

**MISSION-SHAPED CURACY? RESHAPING CURACY FOR EFFECTIVE  
FORMATION FOR AUTHENTIC MINISTRY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST  
CENTURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis poses the research question of whether curacy in the Church of England, in its current majority model of one curate in one benefice under the supervision of one training incumbent, continues to offer the most productive space for the post-ordination ongoing formation of the newly ordained.

It uses an interdisciplinary methodology, in which theology and ecclesiology are brought into dialogue with the sociological thought of Casanova and Bourdieu, with Stanislavski's theory of method acting, and with performance practice in art music and popular music.

It additionally asks questions of how the increasingly complex external and internal contexts for ministry might be productively conceptualized, and of what kinds of ordained ministers might be needed by the twenty-first century Church of England.

Consideration of these questions contributes to the conclusion that whilst aspects of good practice can usefully be retained from the current model of curacy, contextual demands and the changing nature of the role of the ordained, coupled with a significant shift in the demographic profile of those coming forward for ordination, call for a reframing of its structures.

## **DEDICATION**

For my parents, who inspire me  
and whose belief in me has made this thesis possible.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Advisory Board of Ministry	ABM
Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry	ACCM
Central Advisory Council of Training for the Ministry	CACTM
Curates' Augmentation Fund	CAF
Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland	CCBI
Central Entrance Examination	CEE
Economic and Social Research Council	ERSC
Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans	FCA
Global Anglican Futures Conference	GAFCON
Ministers in Secular Employment	MSE
New International Version	NIV
New Revised Standard Version	NRSV
Non-Stipendiary Ministry (or Ministers)	NSM
Ordained Local Ministry (or Ministers)	OLM
Self-Supporting Ministry (or Ministers)	SSM
World Council of Churches	WCC



## INTRODUCTION

This study is about curacy in the Church of England. The research questions it addresses arose primarily from the author's experience as a curate, training incumbent, and an Associate Diocesan Director of Ordinands who has the good fortune to serve as part of a Diocesan Vocations Group charged with shaping the vocations strategy for the Diocese of Manchester.

During that time I have reflected at length, as many others have before me, on the general research field of the current shape of ordained ministry in the Church of England in the light of the contexts in which it exists and to which it responds, and on the specific research field of how curacy may or may not offer a fruitful environment for the encouragement and nurture of the newly ordained.

Latterly, as one who was fortunate to have had a positive experience of curacy, I have tried to create a similarly fruitful experience for a newly ordained colleague, whose skills, experiences and learning styles are refreshingly different from my own. My success in doing that is for others to judge, but the process has both refined my practice and helped to shape three qualitative hypotheses, which serve as research questions for this study. I will return to these below.

### **Locating Myself: the Question of Researcher Bias**

As Selltitz et al. note, any researcher investigating an institution to which they have some connection must adequately consider questions of their bias, as researchers are 'human beings not machines' (quoted in Bell, 1987, p.73). Given my involvement first as a curate, and later as a training incumbent and Associate Director of Ordinands,

much of the research for this project has taken place with me as a participant observer, which, as Cameron notes, 'raises issues of neutrality and objectivity' (2005, p.20).

In addressing such issues, Richards draws the researcher into 'reflect[ing] on the baggage you take in [to the project], the biases and interests and areas of ignorance' (2005, p.42). Schwandt (2001, p.224) goes further, suggesting that reflexivity rather than reflection is needed, and that there is a need to engage with the issue of bias rather than simply acknowledge it. Reflexivity addresses 'one's biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences and so forth' and considers how the researcher is located in the 'setting, context [and] social phenomenon' being researched. Such an approach takes seriously the cultural encoding of the researcher that leads to there being no absolute objectivity from which to research.

Richards (2005, p.190) suggests a useful way forward in acknowledging bias and reporting on methodological reflexivity:

Describe yourself as the researcher, your situation and your cultural and social location and ability to understand the different locations studied, the difficulties and how you dealt with them, your involvement with the situation and participants studied, and reflection on the influence of this involvement on them and on your study.

I write as an ordained minister of the Church of England, who aims to be a critical friend to the institution of which I am a part. I hold it in considerable affection, as a 'cradle Anglican' who whilst fundamentally suspicious of divisive labels, has moved, over time, from self-identifying as an Anglo-Catholic sacramentalist to a charismatic evangelical. However, I have not rejected my catholic roots, seeing them as something to be cherished and carried rather than cast aside. This journey has both provided me with first-hand experience of the several traditions of the Church of England, and, at times, located me in hard places as I have been able to see value in conflicting points of

view, practices and theologies. I continue to sit as something of an insider and outsider to each tradition.

Brown and Cooke (2010, pp.6-7) note that, whilst there is an expectation of a contribution to academic knowledge, the professional doctorate ‘has been purposefully adapted to suit doctoral level study in a professional field rather than academia per se’ and consequently enjoys a ‘close relationship ... with the development of practice within the profession.’ Undertaking a professional doctorate has provided structured ways for me to reflect on my experiences and the contexts in which I have practised and continue to practise as an ordained person, bringing them into dialogue with models and theories of professional practice from my previous career as a musician, and with insights drawn from other disciplines. This process of intentional interdisciplinary engagement has, as the ERSC (2005, Appendix 2 paragraph 2) notes, both developed my professional practice, and already, through many conversations with colleagues and superiors in the Church, supported me in ‘producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge.’

I have also chosen to research an aspect of ordained ministry, something in which I continue to engage, so I inevitably bring my experiences and the preferences, prejudices and biases they have formed into the task of research. Both previous research and work I have carried out for this study seem to point towards a need for some degree of reframing of curacy, but I am uncomfortable with the prospect of wholesale abandonment of current models, having enjoyed and benefitted from my time as a curate. Here I acknowledge that my position has been reached partly by critical enquiry and partly by reflection on my experience.

I served a curacy in a liberal catholic parish, working positively in that ethos and negotiating my level of participation in its few aspects that challenged my convictions. Under the guidance of a gracious and tolerant training incumbent and with the partnership of a reader (now curate) who enjoyed the opportunity of working alongside colleagues of different traditions, I began the journey into learning something of the wisdom and discernment needed to read and interpret the complexity of life inside and outside the denomination in the twenty-first century and to offer any kind of articulated and lived response. As a team, we unconsciously modelled the principle of *adiaphora*<sup>1</sup>, not always reaching a common mind, but agreeing courses of action that were in accord with the will of God, as best we could discern it.

Expressed more simply, it was astonishing how much common ground we could establish and how we were able to see the value in practices and theologies with which we did not necessarily agree, when we kept in mind that ministry exists for God and to the benefit of others. The vitality to the faith community of the practices and theologies remained our motivating factor, although we were respectful of our individual convictions when negotiating participation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, among field clergy and readers, we are far from alone in being able to achieve a positive, workable way of cross-tradition being and doing, even if this seems elusive at denominational level, or undesirable when ministry is taken into the realm of abstract discussion.

My ongoing critical reflection since leaving its context has caused me to conclude that my curacy took place in a training context that was, in many ways, exemplary. My

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson (2001, p.24), drawing on Romans 14 and the 1577 Lutheran Formula of Concord, describes *adiaphora* as a process through which a course of action in accord with the will of God might be agreed when a common mind has not been reached on 'matters not regarded as essential to faith that might therefore be allowed in the church'.

training incumbent offered valuable support and guidance, but also showed a generous willingness to value such gifts and charisms as I may possess, to reflect honestly on his practice as much as mine, and provide opportunities for me to take the primary leadership role, sometimes receiving that from me himself. The Church similarly offered much. The people of All Saints and Martyrs were not reticent in voicing their opinion: directly critical on occasion, but similarly forthright in expressing appreciation and love, constantly willing me to do well. And the parish provided diverse opportunities to engage with the joys and challenges of life on an outer social-housing estate.

More widely, two successive Area Deans encouraged me to bring insights from my research into discussions on clergy deployment and my Diocesan Bishop created opportunities for my work to be shared at diocesan level as it unfolded.

Consequently, my experience of curacy was positive, and this could result in bias towards an overly optimistic evaluation of the efficacy of its model. I remain mindful, though, of the many stories shared with me during the period of this study, alongside those recorded in previous research, which present a different experience of curacy.

This has caused me to take a more layered and nuanced approach to my analysis, which affirms aspects of current practice, but also suggests ways in which its structures seem to be in need of reframing.

### **Formulating the Research Questions: Method and Methodology**

The process [of *praxis* research] begins and ends in practice, and hopefully leads to better practice (Ward in Cameron et al., 2005, p.24).

As Robson (1993, p.65) notes, research questions commonly rest on a number of supporting hypotheses, each of which is a ‘testable proposition about the relationship

between two or more events or concepts.’ Verma and Beard (1981, p.184) take this further, stressing both the tentative nature of most hypotheses and defining them as often being ‘hunches that the researcher has about the existence of relationship between variables.’

Bell (1987, p.13), drawing on Bogdan and Biklen (1982, pp.38-44), points out that some qualitative studies commence their research journey with only highly tentative propositions, or without a defined hypothesis to be tested. Richards (2005, p.126) is more definite, attesting that ‘qualitative research does not test a clear hypothesis.’ The research journey for this study, which began during my period of initial training for ordination, has seen title changes and ‘intuitive hunches’ (Robson, 1993, p.65) formed into tentative hypotheses, tested, reshaped and sometimes abandoned. I have now formulated a qualitative hypothesis that forms the overall argument of this study:

- That the structures of curacy, as they currently stand, no longer offer the most fruitful space for forming the kinds of ordained ministers needed by the twenty-first century Church of England, and so need to be reframed, at least in part.

From this I have drawn three research questions, the first of which is addressed to my specific field of curacy:

- How can the structures of curacy be reframed to provide a more effective space for fruitful formation without losing good practice elements of the current model?

Consideration of this specific field question without broader investigation would, however, be inadequate for the task of proposing answers to the hypothesis. Curacy, in addition to being a stand-alone three or four-year period of ordained ministry, is

intended to serve a purpose. This is encapsulated in a statement defining formation from the denominational Report *Formation for Ministry Within a Learning Church*:

Ministerial formation is a dynamic and continuing process that draws on a range of contexts, in which the candidate moves between gathered and dispersed settings of the Church's life, and, under supervision, is helped to grow towards the role of the ordained defined ... in terms of service, holiness, vocation and mission (Ministry Division, 2003a, p.39).

In this way, curacy is intended to be a foundational stage for formation in 'the role of the ordained', which, as the Report identifies, involves engagement with a range of contexts. Therefore the second and third of my research questions are addressed to the wide general field of the contexts in which curates minister, and the narrow general field of the role of the ordained, respectively.

The structure of the thesis proceeds from its wide general field to its narrow general field and then carries conclusions forward to its specific field of curacy.

My second research question begins the discourse, addressed to the wide general field of external and internal contexts for ordained ministry in the Church of England:

- What kind of theoretical framework might offer to the newly ordained a way of reading and holding together the complexities of internal and external contexts for ordained ministry that is consonant with the vision of a mixed economy of church?<sup>2</sup>

I explore this in Chapter 1, by analysing trends of change in both contexts using the concepts of metanarrative and micronarrative. I then suggest an alternative way of

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'mixed economy of church' was coined by Rowan Williams to describe a denominational landscape in which 'inherited expressions', by which was meant local parish churches, and 'fresh expressions' were embraced in a single structure as equal partners (Croft, 2008, p.3). Croft (in Nelstrop and Percy, 2008, p.10) defines a fresh expression as 'a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church' However, as Chapter 1 illustrates, the nature of that landscape, the definition of a fresh expression of church, and of what constitutes 'membership' of any church have all been subject to multiple interpretations.

conceptualizing the complexity: the netnarrative paradigm, which I define and explore using metaphors of musical fugue and deep-sea fishing.

My third research question is addressed to the narrow general field of the role of the ordained:

- What kinds of ordained ministers are needed by the mixed economy Church of England in the twenty-first century?

Beginning in Chapter 1, re-reading ordained ministry through the lens of authenticity, I suggest that the Church of England needs ordained ministers who are real and ring true.

I first consider the appropriateness of authenticity as a lens for re-reading ordained ministry, and then, in Chapter 2, explore what authentic ministry might look like, offering dialogue with understandings of authenticity in musical performance.

In Chapter 3 I discuss issues of role and vocation, in dialogue with Casanova's sociological reading of the privatization thesis and Bourdieu's conception of habitus, specifically asking the question of whether the roles of clergy in the Church of England, in their majority expression as parochial clergy, serve as practical expressions of or barriers to authentic ministry.

