi established an important community of prayer, mission and teaching in the 6<sup>th</sup> century but it is not until the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> that this becomes understood in terms of territory rather than of influence. At that point church leaders such as Giraldus Cambrensis push for St. Davids to be recognised as a metropolitan see.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Martos, J. 1981. *Doors to the Sacred*. London: SCM Press, 480.

worked more as administrators for the monarch and local nobility than as parish priests. Complaints about negligent clergy, either lazy in their duties or often away at court, were common. Clerical education was mixed at best<sup>23</sup>, many priests receiving only a modest education.

This exaltation of priesthood relativized both the ministry of other clergy and the laity. The diaconate and the minor orders became stages towards the priesthood and the laity sheep to be led and pastored. Even the theology of the episcopacy was developed by this exaltation of the priesthood; writing during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Hugh of St. Victor defined the episcopacy as 'a dignity and not an order'<sup>24</sup> and the definition stuck.

Inevitably, there were power struggles between church and state over which areas of life each controlled. The dual nature of power in the medieval state was formalised in the image of the two swords of Luke 22.38. This reference was read allegorically to state that God had given two sources of coercive power for the good governance of His people- the church and the monarchy. However, the two swords could, and often did, fight each other rather than combining to defend the people. Henry II's difficult relationship with the church, of which the martyrdom of Thomas A' Beckett was part, was largely due to his attempts to make church power subservient to royal power. By making himself head of the church, Henry VIII effectively combined command of the two swords within England and Wales. The Christendom model is still very much with us in British Anglicanism, particularly in the duty to marry and bury all those who live within the parish and the general expectation that the vicar belongs to the whole community not just those who attend church. It is also seen in the way our structures and financing reflect the society of which we are a part. It also persists in the idea that one can be Christian by nationality as part of a 'Christian country' with no supporting evidence of faith or commitment.

#### 4. The Changed Heart- The Protestant Model of the Reformation 'You must all be born again' (John 3.7)<sup>25</sup>

The Reformation led to a deep questioning of the Christendom model. It seemed self-evident to more radical Reformers that it produced lazy, ignorant and poor-quality Christians. Protestants stressed personal conviction and conversion through hearing and receiving the Word of God in Scripture. With this understanding of the church's task, ministry became focussed on 'Preaching the word for individual conversion and ministry of the sacraments as signs of salvation'.<sup>26</sup> This is the model Spencer sees at work in Luther and Wesley and in modern Pentecostalism.<sup>27</sup>

The term 'priesthood' was typically rejected except when speaking of the priesthood of Christ and that of all believers. Calvin and his followers adopted a new four-fold order of ministry: pastors or presbyters (ministers of word and sacrament), doctors (teachers), elders (laymen in charge of church discipline) and deacons (laymen who cared for the poor and sick).

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<sup>23</sup> See Deanesly, M. 1969. *A History of the Medieval Church 590-1500*. London: Methuen, 195

<sup>24</sup> Martos, J. 1981. *Doors to the Sacred*. London: SCM Press, 485.

<sup>25</sup> REB. The NRSV has 'You must be born from above' noting 'anew' in a footnote as an alternative.

<sup>26</sup> Spencer, S. 2007. *The SCM Studyguide: Christian Mission*. London: SCM Press, 130.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

At an extreme end of this model was pietism where the priesthood of all believers came close to becoming the priesthood of each believer.

This model greatly increased the power of some of the laity within the church. Luther argued for a wide understanding of Christian ministry that included within its scope all work that Christians do: since all Christians are ‘consecrated priests through baptism,’<sup>28</sup> they minister to each other in various offices by making another’s shoes, baking their bread, cleaning the house, preaching or celebrating the eucharist. In effect, he saw no distinction between clergy and laity in terms of status only in terms of tasks.<sup>29</sup>

The ministers of word and sacrament, however, need equipping in order to fulfil their tasks. The emphasis on preaching necessitates the study of the Bible and calls for serious study. Within the counter-Reformation also, academic learning assumed a higher priority in preparation for ministry as the arguments of the reformers had to be countered. Seminaries began to develop within Roman Catholicism (the word coming from the Latin for a seed bed). They stressed personal discipline and devotion as well as study. Anglicanism relied more on the classical education and socialisation provided by Oxford and Cambridge to educate potential clergy. Bishops would typically have an ‘examining chaplain’ whose job it was to interview candidates and assure the Bishop that they had received a classical education.<sup>30</sup>

Within this model of church, bishops were often deemed irrelevant or even dangerous. They represented the old church from which the Reformers wished to break away and a conservative drag on innovation in the church. In Britain, this strand culminated in the rejection of bishops during the Commonwealth since bishops were ‘identified with tyrannical rule’.<sup>31</sup> Under Cromwell, the episcopacy was replaced by a system in which local churches governed themselves within regional assemblies known as classes, which had powers of ordination and church discipline.

## 5. The Ladder: The Modern Enlightenment Model

### ‘Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Matt. 5.48)

In response to the Enlightenment, colonial expansion, industrialisation and urbanisation, the church began to conceive of itself as an agent of civilisation for the good of all, bringing moral, intellectual, social and physical improvement. The task of the minister in this model is ‘to professionally educate, medically heal, and develop local and national communities that conform to the coming kingdom’.<sup>32</sup> Spencer sees this model as underlying the writings of Hegel, William Temple’s part in the foundation of the Welfare State, the emergence of liberation theology and the *Faith in the City* report.<sup>33</sup> A key term in Spencer’s discussion is ‘professionally’.

Although the formal structures of Anglican ministry remained largely in place, the way in which they were inhabited changed hugely. Clergy were expected to receive formal theological training, generally within a theological college (although this only became

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<sup>28</sup> In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* 1520 quoted in Tomlin, G. 2014. *The Widening Circle*. London: SPCK, 61.

<sup>29</sup> Tomlin, G. 2014. *The Widening Circle*. London: SPCK, 61

<sup>30</sup> Russell, A. 1980. *The Clerical Profession*. London: SPCK., 19

<sup>31</sup> Rosman, D. 2003. *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 89.

<sup>32</sup> Spencer, S. 2007. *The SCM Studyguide: Christian Mission*. London: SCM Press, 154.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

obligatory in the Church of England after the First World War) if only for at least a year.<sup>34</sup> Clergy were expected to stand apart from society in dress and manners. More widespread clerical collaboration also arose as rural deaneries were founded and diocesan and provincial church societies were formed.<sup>35</sup>

All this was underpinned by the ideal of the professional gentleman:

It was the professional man, gentlemanly but highly skilled, cultured yet technically capable, conscious of the service ethic yet making a good livelihood, standing or falling by his own skill or judgement, who was the quintessential self-made man, and who became the cultural hero of late nineteenth century society.<sup>36</sup>

High entry standards were demanded but there was often considerable independence once qualified. They received extensive training which also functioned as professional socialisation.

Russell states that the professionalized model of ministry has remained virtually unchanged since the mid nineteenth century. However well it may have served the church, then and since, he identifies seven ways in which it had become dysfunctional by the late twentieth century:

1. Its marginality to the experience and concerns of mainstream society.
2. Its elitism in a popularist culture.
3. Its tendency to place clergy in ambivalent and exposed positions.
4. Its inappropriateness as a model of leadership in what looks most like a voluntary society.
5. Its tendency to create dependence and deference and thereby put a brake on the dynamism of the church.
6. Its inflexibility and slowness to respond to change.
7. Its cost.<sup>37</sup>

To these I would add an eighth.

8. Its inherent individualism

One of the model's redeeming features is its strong emphasis on public service and sacrifice. The competent professional gives up their chance of the conventional rewards their expertise might demand and dedicates themselves to serving the church and the community. However, this can lead to a denigration of those not perceived to make similar sacrifices, such as part-time or non-stipendiary ministers, an unhealthy desire to prove one's calling through overwork and corresponding unrealistic expectations. Within this model, much of the mission work of the church is done outside its conventional structures through societies and mission organisations which the church, or individual Christians, support largely financially and in prayer.

It is possible to see the urge to apply the models of secular professional management to the church and the language of 'leadership' as a late flowering of this particular model. The Christian leader is expected to take lessons from and display the same qualities as the CEO of a successful business. In his criticisms of the so-called Green Report, Martyn Percy argues

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<sup>34</sup> Russell, A. 1980. *The Clerical Profession*. London: SPCK, 46.

<sup>35</sup> Russell, A. 1980. *The Clerical Profession*. London: SPCK, s 22, 44-45.

<sup>36</sup> Russell, A. 1980. *The Clerical Profession*. London: SPCK, 22.

<sup>37</sup> Russell, A. 1980. *The Clerical Profession*. London: SPCK, 291-296.

that this approach offers little scope for a senior clergyperson to be a 'scholar, evangelist, contemplative, theologian, prophet or pastor'.<sup>38</sup> He sees this as the result of a church that sees itself as primarily a professional organisation of business. The result being that the few administrative officers the church employs redefine the church in their terms and 'secretaries that once served the church- will become sovereign'<sup>39</sup> shifting power out of the hands of the 'unprofessional' bishops.

## 6. The Sheepfold of the Good Shepherd: The Emerging Post-modern Ecumenical Model 'I am the gate for the sheep...whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture' (John 10. 7-9)

As Christendom has waned in the West and churches have flourished in areas where there is no partnership with the secular state, indeed sometimes outright hostility, there has been a reassessment of what church is called to do and be. Crucial to all the emerging ideas of church, which cross traditional denominational boundaries, is *missio dei* - the idea that God has a mission and the church only exists to help in the realising of that mission. Spencer summarises this emerging vision of church as 'a locally rooted community of hospitality and care, prophetically pointing to the coming of the Kingdom'.<sup>40</sup> The task of ministry, then, is 'to nurture this community in theological, personal and practical ways'<sup>41</sup> He sees this vision in the writings of Barth and Bonhoffer, in Vincent Donovan's work among the Masai and in emerging churches.<sup>42</sup>

Within this model, *missio dei* is held to be primary and all church life and structures subservient to it. In 1977, Jürgen Moltmann wrote 'It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and Spirit through the Father that includes the church'.<sup>43</sup> Bosch notes, however, two possible weaknesses in this understanding of Christian mission. The first is that although *missio dei* is an ideal that many Christians find appealing, how that mission is worked out and understood varies widely. The second weakness can be summed up in the question, 'Why does the mission of God need a church?'

Crucial to the sheepfold model is the understanding that all Christians have a ministry by virtue of their baptism. The WCC document *Baptism Eucharist and Ministry* states 'All members are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the Church and the service of the world to which the Church is sent'.<sup>44</sup> This, in turn, calls the ordering of any church into question, 'the churches need to work from the perspective of the whole people of God...How, according to the will of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the life of the church to be understood and ordered, so that the Gospel may be spread and the community built up in love?'<sup>45</sup> The Bench of Bishops echoed this call to discipleship for the whole church, visualising those with a call to ministry in a Ministry Area as 'an interdependent Christian community' and stressing that training for Christian ministry must nurture discipleship, allow for people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and equip people for collaborative leadership enabling 'those

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<sup>38</sup> Percy, M. 2017. *The Future Shapes of Anglicanism: Currents, contours, charts*. London: Routledge, 35.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Spencer, S. 2007. *The SCM Studyguide: Christian Mission*. London: SCM Press, 182.

<sup>41</sup> ibid

<sup>42</sup> ibid

<sup>43</sup> Bosch, D. 1991 *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in the Theology of Mission*. New York: Orbis, 390

<sup>44</sup> World Council of Churches, 1982. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Geneva: WCC, 20.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

called to priesthood to become natural delegators, sharers and empowerers of diverse ministry'.<sup>46</sup>

This stress on discipleship, however, risks problematizing the ordained ministry. This has resulted in a variety of attempts at reconceiving of the ordained ministry in ways that stress collaboration with laity and are rooted in a broad understanding of discipleship.

For example, Stephen Croft's influential book *Ministry in Three Dimensions* argues that the diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate should be seen not as the property of individuals but as belonging to the whole church. Ordained ministers should see their role as part of a shared ministry of empowering and overseeing others along with whatever tasks they themselves fulfil. He argues for low initial training and high on-going support—the exact opposite of the professionalized modern model of ministry.<sup>47</sup>

Rowan Williams in his epilogue to *Praying for England: Priestly Presence in Contemporary Culture* argues that it is the job of the priest to hold open the space created by Christ's death and resurrection 'where the act of God and human reality are allowed to belong together without fear: the place where Jesus is...a place where human competition means nothing; a place where the desperate anxiety to please God means nothing; a place where the admission of failure is not the end but the beginning; a place from which no one is excluded in advance'.<sup>48</sup>

In *The Widening Circle: Priesthood as God's way of blessing the world*, Graham Tomlin starts with election. God chooses a part of the whole with which to bless the whole: God elects humanity out of all creation to give voice to its praise and to be a blessing to it; God chooses the church out of humanity to give voice to its longing for God and to be a blessing to it; God chooses priests in the church to give voice to the church's self-expression and to serve it. Thus, humanity are the priests to creation, the church is the priest to the world and ordained priests are the priests to the church. The nature of the priestly task is, for Tomlin, to participate in Christ's priesthood by mediating, perfecting, offering, revealing and confirming, interceding and exalting. The role of the ordained is to do this for the church, while the role of the church is to do it for the world.<sup>49</sup>

## Which of the Six is the Church in Wales and which should it be?

In using a 'Godly Play' style meditation based on this paper with various groups, I have found no clear consensus on what the Church in Wales is. In any given group there will commonly be a mixing of models 'we are an ark with a crown on it', 'we are the basket that all six are in', 'we are a sheepfold with a light in it', 'we are a sheepfold but the changed heart is the gateway in and out'. It has also been noted that the difference between the ark and the sheepfold is only a matter of how open the doors are. Clergy with diocesan responsibility will report seeing all the models at work in the areas they serve.

The 'theological foundations' on which the Review and report were to be based seem to express a mixed economy of models of church, just as expressed by the groups working with the Godly Play. It states that the church is called to be a 'channel of god's grace and renewal for individuals'.<sup>50</sup> This appears to be a 'heart' understanding of church with slight 'ladder' overtones. It goes on to state that the church must be a 'source of fellowship and

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<sup>46</sup> *Ministry in the Church in Wales* 2013

<sup>47</sup> Croft, S. 1999. *Ministry in Three Dimensions*. London: DLT, 178.

<sup>48</sup> Wells, S. and Coakley, S. eds. 2008. *Praying for England: Priestly Presence in Contemporary Culture*. London: Continuum, 175.

<sup>49</sup> Tomlin, G. 2014. *The Widening Circle*. London: SPCK.

<sup>50</sup> [https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Church\\_in\\_Wales\\_Review\\_2012.pdf](https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Church_in_Wales_Review_2012.pdf)

Accessed 4/5/2020, 44.

community in our society, as the Church calls people into renewed relationships with one another'.<sup>51</sup> This looks like an ark or a sheepfold, depending on how much this fellowship is a witness to or against the surrounding society. It also has overtones of 'light' and 'ladder'. Furthermore, the church is to be 'an agent of change in the world...to bear witness to the justice and peace which are the marks of God's Kingdom'.<sup>52</sup> This is a clear 'ladder' understanding with a hint of the 'light' there too. In short, the theological understanding that commissioned the report can be seen as referencing all the models of church apart from the one the Harries report sees most clearly at work in the Church in Wales.

The Harries Report, however, sets up a clear duality in models of church. It saw the Church in Wales as a 'crown' church, a Christendom church that has failed to realise it lives in a post Christendom society and which needs to become a 'sheepfold' church as quickly as possible. Some of its harshest criticisms arise from the perception of this 'crown' model. The Church in Wales

continues to have the structure and organisation appropriate to an established church 100 years or so ago, but which is now stretched beyond what it can or should properly bear now. The legacy of establishment has good features, not least a continuing sense of responsibility to the wider community, and a respected position from which to speak to it. But ... The present structures are hindering people from making visible the Word of life.<sup>53</sup>

and

the downside of the high authority of the bishop is the fact that despite their efforts to work more collaboratively a number of people have said to us that the Church in Wales is still characterised by a culture of deference and dependence.<sup>54</sup>

The Harris Report's fullest theological statement is a short discussion of 1 John 1.1. It introduces a model of church based on fellowship, community and the mission of God- a 'sheepfold' model.

Our theme is the Word which gives life...the eternal life which was with the Father and was made visible to us...It is this which we have seen and heard that we declare to you also, in order that you may share with us in a common life (*koinonia*), that life which we share with the Father and his son Jesus Christ.

This makes it clear that membership of the Christian community not only takes us into a *koinonia* with other human beings, it takes us into the very *koinonia* of God. The church as an institution, its structures and organisation, only have a purpose in so far as they serve and achieve that aim.<sup>55</sup>

Ministry or Mission Areas are seen as vital in achieving this fellowship by allowing enough people to work together in teams for the mission of the church. The language and assumptions underlying this discussion chimes with the World Council of Churches Report *The Church:*

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid*

<sup>52</sup> *ibid*

<sup>53</sup> <https://cinw.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Church-in-Wales-review-English.pdf>.

Accessed 2/2/19, 5.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 6

<sup>55</sup> <https://cinw.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Church-in-Wales-review-English.pdf>. Section 3. Accessed 8/11/16. For a further discussion of *koinonia* and the church see the papers by Ainsley Griffins in this volume.

*Towards a Common Vision*<sup>56</sup> although this was published after the Harries Report. It also expresses the theology of *missio dei* and thus fits within the sheepfold model.

The changes involved in moving from a Christendom model to a Sheepfold model may be summarised broadly as follows:

Christendom churches tend to mimic the organisations of the state from which they typically receive financial and legislative support. In Sheepfold churches, structure is deemed less important than creating a ministry shared by all to all. They are also self-financing, which means that they typically need to achieve a ‘critical mass’ of membership and income to operate effectively.

The concept of membership is strikingly different in the two models. In classic British Anglicanism, membership is geographically-based and includes certain rights (such as marriage and burial) as well as the expectation that clergy will be available for pastoral care. By contrast, sheepfold churches often see themselves as separate from, and standing against, secular society. People have rights and roles in their local church through their intentional membership.

Christendom churches can be open and tolerant but have very low expectations. They are often socially conservative. The sacraments are often seen as stages of life, rites of passage. Individuals typically grow in faith slowly, through a cycle of penitence and growth, looking towards judgement after death. Sheepfold churches strive to be welcoming but have high expectations of those who become members. They are often socially radical. Sacraments are life-changing events which bring strong responsibilities. The churches themselves are meant to be a foretaste of Heaven, a living signpost to the kingdom.

Christendom churches typically do not put much effort into evangelism except with children. They see mission in terms of serving the whole community and will often work by funding professionals to achieve their ends. Sheepfold churches do put effort into evangelism for conversion. They see mission as everyone’s responsibility, often working in teams and recognising those who have particular gifts and skills. Their mission is often working in partnership with those who want to engage with them, often stressing transformation, and as a witness to the whole community.

The Harries report, however, does not make a strong case for why the painful shift from one model to another is necessary. Why the ‘sheepfold’ model is the most, or even the only, valid way of being church in twenty first century Wales.

## Conclusion

The Harries report’s stress on *koinonia* shows that it assumes that the sheepfold model is the way to have a church fit for purpose in the twenty first century. The difficulties on the way to achieving 2020 vision suggest that not all share this assumption and the vision is interpreted in differing ways as the sheepfold concept is interpreted with assumptions formed by other models. Where, for example, a strong ‘crown’ model still exists, ministry areas become another way of stretching existing resources even further. Where there is a strong pre-existing ‘light’ model, ministry areas become a way of sharing excellence in some aspect of ministry across a wider area than traditional parishes have previously allowed, thereby allowing specialisms to develop. However fertile these hybrids are, they risk pulling individual ministers in many different directions at once. Where no clear vision of the nature and purpose of the church exists, many will feel over-stretched between different expectations

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<sup>56</sup> <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision> accessed on 28/2/18

and lose their sense of purpose and motivation. Where there is no vision the people indeed perish<sup>57</sup>, but where there are too many competing visions the people perish too.

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<sup>57</sup> Proverbs 29.18 in the King James Version. The NRSV has 'Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint'.

# Slaves in the Household of God

*The Revd Dr Rhiannon Johnson*

*Abstract: Shepherds and shepherding have been dominant images for ordained ministry. However, they are problematic in a church that truly values lay ministry as they imply that the priest and the lay person are two very different creatures. This paper is an attempt to open up another range of Biblical imagery for leadership and service, that of being slaves in the household of God. The practice of slavery is abhorrent, but the Biblical language allows the discussion of differentiation of tasks within a common bond and purpose.*

The 2020 process challenges us to reimagine some of the ideas of church and ministry that are most familiar to us. Key among these is the picture of the shepherd and sheep. In this image, congregations are flocks and Christian ministers are a different type of creature from the sheep they serve. The boundaries of power and control within this image can make it hard for lay people to take on new things—‘we are only sheep after all’—and for clerics to share authority with lay people—‘but I am the only shepherd here’—or with other clergy— ‘my sheep only respond to my voice’. While within the models discussed in ‘Models of Ministry’, this approach can be seen to fit within the Christendom model of church, it is fatally compromised by the sheepfold model which sees Christ as the only good shepherd and the Christian minister as one of many gifted, loved and chosen sheep.

Fortunately, shepherd-and-sheep is not the only Biblical image for the relationship of Christians to one another and to God. Balancing it with other images can help provide a more well-rounded and potentially fruitful approach to ordained ministry. This chapter explores the implications of describing a Christian minister as a slave within the household of God, believing that this image opens up language of shared work and common belonging. Admittedly, the image of slavery is a deeply distasteful, even shocking one. The horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and its legacy of racism and prejudice might justly cause us to shy away from the topic altogether. This paper does not seek to condone ancient or modern slavery in practice but rather to see how the New Testament authors, particularly Paul, use the image of slavery to explore what it means to live as a Christian. The image of slavery is not unlike the image of the cross: horrific and evil in its reality but redeemed and repurposed to express a deep truth about God and the world.

## Slavery during the Roman Empire

Although Acts makes a great play of the fact that Paul is a free Roman citizen (e.g., Acts 22.25-30), Paul often introduces himself in his epistles with the ordinary Greek word for a slave: *doulos*. So, for example, Paul opens his greeting to the Christians in Romans by describing himself as a slave: ‘Paul, a servant [δουλος] of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God’ (Rom. 1.1.) As here, many modern translations of the Bible

often rob this description of some of its shock-value by translating 'slave' word as 'servant'.<sup>58</sup> Elsewhere in the New Testament the word is also translated in some versions as 'minister'.<sup>59</sup>

Slaves were to be found everywhere in the ancient world. It has been estimated that they formed twenty to thirty percent of the population of Italy during the first century when the New Testament was composed. Neither slavery or slave ownership followed racial patterns in the way that later slavery did, nor was it linked to a particular culture. It had also only recently expanded exponentially as the Roman Republic and then Empire expanded into new territories. As Sandra Joshel points out, there was no equivalent of the 'free North' that slaves in the American South could dream of, no campaign for abolition, 'no outside'.<sup>60</sup> It was an unquestioned part of the social structure.

This is not to say that there was no prejudice. Slaves were assumed to be lazy and incapable of telling the truth. A slave's evidence could only be accepted in court if the slave had been tortured. Seneca remarked that 'a man has as many enemies as he has slaves'. Satirists and poets could insult a person or behaviour by labelling it servile.

People became slaves either by being born to an enslaved mother, by being captured in war or by pirates, or as a result of crippling debt. They were sold at market. They were legally an object like a chair or an animal. They could be sold, lent or mortgaged. Their owner could beat, abuse, rape and even murder them without fear of reprisal. Their master dictated the work they should perform and the status they should hold within the household or the 'familia'.<sup>61</sup>

It is this concept of the household that allows some insight into how slavery might function as a metaphor of ministry. The head of the household was the 'paterfamilias' ('oikosdespotes' in Greek). He<sup>62</sup> had control over the household whether his children or his slaves. Within a large Greco-Roman household there would be several generations of the owner's biological family, a number of slaves and a hinterland of freed slaves who still owed deference and service to the paterfamilias. All the members of the household, whether biological family or not, would refer to the paterfamilias as 'Father' and 'Lord'. Slaves and children could both be referred to by their master as 'pais'- child. Freed slaves would commonly take the master's family name as their own.

The household or family was where the old and the sick were cared for, children raised and often educated. The 'rural household' would farm the family's estates and produce most of the food, clothes and fuel the household needed,<sup>63</sup> the 'urban household' maintained the family's status and business in the town.

While slaves could be highly educated and work as teachers, doctors, entertainers and administrators, many they also did the hardest and dirtiest manual labour. Slaves in management roles often had other slaves put at their disposal. These slave-controlling-slaves

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<sup>58</sup> Versions that translate 'doulos' here as servant include Tyndale's 1534 Bible, the King James Bible, the New English Bible, The New Revised Standard Version, the Good News Bible, the New International Version and The Contemporary English Version. The Message translates the word as 'slave'. In Welsh the William Morgan Bible, Beibl Cymraeg Newydd and Beibl.net all use 'gwas' or a similar form rather than 'caethwas'.

<sup>59</sup> In Colossians 1.7, Epaphrus is described as both a fellow slave and a deacon of Christ. This is usually translated with minister standing in for one of the two slave-related words.

<sup>60</sup> Sandra R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (Cambridge, 2010), 6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 6-8.

<sup>62</sup> There are some examples of women who fulfilled this role but the concept is linguistically male.

<sup>63</sup> The rural family was controlled by a slave over-seer the 'vilicus' and his wife the 'vilica'. An agricultural manual by the Roman writer Columella. The Greek term 'episkopos' is not generally tied to slavery but there is a definite parallel between how Columella describes the work of this couple (Joshel 2010, 174) and the description of the bishop and deacons in 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1.7.

were known as 'vicariae'.<sup>64</sup> The quality of a slave's life entirely depended on the quality of the paterfamilias. Slaves and freedmen and women of a good and powerful master often had a higher standard of living and more power than the freeborn.

Much of this world is reflected in the New Testament but our translations and assumptions tend to obscure it. 'Family' to us is a smaller unit, vital for mutual support and flourishing, but hardly the complex social organism of the ancient family. Slave is often translated as 'servant' and conjures images of Victorian parlour maids and omni-competent Jeeves-like figures. The language which distinguishes different slave roles either disappears under the general term of 'service' or, like 'deacon', becomes a term for a specialized role in the church.

For example, the word 'ministry' itself comes from the Roman term for the normal, unskilled work that a slave does. Skilled work would have been 'ars', an art.<sup>65</sup> Usually in the New Testament, service or ministry translates 'diakonia'<sup>66</sup>, the work done by the sort of slave who fetches and carries, getting people and things from one place to another. The Greek literally means 'one who comes through the dust'<sup>67</sup> so it might be argued that this fetching and carrying involves a willingness to get dirty in the process.

Our translations rob the language of its power to shock and surprise. Time and translation have obscured the fact that Paul is not proclaiming himself as having a special right or status in his service of Jesus Christ but is declaring his common cause with the Roman Christians as one of many slaves in the household of God. In doing so, he follows Jesus himself, who also uses slave-language to describe his ministry. When he states that he came not to be served but to serve (Mt 20.28 and Mk 10.45), he is using the language of slavery. The Greek verb is 'diakoneo' - not to be served by slaves but to serve as a slave.

Indeed, servants as we understand the term, people who offer their services for a wage 'misthios' - do not get much of a place in the New Testament. They are left in the boat when James and John follow Jesus (Mk 1.20), it is the status the repentant prodigal son would beg for himself (Lk 15. 17 -19) and, unlike the good shepherd, they run away when the wolf comes (Jn 10.12-13) and bicker when the owner of the field is generous (Mt 20.1-16).

Rather, underlying both the parables and the epistles is an understanding that God is the paterfamilias and Christians are part of his household. He is Lord and Father. Different images are used for how we have become part of that household through Jesus. We were bought with a price (1 Cor 6.20 and 7.23). We were adopted (Eph. 1.5, Gal. 4.5). There is play with the ideas of slavery and freedom: for example, Galatians 5.1: 'For freedom, Christ has set us free' and the long allegory of Sarah and Hagar's children. It should not be forgotten, however, that a freedman or woman remained in a relationship with the master of the household and the rest of the family. Also, there is play in how Jesus fits the picture. He is in the form of a slave (Phil. 2), but he is also the master of the household (Jn 15.20 for example) and the firstborn son and heir (Heb 1.1-2 for example).

When considering Christian ministry, therefore, it seems that slave imagery, however abhorrent, provokes three important areas of exploration. The first is the concept of the household of faith, the second is slavery and work and the third is the idea of freedom in Christ.

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<sup>64</sup> Joshel, *Slavery*, 143.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> In Acts 1.17, Romans 11.3 and 2 Corinthians 6.3 for example.

<sup>67</sup> Stephen Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions: Ordination and Leadership in the Local Church* (DLT, 1999), 53.

## The Household of Faith

If, like Paul or like Mary when she agrees to be the mother of Christ<sup>68</sup>, we claim to be slaves of Christ, this means we are part of the household of faith along with all its other members. The New Testament is ambiguous about whether Jesus Christ is the Paterfamilias (as in Rom. 1.1) or God the Father (as in Eph. 2.19), but it is not ambiguous about the importance of belonging. 'You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God' (Eph. 2.19). 'You are no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here.' (Eph. 2.19 The Message).

This household, like all ancient households, has a purpose, and slaves are brought into the household in order to serve that purpose. We serve as Christians, therefore, because of the relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ. If he is our Lord and Father, we are his slaves and children (the word 'pais' could apply to both). We have been adopted through Christ or bought with his blood. Our ministry is based on God's action in Jesus Christ not on our own background, skills or talents.

Furthermore, all slaves, and even the children of the household and its freedmen and women, are in the same basic relationship with the master. Even those serving under the 'vicars', the slaves of other slaves, are ultimately owned and controlled by the master of the household. It follows that differences of status and role between members of the household are all relative to relationship with the householder. As David Bennett puts it 'Disciples are all on the same level of relationship to God, even though they may have different areas and amounts of responsibility'.<sup>69</sup>

Slaves owe obedience to their master, and to those to whom the master delegates authority, but to no one else. Paul plays with this idea in Romans 6 where he suggests that our actions will show who our true master is because we will behave either as slaves of sin or slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6.16-19).

If this idea of obedience is applied to the household of faith, it opens two possible paradigms for the exercise of authority within the church. One is delegation from the Master. We should obey those with authority over us because that authority has been given them by our Lord for a particular purpose. The second is the idea of obedience to the task. We obey because we see that it is the best way of achieving what our Lord wishes. Both models converge in the Rule of St. Benedict. The abbot has huge authority in the household of faith as imagined by the rule, but only because both the abbot and the monks are in mutual obedience to the will of God. Thus, the abbot sees their authority as functional not personal. The abbot can return to the community as one of the monks and someone else step into the role and exercise the same kind of authority over their former superior as that superior once exercised over them. Furthermore, should the abbot ask a monk to do something the monk does not want to do, the monk has the right to appeal and ask the abbot to show how this action serves the communal purpose. If the abbot shows the purpose of the requested action, the monk must obey as both of them are subject to that common task.<sup>70</sup>

All this takes us a long way from an image of ministry as the possession of a few professionalized, gifted individuals who then serve other Christians. It opens a language of shared work within and for the household in which there are different tasks, talents and responsibilities but all have a common service and a common goal.

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<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, the word usually translated as a specialised form of servant- 'handmaid'- is simply the feminine form of *doulos* (Luke 1.38)

<sup>69</sup> Bennett, D. 1993. *Metaphors of Ministry: Biblical Images for Leaders and Followers* (Paternoster, 1993), 63.

<sup>70</sup> <http://archive.osb.org/rb/text/rbejms1.html#2> accessed 13/11/19. Chapters 2, 64, 68 and 70.

In Luke 12.42, commenting on a parable about the unexpected return of the master to the household, an unusual Greek word is used for household: 'therapia'- a place of healing. Considering our churches collectively as the household of faith has the potential to be deeply healing both for individuals and for communities. In Ephesians 2, the image of household quickly morphs into the image of temple (Eph. 2. 19-22). The household of God also exists to worship him and manifest him to the world.<sup>71</sup>

## Slaves and Work

The work of slaves is the work of the household not of the individual. We have seen how slaves performed various tasks within the ancient household from the most dirty and laborious to things we would consider professional or artistic vocations. The Master or his representative would direct each slave about his or her work according to the purpose of the household. It is that purpose which directs the work a slave is given (or bought in for) rather than an individual's own inclination.

It follows, therefore, that Christian ministry is the normal activity of the members of God's household. It is not a particular art or the possession of the few. It is dependent not on one's own ambition or self-image but on the needs of the whole household. Within the household some may have specialized tasks and roles, some may take forms of leadership under the Paterfamilias, but all are engaged in maintaining the household's purpose.

Differentiation of tasks does occur. Within the New Testament, there is the general term for slave, 'doulos', and then there are words for slaves who are brought in from outside the household, slaves who are low status even for slaves, slaves who are part of the household, slaves who are body-servants to the master, slaves who lend an extra pair of hands, slaves who fetch and carry ('diakonos'), slaves who oversee other slaves ('oikonomos' in Luke 12 but surely with overtones of 'episkopos').<sup>72</sup> No one slave is expected to do everything for everyone else.

Even the slave-word which has come into English for a type of Christian minister—*deacon*, the fetcher and carrier—has a wider range than our translations usually allow. It appears to be used early as a recognized role in the church, for Phoebe in Romans 16.1-2 and Epaphrus in Colossians 1.7. 1 Timothy 3.8-13 gives guidance on discerning the men and women who should take up this role. As a verb and with a weak translation as 'to serve', it permeates the New Testament. It is what Jesus says he came to do (Matt. 20.28) and what Martha complains that Mary has left her to do alone (Luke 10.38-42), and the type of servant who receives the master's blessing for being good and faithful (Matt. 25.23). This suggests that much of the work of the household of faith is about resourcing others and moving them on—the sort of service that gets people and things from where they are to where they need to be.

## Slavery and Freedom

Roman households freed many of their slaves. Other cultures commented on how often it happened. They used similar language for freeing slaves as for growing into adulthood. Slaves could save money and, with their master's permission, buy their freedom, but it seems more often to have been given as a gift. Typically, this occurred at a death with a master freeing many of their slaves in their will, rewarding faithful service and allowing their heir to

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<sup>71</sup> For further discussion of household as Temple see Clavier, *Rescuing the Church from Consumerism* (SPCK, 2013), 97-103.

<sup>72</sup> Bennet 1993 discusses this at length.

build up his own staff. But although they were no longer owned, freedmen and women were still considered part of the household, often taking the family name. The paterfamilias's role shifted to that of a patron, supporting them in their endeavours, protecting them and also expecting them to add to his reputation, power and prestige. Freedmen and women achieved great wealth and influence. Under emperors such as Nero and Claudius, freedmen of the Imperial household ran the empire.

