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MA Thesis - 1997 - Abstract

**The Priority of the Gospel**

**Church Planting in the Church of England examined in the Light  
of Anglican Tradition and the Ministry of the Apostle Paul**

Church planting, the establishing of new churches, is a significant feature of the modern Church of England, but has received little theological and historical analysis. This study undertakes such an analysis, using Scripture and Anglican historical tradition, placing church planting in a historical context and examining it in the light of the Apostle Paul's ministry.

There is a practical need for church planting, and Anglican missiology has always been committed both to evangelism and to the establishment of the church as its end result, which can be shown historically, both at home and overseas. Anglican history also suggests two further factors: the priority of local, voluntary initiative in evangelism, and the gradual breakdown of Anglican consensus on doctrinal fundamentals, adding further to pressure on the parish system.

Reflecting on these findings in the light of Paul's ministry, Paul felt compelled to preach the gospel, which led inevitably to the founding of churches. These churches were involved themselves in mission as a result of being gripped by God's dynamic purposes in and through the gospel. Paul saw his authority and continuing relationship with them as always governed by the gospel, ideally allowing flexibility and independence within a framework of authority and unity unless the gospel itself was at stake.

For Anglican church planting, these findings argue for its place within the life of the church, meeting the need for a flexible accompaniment to the parish system. This calls for flexible and creative thinking by both parishes and diocesan authorities. Church planting has much life to offer the Church, but if this life is stifled then there is a risk of a breakdown of church order.

# **The Priority of the Gospel**

**Church Planting in the Church of England  
examined in the Light of Anglican Tradition  
and the Ministry of the Apostle Paul**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts

University of Durham

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**1997**

For Julia, τῆ δωρεῆ τοῦ Θεοῦ

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None of this material has previously been submitted for a degree in Durham University or any other University.

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# 1. Introduction

## I. What is Church Planting ?

In 1988 the Lambeth Conference resolved that:

This Conference, recognising that evangelism is the primary task given to the Church, asks each Province and diocese of the Anglican Communion, in co-operation with other Christians, to make the closing years of this Millennium a "Decade of Evangelism", with a renewed and united emphasis on making Christ known to the people of his world.<sup>1</sup>

A year later George Carey, then Bishop of Bath and Wells, indicated support for church planting as a key element in this when he wrote:

I am convinced that church planting is a mark of vigorous and outgoing Christianity and is a sign of hope for the future.<sup>2</sup>

General Synod published its report on church planting, *Breaking New Ground*,<sup>3</sup> in 1994. The working party knew of 177 church plants which had come into existence since 1985,<sup>4</sup> with on average one beginning every fortnight since 1990.<sup>5</sup> Yet it is not automatically obvious what is meant by

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1. Lambeth Conference, The Truth Shall Make You Free (London, Church House, 1988), Resolution 43, p.231.
  2. Article in the Church of England Newspaper, 20th October 1989.
  3. Board of Mission, Breaking New Ground - Church Planting and the Church of England (London, Church House, 1994).
  4. Board of Mission (1994), p.1.
  5. Board of Mission (1994), p.v.

'church planting'. *Breaking New Ground* defines it as arising from a conscious evangelistic purpose to inaugurate a congregation, involving the transfer of people from an initial congregation (or from several congregations) to create or to revitalize another congregation. The resulting congregation will have a known corporate identity and style, an identified and recognized leadership, pastoral structures and is intended to serve an identifiable group, culture or neighbourhood.<sup>6</sup> Church planting is therefore a type of evangelism, establishing a group of Christians<sup>7</sup> to express the gospel in and for groups and neighbourhoods not otherwise being reached by the church. The group to be served is not inevitably defined geographically, but can be defined ethnically or culturally (which can pose problems for Anglican parochial structures). Anglican church plants can take many different forms, ranging from satellite congregations with little independence from the church of origin to new independent parishes, and total precision is impractical when speaking in general terms.

As far as the horticultural metaphor of planting is concerned, I have been unable to discover its origin. There are clear echoes of the parable of the sower (Matt.13:3-9), and the term is old: in the French Reformation newly founded congregations were sometimes called *églises plantées*.<sup>8</sup> 'Planting' has understandably been widely adopted today as providing great scope for describing church plants, allowing ideas such as seeds and runners (to describe their origin) and growth (their development).

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6. Board of Mission (1994), p.6.
  7. These new groups will be called 'church' or 'congregation' in this study without implying anything precise about their independence and corporate life. The term 'Church' will be used to describe the Church of England.
  8. P.Wilcox, "Eglises Plantées" and "Eglises Dressées" in the Historiography of early French Protestantism', Journal of Ecclesiastical History Vol.44 (1993), pp.689-695.

## **II. Why study Church Planting ?**

This study arises from personal experience. In 1992, while serving as Curate of Heacham in the Diocese of Norwich, I chaired a team from the church which planned and began a new congregation, meeting on Sunday mornings within the parish in a local school. Preparation for this involved research into church planting, and it was clear that church planting poses important questions, including the place of evangelism in the Church's life and the validity of church planting as a form of evangelism. The relationship between the local church and the diocese is also raised: what is the better level from which planting initiatives should arise, the local parish or the diocese ? What is the freedom of the parish church in its mission, faced by rigid parish boundaries, but in a world in which (at least in urban areas) parish boundaries are often arbitrary and little known and in which parish churches present very different expressions of the Christian faith ?

Most of these questions did not arise in Heacham, but research showed that there was very little written on the subject which engaged with church planting at more than a practical level. While the practical advice was invaluable, and many of the questions were discussed, there was seldom any extended reflection on the Scriptures and Anglican historical practice and theological tradition. This study therefore seeks to address the questions raised by Anglican church planting in an extended way, examining the Scriptures and Anglican tradition to find, in the light of these sources, a practical way forward for church planting in the Church of England.

## **III. Method**

Since Hooker, the Church of England has seen Scripture, tradition and reason as its three sources of authority, reason and tradition being guides to



the interpretation and application of Scripture.<sup>9</sup> The *Declaration of Assent* contained in Canon C15 provides that the Church of England:

...professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds....and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness.

Of those 'historic formularies', the *Thirty-nine Articles* give a primary place to Scripture (Articles VI, VIII, XIX-XXI and XXXIV). Alongside this, Article XXXIV (together with the preface to the *Book of Common Prayer*), indicates that experience and knowledge inherited from the past are not to be jettisoned lightly, but are to be used as a guide to the reasoned application of the Scriptures to the present day.

The second half of this study will therefore be an examination of the Scriptures, in particular the ministry of the Apostle Paul, whose letters contain a developed ecclesiology and missiology, as well as detailing some of his church planting practice and his continuing relationship with his churches. While others (such as Peter) engaged in evangelism, the record we have of their theology and ministry is much less detailed. This examination necessitates assumptions about the authorship of the Pauline material in the New Testament. This study takes Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon as genuinely Pauline. There is of course ongoing debate, particularly about Colossians, Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians,<sup>10</sup> but space does not permit any treatment of this question.

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9. P.D.L.Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1989), pp.63-66. Also B.Kaye, 'Anglican Belief', in I.Bunting (ed.), *Celebrating the Anglican Way* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), p.48.
10. See the discussion in the introductions to commentaries on these letters, eg P.T.O'Brien, *Colossians and Philemon* (Waco, Word, 1982), pp.xli-xlix; A.T.Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas, Word, 1990), pp.lix-lxxiii; F.F.Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Waco, Word, 1982), pp.xxxii-xxxiv.

To avoid questions of authorship, the Pastoral Epistles will not be relied upon on any major point, but will be used in Chapter 8 to see whether trends identified there were continued at what is acknowledged as a later stage in the development of the church (whether they were written by Paul or not). The same applies to the record of Paul's ministry in Acts. This will be assumed to be basically historical, but will not be relied upon to argue anything not demonstrable from Paul's letters.

This examination of Paul's ministry will firstly be set in the context of Anglican tradition and the current situation in the Church of England, in order to ensure that the biblical material is not used in an a-historical way, ignoring all that Anglicanism has stood for and the rich history of Anglican missiology. This context will highlight the questions briefly mentioned above and allow the right questions to be asked of the Pauline material, that the Scriptures can speak most clearly into the present situation.

There is no single strand of scholarship on which this study seeks to build. *Breaking New Ground* contains the Church of England's most official look at church planting, but offers little in the way of theological or historical reflection, and indeed echoes much of the descriptive and analytical work of Hopkins.<sup>11</sup> Many writers have covered the areas of Anglican history and missiology; key texts have perhaps been those of Avis and Sykes (on the theological development and outlook of the Church),<sup>12</sup> Max Warren (on

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11. B.Hopkins, Church Planting - Models for Mission in the Church of England (Nottingham, Grove Books, 1988) and Church Planting - Some Experiences and Challenges (Nottingham, Grove Books, 1989).
  12. P.D.L.Avis, Anglicanism and the Christian Church (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1989). S.W.Sykes, The Integrity of Anglicanism (Oxford, Mowbray, 1978) and Unashamed Anglicanism (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995).

Anglican missiology)<sup>13</sup> and Robert Warren (on modern approaches to mission).<sup>14</sup> The greatest debt, however, is perhaps owed to those who have written on the mission of Paul and his churches. The work of Roland Allen has been noteworthy in missionary circles for nearly a century, and his conclusions for the modern church still carry weight.<sup>15</sup> However, it will become clear in Chapter 7 that the examination of this area by Bowers and O'Brien has been essential for the analysis of the Pauline material and its application to the current situation.<sup>16</sup>

## IV Outline

The study will therefore fall into two main areas, firstly establishing the Anglican context, and secondly reflecting on this in the light of the New Testament. The practical need for church planting will be demonstrated, alongside an illustration of the variety of forms which planting can take. A brief examination of Anglican systematic missiology will discern whether there is an Anglican commitment to evangelism,<sup>17</sup> and whether this should lead inevitably to the establishment of local churches as the fruit of evangelism. Chapter 4 will then seek to trace the historical trends in Anglican missionary ecclesiology, both in England and overseas through the

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13. M.A.C.Warren, The Calling of God (London, Lutterworth, 1944), The Christian Mission (London, SCM, 1951) and I Believe in the Great Commission (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1976).
  14. R.Warren, Being Human, Being Church (London, Marshall Pickering, 1995) and Signs of Life (London, Church House, 1996).
  15. R.Allen, Missionary Methods, St Paul's or Ours ? (5th Edition, London, World Dominion Press, 1960).
  16. W.P.Bowers, 'Church and Mission in Paul', JSNT Vol.44 (1991) pp.89-111 and 'Fulfilling the Gospel', JETS Vol.30 (1987), pp.185-198. P.T.O'Brien, Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1995).
  17. 'Evangelism' will be used to refer to the active proclamation of the Christian gospel to those outside the church. A comparison is made with other terms in Chapter 3.

work of the voluntary societies, identifying important questions of flexibility in church order, and also seeing the development of theological tension and lack of consensus within the Church of England. The findings of these chapters will be drawn together in a fifth chapter, reflecting on the current situation and identifying the key issues to be taken to the Pauline material, namely the importance of evangelism, the appropriateness of church planting and the need for church order to provide scope for flexibility and local initiative in evangelism.

These issues will be examined firstly through looking at missiology and ecclesiology in Paul's writings: his compulsion to preach, and how his missiology necessitated a corporate expression of Christianity in the founding of local churches. The mission Paul envisaged for his churches will then be seen. Were they just to live a missionary lifestyle, leaving active evangelism and church planting to others specially called to that task, or was active evangelism part of the life of local Christians ? Questions of church order will arise as the final New Testament chapter examines Paul's continuing relationship with his churches. What was his authority over his churches and how was it exercised ? What was their freedom of action in their mission, and how did they relate to other churches ?

The concluding chapter will reflect on the summary of Chapter 5 in the light of the Pauline material, setting out a vision for the way ahead for the Church of England in church planting which is both Scriptural and consonant with Anglican tradition.

## 2. The Variety of Forms of Church Planting

Church plants do not often begin from a historical and biblical reflection on the nature of the church and its evangelistic task. Rather, they are prompted by the practical situation in which churches find themselves, seeking to reach with the Christian gospel those who currently are not part of the church. The question naturally arises as to the best practical way in which to do this. As contexts vary, so forms of church planting also vary enormously. This chapter will seek to give brief examples of varying types of church plants, by doing so also to illustrate the practical pressures that have led to their establishment. This will then pave the way for the theological and historical reflection of the following chapters, especially as some of the questions arising from church planting mentioned in Chapter 1 will be seen once again. Space will not permit a detailed description of all forms of church plant.<sup>1</sup> Rather, several major varieties will be examined, ranging from plants by a parish church within its parish to the establishment of churches serving a group of people defined not geographically but culturally or ethnically.

### I. Planting within the Parish

The Church of England has always sought through the parish system to have a parish church to which every inhabitant of England can relate. This desire has inevitably led to fluctuations in the number of churches founded, depending on the population of the time. While 53% of existing Anglican churches were planted before 1500 AD, as the parish system was

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1. This can be found in B.Hopkins, Church Planting - Models for Mission in the Church of England (Nottingham, Grove Books, 1988), pp.14-22 & 28-29.

developed, between 1500 and 1799 the figure was only 6%. The growth of new urban areas during the Industrial Revolution increased the percentages to 12% (1800-1850) and 26% (1851-1899), this latter figure representing 3,091 new Anglican churches. This has continued this century, with 2,475 congregations being founded since 1900.<sup>2</sup>

Some argue that this process should continue as parishes are often understaffed and ill-equipped to meet new challenges of housing and population shifts.<sup>3</sup> In the 1970s, David Wasdell presented his research findings to General Synod, arguing that while a church could effectively reach a parish population of up to about 2,000, above this figure the church's effectiveness diminished considerably.<sup>4</sup> This links with the thesis of Challenge 2000, an ecumenical group seeking to apply the DAWN principles in England. DAWN ('Discipling A Whole Nation'), a strategy developed in the Philippines in 1974, argues that effective evangelization requires a church for every 750 to 1,500 inhabitants or for every smaller neighbourhood (a smaller community or smaller sub-group of a community such as an urban council estate).<sup>5</sup> On either Wasdell's or the DAWN figures, an average Church of England parish population of 8,000 (with many over 10,000) suggests a need for planting new churches. This was acknowledged by *Breaking New Ground*, which identified 'underchurched areas' of up to to 5,000 people, within a parish but isolated either geographically or culturally.<sup>6</sup>

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2. M.Robinson & S.Christine, Planting Tomorrow's Churches Today (Speldhurst, Monarch, 1992), p.63.
  3. M.Nazir-Ali, From Everywhere to Everywhere (London, Collins, 1991), pp.69-71.
  4. D.Wasdell, Let My People Grow (Urban Church Work Paper No.1 of 1974), quoted in Robinson and Christine (1992), p.75.
  5. B.Hopkins (ed.), Planting New Churches (Guildford, Eagle, 1991), p.229.
  6. Board of Mission, Breaking New Ground (London, Church House, 1994), p.9.

Many modern church plants have this rationale: reaching those within a parish isolated from the parish church by beginning a 'satellite congregation', a congregation worshipping in a different building but part of the parish church (such a congregation would normally later grow towards independence). Heacham in Norfolk, mentioned in Chapter 1, is a large village of 6,000 people with a parish church and a small Methodist chapel. The parish church was situated between the manor house and the old village, but Heacham expanded away from the parish church, with some of the village over a mile from the church building, which was also situated up a slope making it difficult for some residents to reach. The parish church was also full for the morning service (another factor preventing the whole parish being reached), and so the decision was taken in 1992 to establish a congregation to meet in a school situated at the far end of the village. This was within the parish boundaries and was initiated purely by the local church (although the bishop was kept informed and was supportive). The initial congregation came from the existing parish church, though since then others who never attended the parish church have (as hoped) joined the new plant.

A similar pattern can be found elsewhere. In 1971 the parish of Chester-le-Street, County Durham, a town of 25,000 people, began what would become 6 satellite congregations, all within the parish, aimed at reaching those not linked with the parish church.<sup>7</sup> The parish of St Luke's, Bolton, although only having a population of 4,500, began in 1986 the first of two church plants: based at a bowling club and begun because the parish church had no room left at its main Sunday service.<sup>8</sup> Such plants differ little from many historical initiatives such as the mission halls of the last century (see Chapter 4), but

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7. G.Walker & I.Bunting, 'Twenty Years on: Chester-le-Street Today', in Hopkins (ed.) (1991), pp.148-157.

8. B.Hopkins, Church Planting - Some Experiences and Challenges (Nottingham, Grove Books, 1989), p.4.

they are genuine church plants. Others are more unusual, and these will now be described.

## **II. Creating New Parishes**

Many 'underchurched areas' can not be reached simply by planting a satellite congregation of the type described above. Either the parish church is not strong enough to begin such a work on its own, or, in towns, the area to be reached spans two or more parishes. In this case, the solution has frequently been to create a new parish for that area. This clearly is not an initiative that a parish church can do on its own. The legal machinery of the diocese is essential to create the new area and license the minister appointed. An example of this is the Crumbles area of my current deanery of Eastbourne, East Sussex. An originally lightly inhabited area of the parish of Langney, it has seen an enormous rise in population with the building of a large housing estate. St Richard's, Langney, does not have the resources to plant a new congregation. The Eastbourne Deanery agreed that there should be a church plant in the Crumbles, and one of the other Anglican churches gave up a curate's post to enable Langney to become a Team ministry, looking towards the establishment of a church there, which would eventually become a separate parish within the Team. This scheme is about to begin, with a group meeting initially under the care of a retired clergyman.

Daykin describes a similar situation in Southampton, where a new housing estate was built in the suburb of Valley Park. In order to give this area a focus of Anglican church life, in 1987 the Diocese of Winchester created a conventional district out of three existing parishes. A minister was appointed, worship was begun (initially in a converted bungalow), and in 1991 the congregation both became a parish church in its own right and



moved into a purpose-built building.<sup>9</sup> Though more involved than planting in an existing parish, it is not as complicated as the next possibility.

### **III. Reviving an Existing Parish**

While plants within parish boundaries are usually local initiatives, the creation of a new parish is usually the initiative of a diocese, or at least a deanery. This third type of plant is often a mixture of both, as although the initiative is a local one (by the planting church), very often the legal machinery of a diocese is required to put the proposal into effect. This type of plant is known as a transplant, where a church transfers part of its congregation across its parish boundaries into an existing parish church, to reinvigorate a congregation unable otherwise to serve its parish.

Hopkins outlines how a small group of five people, including two Anglican ministers not then working as stipendiary clergy, moved in 1983 from Chorleywood, Hertfordshire, to Holy Trinity, Parr Mount, St Helens, Lancashire, to assist the vicar in attempting to build the life of an inner city parish whose congregation had dwindled to about 40, almost all of whom lived outside the parish. This was effectively church planting (by transplant of what Hopkins calls a 'seed team') since a real mission work had to be started to reach the parish community and create a new local congregation.<sup>10</sup> The assistance of Liverpool Diocese would have been needed if the two clergy were to be licensed and not operate in an unauthorised way.

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9. T.Daykin, 'Planting in Middle-Class Suburbs', in Hopkins (ed.) (1991), pp.76-83.

10. Hopkins (1989), p.12.

Holy Trinity, Brompton, in London Diocese, is a large church which has undertaken several of these transplants. In 1985 100 members of the Holy Trinity congregation moved to St Barnabas, Kensington, with John Irvine, Curate at Holy Trinity, becoming priest-in-charge of St Barnabas, a church of about 20 with a building built to seat 1,000 people. The idea of the transplant came from Holy Trinity, the Diocese suggesting St Barnabas as a possible destination. Such a transplant was within one diocese, but across parish and deanery boundaries.<sup>11</sup>

Three other transplants have since been undertaken by Holy Trinity, two in similar circumstances but one involving a move across diocesan boundaries, the negotiations involving both London and Southwark Dioceses. Holy Trinity knew that a number of their members lived in the Battersea area, and approached Southwark Diocese to see if there was a church about to be made redundant into which a transplant could take place. It was eventually agreed that the parish of St Mark's, Battersea Rise, would be suitable, and funding for Paul Perkin, the new minister who came from Holy Trinity with a group of 70 people (who lived locally), was found from a scheme allowing the bishop to make discretionary appointments for mission experiments.<sup>12</sup>

All the types of plant thus far have been geographically based. Whether within an existing parish, into an existing parish or by the creation of a new parish, all have been intended to serve the needs of a geographical area not being reached by existing arrangements. However, church plants have also been motivated by the desire to reach sections of the population defined not geographically but in other ways, and these will now be examined.

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11. J.Irvine, 'Planting St Barnabas, Kensington', in Hopkins (ed.) (1991) pp.92-97.

12. P.Selby, 'The Experience of a Receiving Diocese', and P.Perkin, 'Negotiations from the Planter's Perspective', both in Hopkins (ed.) (1991), pp.85-91.

## IV. Network Planting

Church plants within recognised boundaries may need the legal involvement of diocesan authorities, but they fit easily within the Anglican parish system. This is not the case with network plants, designed to reach a cultural or ethnic group whose members will not usually live neatly within one parish, whether existing or specially created. Arguably, the traditional model of the parish church, serving a defined geographical area, is not flexible enough to meet the needs of modern culture. Nazir-Ali points to large sections of the population which are not reached by the current Church of England - many urban, working-class areas, and also specific groups such as young people and ethnic minorities.<sup>13</sup> If the Church of England has always aimed to have a presence in every community, then an increasingly diverse and fragmented world will necessitate creative church planting.

This development in society is best illustrated by a specific example. On May 18 1996 an article appeared in *The Times Magazine* about Swindon.<sup>14</sup> In the article, D'Ancona writes that a large proportion of Swindon's population have no roots where they live. Surprisingly few of the town's families have been there for more than a generation. The electoral roll changes by 25% a year, and one clergyman reported that three quarters of the children baptised each year will be gone five years later. D'Ancona comments:

There is little fixity for communities to rely upon...The town lacks an obvious civic centre or cultural heart. Many of its citizens look to Bath for culture, Oxford for shopping and Reading or Bristol for employment.<sup>15</sup>

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13. Nazir-Ali (1991), pp.69-71.

14. M.D'Ancona, 'Mirror to the Nation', *The Times Magazine*, May 18 1996, pp.22-29.

15. D'Ancona (1996), p.24.

There are, he writes, many who feel no profound allegiance to the place where they live. The traditional neighbourhood has declined, but this has not necessarily left a vacuum. Rather, there are a series of inter-related networks which are directed not by community but by activity. Swindonians are less likely than their ancestors to collaborate in the name of a street or neighbourhood; they interact instead while pursuing a hobby, playing a sport, attending a luncheon club or helping out at school.<sup>16</sup>

This is not just an urban phenomenon. Warren writes that even rural areas do not necessarily contain close-knit communities any more, but 'a mosaic of sub-groups and interlocking cultures' such as commuting executives who have moved in from outside with their families.<sup>17</sup>

This new situation necessitates new approaches. Warren again comments that:

A church model based exclusively on where people live is likely to be irrelevant to many unless it finds new ways of operating.<sup>18</sup>

Robinson and Christine point to the 500 ethnic churches planted in London in the last 20 years, and argue that:

Christian communities with their life and witness focussed upon the fixed locations of parishes and buildings have been outflanked by a mobile population.<sup>19</sup>

This is an attitude echoed by *Breaking New Ground*, which declared that churches attempting to reach such networks of people would:

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16. D'Ancona (1996), p.24.

17. R.Warren, Being Human, Being Church (London, Marshall Pickering, 1995), p.8.

18. R.Warren (1995), p.169.

19. Robinson and Christine (1992), pp.38-40.

build upon the Church of England's ecclesial instinct to accept responsibility for an area and to foster the spiritual life and witness of church worshippers living there.<sup>20</sup>

except that 'area' would be defined in a new way. The report itself pointed to particular ministries such as chaplains to the deaf.<sup>21</sup>

It is, however, one thing to realise the need. It is quite another to be able to meet it, particularly in a Church of England with a strong legal framework revolving almost exclusively around the parish system. Network church plants do not necessarily run into boundary problems. St Luke's, Bolton (mentioned above) planted a congregation within its boundaries to reach the Asian population of the parish.<sup>22</sup> In Swindon, D'Ancona found that the church had adapted well to what he calls the 'choice society': St Mark's, Swindon, becoming the preferred place of worship for those opposed to the ordination of women to the priesthood.<sup>23</sup> The parish of All Saints, Brixton Hill, had in 1991 three Sunday services catering for diverse social groups, resulting from evangelistic activities aimed at, for example, young people, older people, single mothers or African refugees.<sup>24</sup>

Yet network church plants often do raise the question of parish boundaries. The continuing place of these boundaries will be discussed in later chapters, but examples of this type of church plant will make the point. In 1993, Bishop Graham Dow of Willesden invited Mike Clarkson and a group from St Barnabas, Kensington, to plant a prototype network church in the Acton Subdeanery, having no parish or building of its own. This church would form

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20. Board of Mission (1994), p.31.

21. Board of Mission (1994), p.3.

22. Hopkins (1989), p.5.

23. D'Ancona (1996), p.26.

24. M.Breen, 'Forming Pastoral Bases in Brixton', in Hopkins (ed.) (1991), pp.123-138.

a mission resource for the Subdeanery, existing primarily for outreach and working together with any of the local churches who wanted to engage in evangelism. Despite the Bishop's support, only one parish would accept the new Oak Tree Anglican Fellowship, and this has severely limited the implementation of the vision for the church, as Canon Law forbids any minister to exercise ministry in a parish without the approval of the local incumbent.<sup>25</sup>

Soul Survivor, Watford, is a congregation set up to reach young people in the town. It was begun in 1993 by a team from St Andrew's, Chorleywood, and operates through a youth cafe and a twice-monthly celebration (in a local school), out of which has grown a congregation meeting on Wednesdays for, alternately, small cell groups and a service. Such a congregation clearly does not duplicate any of the mission and ministry of the local parish churches, and the local bishops have been supportive. The congregation hopes, through negotiations, to be adopted as a missionary congregation by the local deanery.<sup>26</sup>

Such a challenge to parish boundaries and legal structures can also come for other reasons. The motivation for Holy Trinity, Brompton, becoming involved in transplants was that its building was full; something had to be done and there was a legitimate desire humbly to share its life and growth with other churches in the area. Holy Trinity was able to do this within Anglican structures, but other churches have been frustrated in this desire. Hopkins writes of a city-centre church thwarted three times in negotiations to transplant into neighbouring, nearly redundant churches.<sup>27</sup>

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25. M.Clarkson, 'The Oak Tree Anglican Fellowship, Acton', in N.A.D.Scotland (ed.), Recovering the Ground (Chorleywood, Kingdom Power Trust, 1995), pp.113-115.

26. M.Redman & M.Calladine, 'Soul Survivor, Watford', in Scotland (ed.) (1995), pp.115-121.

27. Hopkins (1989), p.18f.

Such pressures can be hard to resist. Scotland writes of the Glenfall Fellowship, Cheltenham, which finally began worship in a school outside its planting parish, but in the area where its members lived. This came about after detailed transplant negotiations failed at a late stage, and after two years' delay it was felt that the frustrations of church members with the machinery of the Church of England necessitated some independent action, lest those members be lost to the church. In 1991 the Bishop of Gloucester felt no option but to withdraw official Church of England recognition from the Glenfall Fellowship.<sup>28</sup>

Additionally, many urban churches have small Bible-study and prayer groups meeting in homes across parish boundaries. If these homes were used as bases for mission, how would the Church of England react? And if the Church has difficulty in accepting network plants not directly hostile to the ministry of local parish churches, how much more difficulty would result from those established in opposition to other churches perceived as inadequate in their life and mission? John Broadhurst, Chairman of *Forward in Faith* and now Bishop of Fulham, has written that the first priority of traditional Anglo-Catholics opposed to the ordination of women to the priesthood is church planting:

in places where orthodoxy has been excluded by abuse of appointments, so that people have a church to go to.<sup>29</sup>

While such a theological rationale falls outside the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting how it stands alongside the practical rationale for church planting which challenges Church of England ideas about boundaries and structures, and this whole question will be discussed fully in a later chapter.

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28. N.A.D.Scotland, 'Glenfall Fellowship, Cheltenham', in Scotland (ed.) (1995), pp.106-109.

29. Interview in New Directions Magazine, Vol.1 No.10 (1996).

## V. Conclusions

This brief outline of forms of church planting has shown two main practical rationales for engaging in church planting: firstly that a geographical area is not being served effectively by the local parish church or churches, and secondly that a particular group within society, not defined geographically, is similarly not being served. The first rationale has led to the planting of satellite congregations within a parish or to the creation of new parishes or the transplant of members from one church to another to help with its life and mission. The second has led to the planting of so-called 'network' churches.

Several important questions have been raised. What is the appropriate level at which church planting is initiated, the local parish church or the wider church? If it is the former, then the further question is raised of the freedom of the local parish church to act, frustrated sometimes by the apparently cumbersome legal and administrative procedures required by the diocese. The question of the place and purpose of parish boundaries is also raised, both by network plants and by proposed plants by churches which have simply exhausted the possibilities of planting within their own parish, and yet are full to bursting-point. How can one deal with such a situation creatively and for the good of the gospel while also remaining true to Church of England order and Anglican history? Moreover, in a church arguably lacking theological consensus, is there such a thing as recognisable 'Anglicanism' which would necessitate only one Church of England church within each parish area?

All of these questions will be examined in some detail in the following chapters. The next chapter will look at church planting in the Church of England from a systematic theological perspective: although church planting has a practical rationale, is it an appropriate expression of Anglican missiology?



### 3. Church Planting in the Light of Anglican Systematic Missiology

At the 1990 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) in Cardiff, Bishop Roger Herft of Waikato, New Zealand, said that:

By and large Anglicans have had a “private and confidential” label over their faith life...If there is one commandment of Christ that Anglicans have kept with some degree of joy it is Jesus's admonition to the three disciples after the Transfiguration, “see that you tell no-one”.<sup>1</sup>

Sykes agrees that the Church of England has not been the most evangelistically<sup>2</sup> minded of churches,<sup>3</sup> largely seeking the deepening of faith of those already baptised.<sup>4</sup> At the Reformation, the Church inherited a largely stable parish system which covered the country, and a lack of significant concern for evangelism is perhaps reflected in the *Book of Common Prayer*, which contains a Catechism but otherwise no provision for the welcoming of converts. The rite of ‘Baptism of such as are of Riper Years’ is described in the Preface to the *Book* as one which ‘may be always useful for the baptizing of Natives in our Plantations’, but the primary use is stated to be to counter the neglect of infant baptism due to the growth of

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1. ACC, Mission in a Broken World (London, Church House, 1990), p.71.
  2. ‘Evangelism’ is used in this thesis to refer to the active proclamation of the gospel to those outside the church, seeking their conversion. ‘Evangelism’ is therefore narrower than ‘mission’, which includes witness through the attractiveness of the lives of Christians and through social action.
  3. S.W.Sykes, Unashamed Anglicanism (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995), p.201.
  4. Sykes (1995), p.xx.

Anabaptism and the 'licentiousness of the late times' (the period of the Civil War and the Commonwealth).<sup>5</sup>

Yet if church planting is to be done seriously, this should be on the basis of a proper Anglican missiology and ecclesiology.<sup>6</sup> Space prevents a full treatment of this subject here, but various areas are vital, given the questions already raised. Church planting is evangelistic: is Anglicanism committed to evangelism? Is the result of evangelism simply the conversion of individuals or the establishment of churches (the corporate nature of salvation)? Who should undertake this evangelism? How should an evangelistic church be structured? These are specific questions, and large areas therefore can not be covered, such as the nature of the gospel to be preached in evangelism. Also, though Anglicanism looks to learn from non-Anglican sources (indeed, missiology has been at the forefront of ecumenical developments since the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910), the sheer volume of writing alone must limit this chapter to those writing from an Anglican perspective, despite the consequent omission of much important modern missiology.<sup>7</sup>

## I. The Commitment to Evangelism

At the Lambeth Conference of 1988 Anglican churches committed themselves to a Decade of Evangelism, calling for a 'shift to a dynamic missionary emphasis going beyond care and nurture to proclamation and

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5. T.E.Yates, 'Anglicans and Mission', in S.W.Sykes and J.E.Booty (ed.), The Study of Anglicanism (London, SPCK, 1988), p.430f.

6. Sykes (1995), p.125; P.D.L.Avis, Anglicanism and the Christian Church (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1989), p.6.

7. Such as J.Blauw, The Missionary Nature of the Church (London, Lutterworth, 1962) and D.J.Bosch, Transforming Mission (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1991).

service.’<sup>8</sup> Bishop Rowan Williams has described this as a ‘necessary idiocy’,<sup>9</sup> since it is of the essence of the church to evangelize. From where have Anglicans seen this commitment arising ?

### a) The Sending God who sends the Church

Theologically speaking, the origin of evangelism is in God himself. The Godhead is characterised by relationships of love within the Trinity, and this love has been expressed in God's movement from himself, beginning at creation, where the Word and the Spirit were the first ‘missionaries’.<sup>10</sup> This sending love of God took a historical form through the calling of Abraham to be a blessing to the nations (Gn.12:1-3) and the election of Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod.19:5f), a light to the Gentiles (Isa.49:6).<sup>11</sup> This sending reached its climax in the Incarnation, when out of the depths of his love the Father sent his own beloved Son,<sup>12</sup> this going forth from God continuing as the Holy Spirit came afresh at Pentecost, bringing home to individuals what Jesus has done, kindling real understanding and faith.<sup>13</sup> Mission is therefore trinitarian: from the Father to the world through the Son and through the Spirit sent by the Father and the Son, the movement returning to God as the church is, in the ascended Christ, caught up into the life of God himself, offering a sacrifice of worship and service.

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8. Lambeth Conference, The Truth Shall Make You Free (London, Church House, 1988), Resolution 44.
  9. Quoted in R.Warren, Signs of Life (London, Church House, 1996), p.1.
  10. M.Nazir-Ali, From Everywhere to Everywhere (London, Collins, 1991), p.9f; C.Wright, ‘The Old Testament and Christian Mission’, Evangel Vol.14 No.2 (1996), p.38.
  11. Wright (1996), p.39.
  12. Nazir-Ali (1991), p.17; J.V.Taylor, For all the World (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1966), p.16; M.A.C.Warren, The Christian Imperative (London, SCM, 1955), p.11.
  13. Taylor (1966), p.23f.

Writers have also argued that to be a Christian is inevitably to be caught up into the mission of God himself. Warren writes that:

the Church exists for the one purpose of being the instrument through which God's redemptive purpose is to be made effective in the world. Everything else in the Church is subordinate to this major responsibility.<sup>14</sup>

The task of Israel is fulfilled in Christ and carried on by the Church, as those in Christ are dedicated to the task of winning the world back to God.<sup>15</sup> Jesus Christ himself is the message of Christianity, and to know him is to know the 'Great Commission' in our lives.<sup>16</sup> Mission springs from the mission of the risen Christ, with whom we are in communion. Mission is not just a response to what God has done, it is participation in God's missionary act in Christ, as we die and rise with him.<sup>17</sup> As the Father sent Christ, so he sends the church (Jn.20:21), which provides the necessary link between the resurrection of Christ and the parousia.<sup>18</sup> This sending is also the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who empowers the church for mission as his instrument.<sup>19</sup> As Taylor writes, Christians cannot avoid trying to make known the promise and invitation made by Jesus, being caught up into the desire of the Spirit of God to make people profoundly aware of Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup>

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14. M.A.C.Warren, The Calling of God (London, Lutterworth, 1944), p.13.
  15. M.A.C.Warren (1944), p.12f.
  16. M.A.C.Warren, I Believe in the Great Commission (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1976), p.23.
  17. R.K.Orchard, Missions in a Time of Testing (London, Lutterworth, 1964), p.29; M.Nazir-Ali, Mission and Dialogue (London, SPCK, 1995), p.50.
  18. N.T.Wright, New Tasks for a Renewed Church (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p.85.
  19. F.W.Dillistone, 'The Holy Spirit and Christian Mission', in G.H.Anderson (ed.), The Theology of the Christian Mission (London, SCM, 1961), p.278f.
  20. J.V.Taylor, The Go-Between God (London, SCM, 1972), p.136.

## b) The Need for Evangelism

The Lambeth Conference of 1988 also saw evangelism as an urgent task, inspired by God's love for us in Christ.<sup>21</sup> This is a different emphasis, focussing not so much upon Christians as caught up into the mission of God himself, but upon the need for that mission. God is an Almighty God, the God of all the nations (Isa.52:7-10; Zech.14:9). Nazir-Ali comments that the picture from the Old Testament is that Yahweh could not just be a tribal god,<sup>22</sup> while Neill writes in connection with Isa.40ff that:

If the God of Israel really is the Creator of the whole universe, if he carries all the nations in his hands, then the unity of the world of nature and of men is guaranteed, and it seems to follow, as part of the divine purpose, that sooner or later all men should find their way back to the God who made them.<sup>23</sup>

Christianity presents a particularist faith, with an inclusive intention to reach all groups of people,<sup>24</sup> and to evangelize is to sing the praises of God before the nations. The motive of evangelism is praise,<sup>25</sup> and this praise is centred upon the decisive acts of God in history, especially the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Cross declares that every human being is the object of the Father's care, but a right relationship with God depends upon a conscious and deliberate act of the human will, accepting the salvation that has been wrought in and by Christ.<sup>26</sup> What Christ has done

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21. Lambeth Conference (1988), p.30.

