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THE ROLE OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, c. 1850 - 1885

MICHAEL JOHN DARCY ROBERTS

JESUS COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

There has been a great deal of research into Victorian religious ideas and organisations carried out in recent years. However, the research tends to focus on areas in which evidence is most manageable - that is, on denominations and sects which have a relatively limited and well-defined membership, or, if the Church of England is concerned, on the activities of the professional full-time representatives of the Church, the clergy. In choosing to study the role of the laity in the Church of England, I have attempted to extend the circle of research a little further from the centre towards which it ordinarily tends to contract.

The notion of a lay role is, however, at its most vague and ambiguous in the Church of England. The vagueness has always been apparent and is the unavoidable characteristic of a religious organisation which has an historical claim to be considered a ' National Church '. But the ambiguity, to a great extent, is a nineteenth-century development, the result of the gradual separation of Church from State and of 'religious' standards of belief and behaviour from 'secular' ones.

The initial hypothesis which I state and then set out to test and refine here is the hypothesis that lay membership of the Church of England during the mid and late nineteenth century largely ceased to be an involuntary act and became, instead, a voluntary one.The ambiguities, or outright contradictions, which appeared in contemporary conceptions of the lay role are evidence of the simultaneous existence of two very different conceptions of church membership - the first presupposing that membership

of the Church was assumed in the same manner as political and social citizenship, the second demanding that there be some test of voluntary commitment before membership was accorded or confirmed.

In putting forward these two opposed conceptions of membership, I have drawn on the terminology of the sociology of religion. These two conceptions of membership, in that context, together form one of the defining characteristics of two distinctive types of religious organisation, the 'church' and the 'denomination'respectively. The distinction between 'church' and 'denomination' can also be used to direct attention to other areas of religious organisation where changes related to the changes in criteria of membership might be expected to occur. (For example, a denomination can be expected to impose a far less rigid distinction between clerical and lay activities and competences than a church would allow.) And, by making use of these 'ideal types', I am also helped to make comparisons at various stages of the historical process and so to make a rough estimate of the rate and extent of the change from one conception of lay membership towards the other.

The evidence of change is extensive and ranges from parliamentary debates, royal commissions and the publications of voluntary societies to memoirs, biographies and private correspondence. There is still the problem to overcome, when using this evidence, that much of it contains an inbuilt clerical bias - merely because the lay role was a matter which the clergy were often more concerned to define than were the laity themselves. Besides, the categories of Church 'party' (in terms of which the various alternative conceptions of the lay role were often discussed)

were categories developed to classify clerical rather than lay attitudes. Thus evidence, while extensive, is not always as direct as one could wish.

The actual structure of the thesis is intended to reflect its argument. The 'denominalisation' of the lay role in the Church of England is pursued through three broad themes. In the first section I set out to establish what role the laity expected and were expected to play in the traditional national Church, and to trace how that role was modified to meet political and social pressures after 1850. I discuss the lay role in the defence of the privileges of Establishment (with a special chapter on attitudes to private patronage). I then discuss the lay role in the defence of certain tenets of doctrinal belief. It becomes apparent that the Church was compelled, by political pressures exerted through Parliament and other institutions of government (which, until the nineteenth century, were assumed to represent the citizens of England and the laymen of the national Church alike), to encourage positive voluntary commitment among its lay members on a greater scale and with less regard to social rank than had formerly been the case.

The second section is concerned with the growth of, and changes in the organisation and control of, lay voluntary work after mid-century. Both charitable and evangelising work is mentioned. I trace how the resources of the Church were strained by the continued huge increases and shifts in population during the period under discussion and how the Church became ever more reliant (in the absence of support from the State) on the voluntary contributions of committed laymen. This was apparent in the matter of financing expansion and also in the

matter of providing staff both for purely 'religious' work (sometimes in areas traditionally reserved to the clergy) and for more secular work (which the Church could only undertake successfully if it could obtain the services of laymen with professional and technical skills acquired from secular life). There is a special chapter on the role of women in voluntary work.

The third section discusses the growth of the 'autonomous' institutions (synods, diocesan conferences, parish councils etc.) which the Church developed to replace the institutions of Church and State (the parish vestry and parliament in particular) which had traditionally been used to regulate Church members but which were now unusable or ineffectual. One of the major problems which the new institutions faced was the hostility of traditionally-defined laymen. The section is particularly concerned to trace how the proponents of the new institutions (who were usually clergy) sought to justify to laymen the establishment of institutions separate from those of the State yet having authority to make decisions binding on all Church members. Some attempt is also made to estimate the extent to which these Church leaders were successful in inducing laymen to participate in the voluntary organisations they established, and to describe the terms on which the clergy and other interested parties allowed the laymen who did participate to do so. This involves, in passing, discussion of the influence which the denominationally organised Nonconformists and the colonial Churches exerted on churchmen by way of example. It also involves

discussion of the marked rise in professional self-awareness among the clergy - a rise which preceded, and helped to precipitate, attempts to define the lay role more precisely.

The conclusion reached in section III, expanded in the general conclusion, is that there was a sustained trend during the period between 1850 and 1885 towards acceptance of a denominational conception of the lay role both inside and outside the Church. The spread of tests of voluntary commitment within the Church, and of the belief that membership involved active participation in a variety of Church-sponsored activities, gives evidence that, out of the involuntary 'natural' community formed by citizen-parishioners, there emerged voluntary communities of committed Church members, distinct from general society both in organisation and, to some degree, in the social values and customs which they upheld. However, I go on to suggest that the Church of England lost by no means all of its national Church characteristics. In particular, the practical influence of traditional, socially and politically well-placed, laymen continued beyond 1885. And, more generally, the denominational ideal of the voluntarily committed layman was never fully accepted either by those who claimed to be voluntarily committed to the Church or by those who claimed their traditional 'lay rights' within it as Englishmen.

THE ROLE OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND c. 1850-1885

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ABBREVIATIONS

B.M.Add.MSS	British Museum Additional Manuscripts
CCC	Chronicle of the Convocation of Canterbury
CCR	Church Congress Reports
P.D.	Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series
Parl.Papers 1857-8	Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to inquire into the Deficiency of Means of Spiritual Instruction and Places of Divine Worship in the Metropolis, and in other Populous Districts in England and Wales (Parliamentary Papers 1857-8, IX (387), p.1).
Parl.Papers 1874	Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to inquire into the Laws relating to Patronage, Simony, and Exchange of Benefices in the Church of England (Parliamentary Papers 1874, VII (289), p.301).
Parl.Papers 1880	Report of the Royal Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Law and existing Practice as to the Sale, Exchange and Resignation of Ecclesiastical Benefices: Minutes of Evidence and Appendix (Parliamentary Papers 1880, XVIII (c. 2507), p.373)

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

During the nineteenth century, the Church of England passed through a period of great strain as the State and society became more 'secular' and the Church, by contrast, more 'religious'. The Church entered the nineteenth century with most of its privileges as an Established National Church intact. It entered the twentieth century with many of its privileges lost and, in Ireland and soon in Wales, actually 'disestablished'. In an increasingly pluralist society, it ceased to be in any strong sense a 'national Church'. The assumptions of its members, not least of its clergy, increasingly approximated to those of a 'denomination' and it became one religious organisation among many. The effects on, or concurrent changes in, the role of the clergy have already attracted researchers. However, similar changes concerning the lay members of the Church have not been studied in any detail or with any comprehensiveness.[1] These changes form the subject matter of this thesis.

The hypothesis which I am setting out to test is, in its bluntest form, the hypothesis that the role of laymen in the Church of England ceased, at some point, to be an involuntary role and became, instead,

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1. The most recent study of the clergy is that of A.J. Russell, 'A Sociological Analysis of the Clergyman's Role, with special reference to its development in the early nineteenth century' (Oxford University D.Phil. thesis 1970). The only study which I have been able to find dealing specifically with the role of laymen is a brief but wide-ranging survey by F.C. Mather: 'The British Layman in Modern Times 1780-1962' in S.C. Neill and H.R Weber, The Layman in Christian History (1963) pp. 216-39.

a voluntary one. To state it in another way, the assumption that every Englishman was, by birth and baptism, a member of his national Church gave way to the denominational assumption that, to become a member of the Church of England, a man was required to make some positive act of assent to the beliefs and participate in the activities of the Church. It is, of course, unconvincing to interpret the change in terms of a simple transition from one generalised state to another. The only sensible conclusion would be one drawing distinctions - one stating not that the hypothetical interpretation is either true or false, but that it is true to a certain extent in certain stated fields and untrue or uncertainly true in other stated fields.

The structure of the thesis is intended to reflect its argument. There are three sections. The division between the three is thematic though the subdivisions within each are primarily chronological. The first section is concerned to investigate lay activities and self-conceptions of a traditional kind. It tries to reconstruct the ideal conception of the traditional lay role in a national Church which many churchmen shared and then to trace what happened when churchmen came to realise that the ideal was no longer attainable or, perhaps, even relevant. The second section is concerned to establish the extent to which laymen already, in mid-century, had accepted an obligation and were allowed a right to participate voluntarily in Church activities. It then traces the expansion of voluntary lay activity and the extent to which the changed conception of the lay role which this entailed was

accepted in the Church. The third section draws upon the preceding sections to examine the way in which the Church was compelled to experiment with new modes of exacting compliance from its members. It also examines the way in which the proponents of new ways sought to justify to Church members, especially laymen, the establishment of institutions separate from those of the State yet having authority to make decisions binding on all church members.

The time span in which I have chosen to test the hypothesis is, to some extent, an arbitrary one and I have not hesitated to follow the ramifications of a train of events when they clearly extended up to a decade or more outside the central period of 1850 to 1885. It is clear that the process of separation of Church and State began in earnest in the late 1820s with the repeal of the Test Acts and the enactment of Catholic emancipation. The process gathered momentum during the 30s and the first signs of major intellectual and organisational response from churchmen appeared in the form of the Oxford Movement and the establishment of voluntary societies to supplement traditional sources of manpower and revenue. But the irreversible loss of the old order was not really accepted by more than a handful of churchmen until several decades had passed and so the years around 1850 seem a more rewarding time in which to begin to test opinion on the subject of the lay role in the Church. Besides, the cluster of events around 1850 which stimulated many churchmen to reconsider the relations of Church and State - the Hampden affair, the Gorham judgment, disputes about the provision of national education, disputes about church rate, Papal

aggression, the 1851 Census and so forth - also encouraged them to reconsider the position of laymen in the national Church, and so explicit evidence about 'the lay role' becomes easier to find. 1885 seems an appropriate date by which to conclude for, by that time, the trend towards 'denominationalism' had had time to become apparent. The proposal to 'disestablish' the Church of England was, for the first and only time, a fairly major issue in the general election campaign of that year. The House of Laymen of Canterbury Convocation met for the first time in 1886, thus completing for the first time a full range of 'voluntary' representative institutions within the Church. And a new generation had grown up since mid-century which did not personally remember what it had been like to live under the old dispensation. (Archbishop Tait and Dr. Pusey, for instance, both died in 1882 and Lord Shaftesbury in 1885, thus depriving churchmen in the space of three years of the three men who were, arguably, their most prominent leaders.)

It is, of course, all too easy to over-estimate the extent of change which took place during this limited period and, by implication, to under-estimate the significance of developments which had occurred and initiatives which had already been taken by 1850. In particular, it is a temptation to set up some pre-industrial 'golden age' of territorially-based national churchmanship and ideologically undifferentiated values in order the better to contrast later developments. Yet a perspective longer than that provided by thirty-five years has to be acquired by some means. Unless we make some attempt to find out which relationships were relatively unchanging and which most subject to change, which 'problems'

or tensions between groups were recurrent and which ephemeral, we are left without a standard by which to judge significances and make comparisons. And besides, I am concerned in this thesis at least as much with what people thought the lay role was, used to be, and ought to be - that is, with idealised memories and expectations - as with what laymen actually did. Under some circumstances, then, it does seem permissible indeed useful, to set up 'ideal types' of behaviour and organisational structure. But every time I have done so I have tried constantly to bear in mind that, although these abstractions are constructed from evidence of 'real' events and bear a simplified likeness to some of those events, they are not intended to represent the historical reality of some once-existing state but to provide a somewhat arbitrary and, therefore, dependable standard of comparison.

The concept of 'role' is itself a sort of 'ideal type' and is used in everyday speech without confusion to denote not so much what people do as what other people expect or require them to do as identifiable occupants of a particular position in society.[1] However, the range of activities that can be conceived in terms of role-playing is enormous. It is not very useful to interpret people's behaviour in terms of the roles they play in society unless we can classify roles more precisely. The role of 'layman' is a peculiarly elusive role to define and there are two main reasons for this.

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1. This informal definition is not so very far removed from the more technically expressed definitions constructed by social scientists. E.g. M. Banton, Roles (1965), p.29, defines a 'role' as a 'set of norms and expectations applied to the incumbent of a particular position'.

The first reason is that all roles involving participation in religious activities are, in post-industrial societies, relatively 'diffuse' when compared with most other roles in society. The clergyman has a relatively diffuse role:[1] he is concerned with the total way in which people live rather than with specific and unrelated aspects of their lives. The role of 'layman' is to a large extent a residual role - the behaviour expected of religious believers who are not full-time professionals - and so it is even more diffuse. And 'diffuseness' may slide to the point of incoherence if a Church can claim, like the Church of England, that it is the Church of the residue of the nation and so claim as members all those citizens who have not specifically renounced allegiance to it. This leads us to the second reason for describing the role of laymen as elusive.

It is not always the case that all parties interested in the performance of a role can agree on what they expect performance of the role to involve. It is sometimes not even possible for all those who believe that they are performing the role to define its obligations in the same way or with the same emphases.[2] This was clearly true in the Church of England during the nineteenth century. In later chapters we will continually

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1. Russell, 'The Clergyman's Role', pp.13 ff. See also B.R. Wilson, 'The Teacher's Rôle - A Sociological Analysis', British Journal of Sociology, xiii (1962), p.22.

2. Wilson, 'The Teacher's Rôle', pp.27-31; R.K. Merton, 'The Role Set', British Journal of Sociology, viii (1957), 106-20.

be confronted with claims made by rival groups to represent 'the laity' of the Church of England or with conflicting pronouncements made by rival theorists about the nature and extent of laymen's rights and obligations. At various times, parliament, courts of law, owners of private patronage, the bishops, the Convocations of clergy, the diocesan conferences, some semi-political pressure-groups, and the press all claimed to represent 'the laity' of the Church of England (or at least to have access to its corporate opinions) and thus claimed authority to impose their particular conception of the lay role on the Church.

These considerations are no doubt unsatisfying in being both obvious and vague. However, they do alert us to certain major limitations in the nature of the evidence available when we set out to make a historical study of the lay role.

For example, when we are reminded that the lay role is a diffuse role, we are alerted to the existence of practical problems. We realise that, in the context of the Church, the clergy are performing a primary role and that, therefore, we can expect to find explicit and frequent evidence of what that role is conceived to be by various groups. There are people constantly concerned to define and uphold the integrity of the role of the clergyman, and other people concerned to define and restrict it. This is not really true of the layman's role. The people most concerned to define the role of the laity are usually the clergy. It is very obvious from bibliographies of nineteenth century Church history that the clergy spoke more, wrote more and therefore,

presumably, thought more about the lay role than any other group. This inbuilt 'bias' in the evidence is not easy to 'correct' because the evidence which might be used to correct it is either scattered or else non-existent.

This problem of weighted evidence also creates problems when we come to decide whether and to what extent we are going to accept the interpretations put on events by contemporaries - in particular, whether we are going to accept their descriptive categories of classification. We have noted that rival groups put forward rival conceptions of the lay role in the Church during the nineteenth century. The primary classifications which these rivals used were classifications in terms of Church 'party' - high, evangelical and broad. From these terms various more refined usages were developed and insulting epithets coined. The classifications of 'party' were of course, developed by contemporaries primarily to describe clergymen. Some groups of clergy had more cohesive traditions than others but probably a majority of clergy could be described as belonging to one of the traditions without unduly straining categories. The difficulty lies in deciding whether and under what circumstances it is permissible to extend the categories to describe laymen. Sometimes it is possible to identify vague groupings of lay churchmen outside the clerical categories but, as they are not groups with any strong tradition of distinctiveness, we are usually forced back to the clerical traditions, each of which did have a fairly strong idea of

the lay role in its schemes, even if not all laymen claimed under each scheme positively accepted the role provided for them.

It is usually only in section I that we have extensive evidence from relatively cohesive groups of laymen who spoke for themselves in discussing what they conceived their role to be. These groups were men such as the owners of private patronage - men with a traditionally defined role to perform. It is also worth noting that these men, members of a traditional ruling class, had a greater tradition of keeping archives and of taking part in the proceedings of organisations which kept records than did other churchmen. It has, for example, been far easier to collect biographical details of landowning, university-educated laymen than of middle-class laymen in commerce and trade.[1]

Having decided that we cannot really avoid relying on the clerical classifications of party when we identify the main lay traditions, it is important to establish a precise meaning for each classification. By 1853, when the rev. W.J. Conybeare published his exhaustive article on 'Church parties' in the Edinburgh Review,[2] the three central traditions,

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1. Main sources of basic biographical information referred to: Dictionary of National Biography; F.Boase, Modern English Biography; Alumni Oxonienses; Alumni Cantabrigienses; obituaries in The Times, the Guardian and other journals and magazines as referred to in text.

2. W.J. Conybeare, Essays Ecclesiastical and Social (1855), pp.57 ff. (reprinted from Edinburgh Review, Oct. 1853).

'high', 'evangelical' and 'broad', were well established. (The usage of the term 'low church' to describe evangelicals and broad churchmen on the basis of their shared anti-sacramentalist Protestantism was not quite so well established but was soon to become so.)

High churchmen in the early nineteenth century had formed the party of conservative orthodoxy, proclaiming the necessary interdependence of Church and State. But, as political conflict spread, high churchmen became progressively more disillusioned with the State alliance and, after the Tractarian movement of the 30s, 'high church' tended increasingly to imply a doctrinal rather than a political stance. High churchmen came to stand for many of the beliefs which sociologists would regard as 'churchly' - a belief in the objective efficacy of the sacraments, in the priestly role of the clergy and in the apostolic succession of bishops, for example. In fact, their tendency towards claiming their rightful place in the 'universal catholic church' at times went further than general public opinion would allow. The efforts of the Tractarians and of their 'ritualist and 'Anglo-Catholic' successors to revive the practice of confession and a more elaborate ritual were particularly condemned. Lawyers called such practices illegal, the educated public described them as sectarian, and the uneducated attacked them as Popery. Thus, being a high churchman could require of a man a very strong sense of voluntary commitment to practices and values openly condemned by the rest of society and only sustained by mutual support within a community of like-minded believers. All high churchmen accepted at the least a duty

to attend the services of the Church and to receive the sacraments, and to defer to the authority of the clergy and the Church hierarchy in matters of Church organisation. In political life, it was the high church party which pioneered most of the corporate assemblies of the Church. High churchmen came to believe that these assemblies were necessary to preserve the Church's values and its independence from State interference. However, there were two major checks on the overall progress of the high church party towards 'autonomy' and a 'voluntary' criterion of church membership. First a majority of high churchmen continued to stand for moderation and the preservation of Establishment through political compromise. This attitude was particularly widespread among politically and socially well-placed high church laity.[1] And, at parish level, the high church country clergy were strong in defence of their duty to serve as parish clergy to the whole community, not just the committed.

The evangelical party was the great party of individual piety and voluntary good works. The party was not as cohesive in organisation as the high church party tended to be but, as has been pointed out, it was only one branch of a movement which extended beyond the bounds of the Church of England. 'Evangelicalism' as a religious and social frame of mind, exerted an influence throughout Victorian society.[2] Evangelicals, when they had first appeared in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, had been condemned as enthusiasts by the

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1. See, e.g. P.T. Marsh, The Victorian Church in Decline (1969), p.156.

2. See G.F.A. Best, 'Evangelicalism and the Victorians' in A.Symondson (ed.), The Victorian Crisis of Faith (1970), pp.37-8, 47.

Church hierarchy and suspected as social subversives by authorities in the State. However, leading Church evangelicals of the era of Simeon and Wilberforce had struggled hard to discipline evangelical energies and to make evangelicals acceptable to authorities in Church and State. Church evangelicals had come to terms with the Establishment and, by the 50s and 60s, in the aftermath of the Gorham judgment and the 'Shaftesbury bishops' of Lord Palmerston's administration, were, with few reservations, staunch upholders of Establishment and the undifferentiated institutions of Church and State. However, evangelicals continued to conceive of salvation in individual rather than corporate terms and, in this way, they continued to be, if no longer a 'sectarian', at least a 'denominationalising' influence in the National Church. For example, they continued to regard all forms of organisation and discipline as matters to be judged more by instrumental than by doctrinal tests. And evangelical churchmen were also undeniably Protestant and so closer in many of their attitudes to nonconformists than to high churchmen. By the 1850s, they were well on the way towards becoming acceptable spokesmen for 'low church' opinion, though the intensity of their commitment to religious values (which low churchmen had suspected of unseemly enthusiasm in former times) had been of crucial importance in the evolution of the Tractarian movement. (Many leading Tractarians and mid-century high churchmen had been brought up in strongly evangelical families.[1]) However, evangelicals did not lose their belief

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1. D. Newsome, The Parting of Friends (1966), pp. 13-5.

that salvation rested more on their right of access to the scriptures than on clergy or hierarchy and, from time to time, they openly stated that their mission to spread salvation necessarily over-rode the constraints of normal ecclesiastical authority. They were not averse to corporate effort - they had, after all, been responsible for the foundation of most of the leading voluntary mission societies of the Church - but they were often impatient of ecclesiastical control. Their attitude towards Church membership was ambivalent as well. A large majority of them were committed to support the Church as a national institution subject (through parliament) to 'lay' control. Yet, true evangelicals were not involuntary but voluntary Church members in the sense that they were expected to have experienced some sort of conversion to Christ.

Broad churchmen[1] were a much more restricted elite and did not depend as much for their identity on corporate institutions or consciously shared traditions as did high churchmen or evangelicals. They tended to want the Church to provide the basis of a national consensus of values. If only other churchmen would relax their restrictive doctrinal tests of membership, they argued, then eventually the nonconformists might conform once again and the National Church become a reality - the institution through which community values could once more be asserted. The broad church leaders were almost invariably

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1. For origins of the term see O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church (1966-70), i.544.

connected with the great political families or the educational institutions of the traditional ruling class. They also tended to be qualified in secular rather than religious knowledge and they came increasingly to be associated with the acceptance of the new scientific knowledge which they hoped to reconcile with traditional values for the benefit of the educated public. Broad churchmen conceived of the clergy as trustees of the public interest, and administrators of a national organisation more than a priesthood or mission leadership. The lay role they conceived, in the secular manner, more in terms of 'rights' than of 'obligations'. They, of course, were the leading defenders of Establishment (in England at least) and of the right of every citizen to have access to, and a voice in the running of the National Church.

The final preliminary, before turning to discuss the development of the lay role, involves the definition of the terms 'national Church' and 'denomination'. I began by suggesting that changes in the role of laymen were associated with changes in the values and organisational structure of the Church of England and that these changes brought the Church nearer to being a denomination. It remains to explain what I understand by the terms 'church' and 'denomination'.

Both terms have been adopted by sociologists of religion to provide them with 'ideal types' of religious organisation which they then use to measure change and compare diverse examples. Yet there

is some difference of opinion between those who employ the terms. Broadly speaking, it appears that some wish to define the terms as analytically as possible - to make them pure abstractions dependent on as little historical and social context as language (itself subject to historical and social change) will allow - while others are content to adopt the terms with a large part of their descriptive context attached.[1] As I am concerned with a historical development and not with cross-cultural comparison, I find the second approach less distorting and more useful in locating significant developments and contrasts.

The original distinction which sociologists of religion, beginning with Troeltsch, made between various forms of religious organisation was a distinction between 'church' and 'sect'. It is well accepted that 'the Church is a religious organization which sees itself as coterminous in the society in which it exists, assuming the identity of the political and the religious community'.[2] This is the definition in a fairly analytical form. The social reality of the Church's self-perception has perhaps never been entirely true. It has certainly not been true in England since at least the seventeenth century and, even then, the Church had already assumed the form of a national Church rather than

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1. Cf. B.Johnson, 'On Church and Sect', American Sociological Review, xxviii (1963), 539-49; D.Martin, 'The Denomination', British Journal of Sociology, xiii (1962), 1-14.

2. B.R. Wilson, Religion in Secular Society (1969), p.242.

a branch of the universal Church. However, it follows that a Church tends to claim as its involuntary adherents all those who are born in a given territorial (usually politically defined) area. Its organisation is territorially based and hierarchically arranged, and tends to be integrated with that of the State. Its ideology is comprehensive and rigid in theory yet flexible and reliant on interpretation of precedent in practice. It is therefore as socially inclusive in its assumptions as is the Church's organisational structure. The sect on the other hand, is socially exclusive, is relatively unstructured in organisation and requires proof of merit before admitting to membership.

The denomination, it was once assumed, was a mature form of the sect - a socially tolerant form of religious organisation which emerged as the members of sects lost their initial fervour and became reconciled with the wider society.[1] However, it has now been accepted that this definition lies on too narrow a set of social assumptions to be of much explanatory value outside the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The denomination has now been explicitly restricted in meaning to a particular historical context - the context of economic expansion and political and social pluralism connected with the spread of industrial and urban living. Given this, it is quite as likely in a specific context that a denomination will emerge from a subsiding Church as from an expanding sect.[2] The crucial characteristics

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1. H.R. Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (1929), p.25.

2. Martin, 'The Denomination', pp.12, 11-3; Wilson, Religion in Secular Society, pp.248-9.

which distinguish the denomination from both church and sect are that it is 'voluntary but not exclusive'.[1] Membership is not acquired involuntarily but as the result of a voluntary act. However, the denomination makes no more than a cursory attempt to test the merit of its members either at the time of entry into membership or by way of control over behaviour after admission. Ideologically, the denomination claims no exclusive access to salvation. It does not require its members to reject the values of wider society in any fundamental sense nor does it prescribe any very rigorous submission to authorities within the denomination. It admits that each individual is responsible for finding his own relationship with God. People with specialised religious skills like the clergy may give advice but are, like all the organisations they lead and all the sacraments they preside over, only providing aids to salvation, to be accepted or rejected as needed. Thus denominations do not have the deeply-entrenched ideological objections which a church might be expected to have towards wide-ranging lay participation in their organisation and in their decision-making agencies.

Having defined the chief attributes of both 'church' and 'denomination', we can eventually use them to measure the extent of the change from one type of organisation to the other in the areas with which we are particularly concerned in the Church of England. However, we must first establish the role of the laity in the Church as

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1. Martin, 'The Denomination', pp.4-10; Wilson, Religion in Secular Society, pp.243-4.

it appeared in 1850. This is one of the main concerns of Section I which follows.

SECTION I

LAYMEN BY BIRTH : THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF THE LAITY AND ITS DECLINE

CHAPTER 2

STANDARDS OF COMPARISON

The years around 1850 are perhaps the most revealing time of the nineteenth century in which to define the role of laymen in the Church of England. Never were people more aware of the discrepancy between the claims of the Church to be the Church of the Nation and the reality of religious practice, recently revealed in the 1851 census. The statistics of this census might be interpreted to mean widely different things but it did seem fairly clear that, in England and Wales on the crucial Sunday in March 1851 when the census was taken, at least a third of the population attended no place of worship at all and, among attendants, a bare majority attended at a service of the Church of England.[1] The theory of Church membership remained as it had been in Elizabethan times: every citizen of England was a member of the national Church. It was true that certain groups had been granted 'toleration' ever time and, by the mid-nineteenth century, political rights as well but the presumption still remained clear. One was an involuntary member of the Church of England unless one took steps to dissociate oneself (and even then one ran the risk of broad Churchmen describing one as 'a nonconforming member of the Church of England'). The vast majority of laymen were thus (as in any established

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1. O.Chadwick, The Victorian Church (1966-70), i. 363 ff.

Church) passive recipients of religious services rather than active participants. If they were participants, then, in traditional society, their activity was more plausibly explained in terms of political, administrative or social duty than of purely 'religious' zeal.

The case must not be overstated: it is of course a distortion to set up a composite picture of a vague 'pre-industrial' golden age of traditional social institutions - institutions which did not require men to distinguish their roles as citizens from their roles as churchmen or religious from secular social values. However this stereotype is a simplification in the direction of a general truth and does help to give added point and lengthened perspective to the nineteenth century issues with which this section will be concerned.

In the context of the traditional parish of the Church of England, layman usually meant the same as landowner. In the ideal paternally-governed agricultural parish, layman meant one landowner whose holdings coincided with the parish and whose tenants were parishioners of the church which he (through his predecessors) had endowed and for which he as patron chose an incumbent to care for the spiritual welfare of the parish. The incumbent, like his patron, would on presentation and institution become a landowner himself, and he had already been educated at a university in company with the sons of the gentry so squire and parson would share a common outlook on life. The relationship was seldom so simple as that. It was only in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century that the social status of the clergy had risen, in a period of agricultural

prosperity, to place them with the gentry,[1] and the rise was more one of aspiration than of reality outside agricultural central and southern England. There were far more ordained clergy than there were benefices available, and even the beneficed clergy did not enjoy a particularly secure or adequate income in the parishes of Wales and the far north of England or in the newly subdivided parishes of the industrial and urban areas. Still, where the social status of the clergyman did approximate to that of the resident gentry, this social position did tend to define the clergyman's total role in the parish. His specifically 'priestly' role was regarded as no more than a vaguely defined professionalism, protected by the law at a few points to preserve his monopoly on the conduct of the public services of the Church. The law aside, what a clergyman did any layman of equivalent social status might do also. As one Norfolk squire heatedly exclaimed te his parson in 1845:

> I have a right to pull it [the church vestry] down if I please ... I cannot see that your conduct is at all more important than mine. I am as answerable for the souls of my parish as you are. There is not the least difference in our situations except that I cannot perform the services of the Church.[2]

Squire and parson administered the parish together. Sometimes they were the same person. Sometimes they belonged to the same family. The squire

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1. G.F.A.Best, Temporal Pillars (1964), pp.62-4; D.McClatchey, Oxfordshire Clergy 1777-1869 (1960), pp.98-9.

2. O. Chadwick, Victorian Miniature (1960), p.89.

might well be a churchwarden, responsible to the parish vestry for the upkeep of the fabric and the provision of the material necessities for public worship. He might also draw income in the same way as the parson by being a 'lay impropriator' of tithes. The clergyman in turn might be a fellow Justice of the Peace as well as a local landlord. In such a situation there was no need to cultivate 'lay' activity as such: the support of the clergyman, the maintenance of the church building and of facilities for public worship, and the performance of the rites of passage were in no way dependent on voluntary contribution but were based on recognised legal privilege and obligation. The National Church provided a public service for the whole community on a territorial basis. W.C. Magee, later to become archbishop of York, was arguing uncompromisingly in 1860:

> The poor man has the same right to the services of the parish clergyman, that he has to those of the parish doctor, and for the same reason - both are officers of the State, appointed to minister to him gratuitously.[1]

It was arguable that the National Church, while no longer fully Established in the political sense, was still socially a part of 'the Constitution of England', and that any attempt to distinguish between its functions and those of the State could be expected to endanger the security of both:

> The day that sees the statesmen of England yield to popular clamour the property and rights of the national Church, will see all other property and all other rights

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1. W.C. Magee, The Voluntary System: Can it supply the place of the Established Church? (1860), p.48.

> receive a shock that shall full surely and full speedily result in their destruction too. Those who refuse to defend the Church may soon be called upon to defend the last fragments of the State.[1]

The problem with this vision of the Church as a symbol of the ordered and self-regulating local community was that by the mid-nineteenth century it bore little relation to reality in most parishes. The population increases and shifts of the previous hundred years had, in countless areas, made the parish an anachronism as a unit of local administration. In newly urbanised areas and in neglected rural areas too, the Church of England failed to restore (if it had ever existed) the territorial system. In many cases this provided opportunities for the spread of Dissent or of open indifference to religious practice - the extension of an imperfection which had been apparent since at least the end of the seventeenth century. Yet from time to time, even in mid-nineteenth century we catch a glimpse of the old system and of its presuppositions - of the squire of a single-estate agricultural parish objecting that the unduly evangelical preaching of the parson attracts 'strangers' from neighbouring parishes into the parish church.[2] And this protest, of itself, witnesses to the growing tension between traditional community values and more purely 'religious' values which accompanied the break-up of a relatively settled society and which was

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1. Ibid., p.73
2. Chadwick, Victorian Miniature, p.79.

such a distinguishing feature of nineteenth century life. The evangelical revival of the mid- and late-eighteenth century foreshadowed the process by often sharply contrasting the requirements of personal salvation with the requirements of 'normal' social behaviour. But it was the Oxford Movement which developed this aspect of evangelical thought most decisively within the national Church, by reinstating the clergy in their 'priestly' role - a role legitimated by reference to a purely 'religious' system of values rather than by reference to values shared by secular society. A heightened sense of vocation spread throughout the clerical profession and, by mid-century, was well established among high churchmen. From this, and from the example of nonconformist 'voluntary' commitment, came the framework upon which a changed and less diffuse definition of 'layman' might be constructed in contrast to the ascribed and largely nominal definition of membership accepted, however grudgingly, within the old National Church.

This transformation became evident far beyond the parish. It had its effect on all the national institutions upon which the Church relied and into which it was integrated. In particular, the relationship of the Church with Crown and parliament came under increasing strain. The sovereign was the formal head of the Church of England, responsible for the nomination of its bishops and deans and many of its lesser clergy, and also for the final and authoritative interpretation of ecclesiastical law. (This latter jurisdiction was, after 1833, exercised by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in ecclesiastical causes, a body in which lay judges always formed a majority.) And parliament, three

hundred years after the Reformation still laid tenuous claim to representing the laity of the Church of England. By the 1850s it had allowed that Dissenters, Catholics and Jews (but not yet atheists) might take part in its work but it still claimed the authority to legislate on all matters of doctrine, forms of worship and ecclesiastical discipline as well as to regulate the temporalities of the Church.

Relations with the Crown had become strained as an increasing number of Churchmen, mainly high church clergy, began to object to secular authority being used to promote and protect clergy of doubted doctrinal orthodoxy. Two celebrated cases came to a head in the late 1840s. In 1847 Lord John Russell, prime minister at the time, nominated Hampden bishop of Hereford. Hampden's earlier theological writings had been censured by the University of Oxford. In 1850 came the Gorham judgement in which the Privy Council upheld the right of a markedly evangelical clergyman to demand from the high church bishop of Exeter than he be instituted to the benefice to which the Lord Chancellor had presented him.

Relations with parliament became strained as the result of the activities of 'political Dissent'. The civil privileges of the Church of England and its institutional wealth came under attack. The last time that parliament made a direct grant of public money to the Church came in the 1820s, before the Test Acts were even repealed. By 1844 the British Anti-State Church Association had been founded (renamed the Liberation Society in 1853) and by 1847 it was acting as a pressure group at parliamentary elections, seeking pledges from candidates to support

legislation establishing 'religious equality'. The upsurge of nonconformist political activity from the 1840s to the 1880s may in fact have been an indication of nonconformist frustration in the face of a burst of renewed vigour and successful expansion by the Church of England[1] - though to churchmen at the time the position of the Established Church appeared anything but secure.

It had been in an attempt to remove the most contentious aspect of ecclesiastical affairs from parliamentary politics that Peel had in 1835 moved to set up the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. This expedient - of forming an organisation with responsibility for administering and redistributing the corporate wealth of the Church, being neither a body of clergy nor yet a department of State - was thankfully accepted by the leading politicians of both traditional parliamentary parties. The composition and powers of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had to be modified from time to time to meet 'lay' pressures (notably in 1850 when an Estates Committee was set up to take charge of all property management, thus replacing 'a big part-time, amateur board [which included all the bishops] by a small, full-time professional one'), but in general the settlement held and the Church was insulated from direct political pressures in this area.[2]

However, the campaign against the privileges of the Church in other areas grew substantially during the 1840s in spite of the continued dominance of the traditional political classes at Westminster.

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1. A.D. Gilbert, 'The Growth and Decline of Nonconformity in England and Wales', (Oxford D.Phil.thesis 1973), pp.73-4, 357-8.

2. Best, Temporal Pillars, pp.393-7.

In a crisis the Church of England might expect to draw on the support of the vast majority of members of parliament. Not only did the bishops still sit in the House of Lords, but the temporal peers and the majority of members of the House of Commons (who as often as not owned the private patronage) were related to the more prosperous and influential clergy and perhaps drew income from tithes or leased Church property. The fear was that, in politics, the 'crisis' might never be so clear-cut as to rally all Churchmen on the one side. The National Church might be lost by an extended series of minor compromises. This was especially possible in the confused state of mid-century ecclesiastical affairs. Given the deterioration in relations between Church and State there were two equally deeply-felt responses possible. One could point to the indifference of 'erastian' politicians to newly rediscovered religious values and believe that the first priority of Churchmen was to defend the Church as an ideologically defined institution - to defend doctrine. One could also point to the hostility of the nonconformists to the Church's political and legal privileges and believe that the over-riding duty of Churchmen was to defend the Establishment and the material resources which allowed the Church to claim that it was still the Church of the nation. One lay churchman deeply concerned with the dilemma was W.E. Gladstone, and he recorded the confused state of the issue in 1854 when he warned a clergyman:

> Your letter is ... but another proof /that/ the great bulk of those who love the Church of England are not yet awake to one-half of her difficulties and her dangers ... You think no-one would dispute that it is better to have a

> Faith without State Alliance than State Alliance without a Faith. On the contrary, I find tha the great majority of the members of the Church of England do dispute and deny in word or act this very proposition.[1]

We now turn to trace the developing response of churchmen to each issue of this dilemma, showing how response to both issues influenced the conception of the lay role among churchmen.

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1. D.C. Lathbury (ed.), Correspondence on Church and Religion of W.E. Gladstone (1910), i. 126-8: Gladstone to Rev,E.Stokes, 17 August 1854.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEFENCE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT (1) : CHURCH DEFENCE ORGANISATIONS

The main issues over which churchmen and nonconformists fought between the 1850s and 80s are well-enough known. The campaigns for the abolition of church rate, for the right of nonconformists to churchyard burial, for 'non-sectarian' elementary education, for the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland and finally for the disestablishment of the Church of England - all these have been studied in detail by recent historians.[1] The aim of this chapter is therefore limited to tracing the changing role of laymen in the political defence of the Church.

We have already noted the increased political activity of nonconformists during the 1840s. The Liberation Society was only the most extreme fringe of a general movement against the privileges of Establishment. In 1843 Peel's Conservative government had had to withdraw the education clauses of its factory bill because they were

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1. See e.g. O.J. Brose, Church and Parliament: The Reshaping of the Church of England 1828-1860 (1959); W.H. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation: The Movement for the Separation of the Anglican Church from State Control (1972) (though this book is more a compilation of potentially significant raw material than a considered interpretation); O. Anderson, 'Gladstone's Abolition of Compulsory Church Rates: a Minor Political Myth and its Historiographical Career', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XXV (1974), 185-98; P.M.H. Bell, Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales (1969).

alleged to favour churchmen and so aroused widespread nonconformist opposition. It seemed that not even a government otherwise well-disposed towards the Church dared assert the logical consequences of Establishment. As the campaign for the abolition of church rate got under way it began to seem that no government was prepared even to preserve the existing privileges of the Church when faced by sustained agitation. There had been a series of individuals conscientiously refusing to pay church rate for many years. In the 1830s and 40s opposition to church rate became an organised movement in some parishes. In Birmingham and Leeds, for example, it proved impossible for any vestry meeting to agree on a rate after the early 30s, so no rate was levied. By 1855 a parliamentary return revealed that 408 (or approximately 5%) of parishes were refusing to levy a church rate, and the Liberation Society claimed that many more parishes did not even attempt to hold the vestry meeting required to levy the rate, knowing that the cause was hopeless.[1] The campaign against the rate had been greatly aided by the decision of the House of Lords in the Braintree case. The Lords decided in 1853, after sixteen years of litigation, that, while the law required a parish to keep its church in repair, there was no legal means of compelling a vestry to levy a rate if it was unable to agree on an amount to be raised. This was an open invitation to organised warfare in vestry meetings.

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1. Conybeare, Essays Ecclesiastical and Social, p.242; Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation, pp.65-72.

The matter had proved as intractable in parliament as in any parish vestry. As early as 1835-7 the Whig government had been negotiating to offer the Church access to alternative sources of revenue (possibly even a government grant) in return for an agreement to acquiesce in the abolition of church rate. The proposal had been too advanced a suggestion for the Conservative leadership, for Archbishop Howley and even for many Whig M.Ps. All feared that abolition would be the first step to the ultimate goal of radical Dissent - disestablishment.[1] The matter lapsed. Then in the late 40s the question of abolition was raised once again, though without government encouragement. By 1856 the abolitionists were able to muster so many supporters in the House of Commons that Palmerston's government decided to treat the matter as an open question&,until 1861, the abolitionists mustered an annual majority in the Commons. However the House of Lords remained obstructive. The longer the matter remained unsettled the more chance defenders of the Establishment were given to arouse sluggish supporters. In 1861 the defenders of the rate regained their majority in the Commons - with the casting vote of the Speaker on the third reading. The Liberation Society then felt obliged to reconsider its tactics. It abandoned its hopes of an immediate parliamentary victory and turned back to organise a campaign of 'agitation' at parish and constituency level.

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1. Brose, Church and Parliament, pp.55-7, 159-60; Chadwick, Victorian Church, i. 146 ff.

It was during this sequence of events that certain churchmen came to abandon the fiction of regarding parliament as the laity of the Church of England and to accept the need to organise an interest group in parliament and in local constituencies in the same manner as nonconformists were doing. Even the traditional party defenders of the Church interest, the Tories, were now unreliable. They had split, and high church ex-Tories like Gladstone seemed to be less enthusiastic defenders of Establishment than many 'erastian' Whigs. High-minded churchmen bemoaned the decline of 'principle', and the spread of 'expediency', as a motive for political action. But, as we shall find, more practically-minded churchmen turned their thoughts towards mastering the new techniques of political influence. (It should be remembered that between the two Reform Acts, in the 'golden age' of the individual M.P., parliamentarians were perhaps more subject to locally-based interest groups than before or since; governments no longer had the patronage to keep their followers in order and had not yet acquired the machinery of national party organisation to discipline their supporters in the modern manner.)

The Committee of Laymen and the Church Institution were the first organisations to make a sustained attempt to defend the interests of the Establishment in politics. In fact they only emerged in this role after a decade of vigorous but ephemeral activity among churchmen who, as we have seen, were not yet certain whether their first duty was to doctrine or to the Establishment. Hampden, Gorham, the education question, university reform and church rate stimulated local groups of clergy and laymen in many parts of the country to form Church unions and Church defence associations. As early as 1848 a 'Watching Committee

on Church Matters' was formed in London. This organisation began as a body for 'deliberation and advice, with a special view to the parliamentary and political fortunes of the Church', but , illustrating the ambiguity of the situation, eventually merged with the London Union on Church Matters, a body which, by sponsoring public meetings against the Gorham judgement and in other ways, became an organisation primarily concerned with the defence of doctrine.[1] The whole sequence of events illustrates the fact that by the early 50s it had proved impossible to use the phrase 'Church defence' as a rallying cry: it conjured up a response among groups with incompatible presuppositions and wildly conflicting plans of action.

However, by the mid-50s, the immediate ferment over doctrine had subsided, and it became clear that the vast majority of churchmen felt their peace of mind threatened most immediately by the agitation for the abolition of church rate. It was in this atmosphere that the self-recruited Committee of Laymen began its work of rallying support for the Establishment within parliament. It had a rather longer than average life for a mid-century Church pressure group but its operations remain difficult to uncover as its organisation was casual and its activities sporadic. It was founded in 1856 and seems to have disappeared by the mid-60s, its work largely taken over by the Church Institution.[2]

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1. A.J.B. Beresford Hope, The Church Cause and the Church Party (1860), pp.13-7.

2. CCR, 1861, pp.44-9 (J.M. Knott); 1866, p.280 (J.M. Clabon).

The Secretary and most active member was John Knott and he died in 1866. It is difficult to find out anything about Knott's career or activities. He was probably a landowner in north Warwickshire, the constituency which C.N. Newdegate represented in parliament for forty years. Newdegate, the most prominent parliamentary defender of the 'Protestant' cause of his day (and last-ditch opponent of the church rate settlement of 1868), was also a member of the Committee of Laymen. All the members of the Committee stood well within the boundaries of traditional political society and the landed interest. They were generally staunchly old-fashioned Conservatives (the sixth Duke of Marlborough, C.B. Adderley, Lord John Manners) though they included the occasional Peelite (Sir Stafford Northcote - who, of course, returned to the Conservative party). And they were generally 'Protestants' of a convinced evangelical or low church cast - J.C. Colquhoun and Newdegate between them were later to sponsor the foundation of the Church Association, the scourge of ritualism - though they included some prominent high churchmen (Lord Robert Cecil, Henry Hoare).

The methods of operation of the Committee strongly reflected the secure position of its members within traditional political society. Although it did make some attempt to meet the Liberation Society on its own ground it was not very active in organising extra-parliamentary activity. It published the occasional pamphlet or transcript of a parliamentary debate, but, so far as I can find, never held a public meeting. Its chief goal was to give advance warning of moves against the Establishment in parliament and to mobilise support for the Church in the lobbies of the House of Commons. It was remarkably successful

in achieving this goal, or else its Liberationist opponents by their intransigence did its work for it. By 1861, when Churchmen won back the majority on church rate in the Commons which they had lost in the mid-50s, the House was almost completely polarised: more than 600 MPs voted in the division on the second reading in 1862, as against approximately 400 each year between 1854 and 1858. All the traditional methods of bringing pressure to bear on parliamentarians were brought into play. Draft parliamentary petitions were forwarded to clergy and churchwardens. 'Appeals' were made to the electors containing 'corrections' to Liberation Society statistics on the incidence of church rate and alleging that, behind the banner of freedom of conscience, the Liberation Society was carrying on a campaign of political and social extremism, the end result of which not even its unscrupulous leaders could predict.[1]

The Committee invited bishops to endorse its activities.[2] It sponsored deputations to Lord Palmerston and then to Lord Derby when he became prime minister.[3] And, while it awaited the outcome of its parliamentary campaign, it distributed hints to clergy and churchwardens on their legal and procedural rights at Easter vestry meetings in an attempt to counteract the effects of the Braintree judgement.[4]

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1. Committee of Laymen, Papers, Nos.3-4, 8-9.

2. Tait Papers, vol.108, ff.229-34: correspondence between J.M.Knott and Bishop Tait of London, Feb.-March 1858.

3. Committee of Laymen, Papers, Nos.6-7.

4. Ibid., No.5.

There can be no doubt that the Committee of Laymen was a group with extremely conservative political and social presuppositions in addition to its religious views. Its members believed that all change was dangerous, all attacks on existing social institutions attacks on the entire social order. The Liberation Society was 'a central and unconstitutional body': it was undermining the traditions of local self-government and advocating resistance to the payment of a legally sanctioned tax in every way as socially necessary as the poor rate or the highway rate. Knott later claimed that, if the 'democratic virus' of political Dissent had not been opposed, the country might well have gone the way of the war-torn United States. If England had abandoned a State Church for the 'veluntary system', he argued, then:-

> [T]he separation of the Church from the State would have been probable, and, if effected, would in ten years, or less, have been followed by a republic in this nation, and the repudiation of the national debt.[1]

This was a particularly apocalyptic vision of the uncontrollability of social change, once begun, though it reflected the anxieties and indignation of more temperate churchmen as well, once faced with the political intransigence of the church rate abolitionists.[2]

The chief limitation of the Committee of Laymen - its restricted and elite political membership - was also its strength as long as parliamentary reform remained in a state of arrested development.

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1. J.M. Knott, Letters to the Editor of 'The Record'; dated 24 March 1364 and 12 August 1864.

2. Conybeare, Essays Ecclesiastical and Social, pp.249-52 (based on an article first published in the Edinburgh Review, October 1854).

However, a complete defence against Liberationist activities would have to be built on a much wider and more permanent base. The organisation which eventually emerged to meet the Liberation Society on its own terms was the Church Institution (renamed the Church Defence Institution in the early 70s). This body was founded in 1859 to complement the parliamentary activities of the Committee of Laymen,[1] and indeed, the membership of the two bodies overlapped. The avowed aim of the Institution was to counteract 'attempts ... made to sap and destroy the union which from time immemorial has subsisted in this country between the Church and the State'.[2] It claimed to be a body free of party or doctrinal bias, composed exclusively of laymen who, as representatives of a national network of local branches, could claim to represent the entire laity of the Church of England. Inevitably the reality fell short of the claim but, as the Institution did survive much longer than its predecessors and did eventually assume a semi-official role in defending the Establishment, it is useful to study its rather unimpressive origins and over-dramatised early years.

The Committee of Laymen had been clearly 'Protestant' in character: it represented traditional values and a distaste for change in religious as in political and social attitudes. The founders of

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1. H.Hoare, Hints on Lay Co-operation (1858), pp.358 ff.
2. J.B. Sweet, A Memoir of the Late Henry Hoare (1869), p.447.

the Church Institution were at first suspected of high church and possibly tractarian tendencies. This charge they denied,[1] but it was true that high churchmen dominated its first executive committee.[2] The sponsors of the committee which set up the Institution were Henry Hoare (1807-66), a banker, and F.H. Dickinson (1813-90), a west country squire and ex-county member. Both were prominent in the campaign for the revival of Convocation, a predominantly high church movement. Other committee members included Earl Nelson, Lord Robert Cecil, A.J.B. Beresford Hope and J.G. Hubbard, all high churchmen. However, the defence of the Establishment was by no means an exclusively high church concern and by the early 60s the central council contained a fair proportion of evangelicals and broad churchmen. (The archbishop of Canterbury agreed to preside at the annual general meeting for the first time in 1864.[3]). The chairmen of the Institution were men of generally moderate churchmanship. They included J.M. Clabon (1815-93), a London solicitor and parliamentary agent, and H.C. Raikes (1838-91), Conservative M.P. for Chester 1868-80 and later for Cambridge University, who was to become first chairman of the Central Council of Diocesan Conferences in 1881. The Institution was slightly more

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1. Tait Papers, Vol.108, ff. 222-3: Hoare to Bishop Tait of London, 22 Feb. 1858; Vol.116, ff.63-4, copy of Hoare's 'Second letter to the clergy of the Diocese of London', 8 March 1860.

2. List in Sweet, Hoare, p.446. Hoare later related how he had been too 'advanced' for the Committee of Laymen and had left it: Church Institution Circular, xvi. 312 (June 1862).

3. Church Institution Circular, xxxix. 72-3 (Feb. 1864).

successful in dissociating itself from the charge of being a pressure group within the Conservative party than the Committee of Laymen had been able to do - at least in the early years. This was because its founders were disillusioned by the cavalier attitude of politicians in general to the interests of the Church, rather than because it attracted any number of Liberals. In later years the connection between the Institution and the Conservative party became explicit. Raikes resigned the chairmanship in 1874 on appointment as chairman of committees in the Commons after Disraeli's election victory. Wilbraham Egerton (1832-1909) (second baron Egerton, succeeded 1883, & first earl, created 1897), chairman from 1874 to 1896, was a close friend of Lord Salisbury (formerly Lord Robert Cecil) and a leading Conservative magnate in Cheshire and Lancashire.

As to the claim of the Institution to be representative of the laity of the national Church, it was true that it drew on a rather wider range of supporters both geographically and socially than had previous Church defence associations, but the network of local branches was never completed during Hoare's lifetime and the mode of election of representatives to the central council was never intended to be in any way 'democratic'. Hoare had developed his plans for a central Institution of lay representatives in the context of his campaign for the revival of Convocation. It was a compromise designed to satisfy those who (like Dickinson) were concerned to associate 'the laity' in Church government without alarming those already claiming to play a constitutional part in Church government - the bishops and clergy in

Convocation and the traditional representatives of the lay interest, Crown and parliamentarians. (The movement for Convocation revival is discussed fully in section III), Hoare agreed that the Church could best defend itself by encouraging upper and middle class participation in defence of the Establishment on a national basis. But he was a cautious man. From 1856 onwards he began a campaign to encourage the clergy to invite 'lay consultees' to their rural deanery meetings.[1] By 1859 he claimed to have the active support of fourteen of the twenty-one bishops in the province of Canterbury, and he had plans to call together 820 'central consultees' - laymen representing the London area and every rural deanery in England and Wales.[2] Hoare believed that the scheme would produce a body both 'powerful and safe'. It was certainly safe from the point of view of the clergy. The central council of the Church Institution were all laymen, but the vast majority of them were appointed by the clergy. (A few exceptions were made in the case of existing mixed-member Church defence associations agreeing to affiliate with the new Institution.) The rules and regulations of the Institution were drawn up in close consultation with leading members of the hierarchy and the London clergy.[3] However, the 'power' of the Institution was not immediately apparent. It claimed to be in association with almost 450 Church defence and ruridecanal organisations by the beginning of

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1. Sweet, Hoare, pp.439-45.

2. Hoare, Hints, pp.657 ff, 697-722, 763 ff. However, cf. his later disenchantment with the scheme in action: CCR, 1862, pp.165 ff. (esp. speeches of Hoare and A. Brady).

