Biographical Note

Dr. Patrick Logan, formerly a Roman Catholic priest, gained degrees in theology and in canon law from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome at the time of the Second Vatican Council. He later earned a Ph.D from Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut. Having spent the first part of his life in the United States, he has, since 1974, lived in England where, later, he married. He worked for 26 years for the Anglican Diocese of Southwark until his retirement in 2002, although he has not become an Anglican. His specific work was in the area of social responsibility with a focus on homelessness, but his work brought him regularly into contact with a much wider range of diocesan and parochial activities. He has always sought to ensure a strong ecumenical dimension to his work. He is author of *A World Transformed: When Hopes Collapse and Faiths Collide* (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2007).

ABSTRACT

These reflections on Anglicanism are necessarily drawn mainly, although not exclusively, from my experience in the Diocese of Southwark. They explore five features which have most struck me about Anglicanism: its Civility, Humanity, Intellectual Integrity, Pastoral Flexibility and its Institutional Captivity.

To some extent these features are rooted in English culture not simply in Christian faith. And some are shaped by pragmatic rather than purely theological factors. Nonetheless, I do believe that at least the first four of these features have an essentially theological basis. The fifth, viz., the status of the Church of England as an established church, seems more problematic.

Precisely because of the growth of intolerance and fundamentalism in today’s world the first three of these features are particularly needed. Sadly, they appear also to be under threat in some parts of the Anglican Church.

Finally, where it seemed relevant, I have made comparisons with the Roman Catholic Church.

- *Ash Wednesday*
- 9 March 2011
Anglicanism - A Roman Catholic View - Close-up

PREFACE

What persuaded me to accept the invitation to offer these reflections is quite simply a recognition of the profound debt I owe to both the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, even though my own journey has taken me a certain distance from both. I write, also, with a sense of concern about certain developments in both churches - the widening of divisions within the Anglican Church and the narrowing of vision in the Roman Catholic Church.

INTRODUCTION

My specific role as a Roman Catholic working for 26 very fulfilling years in an Anglican diocese was as an adviser on church responses particularly to homelessness but also to wider issues of social responsibility. I was privileged frequently to be working alongside colleagues in other areas such as lay training, spiritual direction, and ordination courses. From time to time I was asked to make my own small contribution in those areas as well.

My work took me to at least half of the diocese’s 302 parishes - inner city, suburban and rural - as well as to deanery meetings, synod meetings and other diocesan events. I was invariably made to feel welcome, often especially so where my background was known. Through this rewarding range of experiences I have come to know, admire and make friendships with scores of quite remarkable people. For that reason, it seemed right, occasionally, to mention some of them by name in the observations which follow.

As for the different traditions within Anglicanism, I rarely approached parishes or people thinking: ‘This one is evangelical’, ‘That one is Anglo-Catholic’ or ‘The other is broad church’. Not that this did not matter, rather that I preferred to let any distinctive nuances emerge naturally. Within each tradition I met progressives and traditionalists, the devout and the semi-detached, people who were deeply committed to addressing the problems of poverty and social injustice and others who were more absorbed in their own successes and struggles. Occasionally there were some who lived up to their stereotypes. Surprising though it may sound, I often found myself more at home with progressive evangelicals than I did with some Anglo-Catholics. Overall, on a scale of 1-10, I would rate my experience of Southwark Diocese as 9+ and my experience of the Church of England more generally at only a point or so lower.

But, to get down to business. I have chosen not to dwell on issues such as the ordination of women, gay clergy, same-sex marriages, or the validity of Anglican orders. I have views on all these matters but, given that these issues have been debated in the public forum for so many years and by people more personally involved than I, it was hard to see that my opinions would contribute much in the way of ‘added value’. Instead, it seemed more appropriate to offer some reflections at a broader level on some general features which have struck me about Anglicanism. These will be looked at under five headings - civility, humanity, intellectual integrity, pastoral flexibility and institutional captivity.
1. Civility - True and False

By ‘civility’ I mean not that treacherous civility of empire which so often served as a cloak for the deceitful and ruthless pursuit of self-interest and the exploitation of the weak. Nor by ‘civility’ do I mean that false and hollow formalism so tellingly unmasked in Luis Buñuel’s biting satire ‘The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie’. What I mean here is civility as civic virtue, under whose wide umbrella are gathered a range of particular virtues such as civic responsibility, a disposition towards public and community service, a spirit of tolerance, a commitment to inclusivity, a celebration of individuality, respect for privacy and appreciation of difference.

