AUTHORITY IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

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The Church was not founded at Pentecost, as is sometimes said, but by Christ during the course of his ministry in Galilee and Judea. It was he who appointed the twelve to become what today, perhaps, would be called teaching officers, and who commissioned the seventy as a *corps* of evangelistic missioners. In the ancient world religious knowledge was sometimes committed to sacred writings, sometimes to a school of ideas, sometimes to a priestly caste or an assemblage of cultic observances, and sometimes it emerged episodically through the translations of oracles. Christ, in contrast, revealed his truth to a living company of people—'the People of God'— who, after his corporeal departure, became his body on earth. Precisely because the message was thus conveyed organically it remained permanently new: able to adapt to changing intellectual modes and social filtration, capable of bringing forward fresh insights in the successive cultural shifts of a progressive humanity. Written texts do not transmit truth of themselves: they require re-interpretation, over long periods of time, if they are to achieve durable meaning. Priestly castes have the disadvantage of imploding into small coteries of exclusivity; they frequently become a mere adjunct of ruling élites. Philosophical systems tend to die when the surrounding culture to which they originally related transforms itself or disintegrates. But a living body of people, at the centre of whose religious insights is not a set of ideas but a person, has the verifiable capability of enduring through the centuries, forever changing yet forever the same.

In the essentials of its historical conveyance of Christ, furthermore, this people must be as indefectible as he is, not only because the Church is actually his body, but because Christ himself, in the gift of the Holy Spirit, promised perpetual guidance into all truth. Whatever the apostles were commissioned to do the Church today has the authority to do. After the first two hundred years the successors of the apostles drew up a new canon of sacred writings: the authority they exercised to determine which sacred literature (the New Testament) was to be recognised is still resident in the Church. The teaching office of the Church, the *Magisterium*, precedes the written Gospels and remains as the dynamic of the Christian mission. It is embodied in 'tradition', the succession of authentic representation of Christ carried through human cultures by those who seek obedience to Christ's first calling. The Church is often thought of today as primarily a kind of fellowship, a collective therapy which exists to assist human emotional need. It may indeed have some qualities which attach to those features but the Church is actually and overwhelmingly an institutionalised teaching office. Hence the importance of its vitality: as an organism it can adapt and grow, it can sever limbs which become diseased, it can show inventive genius. Its infallibility in essentials provides a permanent standard and a point of stability; its errors in contingent matters are the corrosions of the world, the humanity which produces flaws in the operation of all institutions—even when they are perfect in authority. Because it is organic the Church can make 'developments' of doctrine. Over time some features of Christ's truth may require to be accorded more significance than others, or advances in knowledge and changes in culture may re-cast the manner in which the mysteries of religion are formulated. The Church can never invent or create doctrines, but it can define or declare them, with images

appropriate to circumstance, so that truths implicit in the understanding of the first believers may only over centuries assume richer meaning. The smallest of seeds becomes the mustard plant; there is no way initially of telling which dimensions of Christ's teaching may assume importance in the history of society. It is a sign of the authority of Christ in his Church that the People of God are capable of defining the nature of his presence in contexts that are unavoidably transient. 'Development' of doctrine, as associated, for example, with St Vincent of Lerins, or with Franzelin or Newman, has proved controversial because to Protestants actual cases in the last couple of centuries have concerned issues, like the place of the Virgin in the scheme of salvation, and the centralisation of the infallible office of the Church itself, for which they have had limited enthusiasm. But the key idea that a living Church can, as Christ's body, continue to unfold the mysteries of the Kingdom is not in itself controversial. Most Christians have always believed it. Development occurs within the promise of the Holy Spirit's guidance, as within the standard of Scripture, and the teaching tradition of the successors of the apostles: 'Sacred Tradition; Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others'.[1]

The infallible essentials are recognised by their consistency in the universal declaration of the People of God: the teaching that is made everywhere and at all times, the *sensus fidei*. Occasionally, and since the earliest times, controverted points of doctrine have required clarification, and for this the people have gathered in General Councils and elicited, by their *consensus fidelium*, the mind of Christ. For this, plainly, unity is a necessary condition, and a test for the existence of ecclesiastical authenticity has been the continued integration of each local Church with the communion originally instituted by the apostles. In Augustine's phrase—the definition which so pulverised Newman's understanding of the Anglican claim to be the *Via Media*—'Quapropter securus judicat orbis terrarum, bonos non esse qui se devidunt ab orbe terrarum' [Wherefore, the entire world judgest with security that they are not good who separate themselves from the entire world].[2] It is therefore to General Councils that those who stand in the tradition of the historic Churches look for infallible teaching, but only to supplement the pre-existing deposit of received truth. The authority of the Church does not derive from legal conditions like the regularity of orders—important though they may be for other reasons—but from what is actually being taught at any time, and from showing that this body of teaching corresponds with what is being taught universally.

The problem with a 'Doctrine of the Church' is in determining how 'the People of God' may be identified when there exists, as there has virtually always existed, a division within Christianity. This is compounded by the insistence of some Protestants, in the last five centuries, that *no* Church is possessed of an indefectible body of teaching anyway, and that the commission of Christ is in reality distributed to a number of different traditions, some of which, though entirely national and local—as the Church of England was before its replication overseas—claim to be self-sufficient in Christian understanding. Christian believers in this condition have sought to establish their authenticity by reference to Scripture. The difficulty here is that the authority of Scripture derives from the body which selected and canonised it: the Church. A further difficulty is that nineteenth-century scholarship (historical and anthropological as much as theological) has rather compromised the reliability and integrity of Scripture as an infallible resource. It is also awkward for Protestants to argue consistency of teaching since they do not agree among themselves over an impressively wide range of points, and in the case of the Church of England these dis-

[1] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Rome, 1994; English edition 1994), Chapter Two, Art 2, III, 95.
[2] See John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (Oxford, 1931 edn), pp 212f.

agreements extend internally across the whole experience of its adherents. Most of
these disagreements, it is true, are over matters of order, discipline and liturgical
practice, rather than doctrine; and over the Doctrine of the Church itself there is
little disagreement since Protestantism is recognised by the imprecision of the lan-
guage and images currently used in substitution for having a coherent Doctrine of
the Church at all.