I then return to the first of my research questions, as I narrow the discourse to my specific field of curacy in Chapter 4. There I trace the evolution of curacy in the Church of England into its current amalgam of assistantship and apprenticeship, and evaluate the ways in which its twenty-first century *status quo* is effective or ineffective as a period of formation in the kind of authentic ministry presented in the preceding chapters.



Finally, in Chapter 5, I propose a reframing of the structures of curacy, in dialogue with Konstantin Stanislavski's processes for method acting, identifying good practice in the current model that could usefully be retained.

It soon became clear to me that many of the pathways inherent to my research questions had already been well trodden, but that those to my central hypothesis had not, and so the methodology for this study needed to be both 'appropriate for the questions [I wanted] to answer' (Robson, 2002, p.80) and sufficiently creative to open new plains of discourse. Consequently, I have adopted an interdisciplinary approach, which, as the United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education (drawing on Powell, 1999) notes, reflects the important need for doctoral level professionals 'to be able to operate effectively at the interface between disciplines' (Powell and Long, 2005, p.14). In this way, I bring theology and ecclesiology into dialogue with musical performance, acting and social theory, with the aim of drawing out additional dimensions of what it means to practise ministry in the twenty-first century Church of England, and of how the newly ordained might begin to negotiate those dimensions in curacy.

Within this broadly interdisciplinary approach, each chapter of the thesis consciously adopts a number of methods, combining them into an overall mosaic methodology.<sup>3</sup> Percy defines such a methodology as 'insight, observation, analysis and reflection, pieced together to make a representative pattern that challenges prevailing paradigms' which generates a study in which 'unlike other more obvious pure or systematic forms of research ... the sum ... will be greater than the parts' (Percy, 2006, p.2).

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<sup>3</sup> Cameron et al. (2005, p.19) make a useful distinction between methodology and method, defining the former in terms of providing a framework within which particular methods and their underlying rationales might be evaluated, and the latter as the practical usage of an approach.

I have deliberately chosen to integrate the literature review into the various chapters of the thesis, in a way that coheres with this methodology, rather than include it as a separate chapter. In this way, I introduce the dialogue partners from each respective discipline as they are employed, identifying and evaluating their seminal literature as the discourse proceeds.

By suggesting a way of reframing the structures of curacy, I aim to make an original contribution in a small, yet timely, way to the professional knowledge that underpins practice in relation to the formation of curates in the Church of England (UK Council for Graduate Education, 2002, pp.34-35). In addition, I also hope to offer a contribution to academic knowledge through re-reading ordained ministry in the denomination using the previously little-used lens of authenticity. In these ways, I hope to demonstrate the kind of dual focus suggested by the Economic and Social Research Council's (ERSC) evaluation of professional doctorates (2005, Appendix 2 paragraph 3).

Whilst this study makes no claim to revolutionize either the broad field of ecclesiology or the specific field of the study of curacy, it aims to reveal, in some small way, additional fruitful dimensions that subsequent work might develop.

## CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTS FOR MINISTRY

This chapter begins the journey towards reframing curacy by examining the wide general field for this study: the external and internal contexts in which ordained ministry in the twenty-first century Church of England exists and with which it engages. It considers specifically the second of my research questions: what kind of theoretical framework might offer to the newly ordained a way of reading and holding together the complexities of internal and external contexts for ordained ministry that is consonant with the vision of a mixed economy of church?

The Church of England faces arguably unprecedented challenges and opportunities in its twenty-first century contexts. On the one hand, the days of Christendom could be said to have passed and claims that the Church no longer occupies a central place in the lives and rites of passage of a majority of the British population seem credible (Brown, 2001; Bruce, 2002, p.62ff; Jackson, 2005, p.103). Yet on the other hand, census returns illustrate that a sizeable proportion of British people still claims some degree of allegiance to the Established Church, however vicarious their religious practice (Davie, in Croft, 2006, p.36ff), and there seems to have been something of a resurgence of interest in the spiritual dimensions of life, although this is now expressed in a number of different ways (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005).

Some studies have placed emphasis in their analyses on how the social structures of society have moved away from being centred on geographical communities in favour of cross-contextual networks grounded in personal choice, which arguably reflects a consumer-driven society (Archbishops' Council, 2004, pp.4-7). However, others provide a corrective encouraging an approach that looks beyond broad strokes to

identify how there are still areas in which a strong sense of geographically-based community remains, alongside the building of individualized networks (Williams, 2011).

In the majority of previous considerations of the challenges posed to the Church of England by such contextual shifting sands and the new opportunities that change offers, there is a central, but seemingly unchallenged, broad thesis of cultural disjuncture between the church and the world, with the implication that somewhat homogeneous cultures can be evidenced in each. This is most commonly expressed in terms of a fundamental fault line between the two cultures, in which the church, in its inherited forms, is thought of as incapable of speaking into the lives of postmodern people, or as involving a time lag, as the backward-looking culture of the church struggles to catch up with that of the world in which it exists (Mobsby, 2007; Pete Ward, 2002).

Whilst many theories have been advanced to support this assumption, some of which are grounded in empirical research, it can be challenged from two perspectives. First, as John Williams (2011, pp.109-110) notes, it can be challenged on grounds that the 'popular postmodern cultural analysis' assumes a 'single, definitive socio-cultural paradigm shift' that does not accurately account for 'a highly varied portfolio of more or less contemporaneous processes' of social change. Second, an assumption that the fault lines acting against effective mission and ministry lie just in disjunctive cultures of change between society and the Church seems over simplistic.

The discourse in this chapter traces how there seem to be at work in both Church and society common processes, through which the Christendom metanarrative is being deconstructed, but which generate a complex landscape of constantly morphing shifting

sands, rather than the wholesale replacement of the Christendom metanarrative with either other competing metanarratives or individualistic micronarratives.

I then suggest an alternative way of conceptualizing the complexity of contemporary contexts for ministry, and the role of ordained ministry within them, bringing theology and ecclesiology into dialogue with musical form.

### **External Contexts**

#### *The Metanarrative is Dead: Long Live the Metanarrative?*

As Warner (2010, p.7), drawing on empirical research undertaken by Brierley identifies, statistical surveys of church attendance in England undertaken between 1979 and 2005 illustrate a strong trend towards decline and marginalization, which seems to support a claim of the death of the Christendom metanarrative. He sees this as indicative of a process that began much earlier, and that has seen a decline in attendance from some 24 per cent of English people in 1851<sup>1</sup> to 6.3 per cent in 2005.<sup>2</sup> The traditional occasional offices of baptism and marriage have also experienced significant decline. In 1900 some 65 per cent of babies born in that year were baptized into the Church of England (Warner, 2010, p.12). By 2008 this had fallen to 13 per cent (Church of England, 2008a).<sup>3</sup> In 1900 some 67 per cent of marriages registered in England took place in the Church of England (Warner, 2010, p.12). In 2008 the Church of England registered

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce (1995; 1996; 2002) reinterprets the empirical data provided by Mann to identify some 60 per cent of English people as attending church in 1851, arguably to advance his theory of relentless secularization (Warner, 2010, p.11), but methodological questions have been raised concerning the number of times people attending church more than once were counted. Gill (1993), reworking the figures to take account of differentials between multiple attenders and single attenders identified in a 1902-3 survey, estimates that the actual percentage should be around 24 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> This figure includes attendance at all Christian churches, not just those of the Church of England.

<sup>3</sup> As Warner (2010, p.12) notes, some care must be taken in comparing these two figures, as post 1980 official Church of England statistics for infant births are not directly comparable with those of previous years, given that they only specify infant baptisms of children under one year of age.

some 53,150 marriages (Church of England, 2008b) from a total of 235,794 in that year (Office for National Statistics, 2011), giving a percentage figure of 22.5 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

Arguably, the most influential sociological theory advanced to account for this decline has been the secularization thesis, which, as Warner (2010, p.83) concludes, gradually came to adopt the status of a metanarrative in competition to that of Christendom, vying for acceptance as a controlling interpretation of religious belief and practice. It found its strongest British advocates in Bryan Wilson (1966; 1982; 1998) and Steve Bruce (1995; 1996; 2002). The thesis encompasses four modernizing social processes that together, it is argued, result in the marginalization of religion in society through undermining its traditional regulatory roles of authority and control (Warner, 2010, p.32).

First: individualism. This dimension draws its bearings from Emile Durkheim's 1912 study of suicide (Durkheim, 2002). Keen to show communal religion as essential to social cohesion, Durkheim extrapolated from empirical evidence of decline in religious observance in Europe a series of causal factors centred on individualism: individualism breaks down social cohesion, which, in turn diminishes the practice of communal religion, and results in growing secularization. He saw this trend as being unintentionally aided by Protestant theologies of salvation: their expression of the heart of the Christian faith as a personal relationship with Jesus, he claimed, 'elevates' the individual. Therefore its unintended consequence is an increased breakdown in communal religion, and thus, social cohesion, and so it acts in favour of secularization (Warner, 2010, pp.22-23).

Second, arising from the social theory of Max Weber (Gerth and Wright Mill, 1991), rationalism and bureaucracy. Weber considered that the Enlightenment trend towards

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<sup>4</sup> This figure does not include blessings following a civil ceremony.

rationality, in which modernity reframed life and the things of life in ways that did not include reference to God, had generated bureaucratic systems that came to define its narrow approach to societal authority. He saw this as inevitable, and traced similar processes at work in the creation of religious communities, in which the initial charisma of a sect<sup>5</sup> gradually evolved into bureaucracy as it developed into an organized church.<sup>6</sup> This, in turn, led to secularization as religion became characterized by the social forces surrounding it, and thus, indistinguishable from capitalist society. Losing its distinctiveness, it also lost its previous authority (Warner, 2010, pp.23-26).

Later proponents of the secularization thesis identified two additional trends, which comprise the remaining two streams of its classical expression.

Third: structural (or functional) differentiation. In this process, society and its practices of living are dissected into distinctive areas of specialization, each of which develops a profession of specialists who are afforded the right to speak with authority within that area of expertise, but only in that area.<sup>7</sup> The notion of the priest as generalist, speaking with assumed authority on a local level into every area of life, sits uncomfortably with this trend, as does the concept of the church having a regulatory, or controlling, function in society. Consequently, religion becomes privatized, as one optional pastime for the individual to choose among many, without any right to speak or to be heard in any other sphere of life (Warner, 2010, pp.26-27).

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<sup>5</sup> Weber's use of the term was culturally neutral, and carried none of the pejorative overtones of its subsequent use to denote a religion that is not considered to be mainstream or respectable.

<sup>6</sup> The strength of Weber's analysis is reflected in its longevity. Many critiques of fresh expressions in the contemporary Church of England appear to adopt his typologies as they claim that over time the charisma of the fresh either generates unsustainability or evolves into a bureaucracy akin to that of inherited expressions that acts against its ability to remain 'fresh'.

<sup>7</sup> Kelsey (1993) and Farley (2001) both identify a similar trend of dissection within theological education, showing how the integrated approach to theology of the 'Athenian' knowledge of God and the things of God became gradually replaced by a series of encyclopedic specialist disciplines: the 'Berlin' approach.

Fourth, in contrast to the advocates of interreligious dialogue, who regard ecumenism as being in accord with Jesus' prayer for unity (John 17), and dialogue with other faiths as a theologically mainstream enterprise (Swidler, 1983; 1990), secularization theorists see religious pluralism as aiding the decline of religion. This is first of all a result of interreligious conflict rendering religious practice an unattractive option, a critique that has more recently been extended to the denominational sphere in discussion of the Church of England's seeming obsession with sexuality and gender. Second, to use Berger's (1967) account, the descent of all religions into plurality, where adherence becomes a matter of personal choice from many options, increases religious relativism, through which plausibility comes into question and, thus, effects secularization (Warner, 2010, p.29).

Additional factors have been claimed to have further advanced the marginalization of religion. Among them, Wilson (1982, pp.153-162) proposed that increased social mobility reduced the sense of belonging to a local community among many people, and consequently lessened any felt need to be part of a church community. Gill (1993) identified over-ambitious church building programmes in the second half of the nineteenth century, which, in his analysis, reinforced the secularization thesis by heightening a sense of decline through ever-empty seats. Brown (2001) assumes the start of the post-Christendom era to be in 1963, arguing that the women's liberation movement led to increasing numbers redefining their identity away from its traditional casting, including that of religious life, which, in turn led to their children not being raised as Christians. Hollinghurst (2010, p.31) places its start earlier in the century, writing that the effects of two devastating world wars would inevitably lead those born in Europe during the twentieth century to question the notion of a God who orders the



world for the good of humankind. Billings (2010, p.142ff) cites the rise of humanism as the greatest contemporary threat to the future of the church, claiming the number of humanists to be high and rising, as a humanist does not have to actively reject the possibility of the existence of God, or join the British Humanist Association, in order to be a humanist, just to ‘accept that God’s existence is not proven.’