Some may say that civility, even as civic virtue, is more to do with Englishness than with Anglicanism. Perhaps so. Certainly the lively civic virtue which flourished especially in 19th Century England, in the rich variety of voluntary associations and friendly societies, boosted by a public school ethos and a middle-class commitment to service, as well as the promotion in all classes of a sense of citizenship cannot be ascribed simply, or even primarily to the Church of England. Indeed it was most often the Free Churches which led the way, along with purely secular humanitarian bodies. Conversely, it seems also the case that Anglican churches beyond England have not proved immune from some very uncivil attitudes prevailing in their surrounding cultures. One has only to think of the poisonous atmosphere permeating American politics and the homophobic sentiments that appear so strong in some African countries.

Whatever its roots, my experience is that civility as civic virtue remains healthy in the Anglican Church. Taking some examples from Southwark Diocese, I have found evident in three different circles.

The first circle is that of civic affairs. Part of the reason for the high degree of Anglican Church civic involvement is, of course, its status as the established church. I have seen countless examples of where local churches have played a much-valued and sometimes high-profile role in enabling people of very different political views to work together for the good of the local community. Credit for this must often be given to the very effective leadership provided by local clergy, people like Douglas Bartles-Smith in the borough of Southwark, Colin Boswell in the Borough of Croydon and Julian Reindorp in the Borough of Richmond.

The second circle is the more limited one of interpersonal relationships. I offer two contrasting examples. The first concerns a local authority housing officer with whom I had been working for several years on various policy issues. One day he informed me that he had decided to become an Anglican. A particular attraction, he said, was that his local Anglican church seemed to be about the only place where people of different political persuasions and backgrounds, of different classes and colours and of different sexual orientations seemed able to relate amicably to each other in a spirit of mutual concern and respect. That experience could be multiplied hundreds of times over.

Alas, however, it was not universal. My second example concerns a local authority Councillor, who was a student on one of the diocesan courses. She told me how, after heated Council meetings, the very same people who, as members of opposing parties, had been at each others throats in the Council Chamber would then often go
off to the local pub and enjoy a drink together. Yet, in the meetings of her Parochial Church Council, people who had taken opposite sides in some relatively minor contentious issue found it almost impossible to remain on speaking terms. Lesson? We ought not to presume to help other people work together if we cannot do so in our own church.

The third circle, that of the Anglican Church’s own policy-making, is where the virtue of civility struck me most, perhaps because it was so necessary. The example I take is the protracted debates on the ordination of women as priests and bishops. As someone who had long been in favour of women’s ordination, I initially misjudged the slowness of it all as a sign of timidity and indecisiveness. Eventually, however, I came to appreciate the process as crucial not just for the sake of preserving ‘unity’ but for genuinely showing respect for the consciences of those who found these developments theologically questionable or simply unacceptable. It is true that the long years of debate simply offered time for some who opposed the change to prepare themselves for the inevitable. But I think that it also gave the debate time to mature which meant that people really did have to listen seriously to one another. I do not wish to idealise the Anglican Church’s decision-making process. I recognise that members are often involved in, or simply subjected to, intense lobbying by powerful and well-organised factions and that, at times, it may take considerable courage to vote according to one’s conscience rather than out of loyalty to one’s close colleagues. Nevertheless, I do think that this process of decision-making stands in sharp contrast to that which, in some church circles, relies mainly on the sheer power of authoritarian structures or of majority votes.

2. Humanity - The Heart of Anglicanism?

A second feature of Anglicanism which has impressed me even more deeply than that of civility, perhaps because it helps lay the foundation for that civility, is its humanity. This spirit of humanity seems almost to permeate the life of the Anglican Church. Here I take three areas of church life where I find this spirit of humanity to be evident: spirituality, public worship and sexuality and marriage.

To take spirituality first. I have had experience with two almost opposite approaches to spirituality. What struck me in both, however, was the spirit of humanity, which opened up a spirituality that was affirmative of human nature, which avoided the imposition of some alienating even if falsely comforting way of relating to God and which was truly life-enhancing.