Most Anglicans are unaware that there is a problem over the Church's ecclesio-
logy. Probably most members of the clergy have scarcely concerned themselves with
the matter: certainly the kind of teaching available in ministerial and theological
training today does not raise issues of this sort with any noticeable profundity. Ser-
mons preached in order to promote Christian unity, for example, almost never in-
clude the Doctrine of the Church itself as among the reasons for disunity and the
greatest stumbling block in ecumenism. The matter is, however, absolutely crucial:
the question of authority—of the means by which truth is known to be true—is the
very basis of all religious association. If sacred writings could stand independently
of time and circumstance, if they could speak, as it were, for themselves, there would
be some mitigation. But texts require exposition and explanation; the cultural as-
sumptions which determined the manner in which the information they convey was
established have to be interpreted. It is the living Church which does this, and the
process is a creative one. The body which in the first place distinguished which texts
carried authentic truth about Christ and which were corrupted by, for example, folk
miracles or miraculous fantasies (and there were plenty of them circulating in the
first two centuries), is still called upon to deploy its gifts of indefectibility to extricate
the person of Christ from the written word. It is the last claim, made by the historic
Churches, which Anglicans appear to deny. In its scepticism about the infallible
office of the universal Church, Anglicanism is unavoidably Protestant in character,
however much of historic doctrine it may otherwise have retained faithfully, and
however attentive it has been to regularity in episcopal ordination. The historic Doc-
trine of the Church, which it rejected at the time of the Reformation, is the one which
defines authority. Anglicans have not yet decided upon a substitute.

Though most Anglicans are unaware of the problem a few have recognised its
gravity, often as a consequence of exchanges made with ecumenical intent. The usual
route to the problem, however, has been through the Anglican pursuit of an iden-
tity—in its, at times, almost frenetic quest for some ground of unity. 'Anglican apolo-
gists', Bishop Stephen Sykes noticed in 1978, 'have not always seen that their
attempts to explain how all the various viewpoints co-exist in one communion raise
extremely far-reaching issues about the nature of the Church'[3]. That was in his *In-
tegrity of Anglicanism*, a work which, as Dr William Sachs remarked in amplification
of his observation that 'uncertainty about the Church's identity has reached crisis
proportions', had since the 'seventies 'framed the debate's contours'.[4] Writing in the
context of the Lambeth Conference of 1988 J Robert Wright, Professor of Ecclesias-
tical History at the General Theological Seminary in New York City, affirmed that
'as far as the taking of authoritative decisions is concerned, there is clearly a vacuum
at the centre, whether one chooses to evaluate it positively or negatively'.[5] This is true
both in point of jurisdiction and in relation to the interpretation of doctrine. When
Professor Wright and Dr Gillian Evans published a compendium of texts on *The
Anglican Tradition* in 1991 they were obliged to declare at the beginning that 'no col-
lection of Anglican sources can be "authoritative" in any sense which can make it

[3] Stephen W Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (London, 1978), p ix.
[4] William L Sachs, *The Transformation of Anglicanism: From State Church to Global Communion*
(Cambridge, 1993), p 2.
[5] J Robert Wright, 'The Authority of Lambeth Conferences, 1867–1988', in G F Lytle (ed), *Lambeth
Conferences, Past and Present* (Cincinnati, 1989), p 282.

fully "official" '.[6] The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 1922 (which reported in 1938) itself had no consideration of the Doctrine of the Church as such, but was addressed to the pervasive difficulty of Anglican unity: 'It was not appointed in order to survey the whole field of theology and produce a systematic treatise', the Commissioners admitted; 'The Commission was appointed because the tensions between different schools of thought in the Church of England were imperilling its unity'.[7] Its explanation of many doctrinal propositions was unquestionably useful; about the document as a whole, however, there hung a distinctive Anglican atmosphere of indecision over fundamentals. Thus 'On Assent' the Commissioners laid out seven resolutions 'with a view to the avoidance of misunderstanding'. The sixth, and most important, declared that 'if any authorised teacher puts forward personal opinions which diverge…from the traditional teaching of the Church, he should be careful to distinguish between such opinions and the normal teaching which he gives in the Church's name'. Attached to the resolution, however, was a note pointing out that some members of the Commission 'while not dissenting from these resolutions' proceeded to do exactly that.[8] The Report of the Doctrine Commission of 1976 demonstrated that same phenomenon at more considered length: the substantive findings covered forty-two pages and the dissenting and alternative explanations, a hundred and fourteen.

'The authority of the Church in the realm of doctrine arises from its commission to preach the Gospel to all the world'—the words are those of the 1938 Report—'and the promises, accompanying that commission, that the Lord would always be with his disciples, and that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all the truth'.[9] It is an admirable summary. But what is the institutional translation? Anglicans have not been backward in recognising that they have a problem of identity. By the later years of this century, Dr William Sachs noticed in his *Transformation of Anglicanism* (1993) 'uncertainty about the Church's identity has reached crisis proportions'.[10] The debate had once turned on Anglicanism as a middle course between the historic Churches and non-episcopal Protestantism; statements of fundamentals, like the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 (itself echoing the preceding Chicago formula of 1886) had demonstrated a reductionism which avoided the basic difficulty of defining an institutional source of authority. That most of the European Protestant Churches had retained a historic so-called 'deposit' of faith was not really in question. Even Pusey, in his reliance on the concept of such a deposit to defend Catholic aspects of Anglicanism at the time of the *Gorham* case in 1850, did not place its origins in a living tradition of teaching, however, but in Scripture. The Lambeth Conferences have all been concerned essentially with the retention of unity: but without a coherent Doctrine of the Church the participants have recurringly experienced fearful difficulty in defining how the evident diversities within Anglicanism are compatible with the singularity of authority necessarily inseparable from the Body of Christ in the world. Unity and authority are not quite the same thing—for there are a number of ways legitimately to signal unity—but they are plainly very closely related to virtually all the practical tests it is possible to propose. Anglicans once supposed themselves united by adhesion to Scripture, but Scriptual authority, as already pointed out, does not convey the same implications today as it did in, say, the seven-

[6] G R Evans and J Robert Wright (ed), *The Anglican Tradition: A Handbook of Sources* (London, 1991), p xv.

[7] *Doctrine in the Church of England: The Report of the Commission on Christian Doctrine appointed by the Archbishops and Canterbury and York in 1922* (London [1938] 1962 edition), p 4 (Chairman's Introduction by William Temple, Archbishop of York).

[8] Ibid, p 39.

[9] Ibid, p 35.