These accounts within the secularization thesis are persuasive, and each can be evidenced from broad trends in British society. But, for the ordained person trying to interpret their context for the purposes of shaping mission and ministry, considering broad trends in society forms only a part of the task. Interpreting local contexts as they are, and in the light of both scripture and the whole tradition of the church (not simply the past 100 or 200 years) form its other dimensions. Here, as Warner (2010, p.65) and Smith<sup>8</sup> (2010, p.8) conclude, some caution is needed in assuming the accuracy of the thesis.

A growing body of work offers rebuttals to or reframings of the thesis on grounds that it has unhelpfully conflated complex factors into a single overarching process, with the result that its breadth acts against its capacity to be the interpretive metanarrative it arguably seeks to be.

For example, Casanova (1994; 2006; 2009) claims that its privatization hypothesis has been overstated, as in most countries such removal of religion from public life as there has been has not been complete. He further calls for a reconceptualization of the secularization thesis, which examines the ‘multiple modernities’ operative in postmodernity, and in which secularization can be conceived as ‘emancipation from

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<sup>8</sup> Smith (2010) presents an alternative interpretation of twentieth century patterns of decline in church attendance, suggesting them to be a return to normal levels of religious observance in Britain, following anomalously high levels of activity in the nineteenth century.

“the controlling power of religion” rather than its wholesale abandonment (Warner, 2010, p.57).

Despite the need for caution in assuming secularization, as an overarching process, to be the now dominant paradigm, the empirical evidence still seems to support the assumption that the Christendom metanarrative has been supplanted by something, at least in the lives of a significant proportion of British people.

At the turn of the twentieth century, a number of authors turned away from the secularization thesis, but continued to draw out its individualistic dimensions, now framing them as indicative of a postmodern society (Williams, 2011, p.109). These were offered in support of claims that the communal dimension of organized religion is being lost as individualized spiritualities take its place, or that such churchgoing as is present is now grounded in consumerism rather than obligation or offering back to God: in other words, in ‘getting not giving.’ I will now examine the most influential analyses of these two trends.

#### *It's All About Me: The Age of the Micronarrative?*

Davie (1994) theorized the turn to individualism as ‘believing without belonging’, responding to empirical research among church leavers indicating that they, along with many in British society who had never attended church, continued to believe in God but, for whatever reason, commonly the perceived failings of church leaders or church communities (Smith, 2010, pp.54-55), chose not to attend. Davie’s thesis counters the claims of Wilson and Bruce that church attendance and personal belief are inextricably linked, and that decline in the level of one in society indicates such in the other. Her hypotheses were reinforced by Jamieson (Jamieson, 2002; Jamieson et al., 2006), whose

study of what he termed ‘churchless faith’ led to the conclusion that church leaving was less the result of a loss of faith in the Christian metanarrative than of suspicion of bureaucratic religious institutions, a theme expanded into a mission strategy by Kimball (2007).<sup>9</sup> In more recent work, Davie has reinterpreted this as ‘vicarious religion’, which she defines as

... the notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but quite clearly approve of what the minority is doing (in Croft, 2006, p.36).

Hollinghurst (2010, pp.20-23), following Finney, recognizes both the vicarious faith of those raised in Christendom and that it can be turned back into active religious observance, but questions whether Davie’s theories evidence the resilience of religion despite the odds or form stages in its decline, claiming that whilst the former has some validity in relation to generation X, the latter applies among generation Y.

Gibbs (2009, pp.19-31), writing predominantly from an American perspective, identifies five ‘megatrends’ that, he claims, are ‘convulsing’ the Western world. Of them, the final two seem of most significance to ministry in postmodern British contexts: ‘from production initiatives to consumer awareness’ and ‘from religious identity to spiritual exploration.’

In the first, he traces, in common with others<sup>10</sup>, the rise of the consumer society, indicating that it has generated a consumerist outlook on communal church life. This can be evidenced through two everyday examples from parish life. First, in taking what Davie has termed a ‘pick and mix’ approach to religious belief, and, if part of a church

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<sup>9</sup> Bonhoeffer (1997) covered similar ground in his exploration of ‘religionless Christianity’, and Caputo and Vattimo (2007) argue for the post-secular resurrection of religion without religion.

<sup>10</sup> See also Bradshaw (1998); Gabriel and Lang (1995); Moynagh (2001); Ritzer (1999).

community, to choices of which church to attend, how long to stay there, and of levels of involvement in its ministry, based largely on ‘what I get out of it.’

Second: through attitudes to and expectations of the church in occasional offices.

Enquiries for baptism remain high in some parts of Britain, arguably where a sense of geographical community remains strong. However, many enquiries tend to be expressed as ‘I want to book a Christening’, which is often dismissed as simply a matter of semantics. However, perhaps the choice of words is significant in tracing attitudes and expectations, where baptism is perceived not so much as the start of a relationship with God and God’s church, but as a service to be provided. In this way, perhaps baptisms have become, in the face of declining numbers of marriages, the new weddings with the church serving as host and service provider: a kind of spiritual National Health Service.<sup>11</sup>

It can also be evidenced through trends towards ‘designer’ funerals<sup>12</sup> in which, arguably, the understanding of a funeral service by the Church as a liturgy marking the end of one chapter in the life of an individual, and commending their soul to God as they start another, is thought to take second place to a celebration of the life of the deceased, with the minister expected not to object to any family choices, including instructions to ‘not put any God stuff in there.’<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Billings (2010, p.139ff) conceives this in positive terms, citing the possibilities of occasional offices in opening doors to the continuing relevance of the Church of England through a role as chaplain to the nation. Cameron (2010, pp.25-27), drawing on Davie (2003, p.276ff), describes this cultural form of church as akin to a ‘public utility’.

<sup>12</sup> Davie (2006, p.278), embracing Rowan Williams’ language, terms such funerals as ‘mixed-economy funerals’.

<sup>13</sup> Wherever two or three clergy are gathered together, discussions often take place of inappropriate music, or family tributes which include information or reflection perhaps not suitable for a sacred space, or that involve the use of bad language. Munson (in Ammerman, 2007, p.133) interprets this in a more helpful way, identifying how a strict delineation between religious and non-religious meanings generates ways of understanding that arguably undervalue the continuing influence of religion in other areas of public life.

In the second of his megatrends, Gibbs follows such others as Heelas and Woodhead (2005), who, building on Taylor (1992; 2002), suggest that ‘religion as life’ has given way to ‘spiritualities of life’ (Warner, 2010, p.89). This thesis follows three concurrent streams. First, that individualism has brought a constructivist approach to belief in which ‘what seems right to me’ is determinative. Second, that the communal dimension of religion has been rejected, as part of a broader trend away from associational behaviours. Third, that institutionalized religion is regarded with suspicion, as part of a broader trend of hostility towards controlling authorities (Warner, 2010, pp.92-93).

These several theses all appear to identify the dominance of consumerized choice in the religious practices of British people. In turn, this seems to evidence a subjective turn to individualism, suggesting that the metanarrative of Christendom, whilst not having been comprehensively replaced by that of the secularization thesis, in any of its articulations, has been supplanted by individualized micronarratives. In its communal dimension, this would then create the kind of networked society heralded in *Mission-shaped Church* (Archbishops’ Council, 2004, pp.4-7). This model of societal being replaces belonging as part of a community with the construction of micronarratives based on personal choice. When read through the lens of community, it suggests a communal landscape of transient, co-existing, possibly overlapping, networks rather than one characterized by any kind of sustained interaction.

However, all is not as it seems in British society on a local level, and an assumption of the replacement of the Christendom metanarrative with the micronarratives of individualized networks also seems problematic. As John Williams (2011) notes, the nature of individualism within postmodernity, along with both the quality of the

sociological analyses used to evaluate it and the ways in which these analyses are used by the churches, begs further exploration. He writes that

A greater sociological sophistication would have helped the churches to see that they should not be seeking some kind of wholesale response to ‘secularization’ but a rather more discerning engagement with its component processes (2011, p.109).

Similarly, as Percy (in Croft, 2006, p.14) and Sledge (in Bayes and Sledge, 2006, p.29ff) both identify, elements of the Christendom metanarrative survive and interact with postmodernism in the worldviews of many people, and in their expectations of church. This can be evidenced in wider society through such things as the continuing fascination of the newspapers, and through them, the general public, with ‘naughty vicar’ stories or with the sexuality debates in a so-called marginalized organization.<sup>14</sup>

What seems to have changed is the element of control, rather than authority, influence, or the desire to find somewhere to belong. Arguably, this sees many people open to religion speaking in an authoritative and influential way, and to it being a space where community is formed. But equally they seem to reject any assumption by religions of an automatic right to take on a controlling role, either in society or in the practices of living of individuals. Rather the right to influence has to be contended and negotiated.

This suggests that choice and individualism are taking a more complex form that embraces and rejects elements of both metanarrative and micronarrative. Inevitably, this has bearing on how community is formed, and thus requires the ordained to adopt a more nuanced way of reading and interpreting the constantly morphing complexity of the external landscape that is capable of embracing both the speed of change and the interplay of micronarrative and metanarrative. As Baker concludes, this calls for a ‘new

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<sup>14</sup> Davie (2006, pp.279-280) also points to the pressure to live up to expected behaviour codes exerted on religious professionals by people who are not members of any church, offering this evidence in support of her vicarious religion thesis.

theology of catholicity' in which each typology of church formed in response to the complexities of context in localities in particular moments of time offers a

distinctive charism ... but whose gift needs to be seen not as the definitive or only response to the local context, but one aspect that needs other forms if the wholeness of the church is to be expressed in that local context (Baker in Cameron et al., 2005, pp.86-87).

I will return to this below.

### **Internal Contexts**

*An Age of Experimentation: The Death of the Metanarratives of Ordained Ministry?*

The internal contexts for ordained ministry in the Church of England appear to have undergone a similar process of deconstruction of aspects of its previously dominant ecclesiological metanarratives. Despite the fact that none of the many ecclesiological studies that have emerged over the past thirty years has provided a sufficiently compelling critique of the *bene esse* of its threefold ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons to warrant regarding this as anything less than a 'non-negotiable' foundation for Anglican ecclesiology (Avis, 2007, p.165), each of its three 'dimensions' (Croft, 1999) have come under scrutiny and significant reinterpretation.<sup>15</sup>

In this section I will illustrate this deconstruction through analysis of two identifiable trends: a move from delineated church traditions to a more complex system of transient alliances, and the vision for a move from a single economy of church into a mixed economy.

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<sup>15</sup> The literature that makes up this body of reinterpreted work is surveyed in Chapter 2. Perhaps unsurprisingly much of it centres on diaconal and priestly dimensions, these being the orders into which a majority of Church of England clergy have been ordained. A significant amount of work, drawing its foundations from Croft, has explored the exercise of *episcopate* from the perspective of how it can be expressed by others than Bishops. But little of this corpus has addressed itself to how senior leadership is patterned, organized and expressed within the denomination. However, Grundy (2011) provides a recent insightful critique and reworking of its episcopal leadership models.

### *Church Traditions to Transient Alliances*

At the start of the 1990s the internal landscape of the Church of England was, largely, characterized by three co-existing traditions: catholic, evangelical and broad church (sometimes termed ‘middle of the road’ or, perhaps mistakenly, as ‘liberal’<sup>16</sup>). Hybrid identities, such as ‘liberal catholic’ could be noted, as could subgroups, for example ‘charismatic evangelical’ or ‘conservative evangelical’, but the broad categories stood. Despite a somewhat bitter history, particularly through the nineteenth century, to a large degree the ‘parties’ across the spectrum of tradition had learned to co-exist and interact amicably, particularly on a local level.

At the catholic end of the tradition spectrum, new fault lines began to emerge with the ordination of the first women priests in the Church of England in March 1994.<sup>17</sup> Shortly after, a number of clergy and laity left the denomination to join the Roman Catholic Church<sup>18</sup>, whilst others who remained were divided into those who were in favour of the ordination of women, and those who were against. Many of the latter group had joined such organizations as Forward in Faith, or Cost of Conscience, and some of their church communities, pursuant to the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993, had petitioned for alternative Episcopal oversight from one of the three newly-appointed Provincial Episcopal Visitors.<sup>19</sup> The clergy from such parishes organized themselves into their own clergy chapters, set apart from the deanery structures of the denomination, although some clergy continued to participate in both.