The first, in Southwark Diocese, was the SPIDIR course in spiritual direction, guided for so many years by Gordon Jeff. This more modern approach drew heavily on insights from psychology and human development, but without reducing spirituality to therapy. Nor was it open-ended; it operated clearly within a Christian context. But by giving full attention to psychological factors it encouraged individuals to appreciate those things in themselves which contributed to an openness to grace and the movement of the Spirit and to come to terms with those things in themselves which were blocking that process, for example, a clinging to false images of themselves or of God. Spiritual growth was made possible by a sort of release.

The other approach, which superficially might seem to be starting at the other end, is that which was at the heart of the fourth year of training for Kings College ordinands: ‘The Warminster Venture’, conducted by John Townroe. This approach
drew more explicitly and more extensively on the rich spiritual resources of Christian tradition. It centred on the awareness of being in the presence of a loving God, an awareness deepened through the practice of prayer, contemplation and silent retreats. Always presented with an Anglican touch, this approach, too, was deeply personal, affirming and liberating. (I must ask pardon from both Gordon Jeff and John Townroe for greatly simplifying and perhaps partly distorting their tremendously important contributions).

Secondly, and intimately connected with spirituality, is the area of worship. Few people, I believe, fail to be moved by the dimension of humanity that is so evident in the way Anglicans express their faith and devotion, whether in beautifully conducted public services of worship or in sublime poetry from George Herbert onwards, and especially in music. In common with Roman Catholicism it breathes, I feel, a spirit full to overflowing of divine grace. The difference, of course, is that whereas in Roman Catholicism this superabundance finds expression in the richness and exuberance of the Baroque, in Anglicanism it seems to draw more on the spirit of Romanticism.

In a third area, however, that of sexuality and marriage, it seems to me that the humanity of Anglicanism’s approach stands in sharp contrast to the legalism of Roman Catholicism. In spite of the efforts or progressive theologians, Roman Catholic moral theology seems still trapped, at least in its official teaching, in a rigid version of natural law particularly when applied even to such issues as contraception, let alone to same sex unions. When it comes to marriage, especially failed marriages, its even more rigid canon law operates within a framework so coldly juridical that it at times borders on cruelty, in spite of the best efforts of pastorally-minded clergy. Admittedly the Anglican Church’s more humane approach to sexuality and marriage brings its own difficulties. Anglicans seem hardly of one mind in determining the boundaries of what is or is not consistent with ‘the law of Christ’. I have, for example, come across Anglicans, including clergy, who appear to take a rather relaxed view, to put it mildly, to casual sex. But it seems to me far healthier that such issues are addressed by deliberation on the meaning of love, fidelity, responsibility, etc. than by edict and excommunication.

What is the basis of this spirit of humanity within Anglicanism? As with civility, it may partly be ascribed to a deep current running through English culture from Chaucer to Shakespeare to the Enlightenment. But I would like to think that its deepest roots are in an understanding of Christ.

But which Christ? Indeed, looking at Anglicanism from the outside William Blake famously declared: ‘The vision of Christ that thou dost see, Is my vision’s greatest enemy....’ (The Everlasting Gospel). Clearly there are within Anglicanism different images of Christ - a Christ at one with sinners, as the victim undergoing death to propitiate the demands of a God of justice, or a Christ at one with the rulers as the King of Glory on whom the authority of earthly sovereigns depends, or a Christ at one with the poor and marginalized, calling out the need for a new type of society. But there is, I suggest, a common theological substratum. One way of getting this substratum into perspective is to apply the five ‘ideal types’ devised by H. Richard Niebuhr to describe the way different Christian traditions have understood Christ’s relationship to the world (Christ and Culture, 1951).
Two of Niebuhr’s types clearly find little resonance within Anglicanism: the sectarian ‘Christ against culture’ and the Lutheran ‘Christ and culture in paradox’. Two others seem to exist within Anglicanism but only to a limited extent: the Catholic ‘Christ above culture’ and the Liberal ‘Christ of Culture’. What seems most characteristic of Anglicanism, however, is Niebuhr’s fifth type: ‘Christ transforming culture’. Here Christ is seen as the Logos, the heart of reality, the key to a true understanding of the world. Not some sort of alien - even though he was, and is, often treated as a stranger. Not an awesome superpower - even though he was seen as a threat by the rich and powerful. In this Johannine view creation and human nature are seen as fundamentally good, in need of conversion, yes, but of a particular kind of conversion, viz., involving not some revolutionary destruction and a complete make-over, but a process of healing, bringing us back in touch with our true natures and leading to recovery and restoration, albeit imperfect.