22. Nazir-Ali (1995), p.9.

23. S.C.Neill, A History of Christian Missions (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1964), p.17.

24. M.A.C.Warren (1976), pp.42 & 54.

25. Sykes (1995), p.202f; Orchard (1964), p.147.

26. S.C.Neill, 'The Everlasting Gospel', in M.A.C.Warren (ed.), The Triumph of God (London, Longmans, 1948), p.14f.

affects everyone, and all need to hear of it, as (under Article XVIII of the Thirty-Nine Articles) 'holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.' In Christ the Kingdom of God has come, to be brought to its consummation when Christ returns, and this hope (and warning of judgment) needs to be proclaimed. As Neill writes:

as long as [a person] has not heard the gospel, he is the heir wrongly deprived of his inheritance, kept unjustly in prison, and condemned to live in gloom and squalor, from which he ought to be given at least the choice of deliverance.<sup>27</sup>

Anglicans have therefore seen a clear commitment to evangelism on the part of the Church of England. This is in fact nothing new. As the *Second Book of Homilies* (written in 1571 mostly by Bishop Jewel) opines:

If any man be a dumb Christian, not professing his faith openly, but cloaking and colouring himself for fear of danger in time to come, he giveth men occasion, justly and with good conscience, to doubt lest he have not the grace of the Holy Ghost within him, because he is tongue tied and doth not speak.<sup>28</sup>

## II. The Inevitability of the Church

Church planting seeks to establish a Christian community in a particular place, to reach and serve that area. Much traditional evangelism, however, has emphasised the conversion of individuals, with those individuals then being encouraged to join a local church almost as an afterthought - membership of a local church as a part of Christian lifestyle. Both forms of

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27. S.C.Neill, 'The Everlasting Gospel', in M.A.C.Warren (ed.) (1948), p.20.

28. Quoted in J.R.W.Stott, 'Evangelism through the Local Church', in C.Wright & C.Sugden (ed.), One Gospel, Many Clothes (Oxford, EFAC and Regnum, 1990), p.13.

evangelism see the conversion of individuals as primary, and the local church as important, but church planting gives the local church a much higher profile, with the planting of churches itself seen as highly significant evangelistically. It needs to be seen whether this emphasis upon the centrality of the church is supported by Anglican missiology.

### a) The Corporate Nature of Salvation

God is Trinity, and the life of God is one of fellowship and interrelationship. The world is a reflection and revelation of the nature of God, and human beings are made in God's image.<sup>29</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that people are social beings, existing within communities and a whole network of support, security and protection.<sup>30</sup> Yet, the effect of sin is to damage human community, so that often, instead of community, individualism is dominant, with community seen as antithetical to individual fulfilment, useful only as a forum for the subjugation of others.<sup>31</sup> The purpose of God's salvation is to bring individuals to salvation, and restoration into community as God intends. God's purposes revealed in Scripture have had a corporate dimension, and the New Testament presents a picture of barriers of isolation being broken down (Eph.2:11-22). When the love of God penetrates someone's heart, that brings love towards others, and the church is the place of the expression of that love in a redeemed community.<sup>32</sup> Full atonement can only be found in a unified fellowship, where the web of human relationships can come under

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29. S.C.Neill, 'The Everlasting Gospel', in M.A.C.Warren (ed.) (1948), p.13.

30. F.W.Dillistone, The Structure of the Divine Society (London, Lutterworth, 1951), p.13.

31. S.C.Neill, 'The Everlasting Gospel', in M.A.C.Warren (ed.) (1948), p.25;  
J.P.Hickinbotham, 'The People of God', in M.A.C.Warren (ed.) (1948), p.93;  
M.A.C.Warren, The Christian Mission (London, SCM, 1951), p.34.

32. J.P.Hickinbotham, 'The People of God', in M.A.C.Warren (ed.) (1948), pp.93-96.

the lordship of Christ.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the closeness of relationships in the church is shown by images such as the body of Christ (*eg.* 1 Cor.12).

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Committee of Enquiry on evangelism, reporting in 1918, described evangelism as:

So to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of the Church.<sup>34</sup>

This dual emphasis on individual acceptance leading to incorporation into the church is reflected in the sacrament of Christian initiation; baptism. Part of the individual response (Acts 2:38), it leads inevitably to community (Acts 2:42ff).<sup>35</sup> Baptism means that there can be no mission imaginable that does not lead to incorporation into the church.

## **b) The Necessity of the Church for Evangelism**

The centrality of the church in evangelism is secured not just by the fact that individual salvation must lead to a corporate expression of that salvation, but also because without the church there can be no effective evangelism. Nazir-Ali describes the church not as simply a by-product of a delayed parousia, but:

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33. Orchard (1964), p.61.

34. Quoted in The Archbishops' Commission on Evangelism, Towards the Conversion of England (London, Church Assembly, 1945), p.1.

35. M.A.C.Warren (1944), p.20.



an eschatological community, brought into being by Jesus himself, as the herald and embodiment of the new age, however near or far that new age might be.<sup>36</sup>

Evangelism arises from a community. Taylor argues that the sole purpose of the visible fellowship of the church is to be the fuel upon which God's fire is kindled on the earth,<sup>37</sup> while if Anglican evangelism is to touch and transform every aspect of people's lives, and be expressed through worship, then this requires a community, or this evangelism cannot take place.<sup>38</sup> Finney argues that the most appropriate expression of evangelism for modern Britain uses the image not of the Damascus road, but of the road to Emmaus.<sup>39</sup> Rather than the focus of evangelism being on large rallies, with immediate conversion, what Finney describes as the 'new evangelism' looks for evangelism within a wider context of witness, as people can journey alongside the people of God, with a gradual opening-up of faith and realisation of the presence of God. In this, an experience of the life of a Christian congregation, demonstrating integrity and care for others, is essential, alongside verbal sharing of the gospel.

This is not so new. The Archbishops' Commission of 1945 declared that:  
ultimately the evidence for the credibility of the Gospel in the eyes of the world must be a quality of life manifested in the Church which the world cannot find elsewhere.<sup>40</sup>

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36. Nazir-Ali (1991), p.19.

37. Taylor (1972), p.134.

38. A.Osmaston and A.White, 'Sharing our Faith in the World', in I.Bunting (ed.), Celebrating the Anglican Way (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), p.150f.

39. J.Finney, Recovering the Past (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1996), pp.39-46.

40. Archbishops' Commission on Evangelism (1945), p.33.

The church is the supreme means by which God has established that the gospel should be demonstrated in human life and community.<sup>41</sup> It is the visible sign of God's activity in human history and of Jesus its Lord, witnessing to the lifestyle of the Kingdom of God in anticipation of the consummation of that Kingdom.<sup>42</sup> If God has all his human family to win, then this can only be done by a family in whom all other families might find a way back to him.<sup>43</sup>

The church is therefore central to evangelism: individual salvation is not complete until it finds a corporate expression, and the church is necessary as the agent of evangelism, supporting proclamation of the gospel by demonstrating in its corporate life the values of the Kingdom of God, presenting a vision of a society formed and controlled by the Holy Spirit and by love, and where the Holy Spirit gives all the gifts necessary to live the life that God intends. This must give support to the central aim of church planting, the establishment of Christian communities in areas without a Christian witness, but further questions need to be asked.

### **III. By whom is Evangelism undertaken ?**

It has been seen above that the church is required as the agent of evangelism, and therefore it might be thought that this question has already been answered. However, this is not the case and the question is important. One of the factors seen in Chapter 2 was the interplay between the parish level and the diocesan level in church planting. Often, the initiative for

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41. R.Warren, Being Human, Being Church (London, Marshall Pickering, 1995), p.15.

42. Sykes (1995), p.123 & 129; J.V.Taylor, 'The Church witnesses to the Kingdom', International Review of Mission Vol.69 (1980-81), p.295.

43. M.A.C.Warren (1944), p.11.

planting comes from the local level of the parish, but the legal and administrative mechanisms of the diocese are required to give effect to a new church plant if it is to find a place within Anglican structures.

There is a tension, raising not just questions of history and church order, but also theological questions relating to the role and responsibility of individual believers and groups of believers within a wider church. Anglican thinking on this issue has come largely in the context of debates about the role of the voluntary mission societies (of which much more will be seen in later chapters), and arguably the same reasoning applied to their situation (see Chapter 5) can be applied here.

It could be argued that the more the church is seen as the appropriate agent of evangelism, the more this will be seen as a ministry to be undertaken by the whole church, with the consequence that it should be centrally controlled and administered. The initiative would then naturally always come from the diocesan level, with its strategic overview of the needs of the whole diocese. However, while evangelism is the ministry of the whole church, it does not necessarily follow that it is therefore an activity solely to be initiated centrally by church authorities. The trinitarian nature of God, with the different persons of the Godhead in relationship in an essential unity, is reflected in the church, the body of Christ constituted by the Spirit. Within the unity of the church there is a diversity of spiritual gifts and therefore a God-given diversity of function (1 Cor.12). While Chapter 7 will argue that for Paul all believers have a responsibility and a role in evangelism given the nature of the gospel and the gift of the Spirit to all, a diversity of gifting (and perhaps a specific gift of evangelism in Eph.4:11) indicates that evangelistic initiative should not always be looked for from those with different leadership gifts in the church.

Allen argues that mission is the work of all the church, but uses this to plead for increased autonomy for the local church in its life and mission, trusting

local Christians to stand firm in the gospel and evangelize spontaneously.<sup>44</sup> It will be seen that Allen and Warren had very different views about the effectiveness of voluntary missionary societies, but in fact on this point their views are remarkably similar. Warren sees the church as reserving to itself the inalienable responsibility for the evangelization of the world, but exercising that responsibility through the missionary societies.<sup>45</sup> While mission belongs to the church in its wholeness it cannot be discharged by the whole of the church.<sup>46</sup> The missionary societies represent a specialization of function, being a grouping of those whom God has called to exercise the mission of the whole church.<sup>47</sup> The emphasis is therefore arguably on local and voluntary initiative, and if church planting is to follow this direction as part of the church's mission then it will need to ensure that structures and procedures allow for this local, voluntary priority.

## IV. Conclusions

The Pastoral Letter issued by the Anglican bishops at the end of the 1988 Lambeth Conference stated that:

In many parts of the world Anglicans have emphasised the pastoral model of ministry at the expense of mission. We believe that the Holy Spirit is now leading us to become a movement for mission.<sup>48</sup>

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44. R.Allen, Missionary Methods, St Paul's or Ours ? (London, World Dominion Press, 1960), pp.1, 32 & 98.
45. M.A.C.Warren (1944), p.61.
46. M.A.C.Warren (1951), p.91; M.A.C.Warren (1944), p.60.
47. M.A.C.Warren (1951), p.94; see also Nazir-Ali (1995), p.52f.
48. Lambeth Conference (1988), p.327.

We have seen that while the Church of England has perhaps not been the most evangelistically minded of churches, Anglican missiologists have helped the church to see more clearly that a commitment to evangelism should be at the heart of church life. This evangelism, of the very essence of the Christian faith, is not just a matter of the conversion of individuals, but will inevitably lead to a corporate expression in the church, as salvation inevitably includes the redemption of relationships and the need to be able to be in relationship within a redeemed community.

Moreover, without the church there can be no effective evangelism, as the church is the agent of evangelism, demonstrating as a community the life of the gospel, providing a context in which people may see the Christian faith in action, explore it for themselves and perhaps grow in faith and come to a place of commitment to Christ. All this can only be seen as supportive of the idea of church planting as an appropriate expression of evangelism. One more problem is, however, raised.

While this evangelism is the ministry of the whole church, this does not mean that it is necessarily always to be centrally organised and directed, but rather is also to be allowed spontaneous expression within the life of the church, the initiative for evangelism rightly coming often from the local, voluntary level, where people are grouped together in local churches or other voluntary associations.

Yet the Church of England may have problems in allowing that spontaneity free expression within its life. The tensions over the question of parish boundaries and network church planting have already been seen. The Church of England inherited at the Reformation a situation of an (at least nominally) Christian country, and, operating on what might be called a 'Christendom model', organised itself in such a way that pastoral care arguably had precedence over evangelism. The relationship between the two is a complex one (they cannot neatly be separated). Yet the pastoral

emphasis of the *Book of Common Prayer* has already been noted, and the parish system and the place in the Church of England of the occasional offices of baptism, marriage and funerals arguably also reflect a pastoral approach. In the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, although Articles XVII and XVIII recognise that not all have faith (the Articles deal respectively with predestination and obtaining eternal salvation only in the name of Christ), the vast majority of the rest of the Articles covering the life of the Church (Articles XIX to XXXVI) deal with its internal ordering - its worship, sacraments and ministry - rather than its mission.

It may well be, therefore, that there will be found to be a conflict between the evangelistically minded missiology of the Church of England and its pastorally minded order. This is best seen through an examination of the history of the Church of England and its missionary work overseas. This will naturally be selective, but will look at the question of the place of evangelism within Anglicanism, and the tension between local initiative and Anglican order. Following Chapter 2, it will also be necessary to see whether Anglican theological consensus has broken down to such an extent that those wishing to plant churches can arguably do so under a theological rationale that such church planting is necessary to safeguard Anglican witness to the gospel in that area.

## 4. The Historical Perspective

Church planting in the Church of England needs to be put into its historical context. This context has formed the modern Church, and can inform current policy. Models used before could be used again, as similar situations have been addressed. How has any commitment to evangelism manifested itself in practice ? What tensions have arisen between local initiative and church order, and how have they been resolved ? Is there any historical precedent or rationale for planting into parishes of different churchmanship or theological approach in order to safeguard the witness to the gospel ? Such an inquiry must go beyond just examining the Church of England in this country since the Reformation. McGrath writes that:

Traditionally, Anglican understandings of the church have been grounded on the presumption that the church is situated within a largely settled Christian context, and is thus primarily concerned with pastoral care and teaching.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 2 demonstrated how this is no longer adequate for the modern situation. McGrath again argues that:

forms of Anglicanism accustomed to dealing with settled geographical patterns of religious affiliations are not especially well-placed to cope with these [modern] developments.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will therefore look at some less settled situations, the church before the Reformation and especially Anglican missionary work overseas, alongside the history of the Church of England in this country. All the

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1. A.McGrath, The Renewal of Anglicanism (London, SPCK, 1993), p.23f.

2. McGrath (1993), p.24.

questions will be covered together chronologically, as often the development of Anglican thought and missionary work at home and overseas have affected one another.

## I. Before the Reformation

At the Reformation, the Church of England had a largely stable parish system. However, the parochial model was, until the Synod of Whitby in 664, one of two alternative models of church organisation in England. The Roman model, to establish a skeleton parochial structure as evangelism began,<sup>3</sup> existed alongside the evangelistic method of the Celtic missionaries, establishing a monastery in an area and gathering the people before setting-up an appropriate structure.<sup>4</sup> Bishops in the Celtic model were not administrators but evangelists, and Finney claims that in the more fluid social and religious situation of the re-evangelization of England the Celtic pattern was the more successful model.<sup>5</sup>

It is impossible finally to assign to any one church, whether the Roman, the Celtic or the Frankish, the credit for re-evangelizing England.<sup>6</sup> The Celtic church was moreover not uniform, and historical sources for the period are few.<sup>7</sup> It would therefore be inappropriate to draw a direct parallel between then and now and equate the founding of monasteries with the planting of churches. Yet, here is a precedent of flexibility in mission in England.

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3. J.Finney, Recovering the Past (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1996), pp.viii & 32.

4. Finney (1996), pp.27f & 32.

5. Finney (1996), p.55f.

6. G.Bonner, 'Religion in Anglo-Saxon England', in S.Gilley & W.J.Sheils (ed.), A History of Religion in Britain (Oxford, Blackwell, 1994), p.28.

7. Finney (1996), p.27.



Another such precedent is the orders of mendicant Friars, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, in the medieval church. Often working in areas not well served by existing parishes, they existed alongside the parish system (as did other religious orders), and were directly under the authority of the Pope and free of obedience to any local bishop. Originally lay, many were ordained, and in 1281 they received blanket permission to officiate in any parish without the consent of the local priest or bishop.<sup>8</sup> Tensions were caused, illustrative of the dangers of flexible movements. The Franciscans remained flexible, but suffered from internal divisions, while the Dominicans became largely institutionalized within church structures, but for a period their flexibility was seen as a key way to fulfil the ministry of the church.

## **II. The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: from the Reformation to the founding of SPCK in 1698**

### **a) Anglican Identity and Consensus**

At the Reformation, the Anglican reformers did not see the Church of England as a new church, but as the historic church in England in continuity with the Apostles.<sup>9</sup> In establishing Anglican identity, reason, together with Scripture and tradition, was invoked against the Puritans, while against Rome Anglicans looked to Scripture and the primitive church.<sup>10</sup> The *Thirty-Nine Articles* are stated in the Royal Declaration prefacing them to 'contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God's Word', but

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8. Finney (1996), p.142.

9. P.D.L.Avis, Anglicanism and the Christian Church (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1989), p.52.

10. W.P.Haugaard, 'From the Reformation to the Eighteenth Century', in S.W.Sykes and J.E.Booty (ed.), The Study of Anglicanism (London, SPCK, 1988), p.36.

they are not an Anglican equivalent to the Augsburg Confession, true doctrinal authority being given by Article VI to the Scriptures. Indeed, at this time the Church of England contained views ranging from Perkins's Calvinist system to Hooker's rejection of any such systems.<sup>11</sup> Article XIX defines the true church as 'a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments be duly ministered'. This allowed a wide interpretation, as did Hooker's approach in his *Laws*, locating the true church wherever there is a confession of one Lord, one faith and one baptism, at the heart of the faith being the person and redeeming work of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

A three-fold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons is seen by the preface to the *Book of Common Prayer Ordinal* as of apostolic origin, but episcopacy and church government could nevertheless be classified among matters of secondary importance, the *adiaphora*, upon which Christians could genuinely disagree. Episcopacy was of God, was the chosen Anglican form of government and had stood the test of time, but it was open to the church to create new forms.<sup>13</sup> Non-episcopal churches lost something of the perfection of the church, but nothing of its true essence.

Despite well-known exceptions such as the dispute at the Temple Church between Hooker and Travers, the radical Puritan lecturer, party divisions throughout this period were largely absent, the Church of England being seen as an ancient, reformed church based on justification by faith, the authority of Scripture, a vernacular liturgy and a non-sacerdotal ministry.<sup>14</sup> Theological approach varied between moderate Puritans, the Caroline

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11. W.P.Haugaard, 'From the Reformation to the Eighteenth Century', in S.W.Sykes and J.E.Booty (ed.) (1988), p.13.

12. Avis (1989), p.48ff.

13. Avis (1989), p.57ff.

14. Avis (1989), p.86f.

divines and more liberal Protestants (such as the Great Tew circle), but all sought to stand upon Scripture, reason and tradition. Doctrinally, all agreed on the importance of the 'fundamentals' of Christianity, held (in the words of Lancelot Andrewes in *Opuscula Quaedam Posthuma*) to be:

One Canon reduced to writing by God himself, two testaments, three creeds, four general councils, five centuries and the series of Fathers in that period.<sup>15</sup>

However the seeds of the breakdown of consensus, so marked later, were already being sown. Chillingworth challenged the notion of fundamentals by demonstrating inconsistency in the Fathers.<sup>16</sup> Attitudes over episcopacy also hardened with the ejection at the Restoration of many conscientious ministers who had received Presbyterian rather than episcopal ordination.<sup>17</sup> After 1688, the Non-Jurors were the first to argue that bishops were essential to valid ministry and sacraments, which effectively un-churched many non-episcopal continental Protestant churches.<sup>18</sup> These early developments will be seen to continue in later periods.

## b) Overseas Mission

Anglican missionary consciousness began at this time. Bosch has shown that much Reformation theology had a considerable missionary dimension,<sup>19</sup> yet the traditional generalisation that foreign mission was not a priority for the

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15. Quoted in S.W.Sykes, *Unashamed Anglicanism* (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995), p.70.

16. Sykes (1995), p.71.

17. W.P.Haugaard, 'From the Reformation to the Eighteenth Century', in S.W.Sykes and J.E.Booty (ed.) (1988), p.19f.

18. Avis (1989), p.90f.

19. D.J.Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1991), pp.239-261.

Reformers still holds true. Churches were often identified with a defined geographical area;<sup>20</sup> there was a fight for survival against the Catholic powers, a lack of missionary structure (such as the Catholic monastic orders) and a Reformed theology often arguing that the whole world was preached to by Enoch and Noah. The Great Commission (Mt.28:19-20) only applied to the Apostles, and if God had predestined any of the heathen to salvation he could bring them to faith without the help of the church.<sup>21</sup>

Yet even within the established Church of England men like Dean Savaria of Westminster and John Donne at St Paul's argued that the Great Commission was a continuing obligation on Christians.<sup>22</sup> The developed Reformed theology of means (the church as the means and instrument of God's call of unbelievers to salvation) emerged later, but in 1606 the Royal Charter for the Virginia colony provided for an Anglican minister, to propagate 'the Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God.'<sup>23</sup> Anglican chaplains accompanied the settlers to all the American colonies, and the Levant Company placed chaplains at Constantinople, Smyrna and Aleppo.<sup>24</sup> At first overseas chaplains and ministers were without episcopal supervision, but custom and tradition gave jurisdiction to the Bishop of London, who already supervised Anglican congregations in Hamburg and Delft.<sup>25</sup> The first proposal for a

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20. M.Nazir-Ali, From Everywhere to Everywhere (London, Collins, 1991), p.43.
  21. P.D.L.Avis, The Church in the Theology of the Reformers (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1981), p.173. Also S.Neill, A History of Christian Missions (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1964), p.222.
  22. E.Stock, The History of the Church Missionary Society (London, CMS, 1899 & 1916), Vol.I p.20.
  23. Quoted in Avis (1981), p.169.
  24. W.M.Jacob, The Making of the Anglican Church Worldwide (London, SPCK, 1997), p.37f.
  25. G.W.O.Addleshaw, 'The Law and Constitution of the Church overseas', in E.R.Morgan and R.Lloyd (ed.), The Mission of the Anglican Communion (London, SPCK & SPG, 1948), p.77f.

bishop for the American colonies was drawn up by Laud in 1638, but was frustrated by the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>26</sup> Further proposals followed after 1660, and at one stage Alexander Murray was nominated as Bishop of Virginia, but lack of an endowment prevented the appointment. From 1685, Bishop Compton of London attempted to provide for church order through the appointment of Commissaries, under his authority, to supervise the ministers in the colonies, but the success of these depended largely on the goodwill of the local governor.<sup>27</sup> Church order therefore was a secondary consideration, following the appointment of chaplains to meet a pastoral and evangelistic need. This factor will be seen again.

In 1614 the East India Company brought an Indian to London to be prepared as a missionary for India, and in 1657 they tried unsuccessfully to recruit a minister from the universities 'to spread the gospel in India'.<sup>28</sup> In 1698 their Charter provided for a minister in each garrison and main factory centre, but this, with many of the other initiatives, was motivated by a concern to minister to settlers, presumed to be Anglicans, abroad. Evangelism of the indigenous peoples of the colonies was, with few exceptions, a secondary concern.<sup>29</sup> This is illustrated by the *Book of Common Prayer* rite of 'Baptism of such as are of Riper Years' (see Chapter 3), and Yates indeed begins his study with the founding of the Anglican voluntary societies.<sup>30</sup>

This period therefore closes with Anglican consensus on theological method and fundamentals starting to be challenged both by early Latitudinarian attitudes (eg Chillingworth) and by the elevation by the Non-Jurors of

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26. Jacob (1997), p.39.

27. Jacob (1997), p.41f.

28. M.A.C.Warren, *The Calling of God* (London, Lutterworth, 1944), p.58.

29. M.Nazir-Ali, 'The Vocation of Anglicanism', *Anvil* Vol.6 No.2 (1989), p.115.

30. T.E.Yates, 'Anglicans and Mission', in S.W.Sykes and J.E.Booty (ed.) (1988), p.430f.

episcopacy from among the *adiaphora* to a matter of prime importance. This was matched by growing concern for missionary work overseas, a new period beginning with the work of Thomas Bray (who had been one of Bishop Compton's Commissaries in Maryland) and the founding of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1698 and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) in 1701. Both these trends would gain momentum in the eighteenth century.

### **III. The Eighteenth Century: to the founding of CMS in 1799**

#### **a) The Early Work of the Voluntary Societies**

The growth of the Anglican Communion owed nothing whatever to any kind of co-ordinated planning.<sup>31</sup>

This statement exemplifies the importance for the Church of England of voluntary societies in developing missionary work. Voluntary societies began in late seventeenth century London in High-Church circles, as a practical response to the call to a devout and holy life.<sup>32</sup> There were, in 1738, some thirty or forty of these in London alone,<sup>33</sup> and (as Wesley would later find them an ideal model for his Classes) they were thought ideal for evangelisation overseas, as the church government of the time had no

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31. M.A.C.Warren, 'The Missionary Expansion of Ecclesia Anglicana', in M.E.Glasswell and E.W.Fasholé-Luke (ed.), New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World (London, SPCK, 1974), p.126.

32. A.F.Walls, The Missionary Movement in Christian History (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1996), p.242.

33. G.Lean, John Wesley, Anglican (London, Blandford, 1964), p.83.

machinery to undertake the missionary task.<sup>34</sup> Again, innovation and flexibility interposed when church order was not able to fulfil the demands of mission. SPG, though strictly a voluntary society, was in character a semi-official Church of England organisation, having a Royal Charter, the Archbishop of Canterbury as its president and eleven bishops among its incorporated members. It was committed to the spiritual welfare of English colonists, and the conversion of the native inhabitants of the colonies. It could not, however, work outside the colonies, and this work fell to SPCK, alongside its commitment to education and the provision of literature. SPCK was a true voluntary, private society, and virtually directed the Danish mission to India until SPG took over in 1824. This mission furnishes another example of the flexibility already noted. The mission desired the ordination of one of the Indian catechists to be a 'country priest'. The nearest bishop was in London, and so the ordination was carried out by the Danish Lutheran missionary Schwartz under the Lutheran rite. Far from reacting in horror, SPCK reflected the Anglican consensus on episcopacy noted above when they wrote in their next report:

If we wish to establish the Gospel in India, we ought in time to give the Natives a Church of their own, independent of our support...and secure a regular succession of truly apostolical pastors, even if all communication with the parent Church should be annihilated.<sup>35</sup>

This not only demonstrates flexibility in the interests of the gospel, but also introduces a further recurrent theme of Anglican missionary work, already given theological support in Chapter 3, the desire for local initiative and authority, in this context by the establishment of independent overseas churches.

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34. Walls (1996), pp.243-247.

35. Quoted undated in Stock (1899 & 1916), Vol.1 p.23.

## b) England: the Evangelical Revival

In England, the eighteenth century saw a growing polarisation of theological thought. Increasing Latitudinarianism was highlighted by the Bangorian controversy over the Arian views of Bishop Hoadly. Many saw such views as emanating from liberal Protestant non-episcopal churches in Europe, and one method employed to combat such views was to distinguish the Church of England from such churches by focussing increasingly upon the office of bishop, seeing episcopacy as essential for a church. This built upon the Non-Jurors, but threatened the Reformation consensus as much as the Latitudinarian departure from belief in agreed fundamentals.<sup>36</sup>

Alongside this came the Evangelical revival led by George Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley and others. Including a return to an emphasis on the primacy of Scripture, the revival spread among ordinary members of the Church. John Wesley felt unable to leave the care of those spiritually awakened to the ministers of each parish, who might have lacked an adequate understanding of the gospel.<sup>37</sup> He therefore founded his Class societies, meeting at times different from the local parish church (often five o'clock in the morning or afternoon), allowing attendance at both venues.<sup>38</sup>

Wesley never intended schism from the Church of England, but the tensions the revival produced can be illustrated by William Grimshaw of Haworth, who started services in all the outlying parts of his parish, but also ministered to the Methodist societies across the North, leading the Yorkshire circuit.<sup>39</sup> Grimshaw stood against any moves to make Methodism a separate

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36. Avis (1989), p.95f.

37. Lean (1964), p.82.

38. Lean (1964), p.84.

39. F.Baker, William Grimshaw (London, Epworth, 1963), p.109.



denomination, seeing the societies as composed of loyal sons and daughters of the Church, an invigorating (though somewhat painful) transfusion of blood into sluggish veins.<sup>40</sup> The necessity of this parallel, unofficial ministry is demonstrated by the York Diocesan Visitation Returns of 1743, showing that under half the 903 parish churches had both the canonically-required services of Matins and Evensong on any Sunday in the year, and 128 had no services at all.<sup>41</sup> Some areas fared better. Smith notes how in Oldham the willingness of Evangelical curates to minister, without the income of the Living, in parishes with a non-resident incumbent produced a 'paradoxical combination of formal corruption and pastoral excellence',<sup>42</sup> but this pattern was not universal.

The revival found some support but much opposition. In 1748 Grimshaw was charged before Archbishop Hutton of York with neglecting his parish and ministering in other parishes without the permission of their incumbents. The sympathetic Archbishop cleared Grimshaw on both counts - the number of communicants at Haworth had risen dramatically, and Methodist meetings in other parishes were not religious occasions as they were not in parish churches or buildings licensed under the Toleration Acts (a useful technicality)<sup>43</sup> - but several key factors become clear. Anglicans like Wesley and Grimshaw felt that the Reformation consensus had broken down so much that to follow church order would be to bar many from receiving Scripturally-based ministry. Moreover, whatever their churchmanship, that church order permitted many clergy to be absentee clergy produced the same result: the gospel was not preached. The parish system did not meet people's needs, and new ways had to be found. The Methodist Class

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40. Baker (1963), p.246.

41. Baker (1963), p.175.

42. M.A.Smith, Religion in Industrial Society (Oxford, Clarendon, 1994), p.48.

43. Baker (1963), p.131f.

meetings provided a flexible structure which could penetrate the proliferating industrial cities, developing a 'proximity' which the parish church itself could not match.<sup>44</sup> Whereas church order eventually regularised the situation overseas (through the ministry of the Bishop of London), the Church of England found itself ultimately too inflexible to contain Methodism, and arguably lost an almost unparalleled opportunity for growth and new life through the planting of churches. It is significant that the issue which led Wesley to ordain the first independent Methodist ministers was the refusal of the Church of England, uncertain of its order in a new and unique situation, to ordain clergy for the newly independent American colonies. Parallels with the modern situation will be drawn in later chapters.

### c) The Founding of CMS

Anglican missionary concern increased towards the end of the century. In 1787 the Bishop of Nova Scotia was the first overseas bishop appointed under a 1786 Act of Parliament permitting colonial bishops (as bishops of the Church of England). Alongside this development in church order, the Evangelical revival spawned wider missionary interest. Voluntary societies began, the Baptist Missionary Society being founded in 1792, and the mainly congregationalist London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1795.

A group of Evangelical Anglicans, gathered around John Venn, Rector of Clapham, in the 'Clapham Sect', shared this missionary concern and began to plan a new society, modelled not on SPG and SPCK but, like LMS, on the Methodist societies of the revival.<sup>45</sup> No existing society met their purposes.

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44. Smith (1994), p.60.

45. M.A.C.Warren, 'The Missionary Expansion of Ecclesia Anglicana', in M.E.Glasswell and E.W.Fasholé-Luke (ed.) (1974), p.131ff.

Some Anglicans such as Thomas Haweis were involved with LMS; at its inauguration he preached that although:

I am...by choice, as by education, attached to the Established Church....Yet I am no bigot. I neither suppose salvation restricted to her pale, nor the approbation of her rulers, however desirable, essential to an evangelical mission.<sup>46</sup>

Venn, however, argued for the 'Church principle'. LMS was not committed to the Church of England, and loyal Anglicans could find a way to harness voluntary commitment within the established Church.<sup>47</sup> While evangelism could be undertaken by all Christians together, regardless of denomination, converts would be gathered into churches which must then either be linked to an existing body (like the Church of England) or by definition become a new, independent body. Congregationalists in LMS would see no problem, but Anglicans would. Venn and his colleagues wanted to press ahead in a voluntary society, but bring new churches within the fold of the Church of England. Moreover, although Venn and others supported SPG and SPCK, both were unsuitable. These High-Church societies were in decline, would not welcome the influence of Evangelicals, and had adopted the prevalent attitude to episcopacy noted above, that no church enterprise is desirable unless conducted by clergy under the supervision of bishops.<sup>48</sup>

Therefore in 1799 the Society for Missions to Africa and the East was founded, from 1812 being called the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East (CMS). It declared its Anglican basis and character. *The Account of 1799*, the earliest CMS document, devoted an entire page to the Society's loyalty to the Church of England, the CMS basis of faith being the

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46. Quoted in Walls (1996), p.163.

47. Walls (1996), p.164. Also Stock (1899 & 1916), Vol.I p.64.

48. Stock (1899 & 1916), Vol.I p.65ff.

*Thirty-Nine Articles*.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, as a voluntary society CMS sought to channel the energies of committed individuals and remain outside official church structures. The Archbishop of Canterbury's patronage was not sought. When there were no ordained Anglican missionary candidates CMS turned to Lutheran graduates from Berlin: of 24 missionaries sent out before 1815, 17 were German and only 3 ordained Englishmen.<sup>50</sup> Although this followed the example of SPCK in India, it does illustrate the creative tension at work both at home and overseas in this period. Grimshaw at home and CMS overseas were loyal Anglicans, working within the established Church. They adhered to church order and structures whenever possible (CMS sought episcopal ordination from the Bishop of London for their candidates), but where these proved inadequate to meet the necessities of mission they would explore avenues which would allow mission to proceed, with church order hopefully adapting itself in due course.

For Grimshaw and the Methodists this did not happen. With CMS such an adaptation was possible, although the next century would produce some conflict as the tension between voluntary mission and church order was worked out in practice. The nineteenth century would also see even more strains being put upon Anglican theological consensus, with increasing Latitudinarianism and the vigour of the Evangelical revival being joined by the rise of Tractarianism.

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49. M.A.C.Warren, 'The Missionary Expansion of Ecclesia Anglicana', in M.E.Glasswell and E.W.Fasholé-Luke (ed.), p.135f.

50. Walls (1996), p.169.

## IV. The Nineteenth Century: Expansion and the Breakdown of Consensus

### a) The rise of Tractarianism

Tractarianism, dating from Keble's Assize sermon of 1833, placed episcopacy at the heart of the Church. Ministers' authority could only be guaranteed by a literal succession of ministry from the Apostles, and this 'Apostolic paradigm'<sup>51</sup> lifted church government from among the *adiaphora*. Bishops were God-given official points of reference for the church and unique, vital channels of sacramental grace.<sup>52</sup> Fundamentals were too imprecise to be the basis of a valid ecclesiology, even for a moderate like William Palmer,<sup>53</sup> and other Tractarian views increasingly opposed the Reformation consensus. For Keble, Hooker was wrong not to see the apostolic succession as the sole channel of sacramental grace (churches without such a succession therefore having invalid ministry and sacraments),<sup>54</sup> while others sought the 'un-Protestantising' of the Church of England.<sup>55</sup> Although for Newman, Manning and others this led to Rome, many remained, and Tractarian practices in liturgy and church ceremonial became the subject of infamous disputes, legal action and even legislation. Small Anglo-Catholic worshipping communities were even formed in sympathetic establishments or homes in parishes where the incumbent was considered hostile or ineffective.<sup>56</sup>

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51. Avis (1989), p.167.

52. T.Bradshaw, The Olive Branch (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1992), p.42ff.

53. Avis (1989), p.178.

54. Avis (1989), p.203.

55. Avis (1989), p.194f.

56. D.Pytches and B.Skinner, New Wineskins (Guildford, Eagle, 1991), p.39.

Evangelicals such as Litton and Goode sought to defend the reformed character of the Church of England and the traditional consensus alongside moderate High-Churchmen like Rose and Hook and even some Latitudinarians.<sup>57</sup> However, even this remaining consensus began to disappear. The Gorham case, from 1847 on,<sup>58</sup> split Evangelicals and moderate High-Churchmen, while Latitudinarians distanced themselves from both by pursuing a much more liberal line, exemplified by *Essays and Reviews* of 1860, which used critical tools of interpretation on Scripture itself, seen by many as exalting reason over Scripture.

The balance of Scripture, reason and tradition was therefore threatened by the Tractarian elevation of tradition and the Latitudinarian, Broad Church emphasis on reason. Equally significantly, local parish churches began to look very different. Could an Evangelical and an Anglo-Catholic parish, next to one another but with radically different worship and doubting the validity of the other's ministry, be considered in more than name to belong to the same church? The notions of Anglican consensus and comprehensiveness were being stretched to the limit. Unsurprisingly, the 1888 Lambeth Conference sought to redefine the notion of fundamentals as a rallying point. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral defined fundamentals as the Scriptures (containing all things necessary for salvation), the historic Creeds, the two dominical sacraments and 'the historic episcopacy, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.' As will be seen, it is arguable whether this has succeeded in embracing the different interpretations of

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57. Avis (1989), p.164.