In trying to explain what Jesus' death and resurrection have achieved for us, Paul draws widely on ideas relating to freedom and slavery. He is not consistent throughout the epistles, even varying the image in the same epistle. In Galatians 5.1 he states that Jesus Christ has set us free goes on to warn the Galatians against the twin dangers of using their freedom for immorality or letting themselves be enslaved again by law. In the previous chapter, that form of religious observance is seen as a bad slavery which we have escaped by being adopted into the household of faith as sons and heirs (Gal. 4.4-7) rather than through being set free. A similar ambiguity exists in I Corinthians where Paul is speaking to a group that includes both free and slave members. When speaking in large, metaphoric terms in I Corinthians 6.20, he speaks to them all as slaves of God 'You are not your own. You were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body'. In the next chapter, however, he is dealing with the practical concerns of a group in which there is actual slavery-

'Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever.<sup>73</sup> For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters' (I Cor. 7.21-24).

Paul's logic appears to be that certain aspects of slavery and freedom are both appropriate in describing the Christian experience. What unites both those who experience redemption as a liberation from a previous slavery and those who experience it as being brought under the rule of a just and generous master, is the membership of the household and the commitment to the household's purpose. Perhaps those of us whose primary experience is the liberation need to work on remembering the obligations of being part of the *familia* and those whose experience is of the structured household need to remember and rejoice in liberation.

The ambiguity hints at a deep paradox. The only way to be truly free is to be a slave in the household of God and serve no other master. This paradox is enshrined in the second collect at Morning Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer and its descendants. We can have peace because we belong to the God who is able to defend us from 'all assaults of our enemies', therefore 'service is perfect freedom'.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> This is the NSRV version. It could also be translated as 'avail yourself of the 'opportunity'.

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/order-morning-prayer> accessed on 12/9/19

## Conclusion

In our language slave, servant and minister are different things, but need they be? If we see ourselves as belonging to the best of masters and lords, then these three things can be held together not as individual property but part of the common mission of the household of faith. We have been bought from the things that previously oppressed us by the precious blood of Jesus, who is at one and the same time fellow slave, and brother and master. Our household of faith can be a house of healing and a temple of the Living God. Along with every other slave/servant/ minister in the household, our work may differ our service remains the same. None of us needs to feel they must do everything that needs to be done. This image has the potential to rebalance our image of Christian ministry for 2020 and beyond.

# Living Well: Christian existence and ordained ministry in the Church in Wales

*The Revd Dr Ainsley Griffiths*

*Abstract: This paper considers what it might mean to ‘take hold of the life that really is life’ (1 Tim. 6:19), that ‘true life’ which flows to us from the Father, through Christ crucified and risen, and in the constantly renewing grace of the Holy Spirit. It does so in four main sections, exploring our identities as created, restored beings; as people transformed through baptism; as active members of Christ’s body, the Church; and finally as those who encounter Christ in the Eucharist. Relating this to the contemporary Church in Wales, the paper concludes with a vision of threefold ordained ministry.*

## Introduction

In recent years increasing public attention has been given to ideas of lasting fulfilment and purpose, in which people are not merely money-making machines at the service of a capitalist system but those for whom beauty, joy, satisfying work, loving relationships, connectedness to the natural world, bodily, mental and emotional health, physical exercise, intellectual challenge and a whole host of other benefits are regarded as marks of a ‘good life’. This has made ‘well-being’ a buzzword and an industry in its own right. Some universities, for example, have transformed their student welfare departments into ‘well-being centres’ and there students can find advice on money and careers, access mental health and counselling services, join clubs and societies and find out more about a bewildering array of spiritual paths and worldviews. Given this veritable feast of options, what might the Church say to our largely post-Christian, avidly secular society about living well? This chapter seeks to answer that question with particular reference to the Church in Wales and its threefold ordained ministry of bishop, priest and deacon. What is the distinctive attraction of the Christian faith – or, in crude terms, its ‘unique selling point’ – for those seeking fulfilment and happiness? For several years a well-reported survey has attempted to identify ‘the happiest places to live in Great Britain’, quizzing residents according to twelve categories, such as security, neighbourliness, community spirit, local services and amenities, cultural opportunities and so on. One might become cynical on learning that this ‘Happy at Home’ survey is organised by the property marketing website Rightmove and that accessing the results immediately presents a host of gorgeous properties for sale in desirable locations.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless it does allow some insight into what Britons regard as ‘the good life’, though a detailed analysis is not the purpose of this paper.

What I do hope to present is a sketch of four key elements of a ‘Christian answer’ to ‘well-being question’ using insights from Scripture. First, I consider the nature of human existence as a gift from a loving, sustaining creator, who, conquering the destructive ravages of sin, calls us to forgiveness and renewal in his Son. Secondly, the transformation which baptism represents is then considered, leading us from a life selfishly turned inwards towards a Christ-centred Easter existence. This leads to the third aspect, namely the Church, the Body of Christ, where the Spirit draws the baptized deeper into the life of God and equips the members for ministry so that others may be transformed. Finally, I explore the significance of

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<sup>75</sup> See <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/news/articles/dream-properties/where-are-the-happiest-places-to-live/>

the Eucharist as where the needy find a place at Christ's table and have their emptiness filled so that others, in turn, may be fed.

Interestingly, the 2019 'Happy at Home' survey identified Llandrindod Wells as the happiest place in Wales. Recognising that there is 'a real sense of community and neighbourliness' and that 'natural health and wellness are increasingly important in today's world', the town council's website proclaims it a place where people 'live well.'<sup>76</sup> Such self-styled 'Llandrindod Wellness' takes pride in the fact that the town's crest features Hygieia, the goddess and epitome of well-being, but says nothing about the significant etymology of the town's name 'as Church (or enclosure) of the Trinity'. Rather than deriving its inspiration in the Chalybeate Spring in the Rock Park, the Church finds its flourishing in a quite different 'spa', namely the health-giving life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is in the trinitarian well of life that we find life in all its fullness (cf. John 10:10). So, rather than seeking to boost picturesque towns' buoyant property market, we declare with praise: 'happy are those who live in your house' (Psalm 84:4). To the dimensions of that graced existence I now turn.

### *Life given: embracing our created nature*

Psalm 139 resounds with a profound sense of being made by God, known and loved by him, shielded and accompanied, judged and refined, given purpose and focus. Struck by the awesome awareness of being 'fearfully and wonderfully made' (verse 14), the psalmist praises God for his intricate creative prowess in the womb and his forming the unimaginable days that would be (verses 13-16). Our past, present and future are held together in the One who is the beginning and end of all things, who, with unfathomable wisdom remains steadfastly alongside (verses 17-18). This being places life's joys and sorrows, its struggles and successes, within a different perspective: we dare to believe that, in God, our life is more than a collection of unexplained circumstances and random events but has an origin, purpose, shape, direction and destination. The psalmist seems to express in the microcosm of a single life the intentional cosmic order which God, in sovereign freedom, brings to be through his powerful, resourceful word: with the primeval anarchy overcome, everything and everyone is set in their divinely determined place (Gen. 1).

However, that tranquil stability does not last for long as chaos soon disrupts life in the Eden's garden of delights (Gen. 3). Likewise, should the psalm's notions of harmony and tenderness appear rather romantic and ethereal, its closing verses unmask some violently alarming realism about the human condition. Wishing that God 'would kill the wicked' (verse 19) and declaring 'perfect hatred' for opponents (verse 22), the psalmist seems far from Jesus' call to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). This imperfect, vengeful soul needs to be probed and purified, liberated from corrosive animosity, reoriented towards God and thus led 'in the way everlasting' (verse 24). Here we encounter an individual life exhibiting our common human propensity for self-interest and wilful autonomy just like Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3) and which runs like a fault-line through Scripture and the human heart.

Psalm 51 expresses remorseful awareness of being conceived a sinner (Psalm 51:5) alongside the earnest desire to be washed, recreated with a 'clean heart' and with 'a new and right spirit within' (verse 10). Likewise, Paul is tormented by the realisation that despite '[wanting] to do what is good, evil lies close at hand' so that he becomes 'captive to the law of sin' (Rom. 7:21, 23). Paul is utterly dismayed by this perplexing, seemingly insurmountable, fix in which he – and all those 'in Adam' – find themselves. Humanly speaking he is wretched, trapped in his 'body of death' (7:24); yet thanks to divine intervention in Christ, it is sin which is condemned, whilst the sinner joyfully finds liberation (7:25-8:3).

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<sup>76</sup> <https://llandrindod.co.uk/our-town-l>

If the experiences of the psalmist and, centuries later, the apostle reflect accurately our human lot, then we are both the recipients of breath-taking blessing in being ‘under God’ in complete dependency whilst also held captive through being ‘under sin’. In Christ, our sinless, sin-defeating saviour, human beings are made new, adopted as the Father’s beloved children and filled with the Spirit of his Son (Gal. 4:4-7). Feeble sinners thus reclaim their true status ‘under God’, yet with a new richness – not merely created, but also redeemed in Christ and sanctified in the Spirit.

God’s own life is therefore oriented towards ours, in loving, transformative favour, through his only-begotten Son who ‘for us and for our salvation came down heaven’ and ‘for our sake ... was crucified’ (the Nicene Creed). The one who declared ‘this is my body given for you... my blood shed for you’ demonstrates, through costly sacrifice, the ‘for-us-ness’ of God in relation to his creatures. Moreover, this shows us that true life means not introspective self-obsession but a generous outwardness, turned towards others in self-giving love. True life thus means *being-for*: being-for-God and being-for-others, fulfilled in the greatest commandments to love of God and neighbour wholeheartedly (Matt. 22:36-40; Mark 12:29-33). That double ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ focus is fulfilled in the perfecting of our love and by our enjoying uninhibited communion with God and each other. As the psalmist concludes, we long to be ‘led in the way everlasting’ (Psalm 139:24), that is, to inhabit the divine kingdom which transcends the sin-ridden, temporal kingdoms that are passing away.

Yet this interim space is no passive waiting but an active expectancy in which the gifts of the Spirit flourish in joyful, faithful ministry in Christ’s name, whether that be exercised by committed laypeople or by bishops, priests and deacons. So ministry is never merely about ‘plugging the gaps’ and is always more than ‘staffing the foodbank’, ‘doing Sunday School’ or ‘celebrating Communion’—at their core, these are not just chores to complete but opportunities for us to rejoice that our life is ‘ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven’<sup>77</sup>, no longer ‘under sin’ but ‘under God’ in the fullest, most glorious way. Ministry thus heralds the kingdom where all will enjoy that grace-filled victory and invites others to become its thankful, prayerful, worshipful citizens.

### *Life reoriented: the transformation of baptism*

Peter the apostle issued such a call in his Spirit-filled address on the day of Pentecost as he proclaimed Christ, handed over by human beings to crucifixion yet freed from death’s corruption and raised to glorious life: ‘God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified’ (Acts 2:36). Deeply moved by their implication in these events, the listeners are called by Peter to repentance and baptism that they may both experience forgiveness and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:37-40). Astoundingly, around three thousand new believers welcome Peter’s message and are baptized<sup>78</sup> and this appears to have a profound effect on them as they ‘[devote] themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers’ (Acts 2:41-42). A more low-key, but nonetheless joy-provoking, baptism results as Philip brings the Ethiopian eunuch to believe Christ’s good news through unfolding the meaning of Isaiah’s famous portrayal of the suffering servant (Acts 8:26-40). Soon after, we hear of the dramatic encounter of Saul with the risen Jesus, resulting in temporary blindness which then gives way to the light of faith, the bestowal

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<sup>77</sup> This is an allusion to Francis Henry Lyte’s well-loved hymn *Praise, my Soul, the King of Heaven*.

<sup>78</sup> This is around half the number of baptisms which the entire Church in Wales administers in a typical year: 6,115 were baptized in 2016; 5,487 in 2017. See <https://s3.amazonaws.com/cinw/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/43596-CIV-Memberships-and-Finances-2017-E.pdf>

of the Spirit, baptism and the beginning of the missionary ministry of the one who once zealously persecuted the infant church (Acts 9).

Saul's conversion is among the most far-reaching in Christian history as the one transformed in the core of his being becomes the channel for the transformation of countless others. Nevertheless, it is highly doubtful whether he – or indeed any of the others described above – had a fully-fledged doctrine of baptism when they entered the waters. Yet there is undoubted change: Acts repeatedly speaks of profound differences in outward action and attitudes springing from a faith-filled inward conviction. Much later, Paul's letters would articulate a fledgling understanding of baptism as a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12) as believers willingly place their lives within the mystery of the Lord's saving work. Out of that deep assurance Paul (and others) could exclaim 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2:19b-20). The dying and rising enacted in baptism by being 'clothed with Christ' (Gal. 3:27) is no mere visual aid or a hope reserved for a distant future, but a real, 'here-and-now' share in the life of the one who conquered sin and death and who lives for evermore.

In Christ alone we encounter a truly *human* life, free from the snares which diminished Adam and Eve, or, in terms of the meticulous order of the first creation narrative, one who is genuinely in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27). But Christ does not merely *display* his sinless glory but allows us to *participate* in it through baptism, thereby restoring in us the divine treasure which our ancient forebears lost. When John the Baptist '[appears] in the wilderness proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (Mark 1:4) he seems puzzled that Jesus, the eminently worthy one for whom he has been preparing a way, the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, should himself undergo the water ritual. Jesus responds by insisting that it is 'proper ... in this way to fulfil all righteousness' (Matt. 3:14-15). The great Dominican theologian St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) interprets this enigmatic answer as suggesting that Jesus' baptism is not for *his* benefit but for *ours*: it happens fittingly<sup>79</sup> 'that he might sanctify baptism'<sup>80</sup>, cleansing the waters by his sinless flesh<sup>81</sup> whilst receiving the Spirit and the affirmation of sonship which are eternally his. In so doing he makes baptism a sacramental space in which we might become the Father's adopted children and be inspired by the breath of his Spirit.<sup>82</sup> So baptism shows that we – sinful, broken and incomplete – can receive, by grace, a share in what Christ is eternally.

Christ's resurrection marks the beginning of the new creation and falls on the day after the sabbath, creation's 'eighth day'. Some churches have eight-sided fonts to mark this radical newness, reminding us that 'if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new' (2 Cor. 5:17). So whilst in the Creed we affirm 'one baptism for the forgiveness of sins', the sacrament is about more than merely cleansing and the redemption of the past but also about our renewal, our being claimed and equipped for God's future. Furthermore, whilst baptism is necessarily a rite administered to a particular *individual* it is by no means *individualistic* for it marks the entry-point into the graced communion in time and space we call the Church.

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<sup>79</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [hereafter, *ST*], translated by Dominicans of the English Province, 22 volumes (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1935) IIIa.39.1

<sup>80</sup> *ST*, IIIa.38.1

<sup>81</sup> *ST*, IIIa.39.1

<sup>82</sup> *ST*, III.39.2, ad.1

## Life refashioned: the Church as communion embodied

Indeed, as Paul writes to the Christian community at Corinth, ‘in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and we were all made to drink of one Spirit’ (1 Cor 12:13). It is this shared transposition which allows believers to be ‘the body of Christ and individually members of it’ (12:27), each given distinctive gifts by the same Spirit (12:4-11) and connected as closely as the body’s various organs. Such mutual support allows healthy interdependence and collaboration (12:14-26), recognising that no one part possesses the totality of gifts needed for the body’s vigorous flourishing; nevertheless, as a whole, the body possesses all it needs (12:28-30). The Church is thus an experiment in gift-sharing and gift-reception, actively circulating the treasures which have come to its members, not through individuals’ inherent brilliance or ingenuity but through God’s unmerited generosity. In an imperfect way the Church might thus reflect the endless exchange of love and delight which mark the blissful life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Participation in such perfect communion is found in the theological underpinning for the intentional changes experienced by Welsh Anglicans in recent years. *The Church in Wales Review of 2012* (commonly called the Harris Report, after its lead author) inspired 2020 Vision and the move to local ministry / mission areas, highlighting our new shared life in Christ as its leading doctrinal theme. Quoting 1 John 1:1-3, it declared:

Our theme is the Word which gives life ..... the eternal life which was with the Father and was made visible to us ... It is this which we have seen and heard that we declare to you also, in order that you may share with us in a common life (*koinonia*), that life which we share with the Father and his son Jesus Christ.<sup>83</sup>

To speak of this common life (*koinonia*) is more than the shared living-together we regularly experience, be that as a family, workplace or nation, for it relates our limited life to the very life of God. In words of farewell to his disciples, Jesus paints a vivid, if enigmatic, picture of this new existence: as the Spirit of truth abides within, there is mutual interpenetration of divine and human life – ‘you in me, and I in you’ (John 14:20) – and God’s trinitarian glory overflows ecstatically into believing, welcoming hearts, extending a welcome into the Father’s house (14:1-2).

Whilst much of the Harris Report was about institutional reorganisation of parish structures and provincial processes, it was at pains to stress that these need to serve the Church’s fundamental purpose, for ‘membership of the Christian community not only takes us into a *koinonia* with other human beings, it takes us into the very *koinonia* of God.’<sup>84</sup> Deeming ‘the present structures [to be] hindering people from making visible the Word of life, and drawing them into the *koinonia*, which is at once the common life of the Christian community and the Divine Life shared with us in Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit’, the Report makes various recommendations to rectify those shortcomings and release new energy. Some of these proposals relate to finance and buildings whilst others relate to ministry, that Spirit-filled enterprise through which the Church’s common ‘inner life’ of worship, proclamation and care might reach outwards beyond itself, displaying in communities across Wales the ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ *koinonia* which, according to the Report, is the essence of the Church’s being.

Bemoaning the prevalent ‘culture of deference and dependence’ which it detects in hierarchical governance both in dioceses and parishes, the Report advocates greater collaborative leadership, modelled by bishops and cascaded, by example, to all levels. It provides details of how such new principles might affect the Representative Body, the

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<sup>83</sup> *The Church in Wales Review*, 3.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

Governing Body and various advisory bodies but, puzzlingly, does not relate this to what is probably Paul's most distinctive ecclesial metaphor – the Body of Christ – a straightforward connection which would endow the urgent call to enhanced co-operation and mutual support with greater theological richness.

As Paul describes Christ's ecclesial body as abundantly endowed with gifts through the Spirit it is clear that willing deference to the divine giver (expressed in worship) and a necessary sense of dependence (marked by prayerful expectancy) make for a healthy, thriving Church. However, if the Church in Wales has been (and may well still be) characterised by deference rendered to *human beings* and dependence on them, is this outweighed by an ever-greater *divine* deference and dependence? Has the Church been marked by *over-reliance* on inherited power, affluence and prestige (despite the relentless spiral into numerical decline) whilst being *under-reliant* on the somewhat surprising resourcefulness of the Spirit? Does it possess the humility, contrition and fidelity to rediscover its inherent poverty and become open to receive God's countless riches? What difference would it make in attitude and action for the Church in Wales truly to regard itself as a divine instrument for establishing the kingdom of God rather than an ailing human institution which could, in these challenging conditions, simply diminish and disappear like countless high street stores have done already?

Utilising the gifts of each one in ministry builds up the body not as an end in itself but as a 'work-in-progress', 'until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ' (Eph. 4:11-12).<sup>85</sup> So we might say that the Church is 'evolving', coming to a deeper realisation of what it is and what it might become. In this way, rather than being gripped by a narrative of decline, the Church in Wales can regain confidence in God's Spirit-breath who rejuvenates its dry, dead bones to become once again a living body (Ezekiel 37), an instrument for proclamation, service, transformation and love in Wales.

Belief in Jesus and his power to accomplish something utterly breath-taking and extraordinary in reviving what seems dead (John 11:26) is the ultimate test of whether we are mere churchgoers seeking to prop up a dying organisation or disciples living within a healthy, life-giving body founded on God's unstinting provision. Nevertheless, whilst we believe creation came to be from absolutely nothing through God's powerful word (Gen. 1:1-3), it seems that the new creation requires humanity's active, willing cooperation; it is not about utter passivity – some wishful thinking that 'a miracle will happen' – but rather active, expectant collaboration with Christ and the Spirit. When Jesus announces the coming of the kingdom (Mark 1:14-15) the world is not changed instantly but requires the transformation of individual lives and communities, one by one. For this work, Jesus immediately calls others to follow and to work alongside him (Mark 1:16-20). As it reaches its centenary as a self-governing province of the Anglican Communion, the Church in Wales remains committed to that life of discipleship and calls others to do likewise, to be – in various forms and contexts – the ecclesial body of Christ which derives its very existence from him whose own body was willingly crucified and raised and who feeds us at his table with his sacramental body.

### *Life offered: the eucharistic existence*

The only miracle recounted in all four gospels is the feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15). Reflecting upon it yields illuminating perspectives on the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist and here I will focus primarily on John's account as he takes the sign which Jesus accomplishes as a springboard for deeper reflection on the mystery of who Jesus is. In John 6, we are led from practical problems

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<sup>85</sup> Eph. 4, as well as 1 Cor. 12, will be explored in greater detail in my second paper in this volume.

concerning feeding a vast assembly to profound consideration of what it means to be fed by Jesus. The nature of the feeder and the food changes those who consume.

To begin with, we recall that Mark shows Jesus teaching the needy, insistent crowds as the immediate context for the miracle (Mark 6:35). Similarly, when we gather for the Eucharist we listen attentively to God's word in Scripture, expecting to encounter there the living, eternal Word who took flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Whereas we may feel bombarded by words (and images) in our noisy, heaving society, our liturgical listening offers space truly to hear the living One and be somewhat refashioned by that. As Peter says, following the miraculous feeding: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life....' (John 6:68).

The gospel accounts speak of the sheer scale of the challenge of feeding a multitude with paltry resources. Yet before Jesus accomplishes his miracle, there is the realisation that there is *something* to offer: for the masses to be fed, we need to present to Jesus our inadequate resources (John 6:9) that, through him, there may be an overflowing surplus (6:13-14). Between the feeding and the resulting 'bread of life' discourse (6:22-59), John discloses more of who Jesus is. In his awe-inspiring walk on the water he is shown as the one who, in the beginning, triumphed over the primeval chaos (Gen. 1:1-3). Moreover, his evocative words – 'it is I; do not be afraid' (6:20) – do not merely allow his terrified disciples to recognise the person before them as truly Jesus but intentionally echo the divine name revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:14). They are being invited to recognise 'hidden depths' in their teacher and master, the divine nature through which, alone, the wondrous multiplication is possible. Similarly, the Church is presented at each Eucharist with the stunning realisation of the presence of Jesus, fully human, fully divine, in its midst.

Nevertheless, John offers yet more, for Jesus does not merely feed but becomes the food. He wishes to take the participants beyond simply desiring physical sustenance (6:26-27) or even the miraculous manna of the Exodus (6:49), towards longing for genuine, lasting nourishment that is found only in him, the bread of life (6:35; 6:40). To give this bread involves the costly, sacrificial gift of flesh handed over for the life of the world but for those who see the Son and believe the marvellous result is eternal life, resurrection (6:51; also 6:40; 6:54; 6:58). Towards its close, the discourse becomes more explicitly eucharistic in tone as Jesus speaks of the necessity of eating his flesh, the true food, and drinking his blood, the true drink (6:53-55) and thus we discern echoes of the Last Supper accounts given by Matthew (26:26-30), Mark (14:22-26), Luke (22:15-20) and Paul (1 Cor. 11:23-26). For John, however, the result of the eating is for Jesus' life and the life of the believing recipient, to be mysteriously intertwined and just as Jesus lives because of the living Father so those who eat Jesus will live because of him (6:56-7). We are drawn back to the Harris Report's emphasis on *koinonia*, an intimacy expressed at each Eucharist both 'vertically' in our shared communion with God and 'horizontally' in our companionship of each other.

However, the whole episode causes division (at least in John's account) as Jesus' words seem hard for some (6:60). Yet what is to transpire for Jesus will be tougher still to accept (6:61-62) and as a result some disciples abandon him (6:66), a departure which presages the betrayal, denial and wholesale desertion that would occur as the cross loomed. Nevertheless, the post-resurrection appearance on the Sea of Tiberias in which Jesus and his disconsolate disciples share another extraordinary meal – filled with eucharistic overtones – leads to the threefold restitution of Peter, thereby undoing his threefold denial and giving him a strategic role in the servant ministry of the infant Church (John 21:1-19). Similarly, the downcast pair on the road to Emmaus who unexpectedly encounter Jesus in the heart-burning unfolding of the ancient Scriptures and in the breaking of the bread find themselves sent as heralds of the resurrection and those on whom the divine power of the Spirit will come down from on high to equip them as witnesses (Luke 24).

Likewise, when the Church today is fed by Jesus in word and sacrament mission and ministry result. The Eucharist therefore is far more than a shared ritual or an uplifting devotion but the means by which half-believing, empty-handed sinners discover unearnable forgiveness, profounder faith and unmerited abundance. Yet these gifts are not to be jealously hoarded but shared so that the breaking of the bread fuels the Church's wider outreach (Acts 2:37-42): we are filled so that others may be too.

## Conclusion: Plastic Pipes from the Living Well

This paper has proposed a distinctively Christian way of regarding our human existence, beginning with the awed consciousness of our created nature, wondrously brought into being, sustained, nurtured and guarded by God's providence. With necessary realism, it also considered our deeply flawed disposition, our shared propensity for self-interest, whilst affirming the joyous news that such entrancement to sin and death is overcome by the self-denying Saviour who grants believers a share in his cross-sealed, tomb-defeating victory. To be baptized is to accept that invitation, gladly allowing the fullness of Christ's life to be our life. Furthermore, that initiates us into the communion in time and space that is the Church and, granted the Spirit's gifts, the possibility of participating in ministry and mission to and for the world, in Christ's name, whether that be as active, generous laypeople or as clergy, ordained to distinctive responsibilities. Like the five thousand hungry souls of old, we continually come to Christ with empty hands and yearning hearts, expecting to be cleansed, inspired and nourished, not simply for our own fulfilment but for ongoing transformation of others.

If this portrait of the Christian life resonates with the Church in Wales in its centenary year it will not be simply to bolster a hierarchal human institution in its time-honoured configurations but rather to imagine and inspire newness by cleaving faithfully to the 'essentials' given by God in Scripture, baptism and the Eucharist. It invites consideration of what might it mean for the Church to 'sit light' to the outward hallmarks of its life (but clearly not neglect them) and devote real energy to 'sinking deep roots' into the fundamental source which sustains it in every generation: the life of the Three in One which is the 'one thing necessary' (cf. Luke 10:42). So living well means being connected to the Living Well (Psalm 36:9), who through Jesus Christ, blesses the thirsty and expectant with the abundant water of life in the Holy Spirit (John 4:7-15; 7:37-39):

Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

(John 4:14)

This water is freely bestowed, without cost or complex eligibility criteria; the only prerequisite is thirst. Such a privilege forever calls the Church to thankful joy and to learn again and again the radical unconditionality of God's love, receiving all that it needs as God's free gift.

Yet it is costly for God. According to John, blood and water stream from the crucified Christ's side (John 19:34) and this dual flow has traditionally been understood as representing the Church's sacramental life: unity with Christ in his death and resurrection constantly poured out through baptism and the Eucharist. So, the water of life which quenches our deepest longings takes us into the mystery of Christ's dying and rising for us and is a sign of the depth of his commitment to his creatures. Only by being forever 'plumbed in' to this life-giving source will be the Church discover unexpected vitality.

To welcome the flow of the Spirit is to respond positively to Christ's invitation: 'let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink' (John 7:37-8a). However, we should not jealously guard this living water as some prized commodity for Jesus

goes on to say: 'as the scripture has said, 'out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water'. (7:38b). That is, the one who receives the gift of the Spirit from Christ, the one true source, becomes – in a secondary, wholly dependent, manner – a channel for its ongoing transmission. The life of the Spirit cannot be tamed or contained but flows onward through the Church to refresh and revive the world.

However, this newness is not merely the 'next new thing', some clever novelty through which we hope to attract more people and shore up an sickly institution for a bit longer. Rather, it relates to the Church's calling to be an agent of the kingdom, a channel for the new creation. Indeed, John the Divine's magnificent image of the heavenly city portrays the water of life as a river flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, producing extraordinary, curative fruitfulness (Rev. 21:1-2). That image of water then connects day-to-day church life – the beauty of its worship, the warmth of its loving service and even the monotony of mundane administration – to a yet greater, more glorious, vision which is our final end. In this weary, broken world it both proclaims and manifests the work of the One who declares:

I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert. (Isa. 43:19)

The prophet used the image of the wilderness, a geographical characteristic familiar in Isaiah's homeland, to denote God's work in returning the Babylonian exiles from captivity to the promised land. Although the arid wastelands may not speak as immediately to us who live in rain-soaked Wales it relates metaphorically to our nation where only a tiny proportion of the population are frequent worshippers, an ever-diminishing proportion identify as 'Christian' and where the influence of the Church in Wales, both spiritually and socially, is far less than a hundred years ago. The need for the Spirit's living water is acute, even though people may not acknowledge their thirst. To the prophet Jeremiah, the plight of our largely areligious, consumerist generation might be similar to the exiled people of Jerusalem six centuries before Christ who receive the Lord's woeful judgement:

They have forsaken me,  
the fountain of living water,  
and dug out cisterns for themselves,  
cracked cisterns  
that can hold no water. (Jer. 2:13)

Might we think, then, of the Church as appointed by Christ and animated by the Spirit to irrigate that wilderness and make it blossom again, allowing the restoration of broken lives and the magnificent outpouring of joy and beauty, as depicted in Isaiah 35? More specifically, might its ordained ministers be *representative* channels of the water of life, which alone can bring about this remarkable transformation, doing so through proclamation of the word, celebration of the sacraments and loving service to the community? For the Church in Wales' ordained ministers to be compared to cheap piping from the local builders' merchants is the greatest honour if those pipes' vocation is to convey the most precious treasure – Christ's gift of the water of life – and if, in so doing, those who drink it receive citizenship of the new creation.

On reading the other papers in this volume it may appear that there is little in common between the day-to-day tasks which absorb a newly-ordained curate compared to an

archbishop. Our Ordinal waxes lyrical about these tasks in strikingly distinctive ways: from the deacon's tireless 'compassion for the weak and lonely and those who are oppressed and powerless'<sup>86</sup>, to the priest's ministry 'to bless, baptize and preside at the Holy Eucharist' and 'to teach the faith that comes to us from the Apostles'<sup>87</sup> and the bishop's vocation to remain 'mindful of the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep' and so 'to love and pray for those committed to their charge, knowing their people and being known by them.'<sup>88</sup> Despite these vocational differences, in each case the ordained minister is the vessel through which God's living water surges, enabling others to grow into that new life to which Christ calls them and for which the Spirit equips.

So as the deacon brings the gospel alive to young people in a mission service, as the priest elevates the eucharistic host and as the bishop lays hands on confirmation candidates, it is the same living water, streaming from the crucified and risen Christ, which flows and which incorporates individual lives into body of Christ. In distinct, complementary modes and contexts, those ordained to the threefold orders seek to irrigate their communities with the water of life that, connected to Christ the true vine, the sweet fruits of the Spirit may be appear and flourish (cf. John 15:1-17; Gal. 5:22-23). In calling others to that holy, fulfilled life, in revealing glimpses of God's creation-sustaining goodness, in building up the Church in its loving outreach, in standing for justice and the integrity of the fragile natural order, ordained ministers, together with the whole Body of Christ, become a sign of the new creation and cooperate with the Spirit brooding over the chaos of this troubled world (Gen. 1:1-3) in order to draw it towards its good, God-given fulfilment:

The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'

And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.'

And let everyone who is thirsty come.

Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. (Rev. 22:19)

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<sup>86</sup> The Church in Wales, *Alternative Ordinal* (Cardiff: Church in Wales Publications, 2004), 6

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

# The Priesthood

# Becoming the Body: Baptism, Eucharist and Priesthood

*The Revd Dr Ainsley Griffiths*

**Abstract:** *The New Testament provides an intriguing interplay within the threefold body of Christ – physical, sacramental, and ecclesial. This paper constructs a theology of the ordained priesthood, contending that the priest is called to present God’s people perpetually to the Father at the Eucharist, in the power of the Spirit, through Christ whose unique offering at Calvary enables and envelopes all other self-giving. By exploring the essence of ‘offering’, the call to grow in the Spirit and the Church’s common vocation as a priestly body, it portrays the ordained priest’s ministry converging in the nourishing, body-renewing, mission-focused centrepiece of eucharistic self-offering.*

## Introduction

As claimed in my earlier paper,<sup>1</sup> the Christian tradition regards true existence as more than merely ‘being’ but involves ‘being-for’, turned ‘upwards’ towards God and outwards towards neighbour in self-giving love. This ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ orientation is the essence of the law and is seen perfectly in Christ who, alone, fulfils our human vocation. Furthermore, he makes it possible for us to recover our true, God-given, God-imaging identity (cf. Gen. 1:26-28). In servant-like service Christ washes his disciples’ feet (John 13:3-5) and institutes for them the living memorial of his broken body and his blood outpoured. Ultimately he lays down his life for them (John 15:13), thereby manifesting this attitude of ‘being-for’ in all its generous, life-giving fullness: ‘having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end’ (John 13:1). The new community which comes into being through Christ’s action is thus mandated to demonstrate similar sacrificial love as its defining characteristic (John 13:34-35; cf. 1 John 4). That community is described by the apostle Paul as the richly endowed body of Christ, in which each member exercises its distinctive ministry in mutually dependent interconnectedness (1 Cor. 12), whilst finding its completion in the ‘still more excellent way’ (12:31) of love, without which even the most laudable self-offering is as nothing (13:1-3).

‘Body’ is a recurrent word in the influential 2012 *Church in Wales Review* which provided motivation for reshaping former parishes and deaneries into ministry / mission areas. It includes sixty references to the ‘Governing Body’, fifteen to the ‘Representative Body’ and a further ten to various structural, advisory and administrative bodies. 100 words within the Annex’s description of the preparatory work leading to the *Review* explore ‘the Church [as] the Body of Christ’, yet this prominent biblical metaphor receives no further theological exposition. Nevertheless, bodies are an integral part of the Church in Wales: our God-given bodies are washed at baptism, they receive Christ’s body and blood at the Eucharist, individual lives and bodies are united in marriage, in confirmation and ordination the Spirit is invoked as the bishop lays on hands, sick bodies receive the ministry of healing and finally our dead bodies are commended to God in hope of resurrection.

Paul’s image of the Church as the body of Christ, crowned by love, will be the theme of this paper, with particular reference to the relationship to baptism, the Eucharist and the ministry of those ordained as priests. As argued earlier in this volume, living well entails being connected to the Living Well, Christ himself, from whom springs the water of life, the Holy

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<sup>1</sup> *Living Well: Christian existence and ordained ministry in the Church in Wales*, pages in this volume.

Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it is 'in the one Spirit' that believers from many walks of life are 'baptized into one body' and 'made to drink of one Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:13). So through the gifting of the Spirit the body is established, vivified, sustained and equipped and, like any body, grows 'to maturity, to the full stature of Christ ... building itself up in love' (Eph. 4:13, 16).

In the first section I shall explore the significance of offering in the context of marriage, baptism and ordination, extending this in the second part to the particular ways in which baptism, confirmation and ordination emphasise growth in the Spirit. The third section then relates this to four New Testament texts which speak of the Church perpetually presented to God, leading to the final part which sets this explicitly in a eucharistic context, contending that a key aspect of the ministry of the ordained priest is to offer, at each celebration, the people of God to the Father so that they may become more fully Christ's missional Body in and for the world.

## Offering

For many, the vocation to offer one's life to another is experienced most fully in marriage. Here, two people willingly and gladly take one another, 'to have and to hold ... for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer'<sup>3</sup>, vowing to 'love...honour...comfort...and care' for the other.<sup>4</sup> There is a profound sense of one person giving themselves wholly and joyfully to the other and since the Church in Wales' modern marriage rites make the declarations and vows identical for the man and the woman, equality and mutuality are shown as hallmarks. Such profound, loving reciprocity is shown when both partners give and receive rings: 'with my whole being I honour you, all that I am I give to you, and all that I have I share with you.'<sup>5</sup>

Entirely non-religious marriages may well echo this sense of giving one's life wholeheartedly to another and receiving in return the treasure that is their life. Yet the Christian understanding introduces another dimension altogether: the love of the triune God. Vows are made 'according to the will and purpose of God' and 'in the presence of God'<sup>6</sup> and the mutual self-giving expressed in the exchange of rings is placed 'within the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'<sup>7</sup> Thus the finite, fallible love of these two human beings is 'held within' the infinite, eternal, perfect love of God. Moreover, marriage discloses the intersection of these 'horizontal' and 'vertical' dimensions of love in time and space, echoing the oneness which Christ has brought about through his redemptive work: 'You join man and woman to each other and the two become one flesh, as the Church is one with your Son, adorned as a bride for her bridegroom.'<sup>8</sup>

That imagery, drawn from the book of Revelation (19:7; 21:2), is glorious, yet is rooted within, dependent upon, and reflective of, the self-giving of Christ unto death. So genuine Christian love involves setting aside self so that the other might flourish. Hence, those joined in marriage are called to 'be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Eph. 5:1-2). In blissful elation, in the joy of sexual union, in procreation and parenting, in practical, sometimes mundane, tasks, marital love testifies to this 'higher love' and is sustained by it. Furthermore,

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<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> 'An Order for a Marriage Service' in *The Book of Common Prayer for use in the Church in Wales* (Cardiff: Church in Wales Publications, 2010); here, section 3.ii, 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, section 3.i, 39.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, section 3.iii, 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, section 3.ii, 40.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, section 3.iii, 41.

<sup>8</sup> Proper preface for marriage in *ibid.*, 21 etc.

it sets as the couple's hope that vision of a communion far deeper and fuller than any human bond, longing that, when death does indeed part them, God may 'bring [them] to the joy of everlasting life.'<sup>9</sup>

In many Christian traditions, marriage is celebrated within the context of the Eucharist and this sets the mutual self-offering of the partners to each other in yet sharper relief, before the greater offering of Christ crucified. Moreover, having received his costly sacramental gifts – 'my body ... given for you ... my blood ... shed for you' – so they are enabled, together with the whole assembly, to present themselves to the Father: 'we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice.'<sup>10</sup> Remembering and receiving the saving fruits of Christ's unique, historical offering thereby enables the couple to offer themselves anew, deliberately placing their life together within God's life, their human love within the divine love. It is within that eternal, mutual self-giving of Father and Son in the Holy Spirit that human offering becomes possible and is completed.

That call to give oneself unreservedly is, of course, an important aspect of every Eucharist, not just nuptial masses, and this will be a key theme later in this paper (section 5). However, giving ourselves in wholehearted love of God and neighbour 'pre-dates' both our active participation in the Eucharist and our public declaration of lifelong commitment in marriage. Indeed, it is rooted in our baptism, that sacramental sign of our turning to Christ and our desire to live as his disciple. Cleansed from sin, united to him in his death and resurrection, adopted as God's child and filled with his Spirit, the baptized are called to live a 'cruciform' life of service in imitation of Christ's. As the introduction to the signing with the cross states, 'By his cross and precious blood, our Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed the world. He has told us that, if any want to become his followers, they must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him day by day.'<sup>11</sup>

Baptism, like a precious diamond, has many glorious, multicoloured facets and among these is Paul's notion of participating in Christ's death and resurrection, yielding the old self to be crucified with him so that a new self might arise (Rom. 6:3-11; cf. Colossians 2:12). We hand ourselves over to God to be cleansed, remade and adopted as his children. The baptismal liturgy calls us to 'turn to Christ', 'repent of ... sin' and 'renounce evil'<sup>12</sup> to mark our desire to shed the old self – our being 'in Adam', marked by rebellion and death – and allow ourselves to be given a new self 'in Christ' (Rom. 5:12-21). Thus 'born again' or 'born from above' through water and the Spirit (John 3:6-7), we become a 'new creation' (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). This is a miracle of God's redemptive, recreative grace, involving no human effort, righteousness or worthiness on our part: it. Yet it does require us to *declare our need* for God, presenting our broken selves to be restored. Moreover, this a transformative self-offering marked through *bodily* signs: we are signed with the cross on our forehead and washed with blessed water, whilst furthermore, in some traditions, being anointed with chrism, clothed in a white garment and given Christ's light to illuminate and guide.<sup>13</sup>

Baptism thus marks our transition from our old self 'in Adam' to our new self 'in Christ' and involves giving ourselves up to God, body and soul, so that his divine gifts might redeem and expand us towards true fullness of being through him 'in [whom] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' (Colossians 2:9-10). In some sense it is like the intertwining of

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<sup>9</sup> This is the conclusion for each of the prayers of blessing over the couple; see *ibid.*, A, endix 6,, 112-113.

<sup>10</sup> First post-communion prayer in *The Book of Common Prayer for use in the Church in Wales: an Order for the Holy Eucharist* (Cardiff: Church in Wales Publications, 2004),

<sup>11</sup> 'An Order for the Public Baptism of Infants', The Representative Body of the Church in Wales, *Services for Christian Initiation* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2007), section 3(2).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, section 3(1).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, sections 3(2), 3(5) and 3(6).

two lives expressed in marriage – ‘all that I am I give to you, and all that I have I share with you.’ However, there is a vital difference: for whereas a man and a woman pledging themselves to each other do so as loving *equals*, in baptism there is a fundamental *disparity*. As sinful beings, we yearn for forgiveness; as those in whom the divine image is tarnished, we seek restoration; as estranged creatures, we long to be adopted; as those devoid of the Spirit, we thirst for renewal. All we can offer God is our human deficiency and our desire for divine completeness. We crave pure gift, flowing from the immeasurably rich, beneficent One who, through Christ’s saving work, remakes us. Through that transforming love, we come to ‘know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for [our] sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty [we] might become rich’ (2 Cor. 8:9).

## Growing in the Spirit

As the liturgy makes clear, baptism marks the beginning of a *transitional journey* into Christ rather than being an abrupt instantaneous jolt from the old life to the new. Indeed, whereas Jesus’ own baptism shows the water rite and the giving of the Spirit as simultaneous, Acts suggests that for us they may not be perfectly coterminous. Whilst fulfilling the Baptist’s prophecy of baptism in the Spirit (Mark 1:8//) Pentecost’s outpouring (Acts 2:1-11) bears little resemblance to water rituals. Moreover, ensuing narratives shows the relationship between water baptism and Spirit-reception to be less aligned than we might imagine: for example, Samaritan believers who have ‘only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus’ *later* receive the Holy Spirit, as Peter and John lay hands on them (8:16-17), whilst believing, Spirit-anointed Gentiles *subsequently* undergo water baptism (10:44-48). Similarly, the apostle Paul regards sanctification as an *ongoing* activity, so that salvation is more of a *process* than a once-and-for-all event (e.g. Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15; 3:18; 4:16; Col. 3:10) and the Spirit’s presence a *continuing* transformative force leading us towards creation’s fulfilment (Rom. 8:14-30).<sup>14</sup>

Whilst the liturgy of baptism expectantly prays for the gift of the Spirit it does not invoke its outpouring at a particular instant. However, in Confirmation the link is more explicit. In the 1662 Book of Common Prayer (BCP) rite the bishop prays that each candidate might ‘continue thine for ever and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more’<sup>15</sup> whilst the modern Welsh rite is yet more specific, praying that God might ‘pour out [his] Holy Spirit’ upon the candidates collectively and, at the laying-on of hands, that each one might be ‘[anointed] ...with [his] Holy Spirit.’<sup>16</sup> The BCP confirmation rite, as well as numerous collects – including several related to ministry – suggest gradual growth in the Spirit, all helpful correctives to over-identifying the Spirit’s outpouring with a particular instant. Indeed, the Spirit is not a ‘binary’ commodity – a ‘possession’ we either have or don’t have – but rather the one who *possesses us*, who fits us for fullness of life more expansive than we could ever imagine.

Nevertheless, petition for the Spirit’s descent finds unequivocal focus in Welsh ordination rites. Following the Presentation, Charge and Examination, the litany’s strong Spirit-centred accent and the singing of the *Veni Creator* culminate in the bishop’s prayer over the individual candidates:

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<sup>14</sup> See James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 319-323.

<sup>15</sup> Book of Common Prayer, *The Order of Confirmation*.

<sup>16</sup> ‘An Order for Baptism with Confirmation’, The Representative Body of the Church in Wales, *Services for Christian Initiation* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2007).

Send your Holy Spirit upon your servant [N]  
for the office and work of a deacon [or: priest] in your Church.<sup>17</sup>

Emphasis upon the Spirit's descent is particularly prominent in the Welsh 1984 BCP through printing these words in block capitals. Examples could be multiplied from around the Anglican Communion which give the impression that the ordained require a fuller outpouring than any other baptized believer. Might the Church in Wales unconsciously bolster 'the political inference that baptism creates a Christian proletariat while ordination endows one 'first-class citizenship' in the Church', as if bishops, priests and deacons participate more profoundly in the divine life and Spirit-empowered ministerial vocation than other members of Christ's body?<sup>18</sup>

However, if *all* believers are beneficiaries of the ineffable riches of Christ through the Spirit such a hierarchy is misplaced. Without undermining theologies emphasising 'ontological change' at ordination, we should simultaneously recognise that *all* the baptized are called to an even more radical participation in the trinitarian life, described, particularly in the eastern tradition, as *deification* or *theosis* (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:1-3 etc.).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, as I will later propose, clerics might consider the ministry of nurturing God's people in the manifold dimensions of Christ's fullness as foundational, enabling the 'seed of the Spirit' implanted at baptism to germinate, grow and bear fruit, for *all* are called 'to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ' (Eph. 4:13), 'transformed into the [Lord's] image from one degree of glory to another' (2 Cor. 3:18).

That intentional, ongoing 'cultivation' of the members of Christ's body is vital for any church which administers infant baptism, particularly so if it also regards such sacramental initiation as the foundation of ministry. If Paul tells Galatian Christians that he is 'in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in [them]' (Gal. 4:19), why should 'ordinary' Christian formation be regarded as a lower institutional priority than formation for accredited and ordained ministries? Furthermore, whilst ordinands may devote time and energy in discerning and developing their own extraordinary gifts how might they also be trained in enabling the whole people of God to discern the Spirit's bidding and thus deepen discipleship? This is surely imperative if vocation strategies are to be rooted in exploring graced Christian identity rather than merely presenting a denuded, functional, needs-based vision for ministry. We do not simply require willing hands to 'keep the Church's show on the road' but Christ-enraptured hearts and Spirit-anointed lives, serving the true prophet, priest and king.

Christ's own Spirit-filled baptism activates his public ministry: subsequently the devil is resisted (Luke 4:1-13//), the time fulfilled, the kingdom imminent, disciples called (Mark 1:14-20) and gracious divine prophecy (Isa. 61:1-3) realised (Luke 4:16-21). Christ's watery immersion thus exhibits the new identity into which *all* the baptized grow, lay and ordained together, as the Father draws us into our common, graced calling as his adopted children (Gal. 4:6-7) and as ministers of the new covenant in the life-giving Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6). Nevertheless, whilst the Spirit's descent is never contained or constrained by baptism's sacramental formulae, it is he alone who constitutes, equips and in-spires the ecclesial body.

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<sup>17</sup> The Church in Wales, *Alternative Ordinal* (2004).

<sup>18</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1978), 156.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit: a Liturgical Study of Baptism* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 80. See also Jared Ortiz (ed.), *Deification in the Latin Patristic Tradition* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2019).

## The priesthood of the gifted, united body

Furthermore, in the gospels, 'baptism' also signifies Christ's sacrificial end (Mark 10:38-39), his gracious 'immersion' unto death, into complete self-giving, made 'through the eternal Spirit' (Hebrews 9:14), that bodily self-offering by which we are sanctified (Hebrews 10:10). Moreover, through Easter's victory, Christ's transfigured body becomes strangely 'habitable':

y corff a weddnewidiwyd yn y bedd  
yn Gorff Catholig fyw.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, his incarnate, crucified, resurrected body is intimately united with his ecclesial and eucharistic body, for 'in the Spirit we [are] all baptized into one body' (1 Cor. 12:13), 'sharing in the body of Christ' through '[partaking] of the one bread' (1 Cor. 10:16-17), presenting thereby a threefold body in which humanity is privileged to participate.<sup>21</sup> In this section, I briefly consider four New Testament 'body texts' (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4; Rom. 12 and 1 Pet. 2) which describe the shared priesthood of believers, relating them in the next part to the Church's vocation to be eucharistically offered to God that it may become more fully Christ's body.

Confessing the Lordship of Jesus by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3), the Church is divinely endowed with varieties of gifts given by the same Spirit, varieties of services but the same Lord; varieties of activities but the same activating God, thereby balancing the body's evident diversity through the unity forged through emergence from a common trinitarian wellspring (12:4-6).<sup>22</sup> Such gifts are 'expressions of God's generosity, not of human merit'<sup>23</sup>, facilitating not individualistic ambition but the whole body's healthy flourishing, in magnificent multiplicity (12:4-10) and radical interdependence (12:12-26), finding fulfilment in humble, self-forgetful love (13:1-13) and ultimate perfection in the mysterious resurrection body (15:35-58).<sup>24</sup>

Rather than imposing deadening uniformity, the body's divinely-given unity-in-love (Eph. 4:1-6) thrives through God's manifold giftings (4:7), thereby awakening a stunning array of ministries which build up the body of Christ (4:11-12). Christ, 'the measure of God's immeasurable grace' (cf. 4:7) is both 'extraordinarily generous' and 'extraordinarily demanding'<sup>25</sup>, calling *all* who receive such richness to become 'themselves Christ's gifts to the Church.'<sup>26</sup> Hence, leaders' primary vocation is not to be 'a substitute for the church' but 'to make the whole church ready ... for 'the work of ministry' ... for service to God's cause in the world'<sup>27</sup>, each member having genuine agency whilst actively serving a common purpose. Moreover, the body's advance exceeds numerical increase but displays the new humanity's vocation to 'grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ' (4:15).

That immeasurably enhanced existence becomes possible only through Christ's saving work. Thus solely 'by the mercies of God' can believers 'present [their] bodies as a living

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<sup>20</sup> Words from the celebrated twentieth-century Welsh poet D. Gwenallt Jones in his poem *Corff Crist* (the Body of Christ). Here he wonders at the 'the body transfigured in the grave to be a living catholic Body.' *Cerddi Gwenallt: y Casgliad Cyflawn*, golygydd Christine James (Llandysul: Gomer, 2001), 278. Hawlfraint ystad Gwenallt © Trwy ganiatâd caredig Gwasg Gomer.

<sup>21</sup> Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London: Routledge, 2000), 113.

<sup>22</sup> See Richard B. Hays *First Corinthians*, 210.

<sup>23</sup> Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> In various guises, the body assumes such prominence in 1 Corinthians that Paula Gooder styles the letter a 'fugue on the body' (Paula Gooder, *Body: Biblical spirituality for the whole person* (London: SPCK, 2016), 107).

<sup>25</sup> Allen Verhey and Joseph S. Harvard, *Ephesians*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 157-8.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1990), 241.

<sup>27</sup> Verhey and Harvard, 166.

sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [their] spiritual worship' (Rom. 12:1), offering 'a perpetual sacrifice of [themselves] to God' and becoming 'inwardly changed', thereby '[belonging] to the new reality' and '[existing] solely for God and his will.'<sup>28</sup> Paul exhorts the Romans to costly self-offering in the non-bloody 'temple' of loving mutuality, intentionally placing 'the whole person ... within the New Age, the Age of the Spirit'.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, such spiritual (*logikos*) worship is no ethereal sentiment for *logikos* suggests a rational, 'thought-through' offering, enabling the Church to resist being *conformed* to worldly, ever-changing trends but intellectually *transformed* towards that which is 'good, acceptable and perfect' (12:2). Presenting to God the living, holy, acceptable self-offering (12:1), each member is granted a fitting share of grace which enables distinctive ministries (12:5-8), the entire body being animated by sincere, mutual love, overcoming corrosive threats by blessing, rejoicing and goodness (12:14-21).

This community is delivered from past futility by the unblemished lamb's precious blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19) and marked for 'new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... into an inheritance...imperishable, undefiled, and unfading' (1:3). Thus, it constitutes 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people', called to witness to God's mighty saving acts (2:9-10). Christ alone is God's elect and honoured living stone who, in drawing near to us has made possible our approach to him. Thereby he makes us 'living stones' forming 'a spiritual house ... [offering] spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (2:4-5).

Uniquely human and divine, Christ is both temple (cf. John 2:19-21) and acceptable High Priest (Heb. 9:11-14). However, his matchless identity confers a special derivative status upon believers:

the church is the temple of God only because Christ is originally the temple; the church is a priesthood because Christ is the original priest; the church offers acceptable sacrifices because Christ himself is the original sacrifice.<sup>30</sup>

So, in him, his earthly body fulfils the calling of the liberated Exodus people to become 'a kingdom of priests and a holy people' (Ex. 19:4-6), forming 'a community of holy persons, enjoying ... direct access to God ... [participating] in the historic covenant between God and Israel at Sinai ... the election and holiness of God's eschatological people.'<sup>31</sup> Just as Christ offered *himself* as both priest and victim (rather than offering another) so 'this corporate priesthood and temple offers its holy, cruciform life as a godly people in the midst of the nations, and for their sake.'<sup>32</sup> As Christ's body, the Church lives through the same dynamic of generous love, having the same mind as him whose cross-sealed self-emptying reveals the trinitarian life (Phil. 2:5-11).

Becoming 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (1 Pet. 2:9) happens not through 'elective affinity or biological continuity' but constitutes 'the 'new thing' (Isa. 43:19) that God brings about and treasures ... rooted solely in God's creative decision and power of new life ... [testifying] by its very being to this God.'<sup>33</sup> As graced recipient of God's salvific action the Church reveals the entire redemptive event, 'recapitulating the life of the kingly, priestly Messiah' and announcing God's radically inclusive

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<sup>28</sup> John Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London: SCM, 1989), 290.

<sup>29</sup> Ziesler, 293.

<sup>30</sup> Harink, 68.

<sup>31</sup> John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: a new translation with introduction and commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 419-20.

<sup>32</sup> Harink, 69..

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 71

favour for humankind (cf. Eph. 2:11-22; 3:4; 3:9-10).<sup>34</sup> 'Called...out of darkness into [God's] marvellous light' (1 Pet. 2:9), it echoes heaven's worshipful adoration of the crucified, exalted lamb, transcending former allegiances – national, political, cultural and social – as it manifests the new creation's distinctive way-of-being (cf. Rev. 5:9-10).<sup>35</sup>

## Baptism, Eucharist and Priesthood: the Church Re-present-ed

Set between Christ's first coming and his second, his earthly body grows in maturity, awaiting its own entry into the kingdom. In this intermediate space, the sacraments signify our journey into Christ's fullness (John 10:10), sustaining, nurturing and shaping us by God's unmerited gift. Yet they also mark *humanity's* responsive offering to God. In baptism we yield ourselves gladly to God, thankfully consenting to be Christ's priestly body and agents for the world's transformation. Therefore, in this section I examine how baptism and Eucharist mark and mediate this new identity and explore the ordained priest's role in enabling the Church to become truly Christ's body for, in and beyond the world.

Through his sinless Son, God entered humanity's disorder, transforming it through Christ's saving death and resurrection. United with him, we discover that 'to be baptized is to recover the humanity that God first intended.'<sup>36</sup> Whilst remaining in this untransfigured world, believers hope that in us – and possibly even *through* us – God's life-giving Spirit might fashion the new creation (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14). Knowing God as the unfathomable wellspring and purpose of our being is, moreover, to acknowledge *ourselves* as mysteries. Having accepted Christ's work of redemption, we yearn for the 'yet more' of his kingdom, where human-divine intimacy will be perfected. Baptism speaks of that journey towards our true end in God.<sup>37</sup>

Sanctified through Christ's sacrificial bodily offering (Hebrews 10:10), believers' own bodies are '[temples] of the Holy Spirit' and thus 'not [their] own' (1 Cor. 6:19). Moreover, being 'brought from death to life' they tender not the redundant, ineffective sacrifices of old but rather present their very selves, in union with Christ whose sacrifice is uniquely perfect and complete (Rom. 6:13; 12:1; cf. Psalm 40:6; Heb. 10:5). The bodily act of baptism represents our delivery from slavery to sin and death whilst reorienting us towards the promised land of Christ's self-giving love and 'self-receiving' Easter life. It sets us 'in the middle of the heart of God, the ecstatic joy of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and in the middle of a world of threat, suffering, sin and pain.'<sup>38</sup>

Those anointed with chrism pray to receive rich, divine grace to be 'daily ... conformed to [the] image' of Christ, the 'anointed priest, prophet and king'<sup>39</sup>, thereby receiving a gracious share in his unique threefold office.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, baptism marks our being 'clothed with Christ and raised to new life in him' (cf. Gal. 3:27), being granted his light to radiate in the world, a light which comforts, illuminates, guides, searches and judges. Baptism marks our entry into the universal Church – holy, catholic and apostolic – as individuals become *members of Christ* – incarnate, crucified, risen and glorified – and *of one another* – both the visible, earthly community and the unseen, heavenly communion of saints. We become 'caught up in a great economy of giving and exchange', of profound solidarity that proclaims that our individual lives become complete only through 'inhabiting' the lives of

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 72

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-74.

<sup>36</sup> Rowan Williams, *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer* (London: SPCK, 2004), 3.

<sup>37</sup> Graham Ward, *Christ and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 36.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>39</sup> *Services for Christian Initiation*, 33.

<sup>40</sup> See Williams, 12-16.

others, an existence of joyous, sometimes uneasy, often costly, mingling, 'implicated' in one another ... our lives ... interwoven.'<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the Church should never degenerate into some cosy, self-enclosed clique; the cascade of divine freshness forever overflows to reorient and renew. Baptism's once-and-for-all yet ever-deepening transition is renewed at each eucharistic celebration as the Church is offered anew to the Father, reshaped according to Christ's Easter mystery and re-energised by the creative, sanctifying Spirit. God's eternal purpose to re-establish communion creates an extraordinarily hospitable, generous space at the table where beloved sinners feast extravagantly on Christ and he teaches us that godly aspiration means not self-promotion but self-giving. Living well means being-towards-the-other, being-for-the-other, being-in-the-other, being-on-behalf-of-the-other.

At each Eucharist, the Church thankfully celebrates Christ's gracious, self-giving love which constitutes and sustains God's joyful pilgrim people. Nevertheless, this entails more than simply *receiving* Christ but also '[offering] ourselves to [the Father] as a living sacrifice'<sup>42</sup> (cf. Rom. 12:1). Regardless of whether we subscribe to well-established (but sometimes contentious) theologies of eucharistic sacrifice, Paul's use of cultic terminology to explain the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 10) suggests that the sacrament involves more than some lifeless memorial of Christ's death but rather invites humankind's participation and incorporation into that dynamic of life-giving divine love.

The Eucharist's ultimate purpose is to sustain us on our Godward journey, to fulfil our eternal indwelling in God, 'that we may evermore dwell in him and he in us'<sup>43</sup> (cf. John 6:56; 14:20; 15:4; 17:21-23). Every Eucharist enacts change, not solely of inanimate bread and wine but also of receptive worshippers, desirously anticipating creation's end in glorious communion. So eucharistic prayers invoke the Holy Spirit to transform both bread and wine and worshippers as they, too, are offered to the Father as a living sacrifice. The power of Calvary's unique sacrifice endures through Christ's heavenly intercession and, by graced participation, in the Church's own priestly self-offering. God has no need of sacrifice; nevertheless, we do so that Christ's once-for-all sacrifice may transform *us*, leading us to imitate him through giving ourselves away to the Father and to others so that love may abound and deeper communion be established (cf. Phil. 2:5-11).

Together, baptism and Eucharist construct mighty bridges between Christ's incarnate body and his ecclesial and sacramental bodies (1 Cor. 10:17; 1 Cor. 12:13). Moreover, within the eucharistic liturgy – in greeting, confession, adoration, proclamation, affirmation, petition and peace-making – those bonds are restored, celebrated and deepened, leading to its fullest expression in holy communion. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) emphasised that Christ's sacrificed body – historically and sacramentally speaking – matters crucially for those incorporated into his ecclesial body.<sup>44</sup> Inseparably united with its sinless head to form 'the whole Christ' (*totus Christus*), the Church is transformed into his likeness and made holy (cf. Lev. 19:2; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18). Thus, the Church becomes more truly Christ's ecclesial body through receiving his sacramental body and learns to become sacrificial in imitating his self-emptying love. Preaching to the newly baptized, Augustine declares:

if you are the body and members of Christ, it is your mystery which is placed on the Lord's table; it is your mystery that you receive. It is to that which you are that you

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<sup>41</sup> Williams, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Post-Communion Prayer from *An Order for the Holy Eucharist* (Cardiff: Church in Wales Publications, 2004)

<sup>43</sup> From Cranmer's famous 'Prayer of Humble Access'.

<sup>44</sup> Sermon 294.10, in Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P., ed. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A. (New York: New City Press, 1990-95), 10 volumes, volume III/8, 80

answer, 'Amen', and by that response you make that assent. You hear the words, 'the body of Christ'; you answer, 'Amen.' Be a member of Christ, so that the 'Amen' may be true.<sup>45</sup>

United through partaking of one eucharistic bread (1 Cor. 10:17) Augustine exhorts the Church which receives Christ's eucharistic body to become more truly his ecclesial body: 'be what you see; receive what you are.'<sup>46</sup> As Christ's sacrifice involves the utmost self-giving, so the Eucharist memorialises sacramentally that definitive offering<sup>47</sup>, with Christ as both priest and victim.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the ecclesial Body of Christ is offered in union with Christ, its head, for 'in the sacrament of the altar... she herself is offered in the very offering she makes to God'<sup>49</sup>, learning thereby to *become* sacrifice through him who is both offerer and offering.<sup>50</sup> As Jesus, our priestly head, has entered heaven he will likewise exalt his priestly members<sup>51</sup>, for the unifying eucharistic food renders them 'immortal and incorruptible ... the very society of saints'<sup>52</sup> (cf. John 6:54-58).

### Conclusion: the Church re-present-ed

Hence, at the Eucharist, Christ's unique, all-sufficient, historical self-offering is not represented through lifeless memorialism – some 'visual aid' illustrating a closed event confined within antiquity – but it remains a *living* offering as the baptized body is offered anew in the Spirit's power to the Father through him. So the Church is re-presented at the altar to become more fully the living ecclesial body and finds itself *re-present-ed*, that is, gifted again with everything necessary. Moreover, as Christ becomes present (in both senses) the baptized community becomes 'present' to its truest, fullest self through presenting itself to the Father and the 'presents' it receives. That, in turn, empowers the Church's mission, in representing Christ in, to and for the world that it may be gradually enfolded into God's purposes for the new creation.

The ecclesial body's eucharistic coming-to-be enables the Church to grow in maturity, towards the fullness of Christ (Col. 2:9-10). Nevertheless, that corporate emphasis does not diminish the ministry of the ordained priest but rather enhances it. Indeed, as the one who presides over the eucharistic assembly the priest prepares, at each celebration, the *human* gifts who have gathered to thank, praise, confess, listen, pray and offer themselves, through declaring God's absolving mercy, by interpreting Christ's life-giving gospel and by presenting God's baptized people at the altar, alongside bread and wine for the Spirit's transformation:

Made one with [Christ],  
we offer you these gifts and *with them ourselves*,  
a *single, holy, living sacrifice*...  
...that, overshadowed by [the Spirit's] life-giving power,  
they may be the body and blood of your Son,

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<sup>45</sup> Sermon 272 in Hill, *op.cit.*, volume III/7, 300.

<sup>46</sup> Sermon 272, in Hill, *op.cit.*, volume III/7, 301.

<sup>47</sup> *Contra Faustum* 20.21. See Augustine of Hippo, *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, trans., Roland J. Teske (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2007). See, further, William R. Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (Collegeville: Pueblo, 1989), 95.

<sup>48</sup> *Contra Faustum* 20.21.

<sup>49</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, 10.6. See Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 380.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Sermon 351.7, in Hill, *op.cit.*, volume III/10, 126.

<sup>52</sup> *In Johannis* 26.17 (*Tractates on the Gospel of John, 11-27*, trans. John W. Rettig (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 274).

*and we may be kindled with the fire of your love  
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.*<sup>53</sup>

As *The Church in Wales Review* notes, the Church's fundamental vocation is to *koinonia*, to share in the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a supremely graced participation in the bounteous Life which is the source of our life and our final end, a Life which *is*, in its very essence, perfect giving-and-receiving, being-in-the-other, being-for-the-other. Most fundamentally, to desire communion is to recognise that God *is* love, a love revealed in the sending of the eternal Son and perfected in his atoning sacrifice, a divine love which precedes all human love and yet motivates and empowers us to imitate that love in the quality of our transformed relationships, one with another (1 Jn. 4:7-12). So, when we offer ourselves – be that in baptism and the Eucharist, in marriage, ordination or indeed as we approach death – our offering is held within the rich, wholehearted, abiding offering of God in Christ. To be ordained priest involves calling God's people into that deeper life, to consecrate them to the Father through offering them eucharistically within Christ's ever-prior self-offering that through the Spirit they may fulfil their baptismal identity and so be blessed to be a blessing to the world.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The Church in Wales, *Holy Eucharist 2004*, Eucharistic Prayer 5; italics added for emphasis.

<sup>54</sup> See Graham Tomlin, *The Widening Circle: Priesthood as God's way of blessing the world* (London: SPCK, 2014) for an exploration of the 'concentric circles' of blessing bestowed upon creation by the ordained priest, the Church and the human race.

# Proclaiming a Strange New World: Priests as Preachers and Teachers

*The Revd Dr Jordan Hillebert & The Revd Canon Dr Mark Clavier*

**Abstract:** Drawing on the theology of Karl Barth and Augustine of Hippo, this essay examines the role that priests play in proclamation and teaching within the church. According to Barth, proclamation fundamentally involves announcing a strange new world revealed in Scripture wherein God lives, acts and speaks and humanity responds. Because that world is foreign to the world of humankind, however, we must announce it persuasively. This is done, according to Augustine by teaching, delighting, and persuading. Part of the vocation of clergy is to work alongside the laity in fostering 'rhetorical communities' that appeal to both hearts and minds so that men and women will be attracted, inspired, and convinced to inhabit the strange new world of God.

In the essays so far, the ordained ministry has been examined in its breadth and in its depth. Here we turn our attention to how the priesthood fits into the wider picture of proclamation. Within the Catholic tradition, there has been a tendency to fixate perhaps too narrowly on the sacramental and pastoral character of the ministry and to forget that behind these lies the commission to 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you' (Matt. 28.19-20).

Thus, preaching, teaching and proclamation are central to the Church's understanding of ordained ministry. The Ordinal (1662), for example, includes the charge:

see that you never cease your labour, your care and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life.

In the Early Church, the teaching of 'divine wisdom' lay at the heart of its understanding of evangelism, formation, and even pastoral care. We see this as early as 1 Corinthians 1.18-2.16 in which God's wisdom is opposed to the foolishness of worldly knowledge. Later, Irenaeus of Lyons and Cyprian of Carthage argued that bishops are responsible for teaching the apostolic faith to preserve the Church from heresy and disunity. Ambrose in his *On the Duties of Clergy* describes contemplating and teaching the divine wisdom contained in Scripture as the main duty of bishops.<sup>55</sup> But it is Augustine, especially in his *On Christian Teaching*, who stated most clearly that preaching is the highest calling in the church: his 'Christian orators'

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<sup>55</sup> Ambrose, *On the Duties of Clergy*

are tasked with ‘instructing, delighting, and moving’ the faithful to accept and delight in God’s wisdom for their own salvation.<sup>56</sup>

As best illustrated by the sermons contained in the Acts of the Apostles, however, the church’s proclamation refers to something more than teaching doctrine, promoting morality, or explaining difficult passages. In Acts, preachers almost always invite their audience into a new story: the narrative of God’s redemption culminating in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Stories appeal less to our rational faculty than to our imagination. So too, the Gospel story invites us to imagine the world differently, to see it from God’s perspective, to inhabit it as a *strange new world*.

In order to do this effectively, the Christian proclamation must involve three things: a deep familiarity with that new reality, an ability to describe it persuasively, and communities where people can experience it personally. The Apostles were convinced by the Gospel, preached it persuasively to those they gathered or encountered, and lived it through the ‘apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers’ (Acts 2.42). This remains our task today. It is the role of clergy both to participate in these activities of proclamation and to encourage the communities under their care to share in that work.

## God’s Reality

In his 1916 address at a village church in Leutwil, Switzerland, Karl Barth asks, ‘What is there within the Bible? What sort of house is it to which the Bible is the door? What sort of country is spread before our eyes when we throw the Bible open?’<sup>57</sup>

A few possible answers spring quickly to mind: In one sense we discover history — a vast collage of religious, literary, cultural, and human history of every sort. But the purpose of history is to seek after the immediate causes of events, to probe after the reasons that led people of the past to act in particular ways or that allowed a crisis to unfold. The Bible, however, testifies not to the natural/human causes of individual decisions and world events, but to a divine cause, to a God *beyond* history who nevertheless speaks and acts *within* history. So, the Bible isn’t ‘history’ in any straightforward way.