John Henry Newman captures this nicely when explaining that the church ‘...does not teach that human nature...is to be shattered and reversed, but to be extricated, purified and restored.’ Newman goes on to say of the church that: ‘She has it in charge to rescue human nature from its misery, but not simply by restoring it on its own level, but by lifting it up to a higher level than its own’ (Apologia, pp. 221-222).

This Johannine theology, it seems to me, provides the basis for the spirit of humanity that runs through the history of Anglicanism. It is because ‘God so loved the world’ that in Christ we experience that love for the world in such a profound and intimate way, with compassion and tenderness, with friendship and faithfulness. That spirit of humanity is evident in the medieval monasticism of Aelred of Rievaulx, in the Neo-Platonist revival of the early modern period, and in the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century, which so influenced the religious sensibilities of Newman, for whom matters of the heart meant so much (Apologia, pp.99-100).

This incarnational approach is something which Anglicanism shares with Roman Catholicism. It prompts both to see in the created world signs and instruments of life and to take seriously the possibility of a Christian humanism. There is a slight difference. Whereas Roman Catholic humanism has tended to draw more on Aristotelianism, Anglicanism has relied more on empiricism. Empiricism seems to have helped prompt Newman in his journey away from evangelicalism, when he discovered that: ‘Calvinism was not a key to the phenomena of human nature, as they occur in the world’ (‘Autobiographical Memoir’, in Ker, Apologia, p.xxi). But that may not be the only reason why the spirit of humanity appears to have developed differently within Anglicanism than within Roman Catholicism. A further factor is the different approach to theological development, in which a different balance is struck between freedom and authority. That is what will be looked at next.

3. Intellectual Integrity - ‘But Is It True?’

It is often said: ‘If you’re an Anglican you needn’t be too bothered about the Church’s doctrines. What matters is how you live and what sort of person you are’. Yes, it is often said - but it is not quite what I found. To most of the Anglicans I have come across belief does matter. For them ‘how you live and what sort of person you are’ has more than a little to do with what you believe.
I have found consistently amongst Anglicans a very high degree of interest in lively theological reflection, a great deal of challenging writing and lively debate. There were any number of signs of this in Southwark Diocese, including a stream of theological books generated by people such as Hugh Montefiore, Peter Selby, Peter Price, Alan Race, David Edwards, Giles Harcourt and others. There were also, of course, the usual formal training courses for ordinands, lay readers and pastoral auxiliaries. And there was, in addition, the Bishop’s Certificate in Biblical and Theological Studies. There were a number of stimulating informal forums facilitated by people like Ivor-Smith Cameron and Celia Goodenough. And there were theology groups, including one set up by Graham Smith of which I was a member.

In all of this what I appreciated was the quality, indeed the virtue, of intellectual integrity - an integrity in asking critical questions, in registering doubts and attempting to express doctrines in more credible ways. The overall effect was to help people think about belief in a more adult way. These forums and writings were liberating insofar as they enabled people to shed some of the more oppressive or narrow interpretations of Christianity or the false security which may have been imparted from childhood. But was it the truth? Did it deepen or did it undermine official Church teaching? And how was one to tell?

Thus the question of integrity is more than that of good faith, but also of true faith: are there views about the church, of Christ or of God that one cannot hold and yet still claim to be an Anglican, or indeed a Christian?

That is the sort of question which, of course, arises only in extreme situations. Only once did I encounter anything approaching it. It was in the theology group to which I belonged. I can still feel the vehemence with which one of our members, a professional theologian and a liberal at that, said that if we were to invite a certain representative of ‘The Sea of Faith’ movement, he would leave the group. On the other hand, I attended another small group where the leading proponent of that same movement was given fair opportunity to spell out his position and take questions.

The more pertinent issue, then, is not so much about extreme cases but about the way the Anglicans commonly strike the balance between freedom and authority in their everyday approach to church doctrine. It goes without saying that here the difference between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches is considerable.

Lest the contrast between the two churches be overstated, it may be worth taking a cue from Newman, in particular his view on the Roman Catholic Church’s claim to infallibility. Infallibility, for Newman, did not entail absolutism or anti-intellectualism but a different kind of freedom. How so? Against absolutism, Newman argued that infallibility was first of all a characteristic of the church as such. Only secondarily was it a quality of the papacy and even then with limitations. It was never a case of: ‘Whatever the Pope says goes because he is infallible’. Rather the reverse. Referring to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Newman notes: ‘...it is a simple fact to say, that Catholics have not come to believe it because it is defined, but that it was defined because they believed it’ (Apologia, p.227). And, against anti-intellectualism, infallibility for Newman was not simply a safeguard against error. It was, in its own way, liberating. Far from serving to destroy the independence of the mind: ‘There never was a time when the intellect of the educated class was more active, or rather more restless, than in the middle ages’ (Apologia, pp. 229-238). One might say that here Newman was anticipating
Chesterton’s comments on orthodoxy.