58. G.C.Gorham was refused institution to a parish by Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter because he did not believe in the High-Church doctrine of baptismal regeneration. The Privy Council eventually held that this was not a doctrine of the Church, opening the way for Gorham's institution.

Anglicanism, allowing stress at will on either Scripture or episcopacy, and certainly not curtailing twentieth century developments.

## b) Expansion at Home

The situation of the 1743 York Diocesan Returns continued into the nineteenth century, exacerbated by a near doubling of the population between 1800 and 1850.<sup>59</sup> In 1802 half of Anglican parishes had an annual income under £50, inadequate to support a minister, and in 1827 42% of parishes had absentee incumbents.<sup>60</sup> Dioceses were huge,<sup>61</sup> and parishes were often unmanageable. To create a new parish required an Act of Parliament, and in 1841 the parish of Hanover Square had 73,000 inhabitants, and Leeds had 150,000.<sup>62</sup> Rodes writes that:

the established church had suffered a radical disadvantage in competing with dissenters, who could cope with shifts of population by setting up new congregations in new buildings when and where they chose.<sup>63</sup>

Anglicans could resort to Chapels of Ease and Proprietary Chapels, and these did allow church planting to proceed without facing the legal difficulties involved in creating new parishes,<sup>64</sup> but such chapels depended on the goodwill of the local incumbent. The situation gradually changed. From

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59. K.A.Thompson, Bureaucracy and Church Reform (Oxford, Clarendon, 1970), p.7.

60. C.K.Francis Brown, A History of the English Clergy (London, Faith Press, 1953), p.15ff.

61. Until 1837 Lincoln Diocese covered Lincolnshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Huntingdon.

62. S.C.Carpenter, Church and People, 1789-1899 (London, SPCK, 1933), p.258.

63. R.E.Rodes, Law and Modernization in the Church of England (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p.78.

64. Smith (1994), p.41.

1818, commissions improved the financial situation of parishes and could build and fund new churches. Parishes could be created by administrative order, but only from 1831 without the consent of the patron of the original parish.<sup>65</sup> In his Charge of 1835, Bishop Sumner of Chester still encouraged the use of informal cottage meetings to reach the industrial urban poor beyond the reach of the parish church, saying, 'They will not seek the Shepherd....the Shepherd must seek them.'<sup>66</sup>

The legal scope to create new parishes gradually increased, and some bishops began to use this flexibility. Archbishop Tait supported services in theatres and halls (legalised in 1855). Bishop Thorold of Rochester, for whom Christianity was 'not in possession of South London',<sup>67</sup> would from 1877 establish mission districts of up to 5,000 people in large parishes. A young clergyman would gather worshippers to meet in any available building, such congregations becoming successively Mission Halls and parishes in their own right. This was laudable church planting, using more flexible church order, but depended on the commitment of the individual bishop, and overall a lack of structural and administrative flexibility severely hampered the ministry of the Church of England.

### **c) Mission Overseas**

The nineteenth century saw the development and maturing of CMS as an Anglican society. Loyalty to the Church of England was reaffirmed by Henry Venn who, in the Appendix to the 39th annual report, attempted to show that 'the constitution and practice of [CMS] is in strict accordance with

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65. Rodes (1991), p.78.

66. Smith (1994), p.103.

67. Quoted in Carpenter (1933), p.284.



ecclesiastical principles, as they are recognised in...the Church of England'. CMS existed to send forth and supervise missionaries, not to exercise 'spiritual functions'.<sup>68</sup> As a voluntary society, CMS did not fit easily into existing structures, but existed to build the Church. It was not opposed to bishops, though growing lack of consensus meant that some bishops would be unsympathetic to CMS, and in principle bishops were not an absolute necessity for mission. The Church should have its full organisation, with all the benefits of episcopacy, enabling confirmations and ordinations to take place.<sup>69</sup> CMS therefore sought the appointment of overseas bishops, paying half the stipend of Bishop Selwyn of New Zealand when he was appointed in 1840.<sup>70</sup>

Yet tensions arose as a voluntary society financed and sent ordained missionaries, who would then be licensed to work in dioceses overseas with a resident bishop. Who would exercise authority over these missionaries? In 1840, after a dispute with Bishop Wilson of Calcutta, Venn agreed that the bishop alone could grant or withhold licences to missionaries and assign their place of work. Although this was amended after the 1876 Ceylon controversy with the Anglo-Catholic Bishop Copleston over ritualism, what lasted from 1840 was an agreement that any disputes with colonial bishops would be submitted to the adjudication of the home Anglican bishops.

Overseas mission reflected party disputes in the Church. Anglo-Catholic evangelization societies grew, and in many ways Tractarian missionary ecclesiology reached its apogee with the consecration in 1867 of C.F.Mackenzie as 'bishop to the mission and the tribes dwelling in the neighbourhood of Lake Nyasa and the River Shire', to act as pioneer

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68. Quoted in Stock (1899 & 1916), Vol.1 p.385.

69. Stock (1899 & 1916), Vol.1 p.409.

70. T.E.Yates, Venn and Victorian Bishops Abroad (London, SPCK, 1978), p.44f.

evangelist and missionary leader (of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa - UMCA) in an area with no existing church, quite the reverse of CMS's approach.<sup>71</sup> Conflicting views also resulted in tensions in India between churches of SPG and CMS foundation, and in Tanzania later between those founded by UMCA and the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society (BCMS).<sup>72</sup>

In fact, a desire to see overseas bishops can be seen as part of CMS's aim for Anglican churches overseas to move towards independence. Local churches should be, in Venn's phrase, 'self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending', and the 'Venn orthodoxy' was the goal of indigenous bishops within a church structure separate from any Church of England overseas structure, even if this meant geographically overlapping jurisdictions.<sup>73</sup> In some ways this is parallel to the desire for mission work to be undertaken by a voluntary society. Both looked to take authority and initiative, where possible, from central authorities and give it to the local situation. Venn saw a time when CMS itself would no longer be needed in an area, and would withdraw, allowing the 'euthanasia of the mission'.

Moves towards this were slow. By 1840 six native ministers had been ordained, the figure in 1900 rising to 598.<sup>74</sup> Native Church Councils were established, and the Native Pastorate Church began in Sierra Leone in 1861.<sup>75</sup> Indigenous bishops were gradually appointed, beginning with Samuel Ajayi Crowther of the Niger in 1864, and the way to local

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71. T.E.Yates, 'Anglicans and Mission', in Sykes and Booty (ed.) (1988), p.435.

72. Nazir-Ali (1989), p.116.

73. Walls (1996), p.12. Also C.P.Williams, The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church (Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1990), pp.xiii & 3.

74. Williams (1990), p.258.

75. Yates (1978), p.129.

independence, while remaining in communion with the Church of England, was found in the end not through separate indigenous churches but through the creation of independent Anglican provinces, beginning with the Province of New Zealand in 1857.<sup>76</sup>

Therefore the century saw a breakdown of consensus more marked than before, with three parties adopting significantly different positions within the Church. The fundamentals of the faith were redefined in the Lambeth Quadrilateral to try to accommodate everyone, but differences continued unabated and affected work overseas, with different views on the nature of the church being exported to different parts of the world. The mission field also saw tensions between an emerging church order and the continuing independence of the voluntary societies, although this was not as simple as direct opposition: CMS wanted the appointment of bishops, but sometimes it took time to be able to work together.

The priority of the voluntary society overseas, parallel to the growth of Methodism in England 100 years earlier, contrasted with the way in which the needs of England were met. The gradual modernisation of Church law allowed the creation of new parishes, and by the end of the century much was able to be done, but the impression left by the years before 1850 was that the Church had not learned from the Methodism of the previous century. Bureaucratic inflexibility and the restrictions of a rigid parish system were allowed for too long to hinder mission and growth.

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76. Though in New Zealand note the Diocese of Aotearoa, a parallel jurisdiction covering the whole Province to care for the Maori people.

## V. The Twentieth Century: Ecumenism and Pluralism

### a) From Missionaries to Mission

This century has seen two accompanying, but contradictory emphases. Yet further divergence of theological thought within Anglicanism has taken place alongside considerable advances in structural unity between churches. The impetus for this came initially from the mission field. The principle of comity (each society working within a demarcated area) had existed since 1825, when the Bombay Missionary Union (including Anglicans) met to pray and discuss working together.<sup>77</sup> The 1910 Missionary Conference at Edinburgh took this further. Anglicans such as Bishop Gore, Montgomery of SPG and Stock of CMS pleaded for wider unity,<sup>78</sup> and the conference led to the International Missionary Council, which would meet at Jerusalem in 1928, Tambaram in 1938 and on several later occasions before being absorbed into the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961.

Other ecumenical initiatives followed, and the Faith and Order movement resulted in the formation of the WCC in 1948. Anglicans have been involved in the Churches of South and North India, many ecumenical discussions and, most recently, the 1994 Porvoo Agreement with the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches. This Agreement arguably marks a return to the Reformation consensus on episcopacy, predating Tractarianism. With Porvoo, some Anglo-Catholic opponents argued that although all the Lutheran churches were episcopal, not all had an unbroken line of apostolic

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77. M.A.C.Warren, I Believe in the Great Commission (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1976), p.123.

78. T.E.Yates, Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.29.

succession, invalidating their ministry and sacraments. This did not, however, delay the Church agreeing both full intercommunion and interchangeability of ministries between the churches.

In the era of independent national churches, Anglican missionary societies have changed from being providers of mission to these churches to partners with them. This further devolution of authority to the local situation has been reflected by the number of societies which have changed their name. Both CMS and the South American Missionary Society have replaced 'Missionary' with 'Mission', while BCMS has become Crosslinks. A recent CMS information leaflet states that:

As strong local churches have developed [overseas], the role of CMS has changed. Now, as an agency involved in world mission, its role is to send and receive - to facilitate the interchange of people, resources and ideas in mission.<sup>79</sup>

In 1977 the Partnership for World Mission was formed to co-ordinate relationships between the voluntary societies and the wider Church of England, without seeking to control them or squander their enthusiasm and vision.<sup>80</sup> The keynotes have therefore been partnership and co-operation for mission, within the Church of England and with other Anglican churches.

## **b) Crises in Theology and Order**

Ecumenical developments accompanied still further theological diversity. Conflict over the authority of the Bible led to the secession in 1922 of BCMS

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79. From Everywhere to Everywhere, undated CMS leaflet.

80. General Synod, Partnership for World Mission (London, Church Information Office, 1977), p.6f.

from CMS, although many traditional Evangelicals still chose to remain within CMS.<sup>81</sup> Internationally, inclusive approaches to other faiths prompted the WCC in 1968 to replace the word 'evangelism' with 'humanisation',<sup>82</sup> leading to the beginning of the parallel Evangelical Lausanne Conference in 1974.

Within Anglicanism, the 1968 Lambeth Conference stated that:

Comprehensiveness demands agreement on fundamentals, while tolerating disagreement on matters on which Christians may differ without...breaking communion.<sup>83</sup>

This follows the Reformation consensus and the Lambeth Quadrilateral, but there is little agreement on fundamentals. Canon C15 bases the Church on the Scriptures, the Creeds and the historic Anglican formularies, and writers argue that the concept of fundamentals is essential.<sup>84</sup> Yet the *Thirty-Nine Articles* have been effectively demoted as an authoritative source, the Scriptures are subject to radically different approaches and the 1976 Doctrine Commission report *Christian Believing* allowed that some could validly reject the Creeds (though more recent Commission reports have been less radical). Sykes argues that fundamentals can include agreed practice as well as beliefs, pointing to the inclusion of episcopacy and sacraments in the Lambeth Quadrilateral.<sup>85</sup> Bradshaw writes, however, that the very idea of a church, as opposed to a religious club of members sharing incommunicable mystically personal experiences, presupposes shared beliefs.<sup>86</sup> Even if agreement were secured on forms of words, the approach

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81. D.Bebbington, 'Missionary Controversy and the Polarising Tendency in Twentieth Century British Protestantism', *Anvil* Vol.13 (1996), p.152f.
82. 'Evangelism' re-appeared in WCC vocabulary at Nairobi in 1975.
83. Quoted in Sykes (1995), p.64.
84. eg Avis (1989), p.305f and Sykes ((1995), p.211f.
85. Sykes (1995), p.76ff.
86. Bradshaw (1992), p.289.

of non-realist theologians such as Don Cupitt limits the value of any such agreement by altering the traditionally-agreed meaning of those words.

Shared practices are not enough, but even then there has been a dilution of the sense of historical continuity within Anglican practice. Services began to look very different with Tractarian ritualism; this has gone further with the addition of the *Alternative Service Book* to the *Book of Common Prayer*, with still more permissible diversity being planned for the replacement for the *ASB*. Common prayer has disappeared, as has common order. The Act of Synod, after the 1992 decision to ordain women to the Anglican priesthood, recognised radically different views on order and ministry, and, for the first time, enshrined them by creating alternative episcopal oversight for parishes out of sympathy with their diocesan bishop, allowing parishes to receive the care of one of three Provincial Episcopal Visitors.

It is not that the Church of England is about to cease to exist because of this lack of consensus. There has been allowable disagreement on the *adiaphora*, around a firm central core of belief, since the Reformation, and such a position is still seen as possible.<sup>87</sup> The difficulty has come in locating that core, which has shrunk noticeably from even the Lambeth Quadrilateral, let alone Lancelot Andrewes. In such circumstances, it is unsurprising that some have felt the rightness of following the Methodist pattern and looking to begin a ministry in a parish where, in their view, the fundamentals of the faith are denied.

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87. Avis (1989), p.303f; Sykes (1995), pp.76-78; J.I.Packer, *A Kind of Noah's Ark* (Oxford, Latimer House, 1981), p35.

## VI. Conclusions

This examination of the historical context of the modern Church of England has highlighted many significant trends. Theological differences have increased as each century has passed, leading to both eighteenth century Methodists and nineteenth century Tractarians looking beyond Church order and the parish boundary to plant churches where they felt the gospel was not being preached. These were not just precedents of a breakdown of consensus, but also manifestations of an Anglican desire to bring the gospel to all people, a crucial factor in Anglican history since the seventeenth century, and certainly from the Evangelical revival. This century has seen the Archbishop of Canterbury's Committee of Enquiry on Evangelism of 1918, the Archbishops' Commission on Evangelism of 1945 and the Decade of Evangelism launched in 1991 following the 1988 Lambeth Conference.

Indeed, the parallel history of the expansion of Anglican missionary work, and the growth of the Church in England, have demonstrated that the greatest advances have been made where there has been a flexibility of approach to take advantage of the opportunities of the moment, reflecting perhaps the emphasis on local, voluntary initiative seen in Chapter 3. This is especially seen by the Class meetings of the Evangelical revival and by the concept of the voluntary society, as well as by the model of Celtic mission and the initial provision of ministry in the colonies. On each occasion, church structures and order have been inappropriate to meet the situation, and have arguably been left struggling to catch up. However much of a challenge to church order was caused by Methodism at home and the voluntary societies overseas, the cumbersome nature of the legal developments of the nineteenth century show that such flexible approaches are invaluable. Although church order will adapt itself in time, and may even be quite inventive, the inevitable time delay involved means that much opportunity is lost and, in the case of Methodism, division caused.



Before turning to the New Testament, it is appropriate to sharpen the questions that need to be asked. This will be done by reflecting on both these historical factors, and the Anglican missiology and practical pressures to plant churches seen in earlier chapters, in the light of the current situation.

## **5. Reflection on the Current Situation**

In Chapter 1 a number of questions were raised about church planting in the Church of England, and subsequently these have been examined in several ways, practically, theologically and historically. Before looking critically at these issues in the light of Scripture it is important to pause and draw together the themes and trends which have already emerged: not to preempt the overall conclusions of this thesis, but to ensure that the material is presented and analysed adequately, and that the appropriate questions may be asked of the New Testament. The sections of this chapter will therefore reflect the questions posed in Chapter 1, developed particularly in the light of the historical material of Chapter 4.

### **I. The Church's Commitment to Evangelism**

Chapter 3 noted that the Church of England has not been the most evangelistically minded of churches, as at the Reformation a largely stable parish system was inherited, and the formularies, the order and the liturgy of the Church all sought to provide pastoral care for a Christian country.

Yet from the seventeenth century the Church of England has been active in evangelism. This happened overseas through the provision of ministers in the colonies and later through the work of the voluntary societies. In England, significant evangelistic impetus was given by the eighteenth century Evangelical revival, carrying on into the nineteenth century with the huge growth in the number of parishes, to cater for the increase in population and new demographic patterns following the industrial revolution. Moreover while the eighteenth century saw Evangelicals concerned to evangelize in order to safeguard the gospel from perceived threats from Latitudinarians,

the next century witnessed similar motivation from Anglo-Catholics. More recently, still further parishes have been created to meet the needs of a mobile population, and Chapter 2 outlined several different ways by which new churches could be planted, including more flexible methods than just the creation of new geographical units, notably in the area of network churches.

The current Decade of Evangelism is therefore not something new, but the reflection of a trend visible throughout the Church of England's history. Indeed, it follows a period when arguably Anglican writers were at the forefront of missiological thought. Yates writes that post-war missionary ecclesiology was shaped by three Anglicans: Max Warren, Kenneth Cragg and Stephen Neill,<sup>1</sup> while Bosch points to the influence of John Stott in the Evangelical Lausanne Congress of 1974.<sup>2</sup> Chapter 3 drew on Anglican missiology, particularly the writings of Max Warren, to demonstrate an undeniable commitment to evangelism, beginning with the mission of God, necessitated by human need and resulting in the establishment of the church, both to express the corporate nature of salvation and as the appropriate agent of evangelism in a world which needs to see demonstrated the values of the Kingdom of God.

Therefore the Church of England can be seen to be committed to evangelism, by reference to both Anglican history and missiology. The only caveat to this came in Chapter 3 - would the pastorally minded order of the Church of England allow this commitment to be worked out practically? The history of the Church demonstrates that this is a real threat. Much of the evangelism of the Evangelical revival was done through the Methodist Classes, pushing at the limits of Anglican church order, and often breaking

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1. T.E.Yates, Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.137.

2. D.J.Bosch, Witness to the World (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1980), p.16.

those limits. The Church of England ultimately lost much of the fruit of this evangelism to a new denomination. Moreover, while the creation of the new parishes in the nineteenth century was done officially and legally, the process was cumbersome and slow to adapt to the needs of the population. This vital issue of church order must be examined further.

## II. The Appropriateness of Church Planting

If the Church of England is committed to evangelism, the next question is whether church planting is an appropriate expression of that evangelism. When *Breaking New Ground* was published, the working party were aware of criticisms of church planting as allegedly sectarian, homogeneous, endorsing religious consumerism, sitting loose to Anglican forms and threatening the historic order and institution of the Church.<sup>3</sup> The question of church order will, as mentioned above, be dealt with at length below. It is necessary to note here that church planting has always been a significant part of the evangelistic history of the Church of England. Expansion overseas and in England has been through the planting of new churches. The Evangelical revival admittedly saw the creation of Class meetings, rather than churches with full ministry and sacraments, but this was because the meetings were an addition to attendance at the parish church, not an alternative. Also, not all the churches planted overseas fell neatly within an established diocesan structure. This would only come later. But wherever Anglicans evangelised, churches were planted.

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3. Board of Mission, Breaking New Ground - Church Planting and the Church of England (London, Church House, 1994), p.4. Also G.Lings, New Ground in Church Planting (Nottingham, Grove Books, 1994), p.7.

This history is matched by the commitment of Anglican missiology. The church is not only the result of evangelism, it is also in many ways the appropriate agent of evangelism. Evangelism solely with the aim of converting individuals, or undertaken by individuals out of contact with a church, is inadequate.

Finally, the practical pressures outlined in Chapter 2 can be added. It was seen that parishes are often too large, and that even parishes with an appropriately-sized parish population may not be the best vehicle for evangelism. A discrete geographical or sociological unit such as a housing estate may straddle several parishes, or if contained within one parish may feel isolated from a church building in a different part of that parish. This is even without the practical pressures to plant network churches with little reference to a geographical area.

Therefore church planting is an appropriate vehicle for Anglican evangelism, but does raise challenges to the Church, particularly concerning church order, and it is this that will now be examined.

### **III. The Relationship between Parish and Diocese**

#### **a) The Legal Situation**

If church planting raises questions for church order, the appropriate place to begin is with the legal framework for ministry in the Church. Canon C1 describes the Anglican three-fold order of ministry (bishops, priests and deacons) as being of Apostolic origin. The Reformation consensus seen in Chapter 4 classed bishops among the *adiaphora*, but nevertheless given by God for the *bene esse* of the church. Priests and deacons are episcopally ordained, and must swear or affirm true and canonical obedience to the

bishop 'in all things lawful and honest' (Canon C14). This obedience includes a restriction whereby ministry can only be exercised when and where the bishop has so licensed, and in a parish usually only with the consent of the incumbent.

Ministry is therefore exercised only under the bishop's licence and in obedience to him.<sup>4</sup> Within the worshipping life of the local church, the leadership of services is controlled by canon (Canons B11 and 12), notably in restricting presidency at Holy Communion to an episcopally-ordained priest. Within the strict order of the Church of England, therefore, very little church planting may be initiated without the concurrence of the local bishop. Chapter 2 demonstrated that legally this is true for all but planting within a single parish. All other cases involving the creation of or the transfer of ministry into a new parish require at least the bishop's licence.

## **b) Traditional Respect for Church Order**

The legal framework reflects traditional Anglican respect for church order. George Carey reminded the 1991 Anglican Church Planting Conference that the Anglican understanding of the church is rooted in episcopal leadership and the parish structure.<sup>5</sup> The 1988 Lambeth Conference described bishops as a symbol of the unity of the church in its mission, the head of the family and the leader and initiator of mission.<sup>6</sup> While historically only Anglo-Catholics have seen bishops and the apostolic succession as vital to the

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4. The incumbent's freehold restricts the bishop's power to remove anyone from ministry, but freehold of course follows upon ordination and licensing.
  5. G.Carey, 'Church Planting, Ecclesiology and Mission', in B.Hopkins (ed.), Planting New Churches (Guildford, Eagle, 1991), p.25.
  6. Lambeth Conference, The Truth Shall Make You Free (London, Church House, 1988), p.61.

very existence of the church, in them is vested authority and responsibility for the continuity of ministry.<sup>7</sup> Episcopacy is one of the pillars of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, and no authentic Anglican ecclesiology would ever lead to congregationalism. Anglicanism has been described as 'instinctively establishmentarian';<sup>8</sup> historically, Anglicans have been unwilling to act without or against authority. One can cite the submission of the Celtic bishops to Rome at the Synod of Whitby, and the desire of the founders of CMS to be a Church voluntary society, working within church order, and later pressing for and facilitating the expansion of the overseas episcopate. Even in the Evangelical revival, the first instinct of many like Grimshaw was to work within church order, planting first within his own parish, Classes elsewhere meeting at times allowing continuing attendance at the parish church. Today, the existence of PWM witnesses to a desire for order and co-operation, and even in overseas dioceses such as Chile where local churches have considerable freedom to plant new congregations there are regional mechanics to ensure there is no conflict between churches seeking to plant in the same area.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, any total freedom to plant churches in the Church of England without respect for Anglican structures and order would be a radical dissociation from the traditional pattern.<sup>10</sup>

Yet this respect is different from unquestioning submission: the oath of obedience is limited to all things lawful and honest. Episcopal authority in Anglicanism is not a judicial primacy.<sup>11</sup> Rather, Anglican authority is

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7. R.A.Norris, 'Episcopacy', in S.W.Sykes and J.E.Booty (ed.), The Study of Anglicanism (London, SPCK, 1988), p.299f.
  8. M.Nazir-Ali, From Everywhere to Everywhere (London, Collins, 1991), p.50.
  9. Author's interview on 15/2/1996 with Revd Alf Cooper, working with SAMS in Santiago, Chile.
  10. I.Bunting, 'Anglican Church Planting - Where is the Problem?', Anvil Vol.13 (1996), p.112.
  11. T.Bradshaw, The Olive Branch (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1992), p.265.

dispersed, deriving from God, and given to the whole church by the Holy Spirit and in the Scriptures. There are specific gifts of leadership, with authority, but the possibility of correcting leadership decisions has been given to all church members, as they have access to the Scriptures and hear them read in public worship.<sup>12</sup> This notion of accountable authority is seen by the model of the bishop in synod (and bishops as one house in General Synod).<sup>13</sup>

Respect for order is therefore not absolute. Bishops have authority, but if a bishop were to act improperly (*eg* by hindering mission), then the duty of obedience could be weakened.

### **c) The Appropriate Level to Initiate Evangelism**

#### **(i) The Priority of the Local**

The Church of England's legal framework usually requires the involvement of wider church authorities in church planting. There is therefore a potential tension between those possessing the necessary authority and those with the vision and enthusiasm for planting, as Chapter 2 showed that conversely the initiative for planting usually comes from the local church, even to revive another existing parish or plant a network church. Chapter 3 also looked at this tension theologically, arguing for the appropriateness of a wider voluntary principle which could be applied to the position of the local parish church (within a diocese) seeking to evangelize. Although evangelism is the

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12. S.W.Sykes, Unashamed Anglicanism (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995), pp.159 & 169. Also Bradshaw (1992), p.279.

13. Sykes (1995), p.172f.



work of the whole church, the Scriptures point to a Spirit-inspired specialization of function, with some called to exercise the mission of the whole.

Anglican history demonstrates this practically. From the medieval friars to the voluntary societies, evangelism has sprung from the voluntary, local level. Between 1985 and 1990 well under 10% of Anglican church plants were begun at the request of a bishop.<sup>14</sup> This is far from saying that bishops have no role in evangelism. The Lambeth Conference's designation of bishops as the leader of mission echoes much Anglican practice,<sup>15</sup> and Robert Warren contends that:

there is little doubt that the Decade [of evangelism] has made most headway in dioceses where the bishop has taken a clear and visible lead.<sup>16</sup>

The role of the bishop will be important for the concluding chapter, but important here is the almost universal recognition of the priority of the local initiative in evangelism. Internationally, Anglicans also look to a varied approach governed by local requirements. The gospel must be spoken in comprehensible language and categories.<sup>17</sup> The 1986 Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission report, *For the Sake of the Kingdom*, argued that:

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14. G.Lings, 'A Time to Plant', in Hopkins (ed.) (1991), p.115.
  15. In Nigeria bishops are seen as chief evangelists of a diocese: see Bishop E.Gbonigi, 'Nigeria: the Local Church and the Bishop in Evangelism', in C.Wright and C.Sugden (ed.), One Gospel - Many Clothes (Oxford, EFAC & Regnum, 1990), pp.52-25. Also the author's meeting with Bishop Ben Kwashi of Jos, November 1995.
  16. R.Warren, Signs of Life (London, Church House, 1996), p.15.
  17. Anglican Consultative Council, Partners in Mission (London, SPCK, 1973), p.52.

Christians in a given place and time both will and must address the issues, moral and political, with which historical circumstance confronts them in that locale,<sup>18</sup>

while the 1993 meeting of the ACC and Primates declared that 'nothing happens until it happens locally.'<sup>19</sup>

What is valid for different provinces of the Anglican Communion can apply to different dioceses and indeed to different parishes. Anglicanism has tolerated differences over the *adiaphora* within fundamentals, and similarly the parochial system enables a variety of responses to be made to local needs. Bishop Peter Nott of Norwich cites with approval the words of the 1988 Lambeth Conference that:

the process of mission and ministry begins with the local community...The local congregation determines the agenda for the Church at other levels, whose principal vocation is to respond to and support the mission of the local church.<sup>20</sup>

Knowledge of and commitment to an area is vital in evangelism, and this gives a priority to local initiative.<sup>21</sup> Practically, Robert Warren assesses three national evangelistic events of 1994, the mainly Pentecostal *JIM* campaign, the *From Minus to Plus* booklet distributed to every home and the ecumenical *On Fire* initiative. For Warren, only *On Fire* was of lasting value, as although it was conceived and communicated nationally, it allowed for creative interpretation locally.<sup>22</sup>

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18. Quoted in L.Weil, 'The Gospel in Anglicanism', in Sykes and Booty (ed.) (1988), p.74.

19. ACC and Primates of the Anglican Communion, A Transforming Vision (London, Church House, 1993), p.114.

20. P.Nott, Moving Forward (Norwich, Diocese of Norwich, 1989), p.11.

21. Nott (1989), p.7. Also J.V.Taylor, 'The Church witnesses to the Kingdom', IRM Vol.69 (1980-81), p.295.

22. R.Warren (1996), p.52.

## (ii) The Place of Voluntary Societies

Historically, local initiative has been seen through the work of the voluntary societies. These are relevant in two ways. Firstly, if they were a mistaken outworking of the church's missionary purpose, then this could count against such a voluntary principle being applied in England, restricting the freedom of initiative of local Christians. However, unalloyed support for voluntary societies might similarly restrict this freedom, as church planting might then be limited to specialists called together for that purpose.

Chapter 4 showed the desire for the voluntary principle in the inception of CMS, but also showed how this produced tensions, especially with bishops overseas. Max Warren argues strongly for the principle of specialization seen in Chapter 3, that the societies have been channels for the church to implement the missionary purpose underpinning her whole life,<sup>23</sup> and also argues that the voluntary principle is essential to ensure that mission is undertaken by those with a sense of urgency and who do not face competing priorities arising from the many other tasks the whole church faces.<sup>24</sup> He points to very real practical successes of the societies: sending out missionaries and planting churches, beginning welfare services, translating the Bible and allowing the personal, incarnational ministry of many who might not otherwise have found such opportunities for service.<sup>25</sup> They have given a safety-valve for energy and experiment without schism within the church.<sup>26</sup>

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23. M.A.C.Warren, The Calling of God (London, Lutterworth, 1944), p.64.

24. M.A.C.Warren (1944), p.60-62.

25. M.A.C.Warren, The Christian Mission (London, SCM, 1951), pp.95-102.

26. M.A.C.Warren 1951), p.94. eg the ordination of an Indian minister by a Lutheran missionary working with SPCK in the absence of an Anglican bishop, and the role of CMS in pioneering relationships with the developing colonial episcopate.

Yet, there have been many criticisms of their ministry, most damagingly that they are practically ineffective and ecclesiologicaly divisive, wrongly controlling local churches.<sup>27</sup> Allen cites Madagascar, from where missionaries were expelled in 1870, returning in 1895. In this period the church grew ten-fold. This compares with the CMS Annual report of 1925, giving the figure of 1.9 new converts (on average) *per* paid worker that year.<sup>28</sup> On divisiveness, Allen quotes a CMS delegation which reported that CMS administration in most Indian dioceses was:

quite outside diocesan control...It is impossible for such an organisation to be anything other than a divisive influence in the diocese, for as an inevitable result there are two authorities, on the one hand the bishop and his office and his councils, on the other hand the CMS secretary and his office and committees.<sup>29</sup>

This reflects almost exactly the earlier situation with Bishop Wilson of Calcutta leading in 1840 to rules being formulated for the adjudication of disputes. Clearly, this tension was a continuing one. Missionary societies could begin because the institutional church had no vitality in mission, but if the society then became an elite, that could foster dependency in the local, indigenous church and lead to tensions with local church order.<sup>30</sup>

However, both the benefits and the disadvantages of the voluntary societies support the priority of local initiative in evangelism. The societies existed to channel individual missionary commitment and because the church had no

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27. R.Allen, Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours ? (London, World Dominion Press, 1960), p.83.

28. R.Allen, The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church (London, World Dominion Press, 1960), p.8.

29. Allen (Spontaneous Expansion, 1960), p.121.

30. S.Barrington-Ward, 'Packaging or Partnership', in P.Sookhdeo (ed.), New Frontiers in Mission (Exeter, Paternoster, 1987), p.50.

structures for mission. This was local initiative. Once the church became established in a new area, for the society to continue in the same way would be to stifle local initiative, a fact recognised by CMS, however imperfectly, in their efforts to establish an indigenous pastorate and episcopate, ministering in a self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending church, leading eventually to the euthanasia of the mission.<sup>31</sup> If Warren's arguments support the voluntary principle in initiating overseas evangelism, Allen's arguments are for the local, indigenous church to be allowed to continue the task. Both support an approach which seeks to foster evangelism arising from the local, voluntary context, with implications for the position of the local church in evangelism.

### **(iii) Precedents and the Need for Flexibility**

Such a local priority would give scope for flexibility, within the overall structure of church order. This is arguably essential for evangelism: an overall structure avoids the danger of fragmentation denying the unity of the church, while flexibility allows for spontaneity and experimentation. The wind of the Holy Spirit leads the church in mission,<sup>32</sup> and Max Warren argues that 'unless the missionary movement can be responsive to the unpredictability of the Holy Spirit it will soon cease to be a movement', with the result that Christian strategic thinking must ensure it is 'never, never trying to be tidy.'<sup>33</sup> Flexibility was seen throughout history, from the structural untidiness of the Celtic missionaries and the medieval Friars to more modern times. Ministers were appointed to the colonies without waiting for church order to regularise the situation. Lutheran missionaries were used (and their ordinations

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31. See Chapter 4 for full details.

32. Nazir-Ali (1991), p.20.

33. Quoted respectively in Bosch (1980), p.180f and Yates (1994), p.141.

recognised) when no ordained Anglicans were available. The colonial episcopate followed rather than preceded the work of the voluntary societies. The Methodist Class meetings sought originally to pursue mission within the limitations of church order. When developments in the nineteenth century proceeded within a strict legal framework, this was ultimately effective but cumbersome and much opportunity was lost. Smith has noted the continuing effectiveness of Class and cottage meetings in Oldham, and comments that:

reliance on local enterprise was a strength rather than a weakness, while attempts to manage re-organization in the manner supported by bureaucratic rationality would tend to hinder, not promote, ecclesiastical reform.<sup>34</sup>

The practical pressure to plant churches seen above might indicate that such flexibility is again required, and indeed is being shown by some seeking to plant churches. The question is whether the Church of England can accommodate that flexibility within its structures and theology. The example of the Provincial Episcopal Visitors shows that the Church is prepared to consider flexibility and different ways of looking at church order in order to meet the demands of the situation. It may perhaps be that the model of the PWM, linking voluntary societies with the General Synod, is another example of just such flexibility within an overall structure.

#### **d) The Place of Parish Boundaries**

A further question raised by church planting is the continuing place of parish boundaries. The parish system is fundamental to the Church of England,

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34. M.A.Smith, Religion in Industrial Society (Oxford, Clarendon, 1994), p.66.

both legally, and arguably as parishes give a local, rooted expression of Christianity, present in every community.<sup>35</sup> This can facilitate local mission, and respect for boundaries may also promote unity, as churches are not in competition.<sup>36</sup> Where differences on the *adiaphora* are permitted, boundaries can help preserve diversity.<sup>37</sup> As the doctrine of comity allowed co-operation overseas, so boundaries prevent Anglican churches from trespassing on others' work.<sup>38</sup> Even in the eighteenth century revival, Evangelicals like Thomas Adam of Winteringham and Thomas Walker of Truro disapproved of Grimshaw and others as they ignored parish boundaries.<sup>39</sup>

Yet the parish system has been deemed inadequate by both Evangelicals and some nineteenth century Anglo-Catholics, and today is being increasingly questioned. The nineteenth century bequeathed a legal framework allowing the creation of new parishes, and Chapter 2 showed how this can be used to meet the needs of the population, but also demonstrated its limitations. In most urban areas, 40-70% of congregations live outside the geographical parish.<sup>40</sup> This is nothing new. In 1855 Lord Shaftesbury commented that:

The parochial system is, no doubt, a beautiful thing in theory and is of great value in small rural districts; but in large towns it is a mere shadow and a name.

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35. H.Oppenheimer, 'Making God Findable', in G.Ecclestone (ed.), The Parish Church ? (Oxford, Mowbray, 1988), p.73. Also Nazir-Ali (1991), p.67.
  36. D.Pytches and B.Skinner, 'The Origin and Future of Parish Structures', in Hopkins (ed.) (1991), p.218f.
  37. Board of Mission (1994), p.1.
  38. G.P.Benson, 'The Renewal of the Church', in Sookhdeo (ed.) (1987), p.85.
  39. P.Butler, 'From the early Eighteenth Century to the Present Day', in Sykes and Booty (ed.) (1988), p.33.
  40. N.A.D.Scotland, 'A Critique of Present Policy', in N.A.D.Scotland (ed.), Recovering the Ground (Chorleywood, Kingdom Power Trust, 1995), p.43.

while Bishop Fraser of Manchester in 1872 lamented that:

The parochial system...breaks down in the face of that huge mass of ignorance, poverty and wretchedness by which it is so often confronted in the thickly peopled areas of our manufacturing towns.<sup>41</sup>

Historically this motivated men like Grimshaw, and today gives a desire to pursue cross-boundary plants and network plants which intrinsically have very little relation to a geographical area. There is pressure on boundaries, and allowing no flexibility at all has led to congregations such as Soul Survivor, Watford and the Glenfall Fellowship, Cheltenham proceeding (at least initially) unofficially and technically illegally.