3. Tait Papers, Vol.116, ff. 46-52, 54-8; Hoare, Hints, pp.705, 757 ff.

1864 (as against 165 at the end of 1860),[1], but of these only about half seem to have appointed representatives to the central council. The average attendance of representatives at meetings of the council fluctuated between 50 and 80 or so in the early 60s. The income of the Institution was always precarious: there were some sharp exchanges between those who wanted a balanced budget and those who believed that 'the Church generally would indemnify them' if they overextended their resources in a good cause.[2] The inevitable comparison with the Liberation Society was made: the Institution's income in 1861 was £1095, barely a quarter of that of its rival. By 1863 it was still under £2000 and two hundred of its associated rural deaneries were making no contribution to its funds. By 1871 income had slumped almost to the level of 1861, and was only one seventh of the income the Liberation Society had had at the peak of its success in 1869.[3]

However, the Institution was the first organisation to attempt to rally extra-parliamentary support for the Church through a nationally

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1. Church Institution Circular, i, 10 (5 March 1862); xxxix. 74 (Feb. (1864)

2. Ibid., xxx. 174 (March 1863).

3. Ibid., xxi. 400 (July 1862); xxxix. 84-5 (Feb. 1864); The National Church, 1872, pp.61-3; Bell, Disestablishment, pp.18-9, Bell notes that the Liberation Society income for 1869 was extraordinarily large, especially when compared with that of the national political party organisations which were still operating on incomes of less than £2000 p.a. in the early 1880s.

co-ordinated system of local activity and the relative statistical weaknesses of the results should not be allowed to obscure the innovations in techniques of organisation. As long as the campaign for church rate abolition seemed on the point of succeeding in parliament the Institution was rather overshadowed by the Committee of Laymen (though even at this stage of the struggle, Hoare appropriated to himself a great deal of the credit for successful resistance.[1]) Once supporters of the rate regained their Commons majority and the Liberation Society formally decided that nothing was to be hoped for from the parliament then sitting, the campaign was carried back to the constituencies and parish vestries once more and the Church Institution became a central agency of Church defence. The Liberation Society had a national network of branches. It sponsored public meetings and lecture tours, organised opposition to church rate in vestry meetings and distributed propaganda. It collected and published statistics on the voting behaviour of M.Ps, and, during election campaigns, sought to obtain pledges from candidates under threat of withdrawing the support of its members within the constituency if the pledges were not given. Occasionally it was powerful enough to have one of its own members put forward as a Liberal candidate.[2] The Church Institution sought to neutralise the influence of the Liberation Society in most of its activities. It published the usual type of counter-propaganda to reveal the socially subversive 'ultimate aims' and

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1. Tait Papers, Vol.124, f.16: Hoare to Tait, 17 July 1861.
2. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation, pp.52-7, 120-4.

unforeseen consequences of political Dissent. It gave legal advice to clergy concerning the conduct of vestry meetings and used its publications to urge loyal churchmen to attend their parish vestries.[1] It made various attempts, none very successful, to extend its organisation beyond rural deanery level and into individual parishes. (Hoare's London Churchwardens' Association was one of the earlier attempts to do this.[2]) However, these attempts were clear evidence that the Institution had finally rejected the attraction of becoming a shrunken elite operating purely within a Westminster context, and had committed itself to becoming, in principle, a mass movement.[3] From time to time it tried to emulate the Liberation Society by bringing pressure to bear on M.Ps. in the constituencies as well as within parliament but here it ran the risk of becoming an adjunct of the Conservative party and of making it difficult for the clerical hierarchy to support it. Bishop Gilbert of Chichester felt able to endorse the Institution as 'in no way .. aggressive, or in any proper sense of the word, political',[4] and many of the Institution's supporters were disillusioned with all political parties.[5] However, the customary electoral resolution of the

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1. Church Institution Circular, vi. 105-7 (April 1862); vii. 116 (April, 1862); xxxiii.258 (June 1863).
2. Sweet, Hoare, pp.455-7.
3. Church Institution Circular, xxxix.76 (Feb. 1864).
4. Ibid., xxvi. 63 (Nov. 1862)
5. A.J.B. Beresford Hope, Church Politics and Church Prospects (1865), p.7.

Institution recited that churchmen had a duty to oppose any M.P. who had voted for the abolition of church rate in parliament,[1] and this could only work against the Liberal party.

There was another even more immediate practical dilemma which the Institution faced as a political pressure group. Its prime object was to defend the Establishment, but some of its members believed that defence might involve the amendment or reform of the law rather than mere assertion of the status quo. The status quo was, after all, distinctly unsatisfactory now that it included such legal decisions as the Braintree judgement. The Institution faced the same problem of deciding whether its role was to resist attack or to take initiatives in several other issues, but in none more urgently than in church rate. All churchmen in politics faced this problem. The alternatives were most starkly summed up by a speaker at an Institution central council meeting in 1863:

> He believed ... that the reliance of the Church must hereafter be placed, not in the vain hope of obtaining power for minorities to coerce majorities, but in the extension of its influence over the population of the country so as not merely to retain its present hold over the majority of the inhabitants of the country at large, but by the exhibition of its worth and the active promulgation of its principles, to obtain the ascendancy to which it is entitled in each separate locality ....[2]

After the threat of imminent defeat receded, churchmen in fact divided in several ways. There were those who relapsed into indifference There were those who wished the Church to adopt the voluntary system,

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1. Church Institution Circular, xvi.311-2 (June 1862).
2. Ibid., xxxiii.258 (June 1863).

relying on the offertory of congregations rather than the church rate of the parish even where it could be enforced. But within the orthodox circles of the Church Institution there were two major schools of thought. There were those who relied on the continued existence of the common law and sought technical solutions to the problem of its enforcement in the minority of parishes in which it was a contentious issue. And there were those like the speaker quoted who sought to retain the legal privilege of the Church by so improving the services provided by the national Church that its claim to public support might become non-contentious.

The upholders of the first view were the more politically conservative. They preferred to have no change at all, and, from time to time, pointed out that churchmen, not having begun the agitation, were under no obligation to suggest a solution to the problem. Several leaders of the Institution, though not fully accepting the dogmatism of this argument, found it convenient in practice to agree with its conclusions: they realised that an attempt to commit the Institution to a specific measure of legislation would split its supporters.[1] The leading exponent of legislation was Hoare, who had a plan for solving the whole issue by technical modifications in the system of assessment and collection of church rate. He proposed that a bill be sponsored to transfer the duty of paying rate from occupiers to landowners or, alternatively, that the rate be levied and collected in the same manner as highway rate. This plan at least had the recommendation that it

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1. Ibid, xvi.312 (June 1862, R.S.Sowler, Q.C.); ii.25-6 (March 1862, J.M.Clabon); xi.201 (May 1862, A.J.B.Beresford Hope).

avoided the ignominious compromise of allowing for 'conscientious exemption' from payment of the rate, a solution which was unsatisfactory to Church Institution and Liberation Society members alike. But nobody was quite sure how far the landowning interest could be expected to sacrifice itself on behalf of the Church, and churchmen with any plans for attracting a wider social range of laymen to the defence of the Church were horrified by the reinforcement of the 'feudal' element which such a plan would bring about. The Church Institution could not agree to commit itself to a legislative solution of the problem.[1] In this it was in fact representative of wider Church opinion as expressed in parliament, in the press, and at the newly formed Church Congresses. It is true that Gladstone was on the point of writing privately that 'it is sometimes necessary in politics to make surrenders of what, if not surrendered, will be wrested from us'.[2] But conservative politicians with much less suspect reputations among churchmen than Gladstone could get nowhere with suggestions that churchmen should compromise while they were in a position to do so gracefully.[3] To exclude parishioners from liability for rates, it was argued, would exclude them from the right to participate in church activities and so weaken the claim of the Church of England to be a national Church. Suggestions for technical amendment of

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1. Ibid, xi.201-8; xiii.255-62, esp.205-7, 260-1 (Hoare), 256-7 (Beresford Hope) (May 1862).

2. J.Morley, Life of Gladstone (1903), ii.159-60: W.E.Gladstone to W.H.Gladstone, 16 April 1865.

3. CCR, 1861, pp.31-54,esp. 34-6 (R.A.Cross), 52-3 (J.G.Hubbard).

the law met with a better response. Hoare's plan, already described, was very similar to proposals which had been strongly recommended by a select committee of the House of Lords in 1860 at the height of the crisis.[1] Many political conservatives of widely differing ecclesiastical views came to accept that, if there must be change, then it should be change in this direction - a transfer of contentious issues from the perils of the ratepayers' vestry to the security of a system run by landowners or the central government. However, orthodox conservatives still hoped in their hearts that there would be no need for change. They feared that any scheme strengthening the authority of central government at the expense of traditional parish self-administration would upset that providential equilibrium between local interests and centralized power which protected the liberties of Englishmen.[2]

The moderate conservative response was to point out that the parish system had broken down both as a unit of local government and of ecclesiastical organisation. While orthodox conservatives predicted that social disorder would follow the removal of traditionally 'free' facilities for public worship, conservatives with any experience of urban and industrial living found a root cause of agitation against the Church to be that a Church claiming to be national was not providing adequate or free facilities at all in many areas.[3] There was a persistent

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1. Parl.Papers 1860, xxii (154), pp.iii-iv. The Committee was also prepared to recommend limited rights of exemption from payment of rates.

2. [Lord Robert Cecil,] 'Church-rates', Quarterly Review, cx (Oct.1861), 544-78, esp.565-6. Disraeli argued in similar terms: R.Blake, Disraeli (1966) p.282.

3. Cf. [Cecil], op.cit., pp.575-6; CCR, 1861, pp.31-3 (R.A.Cross).

group of leading members of the Church Institution also who argued that the most effective way of securing the Establishment was to find out the extent of the Church's pastoral deficiencies and to sponsor a campaign for parish renewal and increased evangelising activity (including the increased employment of laymen in pastoral work). This group managed to lead a deputation to the archbishop of Canterbury in 1863, along with the representatives of several other defence organisations (including the Committee of Laymen).[1] However, there is evidence of some feeling within the Institution that such matters were beyond its authority and competence.[2] Both J.M. Clabon and Antonio Brady, the two Institution officers most concerned with the promotion of lay agency in parish work, appear to have turned to Church Congresses and to the new diocesan societies of the 60s to fulfil their ideas.

By the mid-60s the Church Institution was in any case, for most practical purposes, inert. There was no longer an immediate political crisis to influence enthusiasm for the Institution's work. And those churchmen who remained aware that the political lull was only temporary either did not care to or could not use the Institution as the centre of any movement for 'Church reform'. Very little evidence remains of the Church Institution's activities between 1864 and 1871 when it was reorganised, and what evidence remains is more concerned with self-congratulation than with planning the consolidation or extension of

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1. Report of proceedings in Church Institution Circular, xxix. 129-35 (Feb.1863). For origins of this branch of the Institution's activities see Ibid, x.185 (May 1862); Sweet, Hoare, p.462.

2. Church Institution Circular, xxxix. 86-9 (Feb. 1864).

existing organisation. Within the Church Institution, 'Church defence' resumed its plainest and least complicated meaning.

Then, in 1865, Lord Palmerston died. Gladstone, recently liberated from his clerical constituents at Oxford, emerged by degrees as a Liberal leader of a new stamp - a leader far less concerned to retain the formal link between Church and State. than had been the previous generation of erastian Whig-Liberals. By 1868 Gladstone had announced his conversion to the cause of Irish disestablishment. His Commons resolution on the Irish Church brought down the minority government of Disraeli in March 1868 and the issue was accepted as a central one by both sides in the general election of 1868. The Conservatives adopted 'Church defence' as a likely popular cause among their supporters and the Liberation Society campaigned ferociously (and probably decisively in several parts of the country) on behalf of the Liberal Party.[1] Gladstone's immediate motives for action are not entirely clear but, insofar as he remained, in his own way, a loyal churchman, his general motives included a concern to free the Church of England from politically damaging associations. He had written privately in 1865:

> I am convinced that the only hope of making it possible for /the Church/ to discharge her high office as stewardess of divine truth, is to deal tenderly and gently with all the points at which her external privileges grate upon the feelings and interests of that unhappily large portion of the community who have almost ceased in any sense to care for her. This is a principle of broad application, broader far than the mere question of church rates ... It is connected with the dearest interests not only of my public life, but as I believe of our religion ...[2]

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1. Bell, Disestablishment, pp.75,96, 106-8.

2. Morley, Gladstone, ii.159-60: W.E.Gladstone to W.H.Gladstone, 16 April 1865.

It was not at all easy for most churchmen to discern Gladstone's concern for the Church's interests and his actions continually polarized politics along lines of religious allegiance for several years after 1868.

However, Gladstone remained in control of the process of legislative change in ecclesiastical affairs throughout his first government. The most authoritative recent historian of Irish disestablishment can find no evidence that the representations of the Liberation Society had the slightest effect on the form in which Gladstone drafted the disestablishment legislation.[1] Gladstone's bill on church rate, too (which he sponsored as a private member while still in opposition), when enacted in 1868, managed to retain its title of an act for the abolition of (compulsory) rate while still allowing the parishes the option of continuing to levy a legally enforceable 'voluntary' rate. Gladstone claimed that in this way the Church would encounter a minimum of disturbance in the slow-changing rural parishes where the rate had never been challenged and where the urban alternative of voluntary collections or pew rents was unlikely to be successful.[2] Furthermore, the concessions of the Liberal government to political Dissent did not appear to be opening the flood-gates: the motion for disestablishment of the Church of England, introduced annually by Miall, the liberationist leader, into the Commons between 1871 and 1873, failed

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1. Bell, Disestablishment, pp.116, 150-4.

2. P.D., 1868, CXC.957 ff., esp. 961. See generally, O.Anderson, 'Gladstone's Abolition of Compulsory Church Rates: a Minor Political Myth and its Historiographical Career', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XXV (1974), 185-98.

miserably without government support. The Liberation Society fell out with the Liberal government before 1874 and did not actively campaign on behalf of the Liberal party in 1874.[1]

Even these controlled measures of church reform were a great deal too much for most Conservative churchmen, but they could do nothing to delay or divert them. Tensions had been apparent before the 1868 election when formerly staunch Conservative defenders of church rate like Lord Robert Cecil (Lord Cranborne) accepted the settlement of that year as the best available under foreseeable circumstances. With the example of the 1867 Reform Act fresh in their memory, such men feared that they might not be offered another chance to settle by negotiated compromise. It was left to a fringe of county gentry led by Newdegate to protest about the betrayal of principle this involved, to predict the social consequences of depriving the poor of free religious facilities and to invoke the spectre of 'ecclesiasticism' overrunning the traditional rights of honest parish laymen.[2] And, after the 1868 election, the leaders of the Conservative party, having rallied to the defence of the Irish Church during the campaign, were compelled to admit that the government had a clear mandate for action from the electorate. They had great trouble controlling their parliamentary supporters, especially in the House of Lords.[3]

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1. Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation, p.230.

2. P.D., 1868, CXC.968-70 (Lord Cranborne), 970-3 (C.N.Newdegate). See also CXCI. 1133-4 (Earl Grey) for an example of similar last-ditch Church defence in the Lords.

3. Bell, Disestablishment, pp.143-7.

The Church Institution seems to have been caught by events even more severely than the Conservative party. Its organisation had been allowed to run down since the mid-60s and evidence of its activities between then and the early 70s is extremely difficult to find. Besides, the Irish Establishment was not an easy institution to defend without forfeiting the approval of at least some churchmen. It cannot have been easy for potential high church apporters of the Institution to accept the crude Protestantism of some of the Institution's propaganda in the cause.[1] And, at the same time other high churchmen were led to question the worth of a continuing connection between Church and State when they saw leading Conservative parliamentarians negotiate a compromise on what was regarded as a matter of principle.[2]

The Church Institution was in a demoralised condition when the attempt was made in 1871 to reorganise as the Church Defence Institution. It is not clear who took the initiative but it appears that the Church hierarchy were willing to encourage the reconstruction of the old Institution on a broader base in order to have an organisation capable of distributing propaganda on equal terms with the Liberation Society. There was no ambiguity of purpose this time as there had been in 1859. It was not intended to provide the Church with a representative body of distinguished laymen but with a propaganda distribution machine and a mass membership capable of exerting influence at local level.[3] The old

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1. /Rev./ J.R.Page, The Question for the Electors: An Address delivered at late public meetings, Promoted by 'The Church Institution' (1868). See also Bell, Disestablishment, pp.101-2.

2. G.A.Denison, The Church of England in 1869: A Lecture delivered to the Leeds Church Institute ... (1869).

3. The National Church, 1874, pp.244-5: 'Statement of the Executive Committee ...'

rules proscribing formal connection between the Institution and any one political party or doctrinal viewpoint remained. But the clergy were now eligible for membership of the central council and executive committee, and efforts were made to strengthen the representation of local associations on the central council.[1] The archbishop of Canterbury quickly gave his endorsement to the Institution, and by 1872 twenty-one English and Welsh bishops had become vice-presidents. By 1873 the Institution claimed to have four hundred branches, compared with one hundred in 1871.[2]

The Institution's income was still very low by Liberation Society standards. It was less than £1,200 in 1871, then doubled to c. £3,000 - £4,500 p.a. between 1872 and 1884. In 1885, under threat of the 'Radical programme' and the election of that year, it soared to almost £13,000. Yet the Liberation Society continued to receive a regular income of more than twice these amounts most years and, between 1874 and 1879, it seems, raised a campaign fund of £84,000 in addition.[3]

The Institution trailed far behind the Liberation Society in political effectiveness as well. The lack of funds was a symptom of this.

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1. Ibid., 1872, pp.8-9, 38, 61-3.

2. CCR, 1873, p.177; Report of the Birmingham Church Defence Conference (1875), pp.55-6.

3. Institution figures from annual reports, published in The National Church. Liberation Society figures from Mackintosh, Disestablishment and Liberation, p.218, though what precise sources of income they record is not made clear.

However, it had some success in the dying phase of the Liberal Government when it supported Lord Salisbury in his campaign to protect the endowed schools of the Church of England.[1] In the campaign of 1874 it made renewed attempts to obtain pledges from candidates and to distribute propaganda, seeking to associate the Liberation Society with extremism in all its various forms. It was delighted with the defeat of the Liberal party and, in particular, with the retirement of Miall from politics, but it is doubtful that its activities had any marked effect on the result.[2] The electorate was certainly weary of six years of constant institutional change and the Establishment benefited from this. However, this reaction against agitation seems sometimes to have extended to a distrust of all pressure groups: The Times, after the election, ran a campaign advocating political inaction as the best policy of Church defence, much to the indignation of the newly-expanded Institution.[3]

And, in several ways, the problems of 'victory' were as taxing to the Institution as those of defeat. The government of 1874 was more openly committed to the defence of Establishment than any for many years: the archdeacon of Buckingham was the proud recipient of a much publicised letter from Disraeli stating that 'My name is entirely at the service of

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1. P.T.Marsh, The Victorian Church in Decline (1969), p.70.
2. The National Church, 1873, pp.229-30; 1874, pp.33, 53, 60-1.
3. Ibid., 1874, pp.204-5, 228-9.

the "Church Defence Institution", and all the aid that I can ever afford to the best and most sacred of causes.'[1] However, Disraeli supported the Institution as part of a much wider political strategy which drew on the related cries of 'lay rights' and 'anti-Popery' as well as the unexceptionable one of 'Church defence'. He hoped to arouse conservative opinion in politics by, inter alia, exploiting 'protestant' fears about high church innovations within the national Church.[2] This was embarrassing to an organisation pledged to defend the Establishment without reference to doctrinal differences. In 1874 the archbishop of Canterbury sponsored the Public Worship Regulation Act. He presented it as a bill with merely procedural implications and was therefore supported by the Institution in the early stages. But Disraeli adopted it as a bill 'to put down ritualism' and the Institution did not feel able to express any opinion on the matter after that. From time to time it pleaded with churchmen to abandon doctrinal dispute in the interests of a higher unity.[3] However, this source of friction made it practically impossible for the Institution to support any plan for Church reform. It could only sustain a negative role, as every reform in the doctrine-conscious 1870s could be argued to have doctrinal implications and thus to be tainted with 'party'. The Institution found 'ritualism' a hindrance

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1. Ibid., 1872, p.71.
2. Blake, Disraeli, pp.506, 522.
3. The National Church, 1874, pp.12, 108.

to Church unity. But it also avoided schemes of Church reform which blurred the distinction between churchmen and nonconformists in pursuit of some broad church fantasy of national religion.[1]
It could really only afford to consider reforms which impinged immediately on the Church's ability to face political agitation. (Thus it supported the efforts of the bishops of Peterborough and Lincoln in 1874 to initiate patronage reform. The issue was being exploited by John Bright and the Liberation Society.[2])

So, in spite of favourable political conditions, the Church Defence Institution ran into new complications before it had mastered the old. Then the old threat returned. The election of 1880 resulted in the return of a Liberal government and more Liberationist M.P.s than ever. The Institution noted with sorrow and indignation that, for the first time, many 'radical' churchmen (especially clergy) had supported the Liberals.[3] The Public Worship Regulation Act had stimulated a ferocious outbreak of ecclesiastical litigation and dissatisfaction. The cumulative result of defending the 'Protestant Establishment' had proved to be the encouragement of small but zealous groups of high churchmen attacking the Establishment from within, and a general disillusion with parliament as a forum for the discussion of ecclesiastical issues among a much wider group of churchmen. It was under these ambiguous conditions that the Institution entered its era of greatest confrontation with the political enemies of Establishment.

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1. Ibid., 1872, pp.59-60.
2. Ibid., 1874, pp.62, 109-10, 181-2.
3. Ibid., 1880, pp.100, 110-1. See also Blake, Disraeli, p.719.

The elections of 1880 and 1885 tested the strength of the Church Defence Institution because in both cases a section of the Liberal party attempted to have the disestablishment of the Church of England adopted as Liberal policy.

The direct issue of disestablishment did not get very far in the 1880 election because the Liberal leaders knew that, in that general form, it would split rather than unite Liberal supporters. The issue which was brought forward to focus enthusiasm (rather as Irish disestablishment had been in 1868) was the Burials bill.[1] And the Burials Act of 1880 was one of the first pieces of legislation sponsored by the new Liberal government. As with Irish disestablishment in 1868 so with the Burials bill in 1880. The government had a clear mandate, but it took exceptional effort on the part of Conservative leaders in the House of Lords to prevent the legislation being rejected by indignant defenders of Establishment.[2] Worse, in 1868 the bishops had been in a position to vote against the bill, thus relieving some tensions within the Church. In 1880 a majority of them, including the archbishops, voted for the second reading and then failed in their attempts to amend the bill in committee. It was a bad moment for the Institution: its leaders had run a vigorous campaign against the bill on the grounds that it was discrimination in reverse - non-conformist exploitation of churchyard facilities for the maintenance of which, since 1868, they were no longer liable.[3] Many members felt

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1. T.Lloyd, The General Election of 1880 (1968), pp.113-4, 147-8.
2. Blake, Disraeli, pp.730-2.
3. The National Church, 1880, pp.109-10, 133-4, 157-8.

betrayed and the archbishop of Canterbury, presiding over the annual general meeting of 1880, was openly attacked for precipitating a public division among churchmen. He could only reply that he desired 'above all things, that the union of Church and State shall be maintained' - which was demonstrably true - and that he had 'so much advice given me that I cannot follow the whole of it.'[1] He was committed to a policy of negotiated compromise. The Institution drew its strength from its promises to take a stand against betrayal of the Church by politicians. Its lay leaders could only apologise for having compromised on an issue which for ten years had been a touchstone of orthodoxy, and promise to advise churchmen on the full extent of their legal rights under the new legislation.

This episode no doubt stimulated groups within the Institution to press for more vigorous political action outside parliament. Then there was the added spur of uncertainty produced by the realisation that it was likely that the electorate would be extended once more. The Institution felt obliged to extend its activities into formerly secure agricultural parishes. All this underlined the fact that the relationship between parliament and the electorate had changed and, under the circumstances, the Institution had no option but to adopt tactics formerly distasteful to most churchmen:

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1. Ibid. Report of the meeting is a Supplement to the issue of July 1880. The archbishop had a long-standing reputation for being more willing to make concessions to Nonconformity than many churchmen were prepared to accept. See the comments of Bishop Magee in 1874: J.C. MacDonnell, The Life and Correspondence of William Connor Magee (1896), ii.35-6.

> The days when politicians guided public opinion have passed, and instead we have public opinion, or what passes for it, driving and pulling politicians from behind. It is a miserable state of things, but as it exists, so it must be dealt with.[1]

There was much talk about rousing 'the latent majority' in politics by means of lecture tours and other Liberationist devices. In 1885 in fact the Institution sponsored 1180 lectures and distributed three million copies of its publications, and the most eloquent of its lecturers won the East Bradford seat from a Liberationist in the general election.[2]

Another sign of the times was the involvement of the Institution in a plan proposed by Canon Ellison in 1885 to form a Churchmen's League in every parish. (This league was to enrol members pledged to defend the Established Church.) The plan was stimulated by an open letter to The Times published on 4 November 1885 during the election campaign and signed by Earl Grey and other prominent Liberals of diverse ecclesiastical viewpoints. The letter was primarily intended to warn all 'Liberal Churchmen' against the dangers which would follow a radical attack on the Church of England. Grey later wrote to Egerton, chairman of the Church Defence Institution, that he hoped the address had 'checked the disposition of weak-minded Candidates to enlist under the banner of the Liberationists.'[3] However, he disapproved of Ellison's plan, which involved inter alia the organisation of a group in every parish to bring 'the united voice of Churchmen to bear' on the selection and election of parliamentary candidates.

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1. The National Church, 1885, pp.61-2.
2. Annual Report of the Church Defence Institution (1885-6), pp.15, 17.
3. Benson Papers, Vol.21, ff. 209-12: Earl Grey to Lord Egerton, 28 November 1885 (copy).

Grey thought this far too factional. So did Archbishop Benson who, being advised by the Dean of Windsor, that 'The Committee of the Church Defence Institution is practically composed wholly of Tories of a very marked type', hurriedly requested the Institution not to organise this new League through the parish clergy and pointedly suggested that the direct sponsorship of the League by the Institution would kill it at birth. The plan seems to have been abandoned, or at least indefinitely postponed, after its supporters were unable to agree about the extent of its political functions.[1]

Still the plan was yet another attempt to provide the link between parliament and 'public opinion' which, it seemed, was a prerequisite not only of Church defence but of the most uncontroversial of Church reforms. In the 80s, as in the 60s, there were those within the Church Institution who were eager to make the Establishment more defensible by legislative reform of some of its more antiquated institutions. Egerton and H.C. Raikes, for example, were on the first executive committee of the Central Council of Diocesan Conferences which met in 1881. This Central Council was part of an attempt to create a self-contained system of government for the Church through voluntary diocesan organisations of committed churchmen - an attempt discussed at length in section III. It is sufficient to note here that many prominent Council members hoped that it would become the united voice of Church opinion which the Church so lacked, providing 'that amount of outside popular

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1. Full correspondence in Ibid., Vol.21, ff.160-227, esp. ff.189-90, 194-5, 204-6, 225-7: Oct.-Dec. 1885.

support which is absolutely necessary for successful action in the House of Commons.'[1] The parliamentary position of the Church seemed particularly intractable in the early 80s when several reforms on which churchmen were generally agreed were being blocked by Liberationist M.P.s. (Among these reforms was Stanhope's patronage bill, mentioned in the following chapter.) It seemed to churchmen that they were being blocked for no better reason than to humiliate the Church and weaken its claims to be an efficient organisation. The incongruities and inconveniences of the Church's position as a religious institution controlled by a religiously pluralist parliament continued to appear throughout the 80s. In 1884 the Liberationists almost carried a motion in the Commons calling for the exclusion of the bishops from the House of Lords. In 1886 Archbishop Benson had to write even to a Conservative prime minister asking who was to sponsor Church legislation in the Commons as the home secretary, the traditional sponsor, was not a churchman.[2] However, it was not until 1893 that parliamentary churchmen accepted the logic of a situation which had been developing since the repeal of the Test Acts. In that year a Church Parliamentary Committee was formed to protect Church interests in parliament without reference to political allegiance.[3] The nonconformists had their pressure groups in parliament. Now at last it seemed that churchmen were willing

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1. CCR, 1882, p.209 (Stanley Leighton M.P., a founder-secretary of the Central Council). See also Proceedings at the First Meeting of the Central Council of Diocesan Conferences and Synods (1881), pp.9, 19-22.

2. Salisbury Papers, section H: Archbishop Benson to Lord Salisbury, 16 December 1886.

3. A.C.Benson, Life of Edward White Benson (1899), ii.93.

to waive their claim to national status and follow the nonconformist example. Yet the change in churchmen's attitude to parliament was never fully completed. There were too many M.P.s claiming their right to be laymen without accepting the need to participate actively in the consultative assemblies of the Church for this to happen. The fate of the revised Prayer-Book at the hands of parliament in 1928 was graphic evidence of this.

A final glimpse of the political defence of the Establishment comes with the 1885 general election. This election seemed indeed to be the great crisis which the Church Defence Institution had predicted would result from attempting to compromise with insatiable enemies. The National Liberal Federation, led by Joseph Chamberlain, adopted 'the Radical Programme' as its campaign platform and this programme included the disestablishment of the Church of England among its aims. Gladstone, the party's parliamentary leader, could not allow himself to be outmanoeuvred by his left wing and made some extremely ambiguous references to the issue in his election campaign (though privately he seems to have been convinced that disestablishment was politically 'impracticable'.)[1] This alarmed churchmen sufficiently to make unprecedented efforts during the campaign.[2] Calls for disestablishment from within the Church seem to have died away.[3] A significant group of Liberal leaders including Lord Grey

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1. D.W.R.Bahlman (ed.), The Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton 1880-1885 (1972), p.793. Hamilton was one of Gladstone's private secretaries at the time.

2. See Archbishop Benson's comments on the campaign: Benson, Life of Benson, ii. 58, 62-4.

3. Church Defence and Church Reform: Report of Proceedings at the Special General Meeting of the English Church Union on February 26, 1886, pp.8-16.

and Lord Selborne openly refused to accept disestablishment as party policy.[1] And the alliance between Conservative party and Church Defence Institution held firm as never before, as Lord Egerton exchanged campaign information with Lord Salisbury and requested his permission to publish his speeches as Institution pamphlets.[2]

The results of the election of December 1885 were not entirely satisfying to the Church. The newly enfranchised agricultural labourers, it was noted, had been captured for the Liberationists as had been feared.[3] But a clear Liberal victory had been avoided and both Archbishop Benson and Lord Egerton in their different ways felt that the Church had been given a reprieve sufficient to allow it to modernise and to 'educate' the electorate.[4] Church leaders felt more cheerful about Church prospects than they had for many decades. However, if the efforts of churchmen during the 1885 campaign are any indication of the style in which they hoped to 'educate' public opinion for the future, it must be suggested that Church prospects were more precarious than was believed. In the addresses of bishops and statesmen and the mass-distributed pamphlets

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1. See p.62. Selborne wrote A Defence of the Church of England against Disestablishment, with an introductory letter to the Rt.Hon. W.E.Gladstone M.P. (1886), but the breach with Gladstone had already occurred in 1885: Selborne Papers, Vol.1869, ff.75-6: Gladstone to Selborne,14 November 1885; ff. 77-8: Selborne to Gladstone (copy), 17 November 1885.

2. Salisbury Papers, section E: correspondence with Wilbraham Egerton, first Earl Egerton of Tatton, February-December 1885.

3. Benson, Life of Benson, ii. 62-4; The National Church, 1885, pp.13-4.

4. Benson, loc.cit.; Salisbury Papers, section E: Egerton to Lord Salisbury, 10 December 1885.

of the Institution alike, there was an assumption that the electorate would be swayed by arguments from historical and legal precedent and that it would be concerned sufficiently with the provision of national facilities for religious and moral instruction to reject the lure of financial gain held out by Liberationists in the form of disendowment.[1]

In practice, the issue of Church establishment was not settled but by-passed. The political preoccupations of the new electorate became increasingly secular, decreasingly religious. The Liberal party lost its way grappling with Irish Home Rule; the Conservative party gained office for almost the next twenty years after 1885. The Liberation Society faded away, its preoccupations seeming irrelevant to increasing numbers of people (except in Wales, where the campaign for disestablishment continued into the twentieth century). The Church Defence Institution gradually slackened its political activities and became an information office instead. It was absorbed into the Church of England Press and Publications Board in the early 1920s.[2]

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1. W.C. Magee, The Danger and the Evils of Disestablishment (1885), p.9, Cf. p.13; Selborne, Defence of the Church of England, pp.91, 317-8; Church Defence Institution pamphlets, 'The Radical Programme', and 'The Doom of Sacrilege' [1885?].

2. M.A. Crowther, Church Embattled (1970), p.197. I have been unable to locate the records of the Church Defence Institution. There is no trace of them in the National Register of Archives, or at Lambeth, or at Church House. Perhaps they were retained by the chief office-holders of the Institution. Its business was small enough for this to be likely.

It should now be clear that the role of the laity in the political defence of the Establishment expanded in direct proportion to the need of the Church to come to terms with changes in political organisation and the widening of the electorate. The Church was one of the national institutions surviving from an 'unreformed' age. Its attackers saw it as an ideological apologist for, and a property-owning appendage of, a traditional ruling class. The question whether it should continue in its privileged position was one of the central issues of politics between the 1830s and the 1880s. In the 50s it was still believed to be possible for the Establishment to rely on the traditional parliamentary co-operation of individual M.P.s. loosely taken to represent the laity of the national Church. But already the Liberation Society and other extra-parliamentary pressure groups were developing new forms of political organisation which aimed to discipline M.P.s by creating mass-membership constituency associations spread over the entire country. Churchmen almost without exception regretted the passing of the old ways. But if they were to exploit the advantage which remained to them - the sustained preponderance of (at least nominal) churchmen in parliament - they could only copy the example of their opponents. Now, it may be true that organisations such as the Liberation Society were less important and less influential than they believed themselves to be.[1] It may also be true that some churchmen were hoodwinked into taking them at their own inflated estimation. It is certainly true that the

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1. Anderson argues in this way in her article on 'Gladstone's Abolition of Compulsory Church Rates', J.Eccles.Hist., xxv (1974), 176-7.

Church Defence Institution measured virtually all its activities by comparison with the Liberation Society and this may have deflected it from undertaking work of more lasting value and effect. But many of the goals Liberationists set themselves were achieved, even if not by their own agents or as a direct result of their agitation. And this created peculiar difficulties for churchmen. They felt obliged to mobilise some form of popular support for their cause, yet they could not attach themselves to any one political party, as their opponents could, without forfeiting their claim to belong to a national church. The mere attempt to mobilise a Church party among the electorate could only serve to illustrate the dilemma, and the various organisations founded to enlist laymen in the cause of Church defence, it must be admitted, met with an indifferent response on most occasions.

CHAPTER 4

THE DEFENCE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT (2): LAY PATRONAGE

In the previous chapter we followed the sequence of events through which Establishment was attacked and defended. We now examine one of the institutional 'structures' associated with Establishment - the one providing the most solid safeguard against sudden or wide-ranging moves to disestablish the Church. This was the institution of lay patronage which, in its traditional form as a property right exercised 'on behalf of' parishioners by the local landowner, gave the whole of the territorially-based traditional political classes a stake in the continued existence of a national Church. It was believed that if the Church were to become a 'denomination', or even a State religious organisation to include nonconformists, there would inevitably be moves made in parliament to redistribute or confiscate (depending on one's point of view) private patronage rights. This, it was realised, would affect the pockets, the local status and the consciences of the vast majority in the House of Lords and the considerable number of M.P.s in the Commons who were lay patrons. It would provide a near-perfect opportunity for a campaign in defence of 'lay rights' in the Church, combined with a campaign in defence of 'property'.

It is true that, by 1850, the worst excesses of the eighteenth century attitude to patronage had receded. It was recognised, for example, in the Church Building Acts of the 40s and 50s that the

protection of the value of patrons' (and incumbents') property should not take precedence over the need to subdivide parishes in populous areas. This order of priorities had not been at all evident in the parallel legislation of the 20s and 30s.[1] However, it was true that the patronage which remained in 'private' ownership generally conferred on the presentee to the living less arduous responsibilities in more pleasant surroundings than did 'public' (Crown, episcopal, etc.) patronage. (However, the living was not necessarily worth more.)[2] Private patronage was at its strongest in rural parishes.

There was another equally eighteenth century attitude on the decline by 1850 which it is worth noting - the use of public patronage as part of the currency of political influence. This change was one aspect of a much more widespread change of attitude towards the qualifications required for public office. And the decline of the older attitude should not be pre-dated. Palmerston and Disraeli openly used episcopal patronage for political ends.[3] Even Gladstone, the first prime minister to formulate a policy of appointment on criteria of opinion within the Church rather than political or social considerations, felt

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1. Best, Temporal Pillars, p.400.

2. CCC, 1876, Report of the Committee of the Lower House on 'Deficiencies of Spiritual Ministration', Appendices C and D.

3. E. Hodder, The Life and Work of the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury (1886), iii. 196-7; Blake, Disraeli, p.507.

he had a right to call on the political goodwill of his episcopal appointees by requesting their votes for the 1884 Reform Bill.[1] But the trend was for the Church, as for the civil service, to become dissociated from political patronage. This affected the attitude of private patrons to their own patronage to an extent.

It is reasonable to deduce that there was a considerably more 'responsible' general attitude to ecclesiastical patronage among patrons by mid-century than had existed in the quite recent past. This was just as well, for it was also clear that further regulation would be extremely difficult to enact or to enforce. The patron's advowson or right of next presentation and the parson's freehold were both rights entrenched in the laws of real property and, like all such rights, they were all but unassailable. Property was property and, with minimal qualifications, a property-owner could deal with it as he thought fit. As we shall see, the only way by which major change was likely to come was through the creation of new patronage, the transfer of existing patronage from one type of patron to another, or through a drastic decline in the value of various forms of real property on which depended the value of Church livings and patronage. It proved not to be very realistic to expect change by way of legislation.

With this in mind, we turn to the statistics of patronage, such as they are. What figures we have are difficult to interpret, even if we

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1. Bahlman (ed.), The Diary of Sir E.W. Hamilton, p.650.

assume that the information on which they are based is accurate (an assumption not necessarily made by contemporaries).[1] Like many Victorian statistics, they are often based on incomplete returns and their categories of classification are haphazard. Sometimes the distinction is drawn between 'public' and 'private' patronage, at other times between 'Crown', 'clerical' and 'lay' patronage. Even these external categories are subject to internal change over time. The patronage of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges was classified as clerical in mid-century but lay at the end of it. 'Private' patronage always included, besides 'lay' patronage, the patronage of individual clergy who owned their own advowsons and even, in the early years of the century, the patronage of clergy who were entitled to exercise patronage by virtue of their office. Then there was the development of patronage trusts, which might be mixed bodies of clergy and laymen and, depending on the terms of the trust deed, public or private organisations. There was the final complication that it was possible to create alternate rights of presentation so that a layman might have the patronage of a living at one time and a clergyman at another, or a private individual at one time and a public or ecclesiastical functionary at another. It is difficult to deal in precise figures under such circumstances.

The following deductions are therefore more impressionistic than precise. It is clear, however, that there was, between the 40s and the 80s, a decline in the proportion of benefices dealt with as ~~number of~~ inherited family advowsons - the core of

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1. See Lord Selborne on the inadequacies of The Clergy List: Parl.Papers 1874, vii (289), questions 1401-3. This is part of the proceedings of the 'House of Lords Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Laws relating to Patronage, Simony and Exchange of Benefices in the Church of England', henceforth referred to as Parl.Papers 1874.

lay patronage - and a relative decline in private patronage generally. The decline is to be explained more as a result of the increase in the number of benefices in the Church[1] than as a result of sale by old-established patrons, though both these elements play their part. There is no evidence of a decline in the holdings of the larger patrons.between 1850 and 1880. The Dukes of Devonshire, the largest private patrons in the Church, owned thirty advowsons in 1855 and thirty-eight in 1880 according to The Clergy List. The Lord Chancellor had no trouble selling off a hundred or so advowsons under the terms of Lord Westbury's Act of 1863, all to private patrons, most of them local landowners or clergymen.[2] It is not possible to ascertain the total number of private patrons at any one time because of changing definition of the term and because of multiple ownership of advowsons. However, there seem to have been about 6,000 advowsons belonging to private individuals in the 1870s.[3] It is estimated that there were about 5,000 such advowsons in the 1820s when they made up more than half the total number of advowsons. The proportion for private patrons by the 1870s was rather less than half.[4]

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1. 10,478 benefices in 1835 according to the Ecclesiastical Revenues Commission of 1835, quoted in CCC, 1875, 'Report on Sale of Advowsons', Appendix A; 13,380 in 1878 according to Parl. Papers 1880, xviii (c.2507), Appendix P; near to 14,000 in 1885 according to The Official Year Book of the Church of England (1886). The Parl. Papers cited here is the 'Report of the Royal Commissioners ... as to the Sale, Exchange and Resignation of Ecclesiastical Benefices: Minutes of Evidence and Appendix', henceforth referred to as Parl.Papers 1880.

2. Parl.Papers 1880, Appendix M; question 1614. In spite of this sale, 'Crown' livings (including those of the Lord Chancellor) remained constant at around 1,000 between 1850 and 1880.

3. 6,228 according to Parl.Papers 1880, Appendix P.

4. The comparison is very rough. Figures for the 1820s are taken from Best, Temporal Pillars, p.47, who, in turn, is making a rough estimate on the basis of inadequately categorised data from the 1821 Census.

Taking into account the number of large landowners who owned more than one advowson, and the number of clergy owning their own advowson, it is possible to estimate that there may have been only about 3-4,000 lay patrons in all at any one time between 1850 and 1880.

The groups which increased their share in the Church's patronage holdings were not individual laymen. Further, there was an increasing tendency among private patrons to sell rather than to bequeath their patronage rights, a tendency widely recognised at the time, and as widely deplored.[1] The proportion of private patronage subject to sale was not particularly great. By the late 70s it was estimated that approximately one living in six had been subject to sale in a five-year period.[2] Ecclesiastical agents gave evidence that most of the patronage which passed through their hands was sold either to clergy or to men of new wealth who wished to establish a son in a profession, but had no existing influence or connections within the Church.[3]

There was one other group who increased their holdings over the period - the bishops.[4] However, they did not need to deal through agents.

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1. Parl.Papers 1874, qn.1156 (Lord S.G.Osborne); Parl.Papers 1880, qu.918 (J.B.Lee, secretary to the archbishop of Canterbury and four other bishops).

2. Parl.Papers 1880, Appendix A.

3. Ibid, qus. 2146-50. (W.E.Stark, ecclesiastical agent). Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.209, gives the figure that by 1878 at least one private patron in nine was also incumbent of the living. This seems to be reasonable the proportion in some counties, notably Essex, was clearly higher. But the authority for the statement is doubtful. Chadwick quotes CCR, 1886, p.50, which in turn quotes Parl.Papers 1880 [p.116]. This is Appendix P of the Royal Commission on Patronage which gives some figures but not the ones referred to.

4. They had the patronage of c. 1,500 livings in 1854 and of c. 2,500 in 1878. Figures from Parl.Papers 1854-5, xli (394), pp.83 ff. (a slightly incomplete return); Parl.Papers 1880, Appendix P.

Thus the most noticeable internal movement in the patronage market was one away from lay ownership towards clerical ownership. However, the motives of the clerical purchasers involved were very different. The private clergy buying their own advowson (subject to certain legal restrictions) were buying security in their increasingly crowded profession. The movement gives evidence of a general rise in the social status and independence of the professions during the nineteenth century. The bishops, on the other hand, were attempting to increase the efficiency of their pastoral supervision and, in a sense, trying to limit the independence of their clergy by ensuring that the needs of the parishioners took precedence over the convenience of the presentee. Some of them developed deliberate policies of buying up strategic town and city livings and these purchases, together with the considerable amount of patronage they acquired through the creation of new livings in cities and industrial areas, gave them an entirely new role as pace-setters in the standards by which patronage was exercised.[1] Their predecessors in this role had been the private 'trusts' of which the Simeon Trust was the most famous. The Simeon Trust had been purchasing livings for evangelical clergy since 1817. In 1850 it owned 29 advowsons and, in 1880, 68. By this stage various rival 'party' trusts had been set up, though none achieved the size of the Simeon Trust and the Church hierarchy looked with increasing disapproval on such trusts for entrenching faction in the Church.[2]

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1. D. McClatchey, Oxfordshire Clergy, 1777-1869 (1960), pp.10, 88.

2. C. Smyth, Simeon and Church Order (1940), pp.202-4, 246-7. Figures from The Clergy List.

The growth of clerical influence over patronage in both old and newly-established parishes was partly offset by the eventual adaptation of the trustee principle to lay use. (The Simeon Trustees, though evangelical, were always clergymen after the early years.) In subdivided urban parishes in particular, it became fashionable for the patronage of the new living to be vested in the individual or, more often, the group of men who had contributed the funds for building and endowing the new church. The inducement of offering the patronage to the men who raised the money was at first frowned upon by bishops and high churchmen but, by the 1850s it was accepted as a desirable practice and, by the 70s, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were prepared to contribute to the endowment of churches built by such trustees on condition that the patronage was made inalienable.[1] By 1878 there were about 750 livings in the hands of trustees of various sorts (including, of course, the 'party' organisations). This was between twice and three times as many as in 1860.[2] In this way a larger and more socially diverse group of laymen became concerned with the exercise of Church patronage, though the total number involved was still very small when compared with the number of laymen involved in other aspetts of active Church life. Finally, in the occasional midlands or northern parish, the patronage was vested by custom in the vestry of the parish or even in 'the inhabitants', but serious churchmen agreed that such a regrettable practice should be stamped out as soon as the law allowed.

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1. Best, Temporal Pillars, pp.400-1; Parl.Papers 1880, qus.970-1, (J.B.Lee).

2. Clergy List, 1860; Parl.Papers 1880, Appendix P.

Having traced the internal readjustments of the patronage system, we can now return to consider the external pressures on patrons. First an outline of attempts made to regulate the exercise of private patronage by legislation; then a more detailed survey of changing attitudes to this patronage within the Church.

There were, very broadly, three phases of legislative debate on patronage reform. There was the period of the 50s and 60s when a handful of conscientious churchmen intermittently strove to point out to their fellow M.P.s that the fitness of a clergyman for his position was more important than the right of a patron to deal with his property unfettered. This was the theme behind (Sir) Robert Phillimore's bills of 1853-4 to ban the sale of next presentations. Such bills aroused little interest. When Lord Westbury introduced his bill to allow for the sale of poor livings in the gift of the Lord Chancellor to private patrons in 1863, he justified it as helping to strengthen 'the great constitutional principle that the Church should be united, as it were, with the landed property of the country'. Each new patron, he continued, 'living on the spot, will take an interest in the maintenance and welfare of the Established Church'.[1] A few high churchmen might mutter that 'The whole tone of opinion on this subject is at present lamentably low',[2] but bishops and parliamentary churchmen of all views supported the bill. It was still thought mildly improper, even among the clergy, to suggest that the personal discretion of a gentleman

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1. P.D., 1863, clxix. 1920.
2. Guardian, 1863, p.325.

patron should be regulated, let alone taken away.[1]

By the early 70s, though, it was not as easy to dismiss the question as one concerning only the private rights of individuals. Some nonconformists, including John Bright, isolated patronage as a symbol of the inefficiency, corruption and injustice of Establishment and so made the question one of politics. All groups of active churchmen felt obliged to consider at least the regulation of patronage 'abuses'. R.A. Cross was the first of the new generation to accept the thankless task of sponsoring legislation. Cross was a moderate churchman with vaguely high church connections. His proposals were similar to those made by a committee of Convocation at about the same time. His Benefices bill of 1870 passed the Commons and failed in the Lords.[2] It was not as if evangelical or broad churchmen were opposed to his proposals; they were making similar ones themselves in an effort to strengthen the 'public image' of Establishment,[3]. Finally, in 1874 the hierarchy picked

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1. CCR, 1867, p.84 (Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford). It should be noted that the bill, and act, required the purchase price of livings sold to be applied in augmentation of the livings, and this object perhaps overshadowed considerations about how the object was to be attained.

2. CCC, 1871, 'Report of the united committees on resignation ..., patronage and the law of simony', pp.15-6; P.D., 1870, cci.535 (R.A.Cross), ccii. 1339-40 (Lord Cairns, chief opponent of the bill in the Lords).

3. The evangelical Lord Sandon was co-sponsor with Cross of the 1870 bill (though other low churchmen like Lord Cairns were strong defenders of the rights of property). Broad churchmen, in general, had far more radical objections to the patronage system than any other section of the Church. See evidence of Bishop Temple of Exeter in Parl.Papers 1874, qu. 617.

up the task. They were encouraged by the recent return of a Conservative government which could be relied upon not to allow Church 'reform' legislation to be captured by radical men in the Commons. Bishop Magee of Peterborough persuaded the House of Lords to appoint a select committee on patronage.[1] Yet even he failed. The legislation the committee recommended passed the Lords-'a House full of patrons' - in an emasculated form but had to be withdrawn from the Commons under pressure of insistent lobbying from patrons, especially clerical patrons. Bishop Magee described 'the conduct of the clergy on this question' as 'very discreditable' and bore the psychological scars of his encounter for years afterwards.[2] What Cross and Magee had been trying to do was not at all radical. They had been attempting to restore by legislative means the ideal of the resident 'concerned' patron. By banning the sale of next presentations they had hopdd to encourage the bona fide purchaser and discourage the mere investor. They fell victim to the vested interests of existing patrons, clerical and lay.

It was not until after 1880 that patronage reform became a political probability. By then, in the final phase of the debate, there were two new elements apparent. Agricultural values (and therefore

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1. P.D., 1874, ccxviii. 900-25; Macdonnell, Life of Magee, ii.3-5.

2. Macdonnell, Magee, ii.15-22, 36-7; B.M.Add. MSS. 51273 (Cross Papers), ff. 78-81: Magee to R.A.Cross, 23 Dec.1880. For examples of the pamphlet campaign waged by the clergy against patronage reform, see 'Siquis', The Cure for Church Scandal (1874); [Anon.] Remarks on "The Church Patronage Bill, 1875" (1875).

the value of many privately-owned advowsons) had become permanently depressed since the late 70s, and the Liberationists were at the height of their activity in politics. The sale of patronage had become difficult and the very concept of patronage was becoming something of an anachronism. The time for drafting 'practical' legislation had arrived.[1] It still took a very long time. First it was the Liberationists who obstructed reform in order to highlight the inadequacies of the Established Church. Then, after the return of a Conservative government in 1886, the vested interests reasserted themselves. It took the archbishop of Canterbury from 1886 until 1898 to get patronage reform onto the statute book. The Benefices Act of 1898 banned the sale of next presentations, and of advowsons as well unless they were attached to a large local landholding. It also required patrons to give advance public notice when they exercised their patronage and invested bishops with wider powers to refuse institution to unsuitable presentees.[2]

This slow-moving chain of legislative events lagged increasingly behind informed Church opinion. The arguments concerning the ideological justification of patronage underwent a major change in the second half of the century. It is true that patronage was generally admitted to be a 'trust' in at least some respect at both ends of the period, but the admission was made with very differing meaning and degrees of sincerity. The questions whose right it was to exercise the trust, whose right to enforce it and on whose behalf - all these questions were asked to an

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1. A draft bill approved by both Liberationists and churchmen was drawn up in select committee of the House of Commons in 1884: Parl.Papers 1884, ix (29).

2. Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.213; Benson, Life of Benson, ii. 74-5, 102-3.

extent far beyond the possibility of practical legislation. The various replies threw into relief changing attitudes towards the lay role in the Church.

It is true that there lingered a certain nostalgia for the resident landowner patron of an agricultural parish. Such men still existed even at the end of the century, though their numbers and local influence must have considerably declined. Still, every legislative proposal and parliamentary inquiry paid some mark of respect towards them. The final Act of 1898 made an exception in their favour. Sir Robert Phillimore (dean of Arches and Sponsor of the bills of 1853-4) told the 1874 select committee:

> There are those who think (and I confess that I am disposed to be amongst that number myself) that advowsons attached to property carry with them a great sense of trust and duty, and that advowsons separable from property entirely fall under a different category.[1]

Yet even in the ideal agricultural parish there existed potential clashes of interest. Clergy were examined by the bishop before ordination; there was no test of fitness for patrons. A patron might be financially incompetent in which case he might be bankrupted and his patronage sold as an asset of his estate. He might be corrupt and commit the offence of simony (or, more likely, employ a lawyer to escape the law on a technicality). He might continue the social practices of a former age and present a relative to the benefice. If the relative was not yet old enough, he could present an aged clergyman who might confidently be

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1. Parl.Papers 1874, qu.111.

expected to die in the foreseeable future or, until 1898, exact a 'resignation bond' from a temporary incumbent. In fact the law could only ever enforce minimum standards of suitability on the patron's choice and, until 1898, the minimum set was very low. Bishops became angry when patrons put aged and inactive clergy into populous parishes in the hope of a quick resale of the next presentation, but the practice was perfectly legal.[1] And, while the number of family livings declined over the period, the problem of incompatible interests associated with them burst into new life with the rise of the patron-incumbent.[2]

However, contemporary commentators thought these problems minor when compared with the problem of regulating patronage no longer 'attached to property'. Such patronage was more likely to be split up into a series of sales of the next presentation in which the profit motive would be uppermost and the fitness of the presentee hardly considered. Yet real property was no longer the only form of property which mattered and the Church would have to adjust to new forms of wealth as long as it continued to approve the existence of 'purchase' of livings. Some few churchmen, when discussing patronage reform, regarded the need to adapt to new forms of wealth as the over-riding consideration. They argued that, the more the sons of the newly wealthy could be persuaded to buy into the Church, the greater the stake of the 'rising middle classes' in the preservation of the Church as a venerable national institution.[3]

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1. Parl.Papers 1880, qus.1382 (Edmund Hobhouse, suffragan bishop of Lichfield); 2185-8 (W.E.Stark, ecclesiastical agent).