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<sup>16</sup> I say mistakenly as some ‘middle of the road’ parishes tend to be among the most conservative and traditionalist in outlook, worship style and belief.

<sup>17</sup> Although the first moves towards the ordination of women as priests in the Church of England began in 1966, with the publication of the Report *Women and Holy Orders* (Church Assembly, 1966).

<sup>18</sup> Or, in a much smaller number, a variety of other smaller continuing Anglican or Catholic churches.

<sup>19</sup> Known as ‘Resolution C parishes’ receiving oversight from either the Bishop of Ebbsfleet or Richborough in the Province of Canterbury or the Bishop of Beverley in the Province of York. Some Dioceses (Blackburn, Carlisle, Wakefield and York in the Province of York, and London, Southwark and Rochester in the Province of Canterbury) make local arrangements for oversight of such parishes.



Against this backdrop the denomination began, from July 2000, to discuss the consecration of women as bishops. In July 2010 the General Synod of the Church of England received the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure (Church of England, 2010c) and draft Amending Canon No 30 (Church of England, 2010b), voted to leave them largely unamended, and referred them back to the dioceses for consideration and vote. This moved forward the consecration of women as bishops in the denomination.

Shortly before, in November 2009, Pope Benedict XVI had issued the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, which opened the way to the creation, in January 2011, of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. This saw clergy and laity, including three serving and two retired bishops, leave the Church of England.

Arguably, the result of this recent history is that defining catholic identity in the Church of England is no longer as straightforward a task as perhaps it was. Bitter debates have emerged concerning who should be regarded as authentic Anglican catholics, and catholic identity in the denomination appears to have become fragmented and increasingly narrowly defined.

A similar process has taken place at the evangelical end of the tradition spectrum. The year 2003 saw new fault lines start to emerge in Anglican evangelicalism, in response to the appointment of Rowan Williams as Archbishop of Canterbury and multiple issues in that year relating to same sex relationships (Craston, 2006, pp.1-2).<sup>20</sup> The lines of demarcation saw ‘open’ evangelicals, who were willing to engage in debate with others of differing opinions with what Rowan Williams (2008) termed ‘the willingness to be

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<sup>20</sup> The nomination of Canon Jeffrey John as Bishop of Reading; the election of Canon Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire in the Episcopalian Church in the United States; and the approval of same-sex marriages in a Canadian Diocese.

converted by each other', being declared unorthodox, and others, most notably the conservative evangelicals of Reform, consolidating their position into a theological worldview that appeared to be characterized by defending their church communities against heresy. New alliances were forged between such organizations as Reform and the charismatic evangelical movement New Wine, which seemed to relegate many of the formerly hotly contested disputes surrounding manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit as second-order issues<sup>21</sup>, and replace them with a common opposition to what they saw as the revisionist agenda of liberalism (cf. in part Warner, 2007).

In a similar way to that of catholic Anglicans, the identity of evangelical Anglicans seems to have become both increasingly fragmented and narrowly defined, and yet hybridized, as the new alliances have also built bridges across previous divides.

A further level of complexity in the denominational landscape was generated by cross-tradition alliances being formed. Although the debates that generated these fault lines in the two traditions were directly associated with gender and sexuality, respectively, they quickly became grounded in consideration of how the authority and interpretation of scripture was brought to bear on contemporary issues and church ordering (Craston, 2006, p.1). This brought previously polarized traditions together, as catholics, who opposed the ordination of women, and evangelicals, who resisted the ordination of gay people, found common hermeneutical ground. Encouraged by leaders, predominantly from the Global South, they organized under the banners of such organizations as the

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<sup>21</sup> The language of first-order and second-order issues is drawn from the theological concept of *adiaphora*, in which (building on Paul's missiological approach in Romans 14 and the question 'what does it matter?' posed in Philippians 1:18a) that which is essential to the task of mission in a context at a particular time is considered a first-order matter, and other, possibly contentious, issues are left unresolved until a future time. Interestingly, those who seem to have adopted the principles of *adiaphora* to form these inter-evangelical alliances have largely resisted their use in seeking a workable resolution to the sexuality debate in the Anglican Communion (Bartel, 2007).

Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (FCA)<sup>22</sup>, which grew out of the GAFCON movement.

Meanwhile, the broad church middle ground came to include those for whom the rhetoric and theologies of GAFCON and Forward in Faith seemed unattractive. Open evangelicals, once an established part of the evangelical movement, moved (often unwillingly) into the middle ground, as did many Catholics. And so the identity of the broad church party seemed to embrace a wider range of theologies and views, as well as shades of church tradition.

Given this complexity, the question of coherence soon arises: particularly of how to read the specific field of these transient alliances, and the general field of the denominational landscape in a way that holds together fragmented and shifting group identities. It also raises, for most ordained people, the question of where they 'fit'. Some readings, most commonly by those who speak from the standpoint of orthodoxy or validity, seem to use the language of competing metanarratives, perhaps suggesting there is a battle to be won.<sup>23</sup> Yet, in some ways, the discourse plain could be more accurately described as being composed of a collection of co-existing transient micronarratives, each of which 'works' for the people involved.

However, this both assumes that the micronarratives are simply co-existing on a common plain and perhaps encountering each other rather than engaging, and that the kind of vision of a genuinely interdependent mixed economy of church, as proposed by Rowan Williams (in *Archbishops' Council*, 2004, p.vii), seems undesirable. I will return to these themes below.

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<sup>22</sup> Initially a conference (the Global Anglican Future Conference) called to take place in 2008 in Jerusalem, in response to the invitation of Bishop Gene Robinson to participate in the Lambeth Conference of that year, out of which a movement was formed.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Venables (2010).

*Mixed Economy, Ecclesial Reciprocity<sup>24</sup> or Parallel Economies: Christendom and Post-Christendom in (Un)tuneful Accord?*

The 2004 Church of England Report, *Mission-shaped Church*, called for fresh expressions of church capable of speaking into the lives and contexts of postmodern people to come alongside inherited expressions that would cater for those who are comfortable with what has been (Archbishops' Council, 2004, pp.4-12). The vision of a moment of opportunity seemed attractive, at least to some, as was its potential to embrace both expressions as 'equal partners' in a church that potentially could be able to engage a wider range of people (2004, p.vii).

But, increasingly, the sociological assumptions on which *Mission-shaped Church* is built and in dialogue with which its theological principles are being formed have been questioned (Warner, 2010; Williams, 2011), as has its adequacy as a responsive strategy for mission (Davison and Milbank, 2010; Hull, 2006; Nelstrop and Percy, 2008). As John Williams (2011, p.117) writes:

On the basis of the sociological literature, to what extent is [the popular postmodern analysis embraced by those driving the agenda of *Mission-shaped Church*] an *adequate* analysis of contemporary social and cultural change? Might there not also be significant counter-trends...? How indeed do churches cope with the co-existence within their institutional life of substantial modern and indeed pre-modern elements as well?

The vision of the mixed economy is not a straightforward one, and, as Nelstrop (in Nelstrop and Percy, 2008, p.188) notes, a number of scholars have found it to be unsatisfactory as a concept. Despite its attractive rhetoric and sincerity of purpose, the practical reality of this economic vision is a work in progress (Nelstrop and Percy, 2008, p.xiv). Scholars and practitioners have taken increasingly polarized views of the capacity of each to 'be church'. And, arguably, in the years that have followed little has

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<sup>24</sup> Nelstrop defines this term as encapsulating 'listening to and learning from the other, [and] of valuing what is uncertain within a secure frame of tradition' (in Nelstrop and Percy, 2008, p.203).

become clearer: the complexity of the mixed economy has increased and distinctions between ‘fresh’ and ‘inherited’ expressions, with their respective ‘geographical’ and ‘attractional’ approaches, are, perhaps, more blurred than might have been hoped.<sup>25</sup>

Critiques of the fresh expressions movement have centred on its supposed lack of rigorous theology (Davison and Milbank, 2010); its lack of capacity to sustain and deepen being church beyond innovation and novelty (Percy in Nelstrop and Percy, 2008, p.27ff); its exclusivism as a ‘niche’ church; and its inherent capacity to be rendered ‘church-shaped’ rather than ‘mission-shaped’ in order to remain a part of the Church of England (Hull, 2006). Moreover, Bishops’ Mission Orders, in addition to lending the ‘respectability’ of statute and denominational *imprimatur* to fresh expressions, have, perhaps, added a layer of legalism that limits their potential for flexibility,<sup>26</sup> and the definition of what does and does not constitute a fresh expression has become increasingly contested, perhaps most especially where designated funding is available for ordained pioneer or mission support posts.

Critics of inherited expressions, such as Mobsby (2007) and Ward (2002) question their capacity to speak into the contexts of postmodernity and connect with the lives of contemporary people. Such writers as Cray (2010), whilst taking a more conciliatory attitude, question the optimistic analyses of such scholars as Davison and Milbank (2010), which emphasize the supposed catholicity of a parish church as inherently capable of embracing a broad range of people who choose to attend.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Francis and Richter (2007) present an example of this in their concept of the multiplex church, with a variety of options which people can opt in to or out of at different times, although their approach could be critiqued on grounds that it neglects the kind of interactive experience of community that both inherited and fresh expressions attempt to create, in their respective ways.

<sup>26</sup> Although by the July 2011 session of General Synod, only twelve Bishops’ Mission Orders had been granted in eleven dioceses (Church of England, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Historically, this might have been the case, but with greater social and geographical mobility increasing personal choice, attractional parish communities, by which I mean those based around a common social

The reality in practice, seven years on from the publication of *Mission-shaped Church*, seems not as simple as either a parallel economy of competing metanarratives of fresh versus inherited expressions (the parallel economy), or the ecclesial reciprocity of co-existing micronarratives.

Instead, as Cameron (Cameron, 2010, p.20 ff; Cameron et al., 2005, xiii)<sup>28</sup> and Guest (in Garnett et al., 2006, p.63ff) note, typically congregations across inherited expression churches in the twenty-first century will be made up of a broad range of people, some of whom could be said to reflect the networked society or consumer culture in their worldview, and others who seem grounded in Christendom ways of thinking. That group might include those who have never experienced fresh expressions, or, as Savage identifies, it might also include those who have been worn out by the ‘labour-intensive work of sustaining fresh expressions’ and who return to the parish church ‘simply for a rest’ (in Nelstrop and Percy, 2008, p.67).

And this appears not only to be true of inherited expressions. Despite the aims of fresh expressions to cater for the unchurched, and a propensity towards what Percy evaluates as ‘niche church’ (in Nelstrop and Percy, 2008) which arguably lends itself well to shaping around the interests and preferences of its participants, many attract a significant number of people disillusioned with inherited models, for one reason or another, in addition to some reaching the unchurched (Male, 2008).<sup>29</sup> And so again,

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class, interests, tradition, beliefs or style of worship, have developed. Some parish churches consciously build their life around a portfolio approach, deliberately aiming to attract a range of people, whereas others, particularly those of a purposely distinctive church tradition, which is reflected in their worship and teaching, consciously do not.

<sup>28</sup> Cameron (2010, p.20ff) does not specifically consider the make-up of individual congregations, but rather presents a series of ‘cultural forms’ of church that illustrates this trend.

<sup>29</sup> Stibbe and Williams (2008) also describe the reconfiguration of a large inherited expression Anglican church into a number of smaller missional communities, meeting primarily outside the church building. Their communities bore the hallmarks of many fresh expressions, yet were conceived within the communal life of a parish church.

despite planning and strategy, fresh expressions also include a broad range of people, with diverse worldviews and expectations.

The above discussion of external contexts cautions against the uncritical adoption of either the secularization thesis or a postmodernist turn to individualism as an account of religious belief and observance in contemporary Britain on grounds that it fails to take account of their complexity. A similar caution can usefully be applied to the assumption that either a parallel economy metanarrative, with fairly neat distinctions between the worldviews of adherents in the various expressions, or a system of ecclesial reciprocity, in which individual micronarratives of expressions of church co-exist, characterizes the landscape of internal contexts for ministry in the Church of England.

Instead, a somewhat messy and intricate economy can be evidenced, in which both fresh and inherited expressions of church seem to have to engage with the expectations, preferences and beliefs of a diverse range of people, with different ideas of the degree to which this is community for them, and of how they wish to be involved, whether this was their intention or not. Given this reality, it seems reasonable to suggest that the inherent complexity of the concept of the mixed economy may actually form its strength, but that it has been interpreted in a way that means it has not yet reached its potential.