Many church leaders are prepared to show flexibility. Soul Survivor has received support, and the Oak Tree Fellowship, Acton, was begun at the Bishop of Willesden's invitation. By 1994, of 177 known Anglican church plants, only four had crossed boundaries without the consent of all parties.<sup>42</sup> For Nott, 'if the interests of mission are to have priority, then we must be prepared to be unsentimental about boundaries...Boundaries are a very secondary consideration'.<sup>43</sup> George Carey, after criticising those who 'muscle in' on other parishes, declares that:

The time will come when bishops will have to develop a strategy for church planting. Initiatives which advance beyond parish boundaries should not be left for DIY enthusiasts.<sup>44</sup>

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41. Both quoted in N.A.D.Scotland, 'A Critique of Present Policy', in Scotland (ed.) (1995), p.42f.

42. Board of Mission (1994), p.1.

43. Nott (1989), p.12.

44. G.Carey, 'Church Planting, Ecclesiology and Mission', in Hopkins (ed.), (1991), p.30.



*Breaking New Ground* followed this, arguing that 'the assertion that parish boundaries are paramount will merely paralyse initiative',<sup>45</sup> and even listing seven criteria to determine whether a cross-boundary plant is authentically Anglican, including a commitment to the canonical Declaration of Assent, the use of canonical forms of worship, proper licensed ministry, firm links with the church's neighbourhood and support for other local churches.<sup>46</sup>

It is not that the parish system should be abandoned. Rather, the practical pressures of Chapter 2, looking at underchurched areas in parishes and at networks, point to the need for flexible structures to compliment the parish system, which is not itself providing a meaningful presence in every community. Without that flexibility it will fail. As Tiller writes:

The Church of England has got to be flexible enough to embrace and encourage these alternatives to the parochial system if it is going to have any kind of significant place in the spiritual life of our nation.<sup>47</sup>

The Provincial Episcopal Visitors demonstrate existing flexibility over diocesan boundaries. Anglican practice overseas also shows flexibility. Parishes are not vital for Anglicanism: there are none in the United States, South America or Port Elizabeth Diocese in South Africa.<sup>48</sup> Network churches are not unthinkable: the Province of Kenya has developed flexible non-parochial ministry to minister to the needs of nomadic tribesmen such as the Maasai.<sup>49</sup> A new approach to boundaries would not be revolutionary.

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45. Board of Mission (1994), p.4.

46. Board of Mission (1994), p.32f.

47. J.Tiller, Introduction to D.Pytches and B.Skinner, New Wineskins (Guildford, Eagle, 1991), p.xii.

48. Pytches and Skinner (1991), p.54.

49. Lambeth Conference (1988), p.33.

A final possible reason for questioning the inviolability of boundaries lies in the immense diversity within Anglican theology and worship. This is not the theological rationale for planting seen in Chapter 4, a desire to protect the gospel where, following the breakdown in consensus on fundamentals, the ministry of the local incumbent is deemed inadequate. Rather, this argument notes that culture is increasingly varied, especially in urban areas. Allowing different styles of Anglicanism to coexist within an area might not damage the Church, but might encourage some to attend who might not otherwise attend their parish church. As the variety and number of Anglican churches increased, so people could have greater access to a church suitable for them, allowing more, not less, diversity.

Such an argument, however, risks denying the status of the church as a new, distinct community, a united body witnessing to the values of the Kingdom of God. Instead, the church could be left as merely a provider of religious services to a consumer society, its status dependent upon its perceived relevance. Marketing the image of different kinds of churchmanship would then become ultimately more important than preaching the gospel.<sup>50</sup> The church must be accessible and meaningful to its society, not cut off in a religious ghetto, but not at the price of losing its distinctiveness. The point about Anglican diversity is valid (and is a fact in urban areas with parish churches of different churchmanship), but caution is needed.

For various reasons, therefore, the material seen leads to questions about the continuing place of the parish system as the only Anglican way to meet the needs of the people. Despite its advantages, it can in practice work against the needs of mission.

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50. D.S.Yeago, "Messiah's People" - the Culture of the Church in the Midst of the Nations', Pro Ecclesia Vol.6 (1997), pp.146-171.

## e) What a Local Church can Plant

The final relevant aspect of church order, arising from the importance of local priority in evangelism, is the question of what a local parish church can plant. The legal position is clear: there is canonical control over the leadership of public worship, notably presidency at Holy Communion, and an episcopal licence is required to exercise ordained ministry. For the Anglican reformers, a true church includes 'the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution',<sup>51</sup> and this requires ordained ministry. This sacramental emphasis continued in the Lambeth Quadrilateral, and although the restriction on eucharistic presidency has been challenged in the Province of the Southern Cone and the Diocese of Sydney, Australia, there is no immediate prospect of this receiving serious consideration in England. A parish church therefore by itself cannot reproduce itself.

Reflection has therefore centred on questioning not the legal framework, but the definition of a church, looking particularly at the base communities of South America. These lay-led groups are arguably able to relate to their local communities in a relevant, rooted way,<sup>52</sup> in line with the DAWN principles of a worshipping community in every neighbourhood. Nazir-Ali writes that they can help reduce a clericalist understanding of ministry,<sup>53</sup> and *Breaking New Ground* acknowledged that church plants are often lay led and that it would be helpful to have faster ways of recognising and training gifts for ministry.<sup>54</sup>

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51. The *Homily for Whit Sunday*, quoted in P.D.L.Avis, The Church in the Theology of the Reformers (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1981), p.66.

52. J.Corrie, 'A New Way of being Church', Evangel Vol.14 No.2 (1996), pp.50-52.

53. Nazir-Ali (1991), p.120f.

54. Board of Mission (1994), p.20.

It may be that flexibility in the definition of 'church' might further evangelism. The Anglican stream at the 1995 DAWN Congress in England observed the traditional Anglican limitations, but wondered:

“what was church” for our planting goals and strategies.

“Breaking New Ground” defines this as the community in which the dominical sacraments are performed, pointing us back to the congregation...With the growing emphasis on Cell Church, Base Community and Meta-Church, perhaps DAWN goals need to be interpreted wider than the Anglican congregation in “Breaking New Ground”. This need not be seen as a “cop out” if outreach cells or base communities are strategically planted with mission intention to reach every neighbourhood.<sup>55</sup>

If such worshipping communities were seen as valid local expressions of the Church of England, and were supported, with ministry in them recognised, authorised and allowed to grow to ordination, then the needs of mission might be served without the need to raise issues like eucharistic presidency.

## V. Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to focus the issues to be examined in the light of the ministry of the Apostle Paul, drawing together the practical, theological and historical material already seen and reflecting upon them. The results can be summarised as follows.

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55. DAWN Congress 1995, Report of the Anglican Stream (London, Challenge 2000, 1995), p.14.

There is a commitment to evangelism in the Church of England, shown by Anglican history and buttressed by Anglican missiology. Church planting is an appropriate expression of this evangelism, given both that missiology and present practical needs. Anglican evangelism, however, has always historically raised important questions of church order. Anglicanism has a pastorally minded order, respecting parish boundaries and episcopal leadership. This is shown by the legal position surrounding the authorisation and exercise of ministry, and the creation of new parishes. This can conflict, however, with the view that the appropriate place to initiate evangelism is the local context, seen once again in Anglican history and missiological theory. Traditional respect for church order is tempered by a need for flexibility when legal procedures are cumbersome and slow. Such issues are evident today in the questions of parish boundaries and of what sort of congregation a local parish church can legally plant. The greater the commitment to evangelism, the greater the pressure for flexibility to allow that evangelism to flourish.

The relevant points to be taken forward are therefore the place of evangelism, the appropriateness of church planting as a form of evangelism and the tension between authority and flexibility in the relationship between the local church and the diocesan authorities. These questions will be treated in three New Testament chapters, namely:

6. Missiology and Ecclesiology in the Writings of the Apostle Paul,
7. The Mission of the Pauline Churches, and
8. Paul's Continuing Relationship with his Churches.

## 6. Missiology and Ecclesiology in the Writings of the Apostle Paul

We have seen an Anglican commitment to evangelism, with church planting as a valid expression of this, and the church as both the necessary end and the appropriate agent of evangelism. This chapter will begin to examine these findings in the light of the Pauline letters. It will show Paul's commitment to preach the gospel, and how this is intimately connected with his ecclesiology. For Paul, faith in Christ inevitably meant mission, and this mission led to the church, both theologically and practically. Paul's goal in mission will be shown to be the establishment of growing, maturing churches. The main sections will therefore be:

- I. Paul's Call to Mission
- II. The Necessity of the Church

Discussion of the content of the gospel that Paul preached will inevitably be limited, but will note that it is the *euangelion*, good news which needs to be told. The emphasis will rather be on Paul's compulsion to preach, and the fact that the gospel inevitably led to the foundation of worshipping Christian communities.

### I. Paul's Call to Mission

#### a) The Compulsion to Preach experienced by Paul

Paul's encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road changed the direction of his life. Whether this experience is best described as a

conversion or a fulfilment of his Judaism, a revelation of Jesus as Messiah,<sup>1</sup> it is certain that this event comprised not simply a transforming encounter with Christ, but also a commission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal.1:15-16, Eph.3:8).<sup>2</sup> Paul writes (Gal.1:15), perhaps with a conscious echo of the call of Jeremiah,<sup>3</sup> that God set him apart for this ministry from the time of his birth. Several passages illustrate how Paul's mission was a dominant part of his Christian life. Although Paul rejoiced whenever Christ was preached for whatever motive (Phil.1:15-18), he felt under a particular compulsion, and this was acknowledged by others. The precise nature of Paul's relationship with the Jerusalem leaders is unclear - whether the approval of other Christian leaders for his mission was needed - but on whatever basis Paul's commission as apostle to the Gentiles was examined, it was recognised by the leaders of the church in Jerusalem (Gal.2:7).

In 1 Cor.9:16, Paul describes his compulsion as an *anankē*. The context is teaching about food offered to idols, with Christian freedom balanced by the moral obligation to limit one's actions, rather than exercise this freedom at the expense of others, causing them to stumble. To illustrate this, Paul relates how he limited his apostolic rights to financial support because of the compulsion he was under to preach the gospel (v.16) He did not want to appear to preach for financial gain, thereby impugning the gospel itself. So to act is not praiseworthy, but merely fulfilling his duty (v.17). In discharging his duty, Paul's attitude is that of a slave (v.19) (a reflection of the servanthood of

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1. See the discussion in K.Stendahl, Paul among Jews and Gentiles (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1976), pp.7-12, A.J.Hultgren, Paul's Gospel and Mission, (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1985), p.4 and J.A.Ziesler, Pauline Christianity (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.2-9 & 25. D.J.Bosch, Transforming Mission (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1991), p.126, describes it as a 'transformation'.
  2. F.Hahn, Mission in the New Testament (London, SCM, 1965), p.97; P.T.O'Brien, Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1995), p.1f.
  3. O'Brien (1995), p.6; D.Senior and C.Stuhlmueller, The Biblical Foundations for Mission (London, SCM, 1983), p.183.

Christ in Phil.2:5-8), becoming all things to all people in order to save some (v.22). The background to *anankē* in classical Greek is that of the principle determining reality and dominating the universe.<sup>4</sup> In Paul this meaning is transformed to express the will of God, governing history and limiting human free will (see 1 Cor.7:37 and 2 Cor.9:7, where there is no such compulsion). Moreover, in the LXX, passages such as Zeph.1:15 link *anankē* with tribulation, particularly eschatological tribulation, and this link is reflected in the Pauline letters (1 Cor.7:26; 2 Cor.6:4 & 12:10; 1 Thess.3:17), indicating that while Paul's compulsion in 1 Cor.9:16 was something which drove him personally,<sup>5</sup> it was also something ordained by God in his eschatological purposes of salvation.<sup>6</sup>

This compulsion again appears in Romans. Paul is called to be an apostle (Rom.1:1). He serves God wholeheartedly in preaching the gospel (1:9), and has a debt to discharge both to Greeks and non-Greeks (1:14), who were the beneficiaries of the commission Paul received as an Apostle, which placed him under an obligation to preach the gospel.<sup>7</sup> He is therefore eager to preach also in Rome, even though this is a church which he has not personally founded (1:15).

Rom.15 outlines this further. Paul's preaching is a priestly duty laid upon him (15:16). Proclaiming the gospel is a solemn and sacred act, a holy act because Paul has been set apart by God for this purpose. Therefore he will only speak of the fruit of his mission (15:18) and that he has proclaimed the

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4. R.Morgenthaler, 'Anankē', in C.Brown (ed.), The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Exeter, Paternoster, 1976 & 1986), p.663f, citing *eg* Plato, Leg., 818c.
  5. *cf* again the compulsion of the prophets in Jer.20:7-9 and Amos 3:8 & 7:14-15.
  6. R.Morgenthaler, 'Anankē', in Brown (ed.) (1976 & 1986), p.663; G.D.Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987), p.418f.
  7. L.Morris, the Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1988), p.63; C.E.B.Cranfield, Romans, a shorter Commentary (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1985), p.15.



gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum (15:19). He wants to make Christ known where the gospel has not been proclaimed (15:20), and therefore he plans to visit Rome on the way to further mission in Spain (15:23-24).

Elsewhere, Paul is compelled by Christ's love to preach (2 Cor.5:14),<sup>8</sup> and sees himself as an ambassador of Christ (2 Cor.5:20). Jesus revealed himself to Paul as Lord, and this lordship must be proclaimed if it is to be acknowledged by others. Put simply, if the gospel is not preached, then how will others hear? (Rom.10:9-15). The very nature of the gospel, a gospel of revelation, requires that it be revealed to others by proclamation. An unproclaimed gospel is a contradiction in terms.

## **b) Paul's Compulsion in the Framework of Eschatology**

### **(i) The Jewish Background**

The eschatological dimension of *anankē* points to how Paul saw himself as called to a specific task at a key moment in salvation history. Paul's missiological background was the Old Testament hope of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion, firmly set in the context of eschatology.<sup>9</sup> All flesh would see the epiphany of God (Isa.2:2; 40:5; 52:10), accompanied by his word which would go forth (Ps.50:1; Isa.45:20 & 22; 55:5), announced especially by the Servant Israel, called to be a light to the Gentiles (Isa.42:6; 49:6). This would result in the journey of the Gentiles to Zion (Isa.2:3; 60:11; Zech.8:21-23; Jer.3:17) for worship (Ps.22:28; 86:10; Isa.45:23f; 66:18) and the

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8. The verb *synechō*, shown by its parallel use in Phil.1:23 to mean constraint by pressure (in Phil.1:23 two conflicting alternatives).

9. J.Jeremias, Jesus' Promise to the Nations (London, SCM, 1958), pp.57-60.

Messianic banquet (Zech.2:11; Isa.25:6-8). The traditional view is that the period of the Second Temple was one of remarkable Jewish missionary zeal and success.<sup>10</sup> This view has recently been challenged.<sup>11</sup> Godfearers and proselytes attracted to Judaism were undeniably welcomed by synagogues as those drawn to the light of God's people. Paul indeed used the presence of godfearers at synagogues to reach the Gentiles (Acts 13:16, 26, 43 & 50; 16:14; 17:4 & 17; 18:7). There is, however, little evidence of active proselytization. Matt.23:15 is often cited, but probably refers to zealous Pharisees travelling to Diaspora synagogues to ensure full submission to the Law (especially circumcision) of those already proselytes.<sup>12</sup> Paul's compulsion comes from this background, but was something new.

## (ii) Paul's Eschatological Mission

It is likely that Paul saw the preaching of the Christian gospel, promised beforehand in the Old Testament (Rom.1:2), as a new stage: the promised word of the Lord going forth to the Gentiles (Rom.10:8 & 17; 1 Cor.14:36; 1 Thess.2:13), with Paul himself as the eschatological instrument of this proclamation. The term *euangelion* itself carries an eschatological sense. Used sixty times in the Pauline writings (four in the Pastorals), in the LXX it is used of proclaiming God's eschatological favour in Isa.40:9; 60:6; 61:1 & 52:7 (used by Paul himself in Rom.10:15). For Paul, the gospel has a content (Gal.2:2; 1 Cor.15:1-3), but is much more. He served the gospel (Rom.1:1; Gal.1:15f), which is not just word but power and Spirit (1 Thess.1:4-5), the divine power of salvation for all who believe (Rom.1:16), set in motion through

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10. Jeremias (1958), pp.11-17 cites, *eg*, Test.Levi 14:3, Orac.Sib.III:195f, Mekh.Ex.22:20.
  11. S.McKnight, A Light among the Gentiles (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1991), *eg* p.48 & p.74ff. Also M.D.Goodman, Mission and Conversion (Oxford, Clarendon, 1994), pp.60-90.
  12. McKnight (1991), p.106f, citing the similar visit of Eleazar to King Izates of Adiabene (Josephus, Ant.20:40-42).

preaching (Rom.15:19). The gospel is active in election (Rom.11:28), is something to be obeyed and defines one's standing with God (2 Cor.4:3; 1 Cor.15:1).<sup>13</sup> The gospel has an eschatological force; the word of the Lord is going forth to the Gentiles (Rom.10:8 & 17; 1 Cor.14:36; 1 Thess.2:13)

Paul could, therefore, interpret his mission in terms of the Old Testament hope. In this, the nations would come to Zion, and superficially this is different from Paul's active outreach, so unusual in Judaism. The difference is that in Christ the last days have come, the word of the Lord is going forth through Paul, and the nations are coming to Jerusalem in the form of Paul's Gentile converts. A key phrase in Romans occurs in a similar form in 1:5, 15:18 and 16:26: the 'obedience of faith' of the Gentiles,<sup>14</sup> seen as the goal of the gospel and of Paul's whole ministry (Rom.15:16).<sup>15</sup> Believing Gentiles are an acceptable offering to God from Paul's labours, and an offering and demonstration to the church in Jerusalem that salvation has indeed come to the Gentiles (15:27). Apocalyptic expectation therefore did not paralyse mission, postponing it to a future date, but rather energised it.<sup>16</sup>

Ephesians 3:1-13 also reflects this in the cosmic language of that later epistle. On the Damascus Road was revealed nothing less than the *mystērion* of God (3:3), the mystery of Christ kept hidden but now made known (3:4-5), that Gentiles are sharers in the promise in Christ (3:7). Paul is to be a herald of that mystery (3:9), to be proclaimed not just to the Gentiles but also to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (3:10) (cf. 2 Cor.4:1-6 & 10:4).

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13. J.H.Schütz, Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp.36-48.

14. O'Brien (1995), p.32: assuming the genuineness and correct position of 16:26, it and 1:5 form an *inclusio* to the whole letter.

15. In 1:5 *eis hypakoēn pisteōs en pasin tois ethnesin*, in 15:18 *eis hypakoēn ethnōn* and in 16:26 *eis hypakoēn pisteōs eis panta ta ethnē*.

16. J.C.Beker, Paul the Apostle (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1980), p.178

### c) The Nature of the Gospel

The final aspect of Paul's compulsion comes from the nature of the gospel itself. Paul's teaching sprang from his overwhelming experience of Christ on the Damascus road (1 Cor.9:1). It was not that Paul had at that time a great sense of need (Phil.3:6 confirms this). Rather, on the Damascus Road the risen Lord Jesus Christ was presented as God's way of salvation.<sup>17</sup>

Paul's developed thinking, however, points clearly to a great need for all to hear the gospel. There is no space to give anything but the smallest presentation of Paul's gospel, but the gospel is needed because humanity stands under the wrath of God (Rom.1:18-3:20). People are as a result of sin objects of wrath, lost and fundamentally unable to help themselves. Having turned away from true knowledge of God (Rom.1:18-23), humanity stands under the power of sin and death. There is a compulsion to sin (Rom.6:17 & 20; 7:14 & 25), which leads to death (Rom.3:23), a slavery to external righteousness, the Law, which can never be a way of salvation (Rom.1:32, 2:23 & 7:7-12) and a bondage to Satan and the powers of evil (2 Cor.4:4; Eph.2:2).<sup>18</sup>

God's answer to this need is the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly his death on the cross. It is here that the centre of salvation can be found. Only Christ can bring God's righteousness (Rom.1:17; Phil.3:9), which alone can deliver from death and open up eternal life (Rom.3:21-24). Through the work of Christ God bestows this righteousness on the ungodly (Rom.4:5 & 5:6). The grammar of Paul's writing is clear: it is God who *makes* righteous (Rom.3:26; Gal.3:8 *etc*); it is people who *are made* righteous (Rom.2:13, 3:20, 3:28 *etc*).

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17. Senior and Stuhlmueller (1983), p.171; also G.Bornkamm, Paul (New York, Harper and Row, 1971), p.120.

18. Beker (1980), p.145.

However this was achieved, Christ's death was to deal with sin. Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom.8:3), in obedience (Phil.2:8), and was made sin for sinful humanity (2 Cor.5:21). He was born under the Law (Gal.4:4), and took on himself the Law's curse (Gal.3:10 & 13).

The work of Christ making available the righteousness of God is accepted by faith (Gal.2:16; Rom.3:21f *etc*), and is granted to those who are 'in Christ'. This is a key aspect of Paul's presentation of the gospel, which will have important consequences: believers by faith are incorporated into Christ's actual death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, thereby dying with him to sin and being raised to new life (Rom.6:3-10; 2 Cor.5:17-21).

In Christ the new age of the Spirit has dawned. Believers are 'in Christ', and by the Spirit Christ dwells in believers (Gal.2:20), enabling them to walk in freedom and holiness. This new life is a 'first fruit' of the glory that is to come at the general resurrection, the redemption of the body at the second coming of Christ (1 Cor.15:12-58; 1 Thess.4:13-5:11). Moreover, salvation has wider implications than the fate of individuals. This is not simplistic universalism. A distinction is drawn between those who are saved and those who are not (2 Thess.1:9; 2 Cor.2:15f), but Rom.8:19-23 shows that salvation will extend to the whole creation, and Col.1:20 and Eph.1:10 indicate that in some way all things in heaven and on earth are reconciled by the work of Christ.

Paul's compulsion to preach therefore becomes still clearer from the nature of the gospel: God's eternal plan of salvation now revealed (Eph.1:1-14), the only way by which humanity can be set free from sin, death and evil. Paul does not have a missiology alongside an anthropology, a christology and an eschatology, but his theology is a missionary theology from beginning to end. It is the *euangelion* of God's saving power and righteousness made freely available to a sinful humanity in Christ. It must be preached (Rom.10:14f).

If Anglican thought has a commitment to evangelism, this is consistent with the compulsion felt by Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, becoming all things to all people, limiting his rights in order to pay his debt to the Gentiles and win some for the gospel. Paul preached in unevangelized areas as a herald and ambassador of God's salvation. This was a priestly duty, making an acceptable offering to God of Gentiles obedient to the faith, such an offering also being a witness both to Jerusalem and indeed to the heavenly authorities that the eschatological righteousness of God has extended also to the Gentiles in Christ. Also, if salvation extends to affect the whole of creation, then it is unlikely to be a matter just for individuals in isolation. While the acceptance of salvation is for each person by faith (Rom.3:21ff),<sup>19</sup> the nature of the salvation received by grace is necessarily corporate also. This means that Paul's missiology inevitably includes ecclesiology as a vital aspect, and it is this that will now be examined.

## **II. The Necessity of the Church**

### **a) The Cultural Background to Paul's Ecclesiology**

Western individualism, from Descartes onwards, arguably finds little counterpart in the world in which Paul ministered. Dodd has argued that in most of history there has been a search for 'the Divine Commonwealth',<sup>20</sup> based on what Dillistone terms 'the organic view of Society'.<sup>21</sup> Paul was a Hellenistic Jew from Tarsus, linked to two cultures, both of which stressed

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19. Even this, however, must be nuanced by the apparent conversion of whole households, following the lead of their head (Acts 16:14f & 31-33; 1 Cor.1:16).

20. C.H.Dodd, The Meaning of Paul for Today (London, Fontana, 1958), p.37ff.

21. F.W.Dillistone, The Structure of the Divine Society (London, Lutterworth, 1951), p.13ff.

that personal identity was defined primarily by the existence and the nature of relationships with others.

The Jews saw themselves as the people of God, racially and religiously bound to one another and distinct from the Gentiles. Within Judaism, there were smaller communities centred on the synagogue, or a Pharisaic *haburah* fellowship, with more distinct communities such as the Essenes developing even more stringent rules for community life.<sup>22</sup> The emerging Christian communities had the diaspora synagogues as their nearest and most natural available model: synagogues were probably legally based as *collegiae*, and had both a private, cultic aspect and a sense of belonging to a larger whole, the people of Israel.<sup>23</sup>

Hellenistic culture equally lacked individualism. Malina argues that the ancient world was marked by dyadism, defining one's identity by one's position in a network of relationships, giving an individual meaning only when set in relationships of honour and shame with others.<sup>24</sup> Banks writes that the Greek world saw itself as bound together at the level of the *polis*, the city or nation state, and at the level of the household (a term which Paul used for the Christian community).<sup>25</sup> Intermediate between these were the voluntary associations, based on *koinōnia*, participation, and the philosophical and rhetorical schools.<sup>26</sup> Hellenistic culture therefore had expressions of human solidarity, and indeed the important Pauline image of the body of Christ may

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22. R.Banks, Paul's Idea of Community (Exeter, Paternoster, 1980), p.17-20.

23. W.A.Meeks, The First Urban Christians (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983), p.80, although the synagogues had a racial nature which the Christian communities sought to avoid (Gal.3:28).

24. B.J.Malina, The New Testament World (London, SCM, 1983), p.54f.

25. Banks (1980), p.15.

26. Banks (1980), p.16f & 19; Meeks (1983), p.77-84.

well have at least some of its roots in the fable of Menenius Agrippa, dating from the Fifth Century B.C. and related by Livy.<sup>27</sup>

Paul often used households as his base after being ejected from the synagogue (Acts 16:15; 17:7; 18:1-3). Churches met in households (1 Cor.16:15 & 19; Rom.16:5-23; Col.4:15; Philem.2), and the term had a theological significance in describing the life of the Christian community (Eph.2:19; Gal.6:10), with leaders described as stewards (1 Cor.4:1; 9:17; Col.1:25; Eph.3:2).<sup>28</sup> However, similar language and similar associations do not automatically mean that the corporate nature of Christianity was simply absorbed by Paul from his non-Christian environment. The churches founded by Paul did not quite fit any existing social model,<sup>29</sup> and there was a distinctive theological basis.

## **b) The Corporate Nature of Salvation**

### **(i) Solidarity in Christ**

It was shown above that all stand in solidarity in sin, as objects of God's wrath, and that salvation is 'in Christ', an incorporation into Christ's death and resurrection (Rom.6:3-10). Salvation must come individually by faith, but finds its true nature as corporate salvation in Christ. As the many died by the trespass of Adam, so God's grace overflows to the many through Christ (Rom.5:12-20). One died for all, and therefore all died (2 Cor.5:14). It is in Christ that believers become the righteousness of God (2 Cor.5:21), and are

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27. Dillistone (1951), p.18f.

28. E.A.Judge, The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century (London, Tyndale, 1960), pp.36-38.

29. Meeks (1983), p.74.



one (Gal.3:28; 1 Cor.1:2). The prize which lies ahead, the future hope, is again in Christ Jesus (Phil.3:14). 1 Cor.15 looks to this hope. The first Adam became a living being, and the last Adam a life-giving Spirit (v.45). As humanity bears the likeness of the earthly man, so believers will bear the likeness of Christ, the man from heaven (v.49). This is true also of the cosmic salvation in Colossians and Ephesians: by Christ all things were created, in him all things hold together and through him all things will be reconciled (Col.1:16-20). Eph.1:3-14, one sentence in the Greek, centres everything on solidarity in Christ. God's election before the foundation of the world was in Christ (v.4 & 11). Believers who hear and respond to the gospel are included in Christ (v.13). All spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph.1:3), the deposit and seal of the Spirit is in Christ (v.13f) and all things in heaven and on earth will be brought together under one head, even Christ (v.10).

Therefore for Paul all of salvation, past, present and future hope, is in Christ. There is no other sphere of salvation or Christian existence. This does not automatically mean, however, that spiritually-linked believers should actually physically gather in congregations. Rather, being in Christ is a question of Christian identity. The same is true for the next image Paul uses, that of the people of God, although here there are important practical implications.

## (ii) The People of God

However dramatic Paul's experience on the Damascus road, it is also true that for Paul the Christian faith is in continuity with Judaism. It is the same God who is worshipped and served, believers by faith inheriting the promises to Abraham (Rom.4 & Gal.3). In the Old Testament the Jewish people had an identity as the people of God. To be right with God automatically involved being part of a chosen people (*eg* Deut.7:6-8). When Ruth came to Israel, she did so on the basis that as Naomi's people would be her people, Naomi's God would be her God (Ruth 1:16). People and faith were inseparable. If the

Christian faith is in continuity with Israel, then this ought still to be the case, with no salvation except as part of the people of God.

There clearly is such a continuity. Paul frequently uses the term *hagioi* to describe Christians (eg 1 Cor.1:2; 2 Cor.1:1; Eph.1:1; Rom.1:7; 8:27; 16:1; 16:15), a term used in Judaism to describe the people of God (Exod.19:5-9; Dan.7:18-27; Ps.Sol.17).<sup>30</sup> In the gospel there is a priority for the Jews (Rom.1:16; 3:29), but Abraham is father not just of those who are of the Law but also of faith (Rom.4:16f). The promises which Christians have are those originally made to Israel (Gal.3:29). This is shown by the image of the olive tree in Rom.11:16-21. If the tree is God's people throughout history, then the natural branches are Jewish believers. Gentiles only have a place by being grafted in as wild olive branches onto the original stock. Indeed, a question which concerns Paul greatly, especially in Rom.9-11, is the continuing place of Israel within the people of God in the light of Christ. For Paul, brought up as a devout member of the Jewish people, this question was absolutely crucial. There is no need to explore either all Paul's thinking about the continuity between old and new covenants, or the continuing place of the Jewish people in God's purposes. It is simply necessary to note that there is such a continuity. Christian believers stand with the people of God throughout history. Individual salvation finds its expression in a communal identity.

Yet there is also discontinuity. For Paul, it is not the case that Christians have a place within the people of God on the basis of faith, alongside Jews included on the basis of obedience to the Law. All are alike under sin (Rom.3:9), and through observing the Law none will be made righteous (Rom.3:20). In Christ has been revealed a salvation that is completely by faith, for all who believe, Jews and Gentiles (Rom.3:21 & 29-30). Rom.4 and Gal.3 may indicate a

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30. Fee (1987), p.32f.

common parentage in Abraham, but they show that the promise to Abraham was always on the basis of faith, and Paul argues that a Law delivered 430 years later cannot do away with this requirement for faith (Gal.3:17). Indeed, the new covenant is superior to the old (Gal.4:21-31), bringing freedom. The Christian community of faith, comprising Jews and Gentiles, is an eschatological community, formed by the Spirit (1 Cor.12:13; Rom.8:14-17), a new creation (Gal.6:15; 2 Cor.5:17). Wright demonstrates that God's answer to Adam's sin was a *people*, a true humanity. Historically, this was Abraham and the people of Israel, whose task was fulfilled by Christ, the second Adam, who inaugurated the new, eschatological, true humanity through his death and resurrection (Rom.5:12-21; 1 Cor.15:20-57).<sup>31</sup> Together, in the church, Jew and Gentile are to work out God's promises dating from the time of Abraham (Rom.9-11).

In this new community in Christ all human barriers are broken down (Col.3:11; Gal.3:26-29). Although distinctions of race and gender remain, there are no social barriers, and particularly no racial barriers, which can be allowed to define and restrict access to the saving grace of God. All is by faith. Eph.2:11-22 illustrates this well. The priority of the Jews in salvation is clear - but in Christ the gentiles have been brought near (v.12-13), and one new creation has been made out of the two (v.15). Gal.2:11-21 demonstrates that this was not just theory but was of tremendous practical importance. At Antioch Paul opposed Peter and others who withdrew from table fellowship with the Gentile Christians under pressure from Jerusalem. Freedom from the Law in the new creation means that for Paul such divisions cannot continue; there must be no denial of the new community created by the Spirit through the gospel.

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31. N.T.Wright, 'The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith', Tyndale Bulletin Vol.29 (1978), pp.65-71, and The Climax of the Covenant (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1991), pp.20-36.

The priority of practical unity can be noted elsewhere, as (conversely to the situation in Antioch) Paul calls on Christians to curb their freedom from rules and regulations in order not to impair fellowship and make others stumble (Col.2:8-23). 1 Cor.8-11 applies this concerning meat offered to idols, while Rom.14:1-15:13 warns the 'strong' not to hurt the 'weak' (quite possibly Jewish believers) by the exercise of freedom over food. At Antioch Paul would not allow food regulations to limit Christian freedom and prevent unity between Jew and Gentile in Christ, but such freedom could not be allowed in other cases to harm unity with those who had not yet fully grasped that freedom. Unity and fellowship are the dominant considerations in both cases.

Paul does not perhaps make as much of this image as might be expected. After his teaching on the place of Israel and the people of God in Rom.9-11, *hagioi* is used for Christians in Rom.12:13, but developed teaching on relationships within the congregation instead uses Paul's preferred image of the body of Christ (12:4-8).<sup>32</sup> *Hagioi* is also not used nearly as much as *ekklesia*, the next image to be examined. Other images may have been more useful teaching instruments, and despite the positive practical implications of the term noted above, it might be that Paul felt it still carried too many Jewish racial overtones to be the right image for the group where racial barriers are broken down in Christ. It is certainly the case that *hagioi* appears to be used sometimes just to refer to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (1 Cor.16:1; 2 Cor.8:4; 9:12; Rom.15:25f).<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, this image, though giving significant practical implications for relationships, still concerns identity and does not necessarily mean that

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32. In Rom.12:4-8 and 1 Cor.12:12-31. Eph.5:3 and Col.3:12 use *hagioi* to describe Christians in passages on relationships, but in Ephesians at least this is still in the context of the church as the body of Christ (Eph.4:1-16).

33. Fee (1987), p.827; C.K.Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (London, A & C Black, 1973), p.386.

Christians will gather regularly in congregations, which is needed to show the local church as the inevitable result of evangelism. This will, however, be shown by examining the images of the *ekklesia* and the body of Christ.

### (iii) The *Ekklesia*

The place in which the new relationships, given by the corporate nature of salvation, are expressed is the church. Over sixty times in Paul the church is described by the term *ekklesia*.<sup>34</sup> The *ekklesia* in secular Greek referred to any gathering of a group of people (a use seen in Acts 19:21-41 for the assembly of the Ephesian citizens).<sup>35</sup> However, it is likely that Paul's use was influenced more by the LXX.<sup>36</sup> The Old Testament uses the word *qāhāl* for the act of calling or summoning the people of Israel together, usually before God, as well as for the gathering itself (eg Deut.4:10 & 9:10; Num.22:4; Jer.26:17; Ezek.32:3).<sup>37</sup> The term *ʿēdhāh* was originally used to describe the people, the society, itself, but by the time of the writings of the chronicler *qāhāl* was used for this purpose also.<sup>38</sup> The LXX occasionally translates *qāhāl* as *sunagōgē*, but most often the word *ekklesia* is used.

One can see why this word should have been chosen by Paul.<sup>39</sup> *Ekklesia* had scriptural authority, and no other word would quite do. In a Jewish

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34. Banks (1980), p.33. *Ekklesia* will be translated by either 'church' or 'congregation', despite the reservations of Hort that these terms have a loaded history (F.J.A.Hort, The Christian Ecclesia (London, Macmillan, 1898), p.1f).

35. Banks (1980), p.34.

36. Banks (1980), p.34.

37. Hort (1898), p.4.

38. Hort (1898), p.5f.

39. The assumption here is that Paul's use of the word is probably the earliest in the New Testament, pre-dating the use in the Gospels (a very limited use), Acts, Revelation and the non-Pauline epistles.

setting, *sunagōgē* would be connected too strongly with the Law.<sup>40</sup> In a Hellenistic setting *sunagōgē* could lead to confusion between the local synagogue and the Christian community. *Laos* would carry racial connotations, and the Greek words used to describe the mystery religions (*synodos*, *thiasos* and *koinon*) would also have wrong associations. *Ekklēsia*, however, would signify both God's election and a voluntary association, with its roots in the personal relationships of the household, yet able to carry a wider geographical (and supra-temporal) meaning.<sup>41</sup>

The importance of the use of *ekklēsia* is that the Old Testament use indicated a physical gathering together, and there is no reason for this to be absent from Paul's use. Also, the Old Testament gathering was specifically a gathering before God, and Paul similarly often refers to the *ekklēsia* as the *ekklēsia tou Theou* (eg Gal.1:13; 1 Cor.15:9; Phil.3:6). In other words, the *ekklēsia* is the place in which being in Christ is worked out practically, as Christians physically gather together before God.

The term is used in several geographical (and temporal) senses: for a congregation as it meets for worship (1 Cor.11:18 & 14:34) and for individual churches, whether an individual house church (1 Cor.16:19, Philem.2) or all the congregations in one town, constituting the church in that place, in receipt of an epistle (1 Thess.1:1; 2 Thess.1:1; 1 Cor.1:2; 2 Cor.1:1 *etc*) or from which an epistle is sent (eg Rom.16:23). The term is used in the plural to designate all the churches of a particular region such as Judea (1 Thess.2:14; Gal.1:22), Galatia (1 Cor.16:1) or Macedonia (2 Cor.8:1), generally to designate several

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40. Galatians and 2 Corinthians, and possibly Colossians, indicate significant problems with Judaizers entering congregations founded by Paul and attempting to impose Jewish legal practices, notably circumcision.