2. Ibid., qus. 775-85 (Rev.S.Slocock, a patron-incumbent); 910 (J.B.Lee).

3. Parl.Papers 1874, qu.203. (Lord Harrowby); Parl.Papers 1878-9 xx (c.2375), p.xii (Earl of Devon); P.D., 1886,cccIv.996 (H.C.Raikes, M.P.)

The view of other scrupulous churchmen, though, was that this was 'doing evil that good may come'.[1] And there were good practical arguments to suggest that the benefit done by opening the Church to wider social influences at one level was only achieved by alienating large numbers of parishioners at another level. There were complaints from newly suburban parishes (in the industrial midlands and the north particularly) that parishioners were most unwilling to contribute to funds for church endowment when they knew that their contributions would only swell the profits of the patron when he next sold the presentation. The very fact of repeated sale of a living could lead to the gradual alienation of parishioners.[2]

There were some churchmen who argued from an early stage that the mere regulation of patronage was an inadequate response, however effective the supervision and however worthy the patrons. In moving to disarm Liberationist attacks, they sometimes felt themselves compelled to admit the superiority of nonconformist (or perhaps utilitarian) ethical standards. They admitted that patronage was 'wrong' - that there was no ground for distinguishing between sale of a next presentation and sale of an advowson - that all forms gave reward without regard to 'fitness' or 'merit'. And, after the abolition of purchase in the army in 1871, it is true that the Church remained the only national institution in

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1. C.Wordsworth [Bishop of Lincoln], On the Sale of Church Patronage and Simony (1874), p.16.

2. Parl.Papers 1880, qus. 143-6 (J.C. Cox, J.P.); 1207-13 (E.Herford, chairman of the Free and Open Church Society of Manchester and also an organiser of the small 'National Committee for Abolishing Purchase in the Church'); 1452-3 (Bishop Bebhouse).

which 'public' office could be acquired by a 'private' transaction. Ecclesiastical patronage became the last anachronistic relic of a once-universal system of public service by private individuals exercising personal discretion.[1] Not many churchmen were prepared to cast off a whole system of social values at once but they were able to bypass their ethical confusion by concentrating on the bad effect the traditional system had on existing public opinion. As Bishop Temple of Exeter remarked:

> ... the worst evil of all is the shock to the religious feeling of a great number of people, especially the artizan class, and the lower middle class, who, I think, find it [the sale of patronage] a very great hindrance to them, a stumbling-block greater than it is quite easy for more educated people to measure.[2]

The argument was popular among broad churchmen throughout the 70s and 80s and among an increasing number of other churchmen concerned with ideological justification of the Establishment. Even evangelicals - and the evangelicals were the group in general most attached to the patronage system because it gave them security against the centralising tendencies of bishops and Convocations - occasionally adopted the argument in its inverted form and suggested that piecemeal patronage reform would merely add fuel to the flames. It would, said Lord Harrowby, only hurt the Church to show that churchmen admitted the imperfection of the system when they might find themselves unable to mend it.[3]

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1. The Times, 27 June 1877, p.9, described it with some relish as 'an inevitable anomaly'.

2. Parl.Papers 1874, qu.617. Archbishop Tait agreed: P.D., 1875 ccxxii. 833-4.

3. Macdonnell, Magee, ii.5: Lord Harrowby to Bishop Tait of London, 2 April 1874. The letter was forwarded to Bishop Magee whose answer to Lord Harrowby's criticism is in the Harrowby Papers, Vol.38, ff.34-6: Magee to Lord Harrowby, 4 April 1874.

Indeed, it was the problem of finding a generally acceptable alternative to unfettered private patronage which made the issue so insoluble.

We have already noted that certain bishops were working to raise standards within the existing system by buying up private patronage and imposing new tests on themselves when they exercised it. However, they could never hope to gain the approval of a majority of churchmen for any deliberate plan to increase their patronage. The general public still associated episcopal patronage with the worst excesses of eighteenth-century nepotism. The mild patronage reform bill of the bishop of Peterborough in 1875 was smeared by widespread suggestions that it was prompted by the greed of bishops for more patronage, and there was the inevitable protest meeting at which it was alleged that the bishops were embarking on a scheme to confiscate the property of lay patrons 'such as the wildest demoninationalist never dreamt of'.[1] This was demonstrably untrue.

However, it was true that bishops would never be trusted with patronage as long as they administered it as a matter of personal discretion in the old fashion. Even if their motives were honest, it was argued, their unavoidable doctrinal or party bias would upset the equilibrium within

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1. 'Siquis', The Cure for Church Scandal (1874), pp.5-7.; 'Sapere Aude', A Plea for Reform in the Church and her Clergy (1878), p.6. Both these pamphlets, according to the inscriptions on the copies at Pusey House, were written by clergymen. Report of the protest meeting is in Guardian, 1875, p.389. Even The Times damned the bill as an attack on 'lay rights': 16 July 1874, p.9. The debate on Magee's bill took place during the debate on the Public Worship Regulation Act and feeling against ecclesiastical 'pretensions' was strong.

the Church which the existing mixed system of patronage was believed to preserve.[1] Evangelicals were particularly afraid that bishops would discriminate against them, as the bishop of Exeter had once discriminated against Gorham. Even when evangelicals were appointed to the bench in some numbers (which only started to happen in the 50s and 60s) it was not easy to dispel traditional fears of centralised authority. 'Ritualistic' churchmen sometimes developed a distrust of bishops for similar reasons. From the early 70s, though, there were attempts to provide bishops with diocesan conferences and councils which they could consult to ascertain church opinion. Once this happened, it became possible to consider the creation of diocesan boards of patronage which could advise the bishop on his appointments. Those who disliked such newly-formed 'ecclesiastical' institutions continued to raise the same objections to the bishop-in-council as they had to the bishop in person.[2] But there was growing enthusiasm for the boards within the Church. They existed in some colonial churches where they were most successful in arousing a sense of responsibility and participation among all classes of laity. The fear was that the traditional laity, represented by the patrons, would lose interest in parish affairs as their influence became submerged in centralised diocesan organisations. The hope was that they would surrender their patronage voluntarily to the diocesan 'pool' in return for an opportunity to participate in the wider administration of the diocese.[3]

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1. 'Siquis', Cure for Church Scandal, p.17.
2. Times, 2 August 1884, p.9: editorial comment on Commons' select committee report on patronage bills, which included a suggestinn in favour of setting up diocesan patronage boards.
3. Parl.Papers 1880, qus.1407-11 (Bishop Hobhouse, who had experience of colonial practice while a colleague of Bishop Selwyn in New Zealand).

Another group of enthusiasts supported the view that trust patronage was the ideal form of patronage. Evangelicals were especially enthusiastic about the merits of this private enterprise form of public trusteeship. It preserved continuity of outlook in a parish, it avoided the scandal of sale, and it was exercised by a body of private citizens of independent judgement under no obligation to serve any turns.[1] However, few others approved of trusts for the preservation of distinctive doctrinal schools. The Times commiserated with parishioners 'doomed by the late Mr.Charles Simeon, or some equally omniscient authority never to hear more than one side of the truth'.[2] The hierarchy generally disapproved of them. Even the next generation of outcasts among churchmen, the ritualists, generally refused to take advantage of 'trafficking' in patronage to entrench themselves in the Church.[3] The system was also underpinned by paternalistic assumptions, increasingly difficult to justify in an age when some were coming to consider it more important for parishioners to participate in decisions affecting them than to be shepherded by a self-appointed elite.[4] The same drawbacks affected other, non-doctrinal forms of trusteeship to a degree: they certainly gave security against the dislocation of parish life by the sale of the living but at the price of entrenching a small and possibly unrepresentative elite of wealthy laymen.

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1. CCR, 1871, pp.465-70, esp. 468-9 (Rev.E.Hollond, A Simeon Trustee).
2. Times, 21 August, 1869, p.9.
3. Church Union Gazette, 1868, p.9; 1880, p.171.
4. See A.J.Tait, Charles Simeon and his Trust (1936), pp.39-40 for the 'charge' given by Simeon to his trustees, and CCR, 1871, p.468 for the conservative views of a later trustee on the role of ordinary parishioners in the patronage system.

A very few churchmen argued that the 'scandal' of the trade in patronage could be cured by empowering a central organisation to buy up livings on behalf of the Church. Such schemes usually involved the passing of legislation to forbid the sale of patronage except to a nominated body, perhaps 'the Crown' or, more likely, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.[1] They attracted the approval of few other churchmen. Patrons, thinking of the fall in property values a restriction on sales would cause, called them confiscation. Conservatives argued that centralisation would extinguish the interest of local patrons in their parishes and, worse, prove to be a useful step on the road to disestablishment by increasing the control of the central government over the Church at the expense of traditional private interests. As one clergyman bluntly put it:

> The enemies of the Church Establishment knew full well that in case of disestablishment they will have to reckon very seriously with ... private patrons, and may find them very difficult to deal with, if their property is to be compulsorily taken from them; hence the desire to induce them to sell.[2]

It was usually fear, rather than enthusiasm, which led churchmen to consider one other alternative to the existing patronage system. This was the 'democratic' alternative - the election of a clergyman to a living by the parishioners. By the 1870s there were some churchmen who claimed to foresee the day when, in conformity with the spirit of the

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1. Parl.Papers 1874, qus.627, 656 (Bishop Temple of Exeter); 'Sapere Aude', Plea for Reform, pp.17-23.

2. Guardian, 1884, p.981.

age, an enlarged electorate would demand the abolition of private interests in Church property, and the popular election of parsons.[1] This was no doubt more rhetoric than sincere prediction - a device used to persuade Churchmen to concede indefensible privilege in advance - but it was true that it summoned up unhappy memories for many churchmen. They remembered church rate vestries. They remembered the handful of parishes in which various forms of popular election did exist. The behaviour of the voters in these elections was, according to serious-minded churchmen, usually 'wholly at variance with any ecclesiastical decorum, and hostile to good order and decency'.[2] The clergy were especially hostile to popular election. They believed that it would compromise their role as upholders of independent and more refined standards of belief and behaviour, and reduce their status to the level of nonconformist ministers.[3] Clergy and patrons alike felt it cut against the grain of gentlemanly values to defer to the wishes of doubtfully orthodox and doubtfully educated parishioners.

However, the traditional arrangement whereby patron and clergyman settled the matter over the heads of parishioners could not survive unscathed in an increasingly mobile and less deferential society. The more voluntary an activity religious observance became the more need the Church had to consult its clientele. In towns it was relatively easy

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1. CCR, 1867, p.81 (A.J.B. Beresford Hope); 1871, pp.482-3 (Vicar of Caernarvon); 1878, p.270 (W.S. Stanhope M.P.).

2. Parl.Papers 1880, qns. 1553 ff; Appendix O.

3. Magee, The Voluntary System, pp.36-8; CCR, 1869, pp.290-1 (Rev. J.F. Mackarness).

to choose which congregation one wished to join. Even in the country, it was increasingly likely that one would have a choice between church and chapel rather than involuntarily accept the status of parishioner. In discussions on patronage as in many other matters it became a commonplace to conclude that 'if you want men to be entirely interested in any institution,you must give them a real voice in its management.'[1] The question which remained was: where in the process of appointment was it best, or rather, safest, to allow mass participation or consultation?

An occasional patron turned over the entire responsibility of exercising patronage to a representative body of parishioners. The Duke of St.Albans created quite a stir in 1869 when he did this in the Lincolnshire agricultural parish of Redbourne. The Times ironically remarked that the act conferred 'a rare and unparalleled privilege', but it endorsed the Duke's reasoning that, 'surely in any parish a clergyman selected in the first instance by the parishioners is more likely to have their future support than one imposed arbitrarily upon them on the nomination of a single individual'.[2] Other churchmen were rather taken aback and hoped that the event would not be made a precedent. It was true that the parishioners in this case made a sober and unexceptionable choice from among 500 applicants, but there was no guarantee that all parishioners would be so conscientious.[3] High churchmen, especially, believed that it was inadvisable to allow a parish

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1. CCR, 1869, p.290 (Rev. J.F. Mackarness).

2. Times, 21 August 1869 (editorial);23 Sept. 1869 (letter from Duke of St.Albans describing the experiment).

3. CCR, 1869, pp.283-4 (Dean of Ely), 301-3 (H.C.Raikes, M.P.).

unregulated choice of its clergy. They were generally prepared to concede that it was beneficial to consult with parishioners at some stage before institution but they argued that patronage should be exercised by 'the Church' rather than by a group of unguided parishioners. As voluntary diocesan organisations spread through the Church in the 70s, they claimed that the solution to the problem of representing all interested parties - patrons, parish and the wider 'Church' - lay in diocesan boards of patronage. However, there was apparently no great rush by patrons to entrust their patronage to these organisations.

The only real consensus which developed among churchmen during the 70s and 80s was a much more limited one. Most people agreed that parishioners should be given a statutory right to object to presentees on certain limited grounds of 'fitness'. Convocation thought so (by a narrow majority). The Royal Commission of 1878-9 thought so. So did the select committee of the Commons in 1884.[1] 'Fitness' was generally agreed to involve questions of 'physical incapacity or immorality' and not to go to any question of doctrine - though, as some aggrieved groups pointed out, a violent reversal of theological outlook between one incumbent and the next might cause quite as much disturbance in a parish as any attempt to install over the heads of the congregation a clergyman defective in some more ordinary way.[2]

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1. CCC, 1872, pp.18 ff; 1873, pp.485-7; Parl.Papers 1878-9, xx (c.2375), p.x; Parl.Papers 1884, ix (29), p.iii.

2. CCR, 1874, p.185 (Rev. W. Hay Aitken); 'Fidelis' [C.W.Wilshere], Leave Church Patronage Alone (1880), pp.9-11. Champions of the rights of Congregations to doctrinal continuity seem usually to have been ritualists.

Even in its mildest forms, the parishioners' right of objection failed to please all churchmen. The agents in ecclesiastical patronage, the patron-incumbents and no doubt many other investors in patronage all objected to the depressing effect that a restriction on the free exercise of patronage would have on the value of the property. Some prodicted that the Church would lose a valuable source of private finance if it discouraged men from investing in Church livings. Some churchmen, on the other hand, supported such a restriction precisely because it would weaken the property element in patronage.[1] Again, there were some churchmen, both high churchmen and evangelicals, who strongly objected to any attempt to place the 'flock' in a position of authority over its 'shepherd'.[2] Yet broad churchmen often believed that the limited right of objection proposed would achieve nothing; some among them wanted parliament to confer an absolute discretion on parishioners to approve or reject presentees. Was it 'an interference with property', asked Albert Grey, M.P., 'to say that a trust should be effectually guarded?'.[3] It was a plausible point to make until one reached the stage of defining who were the parishioners to whom this right was to be given.[4] They might be communicants, they might be rate-

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1. Parl.Papers 1880, qus. 1314 (Rev.P.J. Budworth, an Essex patron-incumbent), 2195 (W.E.Stark, ecclesiastical agent). Cf. CCR, 1869, p.284, (Dean of Ely).

2. CCR, 1871, p.469 (Rev.E.Hollond); CCC, 1872, pp.18 ff. esp. 25-6.

3. P.D., 1884, cclxxxix. 737-41, at p.741.

4. Times, 19 June 1884, p.9; Guardian, 1884, p.928.

payers, or something in between. It was the old ambiguity which had bedevilled settlement of the church rate question and which would continue to complicate all legislative attempts to create new institutions in the Church to replace traditional ones.

Finally, it is worth noting that whatever proposal was put forward to cure the ills of the patronage system, it almost invariably included a proviso in favour of the preservation of a 'mixed' system of patronage. The cynical said that it was not worth the effort to reform the inconsistencies of one part of the Establishment when the whole was doomed:

> Our system of Church Patronage is, it must be owned, one of those many English customs which may be good to practise, but not to talk about.[1]

But it was customary for almost all churchmen to invoke Burkean arguments in defence of the virtues of traditional institutions. The institution of private patronage, it was argued, contributed towards the regulation of party conflict in the Church by involuntarily fostering a tendency towards a 'natural' equilibrium among the conflicting varieties of churchmanship; no group need fear exclusion from the national church so long as it could find private patronage. Private patrons (and to some extent the Crown) were believed to mediate between local lay opinion and the 'ecclesiasticism' of the clergy as a professional group, thus maintaining the level of lay influence and breadth of doctrinal toleration required in a national church.[2] This is yet another reason why churchmen

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1. Times, 21 August 1869, p.9.
2. Parl.Papers 1874, pp.iii-iv; Parl.Papers 1878-9, xx (c.2375), p.vii.

were more prepared to discuss change than to implement it. There was always someone ready to argue that the existing system might be illogical but that it was surely providential in its unintended consequences: legislation, on the other hand, might be well-intentioned but prove to be disruptive in its unintended consequences. People who argued in this way also tended to invoke the rising tone of public opinion as a 'natural', non-coercive alternative to legislation. Most churchmen of any public standing believed in their hearts that the inherent qualities of character of most private patrons could hardly be bettered and that the defects of character in the remainder were more effectively to be regulated by social than legal means.[1]

This, of course, was a point of view very difficult to prove or to disprove. It would be most interesting to know what considerations were foremost in the minds of patrons when they exercised their patronage, whether they took advice, and, if so, from whom. The evidence is, by its nature, scattered and what there is of it in print is generally evidence of conscientious decision.[2] (Victorian biographers would not have thought it their duty to publish it if it were not.) One occasionally comes across the case of a clergyman who imposes his conditions on the patron instead of the other way around.[3] One occasionally finds anecdotes (based on hearsay) of gross impropriety or

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1. CCR, 1871, pp.467-8 (Rev. E. Hollond, an evangelical), 471-3 (A.J.B. Beresford Hope, a high churchman).

2. E.g. Hodder, Shaftesbury, iii.178.

3. M. Reynolds, Martyr of Ritualism: Father Mackonochie of St.Alban's Holborn (1965), pp.77-9.

negligence in the exercise of patronage. A witness before the 1878-9 patronage royal commission related that:

> When the living of Astbury was about to become vacant one of the ladies of the Crewe family was allowed to stake it in a bet with one of the ladies of the Egerton family, the decision being made to depend upon a race between two caterpillars.[1]

However, it is very difficult to doubt that the conscientiousness of patrons did improve over the second half of the century. All sections of Church opinion believed this to be so even if they did not believe private patronage to be in the best interests of the Church.[2] And, even after the collapse of agricultural property values in the late 70s, it was generally believed that the majority of patrons would retain their concern for the Church.

Thus we see over the period a major change in the range and tone of the arguments used to justify the existence of private patronage. The private property element in patronage, still relatively strong in 1850, was increasingly disregarded by 1885. A nominal and untestable concern for the welfare of the parishioners on whose behalf the patronage was exercised was replaced by a fairly general concern to recognise the interest of the parishioners or congregation in the process of selection. In the course of this transition 'the rights of the laity' acqired a a changed meaning. When patronage was a matter of individual discretion, 'the laity' in the context of patronage meant patrons and usually

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1. Parl.Papers 1880, qu. 1217 (Edward Herford, a bitter opponent of the patronage system).
2. Parl.Papers 1874, qu. 619 (Bishop Temple of Exeter).

landowners. Lay rights meant the property rights of this limited group and, by extension, the guarantee these men provided by their position in a traditional ruling group that the national Church would not fall under 'sectarian' or 'narrow ecclesiastical' influences. When patronage became a matter of concern to all actively participating churchmen, 'the laity' came to describe a group of voluntary religious practitioners rather than a group of men involuntarily Church leaders by reason of their established social position. The rights of the laity became the right of the committed to regulate their own voluntary activity. However, as nobody could yet decide exactly how the laity were to be defined or in what form they were to exercise control over the 'trust' of patronage, there developed a distinct gap between theory and practice. So long as private patrons heeded 'public opinion' sufficiently for it to be thought that they were exercising their patronage responsibly, they were able to retain their privilege. In spite of a change in the climate of opinion, they remained securely underpinned by the laws of property and bolstered by the knowledge of their indispensability to the Church in political life.

CHAPTER 5

THE DEFENCE OF DOCTRINE;[1] CONCLUSIONS

We now return to the second branch of the dilemma with which churchmen were confronted at mid-century. Was the Church to be defended as an institution with civil privileges or as an institution guarding certain ideological truths? If the former, it was relatively easy to justify an appeal for lay participation. It was generally agreed that the clergy should not become involved in 'politics'; political activity would undermine their status and waste time more properly spent in performing their primary priestly or pastoral roles. However, if it was the latter position to be defended, then the defence would surely involve the clergy directly because in these matters they possessed authority based on professional expertise (to put their claim no higher).

Still, there were limits to the clergy's pre-eminence in matters of doctrine, liturgy and ritual. The State had exacted certain guarantees from the clergy in past centuries. The chief of these was the legal arrangement whereby the final court of appeal in all matters of doctrine and clerical discipline was the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in ecclesiastical causes. This was a predominantly lay court exercising the authority of the Crown. The official explanation of this arrangement was that the Privy Council was not really a 'court of doctrine'. It had,

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1. 'Doctrine' is used here in an extended sense to include any doctrinal belief, form of worship or ritual practice. The chapter is intended to stand in direct contrast to the chapter on the defence of the Church's civil privileges.

explained Lord Langdale in the Gorham judgement, 'no jurisdiction or authority to settle matters of faith ... Its duty extends only to the consideration of that which is by law established to be the doctrine of the Church of England, upon the true and legal construction of her Articles and Formularies.'[1] The State, it was argued, had the duty to protect the rights of the laity in their national Church by taking steps to see that no clergyman used the temporal privileges of the Church to spread doctrines or practices contrary to those approved by Parliament.

However, this explanation became increasingly unacceptable to a growing number of high churchmen. From the 1830s onward it was realised that layman and citizen were not realistically interchangeable terms and so pressure grew to demand that the 'erastian' State allow the Church to differentiate its institutions from the undifferentiated ones it traditionally shared with the State. By the 1870s Canon Gregory was damning the old institutions with these words:

> The Church has for some time past been treated as though her Founder had died in 1662, and all that had to be done was to execute as fairly as possible the trusts of His will contained in the existing Prayer-book. It seems to have been quite forgotten or overlooked that the Church of England of today has the same power of making her living voice heard, and the same right to utter it, that she possessed in 1662; and that there would be a moral force in her living utterance which cannot be possessed by conclusions drawn from nicely balanced premises by lawyers, however skilful in their profession.[2]

This demand that the State 'restore' to the Church its inherent authority to regulate itself of course provoked a heightened concern among other churchmen who argued that, as long as the Church remained Established

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1. Quoted in Selborne, Defence of the Church of England, pp.202-4.
2. CCR, 1877, pp.277-8.

(and they were usually convinced supporters of Establishment), it should be required to submit to regulation by the existing institutions - the institutions which had guaranteed 'the rights of the laity' against 'sacerdotalism' since the Reformation.

We can illustrate the development of Church opinion on the subject by tracing the fortunes of ecclesiastical litigation over the period. It was in 1850 that high churchmen first experienced deep disillusionment with the traditional system of ecclesiastical appeals. This was the year of the Gorham judgement. This decision of the Privy Council which so upset high churchmen was taken by a bench made up of a majority of legally qualified laymen together with the two archbishops and the bishop of London. As it happened, there was a majority for Gorham among both laymen and ecclesiastics but high churchmen found the whole tribunal lacking in authority. The form and composition of the tribunal had been settled in 1832-3 and in 1840 in an age almost innocent of doctrinal controversy. It had only been as a matter of administrative convenience that appeals concerning doctrine had been classified with all other appeals in ecclesiastical causes.[1] However by 1850 a few high churchmen, led by Archdeacon Manning, believed that the continued existence of such an erastian tribunal gave them a reason for leaving the Church of England altogether. The remaining high church leaders were spurred to demand judicial reform. Bishop Blomfield, the only episcopal member of the Gorham bench who had dissented from the judgement, introduced legislation to constitute the bench of bishops the final

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1. Chadwick, Victorian Church, i. 250 ff.

court of appeal in matters of doctrine. The bill had no chance in parliament. It was all too easy to brand it as an encroachment on lay rights.[1] A more plausible alternative was the possibility of reviving the convocations as the authoritative voice of the Church and of generally educating the laity into orthodoxy by a 'revival of discipline'.[2] However, these were long-term aims and high churchmen were working against time.

In the early 60s there was a series of Privy Council judgements which exonerated broad churchmen from charges of doctrinal unorthodoxy. (The Essays and Reviews case was the most famous of these.) It was little consolation that charges of unorthodoxy against a leading high churchman also failed. (This was the Denison case, dismissed on a technicality.) The Privy Council seemed bent on preserving, even widening, the degree of doctrinal divergence tolerated in the national Church. High church opinion hardened. Essays and Reviews dismayed evangelicals too. The convocation of Canterbury met and delivered a 'synodical condemnation' of listed doctrinal errors contained in Essays and Reviews but this impressed few laymen. Lawyers of a protestant-lay-rights frame of mind were openly contemptuous of the futility of the action. And in 1865, Bishop Tait of London made his classic defence of the continuing need for a final court of appeal of 'mixed' composition and authority. (Tait had been the single clerical judge to approve the decision in the Essays and Reviews appeal) Tait argued in his preface to a standard case-book of

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1. Ibid., i.264-5.
2. Sweet, Hoare, pp.164, 176.

Privy Council judgements that the rights of the individual were best reconciled with the orderly and informed administration of justice in a court of mixed composition. To separate the jurisdictions, he argued, so that lay judges dealt with temporal issues and clerical judges with spiritual would be to run the risk of a clerical usurpation of individual rights; clerical judgeswould all too easily be tempted to exceed their judicial role and start declaring positive additions to doctrine, thus retrospectively imperilling the common law rights of clergy and laity and undermining the national Church by restricting its comprehensiveness.[1]

However, a growing number of high churchmen continued to argue that there should be reform. The first of a series of bitterly contested suits to restrain 'ritualists' was already winding its way through the courts and it was becoming painfully apparent that traditional legal modes of enforcing compliance with ecclesiastical authority were degenerating into ineffectual attempts at coercion. By 1868, Tait was archbishop of Canterbury so all attempts at reform ran against his opposition. The chance of the reformers came in 1873 when the Gladstone government was recasting the whole machinery of higher appeals in civil courts. Gathorne Hardy, supported by Lord Salisbury, R.A. Cross and other leading moderate high churchmen, and with Gladstone's connivance and without Tait's knowledge, sponsored a minor amendment to the Supreme Court of Judicature bill. In this way high churchmen managed to have the

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1. A.C.Tait in G.C. Brodrick and W.H. Fremantle (eds.), A Collection of the Judgements of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in Ecclesiastical Causes relating to Doctrine and Discipline (1865), pp.v-xx.

bishops removed from the final court of appeal in ecclesiastical causes. It took all Tait's energy to have them partially reinstated (as 'assessors', not full judges).[1] By this stage the reformers had convinced even Conservative evangelicals like Lords Harrowby and Cairns and low church Liberals like Vernon Harcourt that a purely lay court was preferable to a mixed one. Tait could not understand the high church change of attitude. For years they had clamoured for a purely ecclesiastical tribunal; now they were clamouring for the removal of existing ecclesiastical representatives. He suspected that it was a plot to relieve high church clergy from scruples of conscience when they broke the law of the land and infringed 'the rights and liberties of English Protestants'.[2] However, the strains imposed by a mixed system were becoming too great for the old arguments to convince. As Lord Salisbury said (paraphrasing Gladstone's argument of twenty years' standing):

> Courts of Ecclesiastical Discipline depended more on opinion than any other Courts and upon the constitution of the Court depended to a very great extent the effectiveness of its jurisdiction.[3]

Salisbury further argued that, while lawyers might be able to convince the public of their impartiality in matters of doctrinal interpretation, bishops could not. This was no doubt a useful way of

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1. See B.M. Add. MSS. 51270 (Cross Papers), ff.47-8: W.E.Gladstone to Cross, 12 Feb. 1873; P.T.Marsh, The Victorian Church in Decline (1969) pp.129-31; M.D. Stephen, 'Gladstone and the Composition of the Final Court in Ecclesiastical Causes, 1850-73', Historical Journal, ix (1966) 198-9.

2. P.D., 1873, ccxv. 1468-72.

3. Ibid., pp.1467-8.

concealing differences dividing potential supporters of the proposed change but it was a most inaccurate prediction. The bishops had been extricated from the Privy Council but the Council remained with its formal jurisdiction unimpaired. Besides, the legal profession increased its influence in the Church as a result of the Public Worship Regulation Act of 1874. This Act, sponsored by Tait, was formally intended to simplify the legal procedures for hearing ecclesiastical cases but most of its supporters expected it to make possible a campaign to rid the Church of ritualists. The anti-ritualist cause was a popular one and it was all too easy to find 'three aggrieved parishioners' to institute proceedings against clergy believed to be ritualists. The Act had set up a new statutory jurisdiction to hear such cases on behalf of the archbishop of Canterbury (though appeal still lay to the Privy Council). Those high churchmen who questioned the authority of the Privy Council were even more dubious of the authority of this court, especially as its first judge was a former judge in divorce.

The scene was now set for sustained and intransigent confrontation in the law courts. Moderate high churchmen had hoped gradually to make issues of ritual and doctrine non-contentious by unobtrusive technical modification of the legal system but they had failed. The pressure of 'Protestant' feeling within the Church and the electorate had tempted the legislature to strengthen rather than weaken the traditional links between the Church and the law. The problem was that, by the 70s, many of the old restraints which had kept litigation within manageable bounds no longer functioned. There was no longer any existing tribunal

whose decisions all parties regarded as binding. Yet there was no obvious way of restraining the institution and prosecution of suits to the utmost lengths the law allowed. Money was no object; there were societies of churchmen willing to raise enormous sums to pay the lawyers' fees. And, as these societies were formed to crusade for a cause, there could be no behind-scenes settlements: the contributors expected to see their aims achieved both absolutely and publicly. (The role of the English Church Union and the Church Association, the two groups most involved in financing legal action, is discussed more fully in the sub-section which follows.) The final result, it has been pointed out, was 'the complete breakdown of the public law of the established Church'.[1]

It was not easy for traditional supporters of Church and State to admit the breakdown. Archbishop Tait was still unrepentant when at the height of litigation in 1877 he wrote that 'it is always the fate of the most eminent judges to have their decisions commented on by persons less perfectly acquainted with the principles and practices of the law than themselves.'[2] However, the law was already discrediting itself. When clergymen were imprisoned for what appeared to be no more than their conscientiously-held, if eccentric, beliefs, many churchmen became uneasy, and 'public opinion' became hostile or derisive. The Church hierarchy, sensing in varying degrees the pointlessness and growing disadvantages of legal action, moved to put a stop to prosecutions. They reasserted

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1. Bell, Disestablishment, pp.15-6.
2. A.C. Tait, The Church and Law (1877), pp.26-7.

(and had upheld by the courts) their discretion to 'veto' the institution of proceedings against clergy for ritual offences &,in this way, became informal arbiters of standards of ritual and liturgical behaviour, eliciting voluntary compliance in place of coercion at law.[1] The unconvinced advocates of State and lay authority saved face through a Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Courts (1881-83). This Commission recommended the repeal of the Public Worship Regulation Act and conceded the right of the Church to a greater degree of disciplinary autonomy to an extent which surprised even high churchmen. The recommendations of the Commission were, however, not enacted. The prudence of the bishops and the growing indifference of politicians and public to religious matters were now sufficient to dampen most attempts to rekindle the forty-year blaze of ecclesiastical litigation.

Church opinion had changed too. When the Public Worship Regulation Act had been passed there were few churchmen in politics who did not believe that the Church's dissensions could be settled by law. Conservatives and Liberals alike agreed that the Church would cease to stand for that tolerant mixture of religious and social values which kept it the Church of the nation if it were to fall under the control of the advocates of religious autonomy. Only a few men like Gladstone foresaw that the law would prove an inappropriate means of regulating religious change. Gladstone was already explaining to Lord Shaftesbury in 1872 that 'it is by moral influence that the Church of England must be guided and held together, rather than by penal and coercive proceedings -

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1. Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii. 347-50.

which, as far as I can judge ... have rather inflamed her wounds and have produced a greater amount of harm than of good.'[1] He opposed the Act of 1874. By 1884 he had clearly been proved right, and most high churchmen needed no warning that religious questions should be kept out of the hands of lawyers at almost any cost.[2] A few ancient high churchmen who had grown up in a different age persisted in refusing to believe that it was possible to draw a distinction between spiritual and temporal.[3]

It was not only high churchmen who had come to doubt the suitability of lay tribunals. The Privy Council had once counted among its supporters most leading evangelicals and broad churchmen along with the whole mass of 'low church' supporters of Establishment and 'lay rights'. The evangelicals and broad churchmen had regarded Gorham and Essays and Reviews as the guarantee of their continued existence within a national Church. The less doctrinally concerned supporters of Establishment had seen the same cases as proof that the Church required continued lay regulation if it was to avoid 'narrow ecclesiasticism' and the forfeiture of its national status. A few of these last continued to regard the Church as a body necessarily dependent on the State. In 1884, for example, the broad church Liberal, Albert Grey, M.P., was still arguing:

> At each crisis in the history of English Christianity, the national rulers have decreed the changes in the doctrines and practices which were required by the conviction of the times. [4]

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1. Lathbury, Correspondence on Church and Religion of W.E. Gladstone, i. 170: Gladstone to Lord Shaftesbury, 7 May 1872.
2. CCR, 1884, p.169 (Sir Richard [R.A.] Cross).
3. CCC, 1884, pp.117-21 (Archdeacon Denison).
4. CCR, 1884, pp.555-6.

But it was becoming more unconvincing almost every year to equate lay membership of the Church with national citizenship and, in most parts of the country, less politically rewarding as well. The more doctrinally committed of low churchmen saw this. From time to time they noticed that 'public opinion' was veering from residual Protestantism towards a demand for toleration based on doctrinal indifference.[1] By the early 80s all but the most bigoted of 'Protestants' realised that legal coercion of 'ritualists' was producing at least as much sympathy for them as resentment against them for 'breaking the law'. Public reaction to the imprisonment of several clergy guilty of 'ritual' offences showed this clearly.[2] Even before this ultimate confrontation between rival ideologies, more sensitive evangelicals were finding it difficult to justify legal coercion of undoubtedly sincere Christians. They gained considerably in support from the discrediting of Protestant efforts to enforce the law, as we shall see in the following section of this chapter.

We now return to study in more detail the pressure groups involved in the sustained outburst of litigation through which the Church passed between 1850 and the 1880s. We have seen how organisations for the defence of the Establishment were, to a degree, democratised; we now investigate how far and in what ways similar processes took place in the 'defence' of doctrine and forms of worship. We trace the rise of mass-membership associations among the laity pledged to defend certain values

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1. E.g. Report of the Conference of the Church Association with deputations from the country (1867), p.66.

2. Marsh, Victorian Church in Decline, pp.232, 264 ff.

they considered essential to the preservation of true faith. Once it had been assumed by all except the most strident evangelicals that the religious beliefs of sincere churchmen were another aspect of the social beliefs which kept them good citizens and loyal patriots. A large number of churchmen, through inertia or conviction, continued to believe that this identity should not be allowed to be lost. Other churchmen believe as the institutions of State became more secular, that the identity was already being lost, and lost as a result of State interference with the Church. These were high churchmen of the era of the Oxford Movement and after, men who were concerned to prevent the State committing acts of 'national apostacy'.

It is thus not surprising that high churchmen were the first to feel the need to organise for the protection of doctrine. They felt least confident that the continued existence of the traditional relationship between Church and State benefited the Church. At first all was confused. We have seen this when we discussed the origins of Church defence organisations. A series of small and geographically scattered associations formed, splintered, coalesced and consulted with one another in a burst of activity which reached its height in the early 50s. The issues arose so fast in succession that it was difficult for those involved to settle their priorities. What united men against the Gorham judgement might divide them on the question of papal aggression or the revival of Convocation.[1] It was only gradually that the strands separated and stable

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1. Beresford Hope, The Church Cause and the Church Party, pp.13-25, gives a general outline. For a specific issue leading to fragmentation see Church Union Deposit, Vol.1, ff.108-11. (Minutes of the Bristol Church Union).

organisations with an effective national network of branches emerged. One strand separated to advocate the revival of Convocation (see section III), another to campaign in defence of the temporal privileges of Establishment, yet another to campaign in defence of 'doctrine'. The Church unions, as the supporters of this last aim called themselves, had more difficulty in emerging than the other groups. They enjoyed no support from the hierarchy and were suspected by most churchmen of being clerical coteries prone to 'chronic agitation' and inclined towards 'popery'.[1] (It was true that several of their leaders became converts to Roman Catholicism during the 50s and 60s.) And there was no small group of centrally-placed, like-minded men to organise a central representative body for the Church unions. There were two rival unions in London which had disagreed about the priority to be given to the revival of Convocation in the early 50s and had never resolved their differences.

The English Church Union, the first of the unions to attempt a national organisation since the confused and token attempts of the early 50s, was founded on the initiative of the Manchester Church Union. It was almost as much a faction as the factional groups it claimed to displace. Its earliest major concern was to organise legal assistance (and a bodyguard) for the pioneer ritualist, the rev. Bryan King, during the riots at St.George's-in-the-East in 1859-60.[2] It was not until the much more severe outbreak of 'No Popery' agitation in the late 60s that

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1. Conybeare, Essays Ecclesiastical and Social, p.124.

2. First Report of the Church of England Protection Society, now called the English Church Union (1860), pp.19 ff.; T.W.Belcher, Robert Brett, His Life and Work (1889), p.92.

the E.C.U. was recognised by the last remaining independent church unions as a central authority. Its membership and financial security became permanent and assured at about the same time. However, the small unrepresentative group of advanced high churchmen who met to draw up the constitution of the E.C.U. in 1859-60 did have a firm order of priorities and so laid a potentially secure foundation. They generally approved of the work of the newly founded Church Institution but pointed out that it had debarred itself from undertaking the doctrinal defence of the Church.[1] This work they claimed for themselves and thus untangled the issues which had so confused the earlier church unions. The objects they set themselves were:

> 1. To defend and maintain unimpaired the doctrine and discipline of the Church ...
> 2. To afford counsel and protection to all persons, lay or clerical, suffering under unjust aggression or hindrance in spiritual matters.[2]

They also required candidates for membership at both central and local levels to be communicants of the Church - an indication of their concern to revive 'discipline' among the laity.

The aims of the E.C.U. had limited early appeal. In 1860 the Union had 205 members of whom 99 were clergy. Its income was £219. It was not until it had identified itself as the leading national organisation in support of 'Puseyism' - Pusey was an early and influential member - that it began to expand dramatically. By 1865 the activities of ritualists

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1. First Report of the Church of England Protection Society ..., pp.17-8.
2. G.B. Roberts, The History of the English Church Union, 1859-1894 (1895), pp.12-3.

were worrying protestant churchmen sufficiently to found the Church Association. This Association began a series of actions against ritualist clergy in the ecclesiastical courts and thereby assured the success of the E.C.U.

As usual, it is difficult to compare statistics, in this case because the ideological presuppositions of the rival groups were reflected in their attitude to membership, to the structure of authority within their national organisations, and in the priority they gave to the various forms of participation open to their members. The E.C.U. for example was (like several post-tractarian high church organisations) proud of the opportunities it allowed women in its work. It claimed to be the first Church voluntary society to admit women to (associate) membership.[1] The Church Association, so far as I can tell, upheld orthodox social attitudes and ignored the possibility of admitting women to any form of official membership. The E.C.U. was also committed to gaining as many active participants in its work as possible, without regard to social status. Thus, when we list the number of E.C.U. members in 1876 as 13,877, we have to note that 2,420 of them were clergy, 5,080 women associates, 794 'ordinary associates' (members of local branches at a subscription of 6d or 1/- a year compared with the middle-class rate of 10/6 for full voting membership) and only 5,583 lay full members. The Church Association on the other hand regarded itself as the protector of old relationships rather than the creator of new ones and so it was

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1. C.Lindsay, The Church Union Movement (1865), p.19.

more concerned to maximise the financial contributions it needed to pay for its legal activities. (E.C.U. members referred to it as the Persecution Society Ltd.) The E.C.U. was also a far more hierarchical and centralised body than the Church Association and this is reflected in the greater number and precision of its statistics. The Church Association was required, in the evangelical way, to concede far more freedom of action to its branches than the high church society. Thus it does not necessarily tell us the whole story to compare the incomes of the two bodies. However, it is worth something to know the scale of contribution, as it is to know the scale of membership.

In fact, the incomes of each society were approximately equal in the 70s and 80s ; once they had become established they both raised between £3,500 and £5,500 p.a. in central funds. In addition, they had special funds in aid of legal expenses, their single most expensive item of expenditure. By the early 80s, by the time the legal campaigns had been fought to a standatill, the E.C.U. had raised about £27,000 for its 'Defence Fund' plus another £5,000 for the maintenance of the families of suspended or imprisoned clergy. The Church Association had raised over £50,000 for 'legal and parliamentary expenses'.[1] The membership figures also seem to have kept pace with each other. Both societies had about 9,000 members each by the early 70s and, by 1880, the E.C.U. claimed to have 18,000 and the Church Association 13,000 members. Most significantly, the years when E.C.U. membership increased by

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1. Figures compiled from annual reports of each society, published in Church Union Gazette and Church Association Monthly Intelligencer.

more than 2,000 p.a. were 1868, 1875-8, 1881 (and 1882 almost).[1] These were the years when ritual prosecutions were at their height - the Mackonochie (St.Alban's Holborn) case of the late 60s, the prosecutions following the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act in 1874, and the period when certain ritualist clergy were being imprisoned during the early 80s. As to the spread of branch societies, both organisations claimed to have about 150 branches by 1870. By 1880 the E.C.U. claimed more than 250 and the Church Association almost 400. By this stage the early nucleus of societies in London, the provincial cities, Oxford and Cambridge and the leading watering places had merged into a more nearly national network.

When we come to consider the policies pursued, the methods used and the styles of leadership accepted by the two organisations, we find the same mixture of explicit rivalry and stubborn individuality which characterises the statistics, now translated into beliefs, actions and personalities.

For example, each group detested its' rival's doctrinal peculiarities. The E.C.U. took a highly sacramental view of Christian worhsip and approved of 'ritual' as a means of heightening the emotional responses of worshippers; it was committed to the belief that salvation was to be achieved through participation in the grace-conferring corporate activities of 'the Church' rather than by individual action; it thus accorded a high status to the clergy and called them a priesthood.[2]

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1. E.C.U. figures in Roberts, History of E.C.U., p.404; Church Association figures from annual reports.

2. E.g. Church Union Gazette, 1873, p.186 (C.L. Wood).

The protestant members of the Church Association believed all this to be pernicious nonsense. To them the Church was a facility rather than a divinely sanctioned corporate body of believers and the clergy were advisers, not mediators. This was the heritage won against the forces of superstition at the time of the Reformation.[1] Yet both groups were strict scriptural literalists and had no patience with 'modern' biblical criticism. They both offered to contribute to the cost of legal proceedings against the heterodox rev. Charles Voysey (though the archbishop of York felt it prudent to accept only the offer of the Church Association).[2]

Each organisation used the courts to 'protect' the practices and beliefs it valued most though, as we shall see, the relative degrees of importance they attached to litigation differed considerably.

And each organisation relied primarily on the same social strata for its members and leaders - with reservations. To return to the E.C.U., it has already been suggested that women and the clergy made up an unusually high proportion of its membership. However, in other respects the E.C.U. conformed more closely to the stereotype of the Victorian voluntary society. It was an organisation with a middle class membership and a mixed leadership of professional men, businessmen, 'gentlemen of independent means' and gentry-landowners. Its branches flourished most easily in big cities and fashionable provincial towns. It was

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1. E.g. Church Association Annual Report, 1867, Appendix I: 'Declaration of the Council of the Church Association at the Conference held at Willis's Rooms', 26-7 Nov. 1867.

2. Church Union Gazette /E.C.U. Circular/, 1869, pp.293 ff.

always able to find a peer (or near-relation of one) to be its president. Its first president (until he became a convert to Roman Catholicism in 1868) was the hon. Colin Lindsay (1819-92), fourth son of a Scottish earl. Its second president was the hon. Charles Wood (1839-1934), second Viscount Halifax (succeeded 1885) and son of the firmly protestant first Viscount (formerly Sir Charles Wood, Whig cabinet minister). Wood was the pivot on which the Union turned almost until his death. The only other figure of continuing influence in the E.C.U. during the period was Dr.Pusey, and here the E.C.U. differed once more from its protestant counterpart. Pusey's reputation as a founding father of Tractarianism was so great that the E.C.U. could not afford ever to lose his support. He in fact exerted an informal power of veto over all policy decisions of the E.C.U. between 1876 and his death in 1882.[1]

The incident which led to Pusey acquiring this informal power over the society is interesting for the light it throws on the E.C.U.'s position in the Church and in wider society. Pusey, who had grown up with a generation which regarded the union of Church and State as a social fact (however irritating some of its consequences), could not understand or sympathise with the antagonistic attitude of the younger generation of ritualists to either Establishment or the law. Right to the end of his life he continued to claim as members of the Church

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1. J.G. Lockhart, Charles Lindley Viscount Halifax (1935), i.199-200.

'all who have not formally left us', and he fiercely rejected any attempts to adopt values so purely 'religious' that they set the E.C.U. against the whole of outside society. As he put it:

> It is so conceited, in a little handful of persons as we are after all (relatively to the millions of England) very unpopular, and having no weight except from our growing numbers.[1]

In 1876 matters came to a head when one young ritualist clergyman refused to recognise the validity of any judgment (temporal or spiritual) pronounced by the court set up under the Public Worship Regulation Act. To Pusey this was 'a clear case of anarchy' and he threatened to resign from the E.C.U. if the Union continued to support such men. As he said, 'there is a large body of real High Churchmen outside, whom I must not seem to compromise'.[2] 'Law', he later reflected, 'has rightly a great spell over English minds and law is against us'.[3] The duty of churchmen was to suffer persecution, not to court it, and the correct policy was one of education, not confrontation.

The ritualist clergy continued to drag the E.C.U. headlong into conflict with the law but, in general, Pusey's advice was accepted. The lay leaders of the E.C.U. were usually extremely careful not to associate themselves with the threats to agitate for disestablishment which ritualist clergy periodically made when under stress.[4] And, although it

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1. Pusey Papers: Pusey to C.L. Wood, 8 Feb. 1871.
2. Ibid.: Pusey to Wood, 26 Dec. 1876, 31 Dec. 1876 (reprinted in Liddon, Pusey, iv. 284-6).
3. Ibid.: Pusey to Wood, 7 July 1881.
4. English Church Union: Report of ... Special General Meeting (1886) pp. 5, 8 ff.

may be that the E.C.U. were the first to invoke the law against their protestant opponents, they realised from the beginning that they could not rely on lay-dominated courts to protect their views or help them achieve their goals. The E.C.U. was a much more 'total' organisation than the Church Association. It preferred, when it could, to operate through the corporate institutions of Church life - the parish congregations, and, when they emerged, the diocesan synods and conferences.[1] It idolised Convocation and would not hear of it being infiltrated by laymen as some reformers wished. The urban ritualist churches were the most fully 'congregationalised' of any in the whole Church. The people who attended these churches went by choice and they went prepared to be instructed in their duties as laymen and to take part in the various 'guild' activities which were encouraged. In fact the lay members of the E.C.U. probably had a clearer idea of what being 'a layman' meant than any other group in the Church. They were taught with considerable precision the limits of their competence and responsibilities, and shown the place they occupied in the hierarchy of ecclesiastical authority. The organising secretary of the E.C.U. from 1871 to 1919, the rev.T.Outram Marshall, claimed to have pioneered the communicant roll test of church membership in the early 80s at St.Augustine's, Kilburn. This involved each member of the congregation in making a declaration each year that he was still a communicant and wished to renew his 'certificate of membership'.[2] The 'education' of the laity away from the lax standards of national churchmanship could hardly have gone further without becoming

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1. E.g. Church Union Gazette, 1876, pp.293-4.
2. Ibid., March 1932 (obituary of T.O. Marshall).

avowedly 'sectarian'.

The open or tacit tests of membership which E.C.U. supporters accepted only served to infuriate 'protestants'. They could not accept the explicit distinction between religious and other social values which the high churchmen were making ever more frequently. To protestants, the Established Church was a bulwark of undifferentiated religious and secular values: it was not only the repository of doctrinal truths won by the blood of martyrs at the Reformation but also the ideological guarantor of the continued existence of the individual and national liberties asserted by those martyrs. Thus, ritualists seemed to be attacking not only religious truth but the self-identity of Englishmen. Given this, it was logical to say, as the Church Association did, that laymen were under an obligation to invoke the law to enforce the rights of citizens in their national Church.

The 'protestants' who argued in this way were, of course, all evangelical or low churchmen insofar as they were committed to an argued doctrinal position. However, just as many high churchmen detested the ritualists for their self-righteous zeal, so many evangelicals detested the protestants - not necessarily for their aims but for their methods. For a decade or so before the Church Association was founded, the evangelical had had a vague equivalent to the Church unions of the high churchmen. Like the Church unions, these Clerical and Lay associations as they were known, were decentralised groups with a mixed membership. Unlike the Church unions, they were not particularly interested in forming a hierarchical national organisation. They took a desultory interest in some matters

bordering on the political-church rate for example - but their primary function was to organise conferences of evangelicals. These were occasional two- or three-day 'retreats' for purposes of devotion and mutual instruction rather than for the purpose of passing resolutions or organising 'any kind of public demonstration'. The first Clerical and Lay association was founded at Gloucester in 1858 and by the early 60s there were about half a dozen regional associations. They had a membership of perhaps a few hundred each at most and an income barely enough to cover organising expenses.[1] Their aim 'to cherish a spirit of forbearance, gentleness, and quietness' was clearly more in harmony with the attitude which led some evangelicals to the first Keswick Convention in 1875 rather than that which led others to the first meetings of the Church Association in 1865.

The enthusiasts for the early Church Association were recruited more readily from groups like the Church of England Laymen's Defence Association founded in Salford in 1864 'to resist all encroachment upon the rights which are secured to the Laity by the laws and formularies of the United Church of England and Ireland'.[2] As ritualist practices spread beyond the handful of parishes affected in the late 50s they created a clientele on which protestants drew. This was the way in which the Salford association began - a local incumbent accused of turning a communion table into an altar, justifying his action by claiming that his

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1. Report of the Third Annual Conference of the Church of England Clerical and Lay Association (Western District) ... June 5th and 6th, 1860, pp. 3-6, 14 ff.

2. Tracts of the Church of England Laymen's Defence Association, Salford (1864-81), No.1: 'Prospectus' (1865).

parson's freehold gave him absolute discretion in matters affecting the chancel, thus inciting objectors to organise in the parish to ensure the election of a protestant churchwarden.[1] Protestants often only needed a grievance like this to exploit a general anxiety among educated and uneducated alike. The decline of the parish vestry, combined with a strong current of anti-Popish feeling swelled by Fenianism, the campaign for Italian unification and the Vatican Council served to magnify the suspicion of Englishmen that ritualism was subversion from within.

Local laymen's defence groups sprang up wherever the E.C.U. became active and, in 1865, the Church Association was formally organised. Its objects were:-

> 1. To maintain the Principles and Doctrines established at the English Reformation, and to preserve the purity of Protestant worship in the Church of England.
> 2. To resist all innovations on the order of Service as prescribed by the joint authority of the Church and State ...
> 3. To resist ... every exercise of that Priestly authority which was put down at the Reformation ...[2]

It expected the pursuit of these objects to involve it in campaigns of public exposure, in litigation and in the sponsorship of amending legislation if this should be found necessary. The prime founders of the Association were J.C. Colquhoun and C.N. Newdegate (if we are to accept Newdegate's later claim).[3] Newdegate's connections have already

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1. Ibid., No.9: 'First Annual Report' (1867), pp.1-3.
2. 'Objects' dated Jan.1866, taken from Church Association Annual Report, 1877, p.55.
3. Church Association Monthly Intelligencer, 1881, p.116.

been mentioned in discussion of the Committee of Laymen. Colquhoun (1803-70), the Association's first chairman, was the son of a Scottish lawyer and a former M.P. for a variety of constituencies in Scotland and the industrial midlands. The subsequent leaders are rather elusive figures The more prominent evangelicals did not think it prudent to take a leading role in it (though Lord Shaftesbury was president of the Dorset branch) and the clergy, though participating in its organisation at all levels, were usually under too much rank-and-file suspicion of their innate professional tendencies to be influential.[1] Perhaps the most prominent member during the 70s (and chairman 1883-5) was James Maden Holt (1829-1911) (Cons. M.P. for N.E. Lancs., 1868-80) whose parliamentary career included moving the rejection of Irish disestablishment on the third reading of the bill, and the sponsorship of an amendment to the Public Worship Regulation Act (which, if it had succeeded, would have deprived bishops of their discretion to 'veto' the institution of legal proceedings against clergy by 'aggrieved parishioners' under the Act). The patrons of the cause included significantly large numbers of Irish peers and retired Anglo-Indians.