Nonetheless, Newman remained resolutely opposed to Liberalism. To understand this, it would seem crucial to ask what he meant by ‘Liberalism’? The summary description which he offered was simply ‘the anti-dogmatic principle’. But the anti-dogmatic principle itself is rooted in something deeper, Rationalism. For Newman: ‘Rationalism is the great evil of the day’ (Apologia, p.131). By Rationalism Newman meant that peculiar approach to truth which demanded of any given proposition that it be subjected to the rigours of rational proof before it could be accepted. It must be irrefutable. For Newman such an attitude goes against the normal process of human reasoning. In his Grammar of Assent, he contrasts certainty (the quality of propositions) to certitude (the attitude engendering rational assent which relies more on the convergence of strong probabilities). Rationalism, furthermore, fails to account for the power of conscience as Newman describes it with its demanding, almost tyrannical sense of duty. Even less does Rationalism accord any value to the deeply personal, human character of religious sensibility, which for Newman involved heart speaking to heart. Finally, as applied specifically to Christian doctrine, Rationalism’s approach, for Newman, fails to acknowledge Revelation for what it claims to be - precisely not a collection of propositions but an historical body of living truth which subsists as a whole and which develops organically (Essay on the Development of Doctrine).

So where does all this leave Anglicanism? There is little of rationalism, it seems to me, but plenty of liberalism. It is not that there is no authority. The authority that is there is authority in a liberal mode, positively encouraging critical and creative thinking. Are Anglicans who imbibe liberalism simply, as Newman saw them, people who think they are enlightened but who fail to see where they are being led? Does a Church which embraces liberalism sooner or later find itself devoid of any distinctive theology, as Newman concluded was the case with Anglicanism? That I find hard to accept. Alongside the vertical structures of doctrinal authority in the Church of England - with which I claim no familiarity - there is what might be called a horizontal sort of ‘authority’ in that the three traditions in the Anglican Church - evangelical, catholic and broad - may, in a certain sense, be said to call each other to account. It is not that the evangelical and catholic traditions act as a check on liberalism, but rather that there are liberal currents within each of the three traditions. I find this sort of interaction very healthy.

I do not claim that many of Newman’s brilliant insights into the dangers of liberalism are no longer relevant, but rather that there are equally very real dangers in adopting his wholesale condemnation of liberalism. This is not just because liberalism today means something different from ‘Liberalism’ in Newman's day. After all, Newman himself acknowledged, ‘Liberalism’ meant different things at different times even in his own lifetime (Apologia, Note A: Liberalism) yet he still opposed the core feature of liberalism, its ‘anti-dogmatic principle’. And that principle surely is still very much alive and kicking. Newman’s warnings do indeed have their uses at a time when many are indeed approaching Christianity not so much as a living body of revealed truth but as one stall in a religious fair, some bits of which are worth taking, in a pick and mix manner, as part of a provisional construct called ‘religion’ or ‘spirituality’.

But there is another kind of liberalism, it seems to me, which is rooted in a deeper and genuinely ‘catholic’ attitude, which welcomes intellectual challenges, dialogue, and a widening of perspective. It takes seriously the questions posed by
developments in Biblical research, by contemporary science and by the increased intermingling with people from other faiths. From the time of the second century ‘Apologists’ onwards, Christian theologians have engaged positively with other points of view, whether the philosophies of the Stoics, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel or Marx. They have not only been prepared to acknowledge the value of such philosophies but have also explored the extent to which their insights and perspective may be incorporated into Christian theology. To do that requires a mixture of humility and a confidence that Christian faith - especially in a Johannine framework - reveals the true meaning of our world in its depth and breadth.