41. Banks (1980), p.49.

local congregations (2 Cor.11:8 & 8:23; Rom.16:4) or even to refer to every congregation wherever it may be found (1 Cor.7:17; 14:33).<sup>42</sup>

There is also arguably a more universal use, which will be important in Chapter 8 when looking at the unity of the whole church. Gal.1:13, Phil.3:6 and 1 Cor.15:9 seem to use *ekklesia* in the singular to describe the whole church of God persecuted by Paul. 1 Cor.10:32 & 11:22 have a similar usage, with the whole of the church, wherever it may be found, represented in the meeting of a particular local church. Cerfaux, however, argues that the former texts refer to the one church at Jerusalem (churches in other places were only founded as a result of Paul's persecution), and the latter texts apply a title of honour to the church at Corinth originally bestowed on the church in Jerusalem.<sup>43</sup> Banks similarly argues that the gift of ministries to the church (in 1 Cor.12:28), which on first sight appears to refer to the church in every place, in fact just refers to Corinth, with no indication that this need be a pattern repeated elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> O'Brien also argues that as *ekklesia* includes the notion of gathering together, then this must be restricted to the local church which physically can gather in one place.<sup>45</sup>

The reason for this argument is to ensure that there is no reading back into the New Testament of a unified national or international church such as the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>46</sup> Beker writes that:

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42. Hort (1898), p.116f.

43. L.Cerfaux, The Church in the Theology of St Paul (New York, Herder and Herder, 1959), p.109-115 & 192-195.

44. Banks (1980), p.36f. The reference to apostles is in this argument to the apostolic founder of the church in question (*cf* 1 Cor.9:1-2).

45. P.T.O'Brien, 'Church', in G.F.Hawthorne and R.P.Martin (ed.), Dictionary of Paul and his Letters (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), p.124, although O'Brien acknowledges the *ekklesia* as a universal society in Ephesians and Colossians.

46. Banks (1980), p.37.

the universal element that is concretised in each congregation is not the Church, but the Christ at work in the gospel.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, Dunn contends that the 'church-ness' (*sic*) of each individual Christian assembly did not depend on being part of a universal entity, but on its own direct continuity through Christ and the founding apostle with the assembly of Yahweh.<sup>48</sup> The movement of thought is from the local and particular to the universal, and not the other way round.<sup>49</sup>

Ridderbos disagrees, arguing that the ideas of the people of God and the body of Christ both imply that the universal church is primary - the local can only find its identity as an *ekklesiā* as part of the whole people or body.<sup>50</sup> The arguments of Cerfaux and others probably strain the language too far. Paul was on his way to persecute the church in a place other than Jerusalem when he was converted. Moreover, the language of 1 Cor.12:28 most naturally refers to the wider church: in Paul's thinking there can arguably be only one apostle for each church.

This is surely confirmed by Colossians and Ephesians. The universal aspect of the church in these epistles will be seen most clearly in the discussion of the body of Christ, but the term *ekklesiā* appears in a definitely universal sense, spanning geography and time as well. Christ is the head of the church (Col.1:18), which, chosen eternally (Eph.1:4 & 11), is his fullness (Eph.1:23). Part of God's eternal purpose for the church (Eph.3:11) is that through it his manifold wisdom will be made known to the rulers and authorities in the

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47. Beker (1980), p.422f.

48. J.D.G.Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Forthcoming: manuscript copy used), §.20, p.7.

49. Cerfaux (1959), p.191.

50. H.Ridderbos, Paul, an Outline of his Theology (London, SPCK, 1975) p.329f; see also M.Goguel, The Primitive Church (London, Allen and Unwin, 1963), p.53f.



heavenly realms (Eph.3:10). The ministries provided here (Eph.4:11) are certainly provided for the universal church, rather than for the church in one place, and the list is too similar to that in 1 Cor.12:28 for there to be a hugely different context for each verse.

Therefore Paul's preferred term for the congregation, the *ekklesia*, does imply the physical gathering of the community before God. It reinforces the teaching that salvation has a corporate nature, and that believers are linked to other Christians locally, the wider church and the eternal church in God's cosmic purposes. This will be seen even more strongly by Paul's use of the image of the body of Christ.

#### (iv) The Body of Christ

The body of Christ has been described as the image weaving Paul's thought into a whole.<sup>51</sup> Robinson sees it as the keystone of Pauline theology (as 'body' is variously used to sketch out the whole gospel), writing that:

It is from the body of sin and death that we are delivered; it is through the body of Christ on the cross that we are saved; it is into his body the Church that we are incorporated; it is by his body in the eucharist that this community is sustained; it is in our body that its new life has to be manifested; it is to a resurrection of this body to the likeness of his glorious body that we are destined.<sup>52</sup>

Various suggestions have been advanced for the origin of the phrase, including the Jewish notion of corporate personality, reflecting Old Testament

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51. Dillistone (1951), p.64.

52. J.A.T. Robinson, The Body (London, SCM, 1952), p.9.

passages such as Isa. 1:5-6 & 53:4.<sup>53</sup> We have noted the fable of Menenius Agrippa, and Mitchell has demonstrated remarkable similarity between Paul's use of the body image in 1 Cor.12 and its use in secular Greek writings.<sup>54</sup> Mitchell finds references to the body, as a metaphor for a political organism with independent members, dating from a period of over 600 years up to the second century.<sup>55</sup> There is parallel use of details such as hands, feet and eyes,<sup>56</sup> and the same differentiation of gifts and contributions for the advantage of the body.<sup>57</sup>

Dillistone sees eucharistic terminology behind the phrase, linking 1 Cor.6:15, describing Christians as members of Christ, 1 Cor.11:23-26 (the account of the last supper) and 1 Cor.12:12-27, the developed image of the body of Christ governing the unity of the church. Christians are members of Christ as they are members of the body of Christ by participation in the eucharistic bread - again, the body of Christ (1 Cor.10:16f).<sup>58</sup> It may be that there is too great a jump, from *feeding on* the eucharistic body of Christ to *participating in* the body (in the sense of 1 Cor.12).<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, the *Kyriakon deipnon*, the 'Lord's meal' of 1 Cor.11:20, is given to sustain the life of the body of Christ, and the tradition Paul received may have played a part in the development of the image.

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53. E.Käsemann, Perspectives on Paul (London, SCM, 1971), p.103; Dillistone (1951), p.61.
54. M.M.Mitchell, Paul and the Rhetoric or Reconciliation (Tübingen, J.C.Mohr, 1991), pp.157-162.
55. Mitchell (1991), p.158, citing *eg* Dio.Chrys. Or.1:52, 3:104-107; 17:19; Plutarch Mor.426a.
56. Mitchell (1991), p.159, citing Xenophon Mem.2:3:19; Plutarch, Mor.478d.
57. Mitchell (1991), p.159, citing Plato, Resp.2:370a-b; Aristotle, Pol.2:14; 3:22.
58. Dillistone (1951), p.63.
59. Ridderbos (1975), p.366.



Whatever its origin, the term indicates that Christians are in a very close living relationship. To be in Christ is necessarily to be a member of his body. Whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, all Christians are baptised by one Spirit into one body and given the same Spirit to drink (1 Cor.12:12-13). Banks notes that the term describes the relationship between Christians and Christ, and Christians and one another. It never describes the relationship between believers and the world.<sup>60</sup> For Paul the church is defined in terms of Christ, who through his Spirit is truly and wholly present in his body.<sup>61</sup>

As the human body has many members, so it is with Christ (1 Cor.12:12). The body of Christ necessitates the unity of Christians. As Mitchell writes:

There can be no doubt that 1 Cor.12, which employs the most common *topos* in ancient literature for unity, is a straightforward response to the factionalism within the church community, which is the subject of the entire letter.<sup>62</sup>

It is striking that Paul uses for the local congregation an image used in his society to refer to the wider city or state.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, Yeago writes that Paul saw the church as a new public order in the midst of the nations, a culture in its own right alongside Jewish and Gentile society.<sup>64</sup> To become a Christian is to join a new community (Gal.3:26-29; 1 Cor.1:2-9).<sup>65</sup>

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60. Banks (1980), p.67. The body image is used against sexual immorality in 1 Cor.6:12-17, where union with Christ in his body is incompatible with sexual union with a prostitute. This in fact reinforces the point, as Paul is teaching that for those who are united with Christ in his body it is unthinkable that there could be union with anyone outside the body of Christ. See Fee (1987), pp.257-260.
61. Banks (1980), p.63.
62. Mitchell (1991), p.161.
63. S.C.Barton, 'Christian Community in the light of 1 Corinthians', Studies in Christian Ethics, Vol.10 No.1 (1997), p.14.
64. D.S.Yeago, "'Messiah's People" - the Culture of the Church in the Midst of the Nations', Pro Ecclesia Vol.6 (1997), p.152.
65. Yeago (1997), p.154f.

In the church there is a new solidarity in Christ, transforming old divisions. The body has various parts which all, though different, have an important part to play. No part is to look down on another, and no part should feel inferior and therefore not a true part of the body (1 Cor.12:14-27). To each within the body gifts of the Spirit are given (1 Cor.12:7). What affects one part of the body affects the whole. Therefore there should be genuine concern for one another (1 Cor.12:25f). A similar use is found in Rom.12:3-8, again concerning mutual relationships within the body. Each has a different gift, given by God, and therefore the Christian attitude should not be one of pride but humility and sober judgment. Such teaching is meaningless unless Paul intends Christians actually to gather together.

Again, this means that the Christian life is necessarily corporate, and therefore the goal of mission cannot simply be isolated Christians, but rather the establishment of local churches. Indeed, just as was seen with the *ekklesia*, the body of Christ can refer to a local congregation, not as a part of the wider body of Christ, nor as *a* body of Christ, but as the *whole* body of Christ, realised in that place (1 Cor.12:27 with 12:13).

The image is developed in Colossians and Ephesians. Notably, the body's relationship with Christ is clarified: Christ is the head of the body (Eph.1:10 & 23; Col.1:18). As noted above, the emphasis of these epistles is towards the universal and cosmic aspects of salvation. Christ who is head of the body is the one in whom all God's fulness dwells, and who is Lord over all (Eph.1:10 & 21), including the cosmic powers and authorities of whom Christians might be afraid or tempted to serve and use as mediators (Col.1:16f; 2:8-19). As individuals, they can be free from the powers as part of the body of Christ.

As all the fulness of the deity dwells in Christ (Col.2:9), so the body of Christ is the fulness, the *plērōma*, of Christ (Eph.1:23), the sphere of his filling.<sup>66</sup> Christ fills the whole universe (4:10), and he fills his body, the church, a holy temple to the Lord, with his Spirit. Christ and his body are bound very tightly together. The body of Christ cannot be seen as an optional extra in God's plan of salvation. Additionally, the body is where the eschatological reconciliation of Jew and Gentile (seen earlier) takes place (2:16). It is the sphere in which Christians grow to maturity (4:11-16 - also Col.2:19), and is the bride of Christ (5:23-32), as closely linked to Christ as wife is to husband.

The image of the body of Christ therefore serves powerfully to denote the diversity-in-unity of the church with Christ in the body created by the Spirit. It is the fulness of Christ, and the sphere of believers' growth to maturity and of their freedom from spiritual powers and authorities. Believers, in Christ, are brought into an organic unity with one another, the different gifts bestowed by the Spirit all having a place in the life of the body. No member of the body can despise or exclude another. The invisible unity of believers in Christ therefore has a concrete expression in the local body of Christ, which is not an accidental gathering but one with a deep theological basis.

This unity within the people of God can also be seen through the use of the image of the household or family (Gal.4:1-7; 6:10; Rom.8:14-17), and through the image of the building or temple of God (1 Cor.3:9-17; 2 Cor.6:16; Rom.15:20). These too reinforce the corporate nature of salvation. To be in Christ by faith is to be linked to other believers in the closest possible way. Space does not permit more detailed examination of these images, but it is

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66. For a full discussion of Eph.1:23 and its difficulties see F.F.Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1984), pp.275-277, A.T.Lincoln, Ephesians (Dallas, Word, 1990), pp.66-76 and J. Armitage Robinson, St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (London, Macmillan, 1904), pp.42-44 (who alone takes the contrary view, that Christ is incomplete without his body, the church).

clear that the corporate nature of salvation finds extensive theological grounding in Paul's ecclesiology. Salvation involves human solidarity in Christ in the people of God, and a place for each believer within the *ekklesia*, which is the body of Christ. It is hard to argue that all these images convey only a theological unity, not necessarily resulting in believers actually gathering together in a physical congregation. This would be to strain Paul's language of the people of God and the body of Christ to breaking point, especially as *ekklesia* refers primarily to the gathering of the local congregation. However, to complete the picture we can examine Paul's concern for the growth to maturity and the practical life of the *ekklesia*.

### c) The Corporate Life of the Christian Community

O'Brien writes that the goal of Paul's mission was not just the conversion of Christians, but their continued development in the faith.<sup>67</sup> It seems that Paul's desire to preach the gospel to 'you who are at Rome' (Rom.1:15) is to teach Christians, to whom he wants to impart a spiritual gift to make them mature and strong in the faith (Rom.1:11). Paul is concerned for Christian growth. He stayed with the Thessalonian converts to teach them (1 Thess.2:10-12), and after being forced to leave was full of concern for them (1 Thess.2:17-3:13). 1 Cor.15:1-2, Col.1:5 & 23 and Phil.1:27 all show continuing concern, as does 2 Cor.2:12-13. The Lord had opened a door for evangelism at Troas, but Paul left this to meet Titus, bringing news about the situation at Corinth. The fact that Paul wrote letters at all demonstrates his concern. The unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph.3:8) could surely not be preached by Paul in primary evangelism alone.

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67. O'Brien (1995), pp.30-34 & 62-64.

Such care for the continued growth of Christians again necessitates the church. The image of the body of Christ includes the growth of the body to maturity as it is joined to Christ, its head (Col.2:19; Eph.4:11-16). Christians mature in the faith as they are joined together, and both physically gather together in congregations and seek unity and care between congregations. Several areas of practical provision for corporate Christian life can finally be mentioned, sufficiently to show that Christians were physically to gather together and care for one another.

Baptism illustrates this. Paul distances himself from the practice of baptism in 1 Cor.1:13-17, lest it lend weight to Corinthian factionalism. Nevertheless, baptism is used as the basis for ethical teaching in, *eg*, Rom.6:1-14, and is presupposed as a physical act administered to a believer, impossible outside the context of a community of believers. Similarly, 1 Cor.10:14-22 uses the *Kyriakon deipnon* as part of Paul's teaching about idol feasts, and therefore again is presupposed by Paul. 1 Cor.11:17-34 gives more explicit teaching about this, teaching the Corinthians how to behave when they come together as a church to eat.

The same is true of ministries within the church, enumerated in 1 Cor.12:28-30, Rom.12:8 and Eph.4:11, and mentioned in Phil.1:1, 1 Thess.5:12, Rom.16:1ff and the Pastoral Epistles. Many of these ministries have no function unless the believers meet together as a congregation - *eg* teachers (1 Cor.12:28 & Eph.4:11) and those with gifts of administration (1 Cor.12:28 - whatever the exact meaning of this ministry). Even granting that the lists in the epistles are neither exhaustive nor necessarily prescriptive, Paul provides for the good ordering of church life, as he also does with corporate worship (1 Cor.11:2-34; 14:1-40).

Finally, much of the teaching Paul gives on Christian lifestyle assumes that the unity of believers has a physical expression. This is certainly true of *eg* 1 Cor.6:1-11 (concerning litigation among believers), 1 Thess.5:12-15,

Col.3:7-17, Eph.4:1-3 and Gal.6:2. This will be shown in a more detailed way with an examination of the collection for the church in Jerusalem, instigated by Paul and taking up a significant proportion of his ministry. As his apostleship was acknowledged by others, he was asked to remember the poor (Gal.2:10), which Georgi sees as a reference to the church in Jerusalem, and which, while encompassing gratitude and recognition of the special place of that church, could also include material assistance.<sup>68</sup> The next reference is 1 Cor.16:1-4. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to copy what he had asked the Galatian churches to do, very practically to put aside weekly a considered sum of money, which would then be available when Paul arrived to be taken to Jerusalem by agreed representatives of the churches. 2 Cor.8 & 9 deal with a time when, after having lapsed, the collection was resumed.<sup>69</sup> Again, the teaching is practical as well as theological (2 Cor.9:5). Titus was to encourage the collection at Corinth (2 Cor.8:6), assisted by two others, one of whom was chosen by the churches to accompany the offering (2 Cor.8:16-24; 12:18). Finally, in Rom.15:25-33, the collection is the reason for Paul's visit to Jerusalem (v.25f), a material blessing to that church which had shared its spiritual blessings with the Gentile believers. This very practical step is described as *koinōnia* (Rom.15:26; 2 Cor.8:4; 9:13), as *diakonia* (2 Cor.9:13) and as *leitourgia*, showing that it embodied the deepest level of theological unity and Christian service. Theological unity was therefore worked out very practically, both within each *ekklesia* and between the congregations.

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68. D.Georgi, Remembering the Poor (Nashville, Abingon, 1992), pp.33-47.

69. Georgi (1992), p.68-75.



## IV. Conclusions

Paul was compelled to preach the gospel. His theology was a missionary theology through and through, as he proclaimed to the Gentiles the good news of salvation through faith in the crucified and glorified Lord Jesus Christ, who has inaugurated the promised new, eschatological age of the Spirit, and made available to all by faith the promises of God to Abraham.

This salvation is a matter of individual (or household group) response, resulting in the incorporation of believers into the wider eschatological community, the church. As humanity in sin is in solidarity in Adam, so redeemed humanity is in solidarity in the second Adam, Christ, incorporated into Christ in his death and his resurrection. Believers are members of the *ekklesia*, the church, manifested both locally and universally. Many images, used to describe the church, demonstrate how salvation inevitably has this corporate dimension. Christians are the people of God, in continuity with Israel but new and distinct as those of faith, Jew and Gentile, are members of this new community created by the Spirit. Believers are part of the body of Christ, baptised by the Spirit into one body, united with Christ the head and with other believers. The body is the sphere of the exercise of the Spirit's gifts, reconciliation between Jew and Gentile and growth to Christian maturity. As Bowers writes:

A distinguishing feature of the Pauline mission is that it found its fullest sense of completion neither in an evangelistic preaching tour, nor in individual conversions, but only in the presence of firmly established churches.<sup>70</sup>

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70. W.P.Bowers, 'Mission', in Hawthorne and Martin (ed.) (1993), p.610.

As a practical outworking of this Paul provided for the life of the community, with teaching covering worship, leadership and Christian lifestyle. Practical relationship and care between churches is illustrated by Paul's promotion of the collection for Jerusalem. It would be interesting to speculate whether Paul would have assented to the well-used phrase of Christian history that 'outside the church there is no salvation', the *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. He would probably have preferred to say that there is no salvation outside of *Christ*, especially in the light of the discussion of the position of the Jews in Rom.9-11. Incorporation by faith into Christ and his body is then inevitably manifested on earth in a physical assembly of Christian believers, bound in Christ to one another and to God's people across the world (and through history).

The following principles can therefore be drawn from Paul's missiology and can be said to have governed his ministry:

- (i) The revelation of the gospel, provided by God in Christ for the salvation by faith of all people, regardless of race, gender or social background,
- (ii) The need to proclaim this gospel, that people may have the opportunity to respond and receive the gift of salvation, and
- (iii) The goal of establishing growing, maturing communities of those who have so responded.

Compared to the Anglican missiology noted in Chapter 3, there is no similar trinitarian emphasis (understandable as the great trinitarian formulae lay still in the future). There is, instead, perhaps a greater explicit eschatological framework, with Paul very certain of his place within God's purposes. Both see evangelism arising from the mission of the risen Christ and necessitated by deep human need. Both would consider evangelism incomplete unless it leads to the formation of worshipping Christian congregations, of which modern church plants may be an appropriate form.

Yet Anglicans should not automatically look to Paul's personal compulsion to supplement any perceived Anglican missiological weakness. Paul was an apostle specially called and commissioned by Christ, and it is not certain that he saw his mission as a model for all believers to follow. Anglican missiology has presented the church as the appropriate agent of evangelism. This does not necessarily follow from Paul's personal compulsion. Moreover, even if for Paul all Christians are called to proclaim the gospel, this need not involve his ministry of the establishment of churches. It is arguable that this is a specialist ministry of those, like him, directly called by Christ, rather than the ministry of the local church. Chapter 7 will look at this question: were Paul's churches expected to reach out in mission to non-believers, and might this involve the founding of new, separate churches ?

## 7. The Mission of the Pauline Churches

Chapter 5 established the importance for Anglican missionary history and for current evangelistic work of local initiative and priority. It is arguably from the local, voluntary context that most significant evangelistic endeavour has arisen. Chapter 3 also indicated that it is the church that is the appropriate agent of evangelism, supporting proclamation by demonstrating the existence and values of the Kingdom of God. This necessitates an important role for the local church in mission, but while Chapter 6 demonstrated Paul's compulsion to preach the gospel and found local churches, this was a direct, very personal and unique call (Gal.1 & 2, especially Gal.1:15; Eph.3:8). For Paul, the apostles were a unique group, of which he was the last (1 Cor.15:8), with a special role. Moreover, given that some are specially gifted as *euangelistai* (Eph.4:11), what mission, if any, did Paul envisage for the Pauline churches ?<sup>1</sup>

Over the centuries both Paul's compulsion and the 'Great Commission' of Matt.28:18-20<sup>2</sup> have inspired countless Christian missionaries and church leaders, which makes it the more remarkable that there is very little direct material in the Pauline epistles about mission by members of the Pauline churches. Paul's silence is ambiguous. It could be a refusal to state the obvious obligation to evangelise, as the epistles deal mainly with internal matters of teaching and ethics, but this argument from silence is weak. When other, equally fundamental areas of church life caused problems (*eg* the

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1. The term 'the Pauline churches' refers to the churches Paul founded, and those to which he wrote, including those in Rome and Colossae which he did not found personally. Where a distinction is necessary between those Paul did and did not found personally, this will be expressly drawn.
  2. As well as texts like Luke 24:47-49, John 20:21 and Acts 1:8.

Lord's supper (1 Cor.11:17-34) and the need for holiness (Gal.5:13-26)), Paul did not hesitate to teach. It is hard to accept that the Pauline churches carried out their mission perfectly, while having problems in many other vital areas. Silence could alternatively indicate that the Pauline churches were not expected to evangelise.<sup>3</sup> Or, to look for direct references is perhaps to look for the wrong evidence.<sup>4</sup> This chapter will form a series of tightening circles, focussing more sharply on the mission of the individual local *ekklesiāi*. The main sections will therefore be:

- I. Paul's Background and missionary Methods
- II. Paul's Missionary Strategy and the role of Others
- III. The Missionary Orientation of the local Churches
- IV. Direct Involvement in Evangelism by the local Churches

The crucial question is: is there any evidence of a general duty on Christians actively to share their faith (and perhaps look to found churches), or is this seen as the work of those called, like Paul himself, to a particular task ?

## **I. Paul's Background and Missionary Methods**

The mission Paul envisaged for the Pauline churches would naturally correspond with his own understanding of mission, and his missionary practice. This section will therefore build on the Jewish background covered previously, and look at the types of mission activity that would have been open to him, and therefore perhaps to other Christians, in the ancient world.

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3. W.P.Bowers, 'Church and Mission in Paul', JSNT Vol.44 (1991), pp.89-111 & D.J.Bosch, Transforming Mission (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1991).
  4. P.T.O'Brien, Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1995), notably Chapter 5.

## a) Paul's Jewish Background

We have seen that there is little evidence at this time for active Jewish proselytization through local synagogues, though synagogues welcomed those Gentiles attracted to the light of Israel. Given this, might Paul's Jewish background have limited the mission he envisaged for his churches? No conclusive answer is possible, but the opposite is in fact more likely. Wright argues that mission was in the very nature of the people of God, the nations of the world being blessed through the family of Abraham (Gen.12:3),<sup>5</sup> and Chapter 6 noted how Paul was able to interpret his mission within a Jewish eschatological framework: the word of the Lord going forth to the nations in the last days, with the Gentile converts being a first-fruits of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion. If for Paul the eschatological time of mission had come, this could have given his churches a part to play in the sending forth of God's word as part of the family of Abraham constituted by faith. It is perhaps relevant that the Hellenistic Jewish Christianity into which Paul was originally converted seems to have been naturally evangelistic (Acts 6:8-10; 8:1-3; 9:26-30; 11:19-26).

## b) Paul's Missionary Methods

In a fascinating article, Stowers discusses the evangelistic methods Paul could have used, after being ejected from the synagogues.<sup>6</sup> Paul would have had problems in public preaching, having neither the reputation, appearance nor the status of a public philosopher, or a sophist entertaining the crowds.

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5. N.T.Wright, 'The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith', Tyndale Bulletin Vol.29 (1978), p.71.

6. S.K.Stowers, 'Social Status, Public Speaking and Private Teaching: the circumstances of Paul's Ministry', Nov.T. Vol.26 (1984), pp.59-82.

He could probably not have used *gymnasia* due to his opposition to idolatry.<sup>7</sup> Some Cynics did engage people in public debate, but without seeking to form communities.<sup>8</sup> Paul, as a Jew and an artisan, needed social legitimation, which Stowers argues he found in private households. Paul's use of households has been noted, and Stowers sees them as the ideal place for Paul's evangelism, giving status and an audience. He writes that:

The private home was a center of intellectual activity and the customary place for many types of speakers and teachers to do their work. Occasional lectures, declamations and readings of various sorts of philosophical, rhetorical and literary works often took place in homes. Such sessions might be continued for 2 or 3 days.<sup>9</sup>

Malherbe finds links between the Cynic approach and 1 Thess.2:1-12, showing how some Cynics opposed the brash approach of others, and yet also did not want to stay in the comfort and security of a private home.<sup>10</sup> This, taken with Paul's use in Ephesus of a lecture hall (Acts 19:9-10), suggests that Stowers' exclusive concentration on the household does not tell the whole story. Yet references to preaching without a base in a synagogue, household or lecture hall are rare (at most Acts 14:8f; 16:13 & 17:17), and even if Paul were able to engage in evangelism on a personal level, a base like a household would have been needed for the formation of the *ekklesiā*.

Paul therefore is unlikely to have had a social status which would have given him possibilities not there for his churches. Indeed, if the household was his

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7. Stowers (1984), pp.74-76, citing Dio Chrys., Or.13:12; 31:162; 32:52-55; 70:1-8.

8. Stowers (1984), p.80.

9. Stowers (1984), p.65f, citing Epictetus, Diss.3:23:23; Seneca, Ep.76:4.

10. A.J.Malherbe, 'Gentle as a Nurse', Nov.T. Vol.12 (1970), pp.3-13, citing Dio Chrys., Or.32:8-11; 33; 47:73ff.

usual base in a city (Acts 16:15; 17:5-7; 18:7), then there is no obvious reason why such evangelism could not have been continued after his departure, although this would not necessarily include the founding of new congregations. The next step is to look at whether Paul pursued any fixed strategy in his mission, and whether this necessarily included the work of others in mission.

## **II. Paul's Missionary Strategy and the Role of Others**

### **a) Paul's Strategy in the Light of Romans 15:19 & 23**

To the Christians in Rome Paul outlined his missionary motivation and strategy. As shown above, Rom.15:14-33 sees Paul's priestly duty of preaching the gospel as instrumental in winning the eschatological 'obedience of faith' of the Gentiles, who would become an acceptable offering to God. However, in the middle of this section Paul declares that he has fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum (Rom.15:19), and that there is no longer any room for him to work in these regions (Rom.15:23).

Paul may have preached in Jerusalem (Acts 9:28f), but we have no record for Illyricum, and while his missionary labours were intense,<sup>11</sup> he could not have founded a church everywhere in these areas. O'Brien helpfully analyses different interpretations of the verses.<sup>12</sup> Jerusalem probably has a salvation-historical reference, reflecting the Jewish priority in salvation (Rom.1:16 *etc*): the gospel is always 'from Jerusalem'. The eschatological interpretation of

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11. W.A.Meeks, The First Urban Christians, (New Haven, Yale UP, 1983), p.16-18, suggests that the journeys recorded in Acts totalled over 10,000 miles.

12. O'Brien (1995), pp.37-43.



the verses pioneered by Munck argues (from Rom.11:25, Col.1:25 & 2 Tim.4:17) that preaching the gospel to the Gentiles is an eschatological event, and that the gospel is fulfilled in an area once preached there.<sup>13</sup>

O'Brien, however, is surely right in dismissing this interpretation. For Paul, the key eschatological event is Christ's death and resurrection, and preaching to the Gentiles is best seen as part of the continuing outworking of this, rather than as an eschatological event, complete in itself.<sup>14</sup>

Schütz suggests that the verses refer to how Paul preached the gospel: in word and deed, in the power of the Holy Spirit, setting in motion forces to win obedience from the Gentiles.<sup>15</sup> While the dynamic power of the gospel is important (as will be seen below), O'Brien again is right that the verses carry the implication of a task completed, not the manner in which it was done.<sup>16</sup>

O'Brien suggests an ecclesiological reference. Paul sought to found worshipping communities, and his mission could be seen as complete when such communities were established.<sup>17</sup> These could then act as centres for outreach into the surrounding areas, while Paul moved on to new fields (Rom.15:20). This argument requires a strategy behind Paul's mission. Bowers correctly states that there is no real evidence here (read with Paul's intention to proceed to Spain in Rom.15:24) for an overall plan to circle the Mediterranean world, returning to Jerusalem via North Africa.<sup>18</sup> Allen also

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13. J.Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind (London, SCM, 1959), p.43.

14. O'Brien (1995), p.41.

15. J.H.Schütz, Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority (Cambridge, CUP, 1975) p.46f.

16. O'Brien (1995), p.41.

17. O'Brien (1995), p.42-43. Also C.E.B.Cranfield, Romans, a shorter Commentary (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1985), pp.366-369, and L.Morris, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1988), pp.514 & 517.

18. W.P.Bowers, 'Mission', in G.F.Hawthorne & R.P.Martin (ed.), Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (Leicester, IVP, 1993), p.612.

notes the evidence that Paul's mission was often driven not by strategy but by providence.<sup>19</sup> Paul preached in Galatia because of illness (Gal.4:13), was accused by some at Corinth of vacillation in his travel plans (2 Cor.1:15-23) and Acts 16-17 records a sequence of unplanned journeys: into Macedonia and then pushed southwards by persecution into Achaia. The visit to Rome itself was intended previously, but frustrated (Rom.1:13). These cautions are, however, not decisive. Paul acknowledged that all his travel plans were subject to the overruling will of God (1 Cor.4:19; 16:7; Rom.1:10; 15:32), but he nevertheless made plans, which is significant given that Christianity itself most often seems to have spread in the normal course of social circulation.<sup>20</sup> However his plans might be changed, Paul progressed in a definite direction.

Green argues that Paul visited strategic centres, like Corinth, Thessalonica and Ephesus, from which the gospel could spread into the surrounding countryside.<sup>21</sup> He describes such churches as not prisons but 'railway stations' for the gospel, each being a *pars pro toto* in that area, a 'light bearing community' of those in Christ. Hultgren alternatively suggests that Paul was not called to be an apostle to the *Gentiles*, but to the *nations* (the alternative translation of *ethnē*).<sup>22</sup> *Ethnē* sometimes clearly means Gentiles as a class (eg Rom.2:14; 3:29-30; 1 Cor.14:23; Gal.2:12), and other times it refers to the nations (eg Rom.4:17 & Gal.3:8, alluding to the promise to Abraham). If Paul were an apostle merely to Gentiles, this could have been fulfilled in Palestine and Syria without the need to travel further. Instead, Paul took the eschatological word of the Lord to the nations (Gal.1:16f; Rom.15:23-28). The churches represented in Rom.15:16, 19 & 23 were themselves

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19. R.Allen, Missionary Methods (London, World Dominion Press, 1960), p.10-11.

20. W.P.Bowers, 'Paul and Religious Propaganda in the First Century', NovT Vol.23 (1980), pp.318-322.

21. E.M.B.Green, Evangelism in the Early Church (Sevenoaks, Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), p.315-319.

22. A.J.Hultgren, Paul's Gospel and Mission (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1985), pp.125-135.

representative of their areas (their nations): Philippi for Macedonia (Phil.4:15), Thessalonica for Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess.1:7f), Corinth for Achaia (1 Cor.16:15) and Ephesus for Asia (Rom.16:15).

Hultgren's analysis is not completely convincing. For the Israelites, the nations and the Gentiles were effectively coterminous, and it is not easy to maintain the distinction between the terms that he alleges. Moreover, a Diaspora Jew like Paul with a compulsion to preach the gospel would not naturally limit the world to Syria and Palestine, but would look to go into all the Greek-speaking world. Nevertheless, the argument about the representative nature of the churches is compelling. Whether they were representative as part of a nation, or because of their strategic value as a mission centre, the implication is of a strategy where more remained to be done, particularly given Paul's desire to work in unevangelized fields (Rom.15:20). The next question is whether there is any evidence of evangelism by others.

## **b) The Involvement of Others**

Paul knew that other Christians worked among the Gentiles. He was diffident towards the Roman church, which he had not founded, lest he be seen to try to build on another's foundations (Rom.15:20-21). Others preached the gospel, sometimes with his approval (Phil.1:15-18), sometimes not (2 Cor.10:12-16).<sup>23</sup> Paul worked with Barnabas until the argument over John Mark (Acts 15:36-41). He approved of the work of Apollos (1 Cor.3:4-9) and Prisca and Aquila (*eg* Rom.16:3).

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23. The reason for Paul's opposition here was not the fact of preaching the gospel *per se*, but rather how it was being done and the content of the message.

Apollos, Prisca and Aquila are among those described as Paul's *synergoi*, seen by Paul as connected with his work. Although some were linked with just one church (eg Philemon (Philem.1)), the term usually refers to those involved with Paul's itinerant work of evangelism. Sometimes the term refers to his companions: co-authors of his epistles (eg Silas<sup>24</sup> and Timothy), or delegates to Pauline churches, such as Timothy at Thessalonica (1 Thess.3:2) and Corinth (1 Cor.16:10), Epaphroditus at Philippi (Phil.2:25), Tychicus at Colossae (Col.4:7) and Titus at Corinth (2 Cor.7:6-7). They were colleagues who supported Paul's own mission. Other *synergoi* may have been instrumental in founding a church, such as Epaphras, who founded the church at Colossae (Col.1:7; 4:12). Epaphras may have travelled to Colossae, directed there by Paul, during Paul's stay in Ephesus. A similar process may be behind the founding of the churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col.4:13).

Therefore Paul did not see himself as uniquely responsible for the Gentile mission. Some worked with him, and others independently of him. However, this is not evidence of a general call on all members of the Pauline churches to be involved in mission. All these named individuals could have been (and probably were) those with a specific spiritual gift for evangelism and a specific calling to do this work. Banks comments about the *synergoi* that they:

had similar gifts for commending the Christian message to outsiders, but...were chiefly employed outside the gatherings to which they belonged (Col.1:7). On a small scale, their activities would run parallel to Paul's own work, related to the church from which they had come, but not strictly "church" activities.<sup>25</sup>

It is necessary to look further to see any role for local churches themselves.

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24. Silas co-operated fully in the evangelization of Thessalonica (Acts 17:4 & 10; 1 Thess.1:1 with 1 Thess.3:2) and Corinth (Acts 18:1-5).

25. R.Banks, Paul's Idea of Community (Exeter, Paternoster, 1980), p.163.

### III. The Missionary Orientation of the Local Church

#### a) Support for the Mission of Paul and Others

The local *ekklesiāi* were indirectly involved in mission as they supported Paul's mission. Banks notes various aspects of this,<sup>26</sup> pointing to local churches discerning the evangelistic call of one or more members (Acts 13:1-3), gathering to hear about mission (Acts 14:26-29) and sending representatives to other churches to consult about the direction of mission (Acts 15:1ff). Additionally, there is the crucial area of prayer. Paul frequently requested intercession for his mission from the Pauline churches (Rom.15:30-32; 2 Cor.1:11; Eph.6:19-20; Phil.1:19; Col.4:2-4; 1 Thess.5:25; 2 Thess.3:1-3; Philem.22).<sup>27</sup> The local churches also rejoiced to see conversions (1 Thess.1:9), and assisted missionaries on their way. The exact meaning of the word for this, *propempein* (Rom.15:24; 1 Cor.16:6 & 11; 2 Cor.1:16), is uncertain. Morris quotes Bauer, Gingrich and Danker that the word covers: to help on one's journey with food, money, by arranging for companions, means of travel *etc.*<sup>28</sup>

Clearly, more than prayer and good wishes were involved. Churches were to be involved very practically, committed to the Gentile mission by their support of Paul. Finance was a delicate question for Paul. He accepted financial assistance from some (Phil.4:15-18; 2 Cor.11:7-9), but declined it on other occasions (1 Thess.2:5 & 9; 2 Thess.3:8-9; 1 Cor.9:4-18; 2 Cor.11:7-15), despite having the apostolic right to claim support, for the sake of the gospel, that no-one be hindered from following Christ by his actions.

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26. Banks (1980), p.165.