The Church Association in its early years was fully aware that its activities were regarded with suspicion by many churchmen who might have been expected to approve its ultimate objects. From time to time it took pains to stress the more 'positive' and educative aspects of its work. Yet it was committed to defend a traditional order, not to

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1. E.g. Report of Church Association Conference ... (1867), p.59.

participate in the building of a new one, so, in general, it identified any plans for permanent alteration to Church institutions as evidence of the 'Popish' infection. Convocation and diocesan synods were hotbeds of clerical pretension, to be counteracted rather than joined.[1] Even the purely informal Church Congresses (founded in 1861) were regarded as corrupting. By 1869 the Association had agreed under pressure from its leading clerical members that members might attend Congresses as long as they went in strength.[2] However, their experience of Congresses was not happy and, by 1880, they were once more openly split on the question; some lay members believed that Congress-going was 'a veritable sin' and accused evangelical clergy who attended of going as 'ministers' and coming back as 'priests'.[3]

In fact, the Church Association was not founded or built up to take part in an evolutionary process. It was a crisis-oriented society. Like the E.C.U., it recruited its members and raised its funds in times of conflict but, unlike the E.C.U., it held out to its supporters the vision of a definite victory situation. Once the 'Romanisers' had been driven out of the Church it was expected that the Association could be disbanded. Its policy rested on the assumption that the activities of ritualist clergy were illegal and that, once this had been established in the courts, the problem would be solved.

As two decades passed it became apparent that the policy was based on an unrealistic assumption but the Church Association had no

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1. J.Bateman, The Church Association: Its Policy and Prospects (1880) p.9. Cf. Tracts of the Church of England Laymen's Defence Association, 'Fourth Annual Report' (1870), p.6.
2. Church Association Annual Report, 1869, p.21.
3. Bateman, Church Association, pp.7, 36.

alternative strategy to offer which would be acceptable to its members. Its justifications of policy became steadily more tortuous but all involved an appeal to the authority of 'the law of the land' on behalf of protestant Englishmen. In the hopeful early years of the Association its Council took special pains to point out to doubters that 'the work of the Church Association does not consist in prosecuting offenders for breaches of known law, but in ascertaining what the law is in doubtful cases, and they then look to the ordinary to enforce it'.[1] However, the courts were painfully slow to declare the law. There was a whole hierarchy of appeal courts to negotiate and even then the chances of failing on a legal technicality or, worse, of inadvertently establishing the continued legality of vestigial pre-Reformation practices in the Church of England, were very great. The Church Association lost patience and started to lobby strongly for amending legislation. It supported Lord Shaftesbury's bills to 'simplify' the administration of ecclesiastical law. Its agitation helped to spur Archbishop Tait to bring forward the Public Worship Regulation Act. This Act it vehemently supported, though it found it too mild in some respects.[2] In particular it objected to the discretion conferred on bishops to 'veto' the institution of proceedings under the Act,[3] and the crescendo of litigation during the late 70s brought the Association into direct conflict with the bishops.

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1. Church Association Annual Report, 1869, pp.32-3.
2. Marsh, Victorian Church in Decline, pp.132-3, 189-91.
3. Church Association Monthly Intelligencer, 1874, p.294.

The bishops saw what the Association was quite unable to admit - that the law had failed to restrain ritualism and that fighting through the courts to the bitter end only brought the ritualists sympathy and the Church contempt. The council of the Association replied to critics that it was not its fault that clergymen were imprisoned: the law had been broken and it must be enforced.

However, the strains provoked by the failure of 'the law' to suppress ritualism could not easily be resolved. In 1880 the Association split. A revolt broke out among rank-and-file members in the branches. The central Council was accused of 'inaction'; it had spent £12,000 over as many years trying to remove one clergyman (Mackonochie of St.Alban's, Holborn) from his living and yet he was still a beneficed clergyman and still a practising ritualist. The Council had failed to take its opportunity of having him imprisoned. Frustration boiled over and the Council was virtually bound over on good behaviour to demand enforcement of the law to the utmost lengths at the next opportunity.[1]

Yet, while the Council was forcibly converted to the view that 'the Association would be stronger without the help of half-hearted members',[2] its redoubled efforts to bring about a final 'crisis' lost it as much support as it gained. The bishops condemned the Association's intransigence almost unanimously. J.C. Ryle, newly appointed bishop of Liverpool and a former member of the Association, lent his influence to the formation of a Union of Clerical and Lay Associations.[3] In this way the less

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1. Ibid., 1880, pp.123-4, 166-7, 303 ff. esp. 305-6.
2. Ibid., 1880, p.320.
3. G.R. Balleine, A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England (1908), p.232; E.Stock, My Recollections (1909), p.178.

aggressive elements of the evangelical party regrouped, though the membership of the Union was small and its existence precarious during the 80s.[1] Some members of the Church Association had always been suspicious of the loyalty of the clergy to their cause and now they had proof for their suspicions.[2] The new Union was clearly dominated by clergy; the old Association was abandoned to lay protestants. Neither group seems to have been able to retain or knit its membership together to the same degree that the E.C.U. was able to do, though the Church Association did manage to rally its members for a 'crisis' from time to time, as when it prosecuted Bishop King of Lincoln in 1888.

The third so-called 'party' in the Church - the broad church, did not have a pressure group to sponsor legal proceedings with the same degree of enthusiasm as the E.C.U. and Church Association. Broad churchmen, in spite of their general commitment to the judicial authority of 'the Crown' in ecclesiastical affairs, were more prosecuted against than prosecuting. We have seen how both high churchmen and evangelicals regretted the judgment of the Privy Council in the Essays and Reviews case. This decision, however, confirmed the position of the new school of biblical critics within the Church in much the same way as Gorham confirmed the position of the evangelicals. Archbishop Tait (then Bishop of London) was a personal friend of several of the essayists and one of them, Frederick Temple, was appointed

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1. Union of Clerical and Lay Associations: Report of the Central Committee for 1887 (1888), pp.18-9.

2. Bateman, Church Association (1880), pp.3, 7.

bishop of Exeter by Gladstone less than a decade later. The Queen had no objections; she remained a broad churchwoman to the end of her life. Leading broad churchmen had so many supporters in high places that they had little fear of being dislodged by legal proceedings against them. They therefore had little need of a mass-membership organisation to agitate on their behalf and, indeed, would have found it both socially and intellectually inappropriate to call on mass support for the goals they were pursuing.

Broad churchmen were individualists accustomed to exerting influence at high levels within the social and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Their most articulate spokesmen were tutors and professors at the ancient universities like Jowett and J.R. Seeley, headmasters of public schools after Arnold's example like Frederick Temple and H.M.Butler or, sometimes, independent-minded aristocrats like William Cowper-Temple (first Baron Mount-Temple) and Albert Grey (fourth Earl Grey). They were more often than not clergymen, though clergymen in that indeterminate way demanded of college fellows and headmasters until late in the century. They certainly did not define the role of clergyman in the same terms as either high churchmen or evangelicals. In their view, a clergyman's central purpose was not so much to administer the sacraments or to preach as to be a trustee of the lay interest - an educated gentleman ready to stand as organiser of useful social activities in the local community and advocate of reconciliation between conflicting interests on the national plane. They generally abhorred 'dogmatism' and any attempt to narrow the comprehensiveness of the national Church. They

endorsed the words of the revered Dr. Arnold:

> We all have, with very few exceptions, the same notions of right and wrong ... We all believe that our first great duty is to love God; our second to love our neighbour.[1]

It was in pursuit of these wider social aims that broad churchmen sometimes felt the need to organise. In other respects they remained individualists, pursuing their biblical researches or their responsible careers among the administrative and educational elite without much concern to be recognised as a formal group within the Church.

Even when campaigning to guarantee or extend the comprehensiveness of the national Church, they tended to be individualists. Lord Ebury, for example, (Lord Robert Grosvenor, 1801-93, created first Baron Ebury 1857), spent a lifetime waging a single-handed battle for Prayer-book reform. As president of the Prayer-Book Revision Society from its foundation in 1859 until his retirement in 1889, Lord Ebury laboured to make the public services of the Church of England acceptable to 'the nation at large'. This included nonconformists.[2] (Lord Ebury had always been a strong protestant and he became a marked anti-ritualist in later years.) The members of his society were few and little attempt was made to establish a network of branches outside London. In fact Lord Ebury, from his seat in the House of Lords, was the society to all intents and purposes. What he achieved (for example, a relaxation of the terms of clerical subscription to the Articles) he did as a private member of parliament

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1. National Church Reform Union pamphlets [c. 1880], 'The Basis of National Communion'.

2. 'First Report of the Association for Promoting a Revision of the Prayer-Book ...' in E.V. Bligh, Lord Ebury as a Church Reformer (1891), pp. 229-31.

rather than as the parliamentary representative of an organised extra-parliamentary pressure group.

Parliament was the natural forum for the activities of broad churchmen and legislation their chosen weapon. If the Church was to be reinstated as the Church of the nation then it would have to be reinstated by an institution which all citizens acknowledged as authoritative. It could not be reinstated by some voluntary organisation of self-proclaimed churchmen. This line of reasoning underlay most of the proposals for 'Church reform' made by broad church individuals or groups. Lord Ebury's plans presupposed it. So did the plans of the National Church Reform Union, the most ambitious organisation sponsored by broad churchmen during the period.[1] The N.C.R.U. was founded sometime in the late 60s or early 70s.[2] Its immediate concern, like that of several laymen's defence groups which sprang up in those years, was to assert the rights of laymen in their parish churches against clerical encroachment. But, unlike the popular associations, it hoped to reconstruct rather than to repress. At first its handful of supporters continued to act in their individual capacities.

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1. W.H. Fremantle, 'Lessons from the History of Church Reform' in A.Grey and W.H. Fremantle (eds.), Church Reform (1888), pp.110-5.

2. Ibid., p.108. The keeping of records was never one of the Union's strong points. See the correspondence between H.M.Butler and Archbishop Tait in 1882 in which Butler claimed that he had not been active in the Union for seven years or so although his name still appeared in its list of office-holders; Bahlman (ed.), Diary of Sir E.W. Hamilton, p.159, note 1.

Lord Sandon, for example, aided by the rev. W.H. Fremantle, sponsored a bill for the creation of statutory parish councils (1870) to assert the control of parishioners over their church and the forms of worship practised there. (This is discussed fully in section III). By 1872 the Union had seen the need to form Church opinion outside parliament and it sponsored a public meeting on the subject of Church reform, chaired by Lord Lyttelton and attended by a fairly wide variety of churchmen.[1] The matters discussed illustrate the range of the Union's preoccupations. The headmaster of Harrow (Butler) summed them up by concluding:

> I know not whether the Church of England is destined to live for ever, but if she is to remain for ever in connection with the State it must be by enlisting more and more side by side with the devotion of our clergy the wisdom of an enlightened laity, and by appealing more and more to the loyal affection and even co-operation of the poor of the land.[2]

The concern to preserve a national Church and the belief that this was to be done by recasting the forms of worship and reinterpreting the articles of faith in such a way as to reconcile 'educated opinion' to the Church, by encouraging laymen to participate in the administration of parish affairs on equal terms with the clergy, and by expanding the concern of churchmen for the social welfare of the poor - this was the leading preoccupation of the Union as it developed through the 70s and 80s.[3]

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1. Guardian, 1872, pp.253-6.
2. Ibid., p.255.
3. N.C.R.U, pamphlets [c. 1880], 'Principles of the Union'.

The members of the N.C.R.U. were an intellectual and social elite. The Union never managed to carry its legislative schemes into action or, it seems, to form more than a handful of branches. Still, N.C.R.U. members, unlike the vast majority of active churchmen, realised that traditional ecclesiastical and religious attitudes would have to be modified to meet 'secularisation' and 'democracy'. To this extent they foresaw a new importance in, and a new role for, the layman. However, they were also unwilling to contemplate the possibility that 'religious' and 'secular' values might diverge so irrevocably as to turn all religious belief and practice into a minority preoccupation and in this sense their conception of the layman's role remained the anachronism of the undifferentiated citizen-parishioner.

It can now be seen that each of the most active (if not most representative) 'party' organisations within the Church contributed towards the emergence of a more precise and less diffuse conception of the lay role among churchmen. The E.C.U. made its contribution by design. The others did so at least partly involuntarily. They were caught up between the still authoritative institutions of the old State Church and the potentially authoritative institutions of what might well become an autonomous Church. They found it difficult to avoid following the example of the high church pace-setters. Even if they wanted to preserve the national Church by opposing attempts to place doctrinal restrictions on membership they had to do so by mobilising the support of a body of actively committed lay adherents

held together by voluntary rather than involuntary ties.

It is true that the exaggerated enthusiasms aroused by the E.C.U. and the Church Association could not be sustained. They were the result of the temporary tensions created when people began to question the legitimacy of the traditionally undifferentiated sources of authority within Church and State. Yet the period of questioning did provide the opportunity for a relatively large number of churchmen to experience a type of lay membership which required their active participation in church affairs. This experience led churchmen to discuss far more energetically what the layman's role should be in the Church, even if it led to no consensus.

It is too early to draw any firm general conclusions about the effect which the differentiation of the institutions of Church and State had on the conception of the lay role. A full assessment can only come after tracing the movement complementary to the one described here - the growth of autonomous or 'voluntary' institutions in the Church - Convocations, diocesan conferences, parish councils and the like.

What can be done is to recapitulate two leading themes of this discussion. The first is the influence of the nonconformist example - the 'voluntary system' as it was known. The Church of England could not afford to discount the nonconformist example in matters either of ecclesiastical or of political organisation. The glory of the nonconformists was always admitted to be the energy of their lay members. We have seen how certain churchmen sought to emulate their attitudes and accept their values in both political organisation and patronage.

But the pure 'denominational' or 'voluntary system' stereotype was not fully acceptable to churchmen for all its fascination. It worked well for the sheep but often let the goats disappear uninfluenced. And perhaps even the sheep had their vices. Broad churchmen, especially, lamented the division of values - 'citizen' from 'Christian' - which nonconformity was alleged to foster. Low church and evangelical 'protestants' had their own, more doctrinally-slanted version of the same objection.

The problem was complicated by the growth of a specifically 'clerical' spirit among all but the broad church clergy. The clergy were the first section in the Church to discover a new self-identity. As they began to define their role less in terms of social and more in terms of religious values they began, part by design, part involuntarily, to reorder the role of layman in the Church. This clearly worried the great majority of laymen in the traditional - involuntary membership of the national Church - sense. But their opposition merely tested the resolve of those other laymen who had voluntarily accepted a division of values and, if necessary, a restrictive test of membership in the Church. The old assumptions could not be obliterated nor the new ones fully accepted.

SECTION II

THE ROLE OF THE LAITY IN THE VOLUNTARY SOCIETIES OF THE CHURCH

CHAPTER 6

TYPES OF VOLUNTARY ACTIVITY

The nineteenth century was the great age of voluntary societies for religious and philanthropic purposes. When the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, the century's most famous supporter of voluntary causes, died in 1885, two hundred societies sent representatives to his memorial service in Westminster Abbey. It would be an endless task to investigate the lay role in every voluntary society connected with the Church of England. This section, then, will aim only to identify various types of voluntary work and to investigate the role of laymen in organisations representative of each type.

It had been clear to many for the half century before 1850 that the Established Church would increasingly have to rely on the efforts of volunteer laymen if it was to fulfil its traditional role in a fast-changing society. Most obviously, the growth of population and the migration from country to city (and then to suburbs by the 1880s) strained existing Church organisation. The population of England and Wales rose from 9 million in 1801 to 18 million in 1851 to 26 million in 1881. The number of beneficed clergy in the Church of England rose from about 6,000 at mid-century

to more than 13,000 in the late 1880s.[1] The benefices had to be endowed and new churches built, largely by voluntary fund-raising, and still the clergy required more lay assistance than ever they had in the relatively uncomplicated society of a traditional parish. They were perhaps more likely to receive assistance, too, than they had been in the past. Urban and industrial society produced more wealth, but it did not arrange its distribution in any obviously 'just' way, nor did the increased specialisation of occupational skills seem to make society any more cohesive. Men brought up to accept the hierarchical certainties and paternalistic social relationships of traditional society found it difficult not to be alarmed by change and some at least felt a guilty responsibility for the break-down of traditional relationships. This feeling was a spur to religious and philanthropic activity.[2]

The extent of the voluntary response to Church needs was remarkable, particularly among its middle- and upper-class adherents. This is evident at a purely financial level from the main headings of the table of 'voluntary contributions of the Church for twenty-five years, 1860-1884', which appeared in the Church of England Year-Book for 1886.[3]

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1. O.Chadwick, The Victorian Church, ii.167.

2. For more extended discussion of the motives of Victorian philanthropists see B. Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', Victorian Studies, ix (1965-6), 353-74.

3. Official Year-Book of the Church of England, 1886, pp.xvi-xix.

		£
I	Theological schools and the education of candidates for holy orders	528,653
II	Church building and restoration, endowments, building of parsonages, etc.	35,175,000
III	Home missions (Income from societies for church building and extension, for employment of additional clergy, scripture readers, etc. for home missions, temperance work, extension of the home episcopate, etc.)	7,426,478
IV	Foreign missions	10,100,000
V	Elementary education (but not secondary or university)	22,421,542
VI	Charitable work (Income for nursing, hospitals, orphanages, reformatories, penitentiaries, etc. - all institutions under exclusive control of Church of England)	3,818,200
VII	Clergy charities, general and diocesan	2,103,364
		£81,573,237

The figures from which the table was compiled are no doubt of varying degrees of reliability: they were compiled from the official returns of more than four hundred voluntary societies (tested by 'an experienced actuary'). They do not distinguish between contributions made by the clergy and those made by laymen. On the other hand, they are restricted to the activities of the Church of England exclusively (in an age when some of the most active societies, the British and Foreign Bible Society for example, were supported equally by nonconformists and low churchmen of the Established Church). They

are a record of contributions only (i.e. not of income from other sources such as invested capital). And they exclude the amount raised at parish level for parish purposes. So far as there is a precise meaning to the question, 'How much finance did laymen contribute to the Church through voluntary societies?' the total given is as good an answer as can be provided. It could still be challenged by attacking the criteria on which it includes and excludes certain activities: where does one draw the line between religious and secular charity, parochial and extra-parochial activity, activities controlled by churchmen and those merely supported by them? Would Victorians always have thought the distinctions significant enough to record in any case? But there can be no doubt that the regular voluntary contribution of three million pounds a year was a relatively recent phenomenon in Church history, and that the voluntary societies played a vital part in enabling the Church to meet social change as far as it did. A brief survey of the origins of lay voluntary organisation places the development in context.

It is useful to distinguish between two broadly different types of voluntary lay participation in Church activity. The first type of activity can be described as corporate, organised through national voluntary societies and usually performed without the formal sanction or control of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The second type of activity, by contrast, is most simply seen as individual

activity - the work of single laymen acting in a traditional parish setting and at least nominally under the direction and control of the local clergy.

The first corporate voluntary societies were the missionary societies, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.), both founded around 1700. These societies, though they allowed for lay participation, were dominated by the clergy, and relied on the state for finance rather than seeking the contributions of a mass lay membership. The voluntary societies of the Evangelical Revival, begun in an age of far more obvious social crisis than their predecessors, were far more eager to arouse and harness lay enthusiasm, and during the last years of the Napoleonic wars and the years of home unrest which followed, they expanded to become 'national' organisations with a greatly increased membership. The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) founded in 1799, had an income from voluntary contributions of £3,000 in 1812-13, of £13,000 in 1813-14 (after the formation of 'District Associations') of £30,000 by 1819-20, further rising to an average of £75,000 a year by the 1840s.[1] Traditionalists and high churchmen objected to the methods of organisation adopted by the evangelical societies: such societies allowed too much influence to lay enthusiasts and too little to the ecclesiastical authorities

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1. E.Stock, The History of the C.M.S. (1899),i .476.

to be orthodox. But the orthodox societies were induced to expand in the same way. The S.P.C.K. increased its membership from 3,560 in 1810 to 14,530 in 1820 (to 15,000 by 1850), and its revenue increased from £12,000 to £60,000 a year between 1800 and 1820.[1] The S.P.G. lagged but then faced a crisis when the Whig governments of the 1830s withdrew state support from its work in Canada. It reorganised on a national basis and its income from voluntary contributions increased from £9,000 in 1833 to £48,000 in 1843.[2]

The S.P.G. was not the only society to be jolted into action by the changed political climate of the 1830s. For some time it had been becoming apparent that the state was unwilling to finance the national Church on a scale sufficient to meet its claims. High churchmen (predominantly laymen) had founded the National Society in 1811 to provide elementary education through a system of parish schools. They had founded the Church Building Society in 1818 (I.C.B.S. - it was Incorporated in the 1820s) to raise funds to supplement state grants for the building of new churches. By the 1830s the prospect of financial support from the state was receding fast, and both high church and evangelicals felt the need to extend the range of voluntary activities to compensate for the loss of state privilege. In 1836 a group of young evangelical laymen combined to found the Church Pastoral-Aid Society (C.P.A.S.), a society which aimed to pay

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1. W.K. Lowther Clarke, A History of the S.P.C.K. (1959), p.148.
2. C.F. Pascoe, Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G. (1901), p.826.

for the employment of additional clergy and of lay agents in understaffed parishes.

It was a new departure for a voluntary society to be formed with the explicit aim of employing laymen for pastoral work, and the C.P.A.S. was very soon under attack from high churchmen and influential members of the Church hierarchy: it was said that 'the legitimate business of a society is to provide money, not men: means and not agents'.[1] The foundation of the C.P.A.S., in fact, provoked the classic confrontation over the limits of the lay role in a traditionally organised Church.[2] The claims made on behalf of laymen in 1836 were not formally accepted by the Church until 1866 and after, and it is worth noting the main arguments in objection and justification. Some critics, like the one quoted above, objected to the whole idea of laymen encroaching on the traditional role of the clergy. They branded it as yet another instance of the pernicious influence of Dissent in undermining traditional structures of authority in Church and State. It was in principle wrong that a lay society should 'institute a new system in the Church, affecting its character, independently of the constituted authorities of the Church'.[3]

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1. British Critic, xli (March 1837), 225 ff., quoted in P.B.Coombs, 'A History of the C.P.A.S., 1836-1861' (Bristol University M.A. thesis, 1960), p.70.

2. See Coombs, op.cit., pp.83, 143-5.

3. 'A Clergyman', Remarks upon the System of Lay-Teaching as proposed by the C.P.A.S. (1836), p.2.

Besides, dark predictions were made that paid lay agents of the type likely to be attracted by £80 a year would stay in the Church only so long as it took them to build up the goodwill to set up on their own as dissenting ministers. C.P.A.S. supporters argued that the substantive need for urban evangelism over-rode the purely instrumental problem of how it was to be provided. As evangelicals they believed that salvation was a personal rather than a corporate matter and ecclesiastical organisation, in their opponents' words, a matter of 'expediency' rather than 'principle'. However, they were prepared to show their good faith by compromising on two points of organisation. The high church Bishop Phillpotts had protested that: 'The introduction of a regular salaried lay officer, sent from a distance by an irresponsible Society, and not even amenable directly and legally to the bishop, is, in my estimation, highly objectionable'. The Society in a special regulation made it clear that 'the nomination of an Assistant shall always be left with the Clergyman to whom aid is given, the Committee claiming only full satisfaction as to the qualification of his nominee'. The lay assistant was, on appointment, to be responsible solely to the local incumbent, thus preventing injury to the parish system (though not safeguarding the high church bishops' interest in keeping evangelical patronage in check). The first compromise led to a further dispute about the right of a mixed committee to examine the 'qualification' of nominees, a matter presumed to involve the clergy. By the 1840s, the C.P.A.S. moved to remove this ground of objection too, and restricted its examining

committee to clerics. But the evangelical tone had already been established and a whole spectrum of high churchmen from Bishop Phillpotts to Bishop Blomfield, from Joshua Watson to W.E.Gladstone, withdrew their support from the C.P.A.S. to found the Additional Curates Society (A.C.S.) in 1837. The A.C.S. was fully supported by high churchmen, some of whom seem to have expected the need for both societies to disappear once the state could be persuaded to adopt the work of paying additional clergy as its own responsibility. Still more high churchmen admitted the need for a voluntary society but could not accept methods which so extended the lay role in areas traditionally reserved to clergy.[1]

The state of opinion on the extent of the lay role had changed marginally by the 1850s. Traditionalists were still opposed to lay agency.[2] But pragmatists like Bishop Blomfield of London began to see that mere provision of churches had failed to reclaim the urban masses for Christianity, that lay agency would be needed if church building was to have any point.[3] However, it was the failure of the first method, not the notable success of the second, which was convincing. (By 1850 the C.P.A.S. was supporting only 108 lay agents but 299 clergy.)

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1. These debates are fully described in Coombs, 'History of the C.P.A.S.', pp.63-90.

2. See Bishop Phillpotts in Parl.Papers 1857-8, ix (387), questions 878-80.

3. A.Blomfield, Memoir of Charles James Blomfield, Bishop of London (2nd edn. 1864), p.333: Bishop Blomfield to /?/ 21 Sept. 1854.

Discussing the lay role in voluntary societies before 1850 has in passing raised issues concerning the second type of lay activity mentioned. The introduction of sponsored lay agency necessarily raised issues concerning the role of laymen in the parish. But it remains to sketch the extent of the work traditionally done by individual laymen in a parish setting.

First, there had always existed the very diffuse, uninstitutionalised duty of parishioners of wealth or social standing to give charitable relief to the sick and the poverty-stricken. This, of course, continued, though its social appropriateness, obvious in a traditional rural parish, became less apparent in urban conditions. Nevertheless, the traditional ruling class continued to believe that the duty should be observed under the new conditions, by the new owners of wealth.[1] And, indeed, substantial numbers of the newly-wealthy, at least after a generation or so,[2] did accept the traditional ethic of the landed classes that wealth and social status, social influence and social responsibility were ideally mere aspects of each other. The converse of this proposition, however, tended to be that poverty and crime were likely to be equally strongly connected with moral failure. It is certain at least that in 1850 there were few active laymen who believed it safe, perhaps even possible, to distinguish between 'religious' and 'secular' charity. In fact,

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1. Parl.Papers 1857-8, ix (387), p.xv (Report of House of Lords Select Committee on 'the Deficiency of Means of Spiritual Instruction and Places of Divine Worship in the Metropolis, and in other Populous Districts ...') (Referred to henceforth as Parl.Papers 1857-8).

2. D.Owen, English Philanthropy 1660-1960 (1965), pp.469-70.

'religious proselytism was itself designed to remedy (or alleviate) early Victorian poverty and ignorance'.[1] Charity relief and evangelism were as yet regarded as vocational work for volunteers and not as specialist skills requiring research and training as, to a degree, they became.

There were, in fact, some specialised roles for laymen in the parish before 1850, though the actual skills they required were diffuse enough. Apart from the formal officers of the parish as a unit of administration - churchwardens and their assistants - there were laymen (and women) who acted as volunteer district visitors and, especially, Sunday school teachers. However, it depended totally on the attitude of the incumbent what duties he would permit laymen to perform and, indeed, whether he encouraged them to come forward at all. This had always irked evangelicals with their developed sense of personal responsibility, and their irritation continued well beyond 1850. J.C. Ryle, a leading evangelical, wrote in 1870:

> Oh, mighty condescension! Oh, wondrous liberality! We will let laymen do rough work which could not be done at all without them, and work which they have no need to ask the clergy's leave to do! If that is all that people mean when they talk of enlisting 'lay co-operation' I am sorry for them.[2]

But by this stage, it will later be seen, even traditionalist high churchmen were pressing for a formal recognition of the layman's right

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1. B.Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', Victorian Studies, ix. 356.

2. J.C. Ryle, Church Reform (1870), vi.9.

to participate in parish work. As to the 'right' of laymen to teach in Sunday schools, this right was fairly well established by 1850,[1] and continued to provide more opportunities for lay participation in parish work than any other. By 1885 it was estimated that there were well over 100,000 men and women teaching in Church Sunday schools.[2] However, as Chadwick remarks, 'an Anglican Sunday school ... depended on the vicar'.[3] Some individual evangelical clergy might give great freedom of action to trusted indivdual laymen,[4] but in general the teaching was considered a very humble role, offering about as much freedom from control as the social status of the teacher demanded. Only in the industrial north did laymen take and keep any independent initiative.[5] They, of course, were spurred to rivalry by the enormous and long-standing success of the nonconformist Sunday Schools. Now this important aspect of the lay role cannot and should not be ignored. However, it is a field in itself, and, being locally based, would require research into a wilderness of individual instances, so it is not intended to use Sunday school teaching as a primary example of lay activity here.

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1. But see Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.257.
2. Church of England Year-Book, 1885, p.498. The total of 113,000 given is based on a return from only 58% of parishes.
3. Chadwick, op.cit., ii.228.
4. E.Stock, My Recollections (1909), p.108.
5. Chadwick, op.cit., ii.258-62.

These, then, are the main types of lay voluntary activity to be investigated, together with some account of the extent of the accepted lay role in each by the 1850s. Before each type is discussed in turn, it may help to identify some issues which arose repeatedly in debates on the extent of the lay role, whatever the type of activity.

CHAPTER 7

RECURRING ISSUES : CENTRALISATION AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

The evangelical attitude - that the salvation of souls was a matter of urgency and the responsibility of every individual - was a very strong source of energy behind Victorian religious and charitable activities, and influenced people far beyond the boundaries of the 'evangelical party'. It inspired many more laymen to take an active part in Church life outside public worship than had ever done so before, and it inspired them to act of their own initiative. This enthusiasm summoned up, however, presented the Church authorities with the ever-recurrent problem of control and 'institutionalisation' - with the problem of preserving its distinctive beliefs and traditional structure of authority intact.

The Church was not the only institution to be placed under strain by the appearance of new sources of disturbance and newly energetic social groups. It, like the state, had difficulty in adapting to at least two sustained trends in social organisation. First came the problem of reconciling traditional local interests to accept the centralised organisation required to manage vastly expanded activities. Second came the problem of controlling the increasing influence of lay specialists with professional status or technical skills, and of controlling self-proclaimed evangelists.

The claims of these groups had to be set off against the need of the institution to defend the traditional definition of its goals and its authority structure, and to protect the status of its various privileged grades.

'Centralisation' became a contentious issue at two distinct levels of Church organisation. At one level voluntary societies saw centralisation as a threat to their freedom of action. As some post-Oxford Movement clergy and bishops began to feel conscious of their corporate identity they inclined to believe that the national voluntary societies should formally recognise the over-riding authority of 'the Church'. As early as 1840 the rev. William Palmer was branding the S.P.G. as a 'joint-stock club' and ironically asking what the apostles would think of an organisation in which their episcopal successors held office not by virtue of their divinely-conferred authority, but as the result of a vote among members.[1] And, as late as 1884, a C.M.S. committee member rejected Convocation's proposal for a Central Board of Missions with the argument:

> The principal feature which has distinguished the career of our race from that of foreign nations, and which has, under God, been the secret of our greatness, has been the spontaneity and independent character of all our enterprises. Even the constitution of our political fabric bears this stamp.[2]

At another level the same argument was used in the endless quarrels

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1. Stock, History of the C.M.S., i.389.

2. CCR, 1884, p.460 (P.Vernon Smith, Times correspondent on ecclesiastical affairs).

between the headquarters and the local branches of almost every Victorian voluntary society. To this argument was added the debate about 'efficiency'. Headquarters usually wanted to assess the comparative needs of all localities and redistribute resources from areas of lesser to areas of greater need, and it usually wanted evidence of maximum 'objective' results for expenditure of resources. The branches wanted more immediate and local results to satisfy their members, and they frequently accused the centralisers of achieving efficiency only at the cost of dampening enthusiasm. To some, indeed, it seemed that there was 'a monstrous evil springing up in the centralization of our Charitable Societies'.[1] At its most altruistic this meant a concern lest the giver to good causes should become hardened by the interposition of an impersonal agent between him and the recipient of his charity. At its most self-interested, it might mean that the curb on local members applying their resources locally was interfering with their social enjoyment or spoiling their chance of a good fight with the local branch of a rival society performing the same work.[2] There emerged from time to time in most societies, too, a parallel tension between the desire of the central

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1. J.Pearson, The Duty of Laymen in the Church of England (1856), p.5. Pearson was an old-fashioned evangelical barrister who thought that each parish should be a self-supporting unit, but he seems to have modified his views after discovering the extent of London 'heathenism': CCR, 1867, pp.204 ff.

2. Cf. Pearson, op.cit., pp.8-9; Conybeare, Essays Ecclesiastical and Social, p.95. See also B.Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', pp.366-7 on the 'function' of rivalry between societies. This rivalry was most conspicuous at a local level, though it was no less built into the assumptions of the central administrators of the societies: Stock, C.M.S., iii.63,41-2.

societies to deal with unappropriated contributions and the desire of many contributors to have their gifts applied to specified projects.[1] Sometimes there was an even more delicate balance to achieve even than that between efficiency and enthusiasm.

There was the problem of enthusiasm raised by 'improper' means. The S.P.G. standing committee resolved in 1888:

> That while recognising the advantage to the Society of meetings ... for the sale of work ... which, in addition to the funds obtained, enable those of small means to help by personal labour ... [yet] the objects of excitement which are sometimes added to such sales ought to be discouraged, since they are alien from the spirit of self-denial by which the Gospel is best propagated.[2]

The confrontations between centre and branches were not as easily translateable into terms of lay against clerical interest as were the disputes between voluntary societies and hierarchy. But they too could be exploited in those terms on occasion.

The increased importance of the professional classes and the emergence of new, more specialised, professions from the traditional but diffuse professions such as the clergy - this also raised continuing problems in the relationship between clergy and laymen. The clergy were an old-established profession of relatively high social status (at least since the late eighteenth century) but with a very diffuse social role and (outside the Church) no particular training or specialised knowledge to help them perform their role. In the course of the

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1. This problem caused a financial crisis in the S.P.G., for example, in the early 80s: Pascoe, S.P.G., p.829.

2. Ibid., p.827.

nineteenth century there was a development away from 'status professionalism' in the direction of 'occupational professionalism'.[1] Several new professions with more precisely defined areas of competence and more specialised skills arose directly at the expense of the clergy's authority. Two obvious examples of this trend are the occupations of school teaching and of full-time 'charity organisation' or social work. But the encroachment was general, as can be seen from the concern of the C.M.S. in 1885 to draw up rules regulating the situations in which it was permissible to use medical missions as a preliminary stage in the evangelising of the heathen. It had to be emphasized that 'the medical work should always be subordinate to the spiritual'.[2] In such an atmosphere many clergy felt bound to reassert at least nominal authority and then ran the risk of being accused of wanting to restore a medieval monopoly of knowledge.[3] Of course, the Church had always had, and continued to have the problem of defending institutionalised (priestly) authority against the charismatic claims of self-proclaimed evangelists, but the threat implicit in the progress of most forms of specialised lay knowledge was something relatively new.

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1. See P.Elliott, The Sociology of the Professions (1972), pp.14 ff.
2. Stock, C.M.S., iii.309-10.
3. Note the heat such issues generated: CCR, 1867, pp.311-3 (Earl of Harrowby), pp.314-6 (Viscount Sandon).

Further, the problem of defending clerical status was all the more difficult because of the especially high social component in it. Most clergy and many laymen in mid-century were openly proud of the lack of difference between the educational training and style of life of the clergy and their social equals (in the ideal rural parish of southern England, at least) - the landed gentry. The vicar who objected to Bishop Wilberforce's campaigns against hunting parsons, on the ground that they fostered belief in 'that most mischievous and deadly error, that there are two sorts of Christianity, one for the clergy, and another for the laity',[1] was to be a figure of the past soon after 1850. But the belief in the virtues of a clergy drawn from the gentry survived into the 1880s without particular major challenge.[2] Archbishop Tait, who died in 1882, was said to call people 'ecclesiastics' as a form of personal insult.[3]

Anti-clericalism was not a major social force in England partly because it was so widespread among the clergy (though of course, the main credit for keeping it weak must go to Nonconformity for keeping hostility to the Church within a Christian frame of reference).

With some awareness that these two social developments - centralisation and increased differentiation of skills - have widespread implications for the development of the role of laymen in the Church, we can turn to consider the course of events.

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1. Banbury Guardian, 1 Feb.1849, quoted in B.Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (1971), p.311. See also Lord Shaftesbury's insistence in 1860 on a similar matter of social integration: 'Our clergy should be a married clergy': E.J.Speck, The Church Pastoral-Aid Society, A Sketch of its Origin and Progress (1881), p.138.
2. CCR, 1861, pp.119 ff.; Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.246-7, 250-1.
3. Marsh, The Victorian Church in Decline, p.17.

CHAPTER 8

PROBLEMS OF CONTROL (1) : THE VOLUNTARY SOCIETIES AND CENTRALISATION

This section concerns the development of the lay role in and through voluntary societies as it was affected by the general trend towards centralisation of administration and decision-making. The discussion will deal (A) with the development of the established national voluntary societies after 1850; (B) with the rise of the diocesan societies, of the role of volunteer laymen in their work, and of the relations between them and the national societies existing for similar objects; (C) with the rise of the 'offertory' as a major source of finance for all Church societies, its effect on the status and role of laymen, and its justification in terms of an ideology of participation through giving to a common cause.

(A) By 1850 the major national voluntary societies had defined their spheres of work and were well on the way to completing their networks of local branches. (The major societies are taken to include the C.M.S. and S.P.G., the C.P.A.S. and A.C.S. and possibly the S.P.C.K. For reasons to be explained, two other societies perhaps considered major in 1850 - the National Society and the I.C.B.S. - were to decline or be superseded before the 1880s.)

There were still some areas of organisation which could be worked more intensively. Local branches could be multiplied,

co-ordinated in regional organisations, and propitiated by being allowed to elect representatives to the central committee.[1] Drives could be made to pledge individual parishes or incumbents to hold regular collections for a society's work. (The S.P.G. was particularly successful in this field, and the number of churches listed as contributing to its funds rose from 3,934 in 1850 to 7,921 in 1880.[2]) The last traces of official state support vanished in 1856 when the government refused to continue the practice of recommending certain societies to the public by Royal Letter. (The Royal Letter was a circular letter recommending the work of the S.P.C.K., S.P.G. and I.C.B.S. in turn, read annually in all parish churches and calculated by the three societies benefitting to be worth £10,000 a year to each of them.[3]) All societies now competed on an equal footing and developed similar voluntary organisations to raise their income. What one society did, no other could afford to ignore. This is illustrated throughout the period, the last major example being the simultaneous attempts of the C.M.S. and S.P.G. in the 1880s and 90s to propagate their work among a rising generation by sponsoring children's organisations.[4]

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1. E.g., Stock, C.M.S., iii.63; Pascoe, S.P.G., pp.940-2.
2. S.P.G. Annual Reports, 1873, 1882.
3. Correspondence of S.P.G. with the government reprinted in S.P.G. Annual Report 1857, pp.xxv-xxix.
4. Stock, C.M.S., iii.307, 322; Pascoe, S.P.G., pp.828a-b.

In spite of increased reliance on voluntary contributions for support, and in spite of the increased number of voluntary societies competing for attention, the established societies generally enjoyed a remarkable increase in funds and membership between 1850 and the 1880s. However, it is difficult to illustrate either increase with figures which can meaningfully be used to compare the growth of participation (let alone lay participation) in one society between one date and another, or to compare the growths of different societies. For example, the membership of the S.P.G. was, until 1850, limited by its charter to 320 "Incorporated Members', and the increase in membership to 2,000 in 1866 and to 4,300 in 1877[1] reflects a changing concept of 'membership' more than it provides the statistical basis for calculating percentage increase in its growth. A semi-official society of philanthropic gentlemen had become a purely voluntary society with a mass membership.

The financial prosperity of the major societies is perhaps a more accurate indicator of increased and more widely based lay support. In 1850 the general income of the C.P.A.S. was £31,000 and of the A.C.S. £23,000. For 1884 the figures are £99,000 and £85,000. The average income of the C.M.S. was £133.000 a year between 1849 and 1861, £150,000 between 1862 and 1872, touched a record £261,000 in 1874, and was a more normal £190,000 in 1882. The S.P.G.'s average was about £50,000 a year in the early 1850s and rose sharply to about

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1. Pascoe, S.P.G., p.939.

£70,000 in the mid 50s and early 60s, then more steadily to about £90,000 in the mid-70s and early 80s.[1] Yet even these figures give rise to almost insoluble problems of interpretation. While some fluctuations in income, like those connected with economic depression, might be expected to affect all societies equally, many major fluctuations were not shared so equally. The S.P.G., for example, was less reliant on voluntary contributions in 1850 when it had other sources of income than it was later when it did not. Between 1850 and 1884, the C.P.A.S., and A.C.S., in their rivalry, devised new ways of distinguishing between 'society income' and that of the local branches: it depended upon the rules of a society how much branch income had to be transferred to the central organisation. Some societies had income from investment of receipts, some societies spent as they received. Even comparison of subscriptions and donations alone does not eliminate distortion. Legacies accrued at irregular intervals; funds for special purposes were collected; royal letters were discontinued in the 1850s, and a newly-formed diocesan society might draw off local support permanently or temporarily in the 1870s or 80s. Most dramatically of all, a society might benefit from events

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1. Figures from Stock, C.M.S.,; Pascoe, S.P.G.,; Speck, C.P.A.S.,etc. It is interesting to note how these figures compare with the incomes of other societies. The C.M.S. was the most prosperous of the missionary societies though, in 1861, its income combined with that of the S.P.G. only just exceeded that of the three main nonconformist missionary societies. The average income of the Royal National Life-Boat Institution during the 60s was £33,000 p.a. and that of the R.S.P.C.A. considerably less. D.Owen, English Philanthropy- 1660-1960, pp.177-80.

unconnected with its specified aims. The C.M.S., for example, had enormous and unforeseeable 'windfalls' in 1857 after the Indian Mutiny and in 1874 after news of the death of Livingstone in Africa.[1] These 'boom' years were usually followed after an interval by years of financial crisis when receipts fell to more normal levels and the societies found they had overcommitted themselves. For the idea that 'the Lord will provide' led to some difficult moments when applied as a rule of financial administration. It was a widely held belief, underpinned by continuing national economic expansion, that a most effective way of increasing contributions to foreign missions was to spend current income to the full and then to call on supporters to maintain the expanded organisation as a matter of conscience and self-respect. For example, when the C.M.S. committee, after disturbing experiences in the late 70s, decided to estimate their income in advance and to limit their spending plans to the estimate, a minority of clerical members objected to such a procedure.[2] There is no further evidence that these clergy represented a general clerical attitude, though perhaps it might be suggested that clergy were less willing to admit the mixed motives most supporters had in giving to missions. (The examples of the leap in C.M.S. income in 1857 and 1874 suggest that the givers were motivated by patriotism and a sense of outraged cultural superiority as much as anything.) When the contributors actually

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1. Stock, C.M.S., ii.336; Recollections, p.131. See also S.P.G. Journal, 1869, ff. 203-8.

2. Stock, C.M.S., iii.254-5.

specified what they were giving for, the societies faced the problem of tied funds, and this was generally a matter of concern to central executives without distinction between clerical and lay members.

In spite of their continued expansion and prosperity, these voluntary societies were very concerned to defend their prescriptive rights against encroachment by the advocates of centralisation and corporate action in the Church. This concern was especially strong in the evangelical societies (C.M.S., C.P.A.S. etc.), where the concern to preserve 'independence' was often couched in terms of defending the traditional role of laymen in the Church. Even high church societies occasionally took revenge on the hierarchy, as when the S.P.G. for a time refused to elect Bishop Temple of Exeter (a contributor to the notorious Essays and Reviews) to the customary office of vice-president.[1] However, elections to central committees were seldom contested and, in any case, the ratio of clerical to lay members was usually decreed in a society's constitution. In an actual committee meeting, personality and a sense of corporate identity might be, and usually were, stronger determinants in decision-making than clerical/lay rivalry. It is true that, at S.P.G. committee meetings, clergy seem gnnerally to have outnumbered laymen and to have been more regular in attendance, and that the opposite was broadly true at the C.M.S. This appears

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1. CCC, 1870, pp.146-8. See also the S.P.G.'s rejection of fresh attempts to have the bishops declared members of committee ex officio when their charter was redrawn: S.P.G. Journal, 1881, ff.401,412.

on the face of the records. Yet for 20 years until his retirement in the mid 60s the Rev. Henry Venn was undisputedly in control of C.M.S. decisions. By way of contrast, a high church layman who complained in the 70s and 80s of a decline of lay influence in voluntary societies was accused by a fellow high church layman of being the sort of man who would 'call fire at the Deluge'.[1]

It helps to explain the strong sense of continuity and solidarity displayed by the voluntary societies when we realise that leading individuals often held office in more than one society and that, indeed, in a few cases, certain leading families passed influence down through several generations. There were, in fact, two distinct 'establishments' in the world of the voluntary societies, one high church and the other evangelical. The evangelical societies reserved their most prestigious posts for the aristocracy and landed gentry - men of established position in political life who accepted their role as a semi-inherited social duty. There was the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury (1801-1885), the great philanthropist, patron and vice-president of countless societies, and president of the C.P.A.S. from its foundation in 1836 until his death. There was the third Earl of Chichester (1804-1886), ecclesiastical commissioner 1841-86, chief ecclesiastical estates commissioner 1850-78, president of the C.M.S. from 1834 until his death, and prominent member of, inter

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1. Stock, C.M.S., ii.645ff.; M.Burrows in Weir & Madagan (eds.), The Church and the Age (1870), p.174; CCR, 1880, p.521 (Burrows), pp.527-9 (A.J.B. Beresford Hope).

alia, the C.P.A.S., British and Foreign Bible Society and Church of England Temperance Society. There were the second and third Earls of Harrowby (1798-1882; 1831-1900), both Conservative cabinet ministers in their time, the former being president of the R.S.P.C.A., the latter of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and both members of the main evangelical societies. And by the 80s there emerged Sir John Kennaway (1837-1919), third baronet, and 'father of the House of Commons' 1908-10, trustee of the Church of England Sunday School Institute, president of the C.M.S. from 1887 and of the London Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews. High church societies did not draw so heavily on traditional political society for their public leadership: they preferred to draw on the bench of Bishops. Even so, the S.P.G., for example, drew at various times on the allegiance of Lord Salisbury (1830-1903), future Conservative prime minister, of W.E. Gladstone (1809-1898), Liberal prime minister, of Gladstone's close friend, Sir Walter James (Lord Northbourne) (1816-1893), and of one of Gladstone's successors as M.P. for the University of Oxford, Sir John Mowbray (1815-1899) (another ecclesiastical estates commissioner). For the more technically demanding positions, such as treasurerships, both 'establishments' could draw equally extensively on their connections with the commercial 'establishment' and the City of London. Sir Walter Farquhar (1810-1900), senior partner in the Herries, Farquhar Bank and John Deacon (1859-1941), partner in Williams, Deacon Bank seem to have been treasurers in their successive generations to a number of evangelical societies. High churchmen drew on the expertise of

William Cotton (1786-1866), a director of the Bank of England 1821-66, a founder member of both the I.C.B.S. and the National Society, treasurer of the S.P.C.K., vice-president of the S.P.G., active supporter of the A.C.S. and Colonial Bishoprics Fund; of J.G. Hubbard (Lord Addington) (1805-1889), director of the Bank of England 1838-41, M.P. for the City of London 1874-87, treasurer of the A.C.S. and Colonial Bishoprics Funds, and vice-president of the S.P.G.; of the second W.H. Smith (1825-1891), stationer, cabinet minister under Disraeli and Salisbury and, before that, treasurer of the S.P.C.K. A similar range of examples could be given of the connection between the leadership of the voluntary societies and the legal profession. There was, too, an influential connection between the C.M.S. and the military professions, particularly retired army officers from India. The equivalent group in the S.P.G. was made up of returned colonial bishops.

Further, the overlapping was not confined to the old-established voluntary societies. It will be useful to bear in mind how many of the men already mentioned were prominent members of the new generation of diocesan societies which were formed under episcopal patronage during the 1860s and after. At this point the line between the two 'establishments' becomes indistinct. Diocesan societies could not be openly partisan. Thus, the leading lay founder-members of the Bishop of London's Fund (1863) were Lord Sandon (later

third Earl of Harrowby) and W.H. Smith.[1] The foundation-treasurer of the Fund was Sir Walter Farquhar. Another early treasurer of the Fund was Philip Cazenove (1798-1880), stockbroking friend of Joshua Watson, William Cotton and the Rothschilds and treasurer of the S.P.G. from the mid-50s until his death. A trustee of the Fund by 1885 was Abel Smith (1829-1898), M.P., prominent supporter of the C.P.A.S. and C.M.S., and son-in-law of the third Earl of Chichester. Yet another strand of the network kept the leaders of the voluntary and diocesan societies in contact with the leaders of the major societies for charitable relief. Sir Walter Farquhar and W.E. Gladstone were both trustees of the Metropolitan Visiting and Relief Association (M.V.R.A.) from its foundation in 1843 until after 1885. Sir Walter James was also an active member of the M.V.R.A. C.B. P.Bosanquet (1834- ?), a barrister, was for a time in the late 60s secretary both of the Association of Lay Helpers for the Diocese of London and of the Charity Organization Society. This evidence of the existence of overlapping 'establishments' is, admittedly, impressionistic, though further investigation would probably tend to reveal a wider range of inter-connections rather than to diminish the representative character of the individuals selected here.

Given the existence of such a group of men, it becomes easier to explain why the voluntary societies resisted movements towards

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1. This alliance across (church, though not political) party lines was consolidated further at family level by the marriage of the fifth Earl (the third Earl's nephew) to W.H. Smith's youngest daughter.

centralisation of their activities, and how they did it with such success in several cases. A leadership drawn form among members of a traditionally self-administering class of landowners and from among professional men had confidence in the virtues of independent action and in its own ability to continue to perform a traditional role - confidence often sufficient for it to oppose intervention from a central authority whether the intervention was in ecclesiastical, political or economic activity. The history of attempts to form a Central Board of Missions for the Church of England gives a useful example of a long-maturing struggle between centralisers and voluntarists in ecclesiastical affairs. This struggle continued intermittently for forty years and, even then, produced only a token victory for centralisation.

As far back as 1841 there had been attempts to subject the S.P.G. and C.M.S. to the ultimate control of the bishops. High church leaders like Pusey and the Rev.William Palmer began to demand that the Church conduct mission work in a corporate capacity; Bishop Wilberforce allegedly planned to combine the voluntary organisations at diocesan level for efficiency in fund-raising, and the great administrator of the Church, Bishop Blomfield, brought forward a plan to require the voluntary societies to submit to the home episcopate all disputes arising between themselves and colonial bishops. The C.M.S., in particular, felt threatened by these moves and its powerful secretary, the Rev. Henry Venn, published a full-scale defence of the role of the C.M.S. as an independent society in an 'Appendix to the Thirty-Ninth Report of the C.M.S.

Venn was prepared to concede ultimate control of mission work to a Convocation of the whole Church, whenever that might be revived but, until then, he claimed independence for the C.M.S. on the grounds that 'It is strictly a Lay Institution: it exercises, as a Society, no spiritual functions whatsoever'. In spite of these firm words, the C.M.S. did assent to Bishop Blomfield's plan in July 1841. Some members feared that the C.M.S. would decline into a mere fund-raising agency, leaving the bishops the power to allocate funds, but events proved them totally mistaken. The bishops played no greater part in the running of the voluntary societies than they had done in the past, and their nominal right to adjudicate in disputes remained unused.[1]

The next onslaught against the voluntary societies reached a climax in 1868-70. At the 1868 Church Congress the work of all competing voluntary societies came under attack, the Church of Ireland was about to be disestablished and many churchmen were increasingly concerned that the voluntary societies, as 'the only independent agencies which the Church, as a body, at present possesses',[2] should be at least encouraged to 'rationalise' administration and minimise waste of resources. The laymen speaking recognised in the main that the existing societies had

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1. Details of negotiations in Stock, C.M.S., i.383-398.
2. CCR, 1868, pp.25-6.

vested interests too strong to be ignored and concentrated their efforts in true contemporary style - the second Reform Act had been passed the year before - on finding a balance between the principles of 'popular sovereignty' and 'a strong executive'.[1] They saw more strongly than their predecessors the possible evils of over-valuation of the contributors' wishes at the expense of the overall needs of all mission fields; they deplored the wasteful cost of some of the popular fund-raising methods, and the running costs and administrative habits of rival voluntary societies who, allegedly including the S.P.G. and C.M.S., did not bother to find out whether they were duplicating each other's work. The practical solution, several thought, was to work towards amalgamation of rival organisations in parish and diocesan societies and to use this as a basis for eventual corporate action if this ever became justified by the emergence of a fully representative Church assembly. Only one speaker was so impressed by the changed position of the Church in society as to call 'voluntaryism' outmoded,[2] though he was J.E. Gorst(M.P.), the prominent reorganiser of the extra-parliamentary Conservative party after 1867. The defenders of the voluntary societies as they stood seem to have been almost without exception evangelical clergy.[3] These men met all calls for centralisation with

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1. Ibid., pp.31-2.
2. Ibid., pp.41-4.
3. This is perhaps natural when it is realised that most evangelical laymen, from Lord Shaftesbury down, disapproved of Church Congresses until well into the 70s and did not attend them.

the traditional argument that local support would be severely weakened by any rationalisation in organisation tending to make the societies 'less definite in their /doctrinal/ character' and less responsive to individual enthusiasm.[1]

Evangelicals were generally conservative in their attitude to politics and to intellectual and social change, so it is not surprising that they often opposed centralisation. Their opposition in 1868 is even less surprising as they were well aware that their rivals, the S.P.G., was already considering the subject. The S.P.G. in fact presented a petition to the Convocations in 1869 to consider ways for the 'better support and advancement of Missionary work'. Their immediate reason for doing so was to try to extricate the society from one of its more serious crises of over-spending.[2] Several leading bishops immediately agreed with the S.P.G. that the problem lay in convincing all churchmen that the support of mission work was, ideally, not a haphazardly-induced and optional matter but a continuing Christian duty which might best be organised as a parish and diocesan activity.[3] A committee of Canterbury Convocation, with the bit between its teeth at last, recommended the creation of a Board of Missions. The Board was to have power to co-ordinate (though not to manage) overseas missions and power to accept donations for mission work.[4]

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1. CCR, 1868, p.44 (Dean of Limerick, an hon.sec. of the C.M.S. in Ireland); pp.55-7 (H.M'Neile, Dean of Ripon). M'Neile was not opposed to all corporate organisation of missions: Stock, C.M.S. ii.359.