[10] Sachs, *The Transformation of Anglicanism*, p 2.

teenth century, before the consequences of critical scholarship began to dissolve
away old certainties. The Prayer Book was also a badge of unity, but most Anglicans
under the age of thirty-five have probably never seen one. The Thirty-nine Articles of
Religion, which represent a selection of contentious issues as they presented them-
selves in the sixteenth century, are sometimes characterised not only as ambiguous—
which they certainly are—but as redundant. 'I rather think of them as a kind of
monument to an attempt on our part, centuries ago, to show how far we could go in
the direction of a confessional attitude without actually adopting one', said Bishop
Stephen Bayne in 1964 at the end of his period as Executive Officer of the Anglican
Communion. 'In any case', he added, 'they are museum pieces now'.[11] Bishop
Bayne's office, not surprisingly, was itself unofficial, since there is, in Anglicanism,
no mechanism for creating offices with pan-Anglican authority. Here is his con-
sidered summary of Anglican attempts at defining a basis of unity:

> 'We have no particular theological statement of our own to fence us off from other
> Churches. We have no international power structure which forces our younger
> Churches to conform to some alien pattern of life. We have no central executive
> power. We have no uniform Prayer Book. We have no common language. We have
> no laws which limit the freedom of any Church to decide its life as it will. We have
> no ecclesiastical colonies. We have no 'Anglican' religion. We have no test of mem-
> bership save that of Baptism itself. We have nothing to hold us together except the
> one essential unity giving us in our full communion. And even that is not limited
> to Anglican Churches, for we share in the table of other Churches as well, in in-
> creasing number'.[12]

The last point is extremely important. For the expansion of ecumenical courtesies in
the second half of the twentieth century has allowed Anglicanism the illusion of see-
ing itself as part of a wider context of Christian unity. The reality is actually that the
participant Churches in such arrangements each retain their differences, including
decisively different understandings of the nature of authority itself, and therefore
of the Doctrine of the Church. These measures of inter-communion are not moves
towards Christian unity, especially since the historic Churches, who *do* have distinct
ecclesiologies, are largely outside them; they are moves towards a sort of loose
federalism in which spiritual camaraderie is mistaken for structural agreement about
identifying who the People of God are.
    Anglicans who rely on the existence of an authentic priestly ministry are not
really helped either. The technical line of Apostolical succession and regular ordina-
tion procedures may or may not have been preserved within the Church of England,
and passed to the subsequent lateral Churches, but it scarcely matters when it comes
to determining the capacity to order doctrine. The whole issue was clouded by the
priority given to the question of episcopal ordination at the Savoy Conference in
1661, and then, in the nineteenth century, by the Tractarians, in their hurried belief
that the authenticity of a Catholic identity for the Church of England could be re-
covered by proving an episcopal succession. This itself had simply revealed, once
again, how varied were the opinions held within Anglicanism, for it had not
mattered to most of the leadership before. Those whom the Tractarians believed to
be successors of the apostles, in the 1840s, rushed into print (in the form of published
episcopal *charges*) to deny that they were.[13] The absence of any abiding sense that An-
glicanism was anchored in apostolic orders was revealed, for example, in 1817 when
a Church of England minister (A B Johnson) was appointed for Sierra Leone by the

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[11] Stephen Bayne Jr, *An Anglican Turning Point: Documents and Interpretations* (Austin, Texas, 1964),
p 117.
    [12] Ibid, p 271 (Sermon preached at the opening of the Canadian General Synod, 1962).
    [13] See W S Bricknell (ed), *The Judgment of the Bishops upon Tractarian Theology* (Oxford, 1845).

Church Missionary Society: he was ordained by Lutheran pastors. And the row over the Jerusalem bishopric in 1841 indicated how little the matter of regularity in episcopal jurisdiction depended on a Catholic pedigree. Overseas bishops—the very foundation of most of what became the world-wide Anglican Communion—were until 1864 named by the Colonial Office under Letters Patent. The fact is that, in the historic tradition of western Christianity, as in the early Church, it is not regularity of ordination that guarantees authenticity but what those who are ordained actually teach; ordination or consecration does not in itself convey *jurisdiction*—or the means of safeguarding doctrinal purity. Those who fall into heresy, after all, have generally been led by properly ordained clergy in full apostolic succession. It is not how the leadership acquires its charisms which is relevant in the issue of authority, but how the People of God as a whole is to be identified. The test of authentic teaching is not that it comes from a personage ordained in a certain prescribed manner, but that it is in correspondence with what is being taught throughout the world-wide body of Christ.

Problems of identity, unity and authority, were not solved, and sometimes were not specifically addressed, by the expansion of the Church of England overseas. The 'Anglican Communion'—an expression first used in 1851—is simply a number of autonomous bodies which exactly reproduce the same problems of identity as the parent Church. They are united in having had, in different legal conditions, to re-define their relationship to host political communities as a consequence of the constitutional separations of Church and State made, in the case of America in the eighteenth century, and elsewhere in the nineteenth. The abandonment of 'National' Church status has helped, rather than impeded, their capacity to be categorised as potential candidates for universality, whatever disadvantages may have accompanied disestablishment. There are problems about the concept of a 'National' Church, as the Church of England, which still is one, knows only too well. At the time of the Donatist heresy, early in the fifth century, Optatus denied that any *national* Church could be a reliable custodian of universal truth. The body of Christ is committed to the entirety of peoples, and the witness of the entire world (unity, that is to say) affords the test of authenticity. Christ's body is indivisible, and it does not allow of national characteristics except in accidental features and contingent applications. This was true in relation to the relatively multicultural circumstances of the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine worlds, and it is certainly true today, when national self-consciousness is determined by post-Romantic nationalism. The Jewish nation was chosen by God and incarnated certain truths about his operations in human society; but the whole point about the history of Israel is that it was the *education* of a people. Once brought to completion in Christ the whole revelation of God was universalised, and Jew and gentile, male and female, free and slave, were recognised as being a single people. The Church obviously takes on the cultural characteristics of successive ages, and in turn influences them, yet the Church is essentially outside national possession, particularly since the word 'national' has so many resonances and such various applications. The idea of a *national* Church is probably a contradiction in terms. 'Establishment' of the Church by the state is, paradoxically almost, a separate matter. The Catholic Church, that most universal of Christian institutions, has been, and still is, 'established' by constitutional provision or explicit legal protection in a number of countries. This indicates the state, which Christians have always considered a divine institution, recognising and promoting the Christian religion at the centre of its moral identity. It is completely compatible with spiritual autonomy: that depends on the terms of association agreed between Church and State. In the case of England's erastian polity, since the Reformation, it is a matter of judgment whether spiritual autonomy was preserved. Parliament became the effective governing body of the Church. The Tractarians, reflecting an older tradition of Anglican divines, always maintained that this was compatible with spiritual autonomy so long as Parliament could be estimated to be