27. Bowers (1991), p.101.

28. W.Bauer, F.W.Gingrich and F.W.Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago, 1979), *ad loc.*, quoted in Morris (1988), p.518 n.122.

Therefore the Pauline churches were committed to mission both spiritually and practically. This was still only an indirect commitment - to Paul's mission - and need not have involved any evangelism on their part. But no church member could be completely separated from those outside the church, with only indirect contact through Paul and other specially called missionaries. Church members would naturally contact others through their daily life and work. The second part of our examination of the missionary orientation of the local church is therefore to see what Paul expected from the members of his churches in this daily encounter.

## **b) A Welcoming Attitude to Outsiders**

Bosch describes how Paul enjoined a missionary lifestyle towards outsiders,<sup>29</sup> earning their approval by living quietly (1 Thess.4:11f), abstaining from evil (1 Thess.5:22) and loving all people (1 Thess.3:12). Christians should be blameless and innocent (Phil.2:15), giving no offence (1 Cor.10:32). In Rom.12, the practical outworking of being the body of Christ (12:4-8) is in living good lives (12:9-21), including being responsible citizens of the state (13:1-7). This attractive conduct could have a missionary dimension, fulfilling the role for Israel (already seen) of being a light to the Gentiles. This would draw outsiders, and would give credibility to the evangelistic outreach of Paul and his fellow-workers. The new life in Christ lived by the church would have an affect on outsiders, through both the positive witness of Christian *koinōnia*, and the negative witness of, *eg*, opposition to immorality, idolatry and paganism (1 Cor.5:1 & 9-11; 6:9-11; 10:14; 1 Thess.1:9; Rom.1:18-25). Such a missionary lifestyle would be possible for all believers, whether or not the Spirit gave them particular evangelistic gifts. For Bosch, therefore:

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29. Bosch (1991), p.137.

The primary responsibility of “ordinary” Christians was not to go out and preach, but to support the mission project through appealing conduct and by making outsiders feel welcome in their midst.<sup>30</sup>

Bowers also cites the evangelistic potential of the churches' worship (1 Cor.14:24), as well as the responsibility on Christians to be able to answer those who asked questions about the Christian faith (Col.4:5-6).<sup>31</sup> This can rightly be seen as evangelistic witness, a stage beyond a merely attractive lifestyle, but it is still what Bowers describes as ‘stationary witness’, waiting for others to come and ask, rather than positively reaching out in evangelism.

That Paul exhorted his churches to live good lives in the world is hardly contentious. Bosch<sup>32</sup> and Bowers, however, argue that this was the only mission Paul envisaged for his churches. Churches were the goal of mission, were to support his mission, live attractively as a light to the nations (thereby drawing others), grow to maturity and have fellowship with other churches. Active outreach, however, was for specially called individuals.<sup>33</sup> This does not invalidate all active, independent evangelism. Paul was compelled to preach, and he worked with others and recognised the ministry of still other missionaries. However, for Bowers, the lack of references to direct evangelistic activity is because this was something for specially called individuals, and was not Paul's plan for his churches.

This fits the practical possibilities for evangelism noted above; members of the Pauline churches would be in households and other organisations, in contact

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30. Bosch (1991), p.137.

31. Bowers (1991), p.101 & 106.

32. Bosch (1991), p.137.

33. Bowers (1991), p.107-111.

with others each day. Their lifestyle would be clear, but there would still be significant opportunities to take the initiative in sharing their faith in the course of daily social contact. We have seen that the lack of proselytization by the Jewish synagogues cannot be determinative for Paul's plan for his churches. His role was a new, eschatological one, taking the word of the Lord to the nations, and this may well have had implications for his churches. Moreover, this argument does not account for other references in the Pauline letters which do indicate an acknowledgment and expectation of active evangelism. It is to these that we will now turn.

## **IV. Direct Involvement in Evangelism**

This section will outline the references to evangelism by the Pauline churches. Firstly, specific texts will be discussed, before the general themes of the imitation of Paul and the nature of the gospel are examined. The final part will show from Ephesians and Colossians how this expectation of evangelism became more evident in the later Pauline letters.

### **a) Explicit References to Active Outreach**

#### **(i) Christian Faith Known by Others**

To three churches, Paul writes that their faith has become well known. 1 Thess.1:8 tells how the Lord's message rang out from the Thessalonians, becoming known everywhere. Similarly, the Corinthians are themselves Paul's letter of recommendation, known and read by everybody (2 Cor.3:2), while the Roman Christians' faith was being reported over all the world (Rom.1:8). Ridderbos takes these as references to the faith of the members of the Pauline churches becoming known by those outside the congregations,



thereby arguing that little was said about the mission of the Pauline churches because little was needed to stimulate them to activity.<sup>34</sup>

The context of these passages, however, suggests that this argument is wrong.<sup>35</sup> Part of Paul's purpose in writing Romans was to prepare for his intended visit. He seeks carefully to establish a relationship with a church he has never visited (*eg* 1:11-15). To know of their faith, in order to be able to pray for them, could be sufficient to justify the way in which the letter then seeks to instruct them. 1:8 therefore clearly implies that the faith of the Roman Christians was known across the whole *church*, including by Paul himself.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, 2 Cor.3:1-3 indicates that Paul's opponents in Corinth carried letters of recommendation from other churches, perhaps in Judea, and might have sought such letters from Corinth as a means of introduction to yet further churches.<sup>37</sup> Paul did not need such letters. The faith of the Corinthians, a church he founded, was well known to other Christians. The clear context is again of faith being known by other believers, not outsiders, with no reference to evangelism.

1 Thess.1:8 is the most difficult example (inducing necessary hesitation before coming to an opposite conclusion from that on the other, clearer verses). In a passage encouraging the Thessalonians, Paul gives warm thanks for their faith. The gospel came to them (1:5); they imitated Paul, Silas and Timothy, and the Lord, and so became a model for all the other believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1:7). The Lord's message rang out from them, their faith becoming known not only there, but everywhere (1:8). Specifically, they had turned from idols to the true and living God (1:9-10). Bowers argues that this

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34. H.Ridderbos, Paul, an Outline of his Theology (London, SPCK, 1975), p.434f.

35. O'Brien (1995), p.127, who seeks to find such references elsewhere.

36. Morris (1988), p.56f.

37. C.K.Barrett, The Second Epistle to the Corinthians (London, A & C Black, 1971), p.106.

passage is similar to the others. Their turning to Christ was an inspiration to other believers.<sup>38</sup> This interpretation seems strengthened by the concern which Paul felt for the church after he was forced to leave, and his joy at Timothy's encouraging report about how they were standing firm (1 Thess.2:17-3:10). This firmness in their faith would encourage other Christians, especially the new believers in Achaia.

The date of the letter, however, poses a problem. Morris cites Kümmel, who argues that it was written from Corinth, only 'several months, but not more' after Paul left Thessalonica.<sup>39</sup> In that time Paul preached in Berea and Athens (Acts 17), before moving to Corinth (Acts 18), not visiting any previously-founded churches. While the news from Thessalonica brought by Timothy would greatly encourage the new Christians in Corinth, this does not quite deal with the fact that Paul had no need to tell anyone of the Thessalonians' faith (even allowing for rhetorical exaggeration). The only Christians with whom Paul could have been in contact between leaving Thessalonica and writing 1 Thess.1:8 are either (i) Aquila and Priscilla, whom he met in Corinth, and who had recently come from Rome, where they could have heard of the Thessalonians' faith (Acts 18:2),<sup>40</sup> or (ii) members of churches with whom (unbeknown to us) he exchanged letters. Of these alternatives (i) seems too narrow to carry the weight of 1:8, while (ii) is a weak argument from silence. Most likely is that the people who knew of the Thessalonians' faith were those non-Christians to whom Paul was proclaiming the gospel, who had heard of it as news was carried from Thessalonica. Whether this was due to the Thessalonians sharing their faith, or merely widely reported gossip about the disturbances recorded in Acts 17:5-9 is not

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38. Bowers (1991), p.98.

39. W.G.Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament (London, SCM, 1966), p.184, cited in L.Morris, 1 and 2 Thessalonians (Leicester, IVP, 1984), p.20 n.1.

40. Morris (1984), p.46; F.F.Bruce, 1 and 2 Thessalonians (Waco, Word, 1982), p.17.

clear. Nevertheless there is some tentative evidence that the faith of some Christians was well known to non-Christians around them. Bruce and Best both support this, seeing the Lord's message ringing out from Thessalonica not in encouragement to other Christians but in evangelism.<sup>41</sup>

## (ii) Philippians 1:5: *Koinōnia* in the Gospel

From their conversion, the Philippians had a partnership, a *koinōnia*, in the gospel with Paul (Phil.1:5), in intercession (Phil.1:19), personnel (2:25 & 30) and money (4:15-18). O'Brien argues that this also includes active partnership in evangelism.<sup>42</sup> This is not because others are said to be proclaiming the gospel (1:14-18). These might again be specially called individuals, although 1:14 hints at a wider reference. Rather, 1:5 is linked with 1:27-30. O'Brien argues that *sunathleō* (1:27) implies unity not just with one another but with Paul, and that *agōn* (1:30) moreover describes Paul's conflict for the gospel, involving suffering (eg Col.2:1; 1 Cor.9:25), which struggle can be extended to include his co-workers (Col.4:12-14; 1 Thess.2:2), and here includes an entire congregation, sharing Paul's conflict in the discharge of his evangelistic mission.<sup>43</sup> This could imply more than an attractive lifestyle.

Similarly, in Phil.2:16 the Philippians are called to hold onto (*epechō*) the word of life. *Epechō* could mean to hold *fast* or to hold *out*. The context

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41. Bruce (1982), p.16: 'From the beginning they functioned as a missionary church'; E.Best, *The First and Second Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians* (London, A & C Black, 1972), p.80: 'Those who gladly receive the word can never keep it to themselves; it always spreads out from them.'
  42. P.T.O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1991), p.63. Also G.F.Hawthorne, *Philippians* (Waco, Word, 1983), p.20.
  43. O'Brien (1995), pp.114-119; O'Brien (1991), p.150 & 161f.

would suggest the former. Standing firm under pressure is implied here: 2:15 refers to their being blameless and pure. Nevertheless, for O'Brien it is impossible to hold on to the gospel without also holding it out in proclamation; one automatically leads to the other. This argument will be developed below, but again there is evidence in Phil.1 & 2 that the Pauline churches did more than just support Paul's mission and live quietly and attractively.

Therefore we have seen a possible reference to evangelism in Philippians and a probable indication that the faith of the Thessalonians was known about outside the church. These references are few and tentative, but the paucity of references could be a result of looking at least partly in the wrong place. The next two sections deal with general themes, which could indicate evangelism by the Pauline churches.

## **b) Imitation of Paul**

Paul called the Pauline churches to imitate both him (1 Thess.1:6, Phil.3:15-17, and 1 Cor.4:14-17 & 10:31-11:1) and others (1 Thess.2:14; Phil.2:19-24 & 25-30; 2 Cor.8:1-7). This whole area will be discussed in Chapter 8, but if Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, under a compulsion to preach the gospel, and the Pauline churches were called to imitate him, then this could surely include imitation in the mission which so dominated his life. It would therefore be unnecessary to look for specific exhortations to evangelism, as the references to imitation and to Paul's compulsion would settle the argument.

It is, however, still necessary to look at each case when Paul urged imitation of himself, to see whether evangelism was in view, because it is not clear that imitation would naturally have included evangelism. Paul was set apart for the gospel of God (Rom.1:1). His description of his commission as apostle to the Gentiles (Gal.1:15 & 2:7-9) makes it clear that this was a personal

summons, unique to him. An example of how Paul distinguished himself from his readers is in 2 Cor.5:18-6:2. Here Paul argues that 'we' (the authors Paul and Timothy) were given the ministry of reconciliation, to be ambassadors for Christ. This is often used at the popular level to teach that the church has been entrusted with the gospel of reconciliation for the world. Yet Bowers cogently remarks that the 'we' of this passage does not even include the Corinthians themselves, who were implored to be reconciled to God (5:20; 6:1).<sup>44</sup> A distinction is drawn. Not every ministry and experience of Paul was common to all Christians, as Paul was an itinerant apostle, not a settled member of one congregation. His divine compulsion possibly extended to his fellow-workers, but we have seen that these were also specially called individuals, associated with Paul in his work rather than being representative members of the Pauline churches. Nevertheless, both Ridderbos<sup>45</sup> and O'Brien<sup>46</sup> see evangelism in these references, and therefore the texts must be examined in detail.

The Thessalonians became imitators of Paul and the Lord, and then themselves became a model for other believers (1 Thess.1:6-7). Nothing is specifically mentioned as being imitated, but as the passage concerns thanksgiving for their conversion, it is likely that the primary reference is to imitation in Christian belief and lifestyle. Yet evangelism could also be in view, given the juxtaposition of imitation with the reference (already seen) in 1:8 to the word of the Lord ringing out from them. Whether this is the case in such a fleeting reference probably depends on whether the interpretation of 1:8 outlined above is correct. It is unwise therefore to argue that imitation of itself inevitably included evangelism, given the uniqueness of Paul's mission. This passage will, however, be important for the next section.

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44. Bowers (1991), p.94.

45. Ridderbos (1975), p.434.

46. O'Brien (1995), p.87-94.

In 1 Cor.4:14-17 Paul teaches about Christian lifestyle (4:12f), urging imitation of his humility to counter divisions in the church. Evangelism is not in view. 1 Cor.10:32-11:1 seems more promising, but failure to recognise the uniqueness of Paul's apostolic commission could lead to a false conclusion. The Corinthians should imitate Paul as he imitates Christ. Paul's noteworthy conduct was to become all things to all people, not causing any to stumble, that some might be saved (1 Cor.9:16-23). Imitation could therefore be seen as centring on mission, but in fact the context of Paul's teaching is again ethical, referring to relationships within the congregation. Paul draws an example from his mission, because that was the sphere of his Christian service, but what is to be imitated is rather his readiness to forego his rights for the sake of others. Paul refused financial help from the Corinthians lest this hinder the gospel (9:1-23). For the Corinthians, this principle would help the 'strong' to set aside their rights to eat meat offered to idols in order not to hinder the 'weak' in their faith. The content of the imitation is therefore not evangelism, but the voluntary renunciation of rights for the sake of relationships within the congregation.<sup>47</sup>

The final reference is in Phil.3:17. Again, it is not clear that evangelism is intended. Rather, the context is one of pressing on towards the Christian goal, putting no confidence in the flesh. If *koinōnia* in the gospel (Phil.1:5) indeed carries an exhortation to mission, then this might be reflected in 3:17, but nothing is added to the argument.

Therefore, apart from possibly 1 Thess.1:6, imitation of Paul concerns mainly Christian lifestyle. It does not refer to imitation of him in his mission. Nevertheless, there is one other area which will repay analysis. It was mentioned above that O'Brien develops his argument from Philipians by

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47. G.D.Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987), especially pp.357-363. Fee outlines the many discussions surrounding 1 Cor.8:1-11:1.

reference to the nature of the gospel itself. Paul's conduct (urged to be imitated in 1 Cor.10:32-11:1) was driven by the needs of the gospel, and exploring the nature of the gospel could help explain the juxtaposition in 1 Thess.1:6-8 of imitation of Paul and the word of the Lord ringing forth. The nature of the gospel will therefore now be examined.

### c) The Nature of the Gospel

Chapter 6 began to show how the *euangelion* is much more than merely the content of the Christian message. Paul uses language which seems to give the gospel an almost personal existence. The gospel is the divine, dynamic power of salvation (Rom.1:16; 1 Cor.15:2), set in motion through preaching (1 Thess.1:5; Rom.15:19). This seems to be a powerful shorthand method of describing the power of the Spirit at work through the preaching of the gospel, as God's salvific purposes are bound up with the advance of the gospel.<sup>48</sup> The gospel is bearing fruit and growing (Col.1:6). It is to be obeyed (2 Thess.1:8) and served (Eph.3:7), not hindered (1 Cor.9:12). Schütz applies this understanding of the gospel to 1 Cor.11:1.<sup>49</sup> Imitating Paul does not just mean imitating the submission of his rights to the needs of the gospel, but, phrased differently, means being obedient to the same power of God in the gospel evident in Paul's life. If the gospel is the vehicle of the living, dynamic power of God accomplishing things (Rom.1:16), then to obey the gospel is necessarily to play one's part in God's purposes for and through the gospel.<sup>50</sup> (Schütz sees the same principle at work in Phil.3:17, which then refers to imitation of the power of God at work in Paul's life). As the gospel is the power of God for salvation, then to be a believer is to have this power at work

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48. This Pauline language will be used in this thesis, with the sense given above.

49. Schütz (1975), p.36-48.

50. Schütz (1975), p.321-233.

in one's life, and therefore necessarily be involved in the purposes of the gospel, especially evangelism.

This explains the paucity of direct references to evangelism by the Pauline churches. More important are references to the gospel gripping and constraining each believer. Paul's compulsion stemmed not just from his unique calling, though this led him into a special ministry, but from the gospel itself. Its nature gave an added impetus to his mission, an impetus that he saw as common to all believers.<sup>51</sup> O'Brien agrees with Bosch that for Paul all believers should be a magnet for the gospel by their lifestyle, but sees this as only a part of their participation in the dynamic power the Spirit in and through the gospel. Paul was set apart for and served the gospel (Rom.1:1 & 9), but the place of the gospel in salvation history gives a deep commitment to its advance by all Christians. Not all will duplicate Paul's ministry, but each in their own way, with their own Spirit-given gifts, must participate in the purposes of the gospel.<sup>52</sup> The picture of the body of Christ, with a diversity of gifts within unity, does not negate this, despite the specific evangelistic calling of Eph.4:11. All believers receive the same gospel, with its evangelistic purpose, and therefore although evangelism is expressed differently as different gifts are given (*eg* not all are apostles), the same evangelistic purpose must be in all believers, or they have arguably not been gripped by the gospel and submitted to the lordship of Christ.

This is not stated explicitly by Paul, but it is part of the gospel's inevitable logic. For example, in Phil.1:27 a life worthy of the gospel is a life worthy of the dynamic purposes of the gospel, bringing God's power of salvation into the world. Contending for the gospel means aligning oneself with the living gospel's purposes in the world. Fully to do either is impossible without

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51. O'Brien (1995), p.76.

52. O'Brien (1995), p.106-107.



mission. To hold onto the word of life (Phil.2:16) is necessarily to hold out the word of life, which cannot be contained. The two are inseparable.<sup>53</sup>

1 Thess.1:4-8 can be explained in this light. It was the gospel which came to Thessalonica (1 Thess.1:5), with which Paul was entrusted (1 Thess.2:4) and which worked through him and his companions. It came in power (1:5), and as it took hold of the lives of the Thessalonians by the Holy Spirit, bringing joy (1:6), so they became imitators of Paul and his companions, and of the Lord. As the Thessalonians were gripped by the gospel, they themselves became models to be imitated (1:7). The Lord's message rang out as the gospel could not be contained, but spread to those around them. They were not active in evangelism because they imitated Paul. Rather, as the gospel came to them in divine power, so their lives were formed like Paul's own gospel-formed life (they imitated him), and this same gospel took them out in evangelism. The sequence is determined by the logic of the gospel: its arrival, its taking hold and its sounding forth, all in the power of the Spirit. This is confirmed by 2 Thess.3:1-2, where Paul asks for prayer that the word of the Lord might run and be glorified, just as it was among the Thessalonians. Paul's stress is on the activity of the gospel itself.<sup>54</sup>

#### d) Later Development

What was implicit in the logic of Paul's gospel, expressed most clearly in 1 Thess.1:4-8, is explicit in the later Paulines. Ephesians and Colossians give a vision for a missionary church, Eph.6 containing the clearest reference to evangelism by the Pauline churches. In earlier Paulines, the local *ekklesia*

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53. O'Brien (1995), p.119.

54. O'Brien (1995), p.127f. Also Best (1972), p.74 for the nature of the gospel in 1 Thess.1:5.

itself is not presented as active in mission, as an *ekklesia*. Rather, foremost in Paul's thinking is the gospel taking hold of the lives of individual church members. The reason for this may simply be that Paul's images for the church: body of Christ, people of God, *ekklesia*, building, temple *etc* all refer to the people of God gathering together for worship, fellowship and edification. The terms look upwards rather than outwards.<sup>55</sup> As ecclesiology developed in the later Paulines, so did understanding of the church's mission.

### (i) Paul's Vision for a Missionary Church

Ephesians and Colossians see mission as the function of the church. As the church is in Christ her head, experiencing divine fulness (Eph.1:22f), so the church is Christ's instrument for bringing the world more and more under the blessing of Christ's rule (Eph.1:10; 2:14-18; 4:13).<sup>56</sup> It is through the church that the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known (Eph.3:9). Similarly, in Colossians, the good news of Christ, who is head of the whole cosmos (Col.1:15-20), is proclaimed in the whole world by the church, of which Christ is the head (Col.1:5f, 18, 23 & 26).<sup>57</sup>

This does not of itself indicate who undertakes that proclamation. Eph.4:11 does indeed mention a specific gift of *euangelistai*, and it could be argued that although evangelism was the work of the whole church, this was effected only by certain individuals, applying the principle of specialization seen in

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55. O'Brien (1995), p.130.

56. R.Schnackenburg, The Church in the New Testament (London, Burns and Oates, 1965), p.175.

57. E.Schweizer, 'The Church as the Missionary Body of Christ', NTS Vol.8 (1961), pp.1-11. Also, F.Hahn, Mission in the New Testament (London, SCM, 1965), p.170f, who declares that for Paul there is therefore no other church than the missionary church, and no other mission than that of the church.

Chapter 3. Hahn himself cites the distinction of Newbigin. While for Paul all church life has a missionary *dimension*, not all has a direct missionary *intention*.<sup>58</sup> Paul's vision for the missionary church could have been fulfilled among the Gentiles simply by his own apostolic work. However, Col.4:5 suggests a wider responsibility for evangelism, however, and this is confirmed by an examination of Eph.6:10-20.

(ii) Ephesians 6:10-20: 'The Pauline Great Commission'

'The Pauline Great Commission' is O'Brien's description of Eph.6:10-20, exhorting Christians to stand firm in God's power against the devil's schemes, putting on the full armour of God (6:10f). O'Brien notes that although the readers of the letter are exhorted to stand, the armour includes elements implying more than this.<sup>59</sup> Feet are to be fitted with the *hetoimasia tou euangeliou tēs eirēnēs* (6:15), the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. This seems to be a reference to Isa.52:7, quoted by Paul also in Rom.10:15 in the context of being sent to preach the gospel. The most obvious reference is therefore to evangelism by the readers of the letter.<sup>60</sup>

Eph.6:17 additionally contains a reference to the word of God, the *rhēma theou*, as the sword of the Spirit. A sword is an offensive rather than a purely defensive weapon,<sup>61</sup> but there are other grounds for seeing here a reference

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58. Hahn (1965), p.171, n.3, citing Lesslie Newbigin, One Body, One Gospel, One World (1958), pp.21 & 43.

59. O'Brien (1995), pp.121-125.

60. So J.Armitage Robinson, St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (London, Macmillan, 1904), p.215 and F.F.Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1984), p.408. Bowers (1991), p.106, admits the reference, but argues it is weak. A.T.Lincoln, Ephesians (Dallas, Word, 1990), p.448f sees a link with Isa.52:7, but gives a meaning of preparedness for opposition in the Christian life.

61. Lincoln (1990), p.451; Bruce (1984), p.409.

to evangelism. Armitage Robinson examines the New Testament uses of *rhēma*, and concludes that Eph.6:17 is a solemn use, like the word of God coming to a prophet *to then be proclaimed*, a similar use to Luke 3:2. He also notes the use of the phrase in Rom.10:8 (Rom.10:15 has already been linked with Eph.6:15), where the word of God, in mouth and heart, is the word of confession leading to salvation and the word of proclamation.<sup>62</sup>

The passage is also linked to Paul's proclamation of the gospel, for which intercession is requested. (6:18-20). It is possible, of course, that the only link between this and the earlier verses is that standing firm includes prayer, and, as apostle to the Gentiles, intercession for his mission was Paul's greatest wish. However, this may be further indication that O'Brien is correct in seeing express references to evangelism in Paul's exhortations.

## V. Conclusions

Anglican missiology has seen the church as the appropriate agent of evangelism, and has also identified the local, voluntary context as probably the best level from which evangelism can be initiated, tailored to meet local needs. This chapter has reflected on that emphasis, building on Chapter 6 but moving beyond Paul's own compulsion to examine the mission he envisaged for his churches. Different levels were examined. It seems that Paul did envisage others continuing to evangelize areas after he moved on to unevangelized fields. Indeed, Paul worked with colleagues and approved of the ministry of others, unique though he saw his call and place within God's eschatological purposes. These others, however, did not necessarily include the ordinary members of his churches.

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62. Armitage Robinson (1904), p.206 (on Eph.5:26). Also Lincoln (1990), p.451.

The Pauline churches supported Paul's mission through prayer, finance and other practical assistance. They were to welcome outsiders, not only to support Paul's mission by giving the gospel a good name in society, but also with indirect evangelistic potential, attracting others who might ask questions and decide to join the *ekklesia*. This reflects the concept of the church as the agent of evangelism, demonstrating in its corporate life the values of the Kingdom and allowing non-believers to come and journey towards faith with a group of worshipping Christians. This is, however, far from the kind of evangelistic activity presupposed either by church planting, or if the local church is to have a role and priority in initiating evangelism.

The final level, therefore, looked for references to direct evangelism by the Pauline churches. Possible references were found in 1 Thess.1:8 and Phil.1:5 & 27-30, and these were given a clearer focus by an examination of the nature of the gospel itself. The gospel is, in the power of the Spirit, something dynamic, which for Paul comes in power, transforms lives and achieves its purposes. 1 Thess.1:4-8 shows how, as the gospel took hold of the Pauline Christians by the Holy Spirit, they inevitably grew to imitate Paul in his faith and life, and the word of the Lord sounded forth from them. For Paul, one cannot hold fast to the gospel (Phil.2:16), without also holding forth the gospel in evangelism. Such an understanding of the gospel clarifies other references such as Phil.1 where an evangelistic meaning was only possible. Paul did indeed expect the members of his churches to be active in evangelism. This is no different from the words of Jesus noted earlier. In both John 20:21 and Acts 1:8, evangelism is again in the context of receiving the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, the later Paulines, with a developed conception of the church, illustrate how what was always present in the logic of Paul's gospel became explicit over time. Initially, Paul would naturally concentrate on nurturing the very new life of the Pauline churches, dealing with the evident crises we see in Corinth and Galatia. Also, Paul's clear understanding of apostleship and of his eschatological role may not have left much place in his thinking for a

developed role for his churches in evangelism. Later, as time passed and his churches became more settled, evangelism could come to the fore. Ephesians and Colossians show a conception of the church as a missionary church, and Eph.6:10-20 contains the clearest exhortation to individual evangelism.

Paul's letters do not outline how this evangelism would happen. The likely methods outlined earlier were those of an itinerant preacher, needing to secure a base in each town. Members of Paul's churches would already be within social networks: households, guilds and associations, and would be able to use these. One could speculate on how a new *ekklesiā* might be planted in a town, perhaps by converting the head of a household. However, this would not be determinative for modern church planting. The logic of Paul's gospel leads Christians out in evangelism. It's form will vary between cultures and situations. If church planting is an appropriate form of evangelism for the church today, then there is nothing in Paul's ministry to question this. Interestingly, even if Paul did not envisage the members of the Pauline churches being active in evangelism, instead seeking only to live an attractive, missionary lifestyle, then even this could support church planting: how can others see the attractive lives of Christians unless there is a worshipping, serving Christian community in their neighbourhood ?

A final question must be examined. Local initiative in evangelism has always raised questions of church order, seeking flexibility to be able to put into practice the Anglican commitment to evangelism. The needs of mission have often come above church order. This chapter has demonstrated that evangelism springs from the power of God at work in the gospel, as Christians are gripped by the gospel and led to participate in its missionary purpose. This dynamic echoes much already seen in Anglican history, in both the Evangelical revival and the work of the voluntary societies. The next chapter will therefore look at the whole area of authority and church order in Paul's ministry.

## 8. Paul's Continuing Relationship with his Churches

We have noted that this chapter will examine the questions of church order raised by Anglican church planting. This has two facets: a local church's relationship with wider church authorities, and its relationship with other parish churches (the question of parish boundaries). With such questions of church order there are dangers of a simplistic use of the New Testament, given the wide historical differences between the early church and the present day. If the New Testament is to have a proper authority, it is important to avoid an approach which either applies Paul's situation to the modern Church of England without regard for the different circumstances, or which abandons the task in despair.

Paul never wrote systematic principles of ministry and authority, but displayed them in his relationships with his churches. His situation was also different from today: he was an apostle engaged in pioneer missionary work, under a compulsion to move on and plant new churches (though he did seek to nurture the churches he founded). He was not a leader with pastoral charge of a fixed geographical area, and his churches were not part of a parochial system made up of discrete parish units.

Additionally, as their founder, Paul had a unique relationship with his churches. Sociologically, as an institution like the church develops over time in the founder's absence, the authority of the leaders has to be more firmly secured, leading to greater hierarchical authority.<sup>1</sup> This is known (following Weber) as 'routinisation': a developing organisation ensuring the continuity of

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1. M.Goguel, The Primitive Church (London, Allen & Unwin, 1963), p.158.

leadership essential for the community's survival.<sup>2</sup> Sociologically, Paul was a 'charismatic leader', with a personal authority derived directly from Christ (1 Cor.4:18-21; 2 Cor.10:8 & 13:10).<sup>3</sup> This role is unrepeatable, and the community then routinises or institutionalises the founder's ideas.<sup>4</sup> This is neither a positive nor a retrograde step, but something inevitable. There are, therefore, huge differences from today, but if the Scriptures have authority, that must include even this area. Schweizer argues that while the New Testament gives no law to imitate in church order, church order is part of the gospel, and theological questions about it are appropriate.<sup>5</sup> Paul's letters will not be used to formulate a detailed church order. Rather, we will see whether there are theological principles governing Paul's relationship with his churches which can have a wider application. What kind of flexibility and freedom did the local church have which might be important today ? As Ramsay writes:

To burrow in the New Testament for forms of ministry and imitate them is archaeological religion: to seek that ministry which the whole New Testament creates is the more evangelical way, and our view of the ministry had better be evangelical than archaeological.<sup>6</sup>

This will firstly require an examination of the authority Paul believed he possessed as founding apostle, before seeing how this was applied in practice. The final section will cover the question of relationships between churches, seeking any relevant Pauline material in this area.

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2. B.Holmberg, Paul and Power (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1980), p.162.
  3. Paul was in fact probably technically a 'charismatic entrepreneur', a minor founder of Christianity, who came into an already partly-institutionalised church. His churches acquired a cultic, ethical and doctrinal tradition Paul himself received (Gal.2:1-10; 1 Cor.15:3-7) (Holmberg (1980), p.184). This does not invalidate the point.
  4. Holmberg (1980), p.174.
  5. E.Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament (London, SCM, 1961), p.13.
  6. A.M.Ramsay, The Gospel and the Catholic Church (London, Longmans, 1936), p.69.



Much that Paul wrote about his authority was to defend his apostolic status, under threat as opponents came into his churches, especially at Corinth and in Galatia. However, Paul saw himself as an apostle, with authority, and it is the exercise of this perceived authority which is relevant here. Debates about Paul's apostleship itself are not relevant. Similarly, rather than examining the precise functions of the *diakonoi*, *episkopoi*, *presbuteroi* and other local leaders referred to by Paul, it will simply be necessary to see if any principles can be drawn from the manner of their appointment and the way in which their authority is conceived.

## **I. The Nature and Exercise of Paul's Authority**

### **a) Paul's Apostolic Authority**

This section will look at the authority Paul claimed for himself, before seeing how this was modified by theological principles derived from the gospel.

Although Christians such as Lydia (Acts 16:14) and Crispus (Acts 18:8) could have been his social equals or superiors, Paul possessed the natural authority of a founder, bringing new ideas and moral precepts, and spiritual power.<sup>7</sup> He was a powerful leader with a team of assistants (see Chapter 7).

Theologically he had authority as an apostle (1 Cor.9:1; Gal.1:1; Rom.1:5), commissioned by the risen Christ as apostle to the Gentiles (1 Cor.15:7; Gal.1:16; Eph.3:1-9). He claimed authority over all Gentile churches: those he founded, churches probably founded as a result of evangelism from his churches (Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis: Col.4:12-17; Philem.1, 2, 23 & 24) and even the church at Rome, founded without his involvement (Rom.1:1-15, although note the slight diffidence of 1:11-12, 11:13 & 15:14-24).

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7. Holmberg (1980), p.70f.

For Paul, this authority was real. Through him Christ spoke to the Pauline churches (1 Cor.2:15-16; 1 Thess.2:3-4; 4:8).<sup>8</sup> He claimed he had the word of God (1 Thess.2:13; 4:8; 1 Cor.14:37; 2 Cor.5:18-20; Gal.1:8), requiring obedience (2 Cor.2:9; Phil.2:12). His writings were to be read in churches (Col.4:16; 1 Thess.5:27), with even the authority of Christ himself. Paul was conscious of power (2 Cor.1:23, 10:1-6), not to tear down but to build up (2 Cor.10:8 & 13:10). Opposition to him could be described as opposition to the gospel itself (2 Cor.11:4). He did not hesitate to issue peremptory instructions (eg 1 Cor.3:17; 11:27; 14:13, 28 & 30; 16:1 & 22; 1 Thess.4:2).

## **b) Theological Constraints on Paul's Authority**

### **(i) The Authority of Christ and the Centrality of the Cross**

Despite the theological and sociological foundation to Paul's authority, this authority was substantially limited by that same theology. His position as Christ's apostle gave authority, but meant that ultimate authority rested not with him but with God, revealed definitively in Christ and mediated by the Spirit. Paul's churches came into being not through human agency, but through the proclamation of the word of God (1 Cor.1:4-9; 1 Thess.1:4-8), and were to stand firm in that word (1 Cor.15:1-2). Respect was expressly given for Christ's teachings (1 Cor.7:10; 9:14;<sup>9</sup> 11:23-25; 14:37). Paul was under the clear authority of Christ and his gospel.

Moreover, Paul saw the exercise of his authority as moulded by the cross, which is the heart of the gospel, removing personal pretensions in a topsy-

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8. E.Best, Paul and His Converts (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1988), p.82.

9. Although here Paul refused a right accorded him by Christ, for the sake of the gospel.

turvy status system (1 Cor.1:18-2:5).<sup>10</sup> Spiritual authority comes not from personal status, but from the cross, with its dialectic of weakness and power.<sup>11</sup> Paradoxically, only in Paul's personal weakness and humility, following Christ's model (Phil.2:5-11), could he know the power and authority of God. All his speaking had to be in Christ (2 Cor.2:17; 12:19). Strength is in Christ (2 Cor.13:4; Phil.4:13), as must be any boasting (Rom.15:17; 1 Cor.15:31; Phil.1:25f). Paul's authority came as he embodied the gospel of power in weakness (2 Cor.4:1-7), and where other Christians embodied the same pattern of gospel power in weakness, then they could also possess authority.<sup>12</sup>

Hence Paul's fierce opposition to the false apostles of 2 Cor.10-13. He could boast all they boasted of, and more (10:12-18; 11:16-23; 12:1-6 & 11-13), whereas in fact all that was worth boasting about was his sufferings, in which the power of God could be displayed (11:23-33; 12:7-10), a point which the false apostles missed completely. As von Campenhausen writes:

it is precisely because Paul does not desire to be anything on his own account, and dares to champion only that which Christ does in him, that Christ does in fact both work and speak through him unequivocally and irresistibly.<sup>13</sup>

Paul's favourite word for ministry was *diakonia* (1 Cor.3:5; 2 Cor.3:6; 6:4; 11:23),<sup>14</sup> reflecting Christ's servanthood. He called himself a *doulos* (eg Rom.1:1), and in 1 Cor.9:19-23 reverses the status expectations of his day.

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10. D.B.Martin, The Corinthian Body (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995), pp.55-65.

11. J.H.Schütz, Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.187.

12. Schütz (1975), p.282.

13. H.C.von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries (London, A & C Black, 1969), p.43.

14. Schweizer (1961), p.174.

He claims freedom, *eleutheria* (9:1), a Stoic principle where the truly free man is undetermined by others' needs. For Paul, however, freedom led instead to being the slave of the needs of all.<sup>15</sup> Martin correctly notes that slavery to Christ could in fact confer high social status as a leader, second only to Christ the master,<sup>16</sup> but this does not mean that Paul's self-designation aimed to reinforce his authority. However high a status Christ's slave might have, identification with Christ crucified and risen would still transform every cultural model of power.<sup>17</sup> Paul's authority did not lead him to lord it over others (2 Cor.1:24), but to serve them in their Christian faith.