Perhaps then it is morality that we discover in the Bible, a collection of ethical teachings and moral exemplars. We certainly encounter women and men of considerable virtue in the pages of Scripture, though it must be said that we are just as likely to stumble across egregious acts of violence, arrogance, cowardice, and utter foolishness. Moreover, in the world of Scripture, it is often the women and men of ill repute (the swindlers, the prostitutes, the wasteful and ungrateful son) who find a place at God’s banquet, while the ‘impeccably elegant and righteous folk of good society’ find themselves perpetually at odds with the movement of God’s kingdom. No, Barth declares, in the end the Bible’s chief consideration ‘is not the doings of man but the doings of God — not the various ways in which we may take if we are men of good will, but the power out of which good will must first be created’.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* 4.12.27

<sup>57</sup> Karl Barth, ‘The Strange New World within the Bible,’ *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957), 28.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 39-40.

What about religion? Isn't the Bible's main concern what we should think about God and how we should conduct ourselves in his presence (the conjoined laws of belief and worship)? Again, Barth turns this familiar answer on its head:

It is not the right human thoughts about God which form the content of the Bible, but the right divine thoughts about men. The Bible tells us not how we should talk with God but what he says to us; not how we find the way to him, but how he has sought and found the way to us.<sup>59</sup>

While Barth's account of the Bible is no doubt prone to hyperbole and overstated dichotomies, one can scarcely shake the feeling that he has stumbled upon the key for unlocking the whole, the answer hidden in plain sight, the ideal vantage from which to survey the Bible's strange terrain. What is there within the Bible? Barth answers:

a new world, God, God's sovereignty, God's glory, God's incomprehensible love. Not the history of man but the history of God! Not the virtues of men but the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light! Not human standpoints but the standpoint of God!<sup>60</sup>

If Barth is correct, what we discover in Scripture is primarily a God who lives, acts and speaks. Thus, Scripture is less about *us* than about the God who created, redeemed, and sustains us, the God whom we could not know apart from his self-revelation in Scripture.

Barth's assertion then presses on us a fundamental question about the proclamation: to what extent does Christian preaching bear witness to this mysterious other? How often do we explore this strange new world from the pulpit and in our teaching? To put the question more bluntly: How much does our preaching actually evoke a God who says or does anything?

This is no easy question to answer because there are a number of pressures conspiring against articulating this strange new world confidently. A conglomerate of cultural and ecclesial assumptions prevents us from boldly proclaiming God's work in the world.

For starters, as citizens of a secular age, we inhabit what the philosopher Charles Taylor describes as an 'immanent frame,' a disenchanted universe where meaning is construed and/or constructed apart from divine revelation, and where the self is securely 'buffered' against all spiritual/supernatural forces.<sup>61</sup> Thus, out of a sense of discomfort or outright disbelief in the strangeness of the biblical witness, preachers often restrict their attention to what can easily be shown to be relevant to modern life. The Bible is treated as an essentially human artefact from which we might glean some helpful (among some not so helpful) examples about how people in the past understood themselves in relation to God. God in turn is reduced to a feeling (childlike wonder, gratitude, inner peace), or a principle (love, justice, compassion), or a call to action. The sermon becomes an occasion for motivational vignettes and social commentary rather than a place of encounter with the living God.

Without downplaying the seriousness of the incongruity between the world of the Bible and the closed universe of secular modernity, this pressure need not result in the kinds of paralysis that we so often encounter from the pulpit. The rise in spiritualism and popular forms of mysticism, for instance, attest to the persistent allure of transcendence, even in our secular age. However resistant some may still be to more institutionalized forms of religion, there is nevertheless a growing discomfort with exclusively 'natural' explanations of the world

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>61</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2007) 539-93.

and human existence and a greater longing for mystery. Christian preaching thus offers a necessary challenge to the overly restrictive worldview of secular modernity and a means of interpreting humanity's abiding sense of the transcendent in the light of the gospel.

None of this, of course, fully resolves the tension between modern disenchantment and the biblical drama of God's creative and redemptive work. The strange new world within the Bible is, after all, a *strange* new world. The aim of Christian preaching, however, is not to remove the scandal of scripture but rather to provide an occasion for that scandal to surprise, challenge and ultimately transform us. As St. Paul reminds us, the message of the cross — the supreme manifestation of God's active involvement with his creation — is 'foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God' (1 Cor. 1:18). The proclamation of the 'foolishness of God' (1:25), particularly within the context of the Church's liturgical and sacramental ministry, is a means of re-enchanting the world, of making the world transparent to the saving presence of God.

Coupled with the pressures applied to preaching by a secular age is a general impatience among many preachers to get to the practical application of the biblical text. This is in some respects a direct offshoot of the 'immanentism' mentioned above. Without some sort of appeal to transcendence, the practical demands of the 'here and now' become the primary/exclusive homiletical concern.

Even for those preachers happily inhabiting a more enchanted universe, it is tempting to understand the primary purpose of preaching as engendering certain behaviours and dispositions. The sermon is geared toward encouraging private devotional practices, or eliminating particular vices, or inspiring a commitment to social activism. This kind of preaching can all too easily lend itself to either an anxious legalism or a deistic self-reliance. God is either a hard-won reward for good morals or an absentee creator leaving his creatures to sort out their own affairs. Either way, the activity of God is subordinated to the activity of human beings.

Calls to action and personal transformation are certainly vital components of all Christian proclamation. The Christian faith is a call to discipleship, to conformity to the likeness of Christ, and thus to active participation in his ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:11-21). But sprinting directly to application means circumventing the very grounds for Christian action. For the Christian, who we are and what we do flow out of who God is and what God has done, is doing, and has promised. Christian faithfulness is a *response* to the faithfulness of God. We address God in prayer because God has addressed us in his Word. We forgive others because God in his mercy has forgiven us. We sacrifice ourselves for the good of another because 'the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45). In order to navigate our world aright we must therefore learn to attend closely to the strange new world of God.

This attending to the strange new world of scripture naturally involves attention to the particular texts under investigation — employing the exegetical skills necessary to determine what an individual passage means, what the author(s) hoped to accomplish/communicate through these words, how the original context informs our interpretation, etc. But it also means locating an individual text/passage in relation to the broader narrative, the larger story of God's creative and redemptive purposes. It means treating the various books of the bible, not as isolated literary units, but as inspired witnesses to one great story of salvation culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ

(cf. Luke 24:27). And finally, it means learning to see ourselves, not as spectators, but as characters within that story. Preaching is thus a means of inspiring, equipping, and ultimately persuading others to inhabit the strange new world of the Bible.

### Persuasively Proclaiming God's Strange New World:

An effective proclamation of the strange new world of the Gospel requires both attending to that world seriously and communicating it persuasively. The two activities are closely bound together since preachers must be deeply familiar with the Gospel in order to convey it confidently and inspirationally, and generally preachers can only achieve such familiarity if they have first been totally persuaded by it themselves. Preachers are not unlike ambassadors trying to inspire people to emigrate to their home country in that their words will usually appeal to people's imagination in order to persuade them to move. For that to happen most effectively, people must have an opportunity to inhabit the strange new world—see it for themselves and speak with the people who dwell there. This speaks to the need for church communities to be as they preach: to show within their life together that they are 'citizens of heaven' and members of a different commonwealth (Eph. 2.12-22). How can this be done?

In his *On Christian Teaching*, Augustine of Hippo argues that teaching must be conducted with wisdom and delight:

Eloquent speakers give pleasure, wise ones salvation...We often have to take bitter medicines, and we must always avoid sweet things that are dangerous: but what better than sweet things that give health, or medicines that are sweet? The more we are attracted by sweetness, the easier it is for medicine to do its healing work. So there are men of the church who have interpreted God's eloquent utterances not only with wisdom but with eloquence as well. (*On Christian Teaching*, 4.5.8)

If, as Barth argues, this divine wisdom is the brave new world in which we can know and experience God's life and activity in the world, then delight is the eloquence employed to convey that world to people's imagination. Persuading people to enter into the Gospel—as scandalous as that may initially seem to them—and exciting their affections after they have arrived are necessary parts of proclamation if they are to remain in and grow into God's reality. Divine wisdom appeals both to minds and hearts.

Such wisdom is found in Scripture and the tradition that has grown from and expresses it. From the biblical narrative springs our social imaginary—the way in which we picture our world that's conveyed through imagery, practices, and the words we share, especially in worship. These stories invite us not just to consider biblical teaching but more fundamentally to inhabit their world. This divine wisdom builds up people together in the love of God, our neighbours, and creation. In this sense, a central part of proclamation today is a process of inculturation—preparing people to be at home within God's strange new world. From this perspective, one can see how the whole culture of Christianity—found in hymnody, art, devotionals, sermons, liturgies, teaching, fellowship, feasts and fasts, and the sacraments—share in the work of proclamation. Together these cultural acts and artefacts shape how people think of themselves and their world.

But this has to be done persuasively. The appeal of Christian proclamation is to both hearts and minds. Speaking persuasively is the art of rhetoric. Churches are, therefore,

rhetorical communities or places where God's reality is proclaimed and practiced in such a way as to engage the hearts of those who encounter it. To participate in God's mission meaningfully, churches must seek by their communal life to persuade people to desire and pursue the love of God. God's wisdom and eloquence are properly encountered within that community through Scripture, worship, prayer, teaching, fellowship, and service. Through all these activities, the church promotes a reality expressed through the love of God, neighbour, and creation.

In order to accomplish this rhetorical mission, however, churches require a rhetorical ministry: those formed and commissioned to proclaim God's wisdom eloquently. These 'Christian orators' (to use Augustine's term) seek through their ministry to root Christians in God's wisdom and delight and to announce the Kingdom to those still alienated from God's reality. This rhetorical mission lies at the heart of the ordained ministry, which is tasked with working collaboratively with others in teaching, delighting, and persuading people to discover amongst God's own people a new and enriching reality in which God can be discerned to live and act for and in his world.

A rhetorical ministry, therefore, involves ministries of teaching and delight. The ministry of teaching consists of the formation of Christians into the stories, practices, beliefs, and habits of God's strange, new world. Unless Christians are rooted in God's reality found in Scripture, they cannot be expected to undertake their discipleship in any meaningful way. To fail in this primary task is to fail the mission of God before we have even left the gates. Failure to inhabit Scripture leads Christians to be aliens to their own commonwealth, ignorant of the very wellsprings of the salvation they have been promised in their baptisms. Such teaching however should not be restricted to pulpits and classrooms but rather should characterize every aspect of a church's life. Teaching is less about passing on information than about rooting the hearts, minds, and bodies of Christians into the imaginary, habits, and practices of the Gospel.

This ministry of teaching can only succeed, however, if it is conducted with affection. We are persuaded more through our hearts and affections than by argument. The ministry of teaching is, therefore, also a ministry of delight, since without the latter people will likely not give their attention to or be persuaded by the truths being communicated. Thus, part of the Christian proclamation is seeking ways to stir people's affections and their sense of joy. The ministry of delight takes on additional urgency in our own age, in which manufactured and marketed delights constantly seek to convey the priorities of consumer culture. Contrary to the delights of the world, the delight conveyed by our rhetorical ministry will resist exploiting creation and exalting the self but rather draw people towards glorifying God, celebrating his creation, and living well with our neighbours. God's reality is one in which all creation flourishes.

It should hardly need saying that the ministries of teaching and delight must also be ministries of prayer. Augustine argues that a Christian orator, should be in no doubt that any ability he has and however much he has derives more from his devotion to prayer than his dedication to oratory; and so, by praying for himself and for those he is about to address, he must become a man of prayer before becoming a man of words.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* 4.15.52.

In other words, proclaiming God's strange new world is a form of prayer. By instructing, delighting, and persuading, those called to be Christian orators offer themselves and their vocation to God in humility. This reminds us that the work of proclamation can only be conducted successfully by grace—those who proclaim God's wisdom and delight are never more than conduits of God's own eloquent wisdom. God is always the one who is active; we simply respond by grace to that activity. Through active prayer—not least in reciting the Daily Offices and celebrating the Eucharist—Christian orators stand open to the grace that conveys God's wisdom and delight for the benefit of others. In the end, Christian proclamation is not a human task of building a better society but the prayerful reception of God's own eloquent wisdom for announcing God's Kingdom.

### Inhabiting God's Reality

One of the telling inclusions within the New Testament epistolary literature are the teachings about households and the responsibilities within them of their members. While these strike us now as patriarchal and overly hierarchical, they demonstrate the Early Church's belief that God's reality reshapes all aspects of human togetherness. Nothing was more central or important to Greco-Roman society than the *oikos* or family. To insist that the Christian faith reshaped even that social unit was to proclaim clearly that God's reality changes everything. For this, Christians were accused of turning the world upside-down.

Similarly, a great deal of the Pauline and Catholic epistles are devoted to describing and arguing about the nature of church community. Paul was particularly exercised by false distinctions and practices that interrupted the unity (*koinonia*) of Christ's Body and prevented the Church from living out the new reality it received through Christ's death and resurrection. In effect, the New Testament epistles sought to promote the social consequences of Christ's saving actions, to demonstrate how Christians should live in corporate fellowship that expresses God's peace. By so doing, they revealed God's strange new reality to the wider world.

What the New Testament demonstrates is that God's strange new world must not only be proclaimed but also *inhabited*. As far as God's grace allows, that reality is to be encountered in visible communities marked by apostolic teaching, fellowship, the Eucharist and prayers where Christians dwell together with 'glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people' (Acts 2.46). Repeatedly in the New Testament, the earliest Christian communities are described as or are encouraged to be places where people *belong* and are rooted in the abiding joy of God's love. Implicit is the assumption that only through the experience of such joy can Christians be built up into God's reality and patiently endure the persecution of a hostile world. In essence, God's reality is revealed when Christians live by and out of that reality and can be seen to live as Paul encourages in Ephesians 5: 'filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

In this way, the church is called to be in the midst of the world, proclaiming the Gospel through eloquent teaching and visibly striving to live out God's strange new world. The church is characterized by God's reality, by its very existence demonstrating to the world an

alternative manner of living. This is what the theologians Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon mean when they say:

The world needs the church because, without the church, the world does not know who it is. The only way for the world to know that it is being redeemed is for the church to point to the Redeemer by being a redeemed people. The way for the world to know that it needs redeeming, that it is broken and fallen, is for the church to enable the world to strike hard against something which is an alternative to what the world offers.<sup>63</sup>

The rhetoric of the fallen world strives to shape our desires and delights so that we're disposed to embrace it rather than God. The church requires its own eloquence to announce the wisdom of God in ways that will grab people's attention and make them receptive to his salvific truth.

In other words, when people walk through the doors of our churches or come into contact with the work of our ministry areas, they should experience in our very life a reality unlike anything they've known elsewhere. Expressed through wisdom and delight, these experiences of Christian ministry should root them in a life that trains their desires and strengthens them amidst the trials and temptations of everyday life. By hearing and studying Scripture, engaging in prayer and worship, and receiving the sacraments, but also by participating in the fellowship of the church with praise and thanksgiving, God's reality is proclaimed. And churches will know they are proclaiming that reality because the love engendered will not only magnify God and serve neighbours but also be in harmony with creation.

But, finally, this strange, new world that we proclaim does not therefore create a stark demarcation between us and the world. This has always been a central conviction of the Anglican tradition, exemplified by the parochial system. In rejecting the gathered communities of more radical forms of Protestantism, Anglicans held tightly to the idea that God's strange, new world isn't found apart from society—as though it can be created in some new Eden, unspoilt, untarnished, and pristine—but is always found in the very midst of *our* world. Proclamation is, therefore, not from a distance, spoken to those who may listen from across a protective wall or moat.

Paradoxically, the proclamation of God's strange, new world takes the church ever deeper into the wider world and so identifies in love with others that the line between us and them vanishes. Like the father rushing out to greet his prodigal son before he has even returned home or repented of his betrayal, the church goes out in mission to the world to embrace it with love. By loving our neighbours as ourselves, we refuse to retreat from all that we find objectionable or to treat any person or people as foreigners or enemies. Thus, God's strange, new world has been found most powerfully and visibly in the slums of Victorian Britain, the brutality of Southern plantations, the squalor of poor South Asian communities, and the poverty of Latin American ghettos. Crucially, Christians have proclaimed God persuasively in such places because it was precisely there that God's life and activity shone most brightly as it once did on a hill outside the walls of Jerusalem.

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<sup>63</sup> William H. Willimon and Stanley Hauerwas, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Abingdon Press, 1989), 94.

# Reformed, Catholic and Neighbourly: The Anglican Reception of the Pastoral Tradition

*The Revd Canon Dr Mark Clavier*

**Abstract:** *This essay has two seemingly contradictory goals: 1) to demonstrate how the fundamentals of pastoral care – healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling – transcend various pastoral structures, while also 2) describing a particular Anglican approach to pastoral care that is Reformed, Catholic, and neighbourly. By examining how Anglicanism has engaged with the classical tradition of the cure of souls in a way that is rooted in the theology of the Early Church oriented towards Protestant goals and embedded within local communities, it proposes a renewal of pastoral ministry in Wales that retains the fundamentals of pastoral care and fellowship through collaborative ministry across Ministry Areas.*

In 1616-17, James I directed Cambridge and Oxford to ensure that those training for the ordained ministry should be ‘excited to bestow their time in the Fathers and Councils, Schoolmen, Histories and Controversies, and not to insist too long upon Compendiums and Abbreviators, making them grounds of their Study of Divinity’.<sup>64</sup> This directive, renewed in 1622, expressed royal approval for greater engagement with the Primitive Church, generally defined as, ‘the 3 general Creeds, the 4 first general Councils, and all the ancient fathers that wrote in the first 400 years’.<sup>65</sup> Teaching Patristics became such a notable feature of English universities that it was known (and dismissed by some Scots Presbyterians) as the ‘English method of study.’ But such was the success of this programme that Bishop Joseph Hall could proclaim, ‘*Stupor mundi Clerus Britannus*, ‘the British clergy is the amazement of the world.’ So many learned divines, so many eloquent preachers could not today be found in any other part of the world.’<sup>66</sup>

This renewed engagement with the Church Fathers profoundly shaped the development of an Anglican understanding of the ministry. Effectively, this understanding emerged from a continued commitment to the medieval parochial system, only now reformed on the basis of Protestant commitments as read through the lens of the Early Church Fathers. The result was a ministry:

- rooted within a parochial system;
- Catholic in its comprehension and structure;
- yet Reformed in its ministry, theology, and emphasis on catechesis.

Despite the tensions this created for the pastoral ministry, in general terms the Anglican ministry remained well within the long tradition of pastoral care. Its aim was the cure of souls: whether preaching, teaching, administering the sacraments, visiting the sick, reconciling sinners, caring for the poor, or promoting the stability of the social order, all was directed

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<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Jean-Louis Quantin, ‘Perceptions of Christian Antiquity’ in Anthony Milton (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, v. 1 (OUP, 2017), 290.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (OUP, 2009), 114.

towards ‘reducing [people] to the Obedience of God.’<sup>67</sup> Out of this tangle of seemingly contradictory impulses arose an Anglican ministry that was deeply embedded in local communities and places—what the theologian Ben Quash calls a ‘polity of presence.’<sup>68</sup>

## The Early Development of the Christian Ministry

We begin with a general overview of the pastoral ministry from the Early Church through to the present. How did the Church understand its own mission and ministry? Until relatively recently, it was typically referred to as the ‘cure of souls’, which in almost all cases meant simply the care of people as a means of assisting their journey of salvation.

In their *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*, William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle helpfully define the classical ‘cure of souls’ as consisting of ‘helping acts, done by *representative Christian persons*, directed toward the *healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling* of *troubled persons* whose troubles arise *in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns*.’<sup>69</sup> They further define each aspect of this statement accordingly:

- *Representative Christian persons*: those commissioned to ‘bring to bear upon human troubles the resources, wisdom, and the authority of Christian faith and life.’
- *Troubled persons*: anyone who needs the help and support of the Church’s pastoral care: ‘Pastoral care begins when individuals recognize or feels that their troubles are insolvable in the context of their own private resources, and when they become willing, however subconsciously, to carry their hurts and confusion to a person who represents to them, however vaguely, the resources and wisdom and authority of religion.’<sup>70</sup>
- *Ultimate meanings and concerns*: the aim of pastoral ministry is salvation, so that the care of troubled persons, although concerned with the relief of suffering, is normally directed towards assisting their journey to heaven.

These pastoral functions developed early in the tradition of the Church and remained largely secure thereafter, even while developing in new and creative ways. The cure of souls can, in turn, be broken down into four functions: *healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling*. The ministry of:

- *Healing* ‘aims to overcome some impairment by restoring people to wholeness and by leading them to advance beyond their previous condition.’<sup>71</sup> The Christian ministry of healing, however performed, seeks to be transformative. Traditionally, this ministry has been conducted through intercessory prayer, the anointing of the sick with blessed oils, the cult of the saints, charismatic healing, exorcism, and/or sacramental rites (especially the Eucharist).
- *Sustaining* seeks to help Christians maintain their faith in the face of not only a hostile world or personal loss and grief. Generally speaking, this ministry consists of a four-

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<sup>67</sup> George Herbert, *The Country Parson*, ch. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Ben Quash, ‘The Anglican Church as a Polity of Presence’ in Duncan Dromor, Jack McDonald and Jeremy Caddick (eds.), *Anglicanism: The Answer to Modernity* (Continuum, 2003).

<sup>69</sup> Clebsch and Jaekle, 4 (their emphases).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

stage process: 1) the preservation of faith, 2) consolation during sorrow, 3) consolidation of faith in the aftermath of sorrow, and 3) discovering redemption through the sorrow.

- *Guiding* ‘arrives at some wisdom concerning what one ought to do when he or she is faced with a difficult problem of choosing between various courses of thought or action.’<sup>72</sup> This is primarily the work of edification, or building-up, and has been performed mainly through advice-giving, moral guidance, holy listening, and theological reflection on everyday decisions.
- *Reconciliation* helps ‘alienated persons to establish or renew proper and fruitful relationships with God and neighbour.’<sup>73</sup> Although often performed through the exercise of the other three functions, this ministry expresses itself in two ways:
  1. correction, admonition, and excommunication directed towards confession repentance and the amendment of life,
  2. and the pronouncement of forgiveness and the absolution of sins.

Along with worship and preaching, these four pastoral functions constituted the central activity of the Church’s ministry. They were the means for building up the Body of Christ and shepherding souls towards salvation.

Thomas Oden, in his *The Care of Souls in the Classical Tradition*, argues that late 20<sup>th</sup>-century pastoral care has abandoned the ‘classical tradition’ for a clinical model of care: in his mind replacing the Church Fathers with Freud and Jung. Oden contends that there is, in fact, a clear ‘classical tradition’ of pastoral care that developed ways of caring for people in order to further their journey towards heaven. In this, he reinforces Clebsch and Jaekle’s contention that, within the classical tradition, the ministry’s one overarching aim was the salvation of sinners. Pastoral care was the primary means for achieving this both socially and individually. Thus, the aim of the ministry when, for example, caring for the poor, widows, and orphans, or feeding the hungry, was to be a sign of God’s Kingdom in a fallen world and to enable those people to achieve salvation.

Finally, Andrew Purves draws on Clebsch and Jaekle and Oden (among others) in his *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* to illustrate how the tradition manifested itself in the pastoral theology of such people as Gregory Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Great, Martin Bucer, and Richard Baxter. He argues that pastoral work was ‘concerned always with the gospel of God’s redemption in and through Jesus Christ, no matter the problem that someone presented. Pastoral work by definition connected the gospel story—the truths and realities of God’s saving economy—with the actual lives and situations of people.’<sup>74</sup> It’s worth noting here that Purves, like the authors mentioned above, believes the classical tradition survived the Reformation and afterwards encompassed both Catholics and Protestants.

Implicit in all three books is that the ‘cure of souls’ has been exercised in a wide variety of historical, cultural, and social. The classical tradition of pastoral ministry is also an ecumenical one. But to understand how Anglicans received this tradition, one must take account of the development of the parochial system during the Middle Ages, which bequeathed Anglicanism with a *placed* approached to pastoral ministry.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 49-50.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>74</sup> Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 2-3.

## The Structure of the Pastoral Ministry

We know very little about the day-to-day practice of the pastoral ministry prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In general terms, it's believed that the earliest churches were largely familial and urban. In *The First Urban Christians*, Wayne Meeks emphasizes the importance of the household in the epistles and suggests that the Pauline churches were 'linked with what was commonly regarded as the basic unit of society': the *oikos* or family.<sup>75</sup> These ecclesial households were woven into the fabric of Greco-Roman society and included household slaves, servants, freedmen, and even clients. In this respect, the early forms of pastoral ministry may have profoundly challenged the basis for the whole structure of pagan Greco-Roman society.

By the time of Constantine, the church had become an overwhelmingly urban phenomenon. Not until the third and fourth centuries did the church begin to make in-roads among the provincial settlements of the Roman Empire. Even so, the overwhelming bulk of surviving pastoral literature was directed to urban churches or the rural households of the Roman elite. As far as we can tell, until the collapse of the western Roman Empire, the local structure of the church consisted primarily of urban basilicas, rural villas, and a fast-expanding network of monastic communities.

These various forms of local church, however, undertook an array of pastoral functions. As the writings of Ambrose and Augustine demonstrate, bishops and presbyters devoted their themselves to teaching, guiding, and even deliberating or advocating in courts. Major basilicas ran orphanages, often fed the poor on an almost industrial scale, catechised converts, and disciplined the wayward. In places where the imperial system was collapsing, basilicas and monasteries took on the additional work of ransoming captives, maintaining civil infrastructure, and sustaining the Roman education system. Much of this pastoral work made use of the traditional system of patronage, or complex networks of dependence and benevolence that tied Roman civic life together.

Christianity spread gradually into the countryside after the collapse of the Roman Empire and the subsequent decline of civic life. During the early medieval period, pastoral care was usually undertaken by clergy attached to episcopal households and by monks. In Bede's letter to Bishop Ecgbert, for example, he speaks of the need for the bishop to send clergy into the countryside to feed Christ's sheep:

And because your diocese is too extensive, for you alone to go through it, and preach the word of God in every village and hamlet...it is necessary that you appoint others to assist you in the holy work, by ordaining priests and nominating teachers who may be zealous in preaching the word of God in every village, and celebrating the holy mysteries, and especially by performing the sacred rites of baptism wherever opportunity may offer.<sup>76</sup>

These episcopal households doubled as semi-monastic communities and as schools—the origin of the Cathedral schools that in time would give rise to universities.

The erection of a network of parish churches across Europe required an enormous outlay of capital. Besides building parish churches, financial support was needed for training and provisioning parochial clergy on a massive scale. Such support, in fact, remained beyond the capacity of the medieval Church to meet. In many places, a local pastoral ministry originated in 'proprietary churches' that served as mausoleums for local nobility. These were generally served by clergy appointed by local nobility and supported by fees, gifts, and

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<sup>75</sup> Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 75.

<sup>76</sup> Bede, *Letter to Ecgbert*, 5.

occasionally tithes. 'Such private enterprise did, however, bring the Christian sacraments and a priest, however poorly trained, to the masses of western European peasants.'<sup>77</sup>

Attempts to reform the parochial ministry were a regular feature of the medieval Church. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) insisted that all cathedrals provide teachers for local clergy who would not serve the laity for regular confessions and weddings (introducing the requirement of banns). During the late 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries clerical manuals, such as John Mirk's *Instruction for Parish Priests*, were popular guides for a full range of clerical responsibilities. By the late Middle Ages, parishes had become complex local systems for instruction, pastoral care, administering sacraments, and worship.<sup>78</sup> Given the limitations of the medieval world, they accomplished their tasks remarkably effectively. It's worth noting, too, that while the medieval church was highly clericalized, it also supported an array of lay activities: guilds, confraternities, churchwardens (men and women), and a range of lay duties that included (among other things) beekeeping, management of alehouses, and the visitation of the sick.

## The English Reformation

By the sixteenth century, however, there was a growing demand for the wholesale reform of the pastoral system. On the conservative end, people like Erasmus and Thomas More sought to attack corruption and promote apostolic ideals while leaving the overall scope of the pastoral ministry and structure in place. At the other end of the spectrum, more radical Reformers sought to replace the parochial system with gathered communities of the godly. They also sought a radical transformation of clerical education along biblical lines, aided by the works of the great reformers such as Luther and Calvin.

The battle over the future of the ministry in England and Wales centred on both pastoral structure and the nature and education of the clergy. Effectively, arguments were over what shape the local church should take and what kind of clergy should serve them.

On two matters, however, both sides were agreed. First, that within this sinful world the overall aim of the Church's ministry is salvation. Each side may have disagreed over the means of that salvation, but both believed that people face diabolical forces, cannot save themselves, and, therefore, depend on Christ's righteousness for their redemption. Second, each side shared a worldview that was far more social and communal than our own. Their ambition was the maintenance of a 'godly commonwealth' so 'that we shall have all things well, and that the glory of God shall be spread abroad throughout all parts of the realm.'<sup>79</sup>

## The Emergence of an 'Anglican' Model

A distinctive 'Anglican' model emerged gradually through the political, doctrinal, and social debates of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A central concern of these debates was how a reformed Church of England should be structured in order to encompass all subjects of the Crown. The Anglican solution emerged almost accidentally through the preservation of the parochial system, the composition of the Ordinal, and the development of the 'English method of study.' We will look at each of these in turn.

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<sup>77</sup> Joseph Lynch, *The Medieval Church: A brief history*, 38-9.

<sup>78</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Voice of Morebath*

<sup>79</sup> Hugh Latimer, 'Sermon of the Plough'

### Parochial System

Except during the Interregnum, there were no serious attempts at dismantling the parochial system. The national and parochial Church of England governed by a monarch was deemed to approximate the Early Church after Constantine. Writing in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, for example, the theologian Henry Hammond could claim that the Church of England, 'has always retained that form of government that was established by the apostles...her members always submit to the authority of that government...she has retained the places of worship, the time of worship, the form of worship, and the discipline of the early church'.<sup>80</sup>

In this, the Anglican reformers stood against the trend in radical Protestantism towards detaching churches from local geography in order to structure them in conformity with biblical models and principles. This naturally required a radical break with the medieval past and overtly Catholic forms of ministry and governance. The ambition of radical reformers is exemplified by Parliament's attempt in 1587 at abolishing the Prayer Book and dismantling the parochial and episcopal structure of the Church. The Reformed charge against the Established Church was that its clergy were poorly trained and their congregations 'subject to the vice of good fellowship'.<sup>81</sup>

Not least through a successful resistance to such reforms, the parochial model of pastoral ministry came to characterize Anglicanism in a way that distinguished it from other Reformed Churches. Recent scholarship demonstrates how deeply integrated the parochial system was into the traditional social and cultural networks, which reinforced local hierarchies but also, in places like Wales, sustained regional identities. Armed with the Prayer Book, catechised by their clergy, retaining a wide array of traditional practices, and focused on the local church where their ancestors were buried, parishioners practiced a form of Christian 'neighbourliness'<sup>82</sup> that came to define Anglican pastoral care and ministry. According to Julia Merritt,

The parochial experience was shaped by the ways in which...potential divisions were negotiated by the minister, by the vestry, and ultimately by the individual parishioners. The English parish in this period [17<sup>th</sup> century] was the arena in which these variously balanced forces operated, and where implicit or explicit compromises were devised, negotiated, or rejected. It was not the receptacle of a simple 'parish Anglicanism'. Rather, what emerges...is the extraordinary tenacity with which the parish continued, despite all the revolutionary changes, to be central to the social identity and experience of early modern English men and women.<sup>83</sup>

Almost by accident, Church of England developed an approach to pastoral care and ministry that was *local* and *placed*. In that sense, it could justifiably claim continuity with Gregory the Great and the medieval parochial system, even if its claim on place and community conformed to Protestant ideals.

### The Ordinal

'It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy scripture, and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there hath been three orders of ministers in Christ's church, bishops, priests and deacons.' So, states the Edwardian Ordinal. Similarly, Article 36 established that,

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<sup>80</sup> Henry Hammond, *Of Schism*, 282-3.

<sup>81</sup> For an excellent overview of this, see Peter Marshall, 'Settlement Patterns: The Church of England, 1553-1603' in Anthony Milton (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, v. 1 (OUP, 2017).

<sup>82</sup> Marshall, 58.

<sup>83</sup> J.K. Merritt, 'Religion and the English Parish' in Anthony Milton (ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, v. 1 (OUP, 2017), 145-6. One should include Wales in this assessment too.

The Book of Consecration of Archbishops and Bishops and ordering of Priests and Deacons, lately set forth in the time of Edward the Sixth and confirmed at the same time by authority of Parliament, doth contain all things necessary to such consecration and ordering; neither hath it anything that of itself is superstitious or ungodly.

Both statements refer to one of the more heated debates of the early English Reformation: the nature and role of the ministry. Once more the Church of England committed itself to reforming medieval beliefs and practices while resisting more radical proposals. The result of this policy was a somewhat confused position on the ordained ministry. On the one hand, ordination was no longer considered a sacrament; on the other hand, it continued to include episcopal laying-on of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit.

Yet, in general, the Ordinal represents a conservative impulse to derive a theology of ministry from not only Scripture but also the practice of the Early Church. This policy explains some of the striking decisions made when composing and revising the Ordinal:

- Retention of the traditional ministry of deacons, priests and bishops;
- explicit reference to these as distinct *orders* of ministry; and
- rejection of the medieval practice of presenting the instruments of office.

These decisions represented a firm rejection, on the one hand, of Presbyterian models of ministry and, on the other, of late medieval teachings about the ministry, which had made the giving of various instruments (chalice, crozier, etc.) essential parts of valid ordinations and had insisted on only two orders of ministry: deacons and priests.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the Ordinal epitomizes attempts at paring away medieval accretions in order to restore the practices of the supposedly pristine Church of the first four General Councils.

The resulting Ordinal angered Presbyterians and Puritans as remaining too 'Popish.' John Knox inveighed against it: 'The whole order of their book appeareth rather to be devised for upholding of massing-priests than for any good instruction which the simple people can receive thereof.' Another Puritan decried it as being 'against the very form of ordination of the ministry presented in the Scriptures, and nothing else but a thing word for word taken out of the Pope's pontifical, wherein he showeth himself to be anti-Christ most lively.'<sup>85</sup> And Hooker mentions the objections Puritans had to the invocation of the Holy Spirit: 'A thing much stumbled at in the manner of giving orders is our using these memorable words of our Lord and Saviour Christ, 'Receive the Holy Ghost.' The Holy Ghost they say we cannot give, and therefore we 'foolishly' bid men receive it.' In response to these criticisms and the experience of the debates during the reign of Charles I, the Ordinal was deliberately amended to strengthen the sacramental language of the services.<sup>86</sup>

Like the Prayer Book with its rites (e.g., confirmation and holy matrimony), the Ordinal presents all the elements of a sacrament without ever explicitly referring to it as such. The reality within parishes, however, was far less Catholic than the ordination rite might suggest. First, the diaconate was largely eclipsed by the other two orders; typically, it was only transitional and only then for a required 24-hour period. More importantly, though, the general rejection of medieval clerical vesture and of the lesser sacraments effectively made Anglican clergy Protestant in their character, which was further accentuated by the infrequency of communion.