an assembly of the Church's laity. The real test of spiritual autonomy, however, is the capacity of a Church to conform to the universality of the whole Church—and that was, and is, denied by the existence of the Royal Supremacy in religion. To be spiritually autonomous the Church must show that, as the organic body of Christ, it has the capacity to determine truth from error; that it is possessed of a Doctrine of the Church. The modern growth of ecclesiastical autonomy has not solved the problem: it has merely removed some anomalies in the day-to-day conduct of the Church as an institution. The maturation of the world-wide Anglican Communion, similarly, did not solve the problem. Anglicans sometimes speak as if the sheer scale of the Communion as a whole is a sort of proof that they are part of a truly universal Church. Yet a universal Church in the sense meant by Augustine and the Fathers did not derive its authentication from mere numbers, but from consistency of teaching. There are many indications in the words of Christ himself which suggest that he considered that the numbers of his real followers, in all societies, would always be small. The Anglican Communion has universalised the Anglican pursuit of an identity as a Church; it has not qualitatively made any difference to the ingredients of the problems of ecclesiology. And the considerable cultural diversity it now shows is a by-product of historical development, not evidence of inherent universality. 'The ideal function of the Anglican Communion is to express and guide the spiritual aspirations and activities of the Anglo-Saxon race',[14] said Armitage Robinson, Dean of Westminster, at the Pan-Anglican Congress in 1908. At the time it seemed a perfectly acceptable remark.

The whole idea of the Anglican Communion did not relate to models of universality taken from antiquity, nor was it derived from the writings of the Fathers. It was not even put together with any consciouness of adducing or embodying a Doctrine of the Church. It appeared by chance. It was modelled, in fact, on the simultaneous evolution of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and developed out of a very incoherent theory of empire. The preceding separations of Church and State were not brought about (as Anglicans, especially High Church Anglicans, liked to suppose) because through the experiences of mission, churchmen re-discovered the spiritual autonomy of the Church. They did indeed make that discovery, but only after the state had decided to discontinue government financial assistance—and that did not come because of any prior secularisation of the colonial administration, but because the state, as it developed through 'Responsible Government' to national political autonomy, encountered the hard facts of denominational pluralism—just as it was beginning to do inside the United Kingdom itself in the nineteenth century. It shed its ecclesiastical functions because a majority of its citizens were no longer potential beneficiaries, and rather forcibly pointed this out.

The religious autonomy which necessarily followed was rendered in the form of synods. The first examples were in the new American states, with their arrangement of conventions, and of the national Episcopal Convention of 1785. These were frankly modelled on the secular representative instruments of government which came into existence in the Republic generally, and they had lay participation. The intention was not to embody a Doctrine of the Church, but to secure participation and to regularise ecclesiastical appointments. In the countries of the British Empire, comparably, the growth of synods followed secular models of contemporaneous constitutional experiment. Bishop George Augustus Selwyn's seminal gathering in New Zealand in 1844, and Bishop William Broughton's provincial synod in 1850, led the way. Synods, in the history of the Church, do not determine doctrine, and have only local authority; and that was the case with the Anglican revivals. Their purpose was the exercise of order and ecclesiastical jurisdiction on a voluntary basis, not the determination of truth. It was in the practice of these functions that High Churchmen began to dream of reli-

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[14] Alan M G Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* (London, 1978), p 2.

gious authority as it had been before the erastianism of the English Reformation: it was then that mission conditions breathed new life into Catholic Anglicanism, and its Zephirus came from Oxford. But they recognised that the synods as such were not substitutes for General Councils of the Church, could certainly not claim indefectibility (as Councils could not either, in Anglican discernment), and were essentially bodies to regularise decisions in questions of order and discipline. Selwyn described his first synod as intended 'to frame rules for the better management of the mission and general government of the church'.[15] As it spread, however, synodical government encountered opposition from Evangelicals and Erastians, fearful of clerical aggrandisement and departure from the sovereign authority of Scripture. They need not have worried. Synodical government was discussed at the first Lambeth Conference in 1867 and endorsed in a compromise resolution actually proposed by Selwyn, which referred to the 'due and canonical subordination of the synods of the several branches to the higher authority of a synod or synods above them'.[16] Since no such higher synods existed, nor was there any means of convening them, this was the ideal Anglican formula. It was without meaning.

The English Convocations of Canterbury and York were provincial synods under another name, but their deliberative functions were suspended between 1717 and 1852 (and 1862). Convocations were never regarded as appropriate places for the determination of doctrine, and even Francis Atterbury in his defence of the spiritual integrity of Convocation against the erastianism of Archbishop William Wake, in the dispute of 1697, did not attribute a doctrinal rôle to them. There was a disorientating moment in 1538, immediately after the Reformation statutes, when a synod of English clergy was convened to discuss the nature of the sacraments—certainly a doctrinal matter.[17] But it was called by Thomas Cromwell, using secular authority, and its powers over doctrine were left undefined. Preceding synods, which of course did not have the capacity to determine doctrine either, had been summoned by legatine authority.

What of the authority of Lambeth Conferences? As a source of doctrinal definition they can easily be eliminated from the quest, since they have disclaimed any such authority from the start. Bishop John Henry Hopkins of Vermont, later Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, and a scholar fully informed about the procedures of the early Church, had in 1851 suggested an Anglican General Council, but neither he, nor subsequent exponents of some kind of international body, envisaged the determination of doctrine as among its powers. The English bishops, operating within a persistent atmosphere of erastianism, had anyway to be extremely cautious of any clerical assembly which exercised effective powers independently of statute law. At the start of the first Lambeth Conference in 1867 Archbishop Longley made it clear that the gathering was a conference and not a synod, and that its resolutions would be purely declaratory—they would have only the influence of recommendations.[18] That has remained the position to this day: the resolutions of Lambeth Conferences only have effect if enacted by synods in each constituent Church of the Communion. The 1862 Conference did in fact recommend the creation of what it termed 'a voluntary spiritual Tribunal', with representatives from each Anglican province, 'to secure unity in matters of Faith and uniformity in matters of discipline'.[19] This never came to pass; had it done so its 'voluntary' character would anyway have incapacitated its potential to evolve into a source of doctrinal authority. The nearest the Church of England has come to an effective exercise of authority in

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[15] H W Tucker. *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of George Augustus Selwyn DD* (London, 1879), I, p 158.

[16] Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, p 38.

[17] See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (Yale, 1996), p 185.

[18] Evans and Wright (ed), *The Anglican Tradition*, p 328.