## (ii) The Priority of the Gospel

This primary authority of Christ is shown by what will be called the priority of the gospel, building on the Pauline language seen in Chapter 7. The gospel has been seen to be the dynamic vehicle for the salvific power of God, with all believers necessarily sharing its evangelistic purpose. Gal.1-2 takes this further, demonstrating how every part of Christian life is to be subject to the gospel, in its teaching as well as its evangelistic purpose. Paul's gospel came by direct revelation from Christ (1:11-12); turning away from it is to leave the sphere of grace and divine power (1:6-9). Whoever preaches a different gospel is to be condemned.<sup>18</sup> Paul visited Jerusalem (2:1-10), not to seek personal approval, but to set his gospel before the Jerusalem leaders. If this gospel were acceptable, then Paul's ministry was valid. At Antioch (2:11-21), Paul did not challenge Peter's apostolic legitimacy (as the one appointed by

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15. W.Willis, 'An Apostolic Apologia?', JSNT Vol.24 (1985), p.37.

16. D.B.Martin, Slavery as Salvation (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990), quoted in S.C.Barton, 'All things to all People', in J.D.G.Dunn (ed.), Paul and the Mosaic Law (Tübingen, J.C.Mohr, 1996), p.281f.

17. Barton (1996), p.282.

18. D.M.Hay, 'Paul's Indifference to Authority', JBL Vol.88 (1969), pp.36-43.

Jesus to be leader of the 12), but his authority. For Paul, to contradict the gospel was to act without authority,<sup>19</sup> and in withdrawing from table fellowship with Gentile Christians Peter negated the gospel of grace.<sup>20</sup>

Other passages support this gospel primacy. Paul wanted the gospel proclaimed, regardless of who was proclaiming it (Phil.1:15-18). He valued his fellow workers, partners in this task (eg 2 Cor.8:6 & 17; 12:18; 1 Thess.1:1 & 2:6f). He recognised the ministry of others like Apollos, whose ministry Paul could not control (1 Cor.16:12), even when Apollos built on the foundations that Paul laid at Corinth (1 Cor.3:1-23). If the gospel and its purposes are primary, then no personal fiefdoms are possible without very good reason. (The question of boundaries and fields is dealt with later).

Additionally, as Paul's ministry depended totally upon God's grace and call in the gospel, he would do nothing to hinder the gospel. He generally refused the apostolic right to financial support lest he be seen to profit from the gospel (1 Thess.2:6-9; 2 Thess.3:7-10; 1 Cor.9:12 & 17; 2 Cor.11:9 & 12:14). He would not seek undue influence (2 Cor.10:3), would not dazzle with rhetoric (2 Cor.11:5-6) and would not manipulate (2 Cor.11:16-19). Without the gospel, Paul lacked authority (as Peter had no authority at Antioch). His only weapon to confront an errant church was the gospel (2 Cor.10:3-6), and if he could judge them by this, then others could equally well judge him (Gal.1:8; 1 Cor.4:1).<sup>21</sup> This allowed independence to local churches, as only where they did not embody the gospel was there need (or even place) to intervene. This explains the superficial contradiction in Paul's letters between expressing

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19. W.A.Meeks, The First Urban Christians (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983), pp.136-138; P.T.O'Brien, 'Church', in G.F.Hawthorne & R.P.Martin (ed.), Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), p.130f.

20. Schütz (1975), p.151-154.

21. Best (1988), p.84.

his churches freedom in Christ (1 Cor.10:23; Gal.5:1), and his willingness to give directives (eg 1 Cor.14:37f). This will be seen further below.

The gospel limiting Paul's authority included binding tradition, received by Paul and passed on by him (eg 1 Cor.11:23 concerning the Lord's meal and 1 Cor.15:1-3 concerning the resurrection). Commands of the Lord were also binding (1 Cor.7:10), as were the Old Testament Scriptures (1 Cor.10:11; Rom.15:4). There are also rules, sometimes formulated by Paul for his churches (1 Cor.7:17; 16:1ff), but sometimes with a wider reference (eg 1 Cor.14:33, where it is unclear whether 'all the congregations' includes just the Pauline churches, or also other congregations founded earlier, whose practices he considered binding). 1 Cor.11:16 makes this explicit distinction, describing the covering of a woman's head in worship as being his universal rule, *and* that of the 'churches of God'. These customs would naturally also limit the freedom of local churches, but by reference to an outside standard, rather than to Paul's personal authority.

### **(iii) Additional Considerations**

Other aspects of Paul's teaching express this idea, echoing perhaps the Anglican thinking about the voluntary principle noted above. In the body of Christ there is diversity in an essential unity (see Chapter 6). None are excluded and all have a part to play (1 Cor.12:12-28). Paul has a special apostolic commission, but even apostleship is only one gift within the church (1 Cor.12:28). All gifts are from the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.12:1-11), who has been given by God to all believers (1 Cor.12:13; 1 Cor.14:26), allowing a direct relationship with God and the possibility of criticising the exercise of authority. It is the Spirit who gives life (Rom.8:9 & 26; 2 Cor.3:6) and teaches

(1 Thess.4:8-9).<sup>22</sup> Believers are new creations (2 Cor.5:17), with Christ in them, not Paul (Gal.4:19; 2 Cor.3:18).

Therefore although Paul had considerable authority as apostle to the Gentiles, the very gospel which conferred this authority also limited it. Ultimate authority rests in Christ and the gospel, and authority must be exercised on the pattern of Christ's death and resurrection, in the dialectic of power and weakness. Indeed, the nature of the *ekklesia* as the body of Christ means that all have access to the same Spirit, and all may challenge wrong exercise of authority contrary to the gospel. The picture is of the body of Christ composed of free, spirit-filled Christians (Gal.5:1; 1 Cor.12:13). In Christ there is fundamental equality in the eschatological people of God (Gal.3:28; Col.3:11), but as this people lives between the ages, in the world, then there is also a need for structure and authority.<sup>23</sup> Paul exercised his authority in this tension, and this is best seen as we now examine Paul's authority in practice, taking and transforming the cultural model of authority of his day.

## II. Paul's Authority in Practice

Paul's position is unrepeatable, and what is important for the current situation is not his authority *per se*, but its application and interpretation in the light of the tension already seen between that authority and the primacy of the gospel which conferred it. It is here that any relevant theological principles will be found. This will be explored through examining the most important authority image Paul employed, that of the parent of his churches, to be imitated by their members. This common image from Paul's culture was used but

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22. Best (1988), p.53.

23. J.A.Ziesler, Pauline Christianity (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983), p.120.

transformed to reflect his theology. This will be supported by looking at Paul's use of the vocabulary of authority and his involvement in appointing local leaders for his churches. Finally, the Pastoral Epistles will be examined, to see whether any principles gleaned are modified in these later epistles.

### a) The Cultural Background

The importance of the household in Paul's time has been noted. Indeed, its prevalence led to the Roman Empire calling itself a *familia*: Augustus in 2 B.C. adopted the title of *pater patriae*, the state equivalent of the household head, the *paterfamilias*.<sup>24</sup> The *paterfamilias* had significant power over his immediate family, his extended family and slaves and economic dependants (clients and freedmen) forming part of the household.<sup>25</sup> A second century author, Gaius, declared: 'nothing can be granted in the way of justice to persons under power, that is to say, to wives, sons, slaves.'<sup>26</sup> The household head's power meant that children could not own property in their own right, make valid wills or marry without consent even when adults, until their father gave such rights or died.<sup>27</sup> A father's technical right to kill his children endured until 374 A.D..<sup>28</sup> All this was moderated by social pressure, as affection was valued, and fathers were encouraged to love their children more than honour or wealth. A household was said to be run well if the head voluntarily gave up some authority (and the members obeyed the head).<sup>29</sup>

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24. S.J.Joubert, 'Managing the Household', in P.F.Esler (ed.), Modelling Early Christianity (London, Routledge, 1995), p.213.
25. Best (1988), p.32.
26. H.C.Kee, Christian Origins in Sociological perspective (London, SCM, 1980), p.89.
27. Martin (1995), p.41, citing Dio Chrys., Dis.40:41.
28. Joubert (1995), p.215.
29. Martin (1995), p.42, citing Aelius Aristedes, Orat.24:32-33.



Sons were expected to imitate their fathers as part of their education.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, subjects were to imitate their rulers, and pupils their teachers.<sup>31</sup> Young quotes Seneca, who advises cherishing someone of:

high character, and keep him ever before your eyes...The soul should have someone to respect...for we must indeed have someone according to whom we may regulate our characters.<sup>32</sup>

## **b) Paul as Parent of the Christian Communities**

### **(i) Paul as Parent**

This background is crucial: the image came not from a modern nuclear family but from the first century household, with much greater parental authority. Paul only uses the idea with churches he founded.<sup>33</sup> God is the believers' heavenly Father (1 Cor.8:4 & 6; 2 Cor.1:3) in a new family where Paul, earthly founding-father, is God's authoritative servant and ambassador (1 Cor.4:1 & 14-15; 2 Cor.5:20; 6:13; 12:14; 1 Thess.2:11; Philem.10).<sup>34</sup> The image varies: Paul is also mother and nurse (1 Cor.3:1; 1 Thess.2:7; Gal.4:19). As parent he showed love and concern (1 Thess.2:8f; 2 Cor.6:11-13; Philem.16), even leaving an evangelistic work at Troas to hurry to meet Titus and hear about the situation at Corinth (2 Cor.2:12-13). He prayed for his churches

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30. P.Beasley-Murray, 'Paul as Pastor', in Hawthorne & Martin (ed.) (1993), p.656, citing Plato, Leg.5:729 b & c; Plutarch, Lib.Educ.20; Best (1988), p.61, citing Isocrates, To Demonicus 4:11.

31. Best (1988), p.61f, citing Xenophon, Cyropaedia 8:1:21 (rulers) and Dio Chrys., Dis.55:4:5 & Quintillian, Inst.2:1-8 (teachers).

32. F.M.Young, The Theology of the Pastoral Letters (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.87f, citing Seneca, Ep.11:8-10.

33. It is missing from Romans, Colossians and Ephesians. It is in Philemon, but this is a personal letter, and therefore different.

34. Joubert (1995), p.217.

(1 Thess.3:10), and his anxiety for them was a major concern (2 Cor.11:28). This relationship was an eschatological one: Paul would present them to Christ and boast of them (1 Thess.2:19; 2 Cor.1:14; Phil.4:1).<sup>35</sup>

In return Paul expected obedience (2 Cor.10:6; Phil.2:12). His churches are to recognise a debt of gratitude to Paul (1 Thess.2:8f; 1 Cor.4:15; 2 Cor.12:14f), trust Paul and be proud of him (2 Cor.5:12 & 12:11), opening their ears and hearts to him (Gal.4:19f; 2 Cor.6:11-13). They are to recognise their inferiority (1 Cor.3:1-4 & 4:1-4; 2 Cor.3:1-3), and aim to please Paul (Phil.2:22). They are to be aware of their relationship with him and its responsibilities (2 Cor.7:7 & 11f).<sup>36</sup> This seems almost exactly to mirror the cultural image, the parent, with authority, acting in love.

## (ii) Imitation of Paul

One aspect of this parenthood is the call to imitate Paul. Again, while Romans, Ephesians and Colossians contain general ethical exhortation, there is no call to imitation. Without meeting Paul, it would be difficult adequately to imitate him. Imitation allowed new believers a concrete example of how to put into practice the Christian life taught by Paul.<sup>37</sup> In 1 Thess.1:3-8 the Thessalonians are commended for imitating Paul in accepting the gospel, and in 1 Thess.2:7-12 they are encouraged to remember (and therefore imitate) him. Believers are exhorted to imitate Paul's way of life (2 Thess.3:6-9), of which they are aware, adopting his approach of having no confidence in the flesh (Phil.3:15-17), and not turning to observe parts of the Law (Gal.4:12).

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35. R.Banks, Paul's Idea of Community (Exeter, Paternoster, 1980), p.175; von Campenhausen (1969), p.45.

36. Holmberg (1980), p.78f.

37. S.E.Fowl, 'Imitation', in Hawthorne & Martin (ed.) (1993), p.430.

The Corinthian correspondence also contains this idea of an objective norm against which to test what local believers consider to be the Spirit's work, perhaps unsurprisingly given the problems at Corinth. While teaching against factionalism, Paul exhorts the believers to imitate his spirituality, and sends Timothy to reinforce this teaching (1 Cor.4:14-17). In 1 Cor.10:31-11:1, imitation is in subordinating one's rights for the sake of others in the fellowship (specifically, not eating meat offered to idols if others would thereby be caused to stumble in their faith). This example is important, as Paul calls on the Corinthians to imitate him because he imitates Christ. Here is the application of Paul's theology seen above: the supremacy of Christ and the priority of the gospel. Paul never uses *akolouthein*, the call to follow Christ in the Gospels, but *mimētēs ginesthai* or *mimeisthai*, found in turn almost exclusively in Paul.<sup>38</sup> He did not call people to follow him as Jesus did, but sought by the example of his life to point them to Christ.

### (iii) Transformation of the Image

Paul knew he was an imperfect example (Phil.3:12-14). What was to be imitated therefore was not Paul, but Christ working through him, as he reflected the gospel, with its pattern of death and resurrection, weakness and power (1 Cor.11:1; 2 Cor.12:9).<sup>39</sup> To churches where Paul could not use himself as a model, he specifically calls for imitation of God (Eph.5:1; Rom.15:7). Christ is to be imitated (*eg* Phil.2:5-11; 2 Cor.8:9), and anyone presenting Christ can be a model like Paul, as they are equally members of the body of Christ filled with the Spirit. Paul mentions the Judean churches (1 Thess.2:14), Timothy (Phil.2:19-24), Epaphroditus (Phil.2:25-30) and the

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38. D.M.Stanley, 'Become Imitators of Me', in M.J.Taylor (ed.), A Companion to Paul (New York, Alba House, 1975), p.19.

39. Schütz (1975), p,230.

Macedonian churches (2 Cor.8:1-7). Authority lay again not with Paul's office and person, but with the Holy Spirit. Martin shows how cultural patterns have been transformed. In 1 Cor.4:6-13 traditional designations of high status and authority are contrasted with an avowal of the very low status of the apostles. Paul then exhorts the Corinthians to imitate him as their father, despite this low status (4:14-17). This reverses the cultural expectations of leadership and authority in the light of the cross (1 Cor.1:18-31). As Martin writes:

He uses assumptions about hierarchy and status to overturn the status expectations of Graeco-Roman culture. And, ultimately, he claims the highest status for himself *in order* to convince those of high status in the Corinthian church to imitate him in accepting a position of low status.<sup>40</sup>

Paul addressed members of his churches as 'brothers' (1 Cor.15:58; Rom.15:14; Phil.3:1 & 4:1; Eph.6:10).<sup>41</sup> Letters were sent to the whole congregation, not just a selected few (Rom.1:7; 1 Cor.1:2; 2 Cor.1:1). All ministry flows from Christ, the one high priest, and is shared by all in the body of Christ (Rom.12:4; 1 Cor.12:4ff). Apostleship is one gift among others, and Paul is a *doulos* and a *diakonos*. Paul's authority was to build-up (2 Cor.10:8 & 13:10), but this was also the ministry of the whole church (1 Thess.5:11; Rom.15:14f), which had the gospel (1 Cor.15:3), the Holy Spirit's equipping (1 Cor.12:1-13), basic instruction (1 Thess.4:1; 1 Cor.7:10), Paul's example and the Old Testament Scriptures (1 Cor.14:34): all they needed to grow to maturity as Christians.

In Christ the Pauline Christians have freedom immediately (Gal.5:1; 2 Cor.3:17), without needing Paul to die or grant them freedom. Paul sought to help them discover the real extent of this freedom, as they grew in Christ

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40. Martin (1995), p.67 (emphasis added).

41. Banks (1980), p.55f.

towards maturity. Significantly, in 1 Cor.3:1-3 Paul complains that the Corinthians have not matured adequately, and instead of the neutral word *teknon*, he uses *nēpios*, the word for a mere infant. Maturity must show in their mutual relationships. Alongside authorised ministry, there is mutual responsibility for edification (1 Thess.5:11-14; 1 Cor.12:25f; Gal.6:1f; Col.3:16). All are in ministry (Eph.4:11-16). Responsibility extended even to their relationship with Paul. Paul preferred to work *with* his churches under Christ (2 Cor.4:5), shown by the addition of the *sun-* prefix to verbs (*eg* 1 Cor.12:26; Rom.1:12). As Paul furthered his mission, he expected partnership with the Pauline churches, in finance (Phil.4:14-16), prayer (1 Thess.5:25) and continued contact (1 Cor.1:11). Partnership was even sought from Rome, never visited by Paul (Rom.15:24).

As the churches grew in wisdom and knowledge (Phil.1:9-11; Rom.12:2), they could judge matters for themselves: *eg* over Onesimus (Philem.8f), marriage (1 Cor.7:3-9), food offered to idols (1 Cor.8:8-10; 10:25-28; Rom.14:13-23) and giving (2 Cor.8 & 9). The whole church is addressed as competent, not just the leaders. Paul's view is often quite clear, and this must have exerted significant moral pressure, but there is rarely a direct command. Christians have been given the principles to make a decision. To impose one would be to leave the Pauline churches as *nēpioi*, without true freedom in Christ (2 Cor.3:17; Gal.5:1 & 13), exactly what Paul sought to avoid. He would not usurp their valid decision-making role (1 Cor.16:3), and neither should they abandon it to anyone else (1 Cor.6:1-8). Rather than issue direct commands (well within his authority) Paul often preferred to appeal (*eg* 1 Cor.1:10; 4:16: 16:15f; 2 Cor.8:8; Phil.4:2; 1 Thess.2:12; 4:1; Philem.8) (see below).

It was when the gospel and the very existence of a church were at stake that Paul exercised his authority and intervened directly in a church's life . The churches in Galatia risked turning to a false gospel, imperilling their salvation (Gal.1:6, 3:1 & 5:7-12). A similar situation arose in Corinth, when the church was influenced by false apostles (2 Cor.10:1-6; 11:4 & 13-15), part of whose

error was to attempt to undermine the proper authority of Paul himself (2 Cor.10:12; 12:11-13). Paul's greatest concerns in 1 Corinthians come because the actions and teaching of the church were threatening its life, or compromising its witness to outsiders, *eg* factionalism (1:10-17; 3:1-4), legal actions (6:1-11), syncretism (10:14-22), impropriety in worship (11:1-33; 14:1-40) and sexual immorality (5:1-13; 6:12-20). 1 Cor.5 shows vividly the tension between recognising a church's authority, and intervening to safeguard the church and its witness (5:1-2). Paul swings between merely giving strong advice (5:2 & 12), and actually declaring that he, one of them in spirit, has already taken the decision they themselves are to reach (5:3-5).

Paul did not see his churches as totally independent. As their founder, he possessed real and permanent authority. But he would only exercise this authority when facing a danger so extreme that the whole life of the church was in danger, and decisive action was required. He never intervened to stop evangelism, but when there were situations which threatened God's mission through a particular church. Von Campenhausen writes:

So long as a church in general is still in some sense a church of Christ, he may rebuke the members and censure them, convict, warn and threaten them; he may conjure them to consider the imminent danger they are in, and pull out every stop of his anger; but for all this his approach remains one of appeal and exhortation which seeks to compel them, so to speak, without compulsion to change for the better of their own free will.<sup>42</sup>

Therefore although Paul worked with the cultural model of authority of his day, his gospel led to a radical modification of the exercise of his authority. He never denied his apostolic authority, but exercised it under the authority of

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42. Von Campenhausen (1969), p.51f.

Christ, in the light of the cross and in recognition of the status of the members of his churches as Spirit-filled members of the body of Christ. Rather than command, Paul preferred to appeal and exhort. This will be seen in more depth as his vocabulary of authority is examined.

### c) The Vocabulary of Authority

It is difficult to draw rigid conclusions from Paul's use of vocabulary, with only a small sample in his letters, but he arguably avoids using command terms which would have been within his apostolic authority. *Exousia*, the term for authority, belongs to the Father (Rom.9:21) and Christ (Eph.1:21). Paul uses it for a valid right he has renounced for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor.9:4, 5, 12 & 18). His only positive claim to *exousia* is in 2 Cor.10:8 & 13:10, an authority to build up and not tear down, an authority he was ready to use against the false apostles, to protect the church.

*Epitassein* and *epitagē* are definite forms of command, which Paul often refused to give (1 Cor.7:6; 2 Cor.8:8; Philem.8). In 1 Cor.7:25 Paul has no command from the Lord, giving his own judgment. Absolutely authoritative commands are absent, except for the most severe situations, as in 1 Cor.14:37 where *entolē* is used (for a command of the Lord).

Words denoting authority are still used. *Parangellō* / *parangelia* is used of the Lord's command (1 Cor.7:10), and for Paul's apostolic directives (1 Cor.11:17; 2 Thess.3:12). *Legō* is used with some authority (1 Cor.7:12; Gal.5:2; Rom.12:3). *Thelō* is similarly used (Rom.16:19; 1 Cor.7:32; 10:20; 11:3), and *diatassein* occurs in 1 Cor.7:17, 11:34 and 16:1, but these are all milder than the possible alternatives that Paul seems to refrain from using. *Didaskō* / *didachē* is used for apostolic teaching (2 Thess.2:15; Col.1:28; Rom.6:17; 16:17), but it is unclear whether this is Paul's personal teaching, or authoritative apostolic tradition received by Paul (as in 1 Cor.15:1-3).

Paul preferred to exhort his churches, using *parakaleō* / *paraklēsis* (Rom.12:1; Phil.4:2; 1 Thess.4:1). Paul does expect this exhortation to be followed (Rom.16:17; 2 Cor.9:5), but the language is warm and encouraging, with *parakaleō* tending towards comfort rather than compulsion. This is also true for *noutheteō* / *nouthesia* (1 Cor.4:14; Col.1:28), while *erōtaō* (Phil.4:3; 1 Thess.4:1; 5:12; 2 Thess.2:1) denotes a request between equals.<sup>43</sup> Braumann sees *paraklēsis* as lying behind all Paul's paraenetic passages. Such exhortation flows from the grace of God in the name of Christ (Rom.12:1; 1 Cor.1:10). *Paraklēsis* is a gift of the Spirit to the whole church (Rom.12:8), which joins in this ministry of exhortation (Col.3:16; Rom.15:14; 1 Thess.5:14f).<sup>44</sup> The idea is used in all Paul's letters, even to those churches he did not found (*eg* in Romans).

We have seen that any stronger commands (*eg* to Corinth) are due to the particular situation Paul faced there. Peterson, however, argues that Paul's mild language is in fact a covert way of enforcing authority. He argues this from the use in Philemon of language of love, not authority, to secure a loving response from Philemon (in turn himself in authority over Onesimus). Authority is concealed in Philem.8-17, explicit once more only in v.18-22.<sup>45</sup> All agree, however, that Paul's authority was real. The crucial question is how this authority was used. To agree with Peterson would be to forget the theological limits on the exercise of Paul's authority, flowing from the gospel. As Horrell observes, in relation to Paul's use of the language of imitation in 1 Corinthians, any real power in the language is moderated by the fact that Paul is often addressing the socially strong, who might consider themselves his equals, and there is an express legitimation of diversity in unity and equal

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43. L.L.Belleville, 'Authority', in Hawthorne and Martin (ed.) (1993), p.56.

44. G.Braumann, 'Exhort', in C.Brown (ed.), New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Exeter, Paternoster, 1976 & 1986), Vol.1 P.570.

45. N.R.Peterson, Rediscovering Paul (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1985), p.106f.



worth (1 Cor.12:4-31).<sup>46</sup> Paul was no mere rhetorician, playing with words. Authority was there to serve the gospel and the Pauline churches, not to enforce servile obedience.

#### d) The Appointment of Local Leaders

Little is certain about how Paul appointed and recognised leaders in his churches. What there is reinforces the view that Paul worked with the cultural patterns of authority of his day, transformed by the gospel. There was clearly leadership in the Pauline churches. Elders are mentioned in Acts 14:23 and 20:21-28 (though in no epistle before the Pastorals), but we know nothing about their selection and whether the congregations had any part in this. Named individuals were leaders: Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor.16:19; Rom.16:3-5), Gaius (Rom.16:23) and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor.16:15f). Although no clear pattern of offices emerges, functions and roles are mentioned: the *proistamenoï*, with other functions of working hard and admonishing (1 Thess.5:12), leadership as a gift of the Spirit (Rom.12:8), prophecy and teaching (1 Cor.12:29), the pastor and the teacher (Eph.4:11; Gal.6:6) and the *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* (Phil.1:1).

Many Pauline churches were based on households (Acts 16:15; 17:7; 18:1-3; Rom.16:5; Col.4:15; Philem.2; 1 Cor.16:19). Culturally, a Christian householder would naturally be expected to lead a household church.<sup>47</sup> In Corinth Paul baptised three people (1 Cor.1:14-16), Crispus, the synagogue ruler (Acts 18:8), Gaius, whose household contained a church (Rom.16:23)

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46. D.Horrell, 'Theological Principle or Christological Praxis ? Pauline Ethics in 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1', *JSNT* Vol.67 (1997), p.109.

47. D.J.Tidball, 'The Social Setting of Mission Churches', in Hawthorne and Martin (ed.) (1993), p.886.

and Stephanas and his household, recognised as leaders in 1 Cor.16:15f. Perhaps Paul identified and encouraged those most suited culturally to lead the new churches.<sup>48</sup> Significantly, in the Pastoral Epistles the *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* must manage well their own families (1 Tim.3:4f & 12) (and the *diakonos* his own household), surely an indication that leadership here too emerged from the natural leaders of the household and wider community, as these would have been those able to fulfil the criterion of managing households well, with the ability to be hospitable (1 Tim.3:2; Tit.1:9).

Yet Paul clearly also looked to those given a ministry by the Holy Spirit, regardless of social status. Some Christians were more mature in the faith than others (Gal.6:1f; Phil.3:15f; Rom.14:1-5), more able to exercise spiritual leadership. When supporting the position of local leaders, Paul did not refer hierarchically to his own authority, but pointed to the ministry they exercised (1 Thess.5:12).<sup>49</sup> Leadership is a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor.12:28; Rom.12:8; Eph.4:11), not just a product of secular culture. What ultimately counts is quality of labour in the gospel (1 Cor.16:16), not status.

Therefore, in the tension between the newness of the gospel and the need for structures in the world, Paul again took natural leadership patterns, using these as a framework for the exercise of Spirit-given ministry. It seems that that leadership was not imposed by Paul but grew from within, recognition following local exercise of ministry in the Spirit, rather than *vice versa*.

One possible caveat comes with Paul's co-workers, sent as his authorised, authoritative representatives (1 Cor.16:10f; 2 Cor.8:23): Timothy to Corinth (1 Cor.4:17) and Philippi (Phil.2:20ff) and Titus to Corinth (2 Cor.7:13-15).

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48. M.Y.MacDonald, The Pauline Churches (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.58f.

49. Holmberg (1980), p.106ff.

Was this imposing leadership from outside, over local believers ? Although Corinth was problematic, needing particular care, Philippi was not. However, Banks argues that they came not as regular leaders of the congregations, but on a temporary basis,<sup>50</sup> and that in fact Paul's delegates had no automatic right of entry to the churches to which they were sent (Phil.2:19-23; Col.4:7-8; 2 Cor.8:17-23; 1 Cor.16:10-11; Rom.16:1-2).<sup>51</sup> There is certainly not enough clear evidence here to alter the conclusion that wherever possible Paul allowed natural leadership to develop from within the local congregations.

### e) The Pastoral Epistles

Whenever the Pastoral Epistles were written, they represent a later stage in the church's history. There has been institutionalisation, and possibly some deliberate routinisation to provide for the future (2 Tim.2:2). It is worthwhile, therefore, to examine the Pastorals, to see if the principles of the exercise of authority discerned above differ in these later epistles. If so, then those principles cannot be so important for today. Not that an identical application of those principles should be expected. For Dunn:

The question, then, would be whether the inevitable institutionalizing of the Pauline heritage could nevertheless maintain the openness to the charismatic Spirit and the primacy of the gospel which Paul saw as fundamental to the living Church.<sup>52</sup>

These epistles apparently present a different kind of church life from other Pauline epistles, perhaps a bridge to the monarchical episcopate of Ignatius in

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50. Banks (1980), p.167.

51. R.Banks, 'Church Order and Government', in Hawthorne and Martin (ed.) (1993), p.136.

52. J.D.G.Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (forthcoming: manuscript copy used), §.21 p.17f.

the face of Gnostic provocation.<sup>53</sup> Schweizer sees a church with an extended history.<sup>54</sup> Timothy and Titus stand in Paul's authoritative tradition (1 Tim.4:6 & 16; Tit.2:7), which is forcefully expressed (1 Tim.2:7; 2 Tim.1:11). Sound teaching is crucial in the face of false doctrine (1 Tim.1:10; 4:1, 6 & 13; 5:17 *etc*). *Didascalia* is used 15 times, compared with 6 times elsewhere in the New Testament.<sup>55</sup> The church guarantees the truth (1 Tim.3:15), which must be passed to the next generation to preserve Paul's message (1 Tim.6:20; 2 Tim.2:2 & 8; 3:10). This emphasis is arguably a more institutionalised expression of the priority of the gospel which we have already seen.

*Parangellos* appears more often here as a command (1 Tim.1:3; 4:11; 5:7; 6:13 & 17 *etc*), but exhortation is still preferred to rebuke (1 Tim.5:1-2). The vocabulary of authority has not changed conclusively; teaching still looks more to exhort than to impose outside regulations (1 Tim.4:6 & 11-12; 2 Tim.2:14; Tit.2:1-9). Much echoes the household codes of, *eg*, Col.3:1-4:1. Paul is also still father of Timothy and Titus (1 Tim.1:2 & 18; 2 Tim.1:2; 2:1; Tit.1:4), who are themselves to be imitated (1 Tim.4:12; Tit.2:7). God is still head of the household (1 Tim.3:15), alone possessing ultimate authority (2 Tim.2:4).

The same principles apply to the appointment of Timothy and Titus and by them of local leaders. At Corinth Timothy and Titus were Paul's delegates with a temporary commission, needing to imitate Christ to earn authority. Banks argues that this is actually the situation in the Pastoral Epistles too.<sup>56</sup> They still had an ambassadorial and exemplary role (1 Tim.2:12-15; 6:11-12; 2 Tim.1:8; 2:22-24; 3:10; Tit.2:7), with no undisputed position of command

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53. Schütz (1975), p.261.

54. Schweizer (1961), p.77.

55. Young (1994), p.75.

56. R.Banks, 'Church Order and Government', in Hawthorne and Martin (ed.) (1993), p.136f.

(1 Tim.4:11-15; 5:1-2). Arguably this was identical to the leadership Paul encouraged elsewhere (eg 1 Thess.5:12). Ultimate authority still lay not with the church as an institution represented by Paul and his delegates, but with God, as seen by the origin of Timothy's commission (1 Tim.1:18; 4:14. cf 2 Tim.2:7; 3:15-17 for the priority of Scripture). Timothy and Titus did come as leaders from outside, but this may well have been with the concurrence of the local churches (1 Tim.4:14). They appointed leaders (Tit.1:5; 1 Tim.5:22; 2 Tim.2:2), but from within the churches (1 Tim.3:1-13; Tit.1:5-9). As seen above, the qualifications mentioned could indicate a similar type of natural local leader as emerged elsewhere.

Therefore these epistles do not point inevitably to different principles of authority from that seen elsewhere, despite clear institutionalisation. All was still subservient to the gospel, designed only to safeguard the gospel. This is more than a mere claim by an institution looking to justify itself. There is clear evidence that leaders had no authority outside the gospel, and all that has been seen about Paul's authority derived from and existing because of the gospel equally applies to these letters. With Paul himself not physically present, the gospel had to be presented as sound teaching (by a leader with a godly life-style) or it could have no meaning. It remains the case, therefore, that Paul's attitude to his churches, reflecting the supremacy of Christ and the priority of the gospel, was not just an approach for the first generation but a principle to be applied in each generation. If Paul's approach was indeed to give freedom, under the gospel, to his churches, then this also supports the Anglican view that there should be local priority in evangelism and flexibility in church order to serve the advance of the gospel, within an overall framework of episcopal authority. This will be developed in the conclusions.

### III. Relationships with other Churches

Their relationship with Paul is only one aspect of the independence of the Pauline churches. The other, important for Anglican church planting because of the question of boundaries, is their relationship with other churches. How much did they take account of other churches in their life and mission ?

Paul's situation is again very different from today, with nothing like a parish structure, but it is again possible to discern principles from his letters. These cover the theological basis for unity, the relationship between several household churches in one town, other practical expressions of unity (notably the collection for Jerusalem) and the question of boundaries and fields, within Paul's ministry but applied analogously to the local church situation.

#### a) The Theological Basis for Unity

Paul saw the church as both *ekklesia* and the body of Christ (see Chapter 6). These expressions imply that Christians would gather together in churches. By extension, these local churches would arguably also have a unity within the one body, and the one *ekklesia*, which possibly has a wider geographical sense than the local congregation (Gal.1:13; Phil.3:6; 1 Cor12:28; 15:9), and which clearly refers (in Ephesians and Colossians) to the church as a heavenly, universal reality. If *ekklesia* implies a gathering, then unity within that gathering must be important.

In the universal church of Ephesians, unity flows from the unity of God, and is a basic pre-requisite of the church (Eph.4:1-6), grounded in the redemptive act of the one Lord of the church.<sup>57</sup> The multiplication of local churches

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57. J.C.Beker, Paul the Apostle (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1980), p.307.

cannot be a cleavage in that unity.<sup>58</sup> Unity is also the underlying theme of the whole of 1 Corinthians,<sup>59</sup> a faction-ridden church reminded at the outset of its essential unity in Christ with all Christians everywhere (1 Cor.1:2). Christ cannot be divided (1 Cor.1:13); the church is the body of the (undivided) Christ (1 Cor.12:12-28), and disunity has grave consequences (1 Cor.11:17-34). If individual Christians were to limit their freedom in love for others, were individual churches to limit their freedom for the wider goal of unity? The priority of unity is also shown by teaching on food offered to idols (1 Cor.8-10), and on the strong and the weak (Rom.14-15). No church could act as if it alone existed: Paul referred to the practice of all the other churches in his teaching (see Chapter 7).

Yet Paul's letters do not contain a unified wider church structure such as a denomination.<sup>60</sup> Such an anachronism should not be sought in Paul's ministry, and institutionalisation could quite properly supply such a structure over time, but it may be significant that Paul's priority is on theological, not organisational, unity. Each church was in a real sense complete in itself.

Ramsay quotes P.T.Forsyth, that:

The total Church was not made up by adding the local churches together, but the local church was a church through representing there and then the total Church. It was one Church in many manifestations; it was not many churches in one convention...The local church was not *a* church, but *the* Church,...the totality of all Christians flowing to a certain spot and emerging there.<sup>61</sup>

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58. L.Cerfaux, The Church in the Theology of Saint Paul (New York, Herder and Herder, 1959), p.228-236.

59. Martin (1995), p.39.

60. Banks (1980), p.47. See Chapter 6.

61. P.T.Forsyth, Lectures on the Church and Sacraments, p.40, in Ramsay (1936), p.47f.

Moreover, unity could only be on the basis of the gospel. The Thessalonians were not to associate with those who disregarded Paul's teaching (2 Thess.3:14f), and Paul was prepared to break unity even with Peter for the sake of the gospel (Gal.2:11-21).<sup>62</sup> Unity is a product of the gospel, and dependent upon it, but within this Paul clearly placed a high value on unity, and presumably this was in turn to be imitated by the Pauline churches. A church could not behave as if others did not exist.

## b) Several Congregations in one Town

There is little material about relationships between churches in different towns, but Paul does deal with an analogous case: different household *ekklesiāi* in the same town. Several such congregations could be addressed in a letter and treated sometimes as one *ekklesiā* - eg at Rome (Rom.16:10-15 & 23) and at Corinth (1 Cor.16:15), where it seems that the congregations came together centrally for worship (1 Cor.11:18; 14:23). Acts 6:1-6 shows how tensions could arise between groupings within the church in a city. The factionalism at Corinth may have had the same basis (1 Cor.1:10-13).

It may then be possible that teaching on food offered to idols (1 Cor.8-10) and 'the strong' and 'the weak' (Rom.14:1-15:13) may have been to meet this situation. The basic principle is the same: while some activities are perfectly permissible, if some believers would be caused to stumble in their faith by the exercise of this freedom, then not only should such brethren not be despised, but 'the strong' should voluntarily limit their freedom in order to preserve unity. Unity between *ekklesiāi* mattered more than anything which could divide

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62. Although of course the reason for this was that Peter himself negated essential unity in the gospel between Jew and Gentile by withdrawing from table fellowship.



them. Even if in fact these passages only refer to relationships within one congregation, then the argument still holds by way of analogy: what is appropriate for the relationship between individual Christians is appropriate for the relationship between individual churches.

### **c) Other Practical Expressions of Unity**

There are several other expressions of unity between the churches. Paul laid down rules for his churches (1 Cor.7:17), and taught those with a wider application (1 Cor.11:16). Churches were encouraged to take note of one another, and to imitate each other's faith and life, just as they were to imitate Paul (1 Thess.1:7f & 4:9f; 2 Thess.1:3f; 2 Cor.3:2; Rom.1:8). All these common practices were again subject to the gospel. Where some from Jerusalem attempted to impose Jewish legal practices (notably circumcision) on the Galatian churches, Paul opposed this vigorously as being the imposition of another, false gospel (Gal.1:8-9).