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<sup>84</sup> W. K. Lowther Clarke, *Liturgy and Worship: A Companion to the Prayer Books of the Anglican Communion*, 659-60.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 661.

<sup>86</sup> Clarke, 673-4.

At its best, however, the ministry was refocused on pastoral care and catechesis—Herbert’s *Country Parson*, for example, presents a parish priest devoted utterly to the spiritual, physical, and social welfare of his flock. The retention of an episcopally-ordained ministry and the parochial system produced (at least in the ideal) a uniquely Anglican approach to pastoral ministry that was local, ‘neighbourly’, and comprehending while at the same time hierarchical and adhering to Catholic ordering.

Although the Early Church had been a guiding light for the composition of the Ordinal, the ministry it produced could arguably have only been produced in England and Wales. That the vicar ministering to his parish community would become a quintessential characteristic of British society was by no means a foregone conclusion during the seventeenth century. A comparative reading of George Herbert, John Mirk, and even Chaucer’s *Parson* in the ‘Prologue’ to *Canterbury Tales* shows how successful it was in sustaining the long-established, *placed* character of pastoral ministry that straddled the Reformation divide.<sup>87</sup>

### ‘English Method of Study’

Prior to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Church reforms invariably sought to return the Church to a ‘golden age’—early monasticism sought to recreate apostolic fellowship, medieval reformers continually promoted the theology of Early Church, Luther and Calvin tried to revive the Primitive Church of the first century, more radical reformers wished to restore the church of the New Testament, and English reformers the Church of Chalcedon in AD 451. While these nostalgic returns invariably failed to produce a pure church, they initiated periods of renewed energy that would, in turn, become ‘golden’ moments to which later generations would seek to return.

While both Luther and Calvin sought support for their interpretation of Scripture from the writings of the Church Fathers, the appeal to the Early Church gradually became associated in the British Isles with the Church of England. Debates about church authority focused sharply on the status of the Church Fathers in relation to Scripture. What exactly was their authority in the Church? This wasn’t an easy question to answer: too much emphasis risked granting tradition authority apart from Scripture while too little left the whole structure and governance vulnerable to radical reformers.

Those reformers understood this well: they argued that the ‘English method of study’ bolstered episcopal government and permitted ‘Papist’ practices. In fact, royal decrees requiring the study of the Fathers were intended as a ‘safeguard against the subversive divinity that spread from the continent.’<sup>88</sup> Effectively, the Church of England adopted a position of ‘Scripture interpreted by the Primitive Church’,<sup>89</sup> and did this, in part, to protect episcopacy and traditional forms of parish ministry. Thus, while the Westminster Confession declared that the ‘Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture’ was to be the ‘Supreme Judge’ in all controversies, Henry Hammond spoke for the hierarchy of the Church when he insisted that ‘the Authority of the Canon of Scripture’ was ‘taken from the authentic testimony of the Christian Church of the first ages.’<sup>90</sup> Thus, as Jean-Luis Quantin observes, ‘Conformity to antiquity had become the distinctive mark of the episcopal Church of England.’<sup>91</sup> This effectively is what Anglicans meant by ‘tradition.’

The Anglican approach to ministry, therefore, might be said to have grown out of a strategy of restoring the Primitive Church in a 17<sup>th</sup>-century guise. Jean-Luis Quantin and Calvin

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<sup>87</sup> See Mark Clavier, *Rescuing the Church from Consumerism*, 102-3.

<sup>88</sup> Quantin, 290.

<sup>89</sup> William Laud, *A Conference with Fisher the Jesuit*, 336.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in Quantin, 295.

<sup>91</sup> Quantin, 296.

Lane argue that this even influenced how the break with Rome was later understood, downplaying radical departures with the past while highlighting areas of continuity. In practical terms, this meant that the classical tradition of pastoral care, as articulated by Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory and others, became integral to the 'ecclesiastical polity' of England and Wales. The pastoral work of clergy and laity within parishes served to further the salvation of individuals and to build up and preserve a Christian commonwealth governed by a Christian monarch through his or her bishops. Anglican theologians of the period genuinely believed that this model conformed to the Early Church and even to the British churches prior to the Norman Conquest. This finally represented a kind of retrospective *via media* between the more radical vision of Non-conformists and the perceived corruptions of the medieval papacy.

## Epilogue: A Ministry of Good Fellowship?

It's not within the remit of this paper to trace the development of the Anglican reception of the classical tradition to modern-times. The purpose has simply been to discuss aspects of the initial development of the Anglican pastoral ministry which are often neglected in current debates about the ministry. And it may well be argued that this neglect is for good reasons: not only have many of the appeals to antiquity been demonstrated to be less secure than supposed but also both society and the place of religion in Britain have changed dramatically since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Antiquity has lost its authority in the face of modern scholarship and changing social *mores*, the hierarchical assumptions of the Anglican reformers hold little appeal, and few people feel strongly about the Church's role in protecting the authority of the Crown. Perhaps even more profoundly, there is arguably no longer a sense of our living within a Christian commonwealth in which the Gospel is advanced for the salvation of souls.

At the same time, those earlier debates continue to define the Anglican ministry in distinct ways, not least through the continued use of the Prayer Book and the Ordinal (and their heirs) and the retention of the parochial system. In a world where we're beginning again to appreciate the importance of local landscapes, communities, and cultural heritage, perhaps we'll also regain an appreciation for the Anglican approach to pastoral ministry, which has been so deeply rooted in local places and people.

This, then, suggests a twofold task for the Church in Wales as we reconceive of the ministry using more collaborative models within ministry areas. The first task is to determine what the classical tradition of pastoral care looks like in twenty-first century Wales and to delineate clearly how clergy and laity can undertake together the functions of healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. What does that look like in a pluralistic, secular society? What is the purpose of ministry, mission, and pastoral care today? How are these functions shared? Where do we draw the lines between faithfulness to a tradition and the need to innovate?

The second task is to explore how the looser model of Ministry Areas can retain the classical Anglican rootedness in local places and communities. Do we seek to remain imbedded within local communities? If so, how does this play out in Ministry Areas in a highly secular society? How do churches collaborate to connect with local heritage, social networks, and communities in order to make the Kingdom of God a visible reality?

Taking the Puritan criticism of 'the vice of good fellowship' as an Anglican badge, these two tasks might be rephrased with a single question, 'How does the Church in Wales work collaboratively in ministry areas to promote and sustain places of 'good fellowship' where people can be healed, sustained, guided, and reconciled within the Kingdom of God?' The answer to that question could very well produce a characteristically Anglican approach to mission and ministry suited to the pressures and opportunities of the twenty-first century.

# Deacons & Bishops

# Diakonia and the Diaconate: Serving the Servant King<sup>1</sup>

The Very Revd Dr Sarah Rowland Jones

**Abstract:** *This essay engages with recent scholarship on the diaconate and various reports in England, Wales, and ecumenical documents to call for a renewal of diaconal ministry by reclaiming its iconic role of symbolizing the service to which the whole church is called. Far from being a junior office devoted to 'menial tasks', the New Testament and the earliest church understood diakonia to express uniquely the dignity of such service for which Christ himself is the model. A revitalized diaconate, combining within itself both humble and commissioned service, might also provide a counter-weight to over-developed notions of sacerdotal ritual and ministry that provides an enriching dimension across all lay and ordained vocations.*

‘Once a deacon, always a deacon’ is the inevitable joshing by priests and bishops when one of their number feels prevailed upon sufficiently to embark on making coffee or doing the washing up. True words, spoken in jest, encapsulate a role that in Scripture and the earliest Church runs from one who serves at table, to an emerging formal position within the Christian community of at times considerable mandated authority. It has been a calling of wide variation through subsequent centuries, more often than not viewed as the Cinderella order alongside presbyterate and episcopate, even if that perspective is now being revisited.

Despite recent moves to reconsider a distinctive diaconate, it seems unlikely the Church in Wales will ordain significant numbers of such stipendiary, or non-stipendiary, deacons any time soon. Therefore, without the vital witness of their physical presence, the Church in Wales must take care not to neglect the sign and symbol of this ordained ministry. It must ensure the charisms and practices of the diaconate are not devalued, either as icons and catalysts of the wider diakonia – ministry and service in and beyond the Christian community – to which all the baptized are called; or within the fullness of holy orders in which priests and bishops retain their diaconal ordination. Indeed, priests may be helped in responding to the changes in ministerial life which restructuring may ask, through recognising in greater measure the diaconal dimension within their presbyteral vocation, with historic roots as episcopal officers assisting in running the church – a calling which is equally modelled on, and blessed in, Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve.

## Introduction

At first glance, it looks simple. ‘What is the ministry of a deacon?’ asks the Catechism of the Church in Wales. The answer comes ‘The ministry of a deacon is to help the priest both in the conduct of worship and in pastoral care.’ Put like that, no wonder the diaconal role has long been seen as secondary and supplementary to a presbyteral vocation. Since the fourth century, it became a brief steppingstone on the way to priesthood, increasingly neglected in the Western churches. But what then of the apparently distinct calling in scripture, to men and to women?

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<sup>1</sup> This essay engages with and incorporates some of the ideas presented to the Standing Doctrinal Commission in a paper by The Revd Dr Trystan Owain Hughes, entitled ‘The Diaconate: A Missional Ministry of Love’.

From the 19th century, the diaconate increasingly returned to the ecclesial radar screen. Particular impetus came in the Victorian era in the UK, elsewhere in Europe and in North America, in response to social changes. Church leaders of all traditions saw an urgency to address dire needs of poverty, health and education arising particularly from industrialisation, in ways beyond what was expected of priests. For many, the answer was a return to an active diaconate in a missional, mediatory, role: ‘to evangelise the masses and teach the illiterate’ as an anonymous pamphleteer put it in 1877.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent adoption of an enhanced distinctive diaconate in North America and elsewhere, alongside the challenge of growing diaconal lay ministries, gave momentum to further reconsideration in the second half of the twentieth century. Lambeth Conferences expressed support, and the Second Vatican Council prompted Roman Catholic renewal.

A second significant impetus to rethinking the diaconate, particularly among British Anglicans, comes from study of Biblical and contemporary usage of the root *daikon-* concept, notably by the Australian Catholic, John N Collins. There are challenges around translating *diakonia* into English since, when rendered more as ‘service’, less as ‘ministry’, this has over-emphasised humble, lowly tasks. This has reinforced the idea, as in the Welsh Catechism, of the deacon as mere assistant, and contributed to undervaluing and side-lining the order. But Collins argues that whether it is a menial task (such as waiting at table, the most common usage) or one entailing far greater responsibility, at heart it is an activity mandated by, and on behalf of, someone in authority. Thus, St Paul describes as *diakonia* his divine commission to proclaim the gospel of Christ – a far more responsible, and mission-oriented vocation, in counterbalance to assumptions of servitude. That said, such down-playing of the diaconate is not universal. For example, European Lutherans and North American Anglicans/Episcopalians over decades have seen deacons in prominent, outward-facing, professionalised roles such as leading community development and advocacy.

Collins’ work nonetheless challenges inadequate assumptions in English, or Welsh, Anglican approaches to the diaconate. It puts new spin on questions around how the diaconate relates to growing empowering of the laity in ministry and mission. All this shapes the context for asking how the Church in Wales should view the diaconate as we move to Mission or Ministry Areas. This is the question to which this paper returns, after revisiting Biblical sources, and reviewing the diaconate’s mixed fortunes through history, in and beyond Anglicanism.

## Some Biblical Perspectives

The New Testament provides rich and varied usage of the vocabulary around the person, *diakonos*, the action *diakonia*, and the verb *diakoneo*. Varying translations of servant and service, minister and ministry, and deliberate choices of whether to use ‘deacon’, indicate something of this complexity. There’s a risk of finding what we expect, or have been conditioned to expect! Yet even the etymology is contested, with arguments that it is cognate with the Latin verb, *conari*, to give oneself trouble, not the Greek *konis*, dust, and therefore does not mean ‘to go through the dust’.

While we may feel comfortable with vocabulary of service/servant and ministry/minister, we should nonetheless reflect on the baggage they may connote. Biblical scholar Paula Gooder concurs with Collins: ‘Most occurrences of the word are better

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<sup>2</sup> Young, Frances, (2015) *Inferior Office: A History of Deacons in the Church of England*, James Clarke, Cambridge, 80.

understood to mean “the carrying out of a commissioned task” than the more traditional “humble service”. Our assumptions shape our understanding of how all are commissioned in baptism for a life of worship, witness and service in the name of, and at the behest of, Christ.

Yet diakonia language must sit within the wider Biblical context, such as discussed in *Slaves in the Household of God*. Jesus Christ is both ‘servant’ in Collins’ more dignified understanding, and slave, *doulos*, at Phil 2:7. Too polarised a view of humble service versus authority-bearing commissioned ministry is unhelpful: Gerd Breed argues that ‘Collins’ notion that diakonia is never done out of love or compassion for other people and that the *daikon-* word group only describes the ministry of the special services (ordained services) is found wanting. Through the exegesis of Mark 10:45 in its context it is shown that Mark describes Jesus’ diakonia as done both out of compassion and love for people and as an envoy of God. Jesus instructed his disciples to do the same in contrast to the way of the rulers of the nation.’

The most common meaning of this vocabulary in secular Greek was to wait at table, though it could extend to responsibility for other household concerns, and acting on a householder’s behalf. And while serving others would have been considered dishonouring for a free man, diakonia could also mean serving an honourable cause, the good of the community or a god. In the Septuagint, *diakonos* is generally reserved for court servants (including torturers, 4 Macc 9:17!). In secular and scriptural usage, *daikon-* language is rarer than ‘slave’ language (confusingly also often rendered ‘servant’ in English translations of the New Testament), which may have allowed the early Christians to adopt and reinterpret it, to encompass their new forms of God-given ministry.

In the New Testament, the verb *diakoneo* occurs relatively frequently in the Synoptic gospels and Paul’s writings. Diakonia occurs only once in the Gospels (Martha’s domestic complaint against Mary, Luke 10:40), but is found more in Acts, and is frequent in Pauline writing. *Diakonos* is primarily used for table service, except as developed by Paul. Luke may deliberately avoid the term, since it ‘had become a common “technical” term for a person set aside for a particular ministry ...’ (Thus, while in Acts 6:2-4, the disciples say it is not right that they should neglect the word of God to wait (*diakoneo*) at tables’ the seven ‘appoint[ed] to this task’ are never called ‘deacon’; while the disciples instead devote themselves to prayer and the diakonia of the word.)

But it is to Jesus from whom all ministry, lay and ordained, flows, through adoption and grace. While most gospel occurrences of *diakoneo* language relate to serving at table or similar tasks, Jesus is recorded as appropriating this for himself, often in conversations that begin with eating and drinking. According to Matthew, after Jesus asks James and John whether they can drink the cup before him, he tells the gathered disciples ‘... whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant [*diakonos*], and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave [*doulos*]; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve [*diakoneo*, both occurrences], and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mt 20:26-28, with parallel at Mk 10:43). Similarly, as Luke records, Jesus, eating with his friends, said ‘For who is greater, the one who is at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves’ (Lk 20:27). And so he calls his followers to be such servants – *diakonos* – of one another (Mt 23:11).

Paul (with pseudo-Pauline texts) further develops this language, addressing both the service/ ministry that all Christians owe God, one another, and the wider world; and the specific diaconal role to which only some are called. His usage of this vocabulary is wide,

varied, and by no means systematic. The verb may apply to unspecified acts by an individual (Onesiphorus, 2 Tim 1:18 and Phm 13); to arranging collections for Christians (Rom 15:25; 2 Cor 8:19); to the proclamation of the Gospel (2 Cor 3:3). And in Petrine writing a single sentence can contain both an umbrella use for ministering, and a very specific calling: '... serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received ... whoever serves must do so with the strength God supplies...' (1 Pet 4:10-11).

Turning to the noun form, the service given, diakonia, may entail service of other Christians, perhaps in a household setting (1 Cor 16:15); individual service (Mark to Paul, 2 Tim 4:11); taking collections (Rom 15:13; 2 Cor 8:4, 9:1, 12f – also Acts 1:29); or implementing the purposes of those collections (2 Cor 11:8). The ministry of the Spirit is in contrast to the ministry of death (2 Cor 3:7,8,9). It is entrusted to Paul (2 Cor 4:1, also Acts 20:24); in reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18), and in wider ministry (Rom 11:13; 2 Cor 6:3, and Acts 2:25, 21:19). It may describe a Christian's particular calling (Archippus, Col 4:17); or be linked specifically to evangelism (Timothy, 2 Tim 4:5). While some is pertinent to all Christians, some is particular to certain individuals, including Paul himself. We also find diakonia among the gifts (charisms) 'that differ according to the grace given to us' alongside prophecy etc (Rom 12:6-8); and among the 'varieties of gifts ... and varieties of services' from the same Spirit, the same Lord, with the Spirit given to each for the common good (1 Cor 12:4-7). Thus it seems both that all are called to some variety of service; and that there may be a very specific gift and calling to individuals into particular 'service' or 'ministry'.

So then to particular Pauline (or pseudo-Pauline) usage of the noun, diakonos, servant, minister or indeed deacon, which develops with clearer indications of Collins' interpretation. Paul describes himself and his companions as made competent by God to be 'servants /ministers of a new Covenant' (2 Cor 3:6). But we also have the same word for 'ministers' of Satan, disguising themselves as 'ministers of righteousness' (2 Cor 11:15). Paul (sometimes with others) is a diakonos of Christ (2 Cor 11:23), of God (2 Cor 6:4), of the gospel (Eph 3:7; Col 1:23) and of the church, the body of Christ (Col 1:25). Further, the secular ruler, witting or unwitting, is also a diakonos of God, for our good (Rom 13:4). And Jesus Christ himself is described as the diakonos of the circumcised (Rom 15:8), and also, rhetorically, (not!) as the diakonos of sin (Gal 2:17).

Alongside this emerges what seems to be explicit application of the term in relation to a specific calling to certain Christians. Phoebe is called a deacon (of the Church at Cenchrae, Rom 16:1); as also is Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7) and Epaphras (for the sake of the Colossians, Col 1:7), both being also a 'fellow-slave in the Lord'; and Timothy, (1 Tim 4:6). That this is becoming a particular category of calling is further indicated at Phil 1:1, where Paul addresses the 'bishops and deacons' alongside 'all the saints'. And at 1 Tim 3:8-13, Paul lays out the sort of character deacons, and similar 'women' too, should have, though he does not give details of their role.

## From the Early Church through the Reformation

Insofar as we find an embryonic form of diaconal ministry in the New Testament, it seems to be closely associated with that of the episkopoi, 'overseers', the nascent bishops (this is still reflected today, as bishops alone lay hands on deacons at ordination). Around 96 AD, Clement of Rome writes that the apostles 'appointed their first-fruits, having tested them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons ...' The Didache advises Christian communities to elect their own bishops and deacons. Two decades after Clement, Ignatius of Antioch in his

epistles provides the earliest surviving reference to a three-fold ministry, with deacons named after bishops and presbyters.

In the Patristic age, the office of deacon was generally held for life, with function varying from place to place. In the early Church's developing liturgical life, serving at table readily adapted to serving at the altar. Within the Eucharist, deacons were soon expected, inter alia, to read or chant the Epistle and Gospel, lead the laity in intercessions, receive the offerings of the faithful, give the signal for the unbaptized to leave before the Eucharistic prayer, and assist the bishop (and later the presbyters) in distributing the consecrated bread and wine to the gathered faithful. They could assist, but not officiate, at baptism. Their liturgical functions were considerably reduced in 595 by Gregory the Great, who transferred many to cantors, one of a number of 'minor orders' that had emerged – though singing the Easter Exultet remained the deacon's prerogative.

Elements of the deacon's liturgical role linked directly or indirectly to responsibilities outside the liturgy, with symbolism for today. Beyond the liturgy, the deacon's role held significant importance, acting with, on behalf of, and with the authority of, the bishop (and thus of Christ). They were in charge of collecting and overseeing the distribution of money, and served widely as bishop's emissary (effectively, an ambassador for Christ), while the archdeacon was the bishop's principal administrative officer. Even Ignatius of Antioch reminded early church communities that deacons served on behalf of Christ: 'let all men respect the deacons as Jesus Christ'.

Indeed, the Council of Nicaea in 325 criticised deacons for getting above themselves by receiving the Eucharist before the bishops in some places and for giving it to presbyters – and insisted deacons ranked below bishops and presbyters! Their role was closer to ecclesial 'civil servants' or even junior 'government ministers' than domestic employees, as Collins and Gooder have stressed. In the seventh century, both the fourth Council of Toledo (633) in the West and the Trullan Synod (692) in the East felt it necessary to curb the powers and roles of deacons. Their influence decreased further through the Middle Ages, and though the diaconate was retained in the East, in the West it was largely reduced to a short transitional stage on a clear-cut route to the priesthood – a tradition originating in the fourth century. It was retained in this form at the Reformation in the Church of England, of which Wales was a part until 1920.

In this way, the diaconate moved from being an important role of status, closely connected to the episcopate, to being what the Church in Wales' Doctrinal Commission Report on the Diaconate of 1974 described as 'reduced to ... a purely probationary ministry, a mere shade of the diaconate of the patristic age.' There were exceptions, including ecclesiastical lawyers and royal servants; and individuals like St Francis of Assisi (d.1226), and later, in England, Nicholas Ferrar (d.1637) of Little Gidding. After 1662, when appointing deacons as incumbents of English parishes was outlawed, most deacons were ordained priest within weeks of ordination, or even on the same day.

## Sparks of Renewal

In the 19th century, debate over reviving diaconal ministries resurfaced.<sup>3</sup> Alongside social needs, mentioned above, other factors included ensuring adequately trained and qualified clergy, and review of the parish system. Initiatives arose from various wings of the church, with Thomas Arnold an early proponent in his 1841 pamphlet *Order of Deacons*, which argued for deacons in secular employment. Evangelicals and Tractarians variously took up the call, arguing for closer engagement between church and world.

Some particularly Welsh wrinkles figured. Following moves to train and ordain schoolmaster deacons, in 1847 the Bishop of St Davids noted a pro-disestablishment pamphlet circulating in Welsh which warned, falsely, the government planned 15,000 deacon schoolmasters to draw non-conformist children back to Anglicanism!<sup>4</sup> In 1870 the Bishop of Llandaff revealed that for 17 years he had ordained 'less educated men' in his diocese – that is, from rural and Welsh-speaking backgrounds – to what was effectively the life-long diaconate.<sup>5</sup>

For many, diaconate and curacy became lengthened, to allow ordination of men graduating below the previous minimum age of 23; and for fuller training, including in the parish setting, particularly after the diaconate was opened to non-graduates near the end of the century. Ironically, the significance of the diaconate was both heightened, in its clearer role in professional development of clergy, and weakened, as its temporary, transitional character was reinforced.

Debate rumbled on, with questions around the role itself, costs of training and funding stipendiary deacons, disagreement over whether non-stipendiary clergy were permissible, and the roles of laity. 1866 saw establishment of the 'para-clerical order of ministry' of Readers<sup>6</sup> with licences to lead prayers and preach, which has, arguably, eclipsed the diaconate in England ever since. Elsewhere in the Anglican world, both distinctive and non-stipendiary deacons were increasingly found. In the US, the Episcopal Church ordained men as deacons to serve as missionaries to ethnic groups (from which they often came) and in isolated communities from the 1840s to the 1930s.<sup>7</sup>

In 1920, the Lambeth conference affirmed that 'the diaconate of women should be restored formally and canonically ... throughout the Anglican Communion.' This, being 'primarily a ministry of succour, bodily and spiritual' should 'follow the lines of the primitive rather than the modern diaconate of men.'<sup>8</sup> Implicit is the understanding that the diaconate for men was then a transitional stage on the way to priesthood, and that of the early church more menial.

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<sup>3</sup> Nazir-Ali, Michael, (1991) *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Mission*, Wipf & Stock, Eugene, Oregon, pp.114ff and Young, Frances, (2015) *Inferior Office: A History of Deacons in the Church of England*, James Clarke, Cambridge, Chapter 3, on which this section particularly draws.

<sup>4</sup> The Times, 6 June 1847, p.5C – Young, p.78

<sup>5</sup> The Times, 7 July 1870, p.8A – Young, p.79

<sup>6</sup> Young, p.79

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.episcopaldeacons.org/history.html>, accessed 19 May 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Lambeth 1920, Resolutions 47 and 49.

Developments continued. In the US from 1952 the Episcopal Church ordained men as ‘perpetual deacons’, sacramental or pastoral assistants in their sponsoring parishes.<sup>9</sup> The 1958 Lambeth Council recommended ‘each province of the Anglican Communion shall consider whether the office of deacon shall be restored to its primitive place as a distinctive order in the Church, instead of being regarded as a probationary period for the priesthood.’<sup>10</sup> The Second Vatican Council, 1962-5, called for a ‘permanent’ diaconate with a wide mandate (including officiating at baptism), and proposed this be opened to married men. Pope Paul VI put this into effect in 1967.<sup>11</sup> The following year, the 1968 Lambeth Conference issued a fuller resolution commending the diaconate, which should not be considered ‘inferior’, and which could take distinctive form, including non-stipendiary ministry, open to men and women.<sup>12</sup>

The World Council of Churches’ 1982 Lima Statement, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* also affirmed a growing place for the diaconate in global Christianity, noting the role had been variously understood and exercised through history. It expressed general consensus that it was not confined to humble service, but primarily a ‘ministry of love within the community’.<sup>13</sup> In its Commentary it raised a range of persisting questions, particularly the extent to which the diaconate should be considered an ordained role, distinct from lay ministries.<sup>14</sup> Many of these questions remain with us.

## Some English Developments

The expectations of the 1968 Lambeth Resolution for a widened, more respected, role for deacons notwithstanding, in 1974 the Church of England’s Advisory Committee for the Church’s Ministry recommended complete abolition of the diaconate in 1974, being ‘unable to find a convincing theological rationale’.<sup>15</sup> The General Synod in 1977 declined to follow this advice; the Ordinal of the 1980 Alternative Service Book gave greater emphasis to the deacon’s role; and women (deaconesses since 1861) were admitted to the diaconate in 1987. In 1988 the report *Deacons and the Church* further supported a distinctive diaconate for men and women; and the more ecumenically rooted *Windsor Statement* of 1997 (which issued

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.episcopaldeacons.org/history.html>, accessed 19 May 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Lambeth 1958, Resolution 88

<sup>11</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 29, and [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_motu-proprio\\_19670618\\_sacrum-diaconatus.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19670618_sacrum-diaconatus.html)

<sup>12</sup> Lambeth 1968, Resolution 32. The clause that women made deaconesses by laying on of hands might be considered deacons, i.e. in holy orders, was passed by 221 votes to 183.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Deacons represent to the Church its calling as servant in the world. By struggling in Christ’s name with the myriad needs of societies and persons, deacons exemplify the interdependence of worship and service in the Church’s life. They exercise responsibility in the worship of the congregation: for example by reading the scriptures, preaching and leading the people in prayer. They help in the teaching of the congregation. They exercise a ministry of love within the community. They fulfil certain administrative tasks and may be elected to responsibilities for governance.’ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No.111 (1982) World Council of Churches, Geneva, Ministry, 31.

<sup>14</sup> ‘In many churches there is today considerable uncertainty about the need, the rationale, the status and the functions of deacons. In what sense can the diaconate be considered part of the ordained ministry? What is it that distinguishes it from other ministries in the Church (catechists, musicians, etc.)? Why should deacons be ordained while these other ministries do not receive ordination? If they are ordained, do they receive ordination in the full sense of the word or is their ordination only the first step towards ordination as presbyters? ...’ *BEM*, Ministry, Commentary (31).

<sup>15</sup> <http://exeter.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/A-potted-history-of-the-Diaconate.pdf>, accessed 18 May 2020

from consultations including Methodists, Roman Catholics and Orthodox), affirmed the diaconate as a growing movement internationally.

At the end of the 20th century, there were around 75 distinctive deacons in Church of England (including some women who did not feel called to be priests), and the Diaconal Association of the Church of England called the rediscovery of the distinctive diaconate a 'revolution'.<sup>16</sup> The insights of Collins influenced the 2001 report of House of Bishops' Working Party, *For such a time as this: A renewed diaconate in the Church of England*.<sup>17</sup> This shifted the emphasis more towards explicitly seeing the diaconate as responsible commissioned agency, which opened up a more missiological perspective, also expressed in pastoral, liturgical and catechetical dimensions.<sup>18</sup> It saw particular possibilities for deacons within Local Ministry Teams, but at stake remained the question of 'how a distinctive diaconate would enhance the mission and ministry of the whole body of the faithful ... [and] whether it would detract from or undermine the validity of lay ministries, especially those of Readers and LPAs' with which there would inevitably be overlap. The report responded 'there is strong testimony that embodying sacramentally, so to speak, the *diakonia*, the commissioned service, of the Church in ordination, as an ecclesial sign of the *diakonia* of Jesus Christ, can enhance the sense of commissioned service among all the Church's ministers, lay and ordained.'<sup>19</sup>

However, the General Synod of November 2001 (with some 70 readers among its members) referred the report for further work on relating a renewed, distinctive, diaconate to both ordained and lay forms of ministry. The Faith and Order Advisory Group (FOAG) tackled this in *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church: Biblical, theological and contemporary perspectives*. One answer it provided was to contrast ordained and non-ordained ministry: firstly, the former is lifelong; secondly, it is recognised nationally and belongs to the universal Church; and, thirdly, it is a comprehensive in embracing pastoral care and ministries of word and sacrament.<sup>20</sup> Commissioned or licensed lay ministry may meet one or two of these, but generally not all. A further development was that some ordained pioneer ministry, developed through Fresh Expressions initiatives, was seen as belonging to a distinctive diaconate.<sup>21</sup> The paper urged that the distinctive diaconate be more actively encouraged and recognised as a valid calling through selection and within Dioceses; with greater priority given to reaching the unchurched and the fringe, alongside past emphases on eucharistic ministry among the ordained.<sup>22</sup> This is happening, though unevenly across dioceses.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> [www.dace.org](http://www.dace.org); website discontinued after The Diaconal Association was dissolved in 2017.

<sup>17</sup> GSI207: *For such a time as this: A renewed diaconate in the Church of England*, 2001, Church House Publishing, London

<sup>18</sup> *For such a time as this*, pp.53-6

<sup>19</sup> *For such a time as this*, pp.45-6.

<sup>20</sup> *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*, Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England, 2007, p. 148.

<sup>21</sup> *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*, p.83. Also [www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/selection\\_criteria\\_for\\_pioneer\\_ministry.pdf](http://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/selection_criteria_for_pioneer_ministry.pdf), accessed 18 May 2020

<sup>22</sup> *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*, pp.162-3

<sup>23</sup> See <https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/vocations/no-ordinary-ministry#na>, accessed 18 May 2020

## The Welsh Experience

While the 1974 report of the Church in Wales' Doctrinal Commission recognised past dismissive attitudes to the diaconate, its conclusion was ground-breaking and radical. It suggested consideration of a 'permanent' diaconate embracing both some existing readers and some who 'find their Christian vocation in secular work', and saw such work as extending beyond 'obvious' occupations in health, social care and education, to include 'managerial and manual'. This, should 'broaden our conception of the ordained ministry, which would no longer be seen as a full time, paid, professional caste, but as a differentiated service of Christian men and women towards the Church and towards the world' and 'act as focus of the diaconal service of the whole Church, lay and ordained ... an example, an inspiration, a catalyst, an initiative, to all; so that all would recognize, and fulfil more adequately, their vocation to service.'<sup>24</sup>

It was a time of churches thinking radically. In 1975, the Church in Wales with partners signed the Covenant to work towards visible unity. 1986 saw publication of a scheme for unity based around an episcopal model with 18 dioceses, *Ministry in a Uniting Church*, which envisaged an ordained diaconate, though drawing also on lay Baptist models, 'spear-heading the ministry of the whole people of God, particularly in its service both to the church and to the world.' Although ordained, they would also be seen 'as "lay" in the sense that they would not normally be stipendiary, but would earn their living in secular occupations.' That said, there would be some capacity for stipendiary deacons, for example 'in youth or community work, in social welfare organisations and so on.' They would share in responsibility for leadership and pastoral oversight, worship including particular roles in the Eucharist, administration, and the wider councils of the Church.<sup>25</sup> The scheme was, of course, not adopted. Commenting on it, the Church in Wales' Doctrinal Commission noted a 'considerable confusion in the Church in Wales' over the diaconate,<sup>26</sup> and the Board of Mission felt contemporary Anglican understanding of the diaconate was 'particularly unsatisfactory' and suggested the Church in Wales could learn from the Protestant tradition.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *The Diaconate*, p.10.

<sup>25</sup> *Gweinidogaeth mewn Eglwys yn Uno, Ministry in a Uniting Church*, Comisiwn yr Eglwysi Cyfamodol yng Nghymru, Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales; Abertawe, Swansea, 1986, pp.16-17

<sup>26</sup> *Reports from the Standing Doctrinal Commission of the Church in Wales, the Ecumenical Affairs Sector of the Board of Mission, and a Working Group of the Provincial Legal Offices on 'Ministry in a Uniting Church'* (Church in Wales Publications, 1987), p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8.