[19] Sachs, *The Transformation of Anglicanism*, p 203.

a matter of doctrine was when Archbishop Runcie proposed, in a brief and indecisive debate in the General Synod, that the doctrine of the Double Procession of the Holy Spirit should be deleted from the Nicene Creed. The Provincial Synod of the South African Church had done this in 1982. The General Synod in England is plainly not a body with the appropriate authority to determine doctrine. The idea, similarly, of the see of Canterbury being recognised as the universal Patriarchate of the Anglican Communion, proposed by Selwyn in the 1870s, and subsequently raised in a number of Lambeth Conferences, has not found acceptance. This is wise: the title of patriarch is not a mere courtesy, and carries distinct inferences of precedence and jurisdiction which are incompatible with the notion of the Anglican Communion as a voluntary association. It does not realistically compare with the autocephalous status of Churches within Orthodoxy, and certainly not with the Latin patriarchate of Rome. Until fairly recent times it could also be pointed out that the Church of England was not in communion with any other Churches—apart from its own colonial relatives. Modern ecumenical arrangements have altered this situation, but only marginally: the participants of inter-communion agreements are all Protestant. This is not a step towards a greater reunion of Christianity, in fact, since the basic issue of authority remains unaddressed; the constituents of intercommunion are united by *not* believing in the doctrine of an infallible teaching office. All the Protestant intercommunions have achieved, to be starkly realistic, is a further polarisation of those who hold to the existence of an authority and those who do not.

Anglicans have always considered themselves to be both the inheritor of medieval Christianity in England, the legitimate succession to the mission established by Augustine of Canterbury, and also a 'branch' of the universal Church. In this version of ecclesiology 'the Church' comprises all recognised Christian bodies, divided by location and tradition. But recognised by whom? To what sort of sliding-scale is it possible to refer to determine whether a particular Church conveys authentic Christian truth? Does the definition, for example, include only Trinitarian Christians? The World of Council of Churches, for its part, appears to operate a policy of practical co-operation between the various affiliated bodies without enquiring into their doctrinal orthodoxy. How is it possible to recognise heretical Churches from those which adhere to apostolic teaching? Does the Anglican Communion regard itself as a constituent of a 'Church' which is so broadly defined as to have no precise doctrinal content apart from subscription to the authority of the Scriptures? Since the basic division within Christianity corresponds to positions adopted in relation to the question of indefectible teaching, it is difficult to conceive a definition of the universal Church which includes all viewpoints. The entire metaphor of 'branches' is difficult to apply and as used by Christ himself, when he said 'I am the vine, you are the branches', it had a clearly discriminatory intent. 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me'. The universal Church is the united body of Christ; there is no other definition. The 'branch theory' was dismissed as long ago as 1842 by Cardinal Wiseman:

'Many different branches may be parts of one plant…They must branch out *from* something; they must have a TRUNK; as that trunk must have a *root*. For us to understand the theory of *Branch-churches*, we must have the history of the entire plant. Of what is the Anglican Church a branch? Of the Catholic Church, we are told. What is that Catholic Church? The union or aggregation of all apostolic, episcopal Churches…'.[20]

The branch theory fits very well with the concept of 'dispersed authority', which will be considered shortly, and evidently regards the 'Church', as a concept, as constitu-

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[20] *Essays on Various Subjects by His Eminence Cardinal Wiseman* (London, 1853), II, p 306; 'The Anglican System' (1842).

ted from diverse and mutually conflicting understandings of Christ's teaching, held together—or, rather, patently *not* held together—by simply calling themselves parts of a greater yet undefined entity.

The test of subscription to the inerrancy of Scripture is no longer an unambiguous possibility for the authenticaton of Christian teaching. The manner in which the Scriptural texts are received and interpreted—which has in reality always changed, from the florid allegories and symbolism employed by the early Fathers, to the literalism of some modern Evangelicals—can no longer allow simple acceptance. It was an extraordinary irony that the scholars at the time of the Reformation who sought a return to the exclusive authority of Holy Scripture were also the ones whose very scholarship had revealed how insecure the texts were, when they subjected the verbal accuracy of the Vulgate to extensive critical analysis.[21] Nineteenth-century modes of Biblical understanding inaugurated a theological culture which has left the notion of Scriptural inerrancy problematical to say the least. The idea that only those Christian doctrines and moral practices are essential which may be found in Scripture, which is the Anglican position (Article VI of the Articles of Religion), is compatible with modern Biblical criticism but rests upon a restricted understanding of revelation, an implied denial of development, and a refusal to contemplate the survival of the original magisterium conferred by Christ to his followers. If the fullness of the Christian revelation must be authenticated exclusively in relation to Scripture, there will be an enormous problem when, in the future, really dramatic shifts in the general culture require truly radical re-statements of the faith.

Liturgy has sometimes been considered an authoritative means for the Church to witness to its essential beliefs, and indeed this may be so. Yet there are problems here, too, wrought by historical change. Orthodoxy has committed truth to liturgical forms, and to alter the liturgy, therefore, would compromise truth itself. In the western Church, however, worship has been changed many times, and although alterations of style and even of liturgical images may not of themselves affect the doctrinal truths conveyed they do not allow liturgy, as such, to be judged a secure guarantee of doctrinal authenticity. The liturgical practices of the Church of England at the present time, for example, are determined by committees of expert liturgists who do not, for obvious reasons, wield the authority imparted by General Councils. In the Church of England liturgy 'expresses' doctrine, 'yet the worshipper is free to interpret the words as he wishes', and the 'clergy can extract what they choose'.[22] Liturgical use can only transmit teaching: it cannot help resolve fundamental difficulties if the means of determining truth are controverted in the first place.

Anglicans have always sought to overcome problems about their inability to accept the unitary nature of the teaching found within the historic Churches by distinguishing between 'essentials' and 'inessentials'. The tradition, reinforced by Melanchton during the Reformation, articulated the distinction—which was, indeed, familiar enough in the speculative thought of the Hellenistic Fathers. The number of items in the *adiaphora* list, however, has grown in proportion to the multiplication of divergences inside the Church of England. The Catholics, in contrast, have held to the position that all doctrines, once determined, are equally true but are arranged in a hierarchy of importance which may alter with circumstance. It is difficult to see how these two positions are compatible without either the Anglicans redefining their source of authority or the Catholics restricting theirs. The fact is that there is not, as Anglicans suppose, a single 'deposit' of faith inherited from antiquity, but a range of rival understandings about the means of authenticating the ingredients of the deposit. Hence the difficulty about General Councils. At the time of the

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[21] G R Evans, *Problems of Authority in the Reformation Debates* (Cambridge, 1992), p 56.
[22] Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism*, p 47.