2. Pascoe, S.P.G., p.828; S.P.G. Journal, 1869, ff.203-8.

3. CCC, 1870, pp.155, 319, 322.

4. Ibid., p.315.

This was too much of a step even for the S.P.G. Both the voluntary societies immediately objected that they were far more representative of the Church of England than was any Convocation and, supported by some prominent low church bishops, had the proposed Board stripped of its fund-collecting powers.[1] The C.M.S. was still unsatisfied, fearing the under-representation of evangelicals and laymen on a Board which Convocation proposed to appoint itself. The result was that, though Canterbury Convocation did appoint representatives to the Board in 1876 - a clergyman and a laymen from each diocese - the Board never met and its functions were forgotten. In 1880, when Canterbury Convocation once more considered the matter, the whole principle of centralisation was raised for debate yet again. In the meantime, some of the high church bishops had taken their own initiatives: Salisbury diocesan synod, for example, had in 1873 approved the formation of a diocesan Board of Missions ('to foster and promote ... an interest in Foreign Missions', but not to raise money).[2] And, between 1876 and the early 80s, the C.M.S. had been embroiled in a bitter dispute about the extent of authority held by the colonial bishop of Ceylon over local C.M.S. missionaries and lay agents. The difficulties of deciding on an arbitrating authority acceptable to both bishop and voluntary society had exposed the unco-ordinated way in which the Church's overseas missions were run. High churchman alleged that 'the seeds of constant confusion and insubordination' lay in 'the very constitution of the C.M.S.'[3]

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1. Ibid., pp.316-7, 570, 624.

2. Pascoe, S.P.G., p.828. The C.M.S. opposed such boards: Stock, C.M.S. ii. 366.

3. Guardian, 1876, p.1361.

However, the committee which reported back to Convocation in 1881 was not prepared to condemn voluntary societies so forcefully. While it still stressed the ideology of the Church being responsible for missions in its corporate capacity, it conceded that the proposed Board of Missions should be a consultative body without power to raise funds or supervise work, and that it should include representatives appointed by the Societies themselves.[1] The societies still found grounds for objection.[2] They still feared the prospect of a formal Church agency pronouncing, in however non-binding a form, on general principles. (The C.M.S. particularly feared a challenge to its policy of creating autonomous native Churches.[3]) They therefore refused to appoint representatives to a Board because to do so would make it more difficult to ignore its 'advisory' decisions.[4] Convocation retreated once again. The Boards, which first met for Canterbury in 1887 and for York slightly afterwards, had no authority to pronounce on 'general principles' and their members (clerical and lay) included no official representatives of the voluntary societies. (The C.M.S. however, when after a few years it realised that the Board could do it little harm, tolerated the nomination of its leaders to the Board as private individuals.[5])

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1. CCC, 1881: Report of Committee appointed to consider the Establishment of a Board of Missions.
2. See especially CCR, 1884, pp.452-63.
3. CCC, 1881, p.340.
4. Stock, C.M.S., iii.275.
5. Stock, C.M.S., iii.275.

The attack on the autonomy of the missionary societies had, therefore, all but failed. To succeed it would have had to reduce the societies to direct submission or at least to compete with them by establishing a parallel organisation claiming to represent 'the Church'. It did neither. However, the home mission societies were not in such a strong position to resist a division of the field. They had to come to terms with the rise of a wide variety of diocesan societies, sponsored avowedly by 'the Church' to do work which, in many cases, was already being done by voluntary societies. We turn now to examine the diocesan societies, the lay role in them, and their relations with the older voluntary societies.

(B) By the 1880s many, sometimes most, dioceses in England and Wales had official societies to raise funds for church building and endowment, for elementary education and charity relief, and for the provision of additional clergy and lay helpers for parish work and home missions.[1] The role of laymen in education, charity relief and lay evangelism are considered in Chapter 9. And, in the remaining fields, discussion will centre on the London diocesan societies. This is not necessarily because they were entirely representative but because they were usually the pioneering societies and because they operated on a larger scale in most of their activities and left more information about themselves.[2]

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1. Church of England Year-Book, 1886, pp.14 ff.

2. Some, but not a great deal of work has been done on Church organisations in cities outside London. For a general bibliography, and special discussion of the situation in Birmingham see D.E.H. Mole, 'Challenge to the Church: Birmingham, 1815-65' in Dyos & Wolff (eds.). The Victorian City (1973), ii.815-36.

The movement to create diocesan societies was, naturally enough, an urban movement. The primary aim of its leaders was to extend the existing network of parish churches and clergy to meet the enormous increase in the numbers of people living in towns and cities. Church leaders like Bishop Blomfield had half-realised as early as the mid-30s that this work would have to be financed voluntarily: the most that the state was prepared to do was to simplify the legal procedures associated with the building of new churches and subdivision of parishes.[1] No reformed parliament could be expected to repeat the million pound grant for church building of 1818. Yet, throughout the century the problem of providing for a growing and shifting population did not ease. By the late 60s it was being claimed that church building was at least keeping pace with population growth.[2] However, by that stage Bishop Tait had realised (as his predecessor Bishop Blomfield had finally come to admit) that it was one thing to build churches, another to attract the masses into them. Further, with the improvement in transport which took place after the 60s, the middle classes began to leave the cities to live in new suburbs, where they required new churches, and left behind them a great shortage of active parishioners in inner city parishes.[3]

These changes gave increased opportunities to some laymen. The Church, to encourage church building and endowment, often felt obliged to offer incentives. The London diocesan church building society

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1. A.B. Webster, Joshua Watson (1954), pp.72-3; M.H.Port, Six Hundred New Churches (1961), p.110; Brose, Church and Parliament, pp.200-1.

2. London Diocese Book, 1868, p.26.

3. P.J. Welch, 'The Difficulties of Church Extension in Victorian London', Church Quarterly Review, 1965, pp.303-5, 308.

stressed that private builders who endowed their new churches sufficiently could be rewarded with the patronage.[1] Such stimulants to giving sometimes had unintended consequences if the patron, for example, chose a 'ritualist' clergyman, or used the church too obviously as an institution for the social control of his employees in commercial life.[2] However, there were some remarkable cases of disinterested giving, such as the East End church built by William Cotton, Bishop Blomfield's 'lay archdeacon'.[3] Another, far more widespread, incentive to giving was the practice of endowing a church from pew rents - that is, giving the rent-payer a reserved seat in his parish church. This was the commonest way of endowing a new church in London until well after 1850. It was still being introduced in the 1880s though by that stage it was fully recognised that the system had the objectionable side effect of further discouraging irregular- and non-attendants, particularly the poor for whom the church building campaign was allegedly being carried out.[4]

However, clergy and laymen who were aware of general conditions in London could not believe that self-help and individual acts of generosity by the wealthy were sufficient responses to the problem. Giving, it was felt, would have to be institutionalised if any large amount was to be raised - and applied to achieve general objects rather than the personal satisfaction of the donors. Voluntary societies like the C.P.A.S.

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1. London diocesan church building society Annual Report, 1856-7, pp.24-8.
2. Reynolds, Martyr of Ritualism, pp.7ff. (The case of J.G. Hubbard and the Rev.A.H. Mackonochie); Webster, Joshua Watson, pp.72-3.
3. Parl.Papers 1857-8, qn.35.
4. Welch, Op.cit., pp.306-7.

and A.C.S. could mobilise and distribute some of the resources,[1] but they could not claim to act on behalf of the whole Church. In any case, diocesan societies were more likely to be favoured by the increasingly energetic bishops of the mid-century. Bishop Blomfield had founded his Metropolis Churches Fund in 1836 and this 'temporary' expedient was put on a permanent basis by the foundation of the London diocesan church building society in 1854-5. About this time it was seen that church building by itself was often ineffectual and Bishop Tait encouraged the formation in 1863 of the Bishop of London's Fund (established to raise £10 million in ten years for general extension of Church work) and in 1865 of the Association of lay helpers for the diocese of London.

Bishops found their role as semi-political magnates diminished in post-Reform Act secular government. Yet their role as diocesan administrators and leaders was enhanced by post-Oxford Movement attitudes to ecclesiastical authority, not to mention the concurrent growth of central control of urban administration and the introduction of railways and penny postage. Bishops claimed a new vocation in diocesan leadership. High church bishops like Wilberforce of Oxford provided the most striking examples of the change, but evangelicals like Archbishop Sumner and broad churchmen like Tait also illustrate the trend. Their efforts may have been misdirected. They often had the very traditional aim of restoring a system in which 'every sheep should

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1. See Coombs, 'C.P.A.S.', p.59 for evidence of the extent to which that society redistributed resources from the wealthier to the needier areas.

have a fold and every fold a shepherd'[1] - a paternalistic system based on the presuppositions less of an urban society than of a country parish in which people would live all their lives in definable relationships with their neighbours. But they also took care to preserve the lay role in the new context. Bishop Tait made a very particular effort to enlist the support of prominent laymen by guaranteeing them a major role in the management of the Bishop of London's Fund,[2] The treasurers of the London diocesan societies were almost invariably laymen, and their committees of management were often an honour role of leading laymen. As has been noted, these laymen were carefully balanced to avoid suspicion of 'party' domination in the diocesan societies. They also had strong connections with the 'establishments' of the national voluntary societies. This gave them strength of a sort, though it meant that the diocesan societies' avowed intent to involve 'the great employers of labour' and bring them to a recognition of their social responsibilities[3] remained largely unfulfilled.

The bishops went on to support the traditional lay interest against the growing corporate consciousness of the clergy in the years after the diocesan societies were founded. As more dioceses began to hold semi-official synods or conferences of clergy and laity, many bishops encouraged these assemblies to take particular interest in the finance and organisation of diocesan societies. This was partly to draw them into

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1. The Bishop of London's Fund, Paper I (Nov.1866)
2. Ibid., Paper XIV (May 1869).
3. Ibid., Papers I,XIV.

discussion of unifying, non-contentious issues, partly to provide them with issues which could be expected to interest laymen and enlist their skills and enthusiasm. High church and low church bishpps alike stressed the necessity for conferences to discuss practical issues concerning 'the usefulness of the Church' if the novel bodies were to gain the respect of laymen.[1] In this way the diocesan societies took their place as normal organisations in the Church without stimulating accusations that lay rights were being infringed. In mid-Victorian England this was a relatively unusual achievement.

Some of this lack of apparent tension in a situation where one might expect to find it is no doubt further explicable in that churchmen of all opinions realised that such massive social change presented them with work so widespread that no one method of organising resources would meet the evident need or stunt the growth of alternative efforts. Leading evangelicals raged from time to time against the ecclesiastical 'red tape' which hindered their less orthodox missions,[2] but they did not necessarily resent the rise of missions under diocesan control. Canterbury Convocation in 1879 appointed a committee to examine the relationship between the voluntary and the diocesan societies, but it appears to have regarded the issue as non-contentious and it is doubtful that the committee ever reported.[3]

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1. A.C.Tait, Primary Visitation Charge (1872), pp.5-6; G.W.Kitchin, E.H. Browne, Bishop of Winchester: A Memoir (1895), pp.273-4, 276-7; H.W. Tucker, Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of George Augustus Selwyn (1879), ii.254-6.

2. E.g. Earl of Shaftesbury, Speech at the Annual Meeting of the C.P.A.S. (1873), p.7.

3. CCC, 1879, p.26.

As to financial competition, it has been seen how, in the national voluntary societies, the view persisted that increased expenditure would produce increased income. It is rare to find the C.P.A.S. or A.C.S. complaining that they had to compete with the new diocesan societies for money - though the diocesan societies raised quite large sums by comparison, once they publicised their work. (The London diocesan building society had an average income of only £7,000 a year in the 1850s, but its successor, the Bishop of London's Fund, averaged almost £60,000 of its £100,000 a year target in the 60s.[1])

The national societies, especially the C.P.A.S., were firm that they would not consent to merge their identity or lose control over their agents to any inherently 'high church' scheme for diocesan co-ordination of activity,[2] but neither did they feel greatly threatened by organisations parallel to their own.[3] In London, in fact, under Bishop Tait the diocesan society applied some of its funds to supporting C.P.A.S. agents.[4]

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1. Bishop of London's Fund, Paper XIV (May 1869). The total raised from private sources for church building in London between 1840 and 1876 was estimated at £2,537,000: Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.241 (quoting Parl.Papers 1876, lviii. 553).

2. See Shaftesbury's objections to the plans of the Salisbury diocesan synod to 'take charge of the chief operations' of voluntary societies within the diocese (if they consented): Guardian, 1871, p.1263; C.A.E.Moberly, Dulce Domum : George Moberly, his Family and Friends (1911) p.241.

3. C.P.A.S. Annual Report, 1883, p.23.

4. Ibid., 1865, p.35. Tait was particularly careful to avoid giving offence to the voluntary societies: A.C.Tait, Charge (1866) p.76. Cf. Speck, C.P.A.S., pp.175-7 (a minor dispute with the Bishop of London in 1875).

By the 1880s, in any case, it was difficult to look on the corporate activities of dioceses as abnormal. Centralisation was no longer to be viewed as a high church plot. During the 1870s some dioceses had gone so far as to set up diocesan boards of finance. The main enthusiasts for such boards seem to have been churchmen from northern dioceses, spurred on by the example of the more flexibly organised nonconformists. While high church initiatives in Ely, Lichfield, and Salisbury seem to have been slow to gain widespread acceptance, initiatives supported by prominent laymen in Manchester and Chester seem to have created quite powerful and energetic diocesan boards.[1] It was said to be relatively easy to find laymen of commercial experience willing to serve on such boards in northern dioceses - and these were not men of a sort to under-rate the value the voluntary societies placed on their independence of action, so friction between old and new organisations seems once more to have been minor.[2]

At any rate, the C.P.A.S. celebrated its jubilee in the mid-80s confident that its usefulness was still increasing and giving hints that, in the new age of diocesan self-concern, it was left to voluntary societies like itself to keep alive the 'truth ... that every diocese and every parish has claims on the sympathy and practical aid of every other.'[3]

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1. CCR, 1880, pp.619-24 (Hon. W. Egerton M.P., first Earl Egerton, and Viscount Salford); cf. pp.633-5 (Archdeacon Emery of Ely) and Tucker, Memoir of Selwyn, ii.256.

2. CCR, 1880, pp.620, 623, 641-2.

3. C.P.A.S. Annual Reports, 1883, p.23; 1886, p.38.

(C) We have seen that the missionary societies were, after 1850, concerned to establish that it was not an option but the duty of churchmen to contribute to the work of evangelisation. We have seen, too, how all the major home and overseas mission societies prospered, however irregularly, between the 1850s and 1880s. However, one of the main ingredients of their success - a major change in fund-raising methods - has yet to be discussed. Until the 1850s at least, the voluntary societies concentrated their fund-raising methods on a restricted range of church members. Only the well-off could easily affort the annual guinea or half guinea subscription fees of the main societies, and lesser contributors were encouraged to give relatively infrequently, the choice of time and society usually being determined by the preference of the local clergy, the visit of a deputation from London, or, until 1856, by the ciruclation of a Royal Letter. The relatively narrow basis of contribution seems to have been carried over into the diocesan societies as well. In 1870, Bishop Jackson of London, reviewing the state of the Bishop of London's Fund, 'could not help remarking upon the small number of names that contributed to these funds ... 4,000 names would include all the contributors ...'[1] About the same time the bishop of Rochester came to a similar conclusion - that a few people contributed to every cause, and most churchmen contributed to none.[2] In a stable, hierarchical society, dominated by the gentry, the number

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1. Bishop of London's Fund, Paper XVII (June 1870).
2. CCR, 1867, p.232.

of contributors did not much matter but, in an urbanised society it mattered more. By the 1880s it had become almost a platitude that 'a £5 note collected from twenty poor contributors of 5s. each, indicates an interest twenty times that which would be manifested if that sum were paid by one subscriber'.[1] And the way by which large sums could be raised from large numbers of people without large increases in the costs of collection was the regular church offertory.

As the Church came to rely more on voluntary contribution in place of income from traditional sources, the offertory was adopted to provide funds for many purposes. It was not considered proper to use it as a substitute for endowment of the beneficed clergy: that would have lowered their social and professional status to the level of nonconformist ministers.[2] But it was accepted as a source of income for curates and paid lay agents; it was accepted as a substitute for church-rate when it became impossible to collect funds for church maintenance in the traditional legal way; it was accepted as a means by which voluntary and diocesan societies might regularly raise funds; and it was used more frequently than in times past to collect the traditional alms for charity work. We are concerned with it as a source of funds for the voluntary societies here but, as people came to accept it for several purposes at once, it would be misleading to isolate a single strand of development.

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1. CCR, 1880, p.636.

2. e.g. Parl.Papers 1857-8, p.XX. The practice of giving the parson an 'Easter offering' spread only after 1885: Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii. 169.

First, the statistics of its use. In the late 50s the House of Lords select committee on deficiency of places of worship found that there was 'a strong objection to the offertory' for any purpose. In both London and Liverpool it had been tried as a general source of income for new churches but withdrawn in favour of pew rents. Pew rents were said to give a more reliable income. They also deprived agitators of an opportunity to play on the strong anti-Catholicism of the potential parishioners by stigmatising the offertory as yet another clerically-introduced innovation, 'popish' and 'Puseyite'.[1] ('Papal aggression' was not so far in the past and the London riots at St.George's in-the-East were about to begin.) London's churches remained tied to pew rents in the main and this did not encourage the acceptance of the offertory for any purpose. In 1874 the Free and Open Church Association (the main pressure group campaigning against pew fents and, therefore, in favour of the offertory) claimed that 295 London churches held a weekly offertory,[2] but the spread was slow and it was not complete until well after the 1880s.[3] By contrast, the offertory had become a generally accepted practice in the north by the 1880s. As early as 1862 a Bradford layman was telling the Church Congress that it was not the number of churches built but the number of well-wishers mobilised to contribute which was the measure of Church influence in 'the American

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1. Parl.Papers 1857-8, qns. 854 (Rev. T.F.Stooks, founder-secretary of the London diocesan church building society), 5880 (Archdeacon Jones of Liverpool).

2. CCR, 1875, pp.179 ff.; see also the incomplete national return in CCC, 1876, 'Report on Deficiencies of Spiritual Ministration', p.14.

3. Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.195-6, citing CCR, 1894, p.612.

parts of England /laughter/ the large manufacturing towns.'[1] Some clergy in the north claimed that the need to collect funds to relieve distress during the cotton famine of the American civil war gave them the opportunity to introduce the offertory without it appearing immediately subversive.[2] Certainly, by the mid-60s, 'protestants' had ceased to regard the offertory as a 'party badge' of high churchmen: it was after all too obvious a habit of the nonconformists.[3]

This outline has mentioned some of the more immediate stimuli connected with the introduction of the offertory. But the offertory, in fact, was argued to be a matter of 'principle' as well as expediency, and it is interesting to know the full extent of the arguments for and against it.

Those who did not accept the offertory easily were, in general, those who most tenaciously claimed the right of the national Church to retain its legal and social privileges. They saw virtue in the retention of church rate and of pew rents because these were duties and rights attached to property: these gave men a vested interest in their parish church. To accept the offertory would be to admit that there was a voluntary alternative capable of replacing the traditional privileges

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1. CCR, 1862, p.107 (Francis Powell, 1827-1911, Conservative M.P. for Cambs., W.Riding, Wigan, 1863-1909).
2. CCR, 1869, pp.404-7.
3. CCR, 1867, pp.233-4.

of the Church.[1] Besides, the offertory could be subversive of social order and traditional relationships in several more immediate ways. In country parishes of the traditional sort, most people agreed, the offertory seldom gained easy acceptance, and non-appropriated seating led to social embarrassment.[2] And in the city a man who could not reserve his seat by paying a pew rent could not be sure of finding a place next to his family. Neither could he be sure of finding a place next to a member of the same class and standard of personal hygiene as himself until the spread of suburban living later in the century segregated the social classes geographically to an extent hitherto unknown.[3] Evangelicals in both situations often feared that attempts to raise money regularly at parish level could only be at the expense of the national voluntary societies. Money locally raised and left under the management of local people was usually applied to local objects. The overseas missionary societies were especially alarmed at the small amounts they received from weekly offertories, however large.[4] The offertory threatened settled habits and vested interests. It is not surprising then, that the most frequent warning of both its advocates and opponents was that it should be introduced and its proceeds applied under clear mandate of the parishioners.

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1. CCR, 1862, p.111.
2. CCR, 1875, pp.179-84; cf. CCR, 1871, pp.67-8.
3. CCR, 1875, p.189; Welch, 'Difficulties of Church Extension,' p.306-7.
4. CCR, 1869, pp.430-2; 1878, p.94.

Advocates of the offertory in the 50s had pointed out that money collected in church and disappearing into the clergyman's vestry without any announcement about how it was to be applied could all too easily give rise to suspicion of 'popery'.[1] Legally speaking, the clergyman was within his rights in applying the communion offertory as he thought fit[2] but, as the offertory came to be used more frequently and for purposes which had never been contemplated in the sixteenth century, it was clearly prudent for the clergyman to consult the church-wardens and to publish accounts. In the late 60s and early 70s there was strong low church agitation for 'lay rights', and these included the right of laymen to control the offertory and to manage financial affairs. The immediate point at issue was the right of parishioners to prevent the clergy from using voluntary offerings to finance extravagant or 'ritualistic' church services now that church rate had been generally abolished. But the favoured low church solution - the creation of statutory parish councils - also involved a 'reinstatement' of the lay right to relieve the clergy of all administration of funds.[3] This development will be dealt with fully in chapter 13. For the moment it is sufficient to note that realistic high churchmen became as aware as the staunchest 'protestants' of the advantages of keeping the trust of laymen in financial matters,

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1. Parl.Papers 1857-8, questions 68-84 (to William Cotton).

2. Guardian, 1883, p.201, citing opinion of Dr. A.J. Stephens, a leading low church ecclesiastical lawyer, and of Chancellor Jeune.

3. T.W. Belcher, The Lay Element in ... the Church practically considered (1870), p.28; F.R. Chapman, in Weir and Maclagan (eds.), The Church and the Age, 2nd Ser. (1872), pp.345-9; C.of E. Laymen's Defence Association pamphlets '5th Annual Report' (1871), pp.8-10.

and of drawing on their skills and energies in organising parish finances.[1]

Those who were most in favour of the offertory being generally adopted did tend to be led by high churchmen of a Gladstonian kind, at least in the early stages. These were men who believed that traditional privileges were more a cause of inertia in the Church than a source of strength. The more churchmen were encouraged to rely on their own unaided efforts, they argued, the more energy would be released and the more laymen would actively participate in Church life. As other groups within the Church realised the inadequacy and unreliability of the traditional sources of Church finance, they too became convinced that the offertory was unavoidable and, soon, positively desirable. (The spread of the offertory in the north has already been mentioned: the National Association for the Freedom of Worship, a major ally of the Free and Open Church Association had its headquarters in Manchester.) It was an article of faith of convinced 'free and open' churchmen that offertories either did, or should if properly managed, raise more money than more traditional forms of parish fund-raising. Their opponents rained on them counter-examples which they could always dismiss as unrepresentative, and probably they were right, as the offertory became generally adopted, that it did raise more money regularly than the old methods. But the fire behind the campaign was ideological rather than material. As Earl Nelson, one of the

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1. Guardian, 1883, p.201: editorial on 'The Disposal of Moneys Collected in Church'.

chief enthusiasts insisted before an excited audience at the Church Congress of 1878:

> A great deal of education is required to get people to see that the old system is wrong, and that the new system is more consistent with a national and missionary Church.[1]

The emotional charge of his speech was generated by contrasting scriptural precedents and 'pure' Christian values with accepted social practice. Unlike his opponents, Nelson was arguing that the Church might sometimes act as a corporate sponsor of social change, advocating the adoption of values not accepted by general society. Still, this did not mean that he was any more in favour of social upheaval than were his traditionalist opponents, for the social ends he wished to support were as traditional as any. The arguments of those in favour of the offertory stressed heavily the need to re-establish between different classes the social bonds which had been broken by migration and urban living. The giving of small amounts was valued as a sign that 'the poorer and working classes' were still attached to their parish church and to traditional institutions. By giving, it was hoped, these people would come to feel that they had a stake in the continued existence and expansion of the Church as a 'Church of all the people'.[2] Further, the giving even of large amounts in the relative secrecy of the offertory would humble the pride of those who gained improper satisfaction from seeing their names published in subscription lists.[3]

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1. CCR, 1878, pp.105-6.
2. CCR, 1867, pp.229-31.
3. CCR, 1864, p.247; 1867, p.232.

By means of the offertory the Church could hope to minimise the social tensions of outside society by imposing a symbolic equality on worshippers. In the words of the Bampton Lecturer for 1861:

> [The adoption of a regular offertory] places Almsgiving on its true foundation as a Scriptural duty ... For such is surely the Christian duty; - not the contribution bestowed a few times a year ... and which is often only a tribute to the popularity or the ability of the advocate ... but the continuous flow of habitual Almsgiving, which recognizes God as the proprietor of all, and is an item of systematic expenditure.[1]

It is interesting to note the parallels between Church reasoning on the offertory and political arguments about the extension of the franchise. The parallel can be seen even in discussions about the relative merits of open and secret collection of the offertory and of open and secret ballot at elections. This is especially evident during the 60s when both Church and parliament were facing similar external pressures. The problem, in a way, in both cases was a question of how to give people without a large material stake in society the feeling that it was worth their while to give allegiance to traditional institutions. However, the significance of the parallel fades rapidly after the 60s. Shortly after the 1867 reform act parliament abolished compulsory church rate and disestablished the Church of Ireland. The increased effort of the Church of England to widen voluntary participation in its organisation was a sign that it realised that it no longer enjoyed secure status as a national institution - a status that

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1. J. Sandford, The Mission and Extension of the Church at Home (1862), p. 102.

parliament had just acted to regain for itself - and that it was therefore trying to induce in its lay members a sense of their personal responsibility to participate. Nonconformists had felt this responsibility since long before 1850, but then they only claimed to belong to demominations, not to a National Church.

The conclusion so far is, then, that the Church found itself increasingly reliant on voluntary lay contributions during the nineteenth century. The 'nation' grew, the support of the state withered. During the earlier part of the century, the laymen who raised the contributions also put themselves in a position to take major initiatives, administer their resources and implement their plans in the name of churchmen but without falling under formal control of the hierarchy. This independence of lay action was only a temporary phase, lasting as long as it took the clergy and bishops to become less interested in their traditionally diffuse social role and more concerned to fulfil a specific role within the Church. From the 1840s onwards there was a strong drift towards centralisation under control of the hierarchy. It is true that, by this stage, some voluntary societies had entrenched themselves so firmly in the affections of churchmen that it was impossible to deprive them of their identity. In the new diocesan and parish organisations, too, the position of volunteer laymen was stronger than might once have been thought necessary. The Church needed lay skills and, more, a secure place in the affections of the people, as Gladstonians would have put it.

However, by the 1880s the formal hierarchy was once more firmly in control and voluntary societies had, to a degree, discredited themselves by proving unable to cope with a vastly more complex society than had existed when they were formed. A broad churchman living in the East End of London in the 1880s had this to say about the existence of multiple voluntary charitable societies:

> The reason of existence for these societies in their separate forms is not to be found in the fact that the poor have needs, but in the fact that the people of goodwill have been divided into sects.[1]

He admitted that rivalry might have developed energy in the past, but doubted that it did so with any efficiency in the present. This attitude was slowly corroding confidence in the organisation of most voluntary societies by the 1880s. It is most visible in changing attitudes to charity organisation, discussed in the following chapter.

As a final footnote to the theme of centralisation and lay voluntary activity, it is worth noticing that a new generation of mass-membership church societies took root between the 1870s and 1890s (though chiefly at the close of the period discussed here), and they were formed or carried on with the explicit sanction and encouragement of the Church hierarchy. These were societies like the Church of England

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1. S.A. Barnett in Grey and Fremantle (eds), Church Reform (1888), p. 162. Barnett was a vicar in Whitechapel, Warden of Toynbee Hall and a 'Christian socialist'.

2. e.g. R. Davidson and W. Benham, Life of A.C. Tait, ii.518 (recording the foundation of the Y.M.F.S.); Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.192 (Mothers' Union).

Temperance Society (founded in its original form in 1862), the Girls' Friendly Society (1875), the Young Men's Friendly Society (1879), the Church of England Purity Society (1883) and the Mothers' Union (1887-1893). These organisations operated from the start on the assumption that success was to be measured not merely by the number or size of contributions raised but by the number of laymen they managed to involve in active participation in their work. In this way, too, they prolong trends noted in the voluntary societies of previous generations. However, the stimulus behind them was rather different from that which lay behind previous generations of societies. Most of the voluntary societies we have discussed in this section saw themselves primarily as evangelising societies. They had their secondary object to create a sense of community among their members but they still presented themselves as proselytising organisations: they sought to capture new members for the Church. Many of the new societies were not so much concerned to extend the Church's influence as to consolidate it under new conditions - to retain the allegiance of existing adherents in certain social groups (married women or adolescents for example) whose ordinary life experiences were tending to separate them from the Church.[1] In fact, the newer societies came ever closer to being religiously-organised substitutes for plainly secular activities and have thus been interpreted as evidence

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1. Cf. Gilbert, 'Growth and Decline of Nonconformity', pp.vii-viii for discussion of the parallel change of emphasis in the nonconformist churches from 'exogenous' to 'endogenous' forms of growth.

of the 'secularization' of religion in modern society.[1] If this is so, they point to the ironic conclusion that the Church was as open to lay influence when under the control of the hierarchy as it was when laymen took their own initiatives.

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1. B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (1971), pp.184, 189.

CHAPTER 9

PROBLEMS OF CONTROL (2) : THE CHURCH AND 'LAY AGENCY'

We have already noticed the trend in mid-nineteenth century Britain towards the increased division of labour, and especially towards professionalism based on occupational skill rather than on social status. The Church of England experienced the resulting strains as other contemporary institutions did. Specialisation of role raised problems of authority and problems of effectiveness. On the one hand there was, for example, the simple duty of all believing Christians to evangelise and to be charitable: on the other, the duty of occupational professionals and of administrators to ensure that activities approved by them had the intended effect. In part (A) here, we trace the impact of lay skills and attitudes on one traditional social activity particularly thought to be governed by religious values and note how it slipped away from religious control. The activity chosen to illustrate the process is the giving of charity, though it might equally have been the provision of elementary education by the Church. In part (B) we are concerned with the institutionalisation of individual lay skills and enthusiasms within the traditional structure of Church authority.

(A) It was noted in Chapter 6 (p.143) that by 1850 few active churchmen admitted a distinction between evangelising and charitable work. This seems to have been particularly true of evangelicals,

whose societies dominated the field.[1] This refusal to allow that charity could safely be separated from evangelising had a high church equivalent. High churchmen, whose society dominated the field in education, refused to allow that intellectual instruction could safely be separated from spiritual[2] - though, to be just, both attitudes were common ground to most churchmen.[3] It was generally true in the 1850s, then, that the charity work of churchmen rested on several assumptions peculiar to the age. It was assumed that individuals were responsible for their own actions and that, therefore, (excepting certain cases of recognised misfortune such as sickness or physical incapacity) charity should be given only to the 'deserving' - those prepared to help themselves.[4] However, it was also assumed that this sort of relief could adequately be provided by the voluntary efforts of right-intentioned Christians. And it was believed that the best way to give charity was by personal act, thus creating an emotional bond between donor and recipient.[5] Such charity could be given by volunteers on an unskilled

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1. See K. Heasman, Evangelicals in Action (1962), pp.13-4.

2. See generally H.J. Burgess, Enterprise in Education: The story of the work of the Established Church in the education of the people prior to 1870 (1958), esp. pp.145-70.

3. Cf. G.Kitson Clark, Churchmen and the Condition of England 1832-1885 (1973), pp.71, 75-6.

4. Economic depression, then, was largely to be 'borne'. It might even be thought to place 'a salutary check ... on the extreme prodigality prevalent amongst the poor in better times': C.P.A.S. Annual Report 1862, p.20.

5. J.Pearson, The Duty of Laymen (1856), pp.8-9.

or part-time basis within their own parish. We set out here to trace the decline in this conception of the lay role in charity work and the partial acceptance of the belief that charity work was best performed by semi-professionals - trained, paid and full-time agents controlled and co-ordinated by super-parochial organisations laying down rules based on collected information to ensure the effective application of any aid given.

The changing attitude to the giving of charity is reflected in the sequence of leading organisations for charity relief in London. The three chief organisations were each formed under the stimulus of economic depression, the Metropolitan Visiting and Relief Association (M.V.R.A.) in 1843, the Society for the Relief of Distress in 1860, and the Charity Organisation Society (C.O.S.) in 1869. The M.V.R.A. was formed by several prominent church laymen of a variety of theological opinions under the Chairmanship of Bishop Blomfield. It had the support of leading London clergy and it was intended to ensure that contributions made to charity funds were not raised by exaggerated representations of distress or applied indiscriminately to local objects, but reputably administered and distributed to areas of greatest need. Its distributing agents were volunteers operating on a parish basis. There were a thousand volunteers in the first year of operation, and 2,200 on the books in the 1890s of whom it was estimated less than 200 were in any way 'trained'.[1] The casual nature of the volunteers was something of a

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1. J.C. Pringle, Social Work of the London Churches (1937), pp.179-90.

hindrance to systematic work: the M.V.R.A., like other societies, drew its volunteers 'from tradesmen's wives to ladies of rank, who visit occasionally, when they are in town'.[1] By the late 50s, too, some clergy seem to have reverted to their unsystematic ways, because the committee of the M.V.R.A. were threatening to resign unless the bishop of London instructed his clergy not to run local appeals which would only lead to 'the creation in districts indiscriminately relieved, of increased poverty and dependence, thereby generating the very evils sought to be cured'. The committee particularly objected to the relief of the Spitalfields weavers who, though definitely distressed, were in a doomed trade.[2] Worse still, the winter of 1857-8, according to the M.V.R.A. was 'mild without precedent'. They believed that more money was being raised than was strictly necessary.

The winter of 1859-60, however, was very severe, and it helped on the foundation of a new organisation, initially run without clerical assistance, though still reliant on voluntary workers.[3] This was the Society for the Relief of Distress. Its most articulate lay agent was Edward Denison (1840-1870), son of Bishop Denison of Salisbury and M.P. for Newark 1868-70. He not only worked in the East End but also went to live there. His experience brought him to believe that

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1. Parl.Papers 1857-8, question 3363.

2. Tait Papers,Vol. 108, ff.255-64: Sir Walter James to the bishop of London, 1 March 1858; ff. 270-1: Bishop of London to Sir W. James, 5 March 1858.

3. C.L. Mowat, The Charity Organisation Society (1961), pp.10-1; CCR, 1870, p.185.

'the chief use of this Society ... consists in bringing ... the upper classes in actual contact with the misery of their fellow-citizens, and so convincing them of the necessity of social reform'. It also brought him to believe that 'giving money away only makes /things/ worse'. His conclusions seem to have been almost entirely negative, however, as he was equally as sceptical of the power of legislation.to remedy social distress. His practical influence went into plans for centralising the control of all charities operating in overlapping fields, and in this he believed he had failed by the late 60s.[1]

Yet others continued on, at least in the field of centralised control. The C.O.S. was founded in 1869 with the support of leading clergy and laymen of all main denominations and with the express aim of co-ordinating the relief given by local charities and poor law boards in any area. It was the archetypal exponent of the division between deserving and undeserving poor and its secretary, C.S. Loch, was the leading exponent of the view that charity was 'a science based on social principles and observation'. Its members never resolved the resulting dilemma of the 'case' who was certainly in observable need and yet not deserving of it.[2] Even the C.O.S. had to make compromises on occasion. However, their spokesmen did stand for advanced social thinking in the debates of churchmen: they stood for efficiency of

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1. B. Leighton (ed.), Letters and Other Writings of the late Edward Denison (1872), esp. pp.20, 24, 59, 227 ff.

2. Mowat, C.O.S., pp.68-71.

organisation and distribution, and this implied a preference for full-time, trained specialists in charity relief.

Many churchmen believed the principles of the C.O.S. to be un-Christian. This became apparent in the series of discussions initiated by C.O.S. supporters in Church Congresses during the 70s. The C.O.S. drew support from all Church parties. Its leading advocates, though, were often broad churchmen, eager (after the secularising legislation of the first post-1867 government) to reassert the continued social utility of a national church. W.H. Fremantle who, as rector of a Marylebone parish, pioneered C.O.S. method of charity co-ordination, took the view that:

> We cannot, indeed, expect the parish church to be a spiritual home of all the parishioners, but we can still make it a centre of good in which the rich may aid the poor ... and various institutions may arise for mutual good and for common interests beyond our own narrow boundaries.[1]

Against such men it was usually the older evangelicals who felt most outraged that organisation should hamper efforts by individuals to perform their Christian duty. Lord Shaftesbury, particularly, fell out of sympathy with the moralistic certainty of the charity organisers (though he had encouraged the foundation of the C.O.S.).[2] The Charity

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1. The Master of the Temple (ed.), Recollections of Dean Fremantle (1921), p.83.
2. G.F.A. Best, Shaftesbury (1964), pp.117-8.

organisers did gradually educate Church Congresses to their point of view during the 70s, but not before they had met strong objections from more traditional churchmen. As one speaker argued in defence of spontaneous charity:

> It is the will of God that this work should be done, and I would rather see a person make a mistake in doing it than never make the attempt.[1]

To separate donor from recipient, it was argued, would inevitably lead to hardness of heart in both parties and put an end to the socially valuable bonds of sympathy and gratitude which, ideally, should exist between the privileged and less privileged classes. The answer to this argument was that the Church was no longer in a position to fulfil its traditional role as reliever of all distress; it should therefore confine its efforts to types of misfortune which could effectively be cured. It had to be realised that 'the laws of economy are the laws of God, and the Church of God can no more afford to disregard them than she can any other laws'.[2] The objective was not to secure the salvation of the donor but of the recipient and this could best be done by helping him to achieve or regain his economic independence and social self-respect. Pauperism, it was said, was 'not so much an outside circumstances, as a moral habit'[3] so, to give charity without inquiry, and in money rather than in remedial advice, could well be to give mere 'counterfeit' charity which commuted personal sympathy for a money payment and also debauched the recipient.[3] It was

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1. CCR, 1873, p.91.
2. CCR, 1870, pp.176-7,185.
3. CCR, 1877, pp.220-5.

further pointed out that even 'our Lord and His servants' had not given 'careless or indiscriminate' relief while the French authorities in the years before the Paris commune had.

Opponents then pointed out the existence of certain forms of distress which they believed would never be 'curable' - poverty caused by permanent illness or physical deformity, for example. They also suspected that any attempt to research into the causes of poverty by means of case-study would soon lead to an emphasis on purely secular factors. And some pointed out, with ambiguous effect, that a merely voluntary organisation would never be in a position to enforce the total co-ordination of charity and poor relief agencies upon which the success of its aims depended.[1] The answer to this last criticism was, of course, not less organisation but more. The supporters of the C.O.S. did gain converts as their solution became more familiar, but a residue of the old beliefs still remained. Bosanquet, the C.O.S. secretary in 1875, admitted that the aim of the charity worker should be to 'combine sympathy for the individual with far-sightedness and some regard for general rules'.[2] It was impossible to suppress the traditional belief that giving was a personal and unskilled relationship, and perhaps undesirable to do so entirely. The innovators could only hope to 'educate' opinion, starting with the clergy. (It is worth noting that almost all the speakers on the subject at Church Congresses, beside the C.O.S. spokesmen, were clergy. Presumably, the problems of regulating charity touched them more constantly.)

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1. CCR, 1873, pp.87, 89; 1870, p.175.
2. CCR, 1875, p.106.

Occasionally the C.O.S. had the opportunity to put its precepts into practice. The model (and seemingly the only complete example) of C.O.S. organisation was the Marylebone parish of St.Mary's, Bryanston Square under the incumbency (1866-82) of the Hon. and Rev. W.H. Fremantle. Fremantle was a notoriously broad churchman who had strong links with the main strands of the broad church tradition. (He was chaplain to Bishop Tait of London, friend of A.P. Stanley, admirer of F.D. Maurice and, in the 80s, chaplain of Balliol under Jowett.) His preference for regarding the parish as a socially- rather than religiously-defined unit has already been noted. For a time, and on the rather precarious basis of personal co-operation between Fremantle, Octavia Hill and local members of the C.O.S., the voluntary system worked in Marylebone. The enthusiasm of active parishioners was balanced by prudence in the management of charity relief. Fremantle estimated that 300 parishioners (of all denominations) were active in some way and that the parish achieved through the C.O.S. effective co-ordination of aims and exchange of information with all local charities and with the poor law guardians. To a degree, then, it was possible to rebut the charge that charity organisation meant the destruction of personal relationships and of the right of the layman to do his Christian duty to his neighbour. Fremantle, as he admitted, aimed to restore the parish, even the urban parish, to its ideal rurally-based form - a community whose relationships were extensions of those within the family.[1] In the ideal rural parish there was no need to make

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1. Master of the Temple (ed.), Recollections of Dean Fremantle, pp.82-9.

inquiry or relief an impersonal task for professionals; a well-intentioned employer would know the needs and weaknesses of his employees and so be in a position as a parishioner to give or to advise on the most effective means of giving help to the distressed.[1]

However, it was no permanent solution to the dilemmas of organising voluntary relief to impose a rural ideal on the increasingly class-segregated parishes of late-Victorian London. One of Fremantle's curates, Samuel Barnett, partly realised this. As warden of Toynbee Hall (founded in 1884), he encouraged young men of education and social conscience to interest themselves in urban charity relief and actually to live among those they aimed to relieve, as Denison had done before them. He described himself as a Christian socialist. Some of his undenominational fellow-workers called themselves, simply, socialists.[2] But he, like the pioneer Christian socialist, F.D.Maurice, could not believe that the mere alleviation of material deprivation, unaccompanied by a spiritual change of heart, was an aim worth struggling for. Thus he, like Maurice and Fremantle, still regarded the National Church as the only effective vehicle of social reform: it was true that competition between denominations in charity relief was grotesquely unchristian and inefficient, but the same was true of state intervention.[3] So the old

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1. See e.g. J.A.Miller, The Co-operation of the Laity with the Clergy (1866), esp. pp.6-8,15. Miller was vicar of a Somerset parish. He uses the words 'laity' and 'employers of labour' as interchangeable terms.

2. See Kitson Clark, Churchmen, pp.280 ff.; M.Richter, The Politics of Conscience (1964), pp.320-3.

3. S.A. Barnett, 'A National Church and Social Reform' in Grey and Fremantle (eds.) Church Reform (1888), pp.154-77, esp. 157-63. Note, though, that by the mid-80s Barnett was advocating state old age pensions: DNB, article on Barnett.

dilemmas became more complex. How to prevent 'the charity which gives a shilling where a pound is needed, which cares for the sick man during the season and forgets him during the holiday, which gives money to heal a broken heart or damps energy with a gift ...'[1] without falling back on the spiritually neutral power of the state and its specialist agencies? By 1885, then, there co-existed three attitudes to charity relief - one predominantly religious, one ambiguously so, and one predominantly secular.[2]

This progression of attitudes had marked effect on churchmen's conception of the lay role. After more than half a century of evangelical effort to induce churchmen to be more compassionate as individuals towards individuals, there came a change. Charity was no longer to be justified in terms of the intention of the giver but more in terms of its effect on the recipient. Both justifications were equally capable of strong statement as ethical imperatives. The justification in terms of effect was especially convincing under urban conditions where it was clearly impossible for the giver to be sure that he was achieving what he intended without a general knowledge of regularities in social behaviour and specific knowledge of the behaviour and needs of the individual recipient. To a significant extent, then, the casual duty of the individual layman became the specialised work of the institutionalised professional.

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1. Ibid., p.167.

2. Cf. C.P.A.S. Annual Report, 1886, p.38.; Guardian, 1885 p.253 (editorial on 'The Gospel of Social Reforms').

(B) Some lay skills and enthusiasms remained less specialised and more traditionally based. Yet even within the Church the role of the active lay agent became more specialised and more subject to formal control. The drift from voluntary, informal, unskilled, parish-based work towards formally controlled and trained work is evident here as well even if, in general, it never becomes so pronounced as in more secular activities.

First a comparison of the type and extent of lay evangelistic work in Church of England parishes in the 1850s and the 1880s.
In the 1850s, so far as one can tell from the evidence given to the House of Lords select committee on 'the Deficiency of Means of Spiritual Instruction ... in the Metropolis, and in other Populous Districts', lay agency was largely informal, unskilled, and often undenominational. A London clergyman might be able to call on the services of a dozen or more lay visitors of independent means if his parish was not entirely working-class but it was known that many of these would work only when they pleased and so be 'not so efficient' as paid agents.[1] Paid agents were usually employed by a voluntary society and would work regularly, though without formal training. There were not very many paid agents. The C.P.A.S. supported 108 of them in 1850. Local and not necessarily Church organisations like the London City Mission supported more, and some parishes paid for their own. But the vicar of Bradford had under his

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1. Parl.Papers 1857-8, Questions 593, 1098.

control, in a parish of 80,000, only two scripture readers. All agents were useful to the clergy for distributing tracts and for gathering information which the country clergymen still gathered without lay help but which an urban clergyman could not hope to do by himself. The paid agents, who were of lower social class, were thought to be more effective than clergy in gaining the initial trust of 'heathen' populations in overcrowded and run-down city areas where effective parish organisation had collapsed.[1] Yet even they, if they were dutiful churchmen, were restricted to reading scripture, extracts from the Book of Common Prayer or approved tracts. They were strictly prohibited from preaching, either in houses or elsewhere.[2]

By 1885 the number of laymen involved in evangelising work and the range of activities allowed to them was much increased. In 1885 there were 861 formally recognised (but unpaid) lay readers in the Church. These men were entitled to hold services in unconsecrated buildings if authorised by the clergy, and, though they were more numerous in urban dioceses, they were also firmly accepted in more rural and sparsely-settled dioceses.[3] At the less specialised level, at least eight dioceses had founded lay helpers' associations of part-time volunteers. The London association claimed 5,000 members in 1885.[3]

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1. Ibid., Questions 1655, 2505.
2. Ibid., p.576 (Appendix C). Cf. Questions 1726-32.
3. Church of England Year Book, 1886, pp.111-5.

The qualifications of these men were usually no more than their communicant status and a character judgement by their parish clergyman. Yet even these were more demanding qualifications than had universally been required in the 1850s, and by the 80s there were training courses available, at least for the elite. The old-established voluntary societies continued to finance their agents. There were more than a thousand paid agents by 1876.[1] Further, there seems to have been an increase in the number of parishioners volunteering as district visitors, though the evidence available is impressionistic.

But, to return to the 1850s, there was little indication that the parish clergy or the hierarchy were preparing to encourage increased lay participation in evangelising work. In spite of the nonconformist example, and the startlingly low percentage of the population revealed as church-goers in the 1851 census, the clergy took some time to accept 'lay agency'. Since the 1830s, the evangelicals had been taking initiatives by employing lay agents, but they still did this without official sanction and often without the approval of the hierarchy. They did not love the clergy any better for obstructing them in their mission. Some evangelicals went so far as to warn:

> Cases may occur in which it may be right for Laymen to continue to work [in a parish], despite the opposition of the Clergyman. We must not forget that we, as Laymen, have our duties, for the performance of which we shall be called to account hereafter, and that the negligence of the Parish Clergyman will be no excuse for our own.[2]

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1. CCC, 1876,'Report of Committee on Deficiencies of Spiritual Ministration', p.14. The Report lists 722 paid male agents and 425 women. The returns on which the Report is based are probably incomplete.

2. J.Pearson, The Duty of Laymen in the Church of England (1856), p.25.

In fact, the lay agents of the voluntary societies seem to have worked alongside the London parish clergy without much friction.[1] However, the hierarchy and more traditionally minded clergy were as much concerned with potential as with actual conflict. It was an invitation to irregularity, they thought, to support lay agents who were uneducated and of a low social class, and who often worked without regard to parish or even denominational boundaries. Even if one accepted the credentials of the C.P.A.S. and the Church of England Scripture Readers Association (founded in 1844), there was still the undenominational London City Mission to suspect of confusing the minds of the lost sheep of the Church of England.[2] The orthodox clerical aim was to restore the parish system and to leave to the incumbent the decision whether to employ lay agents. If an incumbent did choose to employ lay agents, they should, with few exceptions, be part-time agents of independent means and good education. Men of lower social class would be of poor education, would have to be paid and would always be subject to the temptation of using their position to collect a congregation before setting themselves up as dissenting clergy.[3] The money spent in supporting lay agents, it was

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1. Parl.Papers 1857-8, Questions 2483-4.

2. e.g. Ibid., Questions 563-72; p.575: London City Mission Instructions to Missionaries: '4. Urge ... the necessity of attending public worship ... Specify no particular church or chapel ... provided that /in the place chosen/ the great doctrines of the Reformation are faithfully taught.'

3. CCC, 1862, p.857; CCR, 1862, pp.64-70.

argued, would be better and more safely spent paying for more curates or endowing more parish clergy. On the high ground, it was argued that:

> [W]hile [the] admissibleness [of paid lay agency], as auxiliary and supplemental to clerical functions, may be pleaded for, - to urge it as preferable to these is hardly consistent with the principles of churchmen, or with reverence for a divinely instituted order.[1]

On lower ground, it was argued that the urban working classes, like their rural forebears, paid more respect to the gentleman clergyman than they would ever be prepared to give to an unordained man of lesser social status.[2]

This belief that the clergy ought to remain in immediate control of all parish work done in the Church's name extended long beyond the 50s - in spite of population growth, the divergence of secular and religious knowledge and the liturgical revival which kept clergy busier within their churches than they had been traditionally. There is a continuous strand in the debate on lay agency which represents the view that, if there cannot be enough clergy trained and endowed to do their traditional work, then they should be supplemented by permanent, perhaps indelibly ordained 'deacons' rather than by unordained men. This was the view of old and, especially, of new high churchmen. It appealed to them because it did not require the church to blur the distinction between clergy and laymen and perhaps infringe statute law, because it had scriptural precedents, and because it avoided the necessity for further endowment. Yet it entitled those chosen to perform almost all clerical

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1. J.Sandford, The Mission and Extension of the Church at Home (1862), pp.112-3.

2. Parl.Papers 1857-8, Questions 376, 1650.

and priestly functions and subjected them, therefore, to the effective control of ecclesiastical discipline.[1]

The objections to the revival of the diaconate, however, became more evident each decade. What the Church most urgently needed was a large class of men, working as evangelisers among the masses in the way that nonconformist lay preachers worked, and having the same status as the nonconformists allowed their lay evangelists. It became evident that what the diaconate would produce would be a relative handful of men, all of independent means and acceptably educated, but more effective as substitute clergy than as evangelisers of the masses. If one attempted to draw on a wider social background for deacons, the problem immediately arose that recruits would not be men of independent means and so would have to be paid or allowed to practise a trade or profession. A professional background might just be acceptable but it was unthinkable that an ordained man should engage in trade; such a confusion of roles would be spiritually dangerous for the individual, socially dangerous to the status of the clergy, and, very probably, illegal.[2] It was all very well to argue as Bishop Browne of Winchester did that, 'When you make a thorough Christian of a man you have done a great deal towards making him a gentleman'. Churchmen still retained an uneasy impression. 'I do not know', pondered one layman, 'whether trade would be a nice thing for a deacon to engage in.'[3] The movement in favour

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1. CCC, 1866, pp.330-41.
2. CCR, 1877, pp.530 ff.
3. Ibid., pp.553, 560.

of a revived diaconate never managed to explain how its solution would 'solve' any major problem the Church faced. The Guardian supported most moderate high church innovations but it too opposed the revival of the diaconate. It commented:

> If parochial work were now what it was fifty years ago, we should have clergy enough to do it and to spare. But a well-worked modern parish is a complex aggregate of machinery ... What we should like to see is a more intelligent division of labour and a more frank surrender of many parts of it by the incumbent to laymen.[1]

The time when churchmen first generally realised the urgency, indeed unavoidability, of the lay agency issue came in the 1860s. The decade began with the nonconformist attack on the privileges of the Church temporarily defeated; it ended with the nonconformists more triumphant than ever before, with church rate 'abolished', the Irish Church disestablished and the Forster Education Act. Looking to the future, it was only too clear that, 'If the Church of England were disestablished tomorrow, it would be thrown out into the country, as regards organization, in the form of a Clerical skeleton'.[2] It was very difficult to deny the political and religious effectiveness of lay-dominated nonconformist modes of evangelisation and organisation. An increasing number of Church dignitaries began searching for ways in which the Church of England might channel some of the enthusiasm and self-confidence of the middle-classes to its own ends. It was generally agreed that the clergy ought to remain educated gentlemen in the traditional manner. After all, the foundations of the faith were under vigorous

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1. Guardian, 1882, p.796.
2. CCR, 1868, p.176.

intellectual attack in the 1860s. However, there was ample room for less formally educated laymen to assist the clergy and spread the gospel among the uneducated.