## Wales and the Wider Context

Anglicans have indeed explored with ecumenical partners their considerable experience of both ordained and lay diaconate, including notably with Methodists in the UK and beyond,<sup>28</sup> and Lutherans (particularly within the Porvoo relationship),<sup>29</sup> both of whom root the diaconate primarily in social and missional outreach, as well as with Roman Catholics.<sup>30</sup> Thus, in Methodism, ordained deacons assist the laity in developing their gifts and living out ministries of servanthood – described by Sue Jackson as a form of midwifery, helping birth new vocations, working less on behalf of, more alongside, the body of Christ.<sup>31</sup> Lutherans in Sweden stress that deacons are not ‘half-priests’ but have a ‘clear caritative identity,’<sup>32</sup> while in Denmark see a strong eschatological emphasis, advancing the coming of God’s kingdom, as intrinsic to serving in the world.<sup>33</sup> From the Catholics comes Walter Kasper’s reminders that ‘deacons are not substitutes to be brought in where priests are lacking’ nor are they ‘ordained social workers!’<sup>34</sup>

Alongside the fruits of its ecumenical life, global Anglicanism has widening experience of diaconal ministry. Those in North America have long been involved in ministries inside and outside their parish: as hospital or prison or institutional visitors, or working with the poor and the marginalised, with minority groups, with the disabled and with advocacy organisations. They may undertake Christian education, youth work, pastoral, liturgical, administrative and organisational duties.<sup>35</sup> Greater appreciation of ‘the deacon’s role as agents of the bishop’ has enhanced their ability to be ‘prophet, interpreter, and catalyst of social change’. Today over 3000 deacons ‘enlist, train, and support baptized persons in ministries of care, or lead the church’s efforts in social action and justice’, many are highly skilled professionals, and some

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<sup>28</sup> See *The Ministry of the People of God: A Report Presented to the 1986 Methodist Conference* (Methodist Publishing House, 1986); cf. [www.methodist.org.uk/media/2062/fo-statement-the-ministry-of-the-people-of-god-1986.pdf](http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/2062/fo-statement-the-ministry-of-the-people-of-god-1986.pdf); *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, Report from The Faith and Order bodies of the Church of England and the Methodist Church, [www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Mission-and-Ministry-in-Covenant.pdf](http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Mission-and-Ministry-in-Covenant.pdf); and, internationally, the reports of Anglican-Methodist International Commission (AMIC), 1996, *Sharing in The Apostolic Communion* (Lake Junaluska, NC: World Methodist Council), and the Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission (AMICUM), 2014, *Into All the World: Being and Becoming Apostolic Churches* (London: Anglican Consultative Council)

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Towards Closer Unity: Communion of the Porvoo Churches 20 Years* (2016); and, internationally, *To Love and Serve the Lord. Diakonia in the Life of the Church*, The Jerusalem Report of the Anglican–Lutheran International Commission (ALIC III), The Lutheran World Federation (2012)

<sup>30</sup> Various in ARCIC, including most recently in *Walking Together in the Way: An Agreed Statement of ARCIC III* (2017) SPCK, London. See also Margaret Elizabeth Carrington, *A Survey of Good Practice in Diaconal Formation in Ecumenical Perspective* (MA dissertation, University of Sheffield 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Jackson, S ‘The Methodist Diaconal Order: A Sign of the Diaconal Church’ in Clark, *The Diaconal Church*, p. 161.

<sup>32</sup> Ragnar Persenius, ‘Towards a Common Understanding of the Diaconal Ministry’, in *Towards Closer Unity*, p. 130.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Tiit Padam, ‘Towards a Common Understanding of the Diaconal Ministry? Recent Developments in the Diaconate among the Porvoo Churches’, in *Towards Closer Unity*, p. 162.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Kasper, *Leadership in the Church: How Traditional Roles Can Serve the Christian Community Today* (Herder & Herder, New York 2003), pp.14,21. For more on Roman Catholic perspectives on the diaconate, see *Foundations for the Renewal of the Permanent Diaconate* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington DC 1993) and James Keating, *The Deacon Reader* (Gracewing, Leominster 2006).

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.anglicannews.org/blogs/2018/01/the-diaconate-renewing-an-ancient-ministry.aspx>

'serve the church in paid employment as diocesan executives, educational specialists, and in social action ministries.'<sup>36</sup>

Bringing concepts of the diaconate into dialogue with the Anglican Five Marks of Mission<sup>37</sup> may also helpfully stimulate our understanding of ministry, especially among those who are often at 'the margins of God's territory'<sup>38</sup> – in hospitals, care homes, industries, prisons, refugee hostels, and so on. As Rosalind Brown puts it, 'it is the church, as much as the world, that needs a deacon on the threshold to make that margin transgressable.'<sup>39</sup>

## Deacons and the Liturgy

Anglicans like to speak of theology and ecclesiology living in liturgy: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. In reviewing deacons' ministry, we must not neglect the liturgical function in which this vocation is rooted. With liturgy literally 'the work of the people' – a communal response to and participation in the sacred – it is vital that the deacon's manifestation of the interface between church and world is fully integrated in worship. Therefore, though it is unlikely most Welsh churches will generally have a deacon present at the Eucharist, it is both illuminating and necessary to reflect on the sign and symbol of the deacon's traditional role, for the wider life of the church. These words and actions should be viewed as an icon and catalyst of the ministry of all God's people, spiritually animating the *diakonia* of the whole people of God. This vivifying meaning must not be lost.

Both priest and deacon are ministers of word and sacrament: both act at the intersection of the transcendent and the temporal. While it is an overly simplistic distinction that in the Eucharist the deacon addresses the people while the priest addresses God, the deacon does particularly embody the relationship between God's Church and the wider world, in Christ' service: serving others in the name of Christ, and serving others as if they were Christ. Deacons both represent the people to God, and God to the people in liturgical expression. Our faith has incarnation at its heart: we must not lose sight of the powerful message that where the deacon would – and still sometimes does – stand, speak and acts, so too the people of God are intimately incorporated.

Therefore it is worth dwelling on those elements of the Holy Eucharist which have been particular to the liturgical deacon, and ponder how, without deacons, all they embody does not become lost, or underplayed. For then the Eucharist becomes unbalanced, at risk of leaning towards sacerdotal ritual insufficiently rooted in the incarnational and participative realities of the Body of Christ, the Church of all God's people, for the sake of the world – as indeed has perhaps happened from time to time within the Western church.

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.episcopaldeacons.org/history.html>

<sup>37</sup> To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God; To teach, baptize and nurture new believers; To respond to human need by loving service; To seek to transform the unjust structures of society; To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.  
<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>

<sup>38</sup> Rosalind Brown, *Being a Deacon Today: Exploring a Distinctive Ministry in the Church and in the World* (Canterbury Press, Norwich 2005), p. 31.

<sup>39</sup> Brown, *Being a Deacon Today*, p. 31.

## Whither Wales?

The resources on which the Church in Wales can draw in considering the diaconate are thus rich, plentiful and varied. Arguably, greater clarity, or perhaps conviction, is necessary. Several moves in recent decades to ordain a distinctive diaconate in Wales have stalled and many, if not most, of those so ordained eventually were ordained priests. But it seems there is still a desire to reaffirm and revive a distinctive diaconate, with the ordination of several distinctive deacons in the last few years highlighting new possibilities of pastoral, missional, and theological significance.

Indeed, the Church in Wales Review and subsequent restructuring of dioceses provides fresh reason for revisiting these questions.<sup>40</sup> Though the diaconate receives only passing mention, in relation to priestly training, the Review gives considerable encouragement to the development of lay ministries, particularly those with greater outward-looking and missional emphasis. This, and the creation of Ministry/Mission Areas, provide a new context for asking, and answering, the fundamental questions around how we understand the diaconal ministry of the whole people of God, the licensed ministry of particular callings, and a distinctive ordained diaconate as responsible commissioned agency in the name of the bishop, collaborating alongside presbyters/priests.

These underlying questions remain, within the changed structural context. Where lacking, the emphases of episcopally-charged commissioned agency within the diaconate must be given proper weight. The Church in Wales should consider if the time is ripe to forge a distinct and significant missional ministry in the local church, the secular workplace, and wider society. Yet some will still ask, is a distinctive diaconate necessary? Wouldn't it merely clericalise lay ministry, as almost every aspect of diaconal ministry can and is now undertaken by the laity? What does ordination add?

In response to such concerns, do we accept the argument of influential US deacon Susanne Watson Epting, that 'even though ordained, [the deacon's] primary identity remains baptismal and our ordination charges and vows serve only to expand, enhance, and urge us on in animating and exemplifying the diakonia to which all the baptized were called'?<sup>41</sup> Is FOAG convincing in saying 'ordination makes a particular ministry a public ecclesial sign of what the whole Church is. It focuses, clarifies and promotes the calling of all the faithful who are constituted by baptism as a royal, prophetic priesthood'?<sup>42</sup> Are we confident that this form of distinctive diaconate would not weaken or remove the wider Church's caritative responsibilities, but instead function to encourage, motivate and inspire both lay and ordained to live out their own daily servant ministries?

And if the Church in Wales chooses to walk further down this path, what further theological, ecclesiological and liturgical work might need to be done? The Church of England's thorough report, and outstanding questions, in *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church* is a valuable resource.<sup>43</sup> What changes might be necessary around vocational discernment,

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<sup>40</sup> [https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Church\\_in\\_Wales\\_Review\\_2012.pdf](https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Church_in_Wales_Review_2012.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.anglicannews.org/blogs/2018/01/the-diaconate-renewing-an-ancient-ministry.aspx>

<sup>42</sup> *The Ministry and Mission of the Whole Church*, 152:

<sup>43</sup> What principles concerning ministry can be learned from the New Testament?

How might these principles be applied today?

What is the nature of the distinction between ordained and lay ministry?

Are the existing divisions of function between the various forms of ministry justified or do they need to be reconsidered?

training, even the ordinal – or can we read old words with fresh eyes? And how would such selection and training sit alongside that for those continuing through the diaconate to priesthood? Would all this cohere with our broader understanding of ordination and ordained ministry, as well as lay vocation?

All likely responses will entail overlaps between lay and ordained ministry. This has in the past been particularly evident in relation to reader ministry, which, as the FOAG report put it, inhabits, ‘in the perception of many, something of a grey area between lay and ordained ministry’. (The significant difference being that readers can only baptize in extremis, as can anyone who intends to ‘do what it is that the Church does’, whereas in Anglican tradition, deacons have baptized, in the absence of a priest, since the Reformation.) Indeed, describing their work as deeply diaconal, in 2017 the Archbishop of York broadly invited the readers of his diocese to embrace ordination, a step many then took.<sup>44</sup> Also as in England, there are questions to be answered around what we understand pioneer ministry to be. Wherever lines are drawn between lay and ordained *diakonia*, there will be an unavoidable arbitrariness. This should be acknowledged, the bullet bit, and responsibility taken when confusions or tensions arise.

And there also is – or should be – potential for more overlap within ordained ministry. Priests and bishops remain deacons. (Thus ‘transitional’ diaconate is a misnomer for those who on further ordination indelibly continue as deacons; and ‘permanent’ is a misnomer solely for those who are not further ordained, since those who do so permanently retain their diaconal vocation!)

Importantly, there are constructive learnings for our understanding of priesthood to be gained by revisiting the diaconate in the light of the changes brought about the Review. Having a better grasp of the historic diaconate as menial, and more as bearing the significant responsibilities commissioned by and delegated from, the bishops, should put a different spin on changes restructuring brings. The call to take more managerial and directive functions could then be seen less as a distraction from the priestly vocation, and more of better integrating the vital, indelible, diaconal dimension in ways that promise spiritual enrichment. Indeed, rather than calling area leaders ‘deans’ as in some dioceses, perhaps ‘area deacons’ would be rather more accurate!

To conclude: the new circumstances that arise through the restructuring of parishes in response to the Church in Wales Review provide a fresh context for reconsidering the position of deacons – whether ‘distinctive’ or those moving on to priesthood. Resources, past and present, are extensive and varied, and brought into sharper focus by recent scholarship. Any decision, however shaped by these resources, and by current circumstances, will inevitably entail an element of choice. And this choice matters, because the diaconate ‘a flagship ministry’ since it is an ecclesial sign of what the whole Church in all its members is called to be. We must be nothing less.

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How do ordained and lay ministries complement each other?

Do the functional differences between ordained diaconal ministry and nationally recognized lay ministries justified their continued existence as distinct forms of ministry?

*The Ministry and Mission of the Whole Church*, 151 – the whole report bears serious consideration.

<sup>44</sup> Church Times, 23 February 2018 - [https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/23-february/news/uk/archbishop-of-york-readers-ordained-deacons-scheme.Many have taken this step, undertaking not to seek priestly ordination for at least 7 years. https://deaconstories.wordpress.com/2018/02/25/readers-can-become-deacons/](https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/23-february/news/uk/archbishop-of-york-readers-ordained-deacons-scheme.Many%20have%20taken%20this%20step.%20undertaking%20not%20to%20seek%20priestly%20ordination%20for%20at%20least%207%20years.%20https://deaconstories.wordpress.com/2018/02/25/readers-can-become-deacons/)

# ‘A Noble Task’: Lessons from the Historic Episcopate

*The Revd Canon Dr Mark Clavier*

**Abstract:** *The episcopate carries the responsibility of upholding authority, unity, apostolic mission, and teaching within the church. This essay surveys the development of the episcopacy according to these duties from the Primitive church to the present, noting the tensions that have often arisen and the social, cultural, and political baggage that has been accumulated along the way. Arguing for a ‘back to fundamentals’ review of the episcopate, it proposes lessons that can be learned from the past to enable bishops to conduct their duties more effectively in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Wales.*

While Ministry Areas are producing substantial and often creative changes to how clergy conduct their ministries, they have not yet had similar impact on the Welsh episcopate. Bishops continue to undertake their office much as they did prior to the development of Ministry Areas. While this is only to be expected given the retention of dioceses and their overarching administrations, it also suggests that less attention has been paid to the nature and conduct of the episcopacy in light of Ministry Areas as has been the case for clergy and laity. This is striking as the *Harris Report* highlighted ‘a culture of deference and dependence’ towards the Bench of Bishops and the need for a more collaborative, collegiate episcopacy with greater space for mission and pastoral care.<sup>45</sup>

Part of the problem with thinking clearly about the episcopate is that, as with parish clergy, it is surrounded by a great deal of institutional and cultural paraphernalia. This is particularly true in Britain where bishops have played leading social and political roles since Roman times. This essay seeks to identify and consider some of that baggage by considering how bishops have historically fulfilled four areas of responsibilities of oversight (*episcopé*) apart from their sacramental role as ordinaries of their dioceses:<sup>46</sup>

- *Authority*
- *Unity*
- *Apostolic Mission*
- *Teaching*

This essay examines these four areas and the tensions they contain during five ‘eras’ of the episcopacy: *Primitive* (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries), *Imperial* (4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries), *Medieval* (11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries), *Reformed* (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries), and *Modern* (19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries).<sup>47</sup> Looking at how

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<sup>45</sup> ‘Harries Report’, 18.

<sup>46</sup> This essay does not consider (except in passing) the sacramental role of bishops partly to keep the focus here within reasonable boundaries but also because it is taken here to be bedrock upon which any transformation of the episcopate must be built.

<sup>47</sup> Due to space constraints, the focus will also narrow from the whole church during the early centuries, the western church during the Middle Ages, and Anglicanism from the Reformation onwards.

bishops have undertaken these responsibilities demonstrates ways that episcopate can be renewed and invigorated by restoring a healthy balance to the expectations and emphases placed on it.

### Authority:

**Primitive Episcopacy:** In the New Testament, the Apostles are designated as ‘rulers’ within the church, given authority by Christ (Jn. 20.21-23) and power through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2.1-3). Afterwards, they function as missionary leaders who proclaim the Gospel and collectively determine strategy, common practice and doctrine (e.g., Acts 15).

Later, apostolic authority settled on bishops typically commissioned through the laying on of hands.<sup>48</sup> One of the earliest assertions of episcopal authority is found in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch: ‘See that you all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father.’<sup>49</sup> In Irenaeus of Lyons’s *Against Heretics*, episcopal authority was expressed in terms of a received ‘deposit’ of faith that confirms doctrinal orthodoxy against heresy:

Thus, the tradition of the apostles, which is manifest throughout the whole world, is clearly to be seen in every church by those who wish to see the truth. And we are able to list those who were appointed by the apostles as bishops in the churches and their successors until our own times .... For they desired that these men should be perfect and blameless in all things, who they were leaving behind as successors, delivering up their own place of teaching.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, in *On the Unity of the Church*, Cyprian of Carthage (c.200-258 AD) argues that bishops are to be obeyed because in their supreme office they represent the unity of God, the universal church, and apostolic teaching.<sup>51</sup> Unity rests on the shared episcopal authority of the Catholic church, which is found wherever bishops live in communion with each other— to break company with episcopal fellowship is to leave the church.

**Imperial Episcopacy:** During the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, tolerance and then official approval of Christianity within the Roman Empire transformed the episcopate, shifting episcopal culture towards the ideals of the Roman elite and expanding episcopal authority beyond the boundaries of the church. From the reign of Constantine, bishops were increasingly drawn from Roman elite and were, therefore, generally well-educated, trained to govern, and wealthy. Bishops often became local magistrates and governors, overseeing municipal works, sustaining education, defending the poor, and legally enjoying the right to speak freely on behalf of their community to Imperial agents.<sup>52</sup> The authority of Imperial bishops is clearly expressed, for example in Ambrose’s *On the Duties of Clergy*, a treatise on the official conduct of bishops. Ambrose’s ideal bishops are wise and eloquent patrons who use their power and authority to benefit their communities. In effect, they are the patricians

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<sup>48</sup> *The First Epistle of Clement* 42.4-5.

<sup>49</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrneans* 8

<sup>50</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heretics* 3.3.1

<sup>51</sup> Stuart G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (SPCK, 1991), 89-91.

<sup>52</sup> See Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (University of California Press, 2013).

of the church whose authority is *pragmatic* (directed towards the public good), *spiritual* (provided by the Holy Spirit), and *ascetic* (rooted in holiness and virtue).<sup>53</sup>

**Medieval Episcopacy:** The Middle Ages witnessed an expansion of episcopal authority as bishops became peers of the realm, papal dignitaries, and munificent patrons.<sup>54</sup> Following the codification of canon law and the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>-century reforms of the church, the juridical authority of bishops was firmly established and systematically organised. However, the Investiture Controversy (1075-1122), an extended dispute between papal and monarchical authority, highlighted the fact that bishops were agents of both monarchs and the pope and in different (and frequently opposed) spheres exercised the authority of each. This created tensions that were officially resolved by the Concordat of Worms but really continued throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>55</sup> Often, however, this dual authority allowed bishops to function effectively as peacemakers and reconcilers as, for example when the English episcopate used its authority to uphold Magna Carta during the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>56</sup>

The Middle Ages also witnessed the expansion and transformation of episcopal power in response to heresies. Bishops directed persecutions of heretics and wielded enormous coercive power. Their responsibility for opposing 'erroneous and strange doctrine' placed them at the forefront of the systematic response to heresy: for example, the persecution of Lollardy in England during the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>57</sup>

**Reformed Episcopacy:** During the long Reformation in England and Wales, episcopal authority was shaped by two opposing forces: on the one hand, bishops played leading roles in both the royal household and Parliament while, on the other, the break with Rome reduced their financial capacity to exercise effective authority.<sup>58</sup> During the later reformation, their authority was also challenged by radical reformers determined either to diminish episcopal power or abolish it altogether. The argument during the 17<sup>th</sup> century about whether the episcopacy is essential, only beneficial, or even necessary for the church was never entirely resolved and came to distinguish low, broad and high churchmanships.<sup>59</sup>

Anglican defences of episcopate continued to focus on its role in governance. Richard Hooker, for example, argued that bishops differed from presbyter primarily in their role as governors of the church:

A Bishop is a minister of God, unto whom with permanent continuance there is given not only power of administering the Word and Sacraments, which power other Presbyters have, but also a further power to ordain ecclesiastical persons and a power of chieftly in government over Presbyters as well as Laymen, a power to be by way of jurisdiction a Pastor even unto Pastors themselves.<sup>60</sup>

For Hooker, the term *apostolic* chiefly means that bishops retain the authority of the original apostles.

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<sup>53</sup> Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 16-22.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph H. Lynch, *The Medieval Church: A brief history* (Longman, 1992), 123-6.

<sup>55</sup> Lynch, *The Medieval Church*, 141-5.

<sup>56</sup> S.T. Ambler, *Bishops in the Political Community of England, 1213-1272* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>57</sup> Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation* (Blackwell, 2009), 15-16, 21-4, 74-80, 202-3, 395.

<sup>58</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (Palgrave, 2001), 88-9.

<sup>59</sup> *Episcopal Ministry: The Report of the Archbishop's Group on The Episcopate 1990*, 86-87.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, 2.7.3.

However, political events, especially the British Civil Wars and the Act of Toleration, overtook theological arguments. By the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, bishops had effectively lost much of their political power: no longer did they serve as ministers, sit in Privy Council, or play any official political role outside of the House of Lords (where they remained a powerful bloc). Indeed, the 18<sup>th</sup> century is deemed to be a period when bishops neglected even their authority within the church

**Modern Episcopacy:** After the Act of Toleration and the Glorious Revolution, the Church of England became the ‘established’ church in a legally pluralistic society. This impacted the power and authority of bishops tremendously; outside of the House of Lords, episcopal authority became situated primarily within dioceses and did not encompass (except in limited areas) those outside the Established church. The 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, marked a period of both renewal and missed opportunities. Both the Evangelical Revival and the Oxford Movement produced bishops deeply committed to providing effective governance in their dioceses; the first bishops were also consecrated for Anglican churches outside of Britain, including the United States where their authority was described and delineated within the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church and their dioceses. In Britain, however, both the background and education of most bishops fostered a growing divide between the Church of England and the working classes. It would not be until the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the British episcopacy would begin to embrace men (and eventually women) from more varied backgrounds and contexts.<sup>61</sup>

Additionally, the exercise of episcopal authority was redefined by the emergence of synodical government and the increasing organisation of the church as a bureaucratic institution abiding by legal and managerial regulations. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially following World War 2, the conduct of episcopal activities became more strongly and systematically structured as their personal authority was delegated to diocesan staff and circumscribed by regulations; likewise, their governance was increasingly shared with elected synodical delegates. ‘Bishops in synod’ became a description used increasingly to denote the more collaborative conduct of their authority.

This professionalisation of the episcopate generally resulted in the more efficient governance of dioceses and wider inclusion of clergy and laity in the exercise of authority. At the same time, there has been a tendency for bishops to become situated within the bureaucracy of their dioceses, which in turn has placed increasing pressure on them to function primarily as managers: ‘the development of the Church’s life in the twentieth century has, in common with that of many other institutions, made management essential and, because of the nature of the Church’s leadership, the responsibility of too many aspects of this has fallen on the bishops’.<sup>62</sup> Meetings and finances comprise a great deal of their ministry—necessary in a modern organisation but increasingly burdensome in dioceses coping with reduced finances, fewer clergy, and fewer viable congregations.

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<sup>61</sup> Trevor Beeson, *The Bishops* (SCM Press, 2002), 4-5.

<sup>62</sup> Beeson, *The Bishops*, 1.

## Unity

**Primitive Episcopacy:** Most assertions of episcopal authority during the first four centuries of the church were in defence of Catholic unity. So, for example, Ignatius insisted on obedience to the bishop as the test of apostolic authenticity: 'Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic church'.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Cyprian's *On the Unity of the Church* argued that heretics stand outside the church: 'We should all firmly believe in and maintain ... unity, but especially those of us that are bishops, so that we may prove the episcopate to be one and undivided .... the episcopate is one, and each part is held to the whole body by each other part'.<sup>64</sup>

Such articulations of unity, however, arose amidst division within the church. In an attempt to overcome such divisions, general and regional councils and synods were developed, where doctrine, practice, and policy could be debated and agreed upon. Development of episcopal communion, however, often came through rancorous disputes and denunciation against not only heretics but also each other. Thus, from the beginning, the episcopacy's role as an instrument of unity highlighted the fact that the church was in fact divided.

**Imperial Episcopacy:** The 4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries were crucial to how the church came to understand and embody unity. The long struggle to produce and then defend the Nicene Creed consolidated the role of bishops as chief defenders of unity. During this time, the ideal of bishops governing their dioceses and acting collectively in General Council was instituted and firmly established. Bishops also began to wield coercive and even violent power or call upon the help of the Roman state to enforce unity within their dioceses.

The bishops' role as instruments of unity was further strengthened in the West by the collapse of the Roman Empire. Episcopal authority was often the only remaining link with former imperial holdings and culture, preserving ecclesial unity amidst socio-political fragmentation and encompassing an increasingly wide variety of cultures, customs, and languages. Even though bishops typically served local monarchs, their orders, relationships, and even backgrounds remained international; for example, the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury included both England and Wales.

At the same time, however, this period saw an intensification of episcopal factionalism as Catholic bishops debated with other heresies (e.g., Arian, Donatist, and Pelagian) and split into eastern and western factions. Petty factionalism also afflicted the episcopacy: for example, the Constantinople and Alexandria were often at odds and in the 10<sup>th</sup> century the church in Rome became notoriously riven with urban factionalism.<sup>65</sup>

**Medieval Episcopacy:** During the Middle Ages, the papacy gradually eclipsed the episcopate's role as instruments of unity. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas stated that 'since the whole church is one body, it requires, if this oneness is to be preserved, that there be a governing power in respect of the whole church, above the episcopal power whereby each particular church is governed, and this is the power of the Pope'.<sup>66</sup> Aquinas

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<sup>63</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Smyrneans*, 8.

<sup>64</sup> Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church*, 1.5.

<sup>65</sup> Lynch, *The Medieval Church*, 105-6.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Su., Q 40.a.6

reflects the development during the twelfth century of the monarchical papacy, which eclipsed the episcopacy as the font of Catholic unity.

The Conciliar movement during the 15<sup>th</sup> century attempted to reassert collective episcopal authority as the supreme instrument of unity in the church. The Councils of Constance (1414-18) and Basel (1431-49) articulated the doctrine that supreme authority resided in the bishops of the church convened in General Council:

Legitimately assembled in the holy Spirit, constituting a general council and representing the Catholic church militant, it has power immediately from Christ; and everyone of whatever state or dignity, even papal, is bound to obey it in those matters which pertain to the faith, the eradication of the said schism, and the general reform of the said church of God in head and members (*Haec Sancta Synodus*).<sup>67</sup>

The Conciliar movement, however, collapsed with the reassertion of papal authority following Basel. In England and Wales during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, bishops functioned mainly as the guarantors of unity through their promotion of the Catholic faith and opposition to Lollard and later Lutheran evangelism.

**Reformed Episcopacy:** The defence of the episcopacy during the debates with radical reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries saw a re-assertation of the episcopacy as an instrument of unity, though now mainly through its relationship to the British monarchy. This was not a straightforward process after the separation of the Church of England from Rome: bishops had to defend themselves against the charge of disobedience to the pope while also insisting on the obedience of radical reformers to their own authority. Generally, this was solved through an appeal to the authority of the monarch to whom all owed allegiance.<sup>68</sup>

Rooting their arguments in Patristics, 17<sup>th</sup>-century Episcopalians articulated a Christian unity that consisted of subordination to episcopal authority and the exercise of episcopal equality. Henry Hammond, for example, wrote of the ‘constant due subjection and obedience of all inferiors to all their lawful superiors, and in due exercise of authority in the superiors toward all committed to their charge’, and to ‘the performance of all mutual duties of justice and charity toward one another’.<sup>69</sup> Bishops exercised their authority to ensure the unity of the church for the sake of the Crown. Similarly, Bishop John Bramhall contended that bishops as heirs of the first apostles were ‘equal in mission, equal in commission, equal in power, equal in honour, equal in all things, except priority of order, without which no society can subsist’.<sup>70</sup> In effect, bishops promoted ecclesial unity on behalf of the monarch by whose royal authority the Church of England remained ‘one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church’.

**Modern Episcopacy:** Undoubtedly, the most striking development of the Anglican episcopacy as an instrument of unity was the establishment of the Anglican Communion and Lambeth Conferences.<sup>71</sup> For the first time, Anglican bishops from around the world could act collectively and deliberate on matters collegially; Cyprian’s *On the Unity of the Church* served

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<sup>67</sup> *Haec Sancta Synodus*

<sup>68</sup> See Benjamin Guyer, ‘From the Apostles’ time’: the Polity of the British episcopal churches, 1603-62’ in Elliot Vernon and Hunter Powell (eds.), *Church Polity and politics in the British Atlantic World, c. 1635-66* (Manchester University Press, 2020).

<sup>69</sup> Henry Hammond, *On Schism*, 2.12

<sup>70</sup> John Bramhall, *A Defence of the Church of England*, 152-3.

<sup>71</sup> See Paul Avis and Benjamin Guyer (eds.), *The Lambeth Conference: Theology, History, Polity and Purpose* (T & T Clark, 2017).

as a theological guide for and defence of episcopal synodality. While Lambeth Conference enjoys only ‘moral authority’ over Provinces, the very act of gathering bishops from across the world together became a powerful symbol of Anglican unity. The role of bishops as one of the four instruments of unity in the Anglican Communion was further highlighted by the creation of Primates Meetings in 1978 for ‘leisurely thought, prayer and deep consultation’ where Anglican primates could be ‘channels through which the voice of member Churches would be heard, a real interchange of heart could take place.’<sup>72</sup> The *Windsor Report* described the role of the episcopate as ‘not a substitute for the mutual accountability of the rest of the Church, but is rather a means of expressing it, drawing it together, and enabling the whole Church to listen to each member and each member to listen to the whole’.<sup>73</sup>

From the mid-90s, however, bishops have struggled increasingly to function as instruments of unity in ways that do not foster in greater factionalism. Within the Anglican Communion, many bishops in the Global South broke communion with those in North America. At the same time, many bishops (especially in North America) have struggled in their own dioceses to hold opposing factions together as Anglicans have fallen out over matters of human sexuality and cross-border interventions. The capacity for bishops to promote unity within their dioceses and the wider church is often based as much on personal charisma as on their episcopal office.

## Apostolic Mission

**Primitive Episcopacy:** The early episcopacy began in mission. The Acts of the Apostles portrays the Apostles—those whom Christ ‘sent’ just as the Father had ‘sent’ him (Jn. 20.21)—as engaged in mission and evangelism. They preach the Gospel, baptize converts, and heal the sick. Peter’s episcopal ministry to Samaria and to the first Gentiles is followed by Paul’s mission to Asia Minor and Greece. Additionally, episcopal communities developed systems administered by deacons for the support of the poor, hungry, orphans, and widows.

By the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, however, the work of evangelism had largely been handed over to others. The bishop’s missional work lay primarily in apologetics, preaching, and care for the poor and vulnerable through his episcopal household. Bishops gradually became static figures: those who ‘send’ rather than those who are ‘sent’. Indeed, the term *apostolic* came increasingly to refer less to an actual commission than to a description of the faith and practice of the first Apostles: to be ‘apostolic’ was to stand against heresies in the teachings of the Apostles.

**Imperial Episcopacy:** By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, bishops had largely ceased to be directly involved in missionary work except in the conversion of pagans and heretics within their own dioceses. In more developed areas, however, the machinery of local social work became highly organised and developed; the episcopal *familia* (household) provided alms and other support for the poor, managed orphanages and homes for widows, ministered to the accused and prisoners, negotiated the release of captives, and similar activities.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, this period

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<sup>72</sup> Colin Podmore, ‘The Development of the Instruments of Communion’ in Jeremy Morris (ed.) *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, vol. 4: Global Western Anglicanism, c. 1910-present* (Oxford University Press, 2017, 298-9.

<sup>73</sup> *Windsor Report*, 65.

<sup>74</sup> See Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership & Community in Late Antique Gaul* (University of California Press, 1992), 45-46, 84-86.

witnessed the occasional involvement of bishops in itinerant evangelism: Methodius, Patrick, Cuthbert, Aidan and Augustine of Canterbury are but a few examples of what might now be called 'missionary bishops'. While these stand out as exceptions to the rule, it demonstrates that even at the height of imperial prelacy, the episcopacy had the capacity to exercise its apostolic imperative to be sent out to proclaim the Gospel to new peoples.

**Medieval Episcopacy:** While bishops were involved in the expansion of Christianity up until roughly the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, they largely ceased to have any such evangelical role during the high and late Middle Ages. Their involvement in mission was primarily to support the poor and vulnerable through their patronage, which could be considerable. In terms of evangelism, the Middle Ages set in place a kind of ancillary role for bishops: when new lands were converted to Christianity, sees were subsequently created near centres of royal authority, and bishops sent to consolidate the new church. Initial evangelism itself was typically undertaken by monks or through the coercive efforts of secular authorities. Bishops typically functioned as apostolic consolidators, establishing the diocesan structures, organisations, and discipline to ensure the growth and prosperity of Christianity in formerly pagan lands.

**Reformed Episcopacy:** At the Reformation, there was a concerted attempt to recover the 'apostolic' episcopacy, understood in light of the pastoral directives of the Pauline epistles.<sup>75</sup> In his *Sermon of the Plough*, Hugh Latimer called for bishops to return to the central task of teaching and caring for the poor and powerless: 'And ye that be prelates, look well to your office; for right prelating is busy labouring, and not lording. Therefore preach and teach, and let your plough be doing.'<sup>76</sup> A common complaint among reformers had been the involvement of medieval bishops in royal government rather than the promotion of faith and godliness within their dioceses.

A similar view was expressed on the high church end of the spectrum in sermon by John Cosin, later the Bishop of Durham. Drawing on John 21.22, he described what it means for bishops to be 'sent' like Christ:

[Jesus], sent by His Father to be a Mediator for mankind, and to reconcile the world by His death and sacrifice upon the cross; [bishops], sent by Him, to mediate and to pray for the people, to be ministers of reconciliation....to be sacrificers too, representers at the Altar here, and appliers of the Sacrifice once made for all; without the last act, the first will do us no good.<sup>77</sup>

Cosin concluded that bishops share in the 'sending' of Christ in four ways: 1) by being pastors to their dioceses; 2) by teaching only what Christ has commanded rather than their own opinions; 3) by encouraging the faithful to be diligent in their faith; 4) by being 'Christ's ambassadors' through the exemplary conduct of their lives; and 5) and by being 'sheep among wolves', bearing peaceably the evil directed towards them.

In essence, the English Reformation reflected a return to some of the ideals expressed in Ambrose's *On the Duties of Clergy*: bishops are to exercise their apostolic mission through good governance, learning, and patronage for the benefit of all under their care.

**Modern Episcopacy:** The export of Anglicanism globally throughout the British Empire and former colonies caused a sea change in how apostolic mission was understood. For the first time in centuries, 'missionary' bishops became involved in evangelism in places

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<sup>75</sup> See Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Clarendon Press, 1990).

<sup>76</sup> Hugh Latimer, *Sermon of the Plough*

<sup>77</sup> John Cosin, *Sermon 6.3.1*

where few if any churches had been established. Frank Weston in Zanzibar and George Selwyn in New Zealand conducted highly successful episcopal missions. In the United States, General Convention passed a new canon in 1835 that created the 'Missionary Bishop' who could conduct episcopal functions in states and territories without any diocesan structures.<sup>78</sup> Jackson Kemper was subsequently consecrated and sent to establish churches in the American Midwest.