Perhaps, when reading this intricate landscape, the task of the ordained person in the contemporary Church of England is to cogently hold together the creative tension, rather than to seek its easy resolution in a seemingly simple explanation.

As Croft comments, building on Oliver Wendell Holmes, the Church of England has ‘not yet reached the point of simplicity beyond complexity’ (in Croft, 2008, p.186). Yet

if the denomination is not to be paralysed into missiological inaction, there is still a responsibility for the ordained to interpret and articulate this complexity in ways that generate moments of ministry during this period of modulation that are both authentic for now and authentic as part of that journey. I will return to this below, as I propose a way of theorizing the landscape.

### **Synthesis: Theorizing the Complexity - The Shifting Sands of Netnarratives**

The discussion above illustrates that ordained ministers in the twenty-first century Church of England are engaging with and speaking into complex, constantly morphing, fast moving situations, cultures and contexts, which see metanarratives and micronarratives co-existing, interacting, and engaging on a common plain of discourse.

As Percy (2006) illustrates, ordained ministry has never existed in a vacuum, and clergy have always engaged with the complexities of life. But there seem to be key differences now from what has been in previous epochs: namely, the speed of change, the constant state of flux, and the complexity of cultures inside ordained ministry as well as outside of it.

This all raises afresh the question of what kind of ordained ministry is needed by the contemporary Church of England, given a multiplicity of expectations, and given that any right to speak and be heard as influential has to be contested, both within and outside the church. Inevitably, this generates a sense of unease concerning what clergy are for.

Rowan Williams opines that much existing discourse has proceeded from an unhelpful starting point:

... reports are written on 'What ordained ministry does the Church of England require?' ... This should not be the preferred starting point for considerations of the Christian priest today; the



Church should really be asking, 'What ordained ministry does *God* require?' or even, 'What *Church of England* does God require?' (quoted in Lewis-Anthony, 2009, p.80)

But perhaps this does not reframe the question in a radical enough way. As Shier-Jones reflects (2008, p.16),

All of [this] prompts the question, 'Who is God calling – and why?' along with the complementary question 'Who is the Church calling – and why?' It would be far too presumptuous (even if it is highly desirable) to simply assume that the two callings are one and the same. So a third question needs to be asked: 'Are these two callings reconcilable in such a way that the work of the kingdom can flourish and grow?'

Shier-Jones identifies the centrality of people, of their sense of vocation, and how this is expressed in the practical realities of role in dialogue with context, to realising or subverting the vision of the mixed economy. Within this vision, the ordained have the dual task of holding and moulding: of holding together individual moments in ministry in particular places at specific times with both other moments and all moments of ministry over time - their own and those of others - and of moulding individuals, communities and tradition itself so they become new pages in the book of life (Rev. 13:8).

This process involves wrestling with complexity and dissonance, and in it, the ordained person needs to find ways of understanding the roles she embodies that are congruent with her sense of vocation, and so generate a sense of ringing true that creates integrity in her ministry, so she experiences it as real before trying to communicate that reality to those among whom she ministers. In this way, by the public persona being congruent with the person, her capacity for influential negotiation in service of the *missio dei* is increased as she speaks authoritatively, but not controllingly, of the reality that lies beyond her and that gives her ministry fruitfulness and vitality.

Being real and ringing true are, of course, highly loaded terms drawn from discussion of authenticity, which is itself a somewhat slippery concept, despite its exploration being a

key interest for twenty-first century people as they seek to make sense of their life and purpose within increasingly fragmented societies (Vannini and Williams, 2009).

At first hearing, authenticity might be thought to have little to offer as an analytical tool for ordained ministry, as its quest has become closely aligned with individualism and subjectivity.

The theologian Gordon Lynch, commenting on the effects of the quest for authenticity on religious practice, emphasizes its subjective dimension as he notes that it leads many away from the ‘pre-packaged’ truths of corporate entities in a turn towards ‘meaning that feels personally authentic to them’ (Lynch, 2002, p.ix). Charles Taylor offers an explanation of the provenance of this trend, claiming that the mid-twentieth century saw the evolution of an ‘age of authenticity’ drawing its roots from the ‘Romantic expressivism’ of the late eighteenth century (Taylor, 2007, p.475). Its cultural bearings lie in an individualistic drive towards the expression of the self, in which discovering and ‘being’ one’s true self become the guiding principles with the aim of breaking down barriers to create a society of equals (2007, pp.475-476).

Taylor rightly identifies how such notions of equality form a utopian ideal that is only ever partially realized, as most commonly it is subverted either by group political posturing or an over concern with the self-actualization of powerful individuals to the detriment of others. In this way, for many individuals crass ‘narrow self interest’ and ‘mindless accumulation’ have been replaced by a ‘higher selfishness’: a concern for self development with the consequent expectation that all aspects of life should be somehow fulfilling for the self without thought of their impact on the ‘other’ (David Brooks, quoted in Taylor, 2007, p.477).

This standpoint seems to offer little fertile ground for developing a way of reading ordained ministry that potentially allows diverse expressions of church to be located within a landscape of greater connectedness. And a descent into subjectivity appears unhelpful for reading ordained ministry against that landscape, given that a common thread uniting its many extant models and theologies seems to be that ministry exists primarily for God and the other, rather than the self.

But, as Taylor contends, the quest for authenticity does not necessarily include the uncritical acceptance of individualism and subjectivity as its essential foundations. He suggests that in order to achieve the sense of ‘being true to ourselves’ human beings need to recognize our connection ‘to a wider whole’ (1992, p.91), and calls for a reconfiguring of authentic relating through an ‘inner sense of linkage’ rather than the wholesale abandonment of the corporate sphere. Taylor sees the formation of individual identity as inherently dialogical, whilst recognizing that, for many, a ‘sense of belonging’ achieved through membership of a ‘publicly defined order’ has been lost. In this way, despite the many issues and barriers to true equality, Taylor (2007, p.478) concludes that authentic self-expression only retains any degree of ethical persuasiveness, and thus, any sense of fulfilment for the individual, when it works towards this vision.

These issues are pertinent to this study. The subtext of many of the contemporary debates faced by the churches illustrate that the quest to establish an authentic identity for ordained ministers is a commonly held task, but little attempt seems to be made to articulate either the processes by which authenticity is negotiated or the nature of that authenticity. I will now go on to offer an articulation of both.

Much recent published work on church leadership seems to explore authenticity questions through lauding an effective leader as being able to influence others through both teaching and modelling a way of being that causes him or her to be perceived as a person of God.<sup>30</sup> On the most basic level, therefore, authentic ministers must say what they mean and mean what they say, but more than that: they must be *experienced as* saying what they mean and meaning what they say.

Charles Wood (2001, pp.8-9), writing primarily about the common vocation to witness shared by the whole people of God, neatly encapsulates the several dimensions of authenticity:

There is the question of the *authenticity* of the performance of witness: of whether it really represents what it claims to represent, the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is the question of its *intelligibility and truth*: of whether the message embodied therein is, as its proponents say it is, true and worthy of acceptance. And there is the question of whether Christian witness is ... *fittingly enacted* in this instance - that is, of whether the gospel is being related to the specific situation of proclamation in such a way that the truth and life it represents might actually be heard or felt and accepted.

Additional dimensions can be seen when his framework is applied to ordained ministry, owing to its representative nature and the interplay of role and vocation in the life and work of a priest. Namely, is the minister herself experienced as authentic, or her message, or both, or neither? And if that person is experienced as authentic, of what is she an authentic representation: God, or the Church, who she really is, all of these, or none? So 'who the minister is' dialogues with what she represents as together a message is transmitted through her ministry that may or may not be perceived as authentic.<sup>31</sup>

But within that corrective to individualism, a fundamental question remains of whether the imperative to connectedness necessarily demands uniformity. The orthodoxy,

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<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Adair (2001); Ascough and Cotton (2006); Breen and Kallestad (2005); Hybels and Mittelberg (2006); Jinadu and Lawrence (2007); Lawrence (2004); Smith and Shaw (2011); Warren (1995); Watson (2008); Wright (2000, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> These kinds of congruence issues are raised in another way by Cherry (2010) and Nouwen (1994).

relevance and validity debates, as the discussion above illustrates, have, to a greater or lesser degree, worked toward such understandings and seem to have done little to move the Church of England beyond situations of impasse in which parallel expressions look on each other uneasily, pausing only to assert the supremacy of their truth.

Perhaps a more productive starting point might be to employ the multidimensionality of authenticity, with its ability to embrace both subjectivity (a creative moment in ministry as something both rightly contextual and unique) and objectivity (requiring some kind of connectedness to other creative moments that are happening contemporaneously and those that have already happened through time).

If a priest is called to be authentic in terms of being real, by which I mean the person being congruent with the role they embody, and ringing true, by which I mean having the ability to communicate the kingdom of God of which they speak and to draw others into it, into what kind of interpretive framework for its contexts does that articulation of authenticity in ministry fit?

Drawing on metaphors of musical fugue and deep-sea fishing, I now suggest an alternative, multi-dimensional way of reading the internal and external contexts for ministry discussed above. It is one that aims to recognize the continuing influence in patterns of life and belief in both British society and the Church of England, in both its inherited and fresh expressions, of individualized co-existing micronarratives and competing metanarratives. I term this the netnarrative. A netnarrative has three dimensions, and it holds together concepts of dissonance and consonance, seeing both not only as present but desirable, with creative tension rather than clear resolution being considered a valid outcome.

First, I will draw out the dimensions of the netnarrative paradigm using the metaphor of musical fugue, and then, using that of deep-sea fishing, draw out its implications for the role of the ordained.

A musical fugue is conceptualized in three dimensions: horizontal, vertical and underpinning. The underpinning is the form the work as a whole takes: it provides a framework which embraces and interprets that which takes place, and provides a road map of starting point, mid-ways markers and a final ending cadence, in which complete harmonic and contrapuntal resolution is achieved. For a fugue, the form consists, first, of an exposition section containing statements of a melody (termed the subject) and a second, complementary yet contrasting, melody (termed the countersubject), which is most often either the subject transposed to another key (tonal area) or modified slightly by changing some notes in subtle yet significant ways. The texture of the music is built up by the first voice (or instrument) stating the subject, and then, as the second states the subject, the first states the countersubject. When all voices have stated both subject and countersubject, the exposition is over.

This is followed by a modulatory section in which both subject and countersubject are variously stated, extended, truncated and transposed, and interspersed with new material (termed an episode), which gives relief from constant statements and restatements of the subject and countersubject, and sometimes serves to move the music into a fresh tonal area. But the episodic material is usually not entirely new, for there are references to fragments and patterns of both subject and countersubject (termed figures), which both evoke what has been and point to what is to come.

A final section follows in which both subject and countersubject are restated in the home tonal area (tonic key), and this section provides the climax to the work, in which

both subject and countersubject are brought into closer relationship and their tensions resolved in the final cadence.

The horizontal dimension of the fugue lies in the progress of its melodies in each 'voice'. Subject and countersubject each has its own melodic integrity, and, when taken out of context and played as a single-line melody, stands in its own right. Each voice (or instrument) then constructs an extended melody through how it uses both along with episodic melodic material. Again, if a single voice of a fugue is taken out of context, and played as a single-line melody in its entirety, its integrity stands as a crafted melodic piece of music.

The vertical dimension is created when these melodies (or voices) are placed against each other in the underpinning framework of the form of the fugue. Inevitably, when melodies are placed together, each competes for the right to be heard, and, at moments, will jar against each other whilst at other times they sound in perfect consonance. When a fugue is analysed harmonically, the analyst takes a vertical transect across the flow of the horizontal counterpoint, and reveals moments of dissonance, when the melodies jar, and moments of consonance, when they cohere. Yet the moments of dissonance are essential in moving towards greater consonance.

Bringing this back to discussion of ordained ministry, in the netnarrative paradigm, the micronarratives of individuals, lay and ordained, function as subjects and countersubjects within the overall work of the *missio dei*, distinct yet sharing commonalities. They have their own basic integrity as melodies, but may well need revision and further crafting through restatement, modification and episodic transition to reach their full potential as a great melody. In theological terms, this is the unique beauty of a being who is created in the image of God, but in whom sanctification is a

constant process of shaping and reshaping, and who, whilst recognizing inherent incompleteness, is in pursuit of the kind of perfection of which Matthew 5:43-48 speaks.<sup>32</sup>

Significantly, in the use in that passage of the adjective *teleios*, perfection is conceived in terms of completeness, recognizing both the unattainability of this in an individual moment, but also placing a requirement to model what will be in the here and now. In musical terms, a melody is never complete until the work of which it is a part is completed. And so that level of completeness, for a human being, is held in the creative tension of consonance and dissonance caused by the ‘now but not yet’ of living life with an eschatological perspective.