Churches prayed for one another (2 Cor.9:14), greeted one another (Rom.16:16; 1 Cor.16:19) and supported Paul's ministry by helping him from one church to another (1 Cor.16:6; 2 Cor.1:16; Rom.15:24). There were also more concrete contacts: reading letters sent to other churches (Col.4:16), and welcoming visitors from them, like Phoebe (Rom.16:1-2), Aquila and Priscilla (Rom.16:3-4; 1 Cor.16:19) and Tychicus and Mark (Col.4:7-10).

The clearest sign of unity between the churches is the collection Paul felt compelled to arrange for the poor Christians at Jerusalem. Paul had agreed to remember them (Gal.2:10),<sup>63</sup> but for Paul Jerusalem had a unique place in

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63. Holmberg (1980), p.35-51.

salvation history (Rom.15:19). He had an eschatological duty to make an acceptable offering of Gentile Christians to Jerusalem, confirming his gospel and apostolic status (Rom.15:27-31), and fulfilling his priestly duty (Rom.15:16). This offering would comprise the large contingent of Gentiles from the Pauline churches accompanying the offering (1 Cor.16:3-4). For several reasons, therefore, the collection was important, and although Paul would not directly order the Corinthians (2 Cor.8-9), his will was clear (2 Cor.8:7); it was unthinkable that they would not participate. This confirms finally that churches were to support and help one another in the gospel. They could not exist in total independence from others, and were not to hinder and obstruct others.

#### d) Boundaries and Fields

Paul therefore saw churches as united with one another. Household congregations were to submit their own rights to the needs of others. None of this material, however, concerns geographical boundaries, which are such a contentious matter in Anglican church planting. However, a model can arguably be found as Paul saw himself as having a field of activity and authority and reacted to others ministering in that field. He was recognised as apostle to the Gentiles, as Peter was to the Jews (Gal.2:7). Whatever the exact nature of that distinction,<sup>64</sup> Paul thereby acknowledged that others could have spheres of responsibility alongside his, and that it was important to recognise these. Other material comes in Rom.15:16-20, where Paul's field is

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64. F.F.Bruce, Apostle of the Free Spirit (Exeter, Paternoster, 1977), p.154f discusses the ambiguity in this demarcation. An ethnic division is problematic. Jews and Gentiles were found together in almost every town, and Paul usually preached first in synagogues to both Jews and Gentiles (eg Acts 18:4). Yet, it is surely wrong to argue that Peter and others would have been barred from evangelising Jewish communities outside Palestine, the result if the demarcation were geographical.

again mentioned, and in passages containing Paul's reaction to others ministering in his field (Phil.1:14-18; 1 Cor.3:5-15; 2 Cor.10 & 11). Several principles can be drawn.

- (i) Fields of activity are not automatically wrong (Gal.2:7), and can include for example ethnic as well as geographical boundaries (reminiscent of modern ideas about networks).
- (ii) Paul preferred not to build on foundations laid by others, but to work in unevangelized areas (Rom.15:20; 2 Cor.10:16). There is, however, no hint that this must be a universal practice.
- (iii) It was possible to build on someone else's foundations laid in a church, but great care had to be taken in doing so (see 1 Cor.3:5-15 concerning the work of Apollos in Corinth, a work of which Paul approved).
- (iv) This was unacceptable if those ministering were destructive and divisive, undermining Paul's work and preaching a different gospel. Paul opposed those who were criticising his ministry and dividing the church (Gal.1:9; 2 Cor.10:13-18; 11:4 & 13-15).
- (v) The overall priority in all cases was that the gospel be preached, and it was comparatively immaterial by whom this was done (Phil.1:14-18).

Therefore Paul viewed boundaries and fields, like everything else, as subservient to the gospel. They could be invoked to keep a false gospel out of a church (2 Cor.10), but were not there to preserve personal influence, preventing others from evangelizing. Overall, unity mattered for Paul, flowing from the gospel and finding expression in relationships between household congregations, in the recognition of fields of ministry and the ministry of others and practically in co-operation between churches, notably over the Jerusalem collection. As unity came from the gospel, the only limitation on unity was if there was no unity in the gospel, because the gospel was being denied. As with Paul's own authority, what mattered most was the advance of the gospel. This approach of respect for authority, for unity and for boundaries being strong, but being subservient to the needs of the gospel, resonates with much

in Anglican history, both in the traditional respect for order and in the willingness of some reluctantly to disregard order for the sake of the gospel. This will be developed in the conclusions.

## **IV. Conclusions**

Anglican church planting raises many questions about church order, with its stress on local initiative and priority in evangelism, flexibility in church order for the needs of mission and the pressure on boundaries generated historically by theological disagreement and today also by the social and practical question of networks. To reflect on this, the independence of the Pauline churches has been examined, both the continuing relationship of authority Paul had with his churches, and unity between local churches. In both areas, what has stood out has been what we have described as the priority of the gospel, perhaps unsurprisingly given Paul's compulsion to preach the gospel (see Chapter 6).

Paul's view is like that of the Centurion in Matt.8:9, a man aware of his own authority, yet conscious that such authority only came as he was under a higher authority. Paul received from the risen Christ apostolic authority over Gentile churches, including those he had not personally founded, such authority arising from and dependent entirely upon the gospel. To exercise ministry and deny the gospel would be to act without authority, as Paul believed Peter did at Antioch.

Living between the ages, in the tension between the newness of the gospel and the need to live and work in the world of existing cultural patterns and structures, Paul used but transformed the cultural image of the parent to express the Lordship of Christ and the priority of the gospel. He was unwilling to impose his authority unless the gospel were at stake. Local Christians were part of Christ's body, gifted by the Spirit. They were not inferior, but had

the same freedom in Christ as Paul himself, the same ability to assess teaching and apply it to their life and mission, even if lack of experience could necessitate Paul's guidance (and occasional direct instruction). This has been illustrated by Paul's choice of command vocabulary and the manner of the recognition of local leaders.

Paul therefore gave much freedom to the local situation. Having regard to the process of institutionalisation, this is reflected also in the Pastoral Epistles, which suggests strongly that there are principles here to be applied to each age, interpreted and applied within that age's particular context and having regard to a church's tradition. The Church of England is no exception. Local initiative and priority and flexibility in evangelism have always been live issues, perhaps particularly in times of growth. Both the Evangelical revival and the growth of Methodist church planting and the rise of Tractarianism brought tensions, as did the work of the voluntary societies overseas, demonstrated by the relationships between CMS and the episcopacy in the nineteenth century. The role of bishops and other church authorities can be vital in facilitating evangelism (see Chapter 2), but the nineteenth century illustrated how central, legally based initiatives, though valuable, were comparatively slow and cumbersome.

Paul acted decisively when he saw the gospel at stake. Arguably, if parallels can legitimately be drawn with Paul, the primary consideration of leaders with authority needs to be the gospel: a willingness to intervene decisively to protect the gospel (as at Corinth and in Galatia), and a willingness to allow local priority and initiative to further the gospel where over-centralisation could stifle the individual life and mission of a church.

The same principle of the priority of the gospel can be applied to relationships between local churches. The Pauline churches were called to unity with one another as part of the nature of the church, part of the gospel. They were called to help one another, to have due regard for one another's sensibilities

and (applying Paul's view on boundaries to the local situation) not to interfere destructively in each other's ministry. Anglican parish boundaries have come under theological and practical pressure. An application of the principles gleaned from Paul's ministry would surely support a basic respect for boundaries, with a priority of co-operation in the proclamation of the gospel, while bearing in mind the priority of that gospel and the need for mission in the modern age. Paul's letters show that unity is vital and must be maintained as long as the gospel is not thereby imperilled or hindered, but this must be balanced by the many historical precedents of flexibility as well as by thinking about networks.

It now remains to seek to draw together all the material, seen from Anglican thinking and history and Paul's ministry, to attempt to outline a way forward for Anglican church planting which is both faithful to Scripture and consonant with the Anglican tradition.

## 9. Conclusions

There can be no doubt that there is a wide and deep gulf between the Church and the people....The present irrelevance of the Church in the life and thought of the community in general is apparent from two symptoms which admit of no dispute. They are (1) the widespread decline in church going; and (2) the collapse of Christian moral standards.<sup>1</sup>

These words, not recent but from 1945, outline the motivation of many involved in church planting, attempting to bridge that gulf and make the church relevant once more. Anglican church planting has been examined from a number of angles, and reflected upon in the light of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. It remains to draw some conclusions and to suggest some pointers towards authentic and appropriate Anglican church planting. This will involve looking again briefly at the three main sections of Chapter 5, together with the New Testament material, before outlining a possible way forward.

### I. The Priority of the Gospel

Despite the potential limitations of a pastorally-minded church order, Anglicanism has always been committed to evangelism, with significant missiological writing and evangelistic endeavour at home and overseas. Historically, the stimulus for this has often arisen from the local, voluntary context, as shown by the voluntary societies and the Evangelical revival.

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1. Archbishops' Commission on Evangelism, Towards the Conversion of England (London, Church Assembly, 1945), p.2f.

This historical fact reflects the emphasis seen both in Anglican systematic missiology (Chapter 3) and in Paul's missionary ecclesiology (Chapters 6 and 7). Paul was compelled to preach the gospel, both by the unique commission he received and by the very nature of the gospel itself. The gospel is a gospel of revelation, to be proclaimed in the world, God's gospel of salvation meeting the deepest needs of sinful humanity. More than a set of teachings, the preaching of the gospel is a dynamic, powerful vehicle for the Spirit of God at work in the world, coming to change people's lives, grip them and then ring out from them as they are swept up into the gospel's dynamic purposes (1 Thess.1:4-10). This is another reason why local initiative has been an important part of Anglican evangelism. It is an inevitable result of individual Christians being gripped by the gospel. Given the nature of the gospel, a lack of such local initiative would be more startling.

Examining Paul's ministry arguably alters, perhaps significantly, the focus of the Anglican commitment to evangelism. A commitment to evangelism becomes, instead, a commitment to the priority of the gospel. For Warren, 'the Church exists for the one purpose of being the instrument through which God's redemptive purpose is to be made effective in the world.'<sup>2</sup> It is not that an existing church decides to evangelize. Rather, God's purposes in and through the gospel form the church, determine all its life and send the members of the church into the world as instruments of the gospel. This primacy of the gospel also has implications for the church corporately. Paul's images for the church (body of Christ, *ekklesia*, etc), with an inward focus of worship and mutual service, encouragement and teaching, might argue that while evangelism is appropriate for individual members of the church, it is not for the local church itself, as a church. However, the primacy of the gospel must indicate otherwise. If there are forms of evangelism which Christians

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2. M.A.C.Warren, The Calling of God (London, Lutterworth, 1944), p.13.



cannot undertake individually, but only corporately in the local church, then a church is arguably failing to live by the gospel (which by the Spirit has brought that church into being) if these forms are not attempted.

Church planting is such a form, and can be a method whereby a local church reaches underchurched segments of the community, defined both geographically and culturally or socially (networks) (see Chapter 2). The 1988 Lambeth Conference stated that even where the church:

has been present for many years, there is still a need for primary evangelism among significant sections of the population.<sup>3</sup>

The second question, therefore, is whether church planting is an appropriate expression of the Anglican commitment to evangelism (arising from the priority of the gospel).

## **II. Church Planting as an Expression of Evangelism**

The parish system is still fundamental (see below), but practically there is scope for church planting within parishes, and for the renewal of existing parishes, the creation of new parishes and the planting of churches specifically designed to reach ethnic or social groups, 'network' churches. Arguably, the planting of special churches may be the only way to reach some of these groups. Church planting has been noted to be the historic Anglican method of evangelism, and Anglican missiology presents the church both as the necessary fruit of evangelism and its appropriate agent.

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3. Lambeth Conference, The Truth Shall Make You Free (London, Church House, 1988), p.33.

This is consistent with the emphasis in the Pauline material. Both emphasise the inevitable corporate expression of personal salvation, with the presence of a worshipping, living community as a vital support to active evangelism, demonstrating a Christian life. For both these reasons church planting is already an appropriate expression of evangelism. It is the necessary logic of Paul's thinking seen in Chapter 7 which goes further, arguably seeing local believers and churches as active agents of evangelism, rather than witnessing merely through lifestyle and relationships. If the gospel grips Christians and draws them into its purposes, then this will result in evangelism. If the establishing of local churches is the necessary fruit of evangelism, then church planting logically cannot be taken out of the sphere of the local church's evangelism. To see church planting as inappropriate, for local Christians or local churches, is to deny the Spirit free reign in the church.

Affirmative answers to the first two questions leads to further questions for church order: whether a pastorally-minded church order can accommodate this evangelistic imperative, especially given the extra questions of structure, ministry and sacraments resulting from church planting. Local initiative and priority have been very important for the Church of England historically, and Chapter 5 affirmed this approach as correct for today. It is not that the nature of the gospel means that evangelistic initiative will, inevitably but unfortunately, arise locally. Rather this is to be welcomed as giving evangelism rooted in a local community. For Warren:

Imposed initiatives and structures are likely to fare poorly in today's climate. A creative idea that can be interpreted and implemented locally seems to be a model that can be repeated.<sup>4</sup>

The question of church order and authority is therefore crucial.

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4. R.Warren, Signs of Life (London, Church House, 1996), p.52.

### III. Flexibility in Church Order and Authority

Historically, most Anglican evangelism, while never abandoning or ignoring church order, has pushed at its limits. Chapter 4 gave examples of this at home and abroad, and also illustrated the reverse situation where a legal, structural approach was ultimately effective, but cumbersome. As the Holy Spirit is the prime mover in evangelism (Chapter 3), and the gospel is powerful and dynamic, rigidity in structures can only quench evangelism. Not that this leads to an ecclesiological free-for-all. Ignoring the wider structure within which this flexibility can find a home risks fragmentation (both in doctrine and in order), leading to an equal evangelistic ineffectiveness. Episcopacy and a diocesan framework are a vital part of the wider Anglican structure, and the founding of CMS is eloquent testimony to Anglican respect for order, as is the very small number of unauthorised Anglican plants to have crossed parish boundaries.<sup>5</sup>

For Paul, authority, even that of an apostle, was real but an interpretation of the gospel, the Holy Spirit inspiring local Christians as well as Paul himself. His authority was derived from his call to preach the gospel, with no other basis. To exercise it and thereby hinder the advance of the gospel was to act outside the scope of that authority. Unity was also important. Christians could not act as if they were independent of others, within one church or in relationships between churches. Yet again, this unity was not absolute but came from the gospel and was dependent upon it.

Allen argues that flexibility in order, and trust placed in local churches, is vital for evangelism. He argues that Paul gave authority to his churches from the beginning over ministry, finance, church order and discipline, trusting the Holy

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5. G.Lings, New Ground in Church Planting (Nottingham, Grove, 1994), p.3.

Spirit to indwell and equip church members.<sup>6</sup> Such churches were capable of growth and expansion,<sup>7</sup> and should be the model for churches today, which should be structured and expected to reproduce themselves from the beginning.<sup>8</sup>

This tension between respect for church order and vital flexibility is reflected elsewhere. Warren argues for 'inspired spontaneity', different from spiritual anarchy,<sup>9</sup> while for Sykes structures themselves must preach and exemplify the gospel.<sup>10</sup> Walls memorably describes the voluntary societies as the 'fortunate subversion of the church', as the evangelization of the world was (and is) beyond the capabilities of classical church government.<sup>11</sup>

Legally, although Anglican authority is not centralised in church leaders but dispersed in the Scriptures and Creeds, available to all, there is little scope for an Anglican church to reproduce itself fully, even within its parish, as it cannot confer independent ministry and sacramental life. Beyond parish boundaries there is even less scope, as legal assistance is needed to license ministry in an area and to create new parishes. This tension between local initiative and central authority will cause pressure on church order, especially given that rapid changes to society require new visions and ways of working for the church in its ministry (see Chapter 2), necessitating new ways of partnership

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6. R.Allen, Missionary Methods (London, World Dominion Press, 1960), especially Chapters 1, 6 & 9-13.

7. Allen (Missionary Methods, 1960), p.vii.

8. R.Allen, The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church (London, World Dominion Press, 1960), pp.25-28.

9. M.A.C.Warren (1944), p.48f.

10. S.Sykes, Unashamed Anglicanism (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995), p.xi.

11. A.F.Walls, The Missionary Movement in Christian History (Edinburgh. T & T Clark, 1996), pp.240-247.

and sharing in collaborative ministry.<sup>12</sup> While most parish churches operate the traditional Anglican pastoral model, outward-looking missionary structures are needed to fulfil the evangelistic imperative.<sup>13</sup>

Arguably, this approach mirrors the freedom and flexibility Paul looked to his churches to assume. Establishing the principle, however, is always easier than working it out in practice. The final section will therefore seek to outline some pointers for a way ahead.

## **IV. The Way Ahead**

This final section will seek to suggest how the priority of the gospel can be applied to Anglican church planting, balancing a respect for church order with necessary freedom and flexibility. The need for new structures will be followed by an examination of the role of bishops, looking finally at whether unauthorised and technically uncanonical church planting can ever be justified.

### **a) The Need for New Structures**

#### **(i) The Continuing Importance of the Parish**

There is no suggestion that the parish system should be dismantled. The words of the 1945 Archbishops' Commission still carry weight:

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12. Board of Mission, A Time for Sharing (London, Church House, 1995), p.1.

13. M.Robinson & S.Christine, Planting Tomorrow's Churches Today (Speldhurst, Monarch, 1992), pp.31-33.

Even in towns and cities the parish is still, and will largely remain, the organic unit of the Church. The conversion of England cannot be attempted apart from the parish system.<sup>14</sup>

In his introduction to *Breaking New Ground*, Bishop Patrick Harris echoed this:

Church planting is not an erosion of the parish principle of mission in the Church of England. It is a supplementary strategy which enhances the essential thrust of the parish principle - a commitment to a ministry to all members of the community, individually and collectively, within the overall commitment to establishing and sustaining the Kingdom of God.<sup>15</sup>

Parishes give a rootedness in community, one of the aims of church planting, making the people of God findable by the wider community. Parishes give a valuable responsibility for each inhabitant. The problem is that this rootedness and responsibility is sometimes a fiction in the practical reality of modern Britain (see Chapter 2). More is needed to compliment the parish system. Finney, drawing on the Celtic and Roman re-evangelization of Britain, argues from the success of the Celtic mission that where a large group of people, or a society, is not Christian, then the Celtic method of planting monastic communities (analogous to modern church plants) is superior. The Roman method of settled parishes is better suited for a situation after significant conversions, while a 'mixed economy', such as he sees in modern Britain, calls for the application of both models, the parish system and more flexible, 'entrepreneurial' evangelistic methods.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Archbishops' Commission (1945), p.69.

15. Board of Mission, Breaking New Ground - Church Planting and the Church of England (London, Church House, 1994), p.vi.

16. J.Finney, Recovering the Past (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1996), p.141.

## (ii) The Need for New Structures

Again, this recognition of the need for alternative structures alongside the parish system is not new. Orchard argued for the need for both parishes and gathered congregations to witness to the nature of God and be fully effective,<sup>17</sup> while the Archbishops' Commission significantly favoured:

individual Christians permeating every section of society,  
and...groups of Church people planting living centres, or germs, of  
Christian infection in that particular community in which they spend  
their working hours.<sup>18</sup>

Structures and order are needed, but these must go beyond the parish system, able to reach into networks of relationships and areas untouched by that system.<sup>19</sup> This is more than just the nineteenth century planting of mission halls, though there is a place for this. The Church of England needs to find ways of engaging with what Bunting describes as 'communities of attachment', interest groups with a shared identity.<sup>20</sup> Even in nineteenth century Oldham, a need was perceived to do more than merely build new buildings, perpetuating a pastoral style of ministry. New forms of evangelism were needed.<sup>21</sup>

The Church of England has inherited a pastoral mode, and must strengthen its role as a missionary church, taking its identity, priorities and agenda from

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17. R.K.Orchard, Missions in a Time of Testing (London, Lutterworth, 1964), p.186f.

18. Archbishops' Commission (1945), p.70.

19. R.Warren, Being Human, Being Church (London, Marshall Pickering, 1995), p.125; Bishop G.Dow, 'Living with a Vision', in N.A.D.Scotland (ed.), Recovering the Ground (Chorleywood, Kingdom Power Trust, 1995), p.122f.

20. I.Bunting, 'Anglican Church Planting - Where is the Problem?', Anvil Vol.13 (1996), p.106f.

21. M.A.Smith, Religion in Industrial Society (Oxford, Clarendon, 1994), p.99f.

mission.<sup>22</sup> As Warren simply observes, a congregation of 40 adults with an average age of 50 or more may in theory be able to serve a parish, but in practice such a congregation could not easily be the natural place for young people to worship.<sup>23</sup> Mission demands the flexibility to establish new congregations alongside the parish structure. Theologically, alternative structures are not alien to Anglicanism. If, as Ramsay argues, the credentials of the Church lie in 'its incompleteness, with tension and travail in its soul',<sup>24</sup> then this incompleteness can surely extend to order and structures. Pytches and Skinner lament that:

All too often, movements of the Holy Spirit have been either syphoned-off by an immature, ignorant or impatient local leadership, or snuffed out by an intolerant establishment.<sup>25</sup>

For Allen, such flexibility is no greater than that Paul gave to his churches. There are no greater dangers of immorality or syncretism.<sup>26</sup> Local churches will only be effective if given significant freedom and authority in finance and leadership.<sup>27</sup> Central organisation will produce dependency, discouraging able local Christians from their own ministry.<sup>28</sup> The very existence of the PEVs witnesses that the Church of England is willing to allow flexibility to accommodate different points of view. The step towards parallel structures has already been taken.

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22. P.Simmons, From Maintenance to Mission (Cambridge, Grove, 1995), p.4f.

23. R.Warren (1995), p.165.

24. A.M.Ramsay, The Gospel and the Catholic Church (London, Longmans, 1936), p.220.

25. D.Pytches and B.Skinner, New Wineskins (Guildford, Eagle, 1991), p.49.

26. Allen (Missionary Methods, 1960), p.viii.

27. Allen (Missionary Methods, 1960), pp.52-60 & 98-100.

28. Allen (Spontaneous Expansion, 1960), pp.108-110.



### (iii) The Shape of New Structures

To imagine what any new structures would look like is not easy. Warren correctly observes that the Church of England has a fairly fixed idea of what a church is and should be like.<sup>29</sup> The Church has always had a predominantly pastoral structure and mode of existence, with attitudes and expectations based on this. Church planting gives an opportunity to start afresh and plant churches which are structured for mission and self-reproduction, but such thinking takes a conscious effort. The existence of networks clearly demands a more flexible approach to boundaries: *Breaking New Ground* comments that:

we need to find ways to enable diverse styles of church life to co-exist without always having recourse to territorial or even denominational boundaries.<sup>30</sup>

Many point towards cell churches, or base communities, as being the way forward, perhaps building on the house groups already existing in many churches. For Barrington-Ward, it may be these 'by which alone...Western inner cities can be won for Christ.'<sup>31</sup> These can reproduce rapidly and provide a place for the nurture of new Christians. Multiple congregations can exist for different groups, even within a single parish.<sup>32</sup> Warren gives a detailed vision:

These new structures will be network-type expressions of the Christian faith, functioning with very light and fluid structures. They are likely to be almost exclusively "self-servicing"...Clergy and laity will need to exist alongside traditional expressions of

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29. R.Warren (1995), p.7.

30. Board of Mission (1994), p.3.

31. S.Barrington-Ward, 'Packaging or Partnership', in P.Sookhdeo (ed.), New Frontiers in Mission (Exeter, Paternoster, 1987), p.52.

32. Simmons (1995), pp.15 & 21.

institutional Christianity. Some will function clearly from within the parish structure, some will be more loosely affiliated, and yet others will be unconnected. Others may start entirely separately and move, in different stages, to the point where they become a new parish church.<sup>33</sup>

It is a risk to place significant trust in new churches, not keeping them in dependency,<sup>34</sup> but this echoes both Allen and Henry Venn, who looked for self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches. A different style of ministry training could help. Traditional residential training allows a depth of theological learning, but more flexible patterns could allow faster recognition of leadership gifts in new congregations, with training taking place in the local context.<sup>35</sup> This might follow not so much current Anglican part-time ministry courses but programmes like SEAN, which trains indigenous Anglican leaders in South America. Perhaps this might not be too dissimilar from the way Paul seems often to have identified the natural leaders arising within each of his churches. Collaborative ministry would certainly be needed, as many new congregations would, at least initially, be lay-led.<sup>36</sup>

This is not unrealistic. For Bishop Patrick Harris:

The structures and canons of the Church of England are flexible enough to allow bishops to encourage and enable church planting to take place in their dioceses...even across the boundaries of parishes, deaneries and dioceses.<sup>37</sup>

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33. R.Warren, 'Finding new Structures for Ministry', in Board of Mission (1995), p.24.

34. Lambeth Conference (1988), p.34.

35. Board of Mission (1994), p.20.

36. Pytches and Skinner (1991), p.33. Also Board of Mission (1994), p.vi.

37. Board of Mission (1994), p.v.

Precedents exist. A deanery plant has been established in Deal, Kent, aimed at a 'Radio 1' congregation. Planted from one church and operating across boundaries, it has diocesan approval and deanery accountability.<sup>38</sup> Also, the scandal which damaged the *Nine O-Clock Service* in Sheffield should not disguise the fact that this network youth church was able to function as a parish church alongside others through the device of drawing parish boundaries around its administrative office building, and allowing cross-boundary ministry.<sup>39</sup>

The model of PWM, ensuring a partnership between the voluntary societies and the General Synod, is perhaps a good one. Pytches and Skinner raise the missiological distinction between the Modality (the main church structure and mode of existence) and various Sodalities (temporary, mobile and highly enterprising semi-independent units of church life, like the medieval friars).<sup>40</sup> This distinction could help, allowing new congregations to be planted to reach new people, initially leaving open questions about ministry and sacraments.<sup>41</sup> Calladine writes about the Fellowship of Independent Anglican Churches (FIAC), founded in 1991 to link cross-boundary plants unrecognised by church authorities, holding them in a network until the Church of England can accommodate them, preventing them dying or becoming rebellious and unaccountable. FIAC is temporary, not seeking to replicate any episcopal functions. Unauthorised plants may be 'naughty children', but they should be supported and nurtured rather than abandoned.<sup>42</sup>

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38. Lings (1994), pp.8-10.

39. M.Calladine and B.Skinner, 'Cross-Boundary Church Plants, some Principles and Precedents', in Scotland (ed.) (1995), p.77.

40. Pytches and Skinner (1991), p.63.

41. Pytches and Skinner (1991), p.26.

42. M.Calladine, 'The Fellowship of Independent Anglican Churches', in Scotland (ed.) (1995), pp.88-100.

This may be important, but caution is needed. Such plants must still be recognisably Anglican, as the danger exists that the concept of network plants could lead groups of like-minded Christians to indulge in a congregationalism which Lings describes as 'Thatcherite competition', creaming off life from parish churches without any real idea of reaching an unchurched group.<sup>43</sup> For Bunting, if we are to avoid 'unchurching the church', then Anglican church plants will bear the marks of 'communion', related to the wider church as well as being rooted in the local community.<sup>44</sup> This clearly gives a crucial role for the episcopate, and this will now be examined.

## b) The Role of Bishops

After *Breaking New Ground*, Anglican church planting can no longer be ignored or instinctively repudiated.<sup>45</sup> Wider consultation and planning is therefore not to be feared but welcomed to enable the vision for planting to proceed. Churches should consult as early as possible with wider Church of England structures, as well as ecumenically. *Breaking New Ground* asked:

those keen to plant churches to place their ideas before their bishop for wider consideration at an early stage, and to ask their bishop for responsive leadership and guidance.<sup>46</sup>

Though traditionally classed among the *adiaphora*, episcopacy is at the heart of Anglican ecclesiology, and any authentic Anglican approach to church planting must be within a proper episcopal framework. Practically, moreover, Lings observes that almost any church planting is possible, given good

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43. Lings (1994), p.17.

44. Bunting (1996), pp.107-111.

45. Lings (1994), p.23.

46. Board of Mission (1994), p.4.

relationships between the bishop and an incumbent.<sup>47</sup> Historically, bishops have furthered evangelism. Chapter 4 mentioned Archbishop Hutton's support for Grimshaw and the church planting initiatives a century later of Bishop Thorold of Rochester. At the same time, Bishop Tait of London supported informal services in theatres and halls (technically illegal as held in unregistered premises).<sup>48</sup> Warren notes that the Decade of Evangelism has made most headway in dioceses where the bishop has taken a clear and visible lead.<sup>49</sup>

Bishops can uniquely further church planting. Firstly, they can initiate and encourage mission in a diocese.<sup>50</sup> In Nigeria, bishops are chief evangelists and have a role in the systematic training of the clergy in evangelism.<sup>51</sup> Bishops can envisage mission over a wide area, and can identify underchurched areas in a diocese, for which diocesan resources can be allocated.<sup>52</sup>

Secondly, they can connect new congregations and church planting initiatives to the wider diocese.<sup>53</sup> Bishops are the ones who can give a congregation freedom to experiment and grow, without stifling life, yet give it the wider context to avoid fragmentation. Dioceses could be structured to accommodate and even initiate such experiments. Bishop Graham Dow was instrumental in the establishment of the Oak Tree Fellowship in Acton

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47. Lings (1994), p.15.

48. S.C.Carpenter, Church and People, 1789-1889 (London, SPCK, 1933), p.378.

49. R.Warren (1996), p.15.

50. Board of Mission (1994), pp.4 & 39.

51. Bishop Emmanuel Gbonigi, 'Nigeria: the local Church and the Bishop in Evangelism', in C.Wright and C.Sugden (ed.), One Gospel, Many Clothes (Oxford, EFAC and Regnum, 1990), pp.55-57.

52. Board of Mission (1994), pp.4 & 32.

53. Bunting (1996), pp.111-113.

(Chapter 2), and Pytches argues that bishops can 'mind the gap', giving cross-boundary plants the necessary ecclesiological support, keeping them within an Anglican framework. Bishops can link the 'inherited' church and the 'emerging' new congregations, allowing church plants eventually to be regularised and integrated into diocesan structures, allowing them freedom to flourish and mature.<sup>54</sup> Bishops might be able to allow a variety of Anglican expressions to exist in a given area, as a single Anglican style might not adequately serve a varied social situation,<sup>55</sup> avoiding the dangers already noted of a consumerist congregationalist ecclesiology.

This vision for an episcopal role in church planting presents challenges, not least to those involved in church planting. If the diocese is to provide a link to the wider Church, this must be accompanied by an acceptance of accountability and true episcopal authority. George Carey argues that the: question of where authority is located is important, especially if in reality it resides not with the bishop but with the parent church.<sup>56</sup>

If Anglican churches act as if they were independent churches, then it is not surprising if serious questions and even obstacles are raised by a diocese.

The reverse is also true, giving a challenge to bishops and church hierarchies. Anglican order is flexible enough to allow creative church planting, and if a plant is not to be uncanonical then the legal support of the diocese is almost always necessary. Yet if unnecessary obstacles are raised, and creative initiatives rebuffed, then it is unsurprising if planters are tempted to act independently. Scotland is excessive when he lambasts *Breaking New*

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54. D.Pytches, 'Why raise the Issue?', in Scotland (ed.) (1995), pp.27-33.

55. Pytches and Skinner (1991), p.31.

56. G.Carey, 'Church Planting, Ecclesiology and Mission', in B.Hopkins (ed.), Planting New Churches (Guildford, Eagle, 1991), p.31.

*Ground* for remaining wedded to episcopal leadership,<sup>57</sup> but his feelings are perhaps more understandable given that he leads the Glenfall Fellowship in Cheltenham, which was initially encouraged as a cross-boundary plant by the Diocese of Gloucester, but was later opposed by a local incumbent and had its recognition withdrawn by the Diocese.<sup>58</sup> Nazir-Ali argues that where the whole church is missionary, bishops should recognise and direct voluntary movements, not control them, letting God's work bloom in a particular place. There is canonical obedience, but this must be balanced by great freedom for the local congregation.<sup>59</sup> Bishops must earn the trust planters place in them.

A further challenge remains. Pytches and Skinner argue that bishops should be reticent to impose their authority on a local initiative.<sup>60</sup> In so far as legitimate parallels may be drawn, this reflects our findings that Paul intervened in the life of a congregation only when the gospel or the very life of that church was at stake. An exercise of episcopal authority is surely required, however, if a local church acts to frustrate mission. Without such episcopal intervention, another church might feel tempted to proceed independently. This raises our final question: could an Anglican church ever be justified in flouting authority and order and acting independently ?

### **c) Is Unauthorised Church Planting ever Justified ?**

This question really applies to cross-boundary church plants. Although episcopal opposition to a plant within a parish would be inconvenient, perhaps

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57. N.A.D.Scotland, 'Introduction', in Scotland (ed.) (1995), p.12f.

58. N.A.D.Scotland, 'Going Concerns: Cross-Boundary Church Plants', in Scotland (ed.) (1995), pp.106-109.

59. M.Nazir-Ali, Mission and Dialogue (London, SPCK, 1995), p.53.

60. Pytches and Skinner (1991), p.27.

causing problems over the recognition of ministry, episcopal support becomes a necessity where a plant seeks to cross boundaries. The reasons why a parish might favour a cross-boundary plant have been well rehearsed. There is the practical rationale of wanting to reach a currently unreached group, defined either culturally or geographically. There is also the theological rationale, that the doctrinal position of a parish departs so much from agreed fundamentals that the preaching of the gospel in that place is endangered, requiring a church plant from outside to ensure that the parishioners can hear the gospel.

In the former scenario, a parish might seek defensively to block the creation of a much needed new congregation, designed to reach a group not being served by its parish church. Nineteenth century legislation allowed the creation of new parishes despite the opposition of an affected incumbent. Increased centralisation of power today (after the Pastoral Measures) means that bishops should be able to facilitate most proper initiatives, whatever the opposition of a local incumbent.

In the latter case, intervention is a canonical requirement. The order for the consecration of bishops in the *Book of Common Prayer* requires bishops to:

banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word; and both privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to the same.

In both cases, therefore, it is not unreasonable to expect bishops to act. If this does not happen, then an intolerable tension arises. Clergy have sworn canonical obedience, and the canons restrict unlicensed ministry, particularly in other parishes. Instinctive Anglican respect for order and authority will temper any desire to act independently. Yet, the priority of the gospel must apply here if it is to have any real meaning in the Church of England. Both the Anglican commitment to evangelism and the breakdown of theological consensus on fundamentals have been demonstrated. Anglican missiological



history furnishes honourable examples of independent action for the sake of the gospel, notably the precedent of men like Grimshaw in the Evangelical revival, but also Anglo-Catholics in the nineteenth century and the history of the voluntary societies overseas. There are modern examples too: congregations like Soul Survivor, now being recognised as making a valuable contribution to the Church, and the Glenfall Fellowship, which seems sadly to be being forced towards independency.

Independent action must only ever be a last resort, after every possible opening within a parish has been exhausted, and proper consultation with other parishes and diocesan authorities has not resolved the matter. This will be very rare, given goodwill on the part of both planting parish and diocese, but if it should ever be the case, then one must conclude that independent planting is not necessarily wrong. Paul, after all, saw his ministry and authority as given by and subject to the living, dynamic purposes of God at work through the gospel, which cannot but draw Christians into mission, and cannot but stimulate in evangelism the church, wider and local, constituted by the Spirit through the gospel.

Such independent plants might be frowned upon as rocking the comfortable Anglican boat. The *Church Times* leader of 26 May 1995, commenting on the National Church Planting Conference, astonishingly described all church plants as 'weeds'.<sup>61</sup> Such attitudes are an echo of those who opposed the Evangelical revival, and eventually led to the loss to the Church of England of the new life of Methodism. An organisation like FIAC might engender significant opposition, being seen as rebellious, but in the long term the Church of England might have cause to be grateful for its existence, if it were

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61. M.Calladine, 'The Fellowship of Independent Anglican Churches', in Scotland (ed.) (1995), p.104.

to manage to keep within the Church the new life and vigour generated by the new congregations.

## V. Final Reflections

Church planting is not tidy. It raises as many questions, particularly perhaps for church order, as it solves. It will never be a universal panacea for the needs of the church's mission. Yet it can help to meet a clear evangelistic need in modern Britain, and also to embody some very significant features of both Anglican tradition and Paul's ministry. It shows a commitment to evangelism and the priority of the gospel. It gives a correct place to ecclesiology in missiology, seeing the church as both the inevitable fruit and the appropriate agent of evangelism. It also, in the tradition of the medieval friars, the Evangelical revival and the voluntary societies overseas, gives a proper place to local priority and initiative.

There are significant questions for church order, and tensions over the parish system will need careful and sensitive resolution. The parish system has served the Church of England well over the centuries and must never be lightly discarded. However, the opportunities presented by church planting should also not be overlooked. It would surely prove to be a serious error if the Church of England were ever so to discourage planting that it disappeared from the Church's life, leaving only the words of G.K.Chesterton (about Christianity generally) as its epitaph, that it:

....has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult, and not tried.<sup>62</sup>

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62. G.K.Chesterton, 'The Unfinished Temple', in What's Wrong with the World ? (1910), i.5.

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