It has already been noticed, in connection with the national voluntary societies, that bishops of a variety of theological parties acted to centralise voluntary activities around diocesan organisations in the 60s and 70s. In the field of lay evangelising work, there were two precedent-setting events in the mid-60s: the resolution of fifteen of the twenty-seven English and Welsh bishops on Ascension Day 1866 recognising the position of 'lay reader', and the foundation, under Bishop Tait in 1865-6, of the London Diocesan Lay Helpers Association.

The resolution of the bishops in 1866 was taken after several years of consultation with clergy inside and outside Convocation. It was specifically intended to provide formally recognised status for the work of unpaid lay volunteers in the Church.[1] While the bishops thought it 'not expedient', because of legal complications, to extend the order of the diaconate to 'persons engaged in professions or business', they announced that they were prepared to license laymen to do unpaid work in any parish if the incumbent consented. The licence would authorise the reader to read lessons within a church and, outside it, to hold prayer meetings and explain scripture. He was also to be entitled 'to render general aid to the clergy in all ministrations not strictly requiring the service of one in Holy Orders'.[2]

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1. CCC, 1864, pp.1449 ff.: Report of the Committee on Lay Agency (Chairman, Bishop Tait). See also correspondence on lay readers in the Guardian, 1868, p.1111.

2. CCB, 1866, p.351. Original set of rules in Longley Papers, Lambeth, Vol.5, ff. 32-4.

(The licence was to be revocable by the bishop on the request of the incumbent.) What the formal effect of this resolution was, it was hard to say. Bishop Jackson of London, in later years, 'used carefully to explain, when he admitted readers in the chapel of Fulham Palace, that he had no power to sanction anything not already legal, and that what was already legal they could do, if they pleased, without him.'[1] However, official recognition of lay agency did help to put to rest the misgivings of traditional Churchmen. Evangelicals, too, were grateful. The C.P.A.S. felt able to extend the range of activities of its lay agents.[2] By 1870 bishops in eleven dioceses had licensed readers,[3] and the chief barrier to expansion seems to have been the unwillingness of incumbents to nominate candidates rather than shortage of lay volunteers.

The Association of Lay Helpers for the Diocese of London, founded in 1865 or 1866,[4] was the companion to a number of diocesan societies founded by Bishop Tait, and the model upon which other dioceses drew for their own societies. (By 1885 there were lay helpers' associations

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1. E.Stock, My Recollections, p.222.

2. Ibid.; J.M. Clabon, A Model Parish (1869), p.54; T.W.Belcher, The Lay Element in ... the Church (1870), pp.3-4. Cf. form of C.P.A.S. 'Circular to Applicants for Aid', (printed in Annual Reports) before and after 1873.

3. Guardian, 1870, p.1407; J.M.Clabon, The Church Rights of the Laity (1869), p.79.

4. A pamphlet of the Association, c.1869, entitled Association of Lay Helpers for the Diocese of London puts the date in May 1865, but a Times report of 18 May 1866 (p.7), announces the foundation meeting in May of that year. Perhaps the two reports are of different stages in the Association's formation. It is difficult to know.

in at least seven other dioceses, usually formed on the initiative of the bishop with the approval of his diocesan conference.[1]) The Lay Helpers Association developed naturally out of the work of the Bishop of London's Fund and it aimed, as other diocesan societies did, to raise the motives of its participants from partisanship to 'the dignity of a commission undertaken from the Great Head of the Church'.[2] Its members were to be communicant volunteers who would register with the central organisation their names and the nature of the voluntary work they were prepared to undertake. They would then be employed by any incumbent who needed their services. In this way, it was hoped, the over-active laymen of the West End of London would make themselves available to do work in the East End parishes where local lay helpers were extremely few and poorly educated. The list of services they were allowed to perform was of no great novelty. It was mostly confined to Sunday school teaching, tract distribution, the management of mutual benefit clubs, district visiting and fund raising, though with the bishop's permission it might extend to conducting mission services and active evangelising among the working classes.[3]

The offices of reader and lay helper between them, then, made up the system by which the Church of England hoped to encourage voluntary lay participation in evangelising work. The recognition of such offices was not a precipitate move, given the strictly limited nature of the tasks

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1. Church of England Year-Book, 1886, pp.111-15.
2. Hints to Church Workers (1874), p.11.
3. Clabon, The Church Rights of the Laity, pp.89 ff.

they permitted laymen to perform. Yet even this movement created disturbance among churchmen. Some churchmen felt a need to modify traditional ideology to justify such change as there was; others believed that the change taking place was insufficient in any case; and others had to face the unforeseen practical consequences of the changes formally approved. We discuss each group in turn.

It has been noticed in several other contexts that an ideology of 'church membership through participation' became popular between the 1860s and 1880s. There is, not surprisingly, further evidence of this trend in sermons preached before the diocesan lay helpers associations by bishops and other church dignitaries.[1] A traditional belief was that a good churchman had a duty to work when the clergy requested but this belief, by the 60s and 70s, came to include the reverse proposition that the Church had a duty to provide a layman with work if he requested it.:

> /It is a moral right ... of the Lay Churchman .. to be permitted, under proper sanction and supervision, to do /parish/ work.[2]

Under the influence of nonconformists and the advocacy of evangelicals, even high church theorists reconsidered the scriptural and legal precedents for lay action. Many of them 'rediscovered' the authority of laymen to evangelise and even to preach and to perform traditionally clerical roles in conditions of emergency. And might not the social

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1. e.g. H. Goodwin, The Mission of the Seventy (1870).

2. Clabon, The Church Rights of the Laity, p.81. See also the discussion in Report of the Fourth Annual Conference of the Church of England Clerical and Lay Association (Midland District) (1863), pp.24-5.

conditions of the age in which they lived be emergency enough? They were certainly enough to jolt many non-evangelicals into comprehending the evangelical view 'that all Christians have a spiritual priesthood'. The ideology of lay participation was not the merely formal adjustment of theologians either. Individual evangelical and high church clergy alike encouraged the formation of parish guilds, societies and councils in the late 60s and the 70s on the restrictionist principle that 'in the spiritual hive there can be no drones'.[1] And, of course, even broad churchmen encouraged laymen to be active; they agreed that active work forged bonds, but disliked community activity based on 'sectarian' or unduly dogmatic distinctions. (The formation of voluntary parish councils, however, was as much a political as a pastoral development, and will be fully discussed in section III.)

Some churchmen even hoped that a Church which fully recognised lay agency would draw the Methodists back into its fold, repairing the schism of the eighteenth century. This did not happen, but it is noticeable that, by the 1870s, evangelicals within the Church were less at odds with the hierarchy (over evangelising work, at least) than they had once been. This may have been a consequence of the work of the 'Palmerston bishops' (appointed with the advice of Lord Shaftesbury) who sometimes went out and preached at street corners. Certainly, old evangelicals like Shaftesbury still had little patience with the 'etiquette' the hierarchy placed in the way of personally inspired

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1. CCR, 1875, p.331 (Rev. J.W. Bardsley); 1873, pp.50-5 (Rev. H.D. Nihill); 1883, pp.124-6 (Prof. M. Burrows) and 129 (John Trevarthen, lay preacher and Provost of the Guild of St.Alban).

evangelists, and even less patience with the high church argument that corporate Church institutions like diocesan conferences would generate lay energies left dormant under the Establishment.[1] And other evangelicals still demanded that laymen should be allowed to act without reference to the constricting controls of supine clergy and the parish system.[2] But, at last, they were not alone in deploring the unfettered discretion of the parish clergy to encourage or discourage lay help as they chose.[3] The new leaders among the evangelical clergy too, were increasingly prepared to admit the advantages of institutionalising lay agency.[4]

The main disappointment which evangelicals still suffered was the Church's unwillingness to approve of lay preaching. In an age of religious revivals, beginning in the late 50s and reaching a peak with Moody and Sankey, and the Salvation Army in the 70s, this left Church evangelicals at a distinct disadvantage. Lord Shaftesbury trenchantly remarked in 1875 that 'Moody will do more in an hour than Canon Liddon /the leading high church preacher/ in a century'.[5]

In urbanised England, now that vast masses of people never entered a church, the only way by which they could be reached was through

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1. Earl of Shaftesbury, Speech at the Annual Meeting of the C.P.A.S. (1873), pp.6-7; Hodder, Shaftesbury, iii.282.

2. 'Tekel', The Views of a Church of England Layman .. on the subject of Lay Agency (1866), pp.27-9; /Anon/, Lay Preachers in the Church of England (1877), pp.23-4.

3. J.M. Clabon, Lay Help in Mission Room Services and Home Visiting (1869), p.9.

4. J.C. Ryle, Church Reform (1870), No.V, p.8.

5. Hodder, Shaftesbury, iii.358-9.

missions, preferably run by members of their own class. Evangelicals and broad churchmen were especially convinced of this and, being supporters of Establishment, might well have turned to parliament to demand what the Church hierarchy denied them. However, it was becoming apparent by the 1870s that M.P.s were very unpredictable legislators in ecclesiastical affairs. The only group prepared to risk the hazards of legislation to authorise lay preaching was a group of broad churchmen, the Church Reform Association.[1] It was for them that William Cowper-Temple (1811-88) (step-son of Lord Palmerston and sponsor of the 'non-sectarian' Cowper-Temple clause on religious instruction in the Forster Education Act) sponsored the Occasional Sermons Bill in 1872 and 1873. This bill was chiefly designed to allow clergy, with their bishop's permission, to invite men not in holy orders to deliver 'occasional sermons' in parish churches. Although it was intended to qualify Church of England laymen to preach, the main purpose of the bill was to allow nonconformist ministers to preach in the national Church.[2] It was therefore not so much an assertion of the need to evangelise the masses as an intended antidote to contemporary nonconformist calls for disestablishment. It was part of a campaign to 'restore' the Church to the nation. The problem was that the nonconformists did not want to be restored to a national Church; and churchmen with any pride in their own doctrinal identity objected to the bill for infringing the rights of 'those quiet people who go to Church to worship God in the way their fathers did, and

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1. Other men had defended lay preaching against parliamentary attack in the past, but none seem to have urged it on the Church by legislation. See Stock, Recollections, pp.82-3.

2. P.D., 1872, ccix.790.

to be instructed in their duty'.[1] The bill failed by a clear majority at the second reading each time it was presented to the House of Commons.

In the meantime, some churchmen were having difficulty adjusting to the non-legislative alterations already made in the lay role. Some began to realise that lay volunteers might generate more work for the clergyman than they relieved him of.[2] This would be particularly true if the volunteers were unskilled. It was never difficult to find work for medical workers or people with financial or administrative skills. At the most basic level, it was agreed that it often helped to make a division of labour whereby men did parish work among men, women among women, and young people worked among those of their own age group. The difficulty arose somewhere in between these degrees of suitability. It was difficult to require volunteers to sit for an examination or to undergo training. However, the skills involved in mission work and public preaching were not skills most volunteers possessed naturally. It was pointed out that even the clergy had come to accept the need for vocational training during the century.[3] Volunteers had to learn as they worked, perhaps discussing common problems with the clergy or with their lay helpers association if they belonged to one.[4] Eventually the London

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1. P.D., 1872, ccxii.241 (A.J.B. Beresford Hope). See also P.D., 1873, ccxv. 1977-9 (W.E.Gladstone), and hostile opinion of the Guardian, 1871, p.834.

2. CCR, 1879, p.194 (Rev. W.J.Butler of Wantage).

3. Guardian, 1880, p.1697.

4. See Hints to Church Workers (1874), published by the London Diocesan Lay Helpers Association.

lay helpers association arranged to hold courses at Keble College, Oxford, for its readers. Three dozen men attended the first course in 1881.[1] They were an elite. Most lay helpers were recruited not because of their skills or abilities but because they were volunteers and had the time to spare. Lay volunteers were overwhelmingly drawn from the leisured classes. In country parishes, everyone knew, lay help was difficult to come by and what help there was came from the traditional social leaders of the parish.[2] Even in cities, though, the clergy felt safer working with gentlemen likely to share their social values and sense of the proprieties. We have seen this made clear during discussions on the revival of the diaconate.

It was only in the 70s that any number of churchmen came to accept that the widening cultural division between social classes in cities must mean a corresponding division of labour in evangelising work. The London lay helpers association came to realise this only painfully. The original aim of the association had been to enlist laymen in active parishes to do work in poor parishes where the nominal parishioners were indifferent to the Church. Volunteers were specially admonished to do

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1. W.S. Williams, A Brief History of Readers and their Work in the Diocese of London 1866-1926 (1927), p.42. See also the summary of qualifications required of readers in various dioceses: Appendix to 'Report on Readers and the Diaconate' in CCC, 1884. The qualification in a majority of cases is no more than the recommendation of the incumbent.

2. CCR, 1875, p.320; 1877, p.553.

their work 'not as a superior but as a brother'.[1] Yet results still seemed disappointing. By the early 70s, the association had reversed its original aim and decided that 'even in the poorest districts ... the best lay help is that which is home-grown'.[2] Evangelicals had realised this for some time and mildly resented having it pointed out to them by a newly-founded diocesan society.[3] Having pioneered paid lay agency as well, the evangelicals were used to the idea of lower class lay agents. Their problem was to get the church hierarchy to act on the new insights. As the Earl of Shaftesbury said:

> I cannot help uttering unpalatable things when they are in my heart and on my conscience ... I assert this proposition - that if you wish to recover your hold and your influence over the great masses of the population ... you must bring the masses to bear upon the masses, you must clearly and unreservedly entrust to their agency and management the vast bulk of the working classes.[4]

An institutional solution to the new problems of lay agency was partly worked out during the 1880s and 90s. It was worked out against a background generally similar to that which had inspired action in the 60s and 70s - increased devotional duties for the clergy, continuing social dislocation and political uncertainty. This uncertainty first centred on nonconformist grievances against the Establishment but increasingly centred on working-class grievances against the whole social

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1. Hints to Church Workers, p.99. Cf. Church Progress: A Monthly Record of Home Mission Work, i.144 (Jan.1870). This latter periodical was the semi-official mouthpiece of the London lay helpers association.
2. CCR, 1872, pp.63-4; 1881, p.79.
3. Stock, Recollections, p.221.
4. Shaftesbury, Speech at the Annual Meeting of the C.P.A.S. (1873) p.5.

order, including organised religion. By the 1880s, there were two more specific reasons for urgent action. Agricultural depression severely reduced the endowments of the country clergy and undermined the basis of traditional relationships in country parishes; and, in the cities, evanglising methods took a new turn with the emergence of the Salvation Army.

By the 1880s there were, even among the Church hierarchy, men pressing strongly for formal recognition of further extensions in the lay role. Not even the once undisputed core of clerical activities - the conduct of the authorised services of the Church in consecrated buildings, the right to preach, and the right to perform the sacraments - remained entirely untouched by lay claims. And, in some cases, the practical invasions of the traditional clerical role which precipitated demands for lay recognition were sanctioned by the higher clergy. For example, the bishop of Lichfield enthusiastically supported the Lichfield Diocesan Mission, a group of lay evangelists led by an ex-officer of the Salvation Army who waged an energetic campaign against indifference in the Staffordshire industrial towns during 1884.[1] The tensions which such lay missions created among churchmen illustrate the deep suspicion with which traditional clergy and laity viewed attempts to extend the lay role. Missions led by laymen had always aroused suspicion. Some

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1. See the extensive correspondence in the Guardian, begun on 23 July 1884 and lasting until September.

people believed that lack of enthusiasm among the evangelical clergy had led to the downfall of the great 'evangelical awakening' of 1859-61. Even the aged Lord Shaftesbury felt that the Salvation Army's methods of attracting interest among the working classes were unduly 'sensational'.[1] However, in 1884, Bishop Maclagan of Lichfield (later of York) managed to convince his diocesan synod that the diocese should support a lay mission. (The Church Army was already in existence by then, but it had no formal status in the Church and it was confined to working in individual parishes, rather than holding itinerant missions as Maclagan intended his mission to do.) Maclagan argued that the urban masses had no knowledge of basic Christian beliefs or experience of regular forms of worship. Besides, given the cultural barriers existing between regular clergy and urban masses, it was essential that the Church authorise lay agents qualified to keep contact between the two. Only lower class lay agents could convert the uncommitted and give them the basic instruction they would need before they could become secure parishioners.[2] But as soon as the lay mission began it aroused objection. The leading (anonymous) objector, having experienced both the lay mission and Salvation Army meetings, commented:

> There was an absence of red pocket handkerchiefs and tambourines in the former, but otherwise there was no essential difference; the irreverence was the same, ... the forced excitement, the hymn tunes were all similar ../I/t is a really very grave question whether evangelistic work ought to be entrusted at all to the care of uneducated laymen.[3]

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1. Stock, Recollections, p.83; Hodder, Shaftesbury, iii.435-8. For the general attitude of churchmen to the Salvation Army see Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.294 ff.

2. Guardian, 1884, pp.867-8. 3. Ibid., pp.1101, 1175-6.

There were fears of doctrinal distortion and accusations of lack of respect for the regular clergy, existing religious institutions and denominational boundaries. Local churchmen complained about the difficulties of accommodating the undisciplined enthusiasms of converts to regular forms of parish worship and doubted that conversions induced by forced excitement would last. This continued in spite of testimonials from the parish clergy affected and suggestions that the Apostles themselves might not have had the qualifications for evangelising required by the nineteenth century Church of England. 'Generally', wrote one objector to 'this craze for lay missions and unordained preachers', 'I can imagine no greater nuisance in a parish than the presence of a layman who fancies that he has a mission, and yet has neither learned obedience nor studied doctrine.'[1]

The Lichfield uproar was complicated by the fact that Bishop Maclagan was also prepared to license lay readers to give addresses in churches. He had the support of his diocesan conference and of the upper house pf Canterbury Convocation (by a majority of one), but the lower house protested that allowing laymen to 'preach' in 'consecrated buildings' was an attack to the heart of the clerical and priestly vocation. It forced the upper house to revoke its approval (1883-4).[2] Maclagan was not unduly surprised. When vicar of the London parish in which Spurgeon's tabernacle was situated, he had

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1. Ibid., p.1176. The Guardian agreed in an editorial on 'The Lichfield Mission', p.1338.

2. CCC, 1884, pp.42 ff., 227 ff.

invited laymen to give addresses in his church, saying that 'the only way to get reforms in the Church was to step a little outside the limits of strict legality'.[1] Thus an evangelically-influenced high church bishop took action to implement what evangelicals had long advocated.[2] For the moment, though, Maclagan was thwarted by strong clerical feeling against change. It was most uncommon for a layman to be permitted to preach or read services in a church until after 1900.[3]

For both Convocations and speakers at Church Congresses strenuously resisted attempts to widen the lay role in the mid-80s. The Lichfield experiments gave them an opportunity to restate the theological and social foundations of their claims in defence of the clerical role. All agreed that there was a crisis facing the Church; recruitment of clergy was barely keeping pace with population growth, while endowments were shrinking in country parishes and as difficult as ever to raise in new urban areas. Most agreed that the question of lay agency had not been settled satisfactorily in the 1860s. The archbishop of York reminisced that the bishops in 1866 had dropped a general reconsideration of the lay role on hearing the 'late Bishop of St.David's saying what would a layman say if he were confronted by his tobacconist in the pulpit on a Sunday?'[4]

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1. Stock, Recollections, p.223. Cf. the more orthodox response of the bishop of London at the same time, who told W.H. Fremantle that if he allowed any layman to preach in his durch he would lay himself open to prosecution: Guardian, 1874, pp.205-6.

2. See J.C. Ryle, Church Reform (1870), No.V, p.20; J.Trevarthen, Lay Services and Preaching (1885), pp.6-7; F.D.How, Archbishop Maclagan (1911), p.161.

3. Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.164.

4. York Journal of Convocation, 1881, p.90.

However, the advocates of lay agency were pressing for two different concessions - one to allow laymen to do itinerant preaching in towns and cities, another to allow laymen to act as curates for over-strained parish clergy in poor and scattered country parishes. Between them they sometimes seemed to be advocating the total removal of all distinctive clerical attributes. Thus there grew a strong feeling among clergy, especially those who regarded their profession as a priesthood, that increased lay agency was unscriptural, illegal and subversive of all order: 'the removal of the old landmarks' would lead to 'the obliteration of the distinction between what is human and what is divine'.[1] Besides, at the level of social convention, it might threaten the social standing of the clerical profession, and it would almost certainly be 'a very great shock to the feelings of a great number of their congregations to receive laymen in their pulpits'.[2] Not for the first time, there was evidence that the congregations of the Church of England were more opposed to changes in parish worship than were their clergy.[2] The consensus among the judicious was that, after twenty years, the question still needed time to ripen.

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1. Guardian, 1884, p.771 (Dean Burgon of Chichester).
2. CCC, 1884, pp.49, 240.

Thus we have a conclusion which, to a degree, runs parallel to that reached in the discussion on laymen and voluntary societies. The enthusiasm of laymen was institutionalised and brought under the control of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. By the 1880s it was more often than not a bishop who took the lead in demanding an expanded role for lay members.[1] However, there was not such a cohesive tradition of lay involvement in parish work as there was in fields connected with the work of the national voluntary societies. The movement in favour of 'lay agency' was slow in beginning and late in gaining formal acceptance. This was very largely the result of clerical fears that such an expansion of the lay role could only be achieved at clerical expense. To a lesser degree it was the result of lack of lay enthusiasm for the work; if a layman had a strong sense of vocation he tended to the evangelical view, followed the nonconformist example and acted in the way he thought best rather than wait for the Church to create a formal role for him. There was intermittent pressure on the Church from various groups of churchmen for formal recognition of lay agency throughout the period, but there were relatively few laymen who actually took advantage of opportunities for formal recognition when it was offered.[2] The debates in Church assemblies were frequent and lengthy; the practical results were quite small. There was no doubt that the Church needed lay manpower, skill and enthusiasm. The increasing number of churchmen who believed in Church membership through participation in Church work were sincere

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1. For Maclagan see above. See also the innovations of Bishop Temple of London during the 1890s: Williams, Brief History of Readers, pp. 12-5.

2. Ibid, p.16.

in their belief too. But the terms on which the clergy offered to recognise lay agency remained high. The terms were far too high for some of those laymen who were in process of gaining secular skills and status - they slipped, at varying rates, but inexorably, out of the religious sphere. The terms were also too high, though, for many of those who avowedly remained subject to religious values - they participated, but without particularly valuing formal recognition.

CHAPTER 10

A SPECIAL CASE : WOMEN AND VOLUNTARY WORK ; CONCLUSIONS

The bishop of Carlisle, preaching in Westminster Abbey at the annual service for diocesan lay helpers in 1870, noted in passing that 'when people talk about lay efforts, they seem not infrequently to neglect the fact that half the population is by necessity excluded from the office of the ministry, and that the half so excluded possesses in the nature of things the chief power of spiritual influence upon human souls.'[1] This chapter sets out to discuss the special role which women were expected to play in voluntary lay work. Once again, it is interesting to note the reaction of churchmen and women to centralising and professionalising trends in Church activities. Reactions to developments in women's work, it will be seen, sometimes varied considerably from reactions to the same developments in a male context. At other times they reinforced them.

As women were not generally expected to speak for themselves at public meeting or to publish their views, it is quite difficult to find out what women thought their role was within the Church. The clergy took the leading part in defining the layman's role; the clergy and laymen between them took almost entire responsibility for defining the role of the lay woman. Women very rarely gave addresses at Church Congresses - the

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1. H. Goodwin, The Mission of the Seventy (1870), p.9.

most liberal forums for discussion of Church matters - and they seem never to have participated in public debate there. The evidence is thus fragmentary and this in itself is evidence that the great majority of women accepted that they had no standing in public discussion. Even women who spoke their mind in private correspondence were unlikely to provide representative evidence. They were independent almost to eccentricity if, like Florence Nightingale to the liberal A.P. Stanley in 1852, they wrote:

> The Church of England has for men bishoprics, archbishoprics, and a little work ... For women she has - what? ... I would have given her my head, my hand, my heart. She would not have them. She did not know what to do with them. She told me to go back and do crochet in my mother's drawing room; or, if I were tired of that, to marry and look well at the head of my husband's table. You may go to the Sunday School if you like it, she said. But she gave me no training even for that. She gave me neither work to do for her, nor education for it.[1]

A survey of the extent of work thought suitable for women in the 1850s and 1880s reveals how slowly attitudes changed. Women took no formal part in ecclesiastical administration or decision-making at either date (with the fortuitous but highly important exception of Queen Victoria). There were no women in parliament; there were no women in the new 'voluntary' councils of the Church like diocesan conferences or the House of Laymen. In the 1890s, it was discovered that there was no legal objection to women being churchwardens but Convocation deliberately excluded women from being elected as members of the newly created parochial church councils (unless they were churchwardens).[2] The only

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1. A.M. Allchin, The Silent Rebellion: Anglican Religious Communities 1845-1900 (1958), p.115.
2. Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.201.

work open to educated women was voluntary work and, even here, it was more acceptable to be a clergyman's wife or daughter.[1] Yet women had a severely restricted role in the voluntary societies as well. They gained a well-established auxiliary role as writers of tracts and as fund-raisers - both the C.M.S. and S.P.G., for example, had established ladies' associations by 1885 - but they were not members of the central societies for voting purposes. Some women of standing did form their own societies. The Girls Friendly Society and the Mothers' Union became national organisations between the late 70s and early 90s, and they were run by women on behalf of women; that is, they were extensions of the non-contentious (family-reinforcing) role of women in the Church. As far as formal recognition by the Church was concerned, women were in a less favourable position than men. In the case of lower-class, paid agents the distinction was not so pronounced. 'Bible women' and female district visitors were increasingly accepted as better qualified to do work among women than male agents.[2] Some specialised work in orphanages, female penitentiaries and like institutions gave women of all classes a chance even to develop skills in management. But the London lay helpers association was a society for men only, and there was no female equivalent of the semi-clerical status of lay reader, in spite of the fact that the proportion of women to men in the congregations of the Church seems to have remained constant at the ratio of two to one from the 1870s to the end of the century.[3] Even

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1. See M. Hill, The Religious Order (1973), p.254.
2. CGR, 1883, pp.148-50 (J.G. Talbot M.P. on parochial mission women).
3. Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.222-3 (Estimate based on confirmation statistics).

evangelical missionary societies would not give formal support to women missionaries abroad.[1] Within England, the attitude of the Church towards women preaching continued unchanged since Dr.Johnson's time. One M.P. opposing the Occasional Sermons Bill of 1873 demolished the terms in which it was drafted by asking:

> Why, under the measure before them, should not ladies be allowed to preach? Was the House really prepared for that?

The following broad church sponsor of the bill accused him of frivolous exaggeration. The interpretation was so far-fetched as to be absurd.[2] Women with any sense of formal religious vocation had to make their own way. Some formed sisterhoods and, later, deaconess institutions, and these are mentioned below. For the moment it is enough to note that the Church conceived of the woman's role almost entirely in terms of her role in family life. Her submissive role in the Church paralleled her submissive role in the paternalistic Victorian family, and was reinforced by the selective quotation of scripture.

This conception of women as naturally subordinate gave special shape to the arguments about centralisation and professional status which took place in the organisation of female (as well as male) lay agency. The debates about the development of Anglican sisterhoods illustrate this.

Sisterhoods, when they were revived in the Church of England during the twenty years after 1840, could only be considered voluntary organisations. However, unlike other voluntary organisations, sisterhoods

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1. Stock, C.M.S., ii.398.
2. P.D., 1873,CCXV. 1970, 1971.

aimed to create self-sustaining communities. They consciously distinguished between the religious values they aimed to put into practice and the values of outside society. Thus the normal 'protestant' supporters of voluntary effort were faced with the dilemma of defining their attitude to voluntary societies with un-protestant aims. At first there was some prospect of general social acceptance for sisterhoods,[1] but by the 1850s they were generally thought of as 'popish'. For various reasons, too, sisterhoods were tending to grow as autonomous institutions, outside the parish system.[2] Thus low churchmen, for once, appeared as centralisers, demanding that, if sisterhoods were to continue at all, they should be under the strict control of the hierarchy. The high church and tractarian supporters of sisterhoods were not strongly placed to resist these moves. After all, they were theoretically in favour of a restoration of effective diocesan and parochial organisation. Leading advocates of sisterhoods like Pusey were obliged to argue that they aimed at ultimate reabsorption into the parish system, but that, for the moment, they were acting to supplement its inadequacies by independent action.[3]

However, it was not until 1891, after more than a decade of debate, that the Convocations set down the terms under which they were prepared to give formal recognition to sisterhoods.[4] And the ~~main~~

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1. Allchin, The Silent Rebellion, p.43.
2. Ibid., p.65.
3. CCR, 1862, pp.141ff.
4. Allchin, The Silent Rebellion, pp.157 ff.

reason behind the change in attitude which led to the acceptance of sisterhoods by the Church and by 'protestant' public opinion was primarily a judgement on their secular utility proved over the period since 1850. The sisters had taken up works of charity requiring skills and resolution not forthcoming from other sections of society. Florence Nightingale took sisters to nurse in the hospitals of the Crimean War, Pusey's sisters nursed the sick during the cholera epidemic of 1866, and other sisters were school teachers or ran orphanages and 'refuges' for prostitutes. However, the sisters themselves did not regard the learning of skills or the organisation of charity as their primary calling, and this sometimes created tension between them and their uncertain admirers.[1] Some sisters, from the professional view, were all too eager to avoid earthly rewards by remaining humble and amateur in their occupations.[2] This attitude among sisters contributed to the relatively rapid secularisation of the nursing profession. And, in spite of public appreciation of charitable work, there remained an acute uneasiness among churchmen about the continued existence of an alternative role for women outside the family. Even the generally favourable Bishop Wilberforce insisted that sisterhoods should never impose permanent vows on their members.[3] Vows were considered too direct an attack on the stability of the family (and its property rights). The Church did not recognise any validity in vows until the 1890s and, even then, accepted them in a strictly limited form.

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1. E.g. A.C.Tait, Change to the Clergy of the Diocese of London (1866) pp. 83-7.
2. Allchin, The Silent Rebellion, p.123.
3. CCR, 1862, p.148.

Yet sisterhoods did receive recognition, if not quite for the reason they would have preferred. Given this, evangelicals and conservative churchmen felt obliged to provide their own schemes for full-time lay work for women. During the 1860s and early 70s, various efforts were made by evangelical clergy, generally supported by the bishops, to form deaconess institutions. (The most successful was the Mildmay Park Institution, founded in 1860). The position of deaconess was thankfully adopted by the hierarchy as a solution to most of the problems associated with sisterhoods. Deaconesses were under the direct supervision of the parish clergy, they took no vows and so 'violated no domestic ties', and they aimed rather more eagerly than sisters to exploit the opportunities opened by the increased specialisation in charity, medical and evangelising work.[1] Every deaconess was required to undergo training in some field useful to parish work. The main problem the deaconess movement faced was a lack of candidates. In spite of the rapid moves of several bishops to recognise and support it, it could not offer the same vocational satisfaction of total commitment or the abnormally high (for women) freedom for self-development which, it seems, attracted women into sisterhoods. By 1885 there were at least nine deaconess institutions in seven dioceses with 60 full members and 200 probationers and associates. At the same time there were about thirty sisterhoods with approximately 1,300 sisters and 'at least as many associates'.[2]

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1. Kitchin, Browne, pp.360-1; Stock, C.M.S., ii. 356; CCR, 1875, pp.56ff. 67 ff.

2. CCR, 1885, pp.142 ff; Church of England Year-Book, 1886, pp.156-8.

It is worth noticing briefly that the problems faced by religious communities for women were outmatched by the problems facing religious communities for men. After all, a man could become a clergyman if he had the vocation. Why should he want to become a 'monk' unless he had 'popish' leanings? Male monasticism offended prevailing social values and, besides, seemed irrelevant to the solution of the great problems facing the Church in urbanised society. Englishmen valued the fact that their clergy were, generally speaking, educated in the same institutions as their social equals, married, and 'living in the world'. Male communities, after Newman's secession to Rome in 1845, stood no chance of gaining public approval. There was no sustained attempt made to form any such groups after Newman until the formation of the Society of St.John the Evangelist at Cowley in the mid-60s. Even here, the prominent high church laymen who wanted to join were told by R.M. Benson, the founder, 'to go back to the world and to serve the Church in the position to which providence had called'.[1] During the period before 1885, both high church and evangelical laymen came to value occasional devotional 'retreats' from secular life. High church laymen, too, occasionally joined guilds or formed their own societies for devotional purposes among their colleagues or employees in secular life.[2] But permanent communities established for laymen to live according to specifically religious values did not emerge.

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1. Allchin, The Silent Rebellion, pp.183 ff.; Lockhart, Life of Viscount Halifax, i.119.

2. E.g. A.E.Street, Memoir of G.E. Street (1888), p.57; Tait Papers, Vol. 114, ff. 269-82: G.A. Spottiswoode to Bishop Tait, 20 Oct. 1859.

The formation of sisterhoods was a step in the development of a role for women in Church and in general society outside the family. This was recognised at the time. However it was an ambiguous and hesitant step. It is worth noticing that, within the Church at least, the debate about the place of women was argued in terms of extending, or justifying by analogy, the traditional family role, and very seldom in terms conceding the possibility that women might be eligible to perform work traditionally reserved for men. '[T]he best work woman has to do for the Church is what she does at home', said Bishop Mackarness of Oxford: 'There is her natural and her primary work.'[1] If, for some reason, a woman was unable to marry, then, her natural instincts thwarted, she might find a substitute activity in work analogous to family duties. She might instruct the young, care for orphans, the sick, the old and the socially deprived. '[I]t is natural to woman,' thought a Convocation committee in 1885, 'to render personal service to the sick, to children, and to others who need it. These employments stand to her in the place of the public duties, or physical toils which occupy men.'[2] Women who attempted to usurp the male role, it was thought, could only degrade themselves by violating 'the sanctities of home' and straining 'proper modesty and reserve'.[3] They would be abandoning their natural superiority in 'compassion' and 'delicacy' to become 'an inferior kind of man'.[4]

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1. CCR, 1885, p.160.
2. CCC, 1885: Report of a committee of the Upper House on Sisterhoods and Deaconesses, 8 July 1885.
3. CCR, 1878, p.342.
4. J.W. Burgon, Woman's Place (1871), p.10.

And yet, to redress the balance, a few churchmen do seem to have accepted an independent role for women. The more rigid theological formulations of woman's divinely imposed subjection to men were, after all, occasioned by fears that women were becoming 'more prominent in public life. An Oxford clergyman in 1871 traced the divinely-sanctioned campaign 'to repress forwardness of self-assertion in the other sex' from the Garden of Eden to St.Paul,[1] but his interpretation was not allowed to pass unchallenged. A local curate warned him how much Christianity had suffered already from mistaking social conventions for divinely revealed truth. The Church should not invoke the scriptures, statically interpreted, he argued, as 'the ground of opposition to what may be the cause of social justice and moral progress'.[2] Some mid-Victorians found that, after all, they could find biblical precedents for an active role for women in the Church if they approached their reading with a right spirit.[3]

The theological rationalisations usually followed rather than preceded the social changes which took place. Florence Nightingale was striking out alone when she complained in 1851:

> Women don't consider themselves human beings at all. There is absolutely no God, no country, no duty to them at all, except family ... I have known a good deal of convents. And of course everyone has talked of the petty tyrannies supposed to be exercised there. But I know nothing like the petty grinding tyranny of a good English family. And the only alleviation is that the tyrannised submits with a heart full of affection.[4]

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1. Ibid., pp.4-6
2. C.I.H. Fletcher, Woman's Equality with Man in Christ (1871).
3. J. Sandford, The Mission and Extension of the Church at Home (1862) pp. 216-8.
4. Quoted in Allchin, The Silent Rebellion, p.115.

By 1885, though, educated women, whether motivated by boredom with a too leisured home life or frustration at their under-used abilities, had won their way into at least some of the professions and trained occupations. And, of course, it could not be overlooked that uneducated working-class women had always been expected to earn a living outside the home. The Church had recognised this and so it gradually adjusted to the prospect of an independent role for women of education and leisure as well.[1]

As women acquired skills in medicine, teaching and the performance of charitable work - or merely began to organise 'family substitute' activities in a more systematic way - they undermined the tradition of private benevolence and individual district visiting in the same way as their male counterparts. Like their male counterparts, these women with newly recognised skills and interests were sometimes accused of 'secularising' Church concerns[2] - and the accusation was perhaps even better founded in their case than in that of men. Women found in Church activity a more socially acceptable outlet for their energies and aptitudes than as yet existed in society as a whole and this, of course, strained the traditional conception of the role of women as lay agents in the Church.

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1. CCR, 1883, p.141.

2. CCR, 1885, pp.156-9 (Mrs. Townsend of Winchester, an officer of the G.F.S.).

As we noticed at the beginning of this section, the activities of voluntary societies on behalf of the Church were widespread during mid and late Victorian times - far too widespread for more than a sample to be examined. However it cannot be denied that the role of the layman in voluntary organisations expanded during this period. It expanded both in terms of the numbers actively participating and in terms of the extent of work thought appropriate for laymen to perform. The main stimuli behind this expansion were the enormous changes in social and economic organisation which had been taking place since before the turn of the century and, more immediately, the political threat to the rigidly organised established Church posed by nonconformity. The undisputed successes of nonconformists both in religious and in political organisation were largely attributed to their willing acceptance of lay skills and enthusiasm. The Church of England in its turn accepted an ideology of membership thrɔgh participation. It had always accepted financial help from its more prominent laymen. During this period it came to need and accept financial support from a far wider section of its adherents than it had done traditionally. And it then came to accept lay agency in other, more active ways. Laymen performed tasks traditionally reserved to the clergy - though the tests imposed on those authorised to perform the more sensitive ministerial acts were severe enough to discourage all but a relative handful of laymen.

Given that the Church increasingly sought to encourage active lay participation, confusion arose when men raised the question how far

potential participants should be subject to any test of orthodoxy. Very broadly speaking, one strand of argument within the Church said such a test was important and another said that it was unimportant, or at least to be minimised. High churchmen tended to require some acceptance of doctrinal orthodoxy - and that included acceptance of a 'centralised' structure of authority in the Church with clear demarcation between the roles of clergy and laity. Evangelicals, too, had clear limits to their doctrinal tolerance though they were more tolerant of individual lay initiative in organisation. Any tests of orthodoxy of this sort had disadvantages. They implied a contraction in the membership of a national Church and so invited disestablishment, and they also diverted energies and divided efforts which might otherwise have been applied in united campaigns against the feared onset of mass heathenism. On the other hand, broad churchmen aimed to widen participation in a national Church for the same reasons that political participation was being widened. They hoped to safeguard Establishment, and thus retain formal (if vague) national commitment to religious values, by proving that the Church existed for the whole community and was not inflexible in the face of religious progress. This argument had some attraction, too, to other supporters of Establishment, among them traditionalist high churchmen and politically conservative evangelicals. The problem here was that assertion of the Church's continued national role often implied a dilution of the primary 'religious' element in work sponsored by the Church. It also implied a willingness to employ specialised

knowledge and methods of organisation which gradually changed the nature of church work until it slipped beyond the control of over-arching religious values. (High churchmen too had problems institutionalising new skills, but they at least had a firm commitment to obey Church authorities.) Though the great pioneers of Christian social concern never intended to separate material from spiritual goals, this is what tended to result from their efforts. Laymen participated, but for increasingly secular reasons.

SECTION III

THE LEGITIMATION OF AUTHORITY : LAY REPRESENTATION IN CHURCH GOVERNMENT 1850 - 1885

CHAPTER 11

THE REVIVAL OF CONVOCATION AND THE LAITY

We have already discussed the decline of the traditional institutions of Church and State in section I. However, for the sake of clarity, we considered only one aspect of the process there. In this section we return to trace the process by which the Church of England acquired 'autonomous' institutions to replace the declining institutions of Church and State. More particularly, we try to discover what part the laity played in this process. We try to estimate what part they expected to play, and what part others - the Church hierarchy and the clergy for example - expected them to play. We therefore trace the various ways in which, and the extent to which, 'the laity' of the Church of England came to accept the authority of voluntary decision-making bodies in the Church - bodies not possessing the legal status and powers traditionally attaching to the agencies of the Established Church. The discussion ranges over the whole organisational scale from parish council to national synod.

It should be remembered once again that the Church of England in 1850 had no distinctively independent agencies of government. Its nominal legislature, Convocation, had been suppressed by the Crown in 1717; its potential 'chief executive', the bench of bishops, was selected by

Crown nomination (and was in any case now supplemented by a statutory body, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners); its court of final appeal in matters of discipline and, by practical implication given the absence of any general council, in matters of doctrine, was the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. It was not quite a 'department of state' but its status as an Established and endowed Church remained the ideal which the overwhelming majority of its clergy and lay adherents endorsed.

However, a growing number of churchmen believed that the relationship between Church and State was under great strain by the early 50s. On the one hand, Hampden, Gorham, national education questions and 'papal aggression' bore witness to the 'insensitivity' of the State to religious values. On the other hand, the growth of clerical self-consciousness in the aftermath of the Tractarian movement bore witness to the impatience of some churchmen with the increasingly pluralist religious attitudes of the State. But those who were sensitive to the problem were usually more bewildered than resolute. Those few who, like Archdeacon Manning, came to the definite conclusion that the autonomy of religious values mattered more than the continued existence of the national Church, usually became Roman Catholics, so strong appeared to be the hold of the State over the Church of England.

Those who never thought of leaving the Church of England, but who worried all the same, turned to historical precedent for consolation. They were Englishmen and members of the Church of England; they were therefore doubly disposed to seek a solution by invoking past practice and

calling for the restoration of past institutions rather than by admitting and accepting the inevitability of total readjustment. They were not prepared to recognise that churchmen might ultimately have to choose between 'religious truth' and 'prevailing social values' or that they might at least be required to cede to secular regulation large areas of life in which religious values were still believed to set the appropriate standards of social conduct.

Such assumptions very strongly influenced the movement which developed in mid-century for the revival of synods. Synods, and particularly the Convocations, were the solution of Tractarian and of some other (not necessarily all high church) clergy to the problem of reviving the Church as a more vigorous and self-reliant institution.[1] Synods had scriptural, ecclesiastical and legal precedents. Diocesan synods had survived the Reformation, and the Convocations could plausibly be described as the national synod with authority to declare doctrine and to legislate for the Church. Synods, though, were generally accepted to be assemblies of the clergy. This was a strength and a weakness. It made them more attractive to many clergy who felt the need to preserve due order and to protect the faith and the rights of the profession against encroachment. It also made them objects of greater suspicion to all levels of lay opinion. The 'normal' Englishman regarded 'sacerdotalism' as socially subversive at all times, and at few times more so than during the 'papal aggression' agitation of 1850-1. It was certain that there could be no revival of synods or Convocation in any

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1. For the history of attitudes to Convocation revival before the 1850s see Chadwick, Victorian Church, i.309-11.

form without lay consent or acquiescence.

It was almost as certain, however, that there would be no lay participation in synods so long as the call for them came predominantly from high churchmen. Traditional high churchmen and Tractarians were united in repelling calls for lay participation in Church councils. When, on Keble's advice, Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter decided to counteract the Gorham judgment by calling a diocesan synod of clergy to declare the true doctrine of baptismal regeneration, he had no doubt that he would have to oppose the 'unreasonable jealousy of our own laity, very few of whom can be deemed sound or orthodox'. He wrote to the leaders of the Tractarians only to make certain of the precedents for excluding laymen. Pusey discussed with Keble the general propriety of consulting the laity and suggested that it was 'very advisable to get at the minds of the laity' in view of the anti-ritual disturbances in London and Exeter over the last decades but that 'I do not know that there would be any authority by which the majority should bind the minority, ... or the Bishop himself be governed by them (the shepherd by the sheep) ...' The advice to Phillpotts, then, was that the Primitive Church occasionally invited lay representatives to synods to 'subscribe' to declarations of doctrine. There was no need and no precedent for laymen to take a more active role than this because laymen were virtually represented by the bishops in whose election they participated.[1] This was a rather rigid application of the precedents even for Pusey, who had been more than upset when Lord John Russell had participated most decisively in

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1. H.P. Liddon, Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey (1893-7), iii. 342-4; G.C.B. Davies, Henry Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter (1954), pp.274-5.

nominating Hampden to a bishopric only a few years before. However, to Pusey, there was a fundamental principle at stake to which all precedents were subordinate:

> It is, seriously, a far less anomaly to allow a layman to get into the pulpit to preach, than to admit him to vote in synods on doctrine, ritual, or discipline. There are instances of laymen having been admitted to preach in early times. There are none of their being admitted to vote in Synods ... /T/he preaching ... influences only the single congregation (if it does) ... but a decision on doctrine influences the whole subsequent history of the Church ...[1]

In the more immediate aftermath of the Gorham judgment Pusey had told Keble that lay representation in Church councils might need to be encouraged 'because a desperate condition ... allows desperate remedies'. Given the regrettable vulnerability of bishops to general public opinion, a counter-weight of lay opinion within the Church was needed - needed so much that he was prepared to 'set this stone rolling. We may be hopeful that it will not roll too fast.'[2] In the next few years Pusey spent a great deal of energy discouraging lay initiatives.

Yet there was no denying that lay enthusiasm was necessary to defend Church institutions from political attack and to bear witness that some laymen at least took seriously their duty to submit to the authority of the traditional guardians of religious orthodoxy.

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1. Ibid., p.272.
2. Liddon, Pusey, iii.342.

High church clergy in particular were dependent on lay support if they were to achieve their aims, or believe their aims capable of achievement. It was due to support from laymen of solid social status that the protest movement against the Gorham judgment achieved what success it did, and reassured many high churchmen that doctrinal orthodoxy was not a totally lost cause. Among the speakers at the great meetings of protest against the Gorham judgment (held 23 July 1850) there are names of many of the most influential lay contributors to the debate over lay participation which lasted for the next thirty years. The names of several of these men will already be familiar from other contexts. There was present A.J.B. Beresford Hope[1] (1820-87), a man of moderate Tractarian sympathies and also a man of great wealth, who financed the building of several churches and a missionary college. He was also brother-in-law to the future Lord Salisbury, Conservative prime minister, and himself sat as an independent Conservative M.P. for nearly forty years during which time he became recognised as a leading parliamentary defender of the right of the Church of England to administer itself without parliamentary interference.[2] Also present was F.H. Dickinson (1813-90), the descendant of a Quaker merchant family

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1. He adopted the surname Beresford only in 1854 on succeeding to the estates of his step-father, Field Marshal Viscount Beresford.

2. Biographical details in Law, H.W. and I., The Book of the Beresford Hopes (1925), a book fairly clearly written under the influence of Lytton Strachey and which therefore presents Hope as a 'curious' specimen of Victoriana. I understand that the family papers on which the book was based have been lost since.

which had established itself in Somerset county society. He was the third member of his family to serve as county M.P. in as many generations and was an active leader of county society even after he had been unseated for supporting the repeal of the Corn Laws. (He continued to support the Liberal party until the time of Irish disestablishment.) In Church affairs, he was a contributor to the Guardian for over forty years, and he participated in virtually every major Church representative organisation, diocesan and national, from the Church Institution to the House of Laymen of Canterbury Convocation. His wife came from a family which had strong connections with the 'high' evangelical group centred on the Wilberforce family. Then there was J.G. Hubbard (1805-89), who was chairman of one of the Gorham protest meetings. The successful son of a London businessman, he had already served as a director of the Bank of England and was eventually to become Conservative M.P. for the City of London, serving in the Commons until he was created Lord Addington in 1887. He was noted as 'one of the first laymen in the world of business attracted by the Oxford Movement' and his expertise was heavily relied on by a wide range of high church voluntary societies. And the organiser of the whole gathering was Henry Hoare who has already appeared in passing as a founder of the Church Institution. Hoare made his reputation in Church circles, however, as founder and chief organiser of the Society for the Revival of Convocation. Besides these prominent laymen there were present Pusey and Keble and their clerical allies, and a solitary bishop.[1] Lay

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1. Report of meeting in Sweet, Hoare, pp.181-90.

influence in the early stages of the movement to 'restore' the independence of the Church was strong. It seems that after the meeting Hoare went on to suggest to Bishop Phillpotts that diocesan synods would protect doctrine more effectively if they included lay representatives,[1] and it was this suggestion from 'a very right-minded laymen of considerable station and influence' which induced the flurry of consultation between the bishop and the Tractarian leaders already described.

However, the clergy and the hierarchy had little enough to fear from Hoare and his Convocation Society, as a sketch of his disposition and its origins will show.[2] To expand on the brief details already given, Hoare was hereditary senior partner in the banking company which bore his family's name. His father had been a minor member of the Clapham Sect and his mother was of a major evangelical family, the Noels. Both parents died when Hoare was still a child but he was brought up by his grandfather who continued to impress evangelical values upon him and to prepare him for his role as chief family heir. At Cambridge he was impressed by H.J. Rose, the leading Cambridge member of the Oxford Movement, and, like many other evangelicals, he gradually transferred his religious loyalties to the Tractarians,[3] so much so that he withdrew from active Conservative politics during the 1840s in protest against the increasingly 'indifferent' attitude of

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1. Liddon, Pusey, iii.344.
2. Sweet, Hoare, pp.73-91, 95-109.
3. The transfer was gradual: it seems that he attached little importance to any doctrine of 'the Church' as repository of special authority until c. 1849. Ibid, pp.98-9.

his party towards the national Church. By the early 50s Hoare was devoting to voluntary Church societies a large part of his time, money and formidable aptitude for the organisation of 'business'. In many cases the societies he founded and led were totally dependent on him for finance and organisation. His main interests, the Metropolitan Church Union, the Convocation Society and, later, the Churchwarden's Association and the Church Institution, were at times literally held together by his correspondence which, between 1853 and 1864 he had printed. (He 'issued it gratuitously, or sold it ... for a nominal sum, in order the better both to ventilate the variety of views submitted to him on the synodal and lay question, and also very materially to economize his own time.')[1] There is no doubt that he was a most efficient man, to the point where his official biographer felt obliged to explain the necessity of him exhibiting a 'methodical coldness' to repel those who interrupted his routine. He died prematurely in 1866 from injuries received in a railway accident in the course of one of his countless organising tours of the provinces.

Hoare had helped found the Convocation Society in November 1850 or, more accurately, had gone through an acrimonious series of secessions from other Church defence societies which left him the leader of a small and generally socially humble group of Churchmen committed to the revival

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1. Ibid., p.359. However, the practice made him rather a deadly public speaker, as he habitually inserted large sections of his correspondence in his speeches: e.g. CCR, 1861, p.144. The collected correspondence was published in installments as Hints on Lay Co-operation (1858-64). In the early section of the correspondence the pagination of the letters before and after collection does not exactly correspond. Thus, where there is the possibility of confusion in citation, I have tried to give some other description of identity to supplement the page number.

of Convocation as the solution to the Church's strained relations with the State.[1] It was not an encouraging way to begin. Yet, by the mid-50s, the Society had attracted the approval of a large number of bishops and Church dignitaries and, by 1861, the Society dissolved itself, being able to declare that it had achieved its aim of 'employing all legal and constitutional means for procuring the restoration of /the Church's/ representative assembly to the full exercise of its constitutional functions.'

It is doubtful whether the Society played a crucial role in the revival of Convocation. The really decisive actors were clearly Bishop Wilberforce, Archbishop Sumner (belatedly) and the Prime Minister, Lord Aberdeen (aided by his son and, on conditions, by Gladstone).[2] However, it was certainly useful for these men to be able to say that laymen were in favour of a revival of clerical organisation. Hoare's attitude to Church and State, and his appreciation of the proprieties

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1. Hoare first put forward his plan to revive Convocation to the National Club, a Church defence society with anti-Catholic tendencies, but despaired of it in 1849 when he left to found the Metropolitan Church Union. His attempts to use this as a base for a national society in favour of Convocation revival also failed, largely as a result of opposition from the more prestigious London Union on Church Matters (whose members included Beresford Hope, Hubbard, Dickinson, Earl Nelson, Lord John Manners, Lord Lyttelton and Sir Stephen Glynne). Even after Gorham, the London Union was as yet unconvinced that an active Convocation would increase the public's confidence in clerical assemblies. However, the widespread interest in these disputes did provide Hoare with a sufficient minority of men in and beyond London to form a 'one issue' Convocation Society. Sweet, Hoare, pp.71, 95-6, 100-9, 211-5, 250; Beresford Hope, Church Cause and Church Party, pp.15-7.