An example of this creative tension could be drawn from pastoral practice in funeral ministry. When the minister ‘gets it right’ the bereaved see and experience something that is apposite for that moment in ministry. In other words, the words and actions of the minister are perfectly congruent with the love of a God who constantly pours out himself for others. And so a connection with the intangible is made tangible for those people in that place at that time. Yet such perfection as is in that moment is itself transient. The minister herself will grow, over time, in both faith and experience, through her performance of ministry and that sense of journeying through incompleteness may be reflected in the next moment of ministry being nowhere near as perfect.

Returning to the netnarrative analogy, when placed together within the underpinning form of the *missio dei*, by which I mean the contexts in which a minister encounters people and people the minister, those melodies inevitably compete for the right to be

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<sup>32</sup> Matthew 5:48 records Jesus as saying ‘Be perfect ... as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (NRSV).



heard. And that of the minister is but one melody among many. Some, perhaps those of people who still work to Christendom models of ministry, may immediately choose to function as harmonies, essential for accompanying the more strident melodies, but acting in a supporting role. Others will continue to assert their melodic integrity. And, in particular moments of encounter, some melodies will act as subject (main theme) and others become a counter to the subject (positively or negatively).

A positive example of this at work could lie in collaborative ministry at its best. In one moment of ministry, the gifts, skills and charisms of the ordained person might form the best fit for a primary leadership role, and so their individual melody rises to take the lead whilst those of others accompany harmonically. But, for a community to remain vibrant, it is the interweaving counterpoint of those melodies over time that is crucial. In practical terms, the community making it possible for different melodies to rise, as the gifts, skills and charisms of the individuals of whom they sing are matched to moments of ministry. In this, the ordained person is one among many, taking the primary leadership role at times, but also recognising that, at times, their melody must act as countersubject or accompanying harmony.

This horizontal dimension forms the narrative of both individuals (through their individual melodic journey to completeness) and a community or denomination through time (as the form proceeds from exposition to modulation to final resolution).

As their melodies play against each other, there will be moments of consonance and of dissonance. There will be moments when they create vertical harmonies that, if the work stopped at precisely that moment, would sound whole and well. And there will be others when isolating that moment in the flow of music would result in clashing, jarring

sounds that appear to say nothing of a skilful composer or a work worth listening to. But it is essential to remember why those moments are there.<sup>33</sup>

When brought back to discussion of ordained ministry, debates surrounding gender and sexuality form the most obvious moments of dissonance in the contemporary church. Such moments, taken in isolation, appear to say nothing of a skilful creator of the *missio dei* or of a work that those who have not yet heard it would find worth listening to. Yet these moments of dissonance may well be necessary in pursuit of consonance. Perhaps the issue is more of how they are held and the perspective from which they are viewed. Here the form underpinning the work becomes seminal. In a fugue, a clear form holds together the complexity: exposition, modulation, final statement, and resolution. All the tension of the modulation is ultimately resolved, but not until the final cadence which marks the close of the work. Counterpoint requires tension and resolution to be effective. Melodically derived consonant harmonies reach that point only by journeying through dissonance. And for dissonant moments to have real purpose in the work as a whole, they must be in the pursuit of consonance, even if that consonance is absent from the moment.

Expressed theologically, the exposition of the *missio dei* has ended, and the Church now ministers in a time of modulation, with restatements, developments, transpositions, extensions and truncations of both subject and countersubject, interspersing these with episodic material that both figuratively links to the theme, and provides relief from its

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<sup>33</sup> In offering an answer to his question of ‘what Christianity really is, or indeed who Christ really is, for us today’, in the context of reflection on the dislocated society of Nazi Germany, Bonhoeffer uses a similar ‘musical formula of “polyphony of life”’. By this he means the interplay of the ‘contrapuntal themes’ of spiritual and secular love as ‘melodies of life’ against the ‘*cantus firmus*’ of love between God and humankind (Pangritz, 2002, p.28ff).

constant restatement. This will ultimately lead into a final statement and resolution in the final cadence of the eschaton.

Thus, taking bearings from Wilson (2008, p.268ff) and Rowan Williams (quoted in Higton, 2011), perhaps the Church is not called to bring the work to a premature cadence of resolution, but instead to journey on through this time of modulation being a 'living conversation' grounded in a call to mutuality, faithfulness and faith, in which moments of dissonance and consonance are equally authentic but transient and both are in pursuit of the future permanence of final resolution.

But what does this mean in practice for the ordained minister charged with holding together and interpreting this complexity? Here the deep-sea fishing metaphor helps to lay some foundations. Deep-sea fishing involves casting a net into the sea, leaving it for a period of time as the boat continues to move forwards and then hauling it in to see what has been caught. Inevitably, despite attempts to map and plan to catch particular types of fish, the net will catch what it catches: prediction and strategy can only achieve so much.

In a similar way, the ordained person is called to cast a net into a particular moment in time, in whatever context they should find themselves (the vertical dimension) and to interpret what they find in the light of both their own previous casts at different times (horizontal dimension) and those of others over time (underpinning form). They may find in their net either what they set out to find, or what they have ways of easily dealing with productively (consonance), or they may find that what they have does not easily fit together or with their aims and priorities (dissonance).

Yet simply interpreting and accepting ‘what is’ seems an inadequate task. Linking this back to musical concepts, the ordained are also called to influence the melodies (micronarratives) of those caught in the momentary net in ways that effect their gradual shaping into coherent subjects and countersubjects capable of interweaving in distinctive yet complementary ways, so to help dissonance to move towards ultimate consonance. But equally, in each moment of ministry, to hold that dissonance and consonance in tension, accepting that its final resolution is not in their gift, nor should it be their priority.

This act of moulding and holding is deeply incarnational and takes its foundations from Eucharistic theology.<sup>34</sup> In becoming ‘fishers of men’ (Matt. 4:19) the ordained are fundamentally engaged in continuing Christ’s work of re-membering. By this I mean of putting back together that which has been broken at both individual and denominational level. The particularities of the Christ event were not those of organizational neatness, easy resolution, or cheap success: rather they spoke of constant flux and tension. As missiologist David Bosch (1991, pp.426-427) notes: ‘mission as contextualization is an affirmation that God has turned towards the world ... [and] involves the construction of a variety of “local theologies”’. These can be held together without descending into relativism.

In conclusion, the discourse above illustrates that the task of exercising an authentic ministry of holding and moulding, which embraces diverse expressions of the individual and the corporate, in a series of transient consonant or dissonant creative moments standing as part of a tradition of other such moments through history, is not a straightforward one. It suggests that this complexity requires of ordained persons the

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<sup>34</sup> Avis (2007, p.81ff) identifies Eucharistic ecclesiology as one of two longstanding streams of thought that have shaped the identity of Anglicanism.

kind of integrity and congruence between role and vocation that enables them to be real and to ring true – to be authentic – in a variety of ways to a range of people.

From this I have concluded, in answer to my third research question (that of what kinds of ordained ministers might be needed by the twenty-first century Church of England), that the denomination needs authentic ministers who exercise a ministry that is real and that rings true. This, in turn, raises questions of what kinds of structures and theological underpinnings are helpful to the task of generating and sustaining authentic ministry, and of how the newly ordained can be formed in such a ministerial culture.

I will carry these questions forward into Chapter 2, as I explore the narrow general field of this study by drawing out some of the dimensions of what authenticity in ministry might mean, and offering theological reflection on them.

## **CHAPTER 2: WHAT KINDS OF ORDAINED MINISTERS DOES THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND NEED?**

The Church of England intends curacy to be a journey of formation in which the curate grows ‘towards the role of an ordained person defined ... in terms of service, holiness, vocation and mission’ (Ministry Division, 2003a, p.39). And so before considering the specific field of what kinds of curacy structures might facilitate fruitful formation, the general field needs to be narrowed from the contexts for ministry discussed in Chapter 1 to ordained ministry itself, and the question asked of what that role might be, framed as what kinds of ordained ministers might be needed by the Church of England in the twenty-first century. In some ways, this is not a new question. What clergy are for, and are to be and do, have been questions that have long interested theologians and practitioners alike, generating a significant body of previous work, which falls into four broad categories: denominational reports; accounts of how clergy roles have evolved; evaluations of or reflections on current expressions of clergy roles, some of which also present theologies or models of ministry; and proposals for how clergy lives might be more effectively managed.

From the first category, in 1987, the Church of England’s Advisory Council for the Church’s Ministry published a paper *Education for the Church’s Ministry* (ACCM 22), which asked very directly, ‘what ordained ministry does the Church of England require?’ and posed additional questions of what kinds of training settings might effect formation for this kind of ministry. This generated a collection of responses from the colleges and courses charged with delivering initial ministerial training, which, whilst carefully argued, essentially showcased the perceived benefits of their respective settings, approaches and church traditions (Advisory Board of Ministry, 1991). Such

questions formed integral parts of the subsequent Report *Formation for Ministry Within a Learning Church* (Ministry Division, 2003a), shaping many of its proposals for reform in theological education for clergy.

From the second category, among the many analyses, three accounts seem particularly significant. Towler and Coxon (1979) produced a compelling sociological account of what they saw as the marginalization of clergy and presented accounts of the different ways in which contemporary clergy were articulating their role. Russell (1980) provides an insightful account of the development of what he terms the ‘clerical profession’ illustrating how the role of clergy in the Church of England has become increasingly professionalized, although he notes that the success of the enterprise at his time of writing was only ever partial. Percy (2006), using the analogy and framework of evolution, stresses the role of context in shaping the patterning of ministry, interestingly presenting clergy as an adaptive species capable of impressive survival, often despite the odds.

Among the numerous accounts that comprise the third category, Ramsey’s *The Christian Priest Today* (1972) forms an enduring classic that captures the deep becoming of priesthood expressed in a lifetime of ministry, and Croft’s *Ministry in Three Dimensions* (1999) has proved particularly influential in generating a number of other models of ministry in both fresh and inherited expressions. These Trinitarian foundations for contemporary ministry were also explored by Greenwood (1994; 2002), who has also produced both a useful account of streams of thought and practice in broader local ministry (including that of Ordained Local Ministers) (Greenwood and Pascoe, 2006), and a more recent thought-provoking text on parish ministry. Building on empirical research, he provides a realistic commentary on priestly life as it currently

is, analyses possible future priorities for ordained ministry and suggests the imaginative metaphor of navigator for understanding the role of stipendiary clergy within a faith community (Greenwood, 2009). Pritchard (2007), seemingly writing primarily for those who are exploring a vocation to ordination, provides a lively, yet reflective and honest, account of the multi-dimensionality of contemporary priesthood, extrapolating models from his own experience.

Other accounts, such as those by Carr (1985), Christou (2003; 2009), Cocksworth and Brown (2002), Dewar (2000), Guiver (2001), Mason (2002), Moody (1992), Redfern (1999) and Shier-Jones (2008) variously draw out dimensions of the totality of priestly ministry, or attempt to define the role of the ordained in its wider context of mission and ministry. Platten (2007), primarily addressing the wider theme of Christian vocation, takes an imaginative approach, drawing dialogue partners from musical song as he offers reflection on what it means to create and recreate in ministry. Conversely, Lewis-Anthony (2009), in a somewhat acerbic polemic, identifies some of the dangers in centring models of ministry on arguably unsustainable pastoral practice that, he claims, forms an ideal that never worked in practice beyond the pages of the poems of George Herbert.

As the speed of change both outside and inside the church has increased from the turn of the twentieth century, so, unsurprisingly, the body of research and writing addressing what clergy are for has similarly grown.

Yet for all of this work, and the many insights and models of ministry it provides, two issues can be identified. First, that the Church of England still has no commonly held denominational theology of ministry, but rather a range of working understandings,



some of which, as Davison and Milbank (2010) suggest, may be grounded more in pragmatism than in rigorous theology.<sup>1</sup>

Second, and perhaps of more relevance to this study, that almost all of this previous work seems to begin from the same starting point as the ACCM 22 paper - that of what kind of ordained ministry is required by the Church of England - and then to consider it either in concrete or abstract terms. The framing of the question is significant. Although priesthood is a deeply vocational matter, asking what kind of ordained ministry rather than what kinds of ordained ministers are needed seems to place a firm focus on the public role rather than the private vocation. Where vocation is discussed, the implicit assumption seems to be that it is somehow synonymous with role.<sup>2</sup> As Chapter 3 will demonstrate, although the role of clergy should form the practical expression of their vocation, in practice there has been an expanding fault line between the two, in an increasing number of cases. This raises issues for my general field of ordained ministry, and also for my specific field of curacy. As Joyce (2010, p.15) notes, ‘the question remains about how formation is stimulated among clergy today in a way that links with their vocation’.