At the same time, much of the social work traditionally associated with dioceses was taken over by the State. Increasingly, dioceses sought to provide care and support for those neglected by the welfare state. The development of mass transportation and communication, however, made it easier for bishops to travel widely within their dioceses and to be more visibly involved in local initiatives. Bishops today tend to be visible participants in the social work of others rather than the directors and sponsors of that work themselves.

## Teaching

**Primitive Episcopacy:** One of the duties of bishops in the Early Church was to teach the faith. The Acts of the Apostles portrays apostles such as Peter and Paul as the retelling of the Jewish Scriptures culminating in the death and resurrection of Jesus. During his missionary travels, Paul appoints elders to lead and teach the local communities in the faith. Elsewhere, bishops are enjoined to 'proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching'. (2 Tim 4:2).

The teaching office of the episcopacy was exemplified by the writings of various bishops, such as those mentioned above; Clement, Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Cyprian were all bishops. Their writings sought not only to teach the faith but also to guard against false teaching. In fact, the teaching office of the bishop was often articulated in terms of authority and apostolic pedigree and as the foundation for the unity of the church—by preserving and teaching the apostolic faith, bishops guarded the church's unity within their dioceses.

**Imperial Episcopacy:** One of the main duties of bishops after Constantine was to teach, symbolized by the *cathedra* or the bishop's chair from which they taught and presided surrounded by their clergy.<sup>79</sup> The bishop was to be 'a *doctor* just like the professors of classical learning, teaching his congregation through sermons as well as in small groups'.<sup>80</sup> As already noted, Ambrose envisioned bishops eloquently teaching divine wisdom for the benefit of their communities. Augustine's *On Christian Teaching* tasked bishops with the responsibility of 'instructing, delighting, and persuading people' to receive the Gospel.<sup>81</sup> Pastoral guidance and the exercise of episcopal authority were understood in terms of teaching the faithful how to live aright and seek after God. Thus, at the start of Gregory's *Pastoral Rule*, he states: 'No one presumes to teach an art till he has first, with intent meditation, learned it. What rashness is

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<sup>78</sup> See <https://episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/missionary-bishops>

<sup>79</sup> Rebecca Lyman, *Early Christian Traditions*, 98.

<sup>80</sup> Van Dam, *Leadership & Community*, 63.

<sup>81</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 4

it, then, for the unskilful to assume pastoral authority, since the government of souls is the art of arts!’<sup>82</sup>

Teaching often took place within episcopal households. Bishops played a vital role in the educational reforms of the Carolingians and in Anglo-Saxon England. That people remained conscious of the bishop’s responsibility for teaching the faith can be seen in Bede’s letter to Bishop Egbert of York:

And because your diocese is too extensive for you alone to go through it and preach the word of God in every village and hamlet ... it is necessary that you appoint others to assist you in the holy work, by ordaining priests and nominating teachers who may be zealous in preaching the word of God in every village.<sup>83</sup>

Here we see episcopal authority, even in a delegated capacity, expressed in terms of teaching and mission.

**Medieval Episcopacy:** Ambrose’s image of a bishop endured as an episcopal ideal throughout the early Middle Ages but was shaped by the emergence of monasticism. The result was a thoroughly medieval ideal of a bishop learned in Scripture and canon law, capable of preaching to people of all stations, and living a ‘regular’ life based at the cathedral. However little it was realised, this ideal remained powerful: episcopal households developed into coherent bodies of supporting canons who abided by a Rule (e.g. *Rule of St Augustine*), studied Scripture with their bishop, shared in his ministry and prayers, and provided education through cathedral schools. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) attempted to codify this development by insisting that cathedrals become centres of learning by appointing a theologian ‘who shall instruct the priests and others in the Sacred Scriptures and in those things especially that pertain to the cure of souls’.<sup>84</sup>

The zenith of episcopal teaching was the 12<sup>th</sup> century when cathedral schools were most well-developed and prosperous. The emergence of universities, however, shifted the locus of learning away from bishops and monasteries to universities where theologians studied and taught. While bishops were often drawn from the universities, they typically were not themselves teachers (with notable exceptions) or theologians. Instead, they promoted education by supporting scholars and founding schools and colleges (for example, New College, Oxford and Peterhouse, Cambridge).

**Reformed Episcopacy:** The early modern episcopacy benefited enormously from the ideals of humanism to which both Catholic and Protestant reformers appealed. Early reformers sought to recover the ideal of bishops as teachers and many took seriously the task of promoting catechesis in their dioceses.<sup>85</sup> Almost all bishops had university education and many actively engaged in theological disputes and composed theological treatises. Indeed, one of the remarkable features of early modern Anglicanism is the number and prominence of episcopal theologians. Arguably, the Tudor and Caroline church saw a greater proportion of episcopal theologians than any period of the church.

Likewise, bishops generally held a high view of the need to promote education more widely through their support of grammar schools and universities. Bishops played key roles in developments at Oxford and Cambridge, in promoting catechesis in their dioceses,

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<sup>82</sup> Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule* 1.1.

<sup>83</sup> Bede, *Letter to King Egbert* 5.

<sup>84</sup> Fourth Lateran Council, Canon 11.

<sup>85</sup> Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor*, 11-12, 126-7. Confirmations were known popularly as ‘bishoppings’.

patronizing Oxbridge-trained clergy and competent theologians, and seeking to improve the quality of clerical education.

**Modern Episcopacy:** The development of seminaries, the professionalisation of theology in academia, and the bureaucratisation of the church meant that by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century there was little scope or need for scholar-bishops. Theology increasingly became situated within universities where it was undertaken by credentialled theologians. Pressures on bishops to administer their complex dioceses left little time for serious study or teaching nor did the skills required for management align well with those of theologians and scholars. Although the Church of England partly resisted this trend away from scholar-bishops (e.g., William Temple, Michael Ramsey, Robert Runcie, and Rowan Williams), by and large, the divide between academic theology and the church has widened over the decades. This same trend is to be found in other Anglican provinces, possibly indicating a decreasing esteem for the role of theology in the deliberations of the church.

Arguably, one result of this split between the episcopacy and theological teaching has been the general diminishment of teaching within the wider church. Others have noted that hiving off academic theology from the wider church impoverishes both.<sup>86</sup> If theology is the particular language of the church, then it cannot long prosper apart from the worship, mission, and ministry of the church. Not surprisingly, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a waning of theology as university departments and theological colleges have shrunk or closed while the church has yet to recover an appreciation for serious study and catechesis.

## Lessons for Wales

Taking the reorganisation of the Church in Wales into mission/ministry areas, what are some the lessons that can be drawn from this historical survey?

**Authority:** Since the early church there has been a tendency for the episcopacy to mirror the power structures of its day: Roman episcopal patricians turned into medieval episcopal aristocrats turned into early modern episcopal gentry turned into modern episcopal CEOs. While this tendency can be understood positively as a creative relationship between secular and episcopal authority, it has not always been undertaken with a critical eye. Indeed, during much of the history of the church, ‘the price paid by bishops...for their high place in society was submission to the authority of principalities and powers’.<sup>87</sup> In our own time, new power structures are gradually reshaping how the episcopate functions in accordance with managerial theories based on efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. While some welcome these developments, others express disquiet about the church undertaking supposedly inhumane models of management.<sup>88</sup>

In the Church in Wales, this tendency to adapt to secular forms of authority and governance runs against the problem of diminishing financial and human resources. Not unlike infinite economic growth within a finite world, expanding diocesan administration and regulations in a church of decreasing membership and income can be sustained for only so long. New models of authority and governance are, therefore, required that are both practical

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<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Sarah Coaley: <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/can-systematic-theology-become-pastoral-again-and-pastoral-theol/10095582>

<sup>87</sup> Beeson, *The Bishops*, 2.

<sup>88</sup> See for example Martyn Percy, ‘Are these the leaders that we really want?’ *Church Times* 12 Dec 2014.

and sustainably resourced. Is there a way to recover earlier concepts of authority rooted not only in management but also unity, apostolic mission, and teaching? Can bishops be freed from cumbersome managerial roles so that they can work collaboratively in other ways? One way forward might be systematically to explore ways of creatively sharing *episcopé* among ministry area leaders. In effect, this would be to carry on earlier work conducted in the Church of England—for instance, the call in *Episcopal Ministry* that the ‘welfare and well-being of others ought to be interdependent with the expression of personal and community freedom.’<sup>89</sup> What might a streamlined, decentralized exercise of episcopal authority look like within the landscape of Ministry Areas?

**Unity:** This has become one of the thorniest issues for bishops to handle as the church has lurched from one controversy to another. In Wales, this is further complicated by a history of a lack of cooperation between dioceses. Thus, in a church emerging from years of debate over women’s ministry and currently engaged in debate about human sexuality, where older debates between evangelical and catholic approaches to ministry continue to smoulder, and where the adoption of Ministry Areas has not been universally welcomed, it can be difficult for bishops to be effective instruments of unity.

One way through this dilemma is to recognise the unique opportunity of the bishop *to be known* and *to gather*. Bishops enjoy highly personal and relational power exhibited in their visitations throughout their dioceses and work at the provincial level. They also possess a unique power to gather people together within their diocese: for example, synods, conferences, clergy residentials, and such liturgical occasions as confirmations, ordinations, and chrism masses. There is a need in Wales for drawing on these opportunities to develop ways of effectively linking together Ministry Areas through regular visitations and gatherings. It would similarly be helpful for the Bench to be seen more clearly as a united and collaborative gathering for promoting the common life of the Province as a whole (for example, through communiqués or shared initiatives and worship). How might a recovery of the episcopate’s shared role as instruments of unity inform how bishops understand their ministry at both the diocesan and provincial levels? Inspiration and motivation will be key parts of this equation.

**Apostolic Mission:** If we begin to move away from the late antique and medieval idea of bishops as primarily governors and of apostolicity referring mainly to the deposit of faith, new avenues for thinking about the episcopate in terms of mission appear. Is there a way to recover a sense of bishops as ones who have been sent to undertake apostolic mission? What might it mean for bishops to be pioneering or is there a place for a bishop dedicated to overseeing pioneer ministries? As discussed in the section on authority, there is a need here for a stripped-down episcopacy that is flexible enough to respond to mission opportunities.

Although the Bench is currently raising the profile of evangelism, there is also need for recovering the place of bishops as instruments of evangelism rather than mere promoters of it. What would episcopal involvement in evangelism look like? Perhaps, the apostolic mission of bishops can be demonstrated through preaching tours, sustained articulation of a common vision in their diocese, and coordination within their diocese of a shared understanding of missional work. Bishops already gather people for worship, training, and governance—how might they also gather people for the work of mission and evangelism? The Harries Report implied such a development when it suggested a reconfiguring of the Bench into three

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<sup>89</sup> *Episcopal Ministry*, 286.

diocesan bishops and three area bishops who could ‘focus more fully on their missionary and pastoral role’.<sup>90</sup>

**Teaching:** During the last fifty years, the church has witnessed a precipitous decline in Sunday schools, catechism, and the study of academic theology. While discipleship training (for example, *Theology for Life*) is seeking to address this issue, little consideration has been given to the role of the episcopate in fostering a climate of teaching and learning. What might be done to reinvigorate the episcopate’s responsibility to be a font of learning? Can bishops in the 21<sup>st</sup> century be theologians and teachers or are we now inescapably tied to their being chiefly managers and administrators? As the Church in Wales is producing fewer clergy with advanced theological degrees, the possibility of appointing learned bishops internally is diminishing, and this will have long-term ramifications on the episcopate’s teaching office. On the other hand, it has long been the practice for bishops to be supported by theologians in their teaching office (papal documents are typically ‘ghost’ written). It may be worthwhile exploring better collaborative work between bishops and theologians on pastoral letters, clerical education, and supporting life-long learning. How might bishops be freed up for study and supported in fulfilling their responsibility to teach and preach the Gospel?

In essence, this paper has been a call to return to the fundamentals. As stated earlier, the episcopate has taken on considerable socio-political and cultural baggage over the centuries. At the same time, the work of the episcopacy has changed considerably in recent decades due to the impact of new modes of management, organisational theory, and expanding regulations. By surveying historically the development of the fundamental responsibilities of bishops, it is hoped that others will be encouraged to undertake further reflection and discussion about radically different approaches to episcopacy rooted in and informed by Scripture and tradition.

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<sup>90</sup> Harries Report, 18.

# The Welsh Context

# Blessing and Presiding: A Welsh Contextual Theology of Priesthood<sup>1</sup>

*The Revd Dr Manon Ceridwen James*

**Abstract:** *This essay draws on the unique place of poetry in Welsh culture to argue for a distinctive Welsh approach to ministry that rooted in 'praise' and 'place'. It makes a contextual theological case for renewing the Anglican ministry in Wales along these lines while also tackling the 'culture of deference' noted in the Harries Report by embracing more fully the Welsh preference for equality and egalitarianism more usually associated with Nonconformity.*

## A Welsh contextual theology

In this essay I argue that a Welsh contextual theology of priesthood makes an important contribution to a theology of Anglican ministerial priesthood. A contextual approach asserts that theology is the work of the people, not just theologians, and that talk about God is always in the context of and in response to human practices, needs, significant events and questions. Contextual theologians argue that theology has always been found in hymnody, poetry and non-verbally in ritual; and that all forms of popular, high and folk culture can become valid forms for theology.<sup>2</sup> Theology is always rooted and developed within human culture and cannot be set apart from it.<sup>3</sup>

If we accept this argument, my proposal is that a distinctively Welsh theology of priesthood can be developed based on our shared religious literary tradition (which is not restricted to Anglican poets and writers) as well as distinctive identities. I will now outline some of the features of this tradition by looking at the work of some key poets and writers and also examine some characteristic Welsh assumptions and practices.

## Blessing: priesthood and Welsh poetry

An argument for the importance of poetry for theology can be made from the fact that poetry forms a large part of both liturgy and Scripture. God as creator inspires creativity in us as humans.<sup>4</sup> Poetry reveals that we cannot fully express our relationship with God in mere words - while also maintaining that we *can* write about the concrete experience of God in the ordinariness of daily life. Poetry is integral to our experience of faith. David Ford<sup>5</sup> has identified an interest in the connection between poetry and theology as one of the first of four growing features of Western theology in this century. As Mark Oakley writes:

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Canon Dr Rhiannon Johnson and Canon Dr Mark Clavier for their comments on this paper which helped to improve it. I would also like to thank Menna Elfyn for allowing me to reproduce her wonderful poems in full. The copyright for the poem by Euros Bowen is held by Church in Wales publications.

<sup>2</sup> R.J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1985). Kindle edition and S.B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Revised and Expanded Edition*. (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Here, I am defining culture as a shared and evolving set of understandings, values, stories, artefacts and language.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Pryce, *Poetry, Practical Theology and Reflective Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> David Ford, *The Future of Christian Theology*. (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 2.

Ever since priests and people of the world's religions have been aware of the numinous, they have opened their arms to invoke the divine name and have done so with poetry pouring from their lips and dramatized into movement. It is also striking that the holy texts of the world's religions, believed by many to be revealed by God as holy wisdom from beyond the human mind, are often found in poetic form. It is acknowledged by the world's religions that God is very obviously a poet.<sup>6</sup>

This relationship between poetry and faith is particularly strong within Welsh Christianity, especially given the predominance of the priest - poet tradition. The most internationally renowned Welsh priests of recent times have been poets – for example Rowan Williams and R.S. Thomas. Even those who are historically considered major priest poets, for example Gerard Manley Hopkins and George Herbert, have significant Welsh connections.<sup>7</sup> The group of Anglican priests called the *Hen Bersoniaid Llengar* (Old Literary Parsons) were a major influence on the culture of Wales in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and are credited with preserving and promoting Welsh language, literature and music for the nation.<sup>8</sup> There has also been a recent history of individuals perpetuating a strong and vibrant Welsh identity for the Church in Wales sustained by a commitment to literature or hymnody as seen, for example, in the lives and work of Euros Bowen,<sup>9</sup> Timothy Rees and more recently Gwynn ap Gwilym.

## Praise and Place

In *Praise Above All: Discovering the Welsh Tradition*, A.M. Allchin explores the Welsh poetic tradition, identifying within it a pervading theme of praise. Poetry, he notes, is a much less rarefied pursuit in Welsh-speaking communities than in much of the English-speaking world as it is a commonplace interest for people in every walk of life.<sup>10</sup> Due to the ubiquity of poetry, people are both 'priests' and 'poets' because of the recognition of the glory of God in everyday activities e.g. in celebrating your team's winning goal, a delicious meal, the applause at the end of a concert. This can be characterised as affirmation and the acknowledgment of the presence of God in people and place, and in everyday experiences of joy.<sup>11</sup>

Poems such as Euros Bowen's 'Reredos,' R. S. Thomas's 'The Bright Field' and Waldo Williams's 'Mewn Dau Gae' (Between Two Fields, in translation by Rowan Williams) speak both of a theological (even mystical) engagement with place and the sacrament of the present moment. Places hold history, meanings and identity for people,<sup>12</sup> and this is particularly true for Wales and yet the experience of God's presence is not limited to beautiful or out of the way places. Inge argues that 'it is not just in beautiful, wild or 'sacred' places that sacramental events ...can occur' and describes the novelist Frederick Buechner's experience of a vision of

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<sup>6</sup> Mark Oakley, *The Splash of Words: believing in poetry*. (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2016), 99

<sup>7</sup> Historically, some key religious lay poets have been Welsh too e.g. Henry Vaughan.

<sup>8</sup> Simon Brooks, *Pam na fu Cymru: Methiant Cenedlaetholdeb Cymraeg*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Canon Dr Mark Pryce for introducing me to Euros Bowen's work, and for his encouragement for me to explore the Welsh priest poet tradition both in person and in his own writings on poetry and theology.

<sup>10</sup> Though Oakley (quoting Geoffrey Hill) also maintains that there is an inherent democracy within all poetry given that the reader and not the author is the interpreter of meaning (Oakley 2016: 279) and Mark Clavier also maintains that other English-speaking traditions also emphasise the importance of poetry as a commonplace pursuit: e.g. African American culture.

<sup>11</sup> A.M. Allchin, *Praise Above All: Discovering the Welsh Tradition*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 6.

<sup>12</sup> John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*. (London: Ashgate, 2003). p 36.

the 'consummation of all things in Christ' in, of all place, Sea World Disney resort.<sup>13</sup> We romanticise our landscape, but a theology of place will recognise that we can experience God not just in a quiet rural church, the mountains or looking out into the sea, but in the middle of our slag heaps, factories and shopping centres.

In discussing this essay, when it was first presented at a ministry officers' meeting, and later at a doctrinal commission meeting the question was raised, articulated by Canon Mark Clavier, 'are all these places then equal? Is the encounter with God in a commercialised place or a toxic landscape the same as an encounter with God amidst beauty?' My answer would be a resounding yes. A poetic approach would see beauty and the possibility of an encounter with God in all daily experiences, and a 'toxic' landscape can still be beautiful, or if not beautiful, atmospheric and evocative – for example the blinking industrial lights at Port Talbot, or the purple slate heaps in the Ogwen Valley. Perhaps a distinctively Welsh approach to place would take this as read, given that industrialisation has been a notable feature of the Welsh landscape and the permanent backdrop to the lives of Welsh people since the industrial revolution. The presence of Christ within industrialised landscapes seems to be the point Harri Webb is making in his brilliant poem 'Local Boy Makes Good' with its first two verses:

### **Local Boy Makes Good**

When Christ was born on Dowlais Top  
The ironworks were all on stop  
The money wasn't coming in  
There was no room at the Half Moon Inn.  
The Shepherds came from Twyn-y-Waun  
And three kings by the Merthyr and Brecon line  
A star shone oe'r the Beacons' ridge  
And angels sang by Rhymney Bridge.

This poem talks about Jesus' presence in a variety of settings in south Wales, ending with:

When Christ was hanged in Cardiff Jail  
'Good riddance' said the Western Mail  
But daro, weren't their faces red  
When he came to judge the quick and the dead.<sup>14</sup>

This is also the point Allchin is making. Because praise infuses everything, boundaries between the secular and sacred, church and the home, the domestic and public spheres are transgressed. See for example Allchin's translation of Gwenallt's poem 'Dewi Sant,' where the kitchen becomes the location for the Eucharist:

He brought the Church into our homes,  
Put the holy vessels on the kitchen table  
With bread from the pantry and wine  
from the cellar,  
And he stood behind the table like a tramp  
So as not to hide from us the wonder of the sacrifice.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 72.

<sup>14</sup> from H. Webb *Looking up England's Arsehole - The Patriotic Poems and Boozy Ballads of Harri Webb*, (Aberystwyth: Y Lolfa, 2000).

by Harri Webb.

<sup>15</sup> Gwenallt in translation from Allchin, *Praise Above All*, 61. Hawlfraint ystad Gwenallt © Trwy ganiatâd caredig Gwasg Gomer.

A contextual Welsh theology of blessing therefore speaks of the sacredness of each encounter and of the felt reality of the presence of God in ordinary places and people, in all settings whether it is a beautiful rural scene or an industrialised landscape. The priest is the poet who notices and articulates this, through words which are inadequate though resonant and powerful. This important poem by Euros Bowen, in translation, conveys this effectively:

**Reredos<sup>16</sup>**

The reredos was not  
an ecclesiastical adornment  
of symbols,  
but plain glass,  
with the danger  
of distracting the celebrant  
from  
the properties of the communion table  
for  
in the translucence  
the green earth  
budded in the morning view,  
the river was in bloom,  
the air a joyous flight,  
and the sunshine  
set the clouds ablaze,  
and I noticed  
the priest's eyes  
as it were unconsciously  
placing his hand  
on these gifts  
as though these  
were  
the bread and the wine.

*Euros Bowen (in translation)*

Another of Bowen's poems 'Tap Root' proclaims 'There is no resurrection where there is no earth'<sup>17</sup> and this seems to me to encapsulate the 'earthiness' of both Welsh poetry and spirituality. There is in this tradition both a timelessness and a real awareness of the present moment, a deep love of the concrete and the particular and both a seriousness and a playfulness.

A recognition of the importance of place is important in current discussions about buildings and church provision across Wales. As embodied beings, rooted in a particular community, Inge is right to remind us that places and spaces represent 'the site and the outcome of social, political and economic struggle'.<sup>18</sup> This ambivalence resonates with the

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<sup>16</sup> from Cynthia and Saunders Davies, *Euros Bowen: priest-poet*, (Penarth: Church in Wales publications 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Cynthia and Saunders Davies, *Euros Bowen: priest-poet*, 133

<sup>18</sup> Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 23.

experience of priesthood in the Church in Wales, particularly in rural areas, where nostalgia and church as central to an older way of life is strong and sometimes leads to conflict in terms of liturgy and the use of buildings. Yet this *hiraeth* and power of the past in the present is also something which repulses R. S. Thomas, fearing that Welsh people are an ‘impotent people’ ‘worrying the carcass of an old song’ as he claims in the poem ‘Welsh Landscape’. An understanding of Welsh culture and identities through poetry reveals not just a romanticism and idealism but also an engagement with the reality of life in post-industrial and arguably postcolonial Wales.

Bowen and Thomas’ poetry reminds us (and indeed warns us) that a Welsh theology of priesthood sees the landscape as formational, and that story, history and land is an important part of being a Welsh Anglican (if not Christian) in many areas of Wales today. The priest does not simply say words on behalf of a distant deity but articulates what is already a visceral experience of God; the presence of Christ in a kitchen, (Gwenallt’s ‘Dewi Sant’) a landscape seen through a church window, (Bowen’s ‘Reredos’) on Dowlais Top (Harri Webb) and in a prison cell (Menna Elfyn).<sup>19</sup>

### Praise, prophecy and protest

However, the tradition of praise in Welsh poetry is more complex and surprising than a simple recognition of the presence of God in landscape. One of the first examples of Welsh female poetry is from Gwerful Mechain who combines religious and erotic themes in her medieval praise poems.<sup>20</sup> It could be argued that poetry is where Welsh women have found a space to write their theology. For example, the former National Poet of Wales, Gillian Clarke in her long radio poem ‘Letter from a Far Country’ likens the housewife to the priest and her poem is full of the imagery of linen, bread, wine and blood. Liturgical themes, particularly in terms of voice and voicelessness and even dissent and satire are particularly prevalent in the work of another influential Welsh poet, Menna Elfyn, linking the poet priest with the vocation of prophecy as seen in her poem in memory of R.S. Thomas:

#### **A hymn to a Welshman VIII<sup>21</sup>**

*Tribute to RS Thomas*

Some were given  
priests,  
to read the Word  
on their behalf.  
Many were given shepherds,  
to keep faith safe,  
in its fold.  
Others were given doubters  
to pull the word  
from its crib  
by the hair

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<sup>19</sup> See Menna Elfyn’s wonderful prison poems, ‘The Big Communion’ and ‘The Small Communion’ from *Perfect Blemish*.

<sup>20</sup> K. Gramich, and C. Brennan, C, *Welsh Women’s Poetry 1460–2001: An Anthology*, (Dinas Powys: Honno Press, 2003), 2, 3.

<sup>21</sup> from Menna Elfyn, *Perfect Blemish*, (Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 1996).

and hold it in the night light  
 like a moth beating in the palm.  
 To a choir of the Welsh,  
 voiceless,  
 hoarse-voiced,  
 and to those who believed  
 without question,  
 every one, every time,  
 their breath full of quarrelling  
 there was given  
 a poet,  
 one to make for us  
 a word, to gild it  
 sometimes  
 to challenge it  
 till it turns  
 to a plea  
 for the life of the tribe.  
 And through the word  
 he refined,  
 sometimes wounded  
 but not  
 with war or treachery  
 or the blood scent of crusades.  
 We sing the song  
 again.  
 Join in the hymn  
 'Hymn to a Welshman'  
 A hymn without  
 beginning  
 and certainly without  
 Amen.

*Menna Elfyn (in translation)*

In Elfyn's poetry there is a tradition of dissent, and liturgical words are used as a metaphor for finding a voice, for empowerment and speaking out about justice. This connects to another theme within a potential contextual theology of priesthood within Wales, that of presider, the one who both speaks on behalf of, and who enables all, to speak words of praise. As Rowan Williams argues, the priest's role is to enable others to find their voice:

What priests do is to secure the opportunity for the priestly people to announce who they are – to themselves, but also to the world around...<sup>22</sup>

These words may not just be of identity, or praise, but of protest too. How can we develop liturgies and practices that truly allow people to find their voice?

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<sup>22</sup> Rowan Williams, 'Epilogue' in Coakley, S. and Wells, S (eds.), *Praying for England*. (London: Continuum, 2008), 180).

## Presider not president: Priests in a people's church

If poetry is an egalitarian pursuit as Allchin argues, there is also today a self-perception amongst Welsh people of being an egalitarian people and that all Welsh people are working class. The perception of the classlessness of Wales originates from the rural experience where people of different social and economic status lived in the same community. Although there are large differences in income, they are not as marked as in other parts of the UK and social stratification can be along other lines e.g. respectability or 'Welshness').<sup>23</sup> It would be naïve to think that Wales is as egalitarian in reality as the mythology suggests. However, Trosset, an American ethnographer who learnt Welsh for her research, has identified that often Welsh people, particularly from more predominantly Welsh-speaking areas, relate to others with reference to their connections and families rather than based on their role or employment. She comments how people in Welsh speaking areas are introduced not based on what job they do but on their family connections, who they 'are'. In other words, where they 'belong' (*perthyn*) – the Welsh word for relative is *perthynas*, literally who you belong to.<sup>24</sup>

A commitment to equality is one of the attractive characteristics for Welsh people of nonconformity. For example, Baker and Brown comment, following their research into the life stories of men and women within rural mid twentieth century Wales:

Many interviewees stressed that the Nonconformist chapels of which they had been members were democratic, equitable bodies and that all adults had a vote on important issues. Participants made the distinction that this was unlike the Anglican church, where decisions were believed to be taken by the priest and church elders.<sup>25</sup>

How accurate is this view of the Church in Wales as hierarchical? The authors of the recent Church in Wales review identified an unhealthy 'culture of deference and dependence' within the institution.<sup>26</sup> An emphasis on shared ministry within the Church in Wales, and participative methods such as conferences and synodical government within dioceses and province are steps towards a more egalitarian approach, more consonant with Welsh self-perceptions. However, the implications of this is that Christian leadership in Wales needs to be more about being a presider than a president<sup>27</sup> and being the one who gathers the people rather than lords it over them. How can we change the perceptions of the Church in Wales so that it is more attractive to a culture which so often speaks of egalitarianism and participation?

Another aspect of Welsh culture is shared with that of other Western cultures; the 'subjective turn' discussed by Heelas and Woodhead<sup>28</sup> and characterised by individuals regarding themselves as their own authority rather than any sense of having to 'defer' to a 'higher authority',<sup>29</sup> as well as a shift towards subjectivity and the centrality of the individual, their choices and personal development. For older people duty, sacrifice, tradition and

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<sup>23</sup> N. Evans 'Class.' in H. Mackay, *Understanding Contemporary Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 131 and C. Trosset, *Welshness Performed: Welsh Concepts of Person and Society*. (London: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 55.

<sup>24</sup> C. Trosset, *Welshness Performed*, 90.

<sup>25</sup> B. Brown, S. Baker, and G. Day, 'Lives Beyond Suspicion: Gender and the Construction of Respectability in Mid-twentieth Century Rural North Wales.' *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vol 51: 4 (2011), 141.

<sup>26</sup> Church in Wales (2012), 4: *Church in Wales Review* [online] available from [https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Church\\_in\\_Wales\\_Review\\_2012.pdf](https://churchinwales.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Church_in_Wales_Review_2012.pdf) acc. 13/05/20

<sup>27</sup> The origin of 'president' of course (as opposed to king or ruler) is to be a presider, the chair or the one who 'sits before'. It is only in recent times that it has been associated with great power e.g. of the U.S. as one of the most powerful nations on earth, or as the leader of one-party states in certain authoritarian republics.

<sup>28</sup> Heelas, and L. Woodhead, L. (eds.) with B. Seel, B. Szerszynski, K. Tusting, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. (Oxford: Blackwell. 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, 4.

prescribed social roles are very important, but for those who are middle aged and younger, self-fulfilment is important and authority is found in the individual not in roles or institutions. There is a genuine division between those who are comfortable with concepts such as sacrifice, obedience, and roles based on social identities, and those who find these concepts, arguably part of the Church in Wales culture, as alienating, confusing and even oppressive.

In my own research project, investigating the life-stories and relevance of religion to the lives of middle-aged women in Wales I surprisingly found strength and empowerment to be characteristics of the women I interviewed, whatever their mother tongue or religious commitments. This was because of an operative stereotype which many felt was important to them – the Strong Woman – Welsh Mam. They found church and chapel culture with its prescribed gender roles and (sometimes hypocritical) respectability, repressive<sup>30</sup>This poem, by Menna Elfyn resonates with their experience:

**Will the ladies please stay behind?**<sup>31</sup> Menna Elfyn (in translation).

A service.  
Us in the sheepfold.  
The deacons ranked, facing us,  
bald, thoughtful.  
Him in the pulpit says,  
'Thanks to the women  
    who served...'  
Yes, served at the grave,  
    wept, by the cross....  
'And will the ladies' – the women –  
    'please  
    stay behind?'  
Behind –  
we're still behind,  
still waiting,  
serving,  
smiling.....still dumb....  
the same two thousand years ago  
    as today.  
But the next time they say it  
from the seat too big for women,  
'Will the ladies, etc.'  
what about singing out (all together now!)  
in a chant, a new psalm,  
a lesson being recited –  
  
'Listen here, little masters,  
if Christ came back today  
he'd definitely be making  
His own cup of tea.'

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<sup>30</sup> Manon C. James, *Women, Identity and Religion: theology, poetry story*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> from Menna Elfyn, M. *Eucalyptus – Detholiad o Gerddi Selected Poems 1978–1994*, (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1995).

If a more consultative and collaborative priesthood is more consistent with the Welsh 'ethos' however, this also has to be held in parallel with other features of Welsh identity such as the reluctance to 'put yourself forward' and the sense that Welsh speakers in particular feel 'powerless'.<sup>32</sup> Having power (or presumably confidence) to influence the world is seen as an 'English' characteristic according to the participants in Trosset's research. According to her, two Welsh learners originally from England told her that 'that most people would rather sit and stew about things rather than doing something constructive to change them', and Trosset comments that first language Welsh speakers consider themselves as a 'conquered nation' and as such are stigmatized.<sup>33</sup>

Her ethnographic research certainly tallies with my experience of ministering in Welsh speaking and bilingual communities, where there is sometimes resentment that those coming in to live in an area 'take over,' because they are willing to undertake leadership roles, whilst local people are reluctant and lack the confidence for lay leadership or to offer themselves for lay or ordained ministry. The reluctance to be a 'ceffyl blaen'<sup>34</sup> may explain why the numbers of fluent Welsh speakers offering themselves for ordained ministry is smaller than the percentages of the population who can speak Welsh.<sup>35</sup> There is an urgent need for further research into this and for strategies and initiatives to raise the number of fluent Welsh speakers entering ministry. St Padarn's does require every full time ordinand and lay ministry candidate to learn Welsh, and all part time candidates are also offered tuition via the 'Say Something in Welsh' web-based course. Therefore, even if a low number of candidates enter training being able to speak Welsh reasonably confidently, the number of candidates licensed or ordained being able to operate liturgically and, in some cases, pastorally in Welsh will be higher. The Church of England have developed strategies to increase the numbers of BAME or young candidates for ministry.<sup>36</sup> Given that fluency in Welsh as a language is a skill that is required in many areas of Wales, how much more do we need to address the small number of Welsh speakers entering discernment and training?

The current emphasis (since the Church in Wales 2012 review) on shared ministry within mission / ministry areas and on mutual co-operation and collaboration, and on the participation of all would find a comfortable home within the areas in Wales where egalitarianism and relationships are important. However, for the middle aged and younger generations democracy, participation and equality of voice for all regardless of status is taken as a given, and any organisation which fails to give people a voice, differentiates in terms of status, or even speaks a rhetoric of equality whilst the behaviour indicates otherwise, is likely to seem very alien. To encourage a theology and practice of priest as presider not president is therefore an urgent task both missiologically and pastorally.

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<sup>32</sup> Trosset, *Welshness Performed*, 85, 121).

<sup>33</sup> Trosset, *Welshness Performed*, 123-125

<sup>34</sup> literally a 'front runner (horse) which is a pejorative term for people who like the limelight and / or leadership roles, the nearest equivalent may be the tall poppy syndrome in English.