2. R.G. Wilberforce, Life of Samuel Wilberforce, ii, in which Hoare is treated as no more than a 'useful helper'.

to be observed in agitating on behalf of the Church, suited them very well. Hoare was the perfect type of traditionally-rooted churchman who wanted to innovate without seeming to threaten accepted social conventions. He, as much as anyone, was concerned at the turbulence and pace of change in English society and determined not to be held responsible for further disturbance. In his 'Letter to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of London' in 1859, he argued that:

> Although, as I rejoice to believe, the Crown, the Clergy, and the Hereditary Peerage, have never had a stronger hold upon the affections of the people than at the present moment, yet the old principles of sedition, rebellion, and schism, taking their root in the pride of man's heart, find, as they ever will, many adherents. Those persons again who hate Christianity in a dogmatic form will never cease from the land; and not seldom are they found to make common cause with the advocates of evil political principles.[1]

This deep-set conservatism was reflected in the methods adopted by Hoare to influence clergy and politicians. His whole strategy was designed to convince potential objectors that he was advocating change only to 'restore'. He agreed with Bishop Blomfield that:

> If they were to argue from the abuse of an institution against the institution itself, he knew of none, not even that instituted by the Saviour Himself, against which the same argument might not be used, to prevent the exercise of its legitimate and inherent powers.[2]

Without straining the precedents too noticeably, Hoare successfully supported not only Convocation revival but a system of meetings for

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1. Hoare, Hints on Lay Co-operation, p.689.
2. Ibid., p.103: Hoare to Robert Tooth, 7 Nov., 1855.

consultation (mainly concerned with Church defence) between the clergy and laity of rural deaneries. This was the 'Sutton Deanery' plan, first encouraged by Hoare in Kent, and endorsed by the archbishop of Canterbury. Hoare hoped eventually to make this plan the base of a structure of clerical consultation with the laity at all levels of the Church: this he revealed in his Convocation Society's 'York Memorial' of 1858.[1] To achieve this much Hoare kept his supporters to a strict policy. Bishops and clergy were not to be antagonised by a lay threat to their authority, in Convocation, in the diocese or in the parish:

> I should not like to be interfered with in my place of business ... nor does the Clergyman like to be interfered with in his parish.[2]

At local level, if the clergy decided to consult with laymen, they were to have their status further honoured and their patronage extended by the suggested mode of selection of 'lay consultees'. These were to be appointed by consensus among the local clergy. Hoare could find no scriptural precedent for election of representatives. Besides, he had a horror of contested elections and the extension of political behaviour to Church matters, a development which he believed to be almost inevitable if laymen were allowed to elect each other. Hoare's view was not quite as alarmist as it may now appear. The criteria of Church membership then existing were, after all, very indistinct and this fact was being exploited at the time by those campaigning against

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1. Ibid., pp.301 ff., 644-5.
2. Ibid., 'Restoration of Synodal Action: Report of a Meeting at Chichester, Dec.1853', p.30.

church rate. Besides, there were signs that a dispute within the Convocation Society over whether a 'restoration of discipline' should precede or follow the introduction of lay consultation might divert the Society from its main aim.

The ruling consideration, that the clergy should be assured of their independent and special status, emerged most clearly in Hoare's refusal to tolerate discussion within the Society on the admission of laymen to Convocation. Other, lesser synods might admit laymen, but Convocation, he soon decided, was a case on its own. Scriptural precedents showed that the laity attended doctrine-declaring synods only to 'hearken'. Besides, if Hoare was to base his whole campaign on reassuring people that he was only invoking disused precedents to restore to the Church her full constitutional functions, he would have to revive Convocation in the form the precedents indicated, trusting that, after revival, Convocation might of its own authority consider how best to reform itself. Even then, the most the laity could hope for would be that 'individual laymen, of high social position, should occasionally be present at Meetings of the sacred Synod ... [but] not as a matter of course ..'[1]

This increasingly careful approach illustrates Hoare's concern not to disturb the political classes either. He added to the considerations against laymen in Convocation the belief[1] that parliament

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1. Ibid., pp.53-5: Hoare to Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford, 23 Aug.1854.

would not hesitate to legislate against a plan to create 'any Central Elective Body of lay Representatives, either in Convocation or out of it'. Hoare knew at first hand how readily the great mass of ecclesiastically conservative laymen would connect Convocation revival with clerical pretensions, popery and subversion of the Constitution. The Exeter Synod had drawn this sort of attack. Hoare himself had tried to call a meeting to use 'papal aggression' as an opportunity to advocate the revival of Convocation as the authoritative mouth-piece of the Church of England; the meeting had gone awry and was only prevented from degenerating into a riot by the presence of six policemen.[1] And, in late 1852, Lord Shaftesbury had told an enthusiastic meeting against Confession and Convocatin that the two were 'so necessarily inseparable that I should just as soon think of separating in Guildhall Gog and Magog.'[2] In this context Hoare interpreted the Crown's refusal to grant Convocation a licence to reform its constitution as further vindication of his view that the greatest possible gains would be won 'with the smallest possible disturbance of the existing order of things.'[3]

Finally, to divert his more enthusiastic fellow activists from 'impractical' schemes, Hoare argued that the revival of Convocation was, after all, only a means to an end - that its form was immaterial so long

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1. Sweet, Hoare, pp.256-64.

2. Chadwick, Victorian Church, i.318; Sweet, Hoare, pp.331-3. Cf. Hodder, Shaftesbury, ii.404-6.

3. Hoare, Hints, p.98: Hoare to Robert Tooth, 7 Nov. 1855.

as it existed, and that its very existence would help to mobilise the resources of the national Church which, once done, would disarm its political enemies and restore its former prestige.[1] To this end, of restoring the National Church to a real rather than notional hold over the allegiance of 'the people', Hoare was prepared to endorse the arguments even of Richard Oastler, a man of whom he might normally have been suspicious.[2] Oastler had a simple and unified vision of society as he believed it used to be, and he contrasted it with what he saw in 1860. In Oastler's view, migration of population and the consequent break-down in people's awareness of their 'religious, moral and social duties' was to be remedied by the restoration of the Church 'to hold the balance in Christian hands between the people and the aristocracy (whether of rank or of gold).'[3] Gladstonian finance, free trade and the 'decline of patriotism' were attributed, like 'all our political and social evils, to the laxity of discipline in the Established Church'.[3] Hoare's instinctive sympathy for the way in which Oastler viewed

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1. Ibid., p.140: Hoare to Rev.J.J.Barlow, 6 Dec.1855. The resources, and the leadership which was to draw them out, Hoare assumed, would depend on the traditional landed classes, though he occasionally mentioned the need to encourage middle-class participation. Ibid., p.152: Hoare to William Deedes M.P., 25 March 1856.

2. Ibid., 'Restoration of Synodal Action,' p.21. Oastler was a Tory radical, a Yorkshireman of Methodist parents who had led the agitation in the West Riding against slavery, exploitation of child labour, and the New Poor Law. Like Disraeli at the same time, he saw society involved in a national struggle between old England (protectionist Tory land-owners, the Church and the People) and new (free-trade Whigs and avaricious manufacturers with an inadequate sense of their social responsibilities). He set out his ideas in their final form in Convocation: The Church and the People (1860).

3. Oastler, Convocation: The Church and the People, pp.28-34.

social trends as a whole gives yet more evidence that he longed for the restoration of a more closely-knit, pre-industrial form of society, even though he might be more realistic in his estimate about what Convocation reform might achieve.

A modern observer finds it difficult to believe that anyone could hope to influence social change by reviving Convocation. Others at the time, too, found it difficult to believe that a revived Convocation of clergy could claim any significant authority beyond its members.

Throughout the 1850s there was a school of opinion rival to Hoare's which argued that the mere revival of Convocation would achieve nothing until it was accompanied by some form of lay representation. (This is to be distinguished yet again from the large number of evangelicals, low churchmen and 'protestants' who were opposed to any Church assembly outside parliament whether it containdd lay members or not.) Even after Hoare had refined the Convocation Society to a group united around one issue, there remained members in it who continued to press for lay representation. Hoare was increasingly convinced that this was not a practical goal to pursue and, in 1851, the supporters of lay representation were beaten on a vote and lost all influence in ~~left~~ the Society.[1] Among those estranged from ~~who were lost to~~ the Society was Lord Lyttelton, brother-in-law to Gladstone's wife and one of the handful of lay promoters

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1. J.Bandinel (ed.), Report of Proceedings at a Meeting of Churchmen in favour of a Reform of Convocation ... 11 June 1872 (1872), p.iii.

of Convocation in the House of Lords. There was to be no organised group to advocate lay representation in Convocation until 1869. A parallel attempt to commit the London Union on Church Matters (the body from which Hoare had seceded to form the Metropolitan Church Union) to a policy of lay representation failed in 1852. Pusey, from Oxford, admitted privately to Beresford Hope that Hope's plan had the support of the majority of resident London members, but he threatened to resign unless the subject was dropped. Hope complied.[1]

However Pusey could not convince the most influential advocate of lay representation to remain silent and already, in early 1852, Gladstone had published his Letter to the Bishop of Aberdeen on the Functions of Laymen in the Church. In it he strongly urged the establishment of mixed synods of clergy and laity. Publicly he was concerned only with the Episcopal Church of Scotland but his reasons for urging mixed synods were generally applicable, and he admitted privately that he believed them applicable to Convocations in England.[2]

Gladstone's argument was that the age of Church and State was over. If the Church continued to rely on State support for its authority, it ran the risk of 'the mutilation, under the seal of civil authority, of the Christian religion itself'. However, if it gave up its claim to be the religion of the State and conceded universal religious toleration, it would necessarily tap new sources of energy. The argument has been

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1. Beresford Hope, Church Cause and Church Party, pp.26-8; Liddon, Pusey, iii.352-4; Pusey Papers, Pusey-Hope correspondence, Nov.-Dec. 1852. Pusey was so distressed about lay ignorance of the precedents binding the form of Church Councils that he thereupon decided to set out his views in detail. He published his book on The Councils of the Church in 1857.

2. Liddon, Pusey, iii.345.

described as an argument in favour of 'ecclesiastical free trade';

> Plenary religious freedom brings out into full vigour, and also into fair and impartial rivalry, the internal energies of each communion, so that they stand simply upon their merits before the world ..., [1]

The problem then was to control this energy. The Church was not a democracy and never could be, given 'the unchangeable conditions of her Divine Charter', but it could and should restore the discipline its members had involuntarily lost with the decline of the State alliance by gaining the voluntary consent of its committed members in representative assemblies. British political experience was that:-

> The free expression of opinion ... is the safety valve of passion ... The concession of reasonable privilege anticipates the growth of furious appetite. Regularity, combination and order ... make man more a creature of habits, and less of mere impulse; they weaken the relative influence of the present, by strengthening his hold upon the future and the past, and their hold upon him ... Can it be thought that this, being true of civil, is false in regard to ecclesiastical affairs?'[2]

The experience of the American Episcopal Church suggested that:-

> [lay representation was] not the cause but the corrective of passion and disorder ... adding greatly to what may be called the ballast of the Church ... [The] ill-defined position [of the laity] is our main source of weakness and of danger, the master evil ... [The] excess of central power in the clergy is ... dangerously balanced by the dead weight of indifference and phlegm, and likewise by another excess of power in the laity; that, too, not in the laity as such, as communicants of the Church, but in those among them, who happen to exceed in the possession of worldly goods and the advantages of social position.[3]

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1. W.E. Gladstone, Letter to the Bishop of Aberdeen on the Functions of Laymen in the Church (1852), p.12.
2. Ibid., pp.16-7.
3. Ibid., pp.19, 24-5.

Gladstone therefore recommended that diocesan synods be set up, each 'order' - bishop, clergy, laity - to have a veto on decisions reached, the bishop retaining sole right to initiate 'legislation' and the lay members and electors being subject to a communicant test. The ultimate aim would be to have mixed representative bodies at each level, accustoming people to the lay role at parish level and only after that educating process admitting them to their place at national level.[1]

This was a relatively early example of Gladstonian liberalism - liberal means to conservative ends - and it roused many of his high church Oxford constituents to anger. They had had their suspicions about him since he supported the Maynooth grant (1845) and feared the worst all the more when he voted to admit Jews to parliament in 1847. In little more than ten years he had come from endorsing the union of Church and State to advocating what appeared to be their necessary separation, and he was encouraging others.[2] The more self-assured of his critics felt that he was mistaking a reversible trend for a permanent alteration in Church-State relations. Archdeacon Denison, a supporter of Hoare's viewpoint, argued that 'a Church established by law is the best and highest position both of a Church and of a nation, so far as human enactments are concerned', and that assured benefits should not be thrown away for speculative gain, in fact, could not be thrown away given that this change would require a

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1. Ibid., pp.34-5.

2. E.g. [Rev.] H. Caswall, Synodal Action necessary to the Church: A Letter to the Rt.Hon. W.E. Gladstone, M.P. (1852), in which Caswall endorses Gladstone's plans, especially his call to enforce 'discipline' by a stricter definition of lay and clerical roles: pp.24-6.

surrender of parliamentary powers - 'a surrender for which neither Crown, nor Parliament, nor people are, I apprehend, in any way prepared'.[1] The more theologically inclined of Gladstone's critics were appalled. 'How', asked the bishop of Brechin, 'is any representative system compatible with the analogy of a shepherd and his flock, a comparison given us by our Lord Himself?'.[2] Claiming to speak for the bishops of the Scottish episcopal Church, he continued:

> /D/eeply shall we rue the day, when any motives of expediency, or any empirical attempt at increasing our efficiency, shall induce us to abandon that constitution, which has been hallowed by the use of eighteen centuries ...[3]

South of the border, Gladstone's old Oxford tutor, the rev. Charles Wordsworth, also attacked him for putting 'freedom' before 'truth' and declared that:

> The hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees did not (as Our Blessed Lord Himself has taught us) vitiate the law of which they were expounders and guardians ... All objections drawn from present difficulties are only so many trials of faith, and tests of obedience.

Establishment was God's will, as much it seems for the safety of heedless mankind as for the preservation of the Church. If the Church became representative, the last bar against total social democracy would be lifted:

> Power and station, wealth and property, must have their influence, and must be held responsible for the use they make of it, even in things sacred.[4]

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1. G.A.Denison, 'Introduction of the Representatives of the Laity into Convocation', reprinted from Morning Post, 22 Nov. 1852. Denison here was discussing suggestions for lay representation in Convocation and did not specifically mention Gladstone's pamphlet though it is clear that he had it in mind and, indeed, had a copy: see his pamphlet collection, now in Pusey House, Oxford.

2. 'Cautus' /Alexander, Bishop of Brechin/, A Letter to .. the Bishop of Aberdeen on the subject of the Rt.Hon.W.E.Gladstone's proposal to admit the laity into the synods of that Church (1852), p.7.

3. Ibid., p.16.

4. C.Wordsworth, Letter to the Rt.Hon.W.E.Gladstone (1852) pp.12-3, 48, 56.

Even before Gladstone had published, Pusey had told him of his 'perfect dismay at the prospect of lay legislation in matters of faith' and warned that, if it came to pass, 'then I should look no more with hope to end my days in the Church of England'.[1] Gladstone hastened to assure him that his plan was intended to reserve to the Episcopate pronouncements on questions of doctrine. But Pusey was not reassured. 'For', he said, 'the nineteenth century is too late to experimentalize on the constitution of the Church'. He wrote to the Bishop of Aberdeen that, if he followed Gladstone's advice, he might well be starting a process which would end with the laity celebrating the sacraments, and, more temperately, to Keble:

> The power of the laity is a growing power. To admit them into Synods, and then exclude them from what is to both parties of most real interest, will ... never hold.[2]

The objections, then, were based partly on fear of the social consequences which these men associated with the separation of Church and State, and partly on fear of a loss of orthodoxy which they saw as dependent on their specialised knowledge and skills. For the moment they won their battle. The more radical plans were too long-range and comprehensive to have any immediate impact. An attempt in 1857 to raise the question of lay representation in the Lower House of Canterbury Convocation raised negligible response and led to a report recommending

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1. Liddon, Pusey, iii.344: Pusey to Gladstone, 19 Jan.1852. Pusey hastily added: 'I do not mean that I look to Rome'.

2. Ibid., pp.345-50: Gladstone to Pusey, 21 Jan.1852; Pusey to Gladstone, 23 Apr. 1852; Pusey to bishop of Aberdeen, 15 May 1852; Pusey to Keble, ? [1852].

that the laity make the first move if they were unable to agree that 'a fair trial ... be made of our existing organization'.[1] Convocation was more intent on consolidating its still marginal position than in reforming itself and, given this, Hoare came into his own. He had gained sufficient support from the hierarchy, in fact, to apply increased pressure even on the obstructive archbishop of York (who had refused to revive the Northern Convocation). He claimed that his determination to gain the trust of the clergy and the toleration of the government before entertaining any other consideration was now clearing the way for general progress, and a number of once-hostile laymen were inclined to agree.[2]

However, a significant handful of laymen remained as sceptical as they had been in 1850 about such a narrow interpretation of the lay role. Gladstone warned Bishop Wilberforce that he should not place too much hope in the mere revival of Convocation as 'no form of church government that does not distinctly and fully provide for the expression of the voice of the laity either can be had, or if it could would satisfy the needs of the church of England'. Neither was Gladstone deterred by fear of upsetting the clergy or by fear of precipitating disestablishment even if such a development were to expose the incompatibility between parties in the National Church. 'But', he added, I am utterly against all premature, all rapid conclusions'.[3] F.H.Dickinson

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1. Hoare, Hints, pp.230 ff.; see also Sweet, Hoare, p.385.

2. Hoare, Hints, p.308: Hoare to Dr.C.Wordsworth, 23 Dec.1858, reporting that the London Union on Church Matters had agreed to adopt his 'York Memorial'.

3. Morley, Life of Gladstone, ii.162: Gladstone to bishop of Oxford, 1 Jan. 1854.

agreed that the decisions of an unreformed Convocation would carry little weight with non-clerical opinion but was more eager to start organising a practical alternative. In Convocation and the Laity (1857), he admitted that Convocation was so tied to its constitutional precedents that it was incapable of reform. It should be by-passed (with its own, and parliament's consent) and replaced by a mixed national assembly based on the model of American or colonial synods with the three 'orders' of Churchmen each having a veto on decisions. Laymen in this assembly (as in Gladstone's synods) were to be representatives, not nominees, and ought to be communicants chosen by communicants in diocesan conference. Ultimately, Dickinson agreed, it should be recognised that it was impossible to separate spiritual from temporal matters, and he particularly warned the clergy that innovations in forms of worship, if imposed by clergy, were a legitimate grievance of the laity. 'Ritualism' it seems, was already becoming a source of friction. To help this scheme in its early stages, Dickinson was prepared to accept that the first lay representatives might be elected by Churchwardens (even if Dissenters) and that the business of the assembly might best be limited to the preparation of measures to increase pastoral efficiency and to make the Church more politically defensible against (and attractive to) Dissent.[1]

Hoare printed Dickinson's plans in his Correspondence without comment. For the present, speculation about general institutional reform

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1. F.H.Dickinson, Convocation and the Laity (1857), esp.pp.19-20, 23-4, 27-9, 31-4.

was a purely academic issue. Hoare's strategy had been adopted: his tactics were succeeding. Most Churchmen accepted that the immediate crisis facing the Church by the end of the 50s was not concerned with doctrine but with property once more. A vigorous nonconformist campaign against Church rate (stimulated by the decision of the House of Lords in the Braintree judgment of 1853) seemed within sight of success for the first time since the 1830s. Hoare diverted his organisational energies almost entirely into founding, in 1859 - under episcopal blessings and with Dickinson as his principal colleague - the Church Institution. As we have seen, many eminent laymen supported this body, Beresford Hope and Hubbard among them. The problem of effective lay representation remained, screened but unresolved. Occasionally, an individual was imprudent enough to wonder aloud whether Hoare had achieved any of the 'lay co-operation' about which he was so concerned to give 'hints'. Beresford Hope, at the first Church Congress, dared him to his face to propose 'some definite scheme' and was rebuked by the chairman.[1] Yet the scepticism was not without some foundation. The movement for Convocation revival had been a movement making broad claims for the national Church yet operating on a narrow base. It did not particularly attract or encourage lay participation on a mass scale. This would have interfered with its method of operation which was to influence people of established authority and to avoid at all costs creating the impression that it was trying to mobilise the Church as a political or social pressure-group. Continuity was so much sought that change was all but imperceptible.

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1. CCR, 1861, p.163.

CHAPTER 12

THE LAITY AND 'VIRTUAL REPRESENTATION'

As it happened, the general threat to established institutions which seemed to be strengthening during the 1850s died away in the early 60s. It was not only the Church which gained an extension of the old dispensation. Until Lord Palmerston died in 1865 all reform waited. In this atmosphere the traditional leaders of the Church strengthened their hold on its institutions. For a time, the main causes of dispute ceased to be political and became intellectual and theological once more. The publications in 1859 and in the early 60s of Darwin, of the 'neologist' contributors to Essays and Reviews and of Colenso directly occupied Churchmen for several years after. Evangelicals joined with high churchmen in condemning non-literal interpretations of scripture and in calling for disciplinary action against broad or liberal churchmen. It was a plausible time to call for the strengthening of the sources of doctrinal authority within the Church and for the submission of laymen to authority, once found. It was not a time for laymen to feel confident in taking initiatives except, with episcopal encouragement, in the field of Church defence.

The movement for lay co-operation in the organisation and government of the Church moved slowly forward into the mould prepared for it by conservative churchmen in the 1850s. There was a continuing 'revival' of formal institutions for mixed consultation under traditional patronage, mainly at diocesan level. And there was the

founding of a more informal institution, the Church Congress, which was a mixed gathering of self-selected individuals which had no authority to make decisions but which was intended to serve as a forum for discussion of matters of general concern to Churchmen. Both types of institution were dominated by high churchmen, a fact which was clear both to participants and to those who stayed away.[1] Evangelicals and broad churchmen continued to regard any attempt to place 'legislative' power, or even influence, in voluntary organisations as an inherently high church process, and one not in the best interests of the Church. Lord Shaftesbury reflected after Palmerston's death that the prime minister's taste for appointing (mainly evangelical) bishops lacking in 'ecclesiastical arrogance' had given the Church 'an immense popularity and strength, which she is beginning to lose from no other cause than the proud, domineering assumptions of Convocation and Church Congresses.[2]

Shaftesbury's accusation of 'domineering assumptions' in Convocation is presumably a reference to the further progress made by that body towards 'reclamation' of its traditional functions in the early 60s. In 1860, the Crown permitted Canterbury Convocation to draw up its first new canon since revival. (The canon concerned qualifications for godparents.) In 1861, York Convocation was revived and a national organisation of clergy thus restored, so far as the limited representation of lower clergy allowed.[3] In 1864 (as we have already noted), a rather

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1. M.Burrows, 'The Place of the Laity' in Weir and Maclagan (eds.), The Church and the Age (1870), pp.184 ff.; Kitchin, E.H.Browne, A Memoir, p.278
2. Hodder, Life of Shaftesbury, iii. 196-7.
3. Reform of Convocation to allow the general election of representatives of all clergy was delayed until the twentieth century. Until then, a majority of Lower House members sat either by virtue of office or on nomination of Cathedral Chapters. It was an argument used in favour of this system that it prevented Convocation from being over-run by high Church enthusiasts; many of these dignitaries, having been selected for their office by the Crown, solid Church & State men who retained a respect for 'lay opinion'

thin bench of bishops in Canterbury Convocation took upon themselves the responsibility of pronouncing a 'synodical condemnation' of doctrinal errors in Essays and Reviews after being petitioned to do so by their own Lower House and after the lay majority of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council had dismissed charges brought against two of the contributors to the book.

Convocation in the 60s, then, may have been consolidating its claims to authority over the clergy but it was not gaining respect or affection from lay churchmen much beyond restricted circles of unusually committed high churchmen (such as E.C.U. members). However, for a time, laymen seem to have been content with opportunities to participate at other levels. A handful of familiar voices still spoke out in favour of the forgotten alternatives. Beresford Hope, after attacking Hoare at the Church Congress of 1861, produced his own plan for lay representation in 1863. The 'Frant Deanery' plan as it was called was the scheme of an independent conservative, committed in Church affairs, as in parliamentary politics, to minimise the expected anarchy of contested elections among a mass electorate. Hope accepted the need to engage the laity, and the novel elements in his plan were the devices he suggested to control lay influence. Hope's synod was to vote by 'orders'. It was also to have an electoral system based on the respectable but increasingly old-fashioned principle of representation of corporate interest groups rather than mere numbers.[1] Apart from

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1. Guardian, 1863, pp.881-2; CCR, 1863, pp.256-7. Hope's plan was primarily intended as a basis for diocesan organisation but it was applicable in principle at national level.

Archdeacon Emery, the leader of the Church Congress movement, Hope had no allies. Leading clergy still argued that any national representation of the clergy outside parliament separated Church from State and was an admission that the Church of England had ceased to be the national Church.[1] There the matter rested, for lack of interest, until the anti-ritual disturbances of the late 60s revived it. Then once again Convocation began to feel how limited was its practical authority as signs appeared that parliament was prepared to legislate for the Church without consulting its chief constitutional assembly.[2] Even at this stage there was very little thought of immediate action. A growing number of clergy and laity now saw a mixed Convocation as an alternative to the outworn convention that parliament represented the laity. But high churchmen among them were not going to bring the laity in at a national level until it had been convincingly demonstrated at lower levels that laymen had been educated into accepting their properly limited role. Experience of lay participation at diocesan and local levels was, by 1870, very limited as can be seen in the following survey.

It had been the dream of all the reformers so far mentioned to establish a nation-wide practice of clerical-lay consultation and co-operation from the parish upwards. High churchmen preferred to begin their experiments at diocesan or rural deanery level where they felt most confident of support from the hierarchy. For half a century evangelicals

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1. CCR, 1863, pp.243-8, 258-9.

2. CCR, 1870, pp.159-63. (Esp. speech of Rev.R. Seymour, a veteran advocate of lay representation in Convocation.)

and Tractarians had encouraged bishops to consider it their primary duty to be resident overseers and pastors rather than parliamentary and political functionaries. Inadvertently, too, they had forced bishops to take a greater interest in diocesan administration. The committed local clergy who worked so hard to raise standards of religious behaviour and belief in their parishes proved more contentious and difficult to control than had their less active predecessors.[1] The growing secularisation of politics gave the bishops further reason to exert their energies locally among the faithful rather than at national level. So it was that, during the 1860s and 70s, the bishops were often leaders in founding diocesan assemblies which neither clergy nor laity were in general prepared to demand for themselves.[2]

Henry Hoare had at one stage planned to set up a national scheme of mixed consultative assemblies in every rural deanery, each of these units to nominate a representative to a Central Executive Committee in London.[3] The Central Committee was a total failure; its base-structure was incomplete and its own purpose both restricted and vague. However, rural deanery meetings did continue to exist where they gained episcopal

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1. As early as 1851, Bishop Blomfield of London had warned that, unless Convocation (or some representative authority) was reinstated, 'the time was not far distant when those who were entrusted with the diocesan government of the Church would not know to what hand to turn for counsel and direction ...' Blomfield, Memoir of Bishop Blomfield, p.329.

2. Cf., however, Tucker, Memoir of Bishop Selwyn, ii.250; M.Burrows, Autobiography (ed. S.M. Burrows) (1908), p.236.

3. See chapter 3, p.43.

approval, and bishops as theologically diverse as J.B. Sumner and Samuel Wilberforce endorsed them (though not the diocesan conferences which seemed logically to follow). Still, the first of the diocesan conferences, called by Bishop Browne of Ely in 1865, owed much to Hoare's ideas.[1] The lay representatives to the conference were elected by the conferences of each rural deanery; the lay representatives in these ruridecanal conferences were not elected but selected by parish clergy and churchwardens.[2] This was only one of the several methods by which the pioneering bishops sought to make lay participation 'safe'.

Even given the innocuous nature of early conferences, they had their opponents among bishops, clergy and laymen. When Bishop Selwyn of Lichfield (just returned from twenty years of synodal experience in the colonial Church as bishop of New Zealand) tried to commit the bishops of Canterbury Convocation to a synod[3] in every diocese, he was regarded as a wild enthusiast. He was told that there was no business for such a body to transact, that the laity had shown no interest and would not attend, or else an unrepresentative group of them would attend and proceed to legislate in matters beyond their constitutional competence or organise a centralised bureaucracy which would sap individual energy.[4]

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1. W. Emery, Primary Charge (1866), p.12. Note: by the 1870s it had become the almost universal custom in England and Wales to describe voluntary meetings of clergy alone as 'synods', and of clergy with laity as 'conferences'.

2. Kitchin, Browne, p.272. Browne was a fairly high churchman and his favourite dictum, according to his biographer, was: 'let nothing be done without the Bishop' (p.257).

3. 'Synod' in the context of the colonial, and American, Church tended to be a mixed body. in England it was assumed to be an assembly of clergy.

4. CCC, 1868, pp.1216 ff.

Part of Selwyn's problem was that he had lived so long in a denominational context that he under-rated the 'prescriptive rules and laws' of an Established Church. The basically sympathetic Bishop Browne pointed out that in England it was unrealistic to propose that any voluntary diocesan assembly should have the authority to bind people who had not consented to be bound or even to be represented:

> The real effect of any gathering of this kind must be a moral and not a legal one. It is a very difficult thing, when we have a great Church organisation, to constitute an imperium in imperio - a society also bound together by voluntary association.[1]

Browne also knew that evangelical and broad church clergy suspected that diocesan assemblies were part of a high church plot effectively to narrow the legally sanctioned comprehensiveness of the national Church by luring minorities into hostile territory before acting to their disadvantage.[2] And, before Selwyn himself managed to establish his diocesan conference, he had to allay the suspicions of the evangelical Lord Harrowby whose views on the matter were closely allied to those of many of the laity, including Queen Victoria.[3]

The organisers of the first diocesan conferences, then, being clergy of rank and subject to official influence, were cautious men. They were also properly paternalistic in their attitude towards their 'flock'. The leading organiser below the rank of bishop was Archdeacon

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1. Ibid., p.1226.

2. Kitchin, Browne, p.278. See also Emergy, Charge, p.23.

3. Harrowby Papers, Vol.37, ff.336-7: Bishop Selwyn to the 2nd Earl of Harrowby, 16 Feb.1868; Tucker, Selwyn, ii.254; Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.359-60.

Emery of Ely. He was a little unusual in having a foot recognisably outside the high church camp: he was son-in-law of the prominent and moderately broad church layman, Sir Antonio Brady, and supporter of Dean Stanley in the Athanasian Creed controversy, as well as being chief organiser of both the Church Congress and the Ely Diocesan Conference virtually from their foundation.

In general, though, the organisers left little to chance. In the long term some of them no doubt hoped to create that imperium in imperio mentioned above, but in the short term it was more fruitful to stress the strictly limited and non-contentious aims a conference might adopt. Organisation of Church resources for mass evangelisation, combined with an episcopal desire to break down 'congregationalism ... that isolation .. which divides one clergyman from the other, and the clergy ... from the laity' - these were acceptable aims.[1] Selwyn of Lichfield, after a lifetime in the mission field, was the most evangelistic of all in aim. His 'synod' was to mobilise funds and enthusiasm for missions to the industrial midlands. Beyond that, 'We shall have no power to decide questions of doctrine', he said, 'but unity of work will tend to unity of belief; and the more we strive to do the Will of God, so much the more shall we know of the doctrine whether it be of God'.[2] The missionary impulse could hardly express itself more strongly than this. In fact, a

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1. Kitchin, Browne, pp.273-7.

2. J.H. Evans, Churchman Militant: G.A.Selwyn, Bishop of New Zealand and Lichfield (1964). See also Tucker, Selwyn, ii.250.

great deal of the business of diocesan conferences was to be created at the expense of the great London-based Church voluntary societies. As we have seen, the more evangelical of them sometimes reacted querulously to this episcopal poaching on their area of concern as the dioceses established local boards of missions and education boards, funds for church building and payment of curates...

Apart from the limitations imposed by the type of business considered suitable for discussion, there were further restraints imposed at all stages of organisation. It was customary for many conference members to sit ex officio or as nominees of the bishop. Peers, M.P.s, Lords-Lieutenant and Mayors were invited to add prestige, often without regard to their commitment to practical action. Election of lay representatives was usually indirect and under clerical control. Some, like Emery, were in favour of real elections at parish level rather than 'virtual representation' by episcopal or clerical nomination,[1] but then there arose the insoluble problem of how to define the franchise. Only in Wales, where the Church was much more clearly in need of denominational organisation did election of representatives spring up unchallenged. Finally, when a conference actually met, the bishop retained powers sufficient to control almost every stage of proceedings. He could, and usually did, draw up the agenda, act as chairman, define the limits of permissible discussion and, if a vote was allowed, retain the right to veto decisions agreed on by clergy and laity.

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1. CCR, 1869, p.30.

It is not surprising that even sympathetic observers found a general lack of lay interest in the early diocesan conferences. Bishops were under less pressure to call conferences than synods and it was easy for those opposed to lay participation to ignore the whole issue. Yet, there were some advantages to be had from such limited experiment. The clergy were reassured that lay representation did not undermine their position.[1] By the early 70s, even evangelicals (usually clergy) were coming to accept that the business of diocesan meetings was too important to ignore. As Canon (later Bishop) Ryle said on their behalf:

> 'They /Diocesan Synods and Conferences/ bring men face to face ... they rub off sharp edges'[2]

This was true: the feared explosion of party politics did not take place in diocesan assemblies. Besides, evangelicals could not object in principle to lay representation in voluntary assemblies, but only to the time and manner in which it was done, and in this they shared an attitude common to many moderate churchmen.

The movement for lay participation in diocesan affairs had begun quietly and under firm control. However, it did not spread on a national scale or attract much lay interest until an unprecedented burst of ecclesiastical litigation in the late 60s and early 70s demonstrated more clearly the failure of 'legal' and the need for 'moral' sanctions to enforce Church discipline. It suddenly became very clear that the laymen

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1. E.g. CCC, 1872, 'Report of the Committee on Lay Co-operation, pp.8-9. 21.

2. CCR, 1874, pp.277-8. See also Ryle, Church Reform, No.VI, p.19; C. of E. Laymen's Defence Association: Pamphlets, 'Third Annual Report' (1869), p.3.

involved in diocesan assemblies often represented little more than themselves. There was a resurgence of liberal arguments, more radical in their assertionof lay rights than those of the 50s because they generally came from moderate or low churchmen. Sir Antonio Brady, for example, told the Church Congress of 1870 that the Church would never secure lay obedience and active support without conceding laymen a related responsibility for making the decisions on discipline and deployment of resources. He warned that, unless the 'autocracy of the clergy' were curbed by giving laymen 'a share in the management of the Church's affairs', the Church would fall to the disestablishers and then 'the Laity would ... have too much power', for all pecuniary support would have to come from them'.[1]

During the 1860s, laymen joined with clergy in livelier and more informal, though less directly authoritative, discussion in Church Congresses. The immediate impetus behind the foundation of these Congresses, held annually after the first meeting in Cambridge in 1861, was Church defence. The Congresses were to identify issues over which the Church was likely to become concerned and encourage preliminary discussion by any churchmen sufficiently interested. They were also designed to mount 'a display of strength', as Chadwick phrases it, and to give laymen a feeling of participation such as the nonconformists achieved.

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1. CCR, 1870, pp.145-7. This speech was later published as a pamphlet by the Church of England Laymen's Defence Organisation.

Because they never took formal decisions, Church Congresses never really developed in the direction of becoming effective spokesmen for 'Church opinion'. They complemented neither Convocation nor parliament and, as they placed no restriction on participation (except to follow the general custom of excluding women from debate) they could not claim formally to represent anyone. Yet they were more representative of committed churchmen than any other Church assembly. The initial supporters of the Congress were mainly moderate high churchmen. Hoare was among them but was not a dominant influence. The man who persuaded the local bishop to preside over the 1862 Congress and so set a precedent was Montagu Burrows, once a naval officer but then about to become Chichele Professor of Modern History at Oxford, a conservative but mentally independent churchman who was to devote much of his later life to the publicising of lay claims to participation in Church affairs.[1] The leading clergyman of the movement was Archdeacon Emery, secretary to the Congress for many years. As has already been noted, he was not a particularly 'sacerdotal' clergyman. The Congresses gained great support from Churchmen: in 1864 attendance was about 2000, but by the early 70s was averaging 5000.[2] Even so, Church Congresses in their first ten years attracted the taint of 'party'. Lord Shaftesbury, as noted, thought them harmful. Another evangelical, Lord Harrowby, and his son Lord Sandon,

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1. Burrows, Autobiography, pp.213-4. Burrows attributed his Professorship to Bishop Wilberforce's influence but does not seem to have allowed his gratitude to blunt his naval manner with the Bishop: e.g. Ibid., p.236.

2. Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.363.

actually attended the 1867 Congress in Wolverhampton to explain legislation they were proposing in parliament and to deliver some home truths. Lord Sandon, especially, remarked on the unrepresentativeness of the laymen present. He said that they were the same people who 'habitually attend such meetings as these in London', and he deplored the absence of the 'large class of laymen whom we see taking the lead at the ordinary business meetings which abound in this our populous and active county [who were yet] devoted Churchmen in their own homes and neighbourhoods, and perform all the highest duties of Churchmen ..' He then went on to a general attack on the modern growth of 'priestly feeling', which caused some uproar in the audience.[1] However, the point remains that he did consider the Congress a centre of Church influence worth influencing. After 1872, when leading evangelical clergy decided that their general policy should be to attend Church assemblies, it was clear that the Church Congress had become the most representative assembly of committed churchmen in the country, even though it did not elect anyone or vote on anything. This was recognised in 1877 when the archbishop of Canterbury was present for the first time. In fact, some high churchmen had suspected from the beginning that Congress had the potential to become representative in this way, enough to undermine the authority of more formal assemblies. Members of Convocation made dark forecasts that Church Congresses, 'composed as they are of able men in Church and State, might acquire a degree of

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1. CCR, 1867, pp.314-6.

authority which does not properly belong to unauthorised assemblies', and complained of the embarrassments that might be expected to follow from putting clergy and laymen on equal footing in debate.[1] However Congresses showed no sign of evolving into decision-making assemblies.

Congresses had the virtues and weaknesses of voluntary assemblies. They took no decisions, so nobody felt threatened. They fostered a corporate spirit while allowing previously hostile individuals the satisfactions of active participation. But, as they were voluntary, they were also left to the mercy of the most eager or the most socially prestigious among the laymen, and to the clergy's sense of corporate solidarity. At least one early participant was complaining by 1870 that, 'as yet the inferiority in number of leading laymen in comparison with the clergy [has led to] the ... too clerical character which they have assumed.'[2]

In the 1860s, then, the problem of lay involvement in Church decision-making was attacked in two main ways. In neither case did a solution emerge which was acceptable to all parties as both fully representative and yet fully authoritative. Convocation and diocesan conferences had either no lay representation or insufficiently 'real' representation to attract wide lay support. Lay participants were clearly either too subject to clerical control or too often members of

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1. CCC, 1864, pp.1502, 1508.

2. Burrows, 'The place of the laity', in Weir and Maclagan (eds.), The Church and the Age, pp.175-6.

a traditional land-owning ruling class to be accepted as 'representatives'. Yet Church Congresses, while they suffered rather less from such objections, were never likely to become acceptable even as formal advisory bodies to clergy and hierarchy. As long as the Church lacked a centre recognised as having authority to bind its members it was vulnerable when disputes arose over the extent of clerical and lay roles. And disputes were certain to arise as long as the criteria of membership themselves remained in dispute. Organisation of the sort so far described implied a gradual tightening of the criteria of membership. At the end of the 1860s there occurred what might best be described as a 'lay reaction'.

CHAPTER 13

A DECADE OF DISSATISFACTION

As we have seen, it was between 1867 and 1874 (when the Public Worship Regulation Act was passed) that the last major attempt was made to control by parliamentary means the organisation, discipline and mode of worship of the Church of England. To some degree, it was the time of crisis which high churchmen had been predicting would arrive since the 1840s and before.

At the level of general public opinion, there was the onset of 'No Popery' agitation of a strength unknown since 1850-51. The educated objected to the growing ultramontanism of the Roman Catholic Church as it worked its way towards the Vatican Council of 1870, and it proved easy to finance a campaign of legal prosecutions against ritualists in the Church of England. The masses gave the Pope's chief political enemy, Garibaldi, a hero's welcome to London in 1864 and went on to demonstrate their protestant enthusiasms in mob attacks on ritualist churches and battles with Irish Roman Catholics in the North West and in London. For the first time since Lord John Russell had miscalculated the political implications of 'papal aggression', leading politicians began seriously to wonder whether religious allegiance might be exploited to political advantage. As we have seen in chapter 5, the Act of 1874 was eventually supported by the government.

At the level of organised politics, there was the 'leap in the dark' as the Palmerston interlude ended and the Reform bill of 1867 was enacted. The

first Gladstone government which followed seemed to conservative churchmen to mark the triumph of the nonconformist political crusade and the beginning of government by a coalition of 'sectarians'. Particularly relevant here, the 1868 legislation which abolished compulsory church rate removed a nonconformist grievance but aggravated a Church one; the power of the parish vestry declined and it became increasingly difficult to control the incumbent's use of the parish church. Charges of 'clerical autocracy' multiplied. The general pace of change away from traditional forms and values was quickening and there was every reason to believe that no reform could any longer be considered final. Lord Shaftesbury despairingly and dramatically reflected on Palmerston's death:

> Thus goes the 'Ultimus Romanorum', and now begins ... the greatest social, political, and religious revolution that England has yet endured ...[1]

And, in a loose but direct sense, it was true that political and religious change went together. There were echoes of the widening political demand for the 'consent of the governed' reverberating within the Church. The traditional forms of decision-making, from parish to Convocation, needed adjustment to retain respect. Yet religious institutions are even less amenable to sudden change than are political institutions. In particular, a religious ideology cannot allow some matters to be openly adjusted without greating general scepticism of the truth of its values and beliefs. So it was that, even at official level, initiatives had to be taken to justify change in theological as

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1. Hodder, Shaftesbury, iii.185.

well as practical terms. By 1868, Dr. Moberly, shortly to become bishop of Salisbury, was arguing in his Bampton Lectures that scripture and primitive practice alike identified 'the Church', that is, 'the spirit-bearing body, the successor of Christ', as the whole body of clergy and laity.[1] The implications of this were that, once the Church as an institution gained real and fair representation of all its members, then it was compelled to accept the 'rediscovery' that such a body of representatives was inspired by the Holy Ghost and competent to discuss all spiritual matters.[2]

By the 1870s, then, an unusually wide area of Church organisation was thrown open for readjustment. There was an increased possibility that the boundaries between the clerical and lay roles would be reconsidered and it is not surprising that interested parties staked as many claims as they were able. This section discusses attempts at readjustment in several areas. Part (A) is concerned with some examples of lay power at its upper limits. The issues touched on are doctrinal readjustment - the dispute over the Athanasian Creed - and clergy discipline - the struggle for lay control over the form of public worship, the Public Worship Regulation Act, and reaction to these events in Church assemblies. Part (B) is concerned with a series of attempts

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1. Burrows, 'Place of the Laity' in Weir and Maclagan (eds.), The Church and the Age, pp.191-3.

2. CCR, 1870, p.132. See also the endorsement of Moberly's arguments by William Ince, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford in his sermon of 1882, The Position of Laity in the Church, p.7.

to redefine the lay role at the parish or congregational level. The overall impression which emerges is one of the diversity of opinions people held about the lay role. The traditional Establishment stood seemingly on the brink of a transformation from national Church to religious denomination and the incoherence of its position was reflected in conflicting attitudes to its organisation.

As has been mentioned, the lead in widening the area under debate came from liberal and broad churchmen, assisted by evangelicals. Unlike some high churchmen, broad churchmen were not primarily interested in stimulating emotional commitment to the Church through organisations distinct from the rest of society. We have noted some of their leading characteristics in discussing doctrinal pressure groups in the Church (Chapter 5). We have noted, for example, that they were an elite hoping to convince by reason and exhortation, and that they had little use for mass membership societies (largely because they found it more convenient to use their direct social access to the centre of political power than to take the chance of becoming one more pressure group among many). With Queen Victoria and Archbishop Tait in sympathy with them, they had little need for the cruder forms of organisation.

(A) It was Archbishop Tait himself who led the attack on the use of the Athanasian Creed. Under cover of the 1870 Report of the Royal Commission on Ritual, the Archbishop and a majority of those signing (including Dean Stanley) recommended an end to the use of this Creed in publis worship. This, broad churchmen hopdd, would help reconcile educated opinion to the Church by showing the Church to be responsive to a feeling growing among educated laymen that the essential nature of belief was the sincerity with which one followed one's conscience, rather than the unconditional acceptance of doctrinal formulations.[1] Broad churchmen were sometimes convinced that it was a higher task of religion to foster a morality which was socially inclusive than to bear witness to a doctrinal truth which must inevitably exclude large sections of the nation as unorthodox. The 'damnatory clauses' of the Athanasian Creed cut off at least the wilfully, and perhaps the involuntarily, unorthodox from hope of salvation. High churchmen like Pusey said that this was the way it had to be and identified 'the central heresy of the day /as/ the unimportance of definite faith to salvation.'[2]

However, broad churchmen feared that unless immediate action was taken, the Church ran great risk of provoking conflict between clergy and educated laity, between obscurantism and what Dean Stanley described as 'the whole civilised world'.[3] Their leaders claimed to represent

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1. R.T. Davidson and W. Benham, Life of Archbald Campbell Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury (1891), ii.126; Marsh, Victorian Church, p.45.

2. Liddon, Pusey, iv.240: Pusey to Liddon, 2 Jan.1872.

3. R.E. Prothero, Life and Correspondence of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (2nd edn.) (1894), ii.232-5.

the great consensus of lay feeling in the Church but the available evidence does not really support the claim. When the archbishop ran into vehement opposition in Convocation he was presented with a supporting petition by Lord Shaftesbury, signed by more than 6,000 laymen including 50 peers and 149 M.Ps. Pusey then told him that these men were 'but an insignificant fraction of the Church', and high church organisers, given six months and a Church Congress during which to work, did eventually manage to gather 35,000 signatures from clergy and laity against change, attached to petitions pointedly addressed to Convocation.[1] However, the immediately effective pressures exerted on the archbishop from the high church came from Tractarian clergy who, like Pusey and Liddon, threatened to resign their preferments in the Church if the use of the Athanasian Creed was discontinued. Under these conditions the archbishop accepted the compromise plan, suggested by moderate high churchmen like the new bishop of Salisbury (Moberly) and Lord Salisbury, that the Creed should be retained but 'interpreted' by an 'explanatory note', a decision which led to private accusations of betrayal from Stanley and his supporters without restoring the confidence of high church clergy in an archbishop who was on record as saying that 'Nobody in the Church of England takes them /the damnatory clauses/ in their plain and literal sense'.[2] The matter, having been raised on behalf of the laity by clergy was then finally captured by the clergy in Convocation. For various reasons the 'protestant' laity had not risen sufficiently in

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1. CCC, 1872, p.329. Cf. Davidson and Benham, Tait, ii.152-3.
2. Davidson and Benham, Tait, ii.137-40, 155-6.

support. It was as purely doctrinal an issue as could be imagined but it was not this which constrained laymen to accept a subordinate role. A more likely explanation is that, in its liturgical context, the Creed was accepted as ritual rather than doctrine and so did not necessarily give rise to intellectual puzzlement. Shaftesbury himself admitted privately that 'congregations were disturbed by it only because it was unfamiliar.'[1]

Once the clergy in Convocation had retrieved for themselves the question of drafting an explanatory note, they revealed the extent of their distrust of lay influence. Bishops were at first evenly split on the importance of retaining the Creed's public use, but quietly acquiesced in a policy of minimum change when the widespread 'disquiet' of conservative churchmen became apparent.[2] Disquiet was too weak a word to describe the reaction of the Lower House of Convocation. When Dean Stanley launched an attack on the historical authenticity of the 'damnatory clauses', there was uproar and Archdeacon Denison refused to remain in a chamber where such a question was even entertained. Denison had already remarked that 'I never before heard that "popular apprehension" was to be the rule of a Synod ... I always thought that the use of a Synod was to correct popular apprehension'. Dr.Pusey, not present in person, was invoked to give authority to the view that 'it is not a question for majorities either of Clergy or Laity, - and least of all of the Laity'. The laity were said to be in a dangerously uninformed

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1. Marsh, Victorian Church, p.46.
2. Cf. CCC, 1872, pp.37 ff., 78 ff., and 500 ff., esp. 558.

and undisciplined state, and self-confessed 'old Tories' stressed that giving in to (admittedly widespread) pressure from the 'uncatechised' would offend more than it placated while encouraging further excesses. On one point the disputants were almost agreed - the impropriety of the 'unskilled' having any influence on the outcome. Stanley caught his opponents in the cleft of their own argument: they were saying that all petitions to Convocation were evidence of religious orthodoxy and yet they admitted that theology was a professional skill. Stanley believed that, had he cared to, he could have collected 12,000 signatures in one day outside Westminster Abbey, yet he rejected the act as 'unworthy'. High churchmen like Canon Gregory retorted that the professional skill of Stanley and his new elite of scholarly friends could not ascertain religious truth unaided: 'It is not simply learning that makes men understand Gospel truth, but a holy life'. The House then rejected Stanley's proposal to recommend that the use of the Athanasian Creed be made optional by 54 votes to 13.[1]

After a further year of complex manoeuvre the Convocations of Canterbury and York combined to approve a Synodical Declaration that the Creed contained no doctrine not found in Scripture and that its chief function was to act as 'a warning against errors which from time to time have arisen'. Such a solution reinforced the clergy's role as skilled interpreters of doctrine rather more than it provided explanation to the unskilled laity. Here, then, the clergy in Convocation clearly

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1. CCC, 1872, pp.306 ff., esp. p.340 (Denison), 345 (Stanley), 364 (the 'old Tory' Dean of Norwich), 387 (Gregory), 452, 458 (voting).

succeeded in asserting their exclusive competence, partly because the matter was so clearly doctrinal that it provoked many clergy to assert their professional status, partly because of the highly traditional way in which it was expected that the decision be made, and partly because it was possible for clergy to invoke a silent majority of undemonstrative laymen who seemed to be against all change.

When it was a matter of disciplining clergy suspected of making change, the clergy were not in such a strong position. We saw in chapter 5 that firm 'protestants', especially evangelicals, had, since the mid-60s, been waging a legal battle with 'ritualists' over the interpretation of Church law governing vestments, church ornaments and forms of worship. Ritualism continued to spread and it became clear that the law as it stood, a legacy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, did not achieve what nineteenth century protestants expected of it. Protestants, by the late 60s, were driven to demand parliamentary action. A Royal Commission on Ritual failed to satisfy their expectations, and the failure of bills sponsored by Lords Shaftesbury and Sandon to give laymen greater legal rights against clerical innovation made them more restless. Archbishop Tait encouraged them to believe that he would support legislation to control ritual and, in 1873, the militant Church Association presented the archbishops with a Memorial signed by 60,000 laymen. The archbishops agreed that the danger apprehended by the memorialists of 'a considerable minority both of clergy and laity among us desiring to subvert the principles of

the Reformation' was 'real'.[1] By early 1874 Tait was convinced that, if the bishops did not devise a bill in answer to protestant demands, Lord Shaftesbury and his supporters (including the Queen) would press their own measures; these, if enacted, would arouse such contempt for law among high churchmen that the unity and established status of the Church might be threatened. In fact, Tait's Public Worship Regulation bill, ostensibly a measure to obtain nothing more than the more efficient hearing of cases of clerical discipline, had to be presented as a bill to put down ritualism to gain the support it needed to fend off rival schemes. In this way Tait gained the support of Shaftesbury and eventually of Disraeli. The prime minister had refused to commit his government earlier but now saw a good chance of separating Gladstone and Liberal high churchmen from the majority of their party while earning public gratitude for promoting an English 'Kulturkampf'.[2] Shaftesbury, reflecting on the contrast between his own earlier trials, and the enactment of the 1874 bill, was impressed. 'Of all the clever men I know, or ever have known, D'Izzy is the chief', he said.[3]

However, part of the organisational skill was Tait's. The Act of 1874 was the last major measure concerning the discipline of the Church to be enacted without the consent of Convocation. Tait did consult with the bishops, and had gained their initial support, though he lost this in part by agreeing to too many amendments in parliament. He had no

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1. Davidson and Benham, Tait, ii.105; Marsh, Victorian Church, pp.132-3,
2. For details, see Marsh, Victorian Church, pp.158-64, 169 ff.
3. Hodder, Shaftesbury, iii.348.

intention of having his plans altered by Convocation.[1] High church clergy in Convocation were left to point out unheeded the inconsistency of liberal churchmen restricting the comprehensiveness of the Church. They also protested that the bill would increase tensions within the Church by undermining the independence of the clergy and depriving the middle classes of their accustomed nonconformist heritage of freedom to experiment in forms of worship.[2] Gladstone, an isolated figure in the House of Commons, argued in similar terms. He had already warned Shaftesbury that 'penal and coercive proceedings' had and would cause more harm than good under modern conditions. In 1874, he deplored the invocation of parliamentary authority and predicted that the bill, if enacted, would be disobeyed amid public uproar. At one point he told the archbishops that, if a certain amendment were carried, he held himself 'altogether discharged from maintaining any longer the establishment of the Church.'[3]

Both sides had grasped an aspect of the problem. It was true that this time, in a confrontation between (broadly speaking) protestant laity and high church clergy, lay opinion had crushed opposition. This time laymen were directly affected in a matter of habit. 'Ritualism' conflicted with their social values and these values they shared with both nonconformists and a majority of parliamentarians. So it was widely accepted

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1. Marsh, Victorian Church, p.173.
2. CCC, 1874, pp.104 ff.
3. Lathbury (ed.), Correspondence ... of W.E. Gladstone, i.170; Morley, Gladstone, ii.501-2.

that parliament was competent to legislate and that high church clergy should be prevented from judging in what was believed to be their own cause. Yet, in a larger perspective, the supporters of the Act lost. It had been dangerous to ignore the extent to which the high church clergy, including ritualists, had the support of a laity of their own, not so numerous but deeply and permanently committed enough to prevent enforcement of State law.

Yet it is still possible that Tait might have consulted more widely among Churchmen and remained no wiser. Given the imperfect state of the Church's representative assemblies, it was extremely difficult to discover without major distortion what 'the Church' thought on any issue. This can be illustrated by a survey of attempts made at various levels during the early 70s to use existing assemblies or create new ones to ascertain Church opinion.