To go one step further, I would suggest that this sort of liberalism is also an important element in the Church’s mission to today’s world, where there is such a polarisation between the seductive false liberalism of an increasingly marketised culture in which choice is all, and the frightening illiberalism which is dividing communities into ever narrower and more rigid identities based on religious fundamentalism, nationalism or tribalism. Our times are not like those of Newman’s. We are faced today not with the advance but the retreat of liberalism. These are times when the very word ‘liberal’ is a term of contempt both in the US, where it implies being soft on crime, morality, the work-ethic, etc. and even in the UK, where it is often equated with being woolly-minded, permissive, and unwilling to stand up against injustice or threats to national identity.

Liberalism needs its defenders. The particular challenge for its Christian defenders is to develop this on sound theological grounds. This means demonstrating the extent to which liberal values are inherent in Christian tradition, not simply imported from outside. A second part of that task will be to show why and how those values contribute to the development of the Church’s own inner spiritual life, as well as for its witness to the contemporary world: ‘The truth shall make you free’.

How many Roman Catholics would agree with the observations I have been making? Many would. Would Newman himself? Not very likely, but it is worth noting that he did have some sympathy with some liberal elements within the Catholic Church, both at home and abroad, for example, with figures such as Lacordaire and Montalembert. It would be interesting to speculate how Newman would have reacted to the more conservative, and sometimes authoritarian, policies which have been pursued by the Roman Catholic Church in recent decades. True, the Church does seem to tolerate a degree of dissent on some issues. Roman Catholics who dissent from the Church’s teaching on contraception, for example, are not excommunicated. On the other hand, any Catholic theologian or pastor who dares publicly to support such dissent runs the risk of being removed from office - as some of my Catholic friends have been. I do not find that at all healthy. That is one reason why I value the liberal spirit that is given space in the Anglican Church to breathe, to question, and to allow truth itself to flourish. It must not be extinguished.

4. Pastoral Flexibility - The Shape of Ministry

The Church of England, as an established church, has a parochial system which covers every corner of the land. Yet almost everywhere it has for decades been faced with a decline in members, a crisis in finances and a vast surplus of church buildings. To address this situation it has had recourse to a range of creative, flexible policies. The one which has raised most questions for me personally is the ordination of non-stipendiary clergy, not so much as locally ordained ministers but particularly as
ministers in secular employment. I am not suggesting that non-stipendiary ministry began simply as a crisis-response, although in the present context there is a danger that it could become such. So in this section what I want to do is raise some questions about the theological basis for non-stipendiary ministry.

I readily acknowledge a two-fold personal interest in the issue, both as one who was trained and ordained in a very different tradition and as one who conducted modules for many years in both the Southwark Ordination Course (SOC), as it then was, and for the Ordained Local Ministry course (OLM). One would have thought that any questions I may have had should be resolved by now. Yes, but not entirely. To be absolutely clear: the questions are in no way whatsoever about the character or ability of the candidates themselves. On the contrary, I was greatly impressed with the ordinands, who tended to be experienced professional people, many of whom held high-ranking positions in their fields - civil servants, lawyers, social workers, accountants, etc. Indeed it is precisely in order that such people may not be undervalued, inadequately supported or treated as second-class priests that the basis of their ordination must be seen to rest on sound theology rather than simple expediency.

To take the OLM experiment first. Here the theological justification is easier to see. Ordaining people who have been presented by the local congregation on the basis of firm faith and proven service seems, at least superficially, quite in keeping with the New Testament model of priests as elders. In fact, more questions might be raised about the traditional practice of ordaining young men and women whose life experience has been largely limited to the world of the university and/or theological college. The main question I have about ordained local ministry is less theological than pragmatic: how well does it actually fit with a highly mobile society, in which the ordained local minister is likely to move and the local “community” likely to change dramatically in its composition.

It is in respect to ministers in secular employment that, for me at least, the real theological questions begin to surface: What exactly are they being ordained for? If it is primarily to enhance their ministry in the workplace, does not ordaining a few Christians as priests undermine the workplace ministry of the vast majority of lay Christians? If, on the other hand, they are being ordained primarily to exercise sacramental and pastoral ministry in such parishes as may be designated by the diocesan bishop, does this not undermine the ministry of the parish community? Does it also give rise to the more radical question as to whether the celebration of the Eucharist really does need to be presided over and led by an ordained person. It is a question which the shortage of ordained priests has caused also to be asked, albeit tentatively, in some Roman Catholic circles.