<sup>35</sup> Currently only one person in training for full-time ministry is fluent in Welsh and the numbers training overall are much lower than the percentages here: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/Annual-Population-Survey-Welsh-Language/annualpopulationsurveyestimatesofpersonsaged3andoverwhosaytheycanspeakwelsh-by-localauthority-measure>. (accessed 13/05/20)

<sup>36</sup> e.g. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/20/church-england-a-oints-national-minority-ethnic-officer-black-clergy> accessed 13/05/20.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that there is a distinctive contextual theology of priesthood within Wales, one which is rooted in place as well as people. The Welsh poetic tradition reminds us of the visceral reality of experiencing God not only in bread and wine on silverware on the altar but also in Gwenallt's kitchen and Bowen's landscape. As poets, priests notice and articulate the experience of God in ordinary, even out of the way or uninspiring places. A poetic approach reminds us that living the Eucharistic life cannot be contained in church buildings, and that an awareness of the presence of Jesus and of the empowerment of the Spirit needs to be integrated into the experience of every disciple in their every-day lives – in the quarry, factory, shopping centre, school and housing estate. If priests gather the people and create a holy space for their prayers and their participation, there is also a challenge here for clergy to enable the people to find their agency and their voice, particularly those who lack confidence because of class or other social identifiers.

In this way, a Welsh contextual theology of priesthood, has an important contribution to make to the theology of priesthood more generally in the West. This poetic and earthy theology of priesthood which empowers and gives space to the voices of the Christian community is a corrective to a sterile and functionalist theology and practice of priesthood which arises from an obsession with the guarding of priestly status, and the preservation of the Church as a powerful, boundaried institution.

# Embodying Change: The Particular Conundrum for Stipendiary Clergy in 2020 Vision

The Revd Dr Rhiannon Johnson

**Abstract:** *This paper examines how the changes envisaged in 2020 vision impact priestly spirituality and self-understanding. It looks particularly at areas of identity, autonomy and authority drawing heavily on a Church of England study of the factors that enabled long term ministry. It concludes that a strong sense of sacrificial ministry makes clergy resilient, but notes that this is seen as a sacrifice to God not necessarily to the church or to their parishioners. This places a duty of care on those who ask further sacrifices of them.*

If 2020 vision is to succeed, the role of the stipendiary clergy will be crucial. They are the obvious candidates for leadership in the new Ministry or Mission Areas. They are the major channels of communication about the changes to congregations. They are expected to discern lay ministries and encourage, train and nurture people as they come forward to undertake them. They are expected to model good team working. At the same time, however, the stipendiary clergy are sometimes presented as the reason why change is necessary. Their stipends and pensions are sometimes characterized as unaffordable. They are the public face of a church that is accusing itself of being unfit for purpose. Their insistence on their own status is accused of strangling lay ministry, whether this is true or not. Moreover, in the changes proposed by 2020 vision, it is often the stipendiary clergy who lose most in terms of status and secure expectations.<sup>309</sup>

This triple role as primary agents of change, as the scapegoat for the church's problems and as those asked to make the most sacrifices on the journey place a huge burden on those who have been engaged in stipendiary ministry for some time. This chapter is an attempt to explore how the insecurities associated with this triple role express themselves, why they arise and how they may be negotiated.

Many of these issues surface in complaints and obstructions, which, if left unattended, have the potential to destroy individual ministries and wreck the 2020 process. However, there is little published research or advice to guide clerics through the issues raised by such change. There are a great number of books telling clergy how to do their jobs, but most of these assume that the expectations on clergy, although great, are relatively stable. Of course, the expectations of cleric, parish and church discussed in *The Parish Priest at Work* (Forder 1949) and *Curacies and How to Survive Them* (Camier, Percy and Stevenson 2015) have changed, but the literature in each case assumes a relatively stable status quo.

This, however, is not the current experience of clergy within the Church in Wales. The changes associated with 2020 vision undermine some of the assumptions about church and clerical identity which had remained unquestioned during training and ministry- the link between priest and parish, the pastoral nature of ministry, the expectation of deference, the relative autonomy of clergy work, the special nature of their calling, particularly when that calling is stipendiary. Given the variety of contexts within Wales, not all these stresses are felt equally by all clerics, but, in listening to clerics and their worries throughout the province,

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<sup>309</sup> Another group that potentially loses a great deal in the changes are those on the fringes of the church, the very irregular attenders. Their lack of involvement means that they have no voice in change and may find that the ground has been swept out from under what they have always assumed 'their church' was there to do for them.

common themes do reoccur. This chapter will consider these areas, but given the paucity of the literature available, this will be more personal reflection than academic paper.

One exception, however, to the relative silence on the subject is a 2013 Church of England Study *Managing Clergy Lives: Obedience, Sacrifice and Intimacy* on which this chapter draws heavily. Forty-six Church of England clergy (fourteen women and thirty-two men) were interviewed in depth. All were stipendiary, in parish ministry and area (or rural) deans. The choice of area deans was thought to be a way of ensuring those interviewed were mature in ministry, had the respect of their peers and had demonstrated 'staying power' in their contemporary church (Peyton and Gatrell, 2013, pp1-2). One of the aims of the study was to find what helped some clergy endure change. Although 2020 Vision may be bringing more radical and unsettling change than the factors Peyton and Gatrell discuss, their evidence can still be of use. They conclude that clergy who survive in ministry often have a strong ontological rather than functional understanding of their calling, that is, they understand being a cleric as part of their own identity rather than as a task they fulfil (Peyton and Gatrell, 2013, p 177). 'We conclude from our research that a sacrificial marginality lies at the heart of clergy self-perceptions as they occupy 'that strange hinterland between the secular and the sacred...acting as interpreters and mediators' (Peyton and Gatrell, 2013, p 178 quoting Percy, 2006. P.188).

Key to this is image of ministry as a 'living sacrifice' often quoting or echoing Romans 12:1- 'present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship'. Peyton and Gatrell see this sacrificial understanding as crucial in allowing the clergy to balance the demands placed on them, putting aside their own interests in the cause of what they perceived to be the will of God. This is also tied to the idea of *kenosis*, the voluntary self-emptying of God in Christ described in Philippians 2. 5-11 (Peyton and Gatrell, 2013, p 90). It is important to note, however, that the respondents in the survey saw this as being a sacrifice to God not to their parishioners, their colleagues or the church (Peyton and Gatrell, 2013, p 85).

The implementation of 2020 vision cannot, therefore, simply assume that clergy will brush off the complexities of the triple role described above, accepting it as one more cross to bear. The stipendiary clergy are only likely to do that if, and when, they come to see the changes as enabling a fuller expression of the will of God for the church and for themselves. Some clergy already do, and they have been the most enthusiastic in promoting change, but others remain unconvinced.

In my experience, this lack of conviction is expressed in five major concerns. Although these are given different articulation, the underlying worries keep on recurring. Each of these five is considered in turn below-

### 'I was not trained to be a manager' - The Pastoral Nature of Priesthood

Anglicanism has long prided itself on the pastoral nature of the ordained ministry. The Lambeth Conference of 1930 listed 'a pastoral priesthood' as one of the five 'ideals for which the Church of England has always stood'.<sup>310</sup> The 1984 ordination rite for priests defines the role in deeply pastoral terms and the call to take the Good Shepherd as the pattern for priestly ministry is a consistent feature of ordination services over time. There is, however, an upper limit to the number of people one can pastor effectively at any one time. Croft estimates this as being between 50-150 people with a 'pastoral care ceiling' which prevents

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<sup>310</sup> The others were an open Bible, a common worship, a standard of conduct consistent with that worship and a fearless love of the truth.

churches with this model of ministry growing any bigger, other studies have put the ceiling lower at around 80 people (Croft, 1999, p213).

In implementing 2020 vision, dioceses have asked their stipendiary clergy, particularly those who are to step into LMA leadership roles, to think of themselves as facilitators, rather than providers, of pastoral care, leading and managing teams of lay people who will do the work. For many this undermines their fundamental ideas of what priesthood is. If they are not the Good Shepherd tending to the needs of their flock, what are they?<sup>311</sup> Others fear that the lay workers will simply not emerge, and already overstressed clergy will simply have to care for more people, eventually being unable to care for any adequately.

One way of theologically resolving this very real tension is by asking clergy to consider what they do as clerics and what they do because they are disciples of Christ. Much of the pastoral side of our work arises out of our discipleship. The parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25. 31-46) is not addressed to leaders or clerics but to all. The cleric is not absolved from this part of the call on disciples by ordination, but neither should they be expected to do more than any other true disciple. It may, however, belong to the role of priesthood to encourage, supervise and enthuse fellow disciples in the work we all do of caring for God's people.

There may also be a need to reconsider the underlying metaphor that shapes clergy self- understanding. The Good Shepherd is a model that refers primarily to Christ (John 10.11-14). In the Old Testament it refers to God (Psalm 23, but also Genesis 48.15, Psalm 80.1 and others) and to kings and rulers (Cyrus in Isaiah 44.28 and the bad rulers of Jeremiah 23.1-4). It is, therefore, a model that entrenches a division between the cleric and the laity. A sheep cannot lead the flock, nor can a shepherd be one of the sheep. Allowing other Biblical metaphors, such as that of being fellow slaves in the household of God, to shape ministerial self-understanding could bring greater resilience in the face of change.

### 'Who will I belong to?' - Priest and Parish

Clerical identity has been deeply tied to a sense of place.<sup>312</sup> Clergy are likely to self-identify as 'I am the vicar of X'. They will speak of 'my villages', 'my churches' and parishioners will show a similar sense of ownership when discussing 'our rector' or 'our curate'. For many clergy, this is a profound and symbiotic relationship. Peyton and Gatrell see this mutual ownership and sense of place as a major recurring theme in sustaining ministry (Peyton and Gatrell, 2013, p169). Some feel strongly that the priest earns the right to stand before the people and to speak for them by the quality of their engagement with the parishes they serve. A multi-church benefice can dilute, but not altogether eradicate this intertwining of personal and corporate identity. Work on focal ministry has provided some evidence that churches grow strongly where there is strong loyalty between the leadership and the congregation (Jackson, 2018, p8).

Different dioceses are implementing 2020 vision at different speeds and in different ways. In some, the link between priest and parish is being broken. Several stipendiary clergy are licensed to a ministry area, that is also technically a deanery and a parish and may include a large number of churches. Although the Ministry Area may be split into pastoral areas each under a particular cleric's care, there is no structural reason why the clerics should not have interchangeable ministries. While this potentially allows the congregations to benefit from more variety of style and outlook, it also could be detrimental to building strong relationships

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<sup>311</sup> This point is taken up in the paper *Slaves in the Household of God* in this volume

<sup>312</sup> In discussion of this paper it was noted how a sense of belonging to place is often crucial to expressions of identity in Wales for all, not just clergy.

as clerics shift between too many congregations. It is also likely that the relationship becomes with the church communities rather than the wider parish.

There is evidence that this model of 'team ministry' has a negative effect on church attendance and clergy retention (Jackson, 2005, p17-20). How are people to develop their discipleship with no one to confide in but people they only know slightly? Some dioceses are exploring focal ministry to plug this gap. For other dioceses this merely perpetuates an old Christendom model of church.<sup>313</sup> Nonetheless, the mutual accountability and support that are part of the relationship between priest and parish seem too important to be lightly discarded if clergy can be protected from being spread too thinly to build a relationship of belonging.<sup>314</sup>

So, it becomes crucial that attention is paid, not just to getting ministry areas formed, but to how they are shaped once formed. A 'clerical carousel' model (in which the clergy move between many churches and do not feel owned by any) and a 'focal minister model' (in which each group and church has a lay or ordained minister who 'belongs' to them) will build very different model of what it is to be church.

### 'I don't want to go back to being someone's curate' - Clerical Autonomy

A retired bishop once described the structure of the Church of England and the Church in Wales as a franchise operation. The church centrally sets how it looks, provides the prayer book to be used and then clerics act with great autonomy as they manage their own 'branches' of the organization. This, too, ties in with the model of the clerical professional, largely autonomous in his or her area, trusted to get on with the job with minimum supervision and minimal support. Russell notes how the responsibility placed on the clerical professional makes it hard for him or her to share authority (Russell, 1980, pp 285-287). This is especially true in Wales where there have been relatively few clergy teams or even parishes with several curates.

This is the model of ministry that many stipendiaries were trained for and have exercised. However, clergy have long been encouraged to collaborate and 2020 vision makes this obligatory. This raises a particular anxiety for those clergy, particularly stipendiary, who are not among the first tranche of Ministry Area Leaders. The only model they have of clerical co-working is that of curacy in which there is a clear hierarchy. This was not a positive experience for a significant proportion of clergy. To step back from autonomy to become the underling of someone who was an equal autonomous individual can seem a demotion, an infantilization.

This problem is compounded by a lack of role models. Traditionally, where training for new roles within the church has taken place, it has often included shadowing someone who is experienced in that role and being mentored by them. We have not yet built up a corporate experience of being the kind of church called for by 2020 vision.

This is a real fear, but love casts out fear. If those who first experience being part of an LMA feel themselves respected as equal colleagues, valued for the gifts they bring to the team, freed from parts of their role they have long struggled with, and encouraged to follow their call, not just run a franchise, they will quickly come to love the new way of working and advocate it. This puts a great pressure on the new ministry area leader, but perhaps they too will find themselves supported and encouraged by the team. It should not be forgotten that our old model of ministry left many lonely, overworked, isolated and vulnerable.

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<sup>313</sup> The paper *Models of Ministry* in this volume explains the Christendom and other models of church.

<sup>314</sup> It is possible that, in time, the sense of belonging will re-located itself on the ministry team of lay and ordained 'I belong to this group of disciples' and therefore become more equal and collegiate. It could equally mean that a great deal of energy is used in maintaining the team rather than in its functioning.

## ‘A proper priest’- Stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministries and lay ministry

All the talk of what it costs to support stipendiary ministry, and the ever-growing numbers of non-stipendiary and NSM(L) priests have left some stipendiaries feeling defensive. All made, and continue to make, sacrifices to follow their calling, but those who do not receive stipend can be felt to undermine those who do. As Russell comments, ‘no professional can view with equanimity the implication that its function can be adequately performed either on a part-time basis or as a hobby’ (Russell, 1980, p287). Some of this defensiveness surfaces in an opinion that somehow only stipendiaries are ‘proper priests’ and others have a lesser or defective ministry. This is deeply hurtful to the other ministers and can undermine them with congregations. A similar dismissive attitude is often reported by readers and other lay ministers. The Tyfu listening projects undertaken by St. Padarn’s in 2017 and 2018 noted that responses from lay ministers included ‘phrases like ‘release us’ and ‘trust us’ which may point [to a need for] more of a cultural change’.<sup>315</sup>

The nature of the perceived ‘impropriety’ is sometimes hard to define, even by those who use the term. Sometimes it is seen as a defect in education ‘proper priests have to learn Greek’, sometimes in commitment ‘proper priests are always available’, sometimes in training, ‘a proper priest would know that’. Sometimes this disapproval gets levelled at other stipendiaries who come from a different tradition or background.

It would be simple enough to say, ‘these words are hurtful, do not use them’ but the underlying assumptions also need addressing. A proper priest is one who has been validly ordained. Many books have been written trying to define a good priest, and we all could probably be better priests.

It is my instinct that these comments arise mainly out of a situation in which stipendiaries feel so embattled and despised that they lash out against those who appear to undermine the sacrificial nature of their calling. This is part of the pain inflicted by the ‘scapegoat’ role forced on the stipendiary clergy by the Rowe-Beddo<sup>316</sup> report on church finance and some of the discussion around 2020 vision. To counter this, those leading change need to take care that, in affirming differing gifts, the particular calling and sacrifice of the stipendiary minister is also acknowledged and honoured.

## ‘But ‘Father knows best’ worked’ - A Culture of Deference?

The Harries report slated the whole Church in Wales for ‘a culture of deference’ that stifled creativity. Again, the stipendiary clergy have sometimes been used as scapegoats being accused of a ‘Father knows best’ culture which has infantilized the laity and robbed them of their proper role. This has a certain irony in that, to move change along, bishops have often acted in a much more directive style than their predecessors, using what is perceived as a very ‘top-down’ style of management, depending on their clergy’s deference as enshrined in the oath of canonical obedience.

While many clergy are happy with a style of leadership that is collaborative and facilitative, a significant minority seem drawn towards a more authoritarian style. These individuals are often those most dissatisfied with the changes brought about by 2020 vision. For them, a re-assertion of a strongly directive model of clerical authority seems to safeguard what they fear may be lost to change. Sadly, this is a pattern I have observed mostly in young clergy and it is one that some parishes collude with.

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<sup>315</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ae618550dbda3399e708001/t/5ce2c27cb852ab000172c4b8/1558364799260/SPI+Report+A4-E.pdf>, page 37.

<sup>316</sup> When the Rowe-Beddo report was published a stipendiary cleric remarked ‘this makes us seem like parasites on the Body of Christ’

Against the assertion of clerical authority stands the example of the humility of Christ. A call to Christlikeness would be valuable both for individual discipleship and public ministry but only if it is modelled at all levels of the church's structure. To replace 'Father knows best' with 'Bishop knows best' relocates the problem but does not solve it.

## Conclusion

The spirituality of priestly ministry, as discussed by Peyton and Gatrell, is remarkably robust (Peyton and Gatrell, 2013, pp. 175-176). The idea of embodied sacrifice and kenosis have the potential to carry individual priests through the identity crisis that 2020 vision brings. However, this places a great responsibility on those who oversee priestly ministry. These sacrifices are made, not out of masochism, but out of a deep response to a call of God. This makes priests hard to manage, since the traditional ways of motivating a workforce such as pay, holidays, promotion or status are largely irrelevant, having already been sacrificed to follow the call to ministry. It also makes some management styles irrelevant for working with clergy because the styles assume motivations which are not applicable to the majority of clergy. However, to simply demand more and greater sacrifice is sadistic. Instead, I would argue, stipendiary clergy need to be convinced that the sacrifices they make are to God's greater glory and that they do not labour in vain. To reach such a conviction will need prayer and a serious re-appraisal of our inherited ideas of what it means to be a 'living sacrifice', the Biblical metaphors we chose to understand ministry, the church and the place of the ordained within it, as they apply to the rapidly changing world we live in now.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Some of the other chapters in this collection are an attempt to begin such a process.

## Conclusion: The Pilgrimage of Ordained Ministry

In *Faithful Stewards in a Changing Church: Understanding the Ordained Ministry in Light of the 2020 Vision*, we have attempted to see from where we have come, to take stock of where we find ourselves in the present, and to discern where we might be heading. Often on treks there are unexpected developments—a sudden storm, a collapsed bridge, or an injury—that cause you to rethink your position or alter your route. If these essays are intended to help chart a course, then the appearance of Covid-19 during the final drafting of our work was the event that compelled us to consider our journey in a new light.

### Love in the Time of Coronavirus

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in worldwide self-isolation, social distancing and the closure of shops, businesses, schools, restaurants, and places of worship. The very day that churches were shut for public worship in Wales marked the 802<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the interdict placed on England and Wales by Pope Innocent III during the reign of King John—A.D. 1208-13 may very well mark the last time all the churches in Wales were closed. Restrictions also came into effect just as the Church in Wales prepared to mark the exact date of the centenary of its disestablishment (31 March 2020). Both anniversaries remind us that not only is there ‘nothing new under the sun’ but also that our present experiences, no matter how novel they appear to us, often have historical contexts.

As a result of the pandemic, clergy have faced an extended period of physical absence from altar and people. In ways we could not have seen before Covid-19, *presence*, *place*, and *physicality* have been strongly implied in all our essays—indeed, these can be seen as a theme of the entire series. To be a deacon is to be present in service in a given place and alongside a given people; to be a priest is to be present amidst God’s people, physically offering their ‘praise and thanksgiving’ at the altar; to be a bishop is to be present in the diocese, representing by his or her ministry the unity and apostolicity of the Church Catholic. When physical presence is impossible, what then does it mean to be *with* one’s people? Others have noted that we are discovering how to be socially present during a time of physical absence. If so, then this moment may offer clergy a lesson in how to adjust to Ministry Areas and church closures by becoming socially (and pastorally) present even while they are not always actually on the scene.

Social presence carries with it a double meaning: it not only indicates a way of being present when physically absent but also suggests that presence itself can and should be social. This has been another theme of our essays. The ordained ministry isn’t a ministry apart from the laity, conducted independently through its own resources and authority. Rather, deacons, priests and bishops minister in the presence of the people in the particular places they serve and through them. This is why, as the ‘Models of Ministry’ essay argues, the metaphor of the shepherd minding a flock is not entirely appropriate for priestly ministry—it indicates a passivity on the part of those being served that is false (and always has been). If the people of God are united in God’s love by their mutual service, then ministry is properly shared, collaborative, and social. The Body of Christ is only ever healthy and whole when all members work together to proclaim God’s Kingdom. ‘But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and

knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love' (Eph. 4.15-16).

But lest we wax too romantic, we should also recognize that this period has not been without difficulties. However optimistically one considers innovative ways of being socially present, often physical distance also means financial absence. Furthermore, the use of social media has raised the (not always recognized) difference between a congregation and an audience. Here again, we are reminded that physicality is key to Christian life and ministry. *Ecclesia* (Latin for *church* or *eglwys*) means 'gathering': a congregation is literally a *con-gregatio*, a gathering together of people in praise, prayer, and worship. Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection remind us that physicality goes right to the heart of our Christian witness; they compel us also to avoid as far as possible ideas of church and ministry that are overly spiritual, individualistic, or virtual. Being with and for others, as the essay 'Living Well: Christian existence and ordained ministry in the Church in Wales' has argued, requires a sacrificial presence in the midst of others just as Christ came selflessly to be with us physically in the midst of humanity and creation.

Once self-isolation, social distancing and enforced lockdown end and normal liturgical activity is restored, God's priestly people will be able to present themselves afresh to God at the Eucharist. How will the nature and depth of our self-offering have been affected by the Covid-19 emergency just as our second century as an autonomous Anglican province commences? Many churches have devised imaginative ways to be socially present: live-streaming Eucharists have been celebrated without a congregation in closed churches and innovative ways to ensure loving care to the vulnerable and isolated have been explored. Some cathedrals and churches have discovered in the process that they have become present to all sorts of people from all sorts of backgrounds who before were outside their ministry. How might this experience cause us to stop, rethink where we have come from, take stock of where we are, and adjust our bearing as we move forward?

### Where We Have Come From:

Many of the essays in this collection recognise that any assessment of the present or proposals about the future ought first to take stock of where we have come from. As 'Reformed, Catholic and Neighbourly: The Anglican Reception of the Classical Tradition of the Pastoral Ministry' illustrates, Anglicanism has from its beginning upheld a robust view of ordained ministry, rooted in the study of Scripture and the early church but also retaining medieval developments as it sought to align itself with Protestant ideals. Similarly, 'A Noble Task': Lessons from the Historic Episcopate' surveyed the long development of the episcopacy, noting its fundamental characteristics yet also recognizing the socio-cultural baggage it has taken onboard. Whatever one thinks of the pastoral tradition and the various models for that ministry, they were very much in play when the Church in Wales was disestablished and thus mark the starting point of our journey since 1920.

These surveys, however, have not sought to argue for an uncritical conformity to tradition nor have they been an exercise in nostalgia. Rather, they have advanced what might be called *critical faithfulness*: a commitment to what we have received but also a willingness to cast a critical eye towards past assumptions and altogether different social and cultural contexts from our own. We are a historical Church governed by historic formularies and a tradition we share with all the other provinces of the Anglican Communion—these must shape and sharpen how we think about the ordained ministry in our own context if we are to remain in any sense Anglican.

But history is not static. During the past centenary—and especially during the past few decades with the inclusion of women and the adoption of Ministry Areas—the ordained ministry in Wales has witnessed enormous changes. Have we taken proper stock of our changing circumstances, marking what may have been inadvertently lost or deliberately jettisoned? What has been positive and led to a more collaborative, creative, and missional understanding of the ministry? Where are we simply stuck, unwilling or unable to abandon baggage that encumbers us today? While Evangelicals and Catholics will likely provide different answers, these are questions worth asking and seeking collectively to answer.

The Covid-19 pandemic offers us an occasion to assess our journey so far in a different light. For example, the complete ban in the Church of England on clergy using their churches elicited strong criticisms and defences that have highlighted (in ways that previously lurked beneath the surface) very different concepts of place and priestly presence. For some, that decision helped people to see that the church exists beyond and outside the church building; for others, the ban from celebrating the Eucharist at the altar was little short of a betrayal of priestly ministry. Whatever one's opinion, that debate raised an area of potentially fruitful discussion that touches on *place* and *presence*. Were both sides speaking to truths that warrant further consideration? If so, does this offer lessons for the ordained ministry in Wales as we move into new forms of place and presence in Ministry Areas?

*Faithful Stewards in a Changing Church: Understanding the Ordained Ministry in Light of the 2020 Vision* has sought to provide a basis for answering questions like this. In as much as we have tried to remind people of the fundamentals and history of the ordained ministry, we have also sought to offer a critically faithful way to begin answering some of the pressing issues of the present. We can see where we have come from, which helps us to understand where we are at present, which can be altogether different from where ministers of other Christian traditions find themselves. We would also do well to remember that this is the tradition in which most of our current clergy have been formed and have conducted their ministry. There is no escaping that fact, even if we wished to do so, and thus we must take seriously how our journey so far not only articulates a distinctively Anglican approach to ordained ministry but also limits what we may find acceptable or can even imagine. One does not have to be an admirer of George Herbert to find oneself deeply influenced by the tradition he articulates in *The Country Parson*.

## Where We Are:

This then brings us to the present. A theme of some of our essays has been the difficulty the Church in Wales has in speaking univocally. Different models of ministry contend with each other, creating widely divergent expectations. Evangelicals and Catholics have different, often contradictory, views about ministry, sacraments, and ecclesiology that impact how they understand and assess Ministry Areas. Traditionalists and progressives understand our pastoral inheritance in different ways, disagreeing sharply with each other about what is essential and what should be rejected. Dioceses are also taking different approaches at varying speeds in implementing Ministry Areas. Meanwhile, as highlighted in the essay 'Embodying Change: The Particular Conundrum for Stipendiary Clergy in 2020 Vision', pressure is being placed on clergy to drive change even while much blame is pinned on them for resisting change.

The past few decades have, arguably, pushed the Anglican pastoral tradition beyond its capacity to adapt and change, leaving the church effectively responding slowly and clumsily to a situation that demands creatively, lightness, and flexibility. To put this

another way, perhaps the church has reached this point in its life exhausted and a little discouraged like a walker who has slogged through mud or ascended a steep slope with many false horizons. When well-being and resilience headline clergy conferences then it is probably time to stop and take stock.

Here again the enforced sabbath of Covid-19 provides space to consider our situation in a new light. Self-isolation and social distancing have revealed some interesting features about the ministry. First, clergy have had to find ways to continue their ministry when pastoral care, worship, and sacramental ministry cannot be conducted in a straight-forward way. In that situation, distinction in orders quickly become less important than individual creativity and initiative. Second, there is evidence that live streamed services, Zoom study groups, recorded sermons and the like are attracting a surprisingly wide viewership. People who have not darkened the door of a church in years are tuning in and even engaging with content uploaded to the Internet. This suggests that the church's ministry needs to find new ways of effectively reaching people beyond the doors of our churches. Finally, in searching for ways to express God's love in a time of coronavirus, clergy are jettisoning considerable baggage: in some places, worship has been conducted entirely from the vicarage while elsewhere clergy have had to rely on the expertise (especially technological) of the laity to continue pastoral work, learning, and even worship. As discussed above, this social presence during a time of physical absence is opening up new ways of envisioning ministry.

All of this highlights another theme of our collection of essays: the need to get back to the fundamentals of ordained ministry. 'Living Well' and 'Becoming the Body' provide robust theological and biblical cases for a return to fundamentals. Likewise, the first part of 'Catholic, Reformed and Neighbourly' reminds us of the basic tasks of ordained ministry that transcend particular forms of ministry (parochial and congregational) and social contexts. 'Slaves in the Household of God' similarly takes us right back to the biblical image of ministry as a slavery to God and 'Diakonia and the Diaconate' demonstrates that far from being a junior office in the church, the diaconate embodies the service of the entire church and calls all Christians to embrace that service. In all of these essays, representative *self-offering* is shown to be the central characteristic of ordained ministry. This is another way of saying that the ordained ministry is fundamentally Eucharistic, not only in bearing some relation to the Eucharist but also participating in the 'self-offering' of Christ. 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself' (Phil. 2.5-7) might very well be the message to the clergy of the Church in Wales these essays seek to convey.

## Where We are Heading

Now that we have seen from where we have come and have taken stock of where we are now, we can begin to see our way ahead. As on a trek where the destination lies beyond our vision, we must begin by observing the terrain and taking a bearing to follow. But this immediately raises the problem created by our present situation: namely, how to head in the same direction across the six dioceses—and even within dioceses where there is marked contrast between rural and urban areas. Is it possible to agree on a bearing or are we fated to head off in different directions, aiming for different destinations?

On expeditions, this is where leadership is vital. A group of trekkers must have faith in the ability, know-how, and wisdom of their leaders. At the same time, leaders must listen carefully to the views of their party. Where are they capable of going? What are their concerns and fears? What skills and knowledge might they have to help on the way? Likewise,

it is vital for the bishops of the Church in Wales to listen carefully and sympathetically to the advice, concerns, fears, and hopes of the wider church so they may come to a shared view of where they intend to help lead the church and articulate that vision compellingly and collegially. But because the episcopate has had its own experience of the journey so far and finds itself in a particular place right now, bishops must begin by sharing in the return to fundamentals. It does an expedition no good if their leaders are carrying more baggage than anyone else!

On an expedition, moments like this call for a group discussion where all the members of the party can discuss their concerns and insights and collectively determine how best to proceed. Similarly, the start of the second centenary of the Church in Wales would seem to be a good occasion for provincial conversations about the future of ordained ministry where hopes and frustrations can be safely shared and a new vision for the future collectively embraced. The authors of *Faithful Stewards in a Changing Church* hope that our essays will encourage a wider dialogue that can determine a way forward rooted in a critical faithfulness to the past and an honest appraisal of the present.

To that end, each essay in this collection has offered insights and asked questions to help the Church in Wales take its bearings. These are as follows:

- “Models of Ministry” described various metaphors for the ministry and argued how any given pastoral context may be influenced by more than one of them. Is there a way to set the models in conversation with each other, to see the wisdom and weaknesses of each, and to use them collectively to summon us back to Scripture as we try to conceive of the ministry stripped of unnecessary baggage and configured for 21<sup>st</sup> century Wales?
- ‘Slaves in the Household of God’ argued for a collective response to the call to service within the household of God, embracing the egalitarianism of slavery in which deacons, priests, bishops and, indeed, the laity dedicate themselves entirely to God the Father. How can we make that household more visible and begin to see ourselves as members of one family that is also the God’s temple and the Body of Christ?
- ‘Living Well: Christian existence and ordained ministry in the Church in Wales’ presented a vision of Christian vocation that springs actively from the living water of baptism, which gives new life that reorients, refashions, and sacrificially offers us to God for his mission. What would it practically mean for ordained ministers be *representative* channels of the water of life that brings about this transformation of the whole church through proclamation of the word, celebration of the sacraments and loving service to the community?
- “Becoming the Body: Baptism, Eucharist and Priesthood” reminded us that the ecclesial body being offered to God at each Eucharist makes for a dynamic Church, rooted in Christ’s unique self-offering, animated by the Spirit and oriented towards the Father’s kingdom of love. How do we begin to embrace more clearly through our thanksgiving, praise, confession, listening, prayer, and worship the self-offering that defines our ministry?
- ‘Proclaiming a Strange New World: Ordained Ministers as Preachers and Teachers’ painted a threefold approach to Scripture involving teaching, proclaiming and inhabiting the unfamiliar world revealed by God. Wisdom and delight combine to draw people

into God's strange, new world where people can discover a life that manifests a love for God, neighbours, and creation. If there is merit to its argument, how do we then inspire a return to serious and sustained study of Scripture in our churches and discover effective ways of communicating God's world through preaching, teaching, and delight?

- 'Reformed, Catholic and Neighbourly: The Anglican Reception of the Classical Tradition of the Pastoral Ministry' called for a renewed commitment to the 'cure of souls' shared among the members of God's household but also rooted in presence and place. What do the tasks of 'healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons' look like our world of individualism, pluralism, and secularism? How do we practice neighbourliness in Ministry Areas that often encompass a range of social and economic contexts?
- '*Diakonia* and the Diaconate' provided a close reading of the New Testament, recent scholarship, and both Anglican and ecumenical reports and documents to argue for a revitalised diaconate that can better express and symbolise the service to which the whole church is called. Arguably, no other ministry in the church demands greater attention than the diaconate that has long languished as either little more than a junior office or a strong identity alongside lay ministries. Do Ministry Areas provide a new context in which to re-evaluate the distinctive diaconate as an ecclesial sign of the royal, prophetic priesthood of the whole church, which can enrich the dimension of *diakonia* that underpins both lay and ordained ministries?
- "'A Noble Task": Lessons from the Historic Episcopate' provided historical trajectories and tensions within the episcopal responsibilities of authority, unity, apostolicity, and teaching. How can our bishops be freed from the accumulated social, cultural, and political paraphernalia so they can better facilitate and oversee the shared life of a self-offering church? What would it mean to be missionary bishops in a Welsh context?
- 'Blessing and Presiding: A Welsh Contextual Theology of Priesthood' challenged hierarchical conceptions of church through an articulation of the poetic vision unique to Wales. Yet hierarchy is alive and well within the ministry of the Church in Wales, which was criticized in the 'Harries Report' for its culture of deference. How do we positively and fruitfully confront this culture while at the same time encouraging a flourishing of collaboration and mutual love and edification among deacons, priests, and bishops? How can Ministry Areas be used to foster such a vision?
- Finally, 'Embodying Change: The Particular Conundrum for Stipendiary Clergy in 2020 Vision' sounded a note of warning by drawing our attention to the impossible position in which many clergy find themselves: the primary agents of change, scapegoats for the church's problems, and those asked to make the most sacrifices. How do we embrace the self-offering of the ordained ministry in ways that can build up clergy, inspire them with a renewed sense of their calling, and steer us away from cultures of blame, mutual criticism, and obstruction?

## Our Pilgrimage

If the metaphor of an expedition has any merit, then ours is not simply a long trek in a wilderness (however much it may seem that way at times). It is a pilgrimage from an upper room in Jerusalem to the multicultural Wales of today, in which we follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, in whose life we minister. Like any long pilgrimage, our own has experienced many highs and lows, times when we have marched on with energy and determination and times when we have become lost among the temptations and concerns of our world. But in every stage, those called to ordained ministry have rediscovered their priestly vocation to offer themselves in holy service to all within their care. As we embark on the next phase of our pilgrimage within the fast-changing social landscape of 21<sup>st</sup>-century Wales, it is our prayer that we may come to embrace a renewed vision of our shared ministry to God's people and find our deepest joy in Christ Jesus "in whose service lies perfect freedom".