Reformation there was a broad agreement among both those who remained in the Catholic Church and those who separated themselves that Councils were the proper means of determining doctrine. The immediate problem was to whom belonged the authority to summon a Council. The early Church offered examples of gatherings called both exclusively by bishops and exclusively by civil authorities. Anti-papal sentiment in sixteenth century Europe, and the current aggrandisement of monarchy, hedged both propositions with what turned out to be insuperable barriers. It was a question of the Pope's authority as the embodiment of the indefectible *magisterium* of the Church *versus* a divided political order. The matter in the end proved academic, since Protestants—and the Church of England with them—came to deny the infallibility of conciliar definitions of essential points of faith and morals. And here is a fundamental issue at the centre of the Anglican pursuit of authority. Article XXI (1571) insists that General Councils 'may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes'; and that 'they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God'. The last phrase is significant because it suggests essential matters, the very 'deposit' of faith indeed. The point about the sanction of the civil authority is equally awkward: the subsequent historical separation of sacred and secular in political society has rendered it inoperable throughout virtually every part of the Anglican Communion—except, potentially, within the Church of England itself, which still is, at time of speaking, established by law, and with the relevant 'Prince' as its Supreme Governor. No one, presumably, is going to imagine it appropriate that the British sovereign will ever convene a General Council. The Catholic Church, which periodically does meet in General Council, last faced the intervention of the Powers at the first Vatican Council in 1870; the threat then proved empty, and by the time of the Second Vatican Council it was unthinkable. Anglican teaching maintains that the declarations of Councils are only binding if they are in conformity with Scripture, though this notion can hardly have applied to the conciliar declaration of the canon of Scripture itself, since nowhere in the Bible is the authority of the Bible declared. It is also unclear why Anglicans need have a view about Councils at all. Since they have no practical means of convening one, and no qualification to attend one summoned by external authority, it all seems a bit tenuous. It is also true that if, within Anglicanism, the Scriptures are the sole source of doctrines essential for salvation, and if the meaning of Scripture is accessible to all people, it is hardly necessary to resort to a universal gathering, especially since the findings of such a body have already, in advance, been declared to be capable of error.

The position, then, would appear to be that the Anglican Communion cannot determine its doctrine by reference to the decisions of a General Council—whose declarations, like those of Lambeth Conferences, indeed, must therefore be regarded as advisory. Scripture, as an exclusive source of essential doctrine, has become problematic as a consequence of modern Biblical scholarship. The Prayer Book is no longer a standard of order throughout the Communion, or even within constituent Churches, and few, anyway, would any longer consider worship as a means of declaring agreed doctrinal propositions, but more a matter of shared fellowship. So how, in reality do Anglicans now determine doctrine?

The best test of doctrinal authority is negative, deciding when the faith is being corrupted. How is error to be recognised? The early Councils of the Church were all called in order to identify heretical ideas. In the Church of England and the Anglican Communion the matter is unclear. The Act of Supremacy in 1534 adhered the *correction* of heresy to the royal prerogative: 'Kings of this realm...shall have full power and authority from time to time to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts and enormities...'.[23] This does not in itself actually empower the Crown to *determine*

[23] Supremacy of the Crown Act 1534 (26 Hen 8 c 1): text in Evans and Wright (ed), *The Anglican Tradition*, p 136.

what ideas are heretical and what are not, but to deal with heresies that are consid-
ered such—or that, at any rate, is how the statute *may* be construed. Prehaps it was
also intended that the power should be delegated to a body under ecclesiastical guid-
ance. It is not clear. The difficulty is that the Reformation had cut the English Church
off from the canonical authority (the See of Rome) which had before determined
heresy, without plainly locating it anywhere. Penalties were provided in the new eras-
tian dispensation, but not the means of identifying the heresy itself. This did not, as
it turned out, prevent rival claimants to orthodoxy from dispatching one another for
heresy in the next two centuries, but the problem of defining heresy itself even then
related to formulae which dated from the pre-Reformation Church or from the Re-
formation settlement itself. At first sight it might appear that determining doctrine
in the Church of England eventually passed to the jurisdiction of the Judicial Com-
mittee of the Privy Council. Until 1832 the court of appeal in doctrinal cases was the
High Court of Delegates, which had succeeded appeal to Rome. In 1832 jurisdiction
passed to the Privy Council, a provision which at the time seemed reasonable enough
since by then the ecclesiastical courts were almost exclusively taken up with matri-
monial and probate cases. Causes with doctrinal implications only very rarely came
before them. When, comparatively recently, jurisdiction in doctrinal matters was re-
moved from the Privy Council it was not located elsewhere, so there exists a void at
the centre of the issue of who determines erroneous teaching. In the middle of the
nineteenth century, however, internal party divisions within the Church of England
resulted in a number of cases being heard by the Judicial Committee of the Privy
Council, which very publicly highlighted the apparent fact that Anglican doctrine
was being determined by a tribunal whose members had no requirements to be—and
often were not—members of the Church. The court was also dominated by laymen,
and although the Church Discipline Act in 1840 provided for bishops to become
members for ecclesiastical causes many cases, like the *Gorham* case itself, were not
brought under that Act. In 1865 G C Broderick and W H Freemantle published a
volume describing fifteen cases before the Privy Council, between 1840 and 1864, in
which the doctrine of the Church of England seemed to have been interpreted. Until
the end of the century, as the *Colenso* case in South Africa showed in 1864, the juris-
diction of the Privy Council in doctrinal matters extended to the Anglican Churches
overseas (though never, for obvious reasons, to the Episcopal Church of America).
Yet it is not absolutely clear that the Privy Council, in its deliberations and opinions,
was actually *determining* doctrine, despite the overwhelming public perception that
this was the case, or whether it managed to keep within the less technical work of
seeking to discover what the Church of England's formularies had intended to teach.
The court's proceedings looked like theological constructions because of the often
lengthy introduction of theological argument; its decrees commenced with the words
'In the name God, Amen'. The problem, as usual, was that the formularies of the
Church of England were themselves ambiguous, attempting, as the sixteenth cen-
tury theological diversities had seemed to necessitate, comprehensive but imprecise
expressions of doctrine. And that meant, in the conditions of nineteenth century
legal inquiry, that extrinsic evidence had sometimes to be heard in order to locate
probable original intention. Successive judges in the Judicial Committee were em-
phatic, however, that their duty was not to determine doctrine as such, but only to
apply ecclesiastical law.