To ask what exactly ministers in secular employment are being ordained for seems to me to raise important questions not just about the nature of the priestly ministry but about the church itself. For the answer to the question ‘What is a priest or minister?’ depends on what we believe the church is, not just structurally but theologically. The fact that such questions about ordained ministry do not arise with the same urgency in the Free Churches actually illustrates the point. If the Anglican ordained minister is seen as more than a preacher, teacher, counsellor, administrator or civic figure, is it not precisely because the church which she or he represents is offering something more: a spiritual life, which is so deep that precisely it cannot be put into words or contrived but rather presented sacramentally and nurtured by prayerfulness. The question remains. I hope it is the right question.
5. Intellectual Captivity - Church, State and Gospel

The fifth and final feature of the Anglican Church that has struck me relates specifically to the status of the Church of England as an established church. Here the term that comes to mind, unfortunately, is captivity - not a harsh or cruel captivity. Certainly not. But a captivity nonetheless.

The importance of this issue has long been recognised. It was this which sparked off the Oxford Movement, provoked by a Whig Government whose policies were felt to be undermining the very Church it was meant to protect. It had passed legislation guaranteeing toleration of other Christian denominations and removing religious tests. When, with the passing of the Irish Church Act of June 1833, the Government proceeded to suppress ten of the Irish Church’s twenty-two Anglican bishoprics and to impose a tax on clergy, the battle was joined. The trumpet was sounded the very next month, appropriately on Bastille Day, by John Keble in his sermon on ‘The National Apostasy’. Eight years later, when the Government created an Anglican bishopric in Jerusalem in 1841, in spite of the fact that virtually no Anglican community existed there, Newman declared: ‘It brought me on the beginning of the end’ (*Apologia*, p. 140).

The villain of the piece, according to the Tractarians, was not the Government as such but ‘Liberalism’. It was Liberalism in government that was driving the offensive and Liberalism in the Church of England that had eroded its defences.

For Newman, the question of establishment of the Church of England could be addressed in purely pragmatic terms once he had come to the painful conclusion that the Anglican Church was not really a church anyway:

‘Moreover, I had never even as an Anglican been a lover of the actual Establishment; Hurrell Froude’s Remains, in which it is called an “incubus” and “Upas Tree”, will stand in evidence, as for him, so for me…. Indeed I have been milder in my thoughts of the Establishment ever since I have been a Catholic than before, and for an obvious reason; - when I was an Anglican, I viewed it as representing a higher doctrine than its own, and now I view it as keeping out a lower and more dangerous….While Catholics are so weak in England, it is doing our work…. What our duty would be at another time and in other circumstances, supposing, for instance, the Establishment lost its dogmatic faith, or at least did not preach it, is another matter altogether… How long this will last in the years now before us, it is impossible to say, for the Nation drags down its Church to its own level’ (*The Anglican Church*, *Answer to Detail to Mr. Kingsley’s Accusations*, 1864, in Ker, pp. 454-455).

But though cool on the principle of establishment, Newman never forgot the personal debt he owed it. He refused to join in the calls for disestablishment: ‘And as I have received so much good from the Anglican Establishment itself, can I have the heart, or rather the want of charity, considering that it does for so many others, what it has done for me, to wish to see it overthrown?’ (*The Anglican Church*, *Answer to Detail to Mr. Kingsley’s Accusations*, 1864, in Ker, p. 453). Newman did concede, however, that his *Apologia* might have precisely that effect.
Does the Roman Catholic Church have a view on the established status of the Church of England? Of course not formally. That would be dreadful ecumenical manners. But, where once it would have had a view - which would have to have been negative - there is now no need to take a view at all. For, at the Second Vatican Council, the position of the Catholic Church on Church-State relations underwent a major change. Previously the prevailing view was that whilst the Catholic Church might tolerate whatever church-state regime was in place so long as it provided it sufficient freedom to carry on its basic mission in society, the ideal, nonetheless, was that the Roman Catholic faith should be officially recognised by the State, even if that did not mean actual establishment. In the Council’s Declaration on Religious Freedom, however, liberalism seems to have found a place. Here the role of the State towards ‘religion’ is described as that of guaranteeing full religious freedom both to individuals and to ‘religious bodies’. As for ‘establishment’, the Declaration goes on to state that: ‘If, in view of peculiar circumstances obtaining among certain peoples, special legal recognition is given in the constitutional order of society to one religious body, it is at the same time imperative that the right of all citizens and religious bodies to religious freedom should be recognized and made effective in practice’ (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 7 December 1965, para. 6). In other words, establishment - of any religion - is neither good nor bad in itself and is certainly not the ideal for Roman Catholics (or for Anglicans); it is simply acceptable, and even then only under the right conditions. What sort of conditions might justify such an arrangement the Council does not spell out in any detail.