For example, while the Public Worship Regulation bill was still being debated in parliament, several bishops submitted it to their diocesan conferences for comment. Three contrasting instances illustrate the quality of response which might be expected.[1] Bishop Magee of Peterborough, a staunch protestant supporter of the Establishment, presented the matter for consideration in a speech which lasted for nearly an entire morning and made it quite clear that there were 'indisputable facts' which made it necessary to introduce legislation to curb the 'lawlessness' of 'extremists'. He also urged the laity to speak freely, but even this attempt to encourage the right side did not prevent a deadlock between

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1. Guardian, 1874, pp.689, 735 (Peterborough), 734 (Lichfield), 1281 (Oxford).

clerical and lay orders on a motion that legislation was desirable. However, after further negotiation the conference agreed to endorse 'the principle of the Bill, as enunciated by the President [Bishop Magee]' and to reject a plea that the bill should be delayed until it had been submitted to Convocation for approval. The high church Bishop Selwyn of Lichfield explained to his rather excitable conference that he did not support the bill now that it had been captured by politicians and, in fact, had never supported it 'because he looked forward to the time when the clergy, under the pastoral guidance of their own Bishops and with the advice of their faithful laity, would be a law unto themselves ... [As in the Apostolic Church] they ought to need no law but the law of love.' The bishop made no further attempt to influence the course of debate, was derided by one of his own archdeacons for suggesting that the Church was anywhere near 'the millenial [sic] state when men were content to obey from love', and eventually 'the motion lapsed'. It seems that clergy and laity voted different ways.[1] This muddling into deadlock as a result of relying on members' voluntary restraint could not have been very encouraging to the bishop. In Oxford, Bishop Mackarness, aiming to achieve the same result as Selwyn, was more calculating in his approach and had the help of a consciously responsible group of prestigious high church laymen (including Burrows, Hubbard and the M.P.s for the University) to keep debate under control.

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1. This is not clear from the report but there is evidence in CCR 1874, p.270, which suggests this conclusion.

The bishop stated how surprised he was that politicians had once more turned back to discussing Church affairs and suggested that the press was exaggerating the supposed clash of interests between clergy and laity. He then asked for plans to encourage the growth of alternative ways of adjusting relations between clergy and laymen through diocesan and parish consultations. The conference went on to discuss a recommendation for the establishment of parish councils with power to determine 'all questions of Church order and administration ... not defined by law'. This is an early example of what was to become the usual solution to a vexed problem.

The turmoil of 1867-74 stimulated new interest in effective representation of laymen in Church assemblies as well. It had been the ritualists who had drawn the charges of 'lawlessness' in the late 60s, but, by the time the Act of 1874 was passed, it was clear that a growing number of moderate churchmen had come to identify parliament as a threat to the Church. The old orthodoxy of parliament representing the laity was too transparent a fiction.[1] Yet there was still no credible alternative. Under these conditions, there were renewed efforts to gain lay representation in Convocation. The Association for Promoting the Reform of Convocation (which claimed its origin in the ~~succession of 1851 from~~ pre-1851 minority faction of Hoare's Convocation Society) began a campaign for this object in 1869. It was intended to be a national society but in fact was

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1. Even to some evangelicals: Ryle, Church Reform, No.II, p.12; and see Chadwick, ii. 362.

dominated by a group of well-placed high churchmen (both Gladstonian Liberal and moderate Conservative), defenders of the Church interest in parliament, under the presidency of Lord Lyttelton, Gladstone's wife's brother-in-law. It strongly denied that it aimed to sever the connection of Church and State,[1] but openly feared that failure to engage middle-class laymen in Church assemblies would lead to a disastrous struggle between a clerical Convocation and a heterodox House of Commons.[2] The methods of the Association were aristocratic and restrained: they still believed that 'the reform of Convocation ought to come from within'.[2]

Both York (in 1871) and Canterbury (in 1872) did indeed produce reports on 'lay co-operation'. The Canterbury report recommended the creation of a voluntary (i.e. non-statutory) House of Laymen, elected through diocesan conferences and with the right to be consulted and to accept or reject all 'ecclesiastical legislation, either by Canon or Statute', excluding 'matters concerning the essentials of Faith, Doctrine, and Worship.'[3] The York plan envisaged a more restrictive lay

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1. The Secretary, Bandinel, had published in Organic Reform of Convocation (1869) a plan for a mixed national assembly to legislate for the Church with Crown consent. Some said this implied separation of Church and State: Burrows, 'Place of the laity' in Weir and Maclagan (eds.), Church and the Age, pp.198-9.

2. J.Bandinel (ed.), Report of Proceedings at a Meeting .. 11 June, 1872, pp.12, 18 (Bishop Browne of Ely). The bishop had become much more liberal in his attitude to lay representation since the early years of the Ely Diocesan Conference.

3. CCC, 1872, 'Report of the Committee on Lay Co-operation'.

franchise but put no restriction on lay competence and explicitly denied that parliament any longer represented the laity.[1] It seemed like a major shift of opinion and yet no action followed. Until a complete structure of lay representation existed at lower levels it was difficult to believe that there could be any generally accepted scheme of lay election to Convocation. Besides, there was no sufficient enthusiasm within Convocation to press the matter. After a slight display of interest on receiving a petition from Lord Lyttelton's group in 1873, Canterbury let its report lie undebated until 1877.

In the meantime there were signs of some impatience at Church Congresses and in the religious press. The Congress of 1874, well aware of parliament's renewed claim to represent the rights of the laity, was, according to observers, 'almost unanimous in the desire to secure to laymen ... a share in moulding the measures of Church legislation which may be prepared for Parliament'.[2] Dickinson, Burrows and several others all put forward their plans. So did the evangelical Canon Ryle, who admitted that, however mistaken the original decision to revive Convocation, its 'suppression would not bring peace' any longer. This granted, he argued, it ought to be made representative and laymen ought to be encouraged to participate:

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1. J.Bandinel (ed.), Report.... pp.30-1.

2. Guardian, 1874, p.1348. See also CCR, 1874, p.215 (Archdeacon Denison).

> Everyone knows that the best way to make a man take interest in a business is to make him a partner in the concern.[1]

A consensus was thus gradually emerging from among those churchmen who regarded the Church of England as something more than a national Church, and membership of it as something distinct from the rights of a citizen. Yet nobody in 1874 could quite see how Church institutions might be adapted to avoid 'the Scylla of State autocracy [and] the Charybdis of clerical exclusiveness'. The traditionalists still asserted that 'Parliament is never going to ... admit an imperium in imperio' and predicted that a mixed Convocation or national assembly would be 'the very paradise of Parliamentary failures', scorned by laymen of national standing.[2] Besides, the definition of 'layman' and of what Church membership involved was still too much a contested issue to allow prediction about the form of future institutions. How much it was a contested issue can be better realised when one comes to discuss parallel disputes about the lay role at parish level.

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1. CCR, 1874, p.206. In fact, Ryle had taken this point of view since at least 1870, but had only gradually gained the support of other (and still not all) evangelicals. Ryle saw no inherent authority in synods. To him they were useful only insofar as they were representative and transacted business efficiently: Ryle, Church Reform, No.II, pp.14-5.

2. CCR, 1874, pp.214 (Burrows), 215-6 (Denison), 201 (Canon Trevor).

(B) The development of institutions creating the imperium in imperio at parish level forms a partial exception to the general trend in the formation of Church representative bodies. At other levels representation came as a result of high church initiative but parish councils were often pioneered by broad churchmen and evangelicals. This was so perhaps partly because it was not so easy to impose restrictive criteria of Church membership at community level, partly because it was difficult to differentiate precisely between the functions of clergy and laity at a level where personality might influence decision-making so much. High churchmen did sometimes try to fit the parish into their consultative hierarchy,[1] but were generally unwilling to compel local clergy to do anything which limited their professional discretion (especially if they were old-fashioned high churchmen like Pusey who felt that a clergyman had a duty to his parish as a whole, and not merely to his congregation or mission).

Churchmen of all schools saw that the parish was becoming an increasingly anomalous unit of Church organisation. As a religious unit it was more often than not a fiction, particularly in urban areas where parishes had been subdivided and a form of congregational organisation was spreading, substituting a voluntary practitioner/client relationship for the more traditional involuntary relationship between a clergyman and his parish.[2] Some churchmen wished to reverse this process, some to

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1. Kitchin, Browne, pp.279-80.

2. See Thompson, Bureaucracy and Church Reform, p.231, for the general implications of this change for Church organisation.

hasten it. As a unit of secular administration the parish was a growing source of embarrassment to earnest churchmen until the abolition of compulsory church rate took the venom out of vestry meetings.

Gladstone, in the course of abolishing church rate, argued that its abolition would stimulate lay activity and, above all, 'give a much more effective control upon the clergyman ... with respect to the conduct of services ... and the introduction of alterations' by making clergy more dependent on laymen.[1] This was perhaps a rather disingenuous argument, given that ritualists tended to be voluntary congregations united behind their clergy and not customarily dependent on Church-rate to finance their 'excesses'. However, it does indicate that Gladstone recognised the widespread popular feeling that the clergy were becoming responsible to nobody but themselves.[2] The two great laments about the state of the Church which appear in so much literature of the period are the related issues of 'clerical autocracy' and 'lay apathy'. W.H. Fremantle argued that the Church, with its parson's freehold, was the most 'aristocratic' social institution left in the country. As long as the clergyman remained unaware of what all his parishioners really thought, he bore the sole blame for all inefficiency and all change even though he might be over-worked and forced to assume responsibility for decisions he could not persuade anyone else to make. The parishioners in turn came to feel that there was no scope for their enthusiasms in the parish church and so, 'when

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1. Quoted in W.H. Fremantle, Lay Power in Parishes: the most needed Church Reform (1870), p.19.
2. e.g. Church of England Laymen's Defence Association: Pamphlets, 'Sixth Annual Report' (1872) pp.9-11. Chadwick calls the period 1868-1921 'the clerical age ... in the sense that the parson had more individual power in his parish church than ever before or after': Victorian Church, ii. 322.

an attack is made upon it [the Church], the defenders seem to be advocating the claims of a privileged class ..'[1] The complaint did not come only from broad churchmen, though they were the most articulate spokesmen for a wide spectrum of low church public opinion. The specific charge against 'autocratic' clergy emerged fully between 1867 and 1874: it was their disregard of 'lay rights' when introducing innovations in public worship. Fremantle quoted examples of whole congregations drifting away in disgust when ritualist clergy moved into London parishes with their friends and supporters. The independence of the clergy was also resented when they used the patronage they had in voluntary organisations and the money they collected from the growing practice of voluntary collections without consulting the participants and contributors.[2] This resentment often had a particularly middle-class edge to it, as it was middle-class churchmen in towns and cities who felt most discriminated against in comparison both with their Establishment social superiors and their active nonconformist social equals. It was possible, after pointing out this sort of injustice, to make more extreme claims that the clergy might selfishly hinder lay efforts to evangelise the masses or plot to use 'the keys of the kingdom ... to open the ballot box' in congregations where habitual confession was encouraged.[3]

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1. Fremantle, Lay Power, pp.8, 24-6. For examples of similar evangelical complaints see CCR, 1867, p.314 (Lord Sandon) and for conservative high churchmen see P.D., 1871, CCV.857 (Gathorne Hardy).

2. e.g. Church of England Laymen's Defence Association: Pamphlets, 6th Annual Report' (1872), pp.7-8.

3. CCR, 1878, pp.406 ff. (J.T. Tomlinson of Salford, for many years secretary to the C.of E. Laymen's Defence Association, who stated that 'the incumbent, like a feudal baron of the middle ages, is as independent of his titular sovereign as of his vassals'.)

If the local clergy were to be required to consult with their laity it was obviously of crucial importance to decide the terms on which consultation should take place. Before discussing the broad church plans for statutory parish councils in the 1870s, it is helpful to know something of the unco-ordinated experiments in parish consultation tried between 1850 and 1870.

Some churches built with State aid in parishes created since 1800, and some traditional legal oddities, already had their 'voluntary church councils' or 'select vestries', and these were representative assemblies of a sort.[1] However, in most parishes the ordinary vestry of parish ratepayers continued on its erratic decline until the Act of 1868 formally relieved it of its chief secular interest. It had long been a source of concern to committed churchmen. Thomas Arnold, complaining of the 'passivity' of Church members in the 1830s, had stated:

> The parishioners, except in questions about rates, never act as a body, nor feel as a body. They have no part in keeping up any religious discipline; those amongst them who are qualified for instructing or exhorting their neighbours can do it only as individuals.[2]

Arnold did not live to see the rise of ritualism and the spread of Liberationist disruption of vestry meetings. If he had, he would no doubt have had to qualify his remarks about 'passivity', though not the underlying judgment about the lack of cohesive parish feeling. During the 50s, Church order suffered because the most purely nominal of parishioners

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1. Chadwick, Victorian Church, ii.200; Conybeare, Essays Eccles. and Social, pp.230-1.

2. T. Arnold, Principles of Church Reform (introd. by M.J.Jackson and J. Rogan) (1962), pp.120-2.

were still able to exercise their rights as members of a national Church whenever they chose. This prompted several more orthodox churchmen to consider the possibility of creating parish institutions with a membership restricted to committed participants in the work and worship of the parish. Gladstone, for example, thought that the provision of means for ascertaining sincere lay opinion in a parish might avoid public clashes between clergy and 'laity' over ritual practices of the sort which had led to the 'surplice riots' of the 40s in London and Exeter. He suggested that clergy should consult with laymen enlisted on a 'roll of communicants' in the Presbyterian manner.[1] And the Church Institution, as we have seen, had schemes to restrict membership of vestry meetings (though not necessarily on purely religious criteria). These plans seem seldom to have crossed from discussion to practical reality, though there is evidance which suggests that at least one of Hoare's clerical admirers may have experimented with the creation of a 'select vestry' - a voluntary body half-elected, half-appointed, of whom at least half the total were to be communicants and which was to be entrusted with the management of the parish schools, voluntary societies and general parochial work.[2]

It is difficult to find out whether intermediate experiments took place, but the next major evidence of the establishment of parish councils comes in about 1870 when Lord Sandon presented his parliamentary bill for statutory councils, and broad churchmen related their experiences

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1. Gladstone, Letter to the Bishop of Aberdeen, p.32.

2. CCR, 1861, pp.141-4 (Rev.George Venables, Vicar of St.Paul's, Chatham).

with voluntary councils in an effort to reassure high churchmen of the safety of the proposed measure. In the more respectable parts of London, broad churchmen claimed, mixed councils of communicants and declared members of the Church of England had for several years been deciding parish business concerned with the organisation of finance and charity work, and the approval of changes affecting public worship.[1] Evangelical clergy seem to have been experimenting in similar ways and at the same time in the Midlands and the industrial North[2] (where the pressure for lay participation was as a rule always much stronger than in the South, London excepted[3]). High churchmen do not seem to have thought a formal representative council necessary until a few years later, though they, when they did set up councils, insisted on a communicant test for their voters and appear to have been the first to keep a roll of communicants - in the early 1880s in London.[4] This exclusiveness was a more natural

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1. CCR, 1870, pp.152, 157-8 (Rev.James Moorhouse, Vicar of St.James, Paddington, and later a well-known broad church bishop of Manchester); 1871 p.199 (Hon.& Rev. W. H. Fremantle, Vicar of St.Mary's, Marylebone).

2. CCR, 1878, p.418 (Rev.J.W.Bardsley, St.Saviour's, Liverpool, from c.1873); p.422 (Rt. Rev. S.T. Nevill, Bishop of Dunedin, when incumbent of a Lichfield parish near Lord Sandon's estate, c.1868); Ryle, Church Reform No.VI, p.13.

3. The regional difference in behaviour is broadly connected with the general division between agricultural and industrial England, and the strength of the nonconformist example in the North. We have noted a similar forwardness in the North to adopt the weekly collection, and the two issues are clearly connected.

4. Church Union Gazette, 1874, p.194 (Rev. C.H. Shebbeare of Wykeham, Yorks.); March 1932 (Obit. of Rev.T.O.Marshall, founder of council at St.Augustine's Kilburn, 1880. Cf. CCR, 1873, pp.50-5 (Rev. H.D. Nihill).

development for an urban congregation than for a country parish. As one clergyman pointed out: 'People choose their own churches in London'. It was also done deliberately to counteract the expected effects of plans for 'anti-ritualist' parliamentary legislation.

For broad church and evangelical leaders were never quite confident of the effectiveness of voluntary organisation in combating the spread of ritualism and other exclusive practices. They had needed little urging to turn to parliament, where so many of their allies were waiting for an opportunity to defend 'lay rights'. As early as 1867, Lord Shaftesbury had told the House of Lords that:-

> /I/t is not for the bishop and the minister to settle between themselves the order of the service, or what vestments are to be worn, but that it is for the great mass of the congregation to determine ... It is not for the mere majority of the congregation to determine what changes shall be made, but for the congregation at large, and even then it must be done consistently with the law of the land.[1]

By 1872 he was noting in his diary:

> Must, and will, do much under God's blessing, to resist disestablishment, and secure the parochial system. Would admit any wide reforms, certainly to the extent of excluding the Bishops from the House of Lords.[2]

Broad churchmen were quite as concerned about denominational tendencies in the national Church.

In 1870 and 1871, Lord Sandon, son of the Earl of Harrowby and member of the evangelical Ryder family, introduced his Parochial Councils bill into the House of Commons.[3]

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1. Hodder, Shaftesbury, iii.228.
2. Ibid., iii.301.
3. P.D., 1871, CCV. 822-31.

The bill, he said, aimed to give laymen 'a larger share in the management of the affairs of their own parish churches' and to 'expand within ... the Church those great principles of local self-government which had enabled Great Britain to be the peaceful founder of Empires abroad, and /yet/ while other nations were shattered by periodical revolutions /to remain/ united, happy and unmoved'.[1] The bill of 1870 aimed to set up compulsory parish councils with wide powers to settle the extra-legal aspects of public worship. The councils were to be elected by the ratepayers from among those prepared to declare that they were 'members of the Church of England or proposed to attend the parish church'. The bill of 1871 conceded that the legislation should be enabling, not mandatory, and that council members should be communicants, but Sandon still hoped that nonconformists might be interested enough to vote and so to feel their interests represented. This scheme appealed to many, but not to committed high churchmen. When W.H. Fremantle presented the plan to the Church Congress of 1871, he realised that the two crucial issues on which he needed to convince were the definition of Church membership, and the necessity for legislation rather than voluntary action. His main rhetorical efforts were directed towards establishing that 'all Englishmen who are baptized into the faith of Christ form the English Church', and that 'legal power alone will beget an adequate sense of responsibility in laymen'.[2] He recorded in his memoirs that his proposals

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1. P.D., 1871, CCV. 822-31.
2. CCR, 1871, pp.192-9.

seemed to have gained a grudging acceptance from the Congress.[1] Certainly, he and Lord Sandon had considerable support for their proposals from the newspapers and in the circles of educated opinion. The mildly progressive high church Guardian agreed that there existed a widespread belief that 'the laity had not sufficient power in the Church of England' and predicted that 'some measure of the kind /proposed/ may, at no distant period, become the law of the land'.[2] This would quite conceivably be to the Church's benefit, it argued, as any attempt to involve laymen in parish administration and decision-making could only encourage Church energies and increase trust betwen clergy and laymen.[3]

However, conservative churchmen were not prepared to put the Church at risk by letting loose such a wide-ranging measure in the first House of Commons to be elected since the Reform Act of 1867. Beresford Hope, the chief opponent of the measure in parliament and at the Church Congress[4], was solidly supported by other high church conservatives in both places. At the Church Congress he even gained

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1. Master of the Temple (ed.), Recollections of Dean Fremantle, p.81. Cf. F.R. Chapman, 'The Co-operation of the Laity in Parochial Councils' in Weir and Maclagan (eds.), The Church and the Age, 2nd series (1872), pp. 345-9.

2. Guardian, 1871, p.401.

3. Ibid., 1870, p.785. See also Chapman in Weir and Maclagan (eds.), Church and Age, 2nd Ser., pp.345-9.

4. P.D., 1871, CCV, 832-42; CCR, 1871, pp.207-8.

the support of an occasional evangelical; in parliament he was backed by solid Conservatives like Cross and Gathorne Hardy and, after running into some mild cross-currents created by 'protestants' and nonconformists, was totally backed up by Gladstone. The Liberal prime minister, in a carefully constructed speech managed to give ample credit to the good intentions of both sides while solemnly counselling a 'temporary' delay in the matter to allow public opinion to form further. (Fremantle attributed to Gladstone's intervention the failure of the bill to be committed.) The arguments of the more direct opponents of the bill, of course, usually concentrated on the unfitness of an electorate of ratepayers to perform the function required of it. High churchmen predicted the possible tyranny of a majority composed of nominal parishioners - men who were generally inactive except when stirred to erupt into aggressive protestantism. Even the deliberately judicious Gladstone had insisted on attributing to the clergy alone the improvement in the standards of parish work which had taken place during his lifetime. He was 'sorry to say that what we call the laity of the Church of England were for the most part but too well contented with that /unrevived/ state of things'.[1] Outright opponents of the bill argued that a 'sense of responsibility' was a two-sided matter: any legislative encroachment on the freedom of action of the clergy would sap as much vital energy in them as it summoned forth from the laity. Hope branded Sandon's councils as 'detectives put upon

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1. P.D., 1871, CCV. 872.

/the clergy/ by the parish'. The ex-chairman of the Church Institution took the 'responsibility' argument to its reductio ad absurdum by stating:

> If the parishioners were satisfied with the parson, they would not have a council. A council would be the result of dissatisfaction.[1]

An evangelical clergyman summed up the point of view of many clergy and many high church laymen in fearing that a uniform, statutory council would 'make /a clergyman/ the dependent minister of an Independent congregation'.[2] Other speakers, too, stressed the necessity of preserving the status of the clergy and examples were brought forward of rural clergy who were believed to be the only independent men in parishes dominated by landowners. The point about 'an Independent congregation' did not evoke quite such a united response, for, while many conservative churchmen were worried about the diversity in modes of worship already tolerated and likely to be increased by granting such wide powers to mere parish councils, some churchmen saw a continuing need to experiment if the Church was to provide for the 'differences of taste' which urban congregations expected to have satisfied.

Thus it was that the bill to establish statutory parish councils failed to gain majority support within the Church. Its sponsors had always been prepared for this. '/A/ reform, especially when the clergy are concerned, cannot be carried by rosewater' said Fremantle.[3]

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1. CCR, 1871, p.200 (J.M. Chabon).

2. Ibid., pp.210-11 (Rev. T.A. Stowell of Salford, son of the prominent protestant-evangelical preacher, Hugh Stowell).

3. Master of the Temple (ed.), Recollections of Dean Fremantle, p.81.

Yet even in parliament the defenders of the Church against parliamentary interference were far too centrally placed to allow the bill to succeed. The reformers did not give up hope of a parliamentary victory.[1] However, it was ten years before the plan was taken up again in parliament and circumstances had not changed in its favour. The Church Boards bill of 1881 and 1882 sponsored by Albert Grey M.P.,[2] a Whig-Liberal supporter of the national Church, was never within sight of success. The aim of the bill, even more clearly than in 1870-1, was to strengthen the national Church against disestablishment by encouraging comprehensiveness. The plan was openly adopted by the National Church Reform Union (of which Grey was a member), an organisation which many churchmen believed had suspiciously heterodox aims. The opponents of the bill pointed out that the electorate which it proposed to create would be comprehensive enough to include even atheists as long as they were ratepayers, and that Grey could not guarantee after the experience of the 1870s that parliament would not amend the bill to make it even more offensive and less likely to be capable of enforcement than it was already.[3] But neither Church Congress nor parliament was any longer interested in solving the problem by the means suggested. For example, the parliamentary debate was adjourned

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1. Harrowby Papers, Vol.39,ff. 77-8: W.H. Fremantle to Lord Sandon, 11 March 1872; Tait Papers, Vol.93, ff.25-8: W.H. Fremantle to Archbishop Tait, 9 March /1874 ?/

2. CCR, 1882, pp.413-8; P.D., 1881, cclx.1297-1301. Grey was later to succeed his uncle to become the fourth Earl Grey. He was an admirer of Rhodes and eventually served as Governor-General of Canada.

3. CCR, 1882, pp.406, 419-20, 431.

and not revived - not because of opposition but as a result of the small irony that the Bradlaugh Case took up too much debating time in the following session.

The debate on statutory parish councils had ended quite predictably with their rejection. However it had given impetus in passing to plans to set up voluntary councils. The effect on some individual high church clergy has already been mentioned. Convocation, too, considered the matter, and its Committee on Lay Co-operation recommended in 1872 that voluntary parish councils, elected from among communicants by communicants, should be encouraged, in urban parishes at least. It recognised the usual arguments about the need to match the opportunities for participation given to laymen by nonconformists. It also listed the functions of a council in stimulating church finances and parish work, and in 'promoting a godly discipline'. It also expected the parish council to elect representatives to the other voluntary assemblies of the Church, particularly diocesan conferences. In this way, it was hoped, voluntary organisation would not lead to the 'congregationalist' fragmentation of the Church that so many feared was well-advanced already. The prerogatives of the clergy were to be protected by allowing them sole right to initiate or consent to whatever business was introduced.[1]

After this, the initiative in developing actual schemes passed in the main to the diocesan conferences. Oxford, it will be remembered,

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1. CCC, 1872, 'Report on Lay Co-operation', p.7.

approved a diocesan scheme for parish councils partly to minimise the expected effects of the Public Worship Regulation Act. Between 1870 and 1882 the diocesan conferences of Ely, Bangor, Oxford, Lichfield, St.Alban's, Durham and Liverpool all considered the question of parish councils, typically as a result of being forced to come to a decision on the bills of Sandon and Grey.[1] They tended to deplore attempts to legislate a solution, taking as their main objection the wide electorate that a statutory solution was assumed to imply. It is clear that organised Church opinion was moving continuously against legislative 'interference' during the 1870s.

In general, then, when the issue of voluntary parish organisation was raised in the late 60s and 1870s, it raised with it the inseparable issue of defining Church membership. It was impossible to solve the issue immediately and the result was the 'politicisation' of the debate - as it had been, but less seriously, at other levels of Church organisation when Churchmen tried to differentiate their institutions from those of the State. By the end of the 1870s, there was general agreement within the Church that some provision must be made for formal lay representation in the parish, but some argued that it was to prepare for a disestablishment which was inevitable, some that it was to avoid a disestablishment which was not.[2] There could be no early resolution of the problem.[3]

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1. CCC, 1880-2, (Annual) Reports of Standing Committee on Diocesan Conferences.

2. Cf. Burrows, 'Place of the laity' in Weir and Maclagan (eds.), Church and the Age, p.165; Fremantle, Lay Power, p.42.

3. See Chadwick, ii.201-2 for later developments.

This last conclusion can be equally applied to the whole problem of defining the lay role in the 1870s. Parliament had made one last attempt to champion 'lay rights' but was eventually unable to enforce its legislation when faced by a sustained series of prosecutions under the legislation. Legal controls had come to alienate as many churchmen as they placated. They had also helped to mobilise more churchmen in defence of religious causes than had ever seemed possible a decade earlier. (We touched on some manifestations of this activity in chapter 5.) The voluntary organisation that was being prepared to supplement or circumvent the institutions of Church and State continued to spread throughout the long crisis of the 1870s. However, the strength and sustained nature of the lay reaction against denominational - the favoured word was 'sectarian' - tendencies in the national Church gave some indication that the transition was likely to be slow, painful and incomplete.

CHAPTER 14

THE MAKINGS OF A SETTLEMENT ; CONCLUSIONS

It could not be denied by the early 1880s that it had become impossible to impose Church discipline by statute law. Yet the alternative - control by group obedience to voluntarily accepted authority - was still not strongly developed. The main spur to resolving the problem of authority was still fear of the great unknown. In what form would the Church emerge from disestablishment if it were to occur? The more 'sectarian' of ritualists welcomed the prospect of disestablishment but few other Churchmen did. However, it seemed plain that the secularisation of public life was continuing with the passing of the Burials Act of 1880 and the Bradlaugh Case. The third Reform Act recognised the weakening of the traditional order in the countryside, as well as in towns. The final result was to be a decline in the political importance of religious issues - the Burials Act has been described as 'the last major political victory of militant Dissent in England.[1] - but this new perspective was difficult to accept at the time. Leading churchmen could not decide whether they should organise to stave off disestablishment or whether to prepare for its consequences. While waiting for a definite sign, they approved the strengthening of lay representation in theory while waiting to be pushed into acting on their decision by someone else.

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1. Marsh, Victorian Church in Decline, p.261.

There was, at least, by the early 80s an almost complete foundation at diocesan level which might be built on to give laymen more convincing representation than they had had before. There was a natural growth of diocesan conferences all over England and Wales,[1] until, by 1881, only London, Llandaff and Worcester dioceses had no conference. London had solved the problems caused by its size by 1883, and high hopes were held for a change of heart in the remaining dioceses as soon as their incumbent bishops died or retired. (It was a common pattern for the death of a long-established bishop to be followed by the creation of representative institutions.) It is true that there was a continued diversity in the qualification of conference members, and in the mode by which they were elected, and in the extent of their authority to discuss matters and arrive at a binding decision. The bishop usually retained extensive power to initiate and control discussion and the safeguard of voting by Orders became general. Lay members were usually either selected in recognition of their social status or elected indirectly by mixed ruridecanal meetings. There continued to be a tendency to create business for conferences by drawing the activities of the national voluntary societies into agendas.[2] However, this trend towards the 'education' of clergy and laity in diocesan pastoral and financial administration displeased those who wanted conferences co-ordinated to provide a means of ascertaining national

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1. Full details in Annual Reports of CCC Standing Committee on Diocesan Conferences, esp.1882.

2. E.g. CCR, 1879, p.230 (F.H. Dickinson).

'Church opinion'. For political purposes especially, some believed, there was too much discussion and not enough decision-making.

This at least showed that, by the late 70s, all major party groupings in the Church accepted the necessity and (more or less) the authority of voluntary representative institutions. The dissatisfaction with their existing form led to the founding of the Central Council of Diocesan Conferences. It began as the result of a meeting of secretaries to diocesan conferences in 1879 which aimed to bring 'the combined voice and wishes of Churchmen to assist Convocation, and to bear more directly on Parliament and the country, for the carrying out of any practical measures which might be generally agreed upon.'[1] In spite of the failure of the promoters led by Archdeacon Emery to gain the active support of the bishops, the first meeting of the Council in 1881 attracted clerical and lay representatives from fourteen diocesan conferences and later meetings attracted fairly general support. The meetings were held in London and this has some bearing on the high number of professional representatives elected to the Council. This in turn illustrates the extent to which supporters of the Establishment had taken in their stride the necessity of adopting two distinct roles - churchman and parliamentarian. Of the twenty members of the Council's first executive committee, ten were laymen and, of these ten, six were M.Ps and a seventh was only temporarily out of parliament. An eighth was F.H. Dickinson. It was fairly clear that they would have liked to be

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1. Proceedings at the First Meeting of the Central Council of Diocesan Conferences and Synods (1881), p.9.

ecognised as the official connection between 'Church opinion' and parliament. From their first meeting there was disagreement about what role they should perform. The prudent sensed the hostility of the bishops and pointed out the unrepresentative way in which some of the Council had been appointed; they stressed the purely administrative aspect of their position. However, it was the clear intention of the driving organisers, Archdeacon Emery and Stanley Leighton, M.P., that the Council should consider that it had a mandate to reach policy decisions. Emery and Leighton wanted the Council to be the equivalent for the Church of England of a nonconformist 'parliamentary committee', in addition achieving for the Church all those necessary reforms which only parliament could approve yet which in recent years it had shown decreasing interest in discussing of its own initiative.[1] The conception of the Church as political pressure group was one which would have raised no sympathy with a previous generation of parliamentary Churchmen. Yet this was a new generation, still convinced of the necessity to defend the national Church, but asserting that 'They must depend upon no political party ... only upon themselves.'[2] As it happened the majority of them were Conservatives. This, of itself, was not sufficient to allay the suspicions of the Church hierarchy.

The bishops had from the beginning been suspicious of any attempt to 'co-ordinate' diocesan organisations at the expense of episcopal prerogative. They became happier on receiving assurances that the

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1. Ibid., pp.19, 22; CCR, 1883, p.70.
2. Proceedings .. of the Central Council (1881), p.20.

Central Council was 'anxious to be treated as an instrument of Convocation'.[1] However, they never positively endorsed the Council (and so were more easily persuaded to endorse Archbishop Benson's plan for a House of Laity to be added to Canterbury Convocation a few years later.) The clergy in Canterbury Convocation were divided in their views when asked to endorse the work of the Council. They finally approved the Council in its narrow role of collecting information, but one member afterwards said that he had never listened to a more 'hysterical, angry and unreasonable' debate. The majority of speakers tended to think that 'centralisation' was against all the traditions of the English Church and some openly predicted that 'The more successful it [Central Council] was the more dangerous it would become.' They feared a drift of practical authority away from Convocation to this new mixed and representative assembly, especially noting the disparity between the public standing of the people involved and the insignificance of the business they were allegedly called to transact.[2]

Yet an unreformed clerical Convocation was in a decreasingly strong position to act on behalf of the Church: this was the conclusion reached by one of its own committees when it recommended the endorsement of the Central Council and so precipitated the debate already mentioned. The supporters of the Council had always taken this view, and argued that their scheme was the ideal way of consulting lay opinion without upsetting the official institutions of Church or State.[3] Clerical vested interest,

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1. CCC, 1883, pp.47-9.
2. CCC, 1882, pp.179 ff., 202 ff.
3. E.g. CCR, 1874, p.276 (F.H. Dickinson).

however, was too securely entrenched in Convocation for the Central Council to be taken up as a likely solution to the problem of creating a central authority in the Church.

The only other relatively 'natural' alternative was to associate laymen directly with Convocation. This solution had usually been dismissed as impractical in the past because it had been thought to involve formal constitutional change, the giving of legal status to lay representatives and the invocation of parliamentary authority with all the dangers that implied.

It has already been noted that the general mood in Church Congresses was in favour of lay representation at national level, possibly through Convocation, since 1874. By the Congress of 1877 the advocates of laymen in Convocation were becoming more insistent. Parliamentary well-wishers of the national Church still warned against the perils of legislative change and the defenders of the power of precedent remained, but men like Archdeacon Emery, as yet hopeful that Convocation would reform itself, predicted that a House of Laymen would come.[1] This was not an unreasonable hope, as the Lower House of Canterbury Convocation had, in fact, just adopted the recommendation of its 1872 Committee on Lay Co-operation that a House of Laymen be formed. Why it suddenly decided to act on a matter which it had been willing to ignore for so long is not fully clear. It was certainly in the interest of Convocation to ensure that its terms for lay participation should be

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1. CCR, 1877, pp.142 ff.

the ones around which debate would take place - if it was true that the debate would take place in any case. Some clergy believed this. Others stressed the new trust they had come to place in laymen as a result of the general success of mixed diocesan conferences in the 1870s, and contrasted this with the distrust a majority felt in parliament. Lord Alwyne Compton, the highly-respected mover of the approving motion, pointed out that it was now possible to endorse a system which would preserve the old prestige of Church and State without running the risk of present-day political disruption. He suggested that the members of a Lay House be elected in diocesan conferences (where laymen of importance in public affairs were usually well represented) with the likely result that the Lay House would consist mainly of M.P.s, including peers, who would undertake their newly differentiated role as representative churchmen as part of their normal duty in London during the parliamentary session. The voluntary system was to be used to gain highly traditional ends. Compton had some fears that the business of a purely consultative House would fail to create sufficient interest among such prominent men and so suggested that the consent of the House of Laymen be made, in practice, essential in all matters requiring parliamentary or Crown consent (excluding doctrine).[1]

Compton's motion was resoundingly carried, and then nothing happened. The stumbling block was chiefly the resistance of Archbishop Tait. Tait was a broad churchman and admirer of Thomas Arnold. He

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1. CCC, 1877,pp.117 ff., 157 ff., esp. pp. 157-8 (Lord A. Compton).

enjoyed being called 'the layman's archbishop'. He was also a capable parliamentarian who enjoyed leading the Church from the House of Lords rather than from Convocation. He, as much asany one person by that time, embodied the tradition of 'Church and State.' Much of his effort as archbishop was directed towards staving off the resolution of ambiguities in the sources of authority within the Church and in the criteria of Church membership. He wanted to safeguard the comprehensiveness of the national Church and, if possible, to extend it. He had a special enthusiasm for conciliating nonconformists and had been known to speak of 'our common Protestantism'. He was the last person one would expect to encourage the growth of a separate organisation and distinctive identity for the Church of England. Recommendations for a House of Laymen received no support from him. He encouraged people to believe that any attempt to allow laymen into Convocation would require parliamentary consent.[1] So, in the years between 1877 and his death, the energy and confidence generated by diocesan conferences, such as it was, had to find its own channel upwards. The course it took was the formatio of the Central Council of Diocesan Conferences.[2] This scheme, organised by volunteer enthusiasts, received little support from bishops because, as has been noted, it was outside any established lines of authority within the Church and a possible threat to bishops' status in their diocese and in parliament.

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1. Marsh, Victorian Church, esp.pp.213-7, 246.

2. E.g. J.A. Hessey, The Laity counselling the Church, or Diocesan Conferences: Third Visitation Charge of the Archdeacon of Middlesex (1878). See also Archdeacon Emery in Proceedings ... of the Central Council (1881), p.8.

The breaking of the deadlock came in the years between 1880 and 1885. As we have seen, the elections of 1880 and 1885 both produced 'Disestablishment scares'. The economic structure of society was changing too, and though it is not possible to trace a direct connection, it is clear that by 1885 the agricultural depression was weakening the traditional independence of the large number of clergy whose income came from agricultural rents. The voluntary donations of lay churchmen now counted for more.[1] More immediately, Archbishop Tait died in 1882. His successor was E.W. Benson, appointed by Gladstone, and as much a high as a broad churchman. In contrast with Tait, Benson loathed the House of Lords and its 'thorough conviction of the infallibility of laymen (if not too religious) on all sacred subjects'.[2] He was thoroughly irritated by the neglect the Church suffered in being tied to parliamentary legislation for even the most minor of adminstrative reforms, and believed that the Conservatives were worse obstructors of Church reform than Radicals. He had a more vivid imagination than Tait of what the future might bring, so it was not surprising that he should find a time of 'crisis' like the election of 1885 the right moment to exploit to positive effect the anxieties of conservative churchmen. He surveyed the election results and noted in his diary:

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1. Convocation was hdding lengthy dbbates on the implications of agricultural depression for the Church by 1885. Archbishop Benson believed by 1886 that, if clergy were 'delivered from all sympathy with land', they would turn Liberal or Radical en masse: Benson, Life of Benson, ii.71.

2. Benson, Life of Benson, ii.66-7.

> The attention excited to the subject [of disestablishment] will make the Conservatives feel that they dare no longer oppose ... reforms [including reforms in the lay role] ... we shall be able, I trust, with this wave to do something.[1]

Benson now became the leading advocate of the cause of laymen in Convocation. He did this, not as a recognition of the pressure of opinion within the Church, which was slight, and hardly organised,[2] but as an act of anticipation. He took up the general plan of 1877 with the main aim of creating a body on which he could call to ascertain 'lay opinion'. He was prepared to concede a House of Laymen wide powers to discuss issues concerning the Church on their own initiative, and a right to be consulted (though not a veto) on all decisions requiring the consent of parliament or the Crown for their legal validity. In this way he avoided the need to go to parliament for approval of the scheme while, he hoped, still giving laymen of public importance some incentive to take part. However, the 'wide powers' were vague, and it was clear that the plan was primarily intended to provide Church leaders with ammunition to repel political attacks on Establishment and compel parliament to consider Church needs, and only secondarily intended to give training to the new type of denominational layman who would be needed after 'that terrible calamity' of disestablishment should it happen.[3]

The Lower House of Convocation, though it had endorsed the principle of a House of Laymen in 1877, was somewhat alarmed by the

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1. Ibid., ii.62-4.
2. Ibid., ii.72-3.
3. CCC, 1884, pp.11, 371-3.

expediency of the scheme. Some of its members were so shocked that they reverted to the arguments of the 50s that precedents ignored in one place could not be upheld in any other. As it was impossible to restrict laymen, once admitted, to matters in which they were competent to decide, it was preferable to await 'the great crash' rather than imperil the faith, they said.[1] The fear of creating a 'Frankenstein' was confined to a vocal minority but a clear majority still voted in favour of a resolution reserving consideration of 'the definition or interpretation of faith and doctrine' to the clerical houses of Convocation. In spite of the expressed disapproval of the bishops, they stuck by their resolution and, rather than see the whole scheme adjourned indefinitely, the bishops finally agreed.[2]

Given this atmosphere, there were limitations on the effectiveness of Benson's scheme before it had begun. A lay House had been created without going to parliament for legislative approval, and so it was only a consultative body.[3] Even this had aroused suspicion among the clergy, especially as Benson had tried to compensate for the missing attraction of formal authority by giving laymen wide powers of discussion and, therefore, influence. A few bishops, too, were actively hostile to the scheme. Ryle of Liverpool, who was in a position to criticise without needing to participate, doubted that such a 'voluntary' body would ever

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1. CCC, 1885, pp.125, 154, 157.
2. Ibid., pp.249 ff., 270 ff.
3. The government accepted the scheme on these terms: see Childers (Home Sec.) in The Times, 25 Feb. 1886.

attract sufficiently representative Churchmen to carry authority.[1] Benson was not unduly disturbed by criticisms like this. In fact the scheme was partly intended to attract a certain type of layman[2] (as its original sponsor, Lord Alwyne Compton, had pointed out in 1877). The purpose of a Lay House was to overcome difficulties posed by parliamentary inactivity or hostility in Church matters.[3] It could achieve its purpose best by having the maximum possible connection with the parliamentary class. The first House of Laymen, which met in February 1886, included among its 104 members at least 20 peers, 19 members of the House of Commons, and 5 baronets (not being M.P.s) and it is prudent to assume that more of the remaining representatives, like F.H. Dickinson, had once been M.P.s.[4] The M.P.s, it was pointed out to the archbishop in private, had an embarrassing tendency to be Conservative.[5] After much persuading, Lord Selborne unwillingly accepted the archbishop's insistent plea that he become chairman of the House. This ensured that

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1. J.C. Ryle, Church Reform, No.VI (1886 edition), pp.28-9. See also Benson's correspondence with the unco-operative bishops of Norwich and Worcester: Benson Papers, Vol.36, ff. 8-19 (Jan.1886).

2. CCC, 1884, pp.11-2, 13-5, 374-5.

3. See the topics Benson suggested the new House might consider in its first session: Benson Papers, Vol.36, f.39 (16 Feb.1886).

4. List in Ibid., f.51. Cf. estimate given in Macdonnell, Life of Archbishop Magee, ii.223-5.

5. Benson Papers, Vol.36, f.34.

a man of some public status preserved the dignity of the institution; the archbishop's informants had feared at one stage that there might be a move from the floor to elect G.A. Spottiswoode who, although he was senior partner in the firm of publishers who were also Queen's printers, had no major reputation outside the circle of Church voluntary societies.[1] Selborne was Gladstone's retiring Lord Chancellor who, just a few months before, had quarrelled with him for encouraging radical calls for disestablishment in the Liberal Party. Once he had been a Tractarian and the hope of Dr. Pusey, but now he was an entrenched supporter of Church and State. He was recently widowed and, with his political 'idols broken', was reconciling himself to political retirement when the Archbishop's invitation came.[2]

The solution of 1885-6 to the problem of lay representation was not a final one. There have been a variety of mixed national 'assemblies' 'synods' and 'councils' since then. The 1885-6 scheme relied far too heavily on the prestige and conventions of a social order which was already in decline to become authoritative within the Church, even if bishops and clergy had wanted it to be so. However, its existence was evidence that a fairly general consensus now existed in the Church that some form of lay representation was a practical necessity. The particular solution of 1885-6 is, of course, best explained by bearing in mind who its initiators were and within what limits they believed

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1. Ibid., ff. 24-36.

2. Selborne Papers, Vol.1869, ff. 75-8; Memorials, Part II, ii. 179-87, 241, 245-6.

they had to work. There is no doubt that most groups of churchmen, whatever the varying intensity of their commitment to the Church, at least assumed that the social importance of the Church of England was something more than that of other, more 'sectarian' churches. They believed that the 'privilege' and 'responsibility' which flowed from the historically-established status of being a National Church would have to be taken into account in any new forms of organisation the Church adopted. This prevented full acceptance of a 'voluntary' principle in Church organisation.

When one considers the general development of lay representation between 1850 and the 1880s, it is important to remember that the issue was of primary significance to a restricted group of people and, even to them, it was a matter of responding to, rather than initiating, action. These people were responding to a process of increased institutional differentiation accompanied by increased differentiation of roles among individuals. It was a general reorganisation of social relationships and it had an effect on relationships between Church and State and between groups within the Church. Broadly speaking, it became more difficult to reconcile the duties of being both a good citizen and a good churchman. If a man chose to be a good churchman he distinguished himself increasingly from the wider society. That is, he accepted a new role as 'layman' and this concept, defined in a narrowed context, became less diffuse than it once had been.

However, this process was not sought by most laymen; it was more often resisted. There was no great and united demand from below for lay

representation in the newly differentiated 'voluntary' organisations of Church government. There was certainly continuous pressure to heed 'the spirit of the age' which, it was said, meant representative institutions designed to satisfy the expectations of the prosperous, educated, self-reliant, nonconformist-influenced middle-classes. But this pressure, while continuous, was seldom immediate and the traditional Church leaders, clergy and laymen, had the time to adapt to change. Both leaders and general membership came (often reluctantly) to adopt lay representation as an objective in response to two more tangible social changes - the increase in professional organisation among the clergy, and the rise of 'combative Dissent'. Both these changes had political repercussions and so, from before 1850 until about the election of 1885, there was a strong link between political change and change in Church organisation. Nonconformist success in secularising the institutions of government, from parish to parliament, left the 'National Church' dependent on institutions which had either become empty forms or else fallen under the influence of its religious rivals. The more ineffectual the old institutions became in controlling Church discipline and representing the viewpoints of its anachronistically-defined membership, the more the clergy were exposed/exposed themselves to charges of 'clerical autocracy'. All parties to disputes arising in this way found it a tactical advantage to appeal for lay support, either to redress or else to accentuate the lack of balance in the old relationship between Church and State. Given that the criteria of Church membership were still so uncertain, it was possible for many political and Church

groups to 'interpret' what laymen really wanted. This was useful in an immediate situation but disruptive in the long term because it meant that, whatever solution was proposed to the problem of locating a central source of authority in the Church, some group would be able to condemn it as 'unrepresentative' or inappropriate in some other way. The National Church retained such a variety of social and theological viewpoints that some of its supporters were unwilling even to provide it with effective central organisation for fear that this would compromise the underlying principle of comprehensiveness. So far as 'the laity' in general had a view on Church organisation, this was probably its view. Most laymen did not really want to help create a formal lay role or participate in regularly-meeting institutions. They did not want to distinguish between their roles as churchmen and as citizens. What they wanted was to prevent change at parish level taking place without their consent. The problem of what form lay representation at higher levels should take was left largely for the traditional leaders in Church and political society to solve. These men were cautious, to say the least, but, without a general mandate to create a denominational form of organisation, their power to make any change was limited.

CHAPTER 15

THE LAY ROLE 1850 - 1885

We can now see that there was, over our period, a perceptible change in attitudes towards the role of laymen in the Church. This change was reflected not least by changes in usage of the term 'layman'. The broad assumption which churchmen involuntarily made when they used the word 'layman' in the 1840s was the assumption that the term was a potentially appropriate way of describing any inhabitant of England not actually a clergyman of the Church of England. Militant nonconformists were a growing problem but, for some purposes, even they accepted their role as laymen of a national Church. Some laymen were more prominent than others but the foundation of their importance in the Church lay in the social distinctions widely accepted in society as a whole.

By the 1880s, it was much less likely that a man would regard himself as a churchman merely because he was born English or merely because he was baptised in the parish church. We have seen how this change occurred in various fields. Perhaps the plainest indication of the change comes with the emergence of new or revived tests of Church membership. The late nineteenth-century Church was a great deal more concerned to 'socialise' its members to an awareness of their duties than the early or mid-century Church had been. The natural community of the territorial parish was increasingly and irretrievably

lost and the Church had to develop new and more 'artificial' methods of creating a sense of community among its actual and potential members. Confirmation became a widely accepted and regularly practised rite of initiation to full membership during mid-century. After mid-century, as we have seen, there were increased efforts made to foster a sense of Church membership through participation in Church activities. These activities might be regular attendance at the public services of the Church - high churchmen increasingly adopted a test of Church membership based on attendance at the communion service. They might involve regular participation in some other group activity conducted under Church auspices - for example, the giving of money in an age when the Church no longer had positive State support for its activities, participation in evangelising work or in the instruction of children, or participation in more secular activities conducted with Church encouragement. The territorial parish was largely superseded by the voluntary parish congregation and the voluntary national or diocesan society. The role which individual laymen played in Church activities changed accordingly.

The organisation of the transformed Church came to correspond in many respect with that of its denominationally-organised rivals. In particular, while the denominations relaxed the demands they made on members at the time of entry and afterwards, the national Church came to demand rather more of its members both in terms of initial commitment and of later participation. While the denominations

gradually accepted the professionalisation of their clergy and an increased differentiation of roles between clergy and laymen, the national Church made some efforts to extend the lay role into areas formerly reserved for clergy. Denominations and national Church alike faced the problem of accommodating the increasing number of laymen who had secular skills both useful to the work of religious organisations and subversive of their values. And, giving the most publicly obvious evidence of denominational tendencies in the Church of England, the Church gradually claimed for itself the right to establish separate institutions for its internal regulation in place of its traditional claim to rely on the institutions of the State for this purpose.

Some churchmen were conscious of this process while it was happening and a few actually approved it. Gladstone was one of the few leading churchmen both to predict and to welcome change. He wrote as early as 1852 that:

> The wave of Christianity may indeed be receding from the summits of society, which it took centuries to reach. We have now had before us for many years the undeniable and singular fact that, while the tone and amount of personal religion have been rising in general society, the religious character of the State, as such, has progressively declined.[1]

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1. Gladstone, Letter to the Bishop of Aberdeen on the Functions of Laymen, p.9.

And, having said that, he was driven to conclude that '/The/ ill-defined position /of the laity/ is our main source of weakness and of danger, the master evil which I fondly long to see mitigated or removed'.[1]

Over the following half century, the 'source of weakness' was gradually recognised and partially overcome. Indeed, by the 1860s, there is evidence that some nonconformists feared that the Church of England was employing the 'voluntary' form of organisation more successfully than they were themselves. It appears that the 'growth rate' of Church of England memebrship was greater than that of the nonconformist denominations during the last quarter of the century and that, by one of the indices of membership (attendance at Easter communion), the rate of growth of Church membership actually exceeded total population growth between 1885 and 1913.[2] There must always be reservations about such comparisons, based, as they have to be, on statistics of activities which did not necessarily have equal significance in the institutions being compared. Yet the point must still be taken that the Church of England was becoming increasingly successful in attracting members on criteria of membership similar to those set by nonconformists themselves.

However, we must qualify this picture of increasing 'denominationalisation' in several major respects. First, and most importantly, we

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1. Ibid., p.24.
2. Gilbert, 'Growth and Decline of Nonconformity', pp.73-4, 98.

must extend generally the conclusion we reached in section III. There was never a majority of churchmen, clerical or lay, who consciously accepted denominational status and organisation as a goal to be pursued. The great majority of churchmen only gradually became aware of the trend towards voluntarism and many of these strongly regretted it. The 'voluntary', 'autonomous,' 'participatory' institutions of the Church emerged piecemeal as solutions to problems which were often believed to be temporary. It is true that tests of membership were increasingly applied to churchmen, but different tests were applied in different areas at differing times. It would, for example, be relatively easy by selecting individual elements from the multiple contexts available to assemble the elements for a composite picture of the Church of England as a denomination. The high church provides one denominational characteristic by encouraging the development of voluntary institutions for regulation of discipline, the evangelicals provide another by demanding that their adherents experience some form of conversion as a test of merit, and the broad church provides a further characteristic by its advocacy of the rights of reason and the individual conscience. Yet a composite picture drawn in this way would bear little relation to the reality of 1850, 1885 or any other date, for the Church of England remained an institution tolerating more than one tradition of legitimacy and of membership. There was no unified response to social change and no consensus in defining the role of laymen in the Church.

The reality was that change occurred spasmodically and irregularly. For example, social conditions pushed the Church towards 'congregationalism' in cities and industrial towns, but in much of agricultural England the parish remained closely associated with the activities of the whole local community and the rate of change from an involuntary to a voluntary conception of Church membership varied accordingly. Again, it is true that there occurred a differentiation between the duties of citizenship and the duties of churchmanship but, in a Church which still valued its national status and traditions, the process could never gain whole-hearted acceptance. Many of the clergy, far from accepting the denominational status accorded to nonconformist ministers, used the opportunity provided by the weakening of State control successfully to assert their priestly status. And, although the Church did develop a number of autonomous institutions to replace those which it had formerly shared with the State, it did so in such a way that the influence of the traditional laity in the regulation of Church affairs was very extensively preserved.

Thus, the Church of England during the nineteenth century was by no means transformed so entirely that it ceased to be recognisable as a national Church.

It is interesting to note by way of postscript that the Church of England during the first half of the twentieth century in fact regained some of its pre-denominational characteristics. As the incidence of religious practice and other forms of voluntary

religious activity fell, and as nonconformist influence faded, there was a resurgence in the demand for Church services concerned with celebration of the rites of passage - in effect, a resurgance of demand by 'the laity' in the old-fashioned (pre-voluntarist) sense of the term for partially renewed recognition of their lay rights and lay role.

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