It was the *Gorham* case in 1850 which brought the difficulty before the public, and
which appeared to show that the doctrine of the Church of England—in this case
over baptismal regeneration—was being determined by a secular tribunal. Lord
Langdale, in giving the opinion of the Judicial Committee, attempted to adjust un-
derstanding of what was happening in his view. The question before them, he said,
was not whether Gorham's opinions were 'theologically sound or unsound', but
whether they were in correspondence with the formularies of the Church. 'The case

not requiring it', he declared, 'we have abstained from expressing any opinion of our own upon the theological correctness or error of the doctrine held by Mr Gorham which was discussed before us at such length and with so much learning'.[24] It was a conviction frequently expressed by Dr Stephen Lushington, Judge of the High Court of Admiralty and Dean of Arches, and the most distinguished ecclesiastical lawyer of his day, who was involved in all the doctrinal cases which came before the Judicial Committee. 'This is not a court of Divinity', he said in the *Essays and Reviews* proceedings in 1861; 'it is a court of ecclesiastical law'.[25] In reality, however, law and theological opinion were not so easily separable, and the frequency with which the legal delicacy of Privy Council judges disclaimed their capacity to determine doctrine disguises the fact that for all practical purposes they did so—and were recognised as doing so by the press. Erastian churchmen were untroubled; Tractarians were outraged.

The present void actually seems no inconvenience since the modern Church is not doctrinally contentious—its differences, which are evergreen, relate to matters of order, discipline and moral application. Should the Anglican Communion or the Church of England wish, for example, to contemplate declaring, say, the Assumption of the Virgin as a doctrine of the Church, there would seem to be no procedure for doing so, and no judicial means of testing the validity of the proceedings. Those who hold to Scriptural self-sufficiency will not mind; those who envisage a dynamic function in the *magisterium* of the Church will presumably regret the absence of a defining jurisdiction. The matter at the present time seems rather academic, anyway.

The elimination of a practical procedure for identifying error, and of an accessible appellate jurisdiction in determining doctrine, have produced a situation in which Anglicans can only resort to a number of local provisions, framed in reference to the perceived needs of the individual member Churches of the Communion, none of which have recognised ultimate authority and none of whom claim it. The resulting incoherence is usually expressed in terms of paradox: there is an Anglican rhetoric of self-appraisal in which chaos is described as order, ambiguity as richness of comprehension, patent diversity as a special kind of unity. It has to be said that the solution of Anglicanism's problem over a Doctrine of the Church known as 'dispersed authority' is of this *genre*. Here, explanation envisages the existence of mutually conflicting theological beliefs and ecclesiastical orders as a species of creative unity. The pursuit of institutional comprehensiveness is abandoned, and the concept of 'the Church' becomes an umbrella expression providing shelter for an exceedingly generous range of contentions and panaceas. It was in Report IV of the Lambeth Conference of 1948 that 'dispersed authority' was first spelled out as a substitute for Anglican ecclesiology—a contribution which Bishop Sykes, in his acceptance of its leading tenets, later described as 'the most satisfactory public statement of the Anglican view of authority'.[26] The Lambeth formula derived, according to its authors, from the consistent and prolonged 'refusal of a legal basis of union' within the Communion; it depicted 'the positive nature' of Anglican authority as 'moral and spiritual' rather than legal or institutional, and as resting on 'charity'.[27] Its originality lay, in a further Anglican paradox, in its simultaneous espousal of singularity and diversity:

[24] S M Waddams. *Law, Politics and the Church of England: The Career of Stephen Lushington, 1782–1873* (Cambridge. 1992). p 274; *Gorham v Bishop of Exeter* (1850) 7 Notes of Cases 413. PC.

[25] Waddams. *Law, Politics and the Church of England*. p 316; *Bishop of Salisbury v Williams* (1862) 1 New Rep 196; on appeal. *Williams v Bishop of Salisbury* (1864) Moo PCC 375.

[26] Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism*. p 88.

[27] *The Lambeth Conference, 1948: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, together with Resolutions and Reports* (London. 1948). p 84 (Report IV. 'The Anglican Communion').

'Authority, as inherited by the Anglican Communion from the undivided Church of the early centuries of the Christian era, is single in that it is derived from a single Divine source, and reflects within itself the richness and historicity of the divine Revelation... It is distributed among Scripture, Tradition, Creeds, the Ministy of the Word and Sacraments, the witness of saints, and the *consensus fidelium*... It is thus a dispersed rather than a centralised authority having many elements which combine, interact with, and check each other; these elements together contributing by a process of mutual support, mutual checking, and redressing of errors or exaggerations to the many-sided fullness of the authority which Christ has committed to His Church. Where this authority is to be found mediated not in one mode but in several we recognise in this multiplicity God's loving provision against the temptations to tyranny and the dangers of unchecked power'.[28]

Moreover the means by which truth is known to be true possess 'a suppleness and elasticity', and a 'quality of richness', which evoke 'a free and willing obedience'. The emphasis on freedom of consent, and the checks and balances within the process, indicate the extent to which this style of explanation is dependent on modern concepts of representative and limited government, drawn from the practice of secular modern democracy. Yet the report also makes it clear that the consensus of the faithful 'does not depend on mere numbers or on the extension of a belief at any one time, but on continuance through the ages, and the extent to which the consensus is genuinely free'. Without any consciousness of inconsistency the report also declares that the individual 'Christ-like life carries its own authority'.[29] Here, then, is a puzzling mixture. The manner in which doctrine is known to be authentic is dispersed in a fashion which embraces all the variants, individual and collective, which have presented themselves. There is no clue in the report as to how it is possible to recognise legitimate interpretations from corruptions. What is envisaged is a spiritual free-for-all in which authority is derived from diversity and truth emerges through 'elasticity'. This is rather a frank conclusion. As an account of the ingredients available for a serious discussion of the nature of authority the report is adequate in its way, at least to the extent that it recognises the problems. But it offers no prospect of an ordered passage beyond the preliminaries, so that the unitary body of Christ might act in unity. It is easy to forget, when reading the report, that it is not an ecumenical formula—it applies to conditions *inside* the Anglican Churches. Here are, as it were, echoes of Jules Lechevalier's critique of F D Maurice: 'Mr Maurice's system is a very good one for bringing men in, but it is all door.'