Therefore, in this chapter, I deliberately do not set out to try to succeed where others seem to have failed, that is, considering the doing and being of ministry in the abstract, and going on to suggest a theology of ministry for the denomination. Rather, I take up the conclusion drawn in Chapter 1 that the twenty-first century Church of England

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<sup>1</sup> Davison and Milbank direct their critique solely at fresh expressions, and their claims of pragmatism as an overarching metanarrative for that movement as a whole have been countered by others such as Cray (2010). Despite this, they raise an interesting question that can usefully be addressed to deployment strategies in the Church of England as a whole, and reframed to ask to what extent pragmatic choices are flowing from grounded theology. Although broader deployment questions lie outside the scope of this study, they would benefit from further investigation.

<sup>2</sup> Recent notable exceptions to this trend are provided by Joyce (2010) and Peyton (2009).

needs authentic ministers who are real and who ring true, and I re-read ordained ministry through that lens, with the aim of carrying forward markers that might open avenues to explore how curacy could be reframed to stimulate the kind of formation to which Joyce points.

In doing this, I bring ordained ministry into dialogue with how authenticity is experienced and negotiated by musicians and audiences in art and popular music performance.

### **Synthesis: Ordained Ministry in Dialogue with Musical Performance**

The performance of 'early' music by organizations exclusively devoted to the speciality has in the last decades more and more assumed the nature of a cultist ritual. Under the banner of authenticity members of the cult present us with performances that are occasionally boring and dull because their aim is not, or at least not primarily, to give aesthetic pleasure, to elate and enhance but to demonstrate, educate and provide spiritual purification. For the audience it is an ascetic exercise in moral uplift comparable to the dutiful absorption of a long uninspiring sermon (Frederick Neumann, quoted in O'Dea, 1994, p.363).

Neumann's 1989 critique of the historical performance movement in art music<sup>3</sup> was far from unique and illustrated that fashions were beginning to change in the conceptualization of authenticity in that genre (Botstein, 2006, p.1; O'Dea, 1994, p.363).

The so-called historical performance movement of the 1950s to 1980s carried at its heart the supposed rediscovery through historical scholarship of 'definitive versions' of musical works, against which the authenticity of their performances might be measured. Stephen Davies' presentation of the concept of authenticity in musical performance neatly encapsulates this view:

The view for which I argue characterizes authenticity in musical performance as follows: a performance which aims to realize the composer's score faithfully in sound may be judged for authenticity. A performance of *X* is more rather than less authentic the more faithful it is to the

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<sup>3</sup> Art music is sometimes, mistakenly, termed 'classical music.' Classical music, denoting music from the classical period, is one expression of art music.

intentions publicly expressed in the score by the composer (where those intentions are determinative and not merely recommendatory of performance practice). Because the composer's score under-determines the sound of a faithful performance, the authenticity of any particular performance is judged against (the appropriate member/s of) a set of ideally faithful performances. As a commendatory term 'authentic' is used to acknowledge the creative role of the performer in realizing faithfully the composer's specifications (1987, p.39).

For Davies, an authentic performance is characterized as being informed by 'scholarly advice and instruction', requiring the use of original or replica instruments 'contemporary to the period of composition', and employing 'stylistic practices and performance conventions of the time when the work was composed' (1987, p.40).

Essentially, his view of authenticity is outcomes-based: 'the authenticity of a performance is a concern with its sound' that seeks to recreate what 'might have been heard by the composer's contemporaries' (1987, p.41).

Davies recognizes that, in many ways, this kind of enterprise is far from an easy task, and that wrong notes or misrepresentation of the composer's intentions by his or her contemporaries might well have rendered some performances inauthentic. But he still concludes that the pursuit of musical authenticity rests in the aim of recreating 'an *ideal* sound rather than ... the sound of some actual, former performance' (1987, p.42).

His view of the part played by the performer in the pursuit of authenticity is one of intentional faithfulness and realization, rather than engagement and re-creation. He recognizes that individual performances may sound different, but will nevertheless remain authentic for as long as their performers remain intentionally faithful to the score and perform in a style consistent with the performance practices of its time. In his words 'there must be some common factor ... necessary for a performance's being a performance of *X* rather than of *Y*, and necessary for different sounding performances all to be performances of the same *X*' (1987, pp.45-46). In this way, authenticity can be

objectively established and measured, and has little, if any, need for it to be subjectively experienced by either performer or audience.

To Davies, the creativity of the performer is best expressed through going ‘beyond that which is given in order to present accurately that which is given’. To illustrate his point, he draws a distinction between the mechanical ‘copying’ of a performance, as might be undertaken by a machine, and ‘performing’ in which the individual musician (or ensemble) acts as ‘necessary intermediary’ for both audience and composer (1987, p.48).

The adequacy of objective outcomes-grounded models of musical authenticity in art music has been questioned by a number of authors from the late 1980s, and particularly gained ground through the 1990s, so that the notion of authenticity became somewhat discredited as the century turned. O’Dea notes that through the 1980s the historical performance movement created an ‘atmosphere of orthodoxy and restriction’ around performance grounded in their ‘purportedly claiming superiority for their interpretations’ (1994, p.363).

O’Dea’s language is particularly striking, and immediately raises resonances in the twenty-first century ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘validity’ debates within the Church of England, something to which I will return below.

Gradually, the journey of authenticity in art music began to engage with issues of how possible (or helpful) it is to try to establish a ‘definitive performance’ and of whether performers and audiences have a more active role in negotiating the authenticity of a performance.

Young (1988) champions the place of reception in the negotiation of authenticity. He argues that the kind of authenticity presented by Davies is neither attainable nor worth attaining. Stressing how performers or composers cannot control the ways in which audiences receive and interpret what they hear, he argues that the cultural encoding of the listener will inevitably mean that each will hear the same 'objective' sounds in different ways.

Similarly, Thom questions a definition of authentic performance that rests on a single 'ideal performance' or a 'best interpretation' of any work, suggesting authenticity to be a more nuanced concept in which performers cannot 'evade the responsibility to interpret for themselves'. He concludes that allowing 'historical knowledge' or 'mimicry' to replace 'artistry' seems 'delusory' (Thom, 1990, p.275).

Botstein takes these arguments further, drawing out the point that historically-informed reconstruction only addresses itself to one aspect of musical performance. He perceptively identifies the task of establishing the meaning of past musical events as problematic. In particular, he alludes to the complex ways in which musical text and performances serve as conveyors of meaning, pointing out how understanding the 'purpose and effect' of the original performances seems elusive for composers, performers and audiences alike, even when it is possible to reconstruct how a text was first played (Botstein, 2006, p.1).

In similar vein, Fabian, looking back to survey and evaluate the authenticity debate, adds the observation that, despite disputed claims to historical faithfulness, neither the proponents nor the critics of the historical performance movement looked to a key foundational paradigm of eighteenth-century aesthetics: 'its emphasis on eliciting emotion in the audience' (2001, p.162).

In these ways, to claim that the authenticity of a musical work, and of its performance, lies in its objective dimension alone does not seem so credible. Perhaps, instead, the conductor Gustav Leonhardt's view that a single definitive authentic performance against which all others could be measured could not exist as 'each and every subsequent performance of a composition was a different one' (quoted in Fabian, 2001, p.164) seems to point towards authenticity in musical performance being a matter for negotiation that involves both subjective and objective dimensions.

The key issue that seems to underlie this debate, which is of significance to the task of re-reading ordained ministry through the lens of authenticity, is of the degree to which the intentions of the composer, the musical text itself, and the performance conventions of its context of creation can be thought to continue to exert a determinative influence over the authenticity of subsequent performances (cf. in part Davies, 2009, p.747).

In 1978, the conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt declared that faithfulness to the score was not the same thing as being 'true to the composition' (quoted in Fabian, 2001, p.155). This is a crucial distinction in musical performance, in several respects, and is revealing when applied to the performance of ordained ministry, in terms of the interplay between performer (minister), composer (God), score (scripture and tradition), and context.

First, it acknowledges that the act of composition is a creative and dynamic one in which works are created that reach their zenith of meaning only in performance. The act of composition in music, whilst commonly a solitary pursuit, always has the primary aim that the music composed should be performed, heard and appreciated. Composers and their music always exist within a context, which in part shapes how they write and what they write. So in this sense, from its inception, the act of composition is both individual and corporate.

Using Harnoncourt's definition of authenticity, it is capturing the spirit of the work in performance that should be the aim of the responsible performer, rather than arid adherence to the text on the page. To some degree, this pursuit will always be a subjective enterprise, in which the interpretive gifts of the performer come into dialogue with the text (and all it represents), but there is still a responsibility placed on the performer to interpret the work truthfully rather than distorting and recomposing it, thus maintaining some degree of objective authenticity.

When ordained ministry is re-read through this lens, it points to its authenticity only being worked out in practice: in the moments of encounter between priest and people, as they engage in performance (the *missio dei*) to realize a work (the kingdom of God) of which the Bible and the tradition of the Church speak (its score). Their realized performance will only ever be one interpretation, forming a fraction of the whole which is revealed as the work continues to be performed through time. But as they perform, they engage with the intentions of its composer (God), among which the creation of a work to be performed and experienced assumes primacy.

Second, it recognizes the constant presence of creativity in any act of performance, but places limits on re-creation. In relation to musical authenticity, O'Dea questions the adequacy of 'realization' without 'creation' as the primary expression for the creativity of musicians. She characterizes the approach of the so-called 'responsible' performer in the historical performance movement as renouncing 'the delights of imagination and [realizing the] ideal sounding as closely as possible' (1994, p.364). But she concludes that the 'restrictiveness that has come to be associated with [that] movement ... seems bent ... on forcing performers into corners and quelling their creativity' (1994, p.365). This is a somewhat risky enterprise. To O'Dea, musical performers come to grow an

internal inherent sense of artistic excellence through the motivating factor of their creative life, which lies in a ‘striving to articulate [this sense] in ... concrete terms – in actual performances...’ To then remove or suppress this ‘capacity to play’, or perhaps capacity to create, causes them to ‘go through a profound adjustment, one that may make life feel hardly worth living’ (1994, p.369).

In exploring an alternative, she opines that the benefits of historical scholarship and consideration of the intentions of the composer, as best they can be deduced, offers much ‘to feed [performers’] interpretative imaginations were they only allowed to use them’ (1994, p.365), and stresses the ‘crucial role’ of tradition in informing performance practice (1994, p.370). But, drawing on Carroll, she advocates a ‘creative use of tradition’ in which ‘interpretative excellence’ comes by ‘appreciating’ – understanding and embodying ‘ideals of excellence’ present in past performances and ‘seeking to approximate those ideals in one’s own performance’, rather than merely ‘repeating actions that have ... been deemed successful in the past’ (1994, p.370).

Where this creativity undermines the integrity of the work, O’Dea, drawing on Rosen, suggests it to be primarily a question of ‘bad faith’ in which a desire to perform a work well descends into the realm of the composition serving as an empty vessel through which the virtuosity of the performer might be celebrated (1994, p.371).

Again, the parallels with the practice of ministry are striking. In some ways, never before has so much historical and biblical scholarship informed ecclesiologists and practitioners alike, and been so readily available for engagement. Yet, arguably, these



insights have created a series of *urtext* scores<sup>4</sup>, which have come to be regarded by some as definitive expressions of ‘orthodoxy’ or ‘validity’, with a call for their performance in moments of ministry to demonstrate repetition without creative innovation.

But, as Avis (2007, p.159) notes, a key difficulty here is that whilst it is possible to draw out features that characterize Anglican ministry from both scripture and tradition, discerning a single *urtext* score for it, or a single definitive performance to be repeated, from either is well nigh impossible. Yet, equally, to suggest that the creativity of innovation in a moment of ministry can ignore the weight of historically informed performance practice that has gone before it also seems unhelpfully reductive, and arguably renders the minister an egotistic virtuoso.