Given the degree of religious freedom that prevails in England, and the good relations that obtain between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, Anglicans need not worry that the Roman Catholic Church is pressing for it to be disestablished. Roman Catholics are free to judge the present situation as desirable, undesirable or merely tolerable. They may be aware, however, that within the Church of England itself there have long been those, such as the former Area Bishop in Southwark Diocese, Colin Buchanan, who have argued for the disestablishment of the Church of England. Although these seem to be voices from the margins, I must confess to sharing their view.

I do recognise that establishment offers some advantages for the church’s mission, both pastorally and even prophetically. Pastorally, perhaps the most important advantage is that it entails a responsibility for a ministry, of a kind, to all people, of whatever faith, in every corner of the land. Prophetically, its status gives it the confidence to speak both constructively and critically to the government of the day, as was seen most dramatically in the case of *Faith in the City* under a Conservative Government, and with regard to the invasion of Iraq under a Labour Government. One might even argue, paradoxically, that in an increasingly multi-faith society, the preservation of the historic institution of an established (and liberal) Church of England can actually promote multi-culturalism and social cohesion. Advantages of this sort would seem to count for much more than the *de iure* presence of a number of (very busy) bishops in the House of Lords. As for the funding that the State provides for the upkeep of the church’s cathedrals, cathedrals are so important a part of English heritage - and the tourism industry - that, even without establishment, it is hard to imagine that the State would not wish to provide support.

The case against establishment? For some the issue may be simply about the terms of the agreement, the delineation of particular rights, responsibilities and powers. If, as circumstances change, some of these terms require changing too, they can be re-negotiated. For instance there has been pretty widespread dissatisfaction in the
Church of England about the role of Prime Ministers and monarchs in the appointment of bishops, and steps have been taken to agree a limit to the exercise of those powers, although, as I understand it, they remain as reserve powers. But the very fact that such an important internal church matter has to be negotiated at all with the state surely suggests that the problem is not just a pragmatic one, concerning the particular terms of establishment. It is a theological problem about establishment itself.

Nor is the theological problem only about the freedom of the church to handle its own affairs as it sees fit. Even more basic, is the issue of the very identity of the church: does it see its natural home amongst the rulers of this world or amongst the people, especially those who lack the status and privileges of class and wealth. Of course Anglicans, like Roman Catholics, would respond by saying that the church is for all, as indeed it is, so long as we do not forget where it all began.

Faced with such criticisms of establishment from a non-Anglican, Anglicans would have every right to reply: It’s all very well to accuse us of institutional captivity but what about the Roman Catholic Church and its concordats with fascist and communist governments? What about the Popes and the Lateran Pact? To which the only honest answer can be: Point taken: Ecclesia semper reformanda.

CONCLUSION

A recurring observation made in the course of these observations is that the five features of the Church of England which I have singled out may be due as much to English culture as to Anglicanism. A certain type of civility continues to be cultivated by the public school system and persistent class-character of British society. A spirit of humanity has been a notable feature of English sensibility from the middle ages through Shakespeare to the present day. Resistance to dogma has deep roots as Newman observed: ‘It is not at all easy (humanly speaking) to wind up an Englishman to a dogmatic level’ (Apologia, p. 186). And the acceptance of an established church fits in nicely with a contemporary interest in heritage and the activities of the royal family.

In short, what I have experienced in the Church of England is certainly not religion in its pure state. Instead it is a wonderful mixture of Englishness and Christian faith, with all the benefits and contradictions that entails. Indeed the one time when the Church of England was least true to itself was when it briefly imbibed not the spirit of liberalism but the spirit of puritanism. The idea of a pure church for a pure people should make us all worry. Thank goodness that spirit did not find a permanent home in Anglicanism...or in Roman Catholicism.

As for Anglicanism in the world today, I do worry. I worry not from any real or supposed threat coming from outside, as for example by the creation of Ordinariates. I assume that, like Newman, those Anglicans who make the painful journey do so because of what attracts them in Roman Catholicism not because of what repels them in Anglicanism. The real threat seems to be coming from within. Will Anglicanism be able to draw on its qualities of civility, humanity, intellectual integrity and pastoral flexibility to enable its dissident factions to find a modus vivendi? If not, we will all be the poorer.
REFERENCES