The report's insistence on the permanent existence of conflict in the life of the Church is factually accurate. The early Councils were full of rancour. Truth is advanced by the testing of propositions and the questioning of orthodoxies, and periods that are especially characterised by these exercises are creative. The concept of 'dispersed authority', however, does not propose any means of arriving at an orderly conclusion in each particular area of controversy. It is a steady-state; permanent indecision. The more weighty the doctrine at issue the less likely the prospect of a resolution: 'dispersed authority' is a formula for, or rather a description of, the means of reducing Christianity to generalities. The *consensus fidelium*, it is true, is very properly *not* defined as a majority—it does 'not depend on mere numers'. But it is only one of several means by which doctrine is to be recognised as authentic; it is explicitly linked to conciliar decisions and these, in turn, are described as resting only 'at least in part' on 'their acceptance by the whole body of the faithful'. Even this dimension of the process can hardly be organic or dynamic, since Anglican

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[28] Ibid, p 84.
[29] Ibid, p 85.

ecclesiology also incorporates the notion that Councils are capable of error in fundamentals, and that without the consent of the political order they cannot even be summoned. Bishop Sykes rightly regards conflict in the identification of doctrine as unavoidable, and sees the 'Anglican history of the experience of conflict' as 'of potentially great service'.[30] What he also says, however, in amplification of the Lambeth report of 1948, is that 'authentic Christian preaching and living can only be achieved in the midst of ambiguity'.[31] Why is that so? The Catholic Church has a clear record of perpetual examination and re-examination of doctrine, tremendous internal controversy, but an ability to arrive at precise formulations. Anglicans are sceptical of this, both because they disapprove of some of the doctrinal decisions achieved in this way, and of the procedure itself—presumably what the Report of 1948 implied when it referred to 'tyranny'. Sykes believes that *all* Christian formulations of doctrine 'will be necessarily controversial', and observes that 'there will be no certainty that the decision made as a result of the conflict will be correct'.[32] Authority, he concludes, cannot be 'embodied' in institutions; there is only a 'continuous process involving all the participators' of discussion and exploration. Despite the distinction of this analysis it remains descriptive; authority is a latency, not a fixed reality. And how very modern it is: a process for arguing about belief derived from committee culture and the participation born of mass education. It would have been impossible to apply this understanding of 'dispersed authority' in preceding centuries. It may be impossible to apply now. As for the positive advantages of the unavoidable existence of conflict—how far that is from the sensibilities of the modern Anglican leadership, who are horrified by controversy. Lambeth Conferences have arguably been preoccupied more with the prevention of division than with constructive or prophetic advance.[33] There is, at any rate, the authority of Hooker, no less, for the priority of error over controversy—it was better, he wrote, 'that sometime an erroneous sentence definitive should prevail, till the same authority perceiving such oversight, might afterwards correct or reverse it, than that strifes should have respite to grow'.[34]

The most telling difficulty about 'dispersed authority' is that over four centuries of its operation in the Church of England has produced what most acknowledge: a crisis of identity, a crisis of unity, and an inability to adduce a coherent ecclesiology. It is hard to imagine that divine providence, disclosed in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can have entrusted the presence of Christ in the World to such an ideological shambles. So the search for an Anglican Doctrine of the Church must resume; 'dispersed authority' is not satisfactory. In entrusting himself, not to a philosophy but to an organic people, Christ remained indivisibly a person—not a wide and dispersed range of inclinations. It is scarcely conceivable that a person should only be known about *via* a tortuous dialectic of truth alternating with error, and remain, still, identifiable through centuries of belief. The simple fact is also that at the time of the Reformation the question of an independent ecclesiology was not resolved when an independent Church was being set up.

Now some will say that this is all a matter of technicalities, that Anglicans have in practice retained the essential doctrines of Christianity in an orthodox form despite the apparent absence of an agreed method of defining doctrine. Some will say this because they still regard Scriptural self-sufficiency as obviating the need for enquiry at all, and some because the external episcopal governance of Anglicanism corresponds to historic models and has passed the test of preserving orthodoxy. From a

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[30] Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism*, p 89.

[31] Ibid, p 94.

[32] Ibid, p 98.

[33] E R Norman, 'Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conference of 1988' in *Anglicanism and Episcopal History*, LVIII, p 3 (September 1989).

[34] Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* [1593–1597] (London, Everyman Edn, 1954) I, p 119 (vl 3).

Catholic perspective, on the other hand, it could be pointed out that the absence of a dynamic means of determining doctrine has resulted in the Anglicans' inability to develop belief—for example relating to the place of the Virgin in the redemptive scheme. Many will doubtless be relieved that that is so. Yet Anglicanism has unquestionably lived off the fat of pre-Reformation accumulations and has, since the sixteenth century, been in a kind of doctrinal limbo. A Doctrine of the Church *is* required. Christianity has until now existed within the general parameters of Hellenistic-Latin culture, which may not prove so durable in the future. Perhaps we are still in the early days of the Church—taking a long perspective into the unknowable future. Perhaps it is near its end, with the end of all things. There is no way of telling. It is unlikely, however, that the main concepts of the Mediterranean cultures which have determined the development of Christ's revelation will persist for ever, and the Church will then need to bring forth treasures new and old in a much more radical fashion, calculated according to the terms available in future arrangements of human knowledge. The means by which truth is known to be true, the question of authority in teaching, will then be absolutely crucial. This is not a problem for the historic Churches, which have dynamic Doctrines of the Church. But Anglicans have a real issue to address. The basic division remains: do Christians have access to an infallible teaching office, as the historic Churches have always claimed, or are the Protestants right in supposing that only Scripture is indefectible? There is no *Via Media* here—Anglicans in this bleak assessment are thoroughly Protestant. In the future, as in the past, the matter of what, in the political sphere, used to be called 'entryism' will be a major threat to the integrity of religious institutions. Alien ideology and secular moral orthodoxy may identify themselves with Christian ethical teaching, and there will be those inside the Churches who may, correspondingly, associate basic Christianity with various enthusiasms for humanity. The ancient problem of heresy, therefore, remains: how to distinguish truth from error, how to protect received teachings from corruptions, and how not to depart from the mind of Christ when determining doctrinal formulations. There is little in the human record so far to suggest that it is possessed of self-correcting mechanisms, and that somehow truth will inevitably emerge in a recognisable form. The Church of Christ embodies Christ; there are unitary consequences for the way Christians therefore conduct themselves institutionally if truth is not only to be determined but to be transmitted. A Doctrine of the Church is unavoidable, and Anglicanism may well be approaching the conjunction of a crisis of identity and a general cultural crisis, so that it will be obliged to address the problem with greater clarity than in the past.

Note. There are articles on the Gorham judgment in (1998) 5 Ecc LJ 104 and on the Colenso case in this issue at p 188.