This places authenticity in the vocation and role of an ordained minister in a dangerous, yet exciting place, between repetition and innovation. It further suggests, as Joyce (2010) and Peyton (2009) have explored, that the individual sense of vocation of the minister forms the sustaining heart of their ministry, yet that vocation is always expressed for God and to the benefit of others.

However, this does not necessarily suggest that the flourishing of the minister through encouragement and use of their gifts, skills and charisms is of no importance. Rather, the kind of formation in appreciation that O’Dea describes for the musician, suggests that this is what gives life to their creative imagination. In turn, such an awakening feeds a sense of vocation as they bring their creativity into dialogue with their growing appreciation of the artistic excellence of God’s creation embodied by their context, and

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<sup>4</sup> The *urtext* score occupied a particular place in the historical performance movement and aims to provide a text as close to that prepared by the composer as possible, with little, if any, of the editing that conventionally takes place in the preparation of musical scores.

other creative moments of ministry that form the tradition informing their performance practice.

But the purpose of the engagement is not interpretative excellence for its own sake, but rather the shaping and improving of performance practice. In other words, if a moment in ministry is truly authentic, it is always about God, not self, and for the benefit of others.

In this way, O'Dea's question of bad faith seems key to both the maintenance of a sense of connectedness and the avoidance of inappropriate virtuosity<sup>5</sup> as the vocation of the individual and their flourishing through the encouragement and use of their gifts, skills and charisms takes a seminal place in the negotiation of their public roles. This is a matter of intentional offering to which I will return below.

Third, Harnoncourt's distinction raises the question of whether an act of performance can ever be entirely divorced from broader contexts. This brings the discussion back again to a sense of connectedness: to that place between repetition and innovation. In particular, of how, using the language of the netnarrative paradigm, transient vertical moments of dissonance in ministry might be held by the ordained within the permanence of the horizontal journey towards ultimate consonance, without a sense of dislocation or forcing a premature resolution.

An illustration of this difficulty for musicians can be found when those schooled in art music come to perform transcribed pieces of jazz (Begbie, 2000, p.224ff; Longden, 2008). The notes they play may well be faithful to the score in terms of their accuracy,

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<sup>5</sup> Which, as Jones and Armstrong (2009) draw out, seems more a question of intention rather than of being good or shining in a particular ministerial role or moment of ministry.

and the performance practices of the genre might be reflected in the performance, but still, to the jazz professional, it ‘feels’ wrong when heard in performance.<sup>6</sup>

In Stephen Davies’ (1987) articulation of musical authenticity, the intention of the performer to be faithful to text and tradition, coupled with the accuracy of the performance, would be enough to establish objective authenticity, which in turn is sufficient to declare the performance authentic. Yet this performance does not necessarily ‘stand’ in the broader tradition of jazz performances, nor might audiences experience it as authentic jazz. In other words, it is not experienced as what it purports to be: it neither seems real nor rings true.

Similarly, as Sudnow (1993) writes of his journey into jazz performance from art music, without the creativity of the performer being engaged in an act of remaking at every level, the performer himself might experience the performance as inauthentic (cited in Begbie, 2000, pp.224-227). In this way, on an individual level, it does not ring true.

Such dissonant moments, when the performance of ministry does not ring true for the minister, open two clear possibilities. Using the language of netnarratives, one possibility is a retreat into repetition of past consonances, which essentially forces a premature resolution through not moving the dissonance on toward new consonance as part of the horizontal journey of life and vocation in the pursuit of final conclusive consonance. The other possibility is a deep relearning and forming, where the new experience of dissonance is interpreted, reframed, wrestled with, and held as it moves toward consonance. I will return to this in Chapter 3, as I discuss how the ordained experience and interpret barriers to authentic ministry.

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<sup>6</sup> This is not a simple question of knowledge or performing ability. The typical comment made is that art musicians cannot ‘swing’. They know that two written equal quavers should not be played evenly in jazz, and play them as dotted quaver and semiquaver groups, but often they sound ‘clipped’ (too precise in duration) and the emphasis is placed upon the ‘wrong’ choice of the two notes.

To this point, the corporate dimension of ordained ministry has been recognized through discussion of the relationship between the performance of individual moments of creativity in ministry and their broader connectedness to their score (scripture) and composer (God). However, little has been said of how the authenticity of a moment might be experienced by the people among whom a minister performs, and of the role they might take in negotiating its authenticity. Here the formation journey of authenticity in popular music performance offers useful insights.

In contrast to the journey of authenticity in art music, that of popular music, in most genres, began from being grounded in highly subjective personal expression.<sup>7</sup> It was, as Jones and Webster note, ‘a shift from “doing the done thing” to “doing your own thing”’ (2006, p.52). In this sense, notions of ‘quality’ or ‘faithfulness to the composer’s intentions’ give way to ability to offer a channel through which an individual sense of meaning might be expressed. This is, in itself, multi-faceted: at one pole, a musician might use the act of performance to express individual creativity, at the other, a couple draw enduring meaning in their relationship from a particular song played at their wedding. Both poles are, in this sense, entirely self-referential: if it has meaning for an individual, it is authentic to that person; there is no requirement for it to have meaning to another.

The inevitable consequence of this subjectivity is that the common acceptance of a central enduring ‘canon’ of ‘authentic’ musical texts within particular traditions of music making is replaced by a loose collection of co-existing transient expressions,

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<sup>7</sup> Although, as Barker and Taylor (2007) trace, as an industry grew up around popular music, in some genres, the authenticity of personal expression gave way to the commercialized ‘faking’ of the cult of celebrity, which they evaluate as ‘wildly entertaining’ at times, but not authentic.

some of which might be relevant beyond their context of initial creation and performance, but with no expectation for this to be so.

This poses obvious problems in terms of connectedness and intention when ordained ministry is viewed through the lens of this kind of authenticity. The authenticity of a single moment alone offers little to the vision of a genuinely mixed economy, if it is solely grounded in ‘what works for me’.

However, authenticity in popular music is not all it seems. Over time, it has developed an ability to locate itself simultaneously in personal and corporate expressions through the ways in which it has developed tradition. The key issue has been one of offering and experiencing: of whether or not what is offered by the individual in terms of their personal sense of authenticity is intended to stand within a broader tradition or not, and of whether that offering (in the sense of both noun and verb) is experienced as authentic by others.

In this way, once again the degree to which a performance can be located within a particular tradition or body of work causes repetition and innovation to be held in creative tension, to provide a framework within which both can enter into productive dialogue and recast dimensions of the identity of a text with each creative realization whilst retaining enough of its fundamental essence to resist a turn towards relativism.

One illustration of this is the enduring fascination with the life and work of Elvis Presley among an incredibly diverse range of people over time. Millions of people listen to his work, and find meaning in it, through its written texts, recorded performances and re-interpretation by subsequent performers. In different ways, each of these is ‘authentic’: in terms of the printed texts, or presentation of the original performance, or

its ability to recreate the context of its initial performance, to serve as a vessel for a musician to express their creativity, or to speak to the emotions of listeners, recalling events and feelings from the past. The lasting authenticity of his work is in little doubt for each of these people, and finding meaning in it binds them together, yet their definitions of what makes it meaningful for them may well be different.

Yet each of these, in their different ways, can clearly be located within the broad tradition of Presley's work and, to be there, needs to evidence some degree of truth to the composition. If a reinterpretation by a subsequent performer strays so far from the original text that it removes the shape, sense, or flow of the song as composed, then many would consider it inauthentic although it remains a valid musical performance. Expressed more simply, the evaluative question employed is 'is this recognizably an Elvis Presley song, or has it been recomposed to a level at which the original is unrecognizable?'

In practical terms, for a minister offering in moments of ministry, the question of intention looms large. An obvious example lies in the art of preaching, specifically of what the minister intends a sermon to speak. Is it carefully designed solely to entertain an 'audience', to display the prowess of the minister, or to draw the people into the world of which the minister speaks? My descriptors are, of course, somewhat stereotypical, and both humour and academic scholarship can be used to great effect in preaching that is for the glory of God and to the benefit of others. Yet the question remains of when a sermon becomes an empty performance (in the negative sense of that word), or a self-indulgent display of academic prowess, and so no longer stands within the tradition of ministry through the Word.

A second example lies in the contemporary popularity for funeral services of the song *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* in the version so evocatively performed by Eva Cassidy. The somewhat wistful lyrics point to a reality that lies beyond the present moment, and encapsulate a longing to somehow ‘be there’ although that longing is always future-grounded. Cassidy’s performance is faithful both to the musical text and the lyrics, and beautifully captures that sense of wishing for something elusive, so in this sense it is objectively authentic. As a performance, its reinterpretation has facilitated something highly creative that speaks of the performer, and seems to convey both her creativity and her emotional investment in the performance, so it is subjectively authentic in that sense. Cassidy only found fame posthumously, and, arguably, her intention was never to produce a recording that would be meaningful for funeral services. But, perhaps the very fact that she herself ‘sings from the grave’ might say something of the subjective authenticity this recording enjoys for bereaved people.

When brought back to the discussion of ordained ministry, this also points to issues of how perfection and incompleteness might be held together. Each interpretative moment of Presley’s work or that of Cassidy is somehow perfect to the individual for whom it has meaning. Yet when taken as a fragment of the whole, it is always inherently incomplete, as, indeed, is that of any preacher. This offers a useful way of considering the lifelong vocation of a priest in terms of how they might be read over time.

At one time in their ministry, they might well be read as somehow perfect, that is, as ringing true in such a way that makes the reality they represent (the kingdom of God) tangible. Yet, as the examples given in Chapter 1 illustrate, such perfection as exists is always incomplete as the horizontal dimension of their melodic journey proceeds towards ultimate resolution. Similarly, for as long as the moment of ministry remains

recognizably of God in terms of what it speaks, it is essentially located within the collection of moments that makes up the breadth of tradition. Recomposition to a degree where God and the things of God are obscured could render the expression inauthentic.<sup>8</sup>

Some of this re-reading of ordained ministry through the lens of authenticity covers familiar ground, although that optic has rarely been used. Much has been written on the personal and corporate dimensions of ordained ministry, and on how the role of clergy in the Church of England has evolved in response to contextual needs and demands. But two conclusions, which do not seem to be present in the extant literature, can be deduced from the discourse above, and which might act as useful markers for a journey of formation in authentic ministry:

First, that authenticity in ministry is about creativity. In particular, that it is found in the place between repetition and innovation, where transience and permanence and perfection and incompleteness are held in creative tension.

Second, that authenticity in ministry is also about vocation. Specifically, that it is found in how the gifts and charisms of individuals or communities are encouraged, offered, received and experienced in the mission of bringing glory to God and blessing to others.

I now go on to reflect theologically on these conclusions.

### **Theological Reflection: Markers for Formation in Authentic Ministry**

Reflecting on the first of my conclusions, holding together such contrary concepts as transience and permanence and perfection and incompleteness on a plain of discourse

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<sup>8</sup> Proponents of orthodoxy and validity as evaluative criteria would advance theses that recomposition in terms of women in the episcopate or the ordination of practising gay people renders God and the things of God obscured by a secularly-driven equal rights agenda. However, it could equally be argued that harsh rhetoric could be subject to the same critique, most especially when the things of God are conceived in terms of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).



for ordained ministry that has repetition and innovation as its poles immediately identifies the establishment of authenticity in ministry as a dialogical process.

Theological reflection on processes for dialogue has become something of a mainstream enterprise. Reports published by such organizations as the World Council of Churches (1979; 2003), and Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (1991), alongside those of the Roman Catholic Church<sup>9</sup> and the reflections of theologians<sup>10</sup> illustrate how, in much ecumenical and interfaith work, the age of the monologue seems to have passed (Longden, 2004). Yet on the questions of repetition and innovation in ordained ministry, achieving the kind of dialogue that leads towards what Wilson (2008, p.268) describes as an ecclesiology grounded in the concept of church as a ‘living conversation’, seems elusive, at least at denominational level. However, in the light of the discussion above, it seems equally necessary, not so much to force a premature resolution of the dissonance and the end of the work, but to hold it and reframe it as necessary dissonance in a time of modulation in the *missio dei* that is moving towards ultimate resolution in consonance.

Such dialogue, embarked on with necessary predicates of humility, honesty and openness (Samartha, 1981, p.100), offers much potential in opening the way to negotiating a kind of ministerial authenticity that is both sufficiently flexible to take account of the personal and local and capable of maintaining connectedness to that which lies beyond itself.

First, dialogue is capable of achieving ‘a more tolerant and less judgemental and condemnatory view toward other[s]...’ (Saliba, 1993, pp.53-54) and ‘the realization that

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<sup>9</sup> Particularly the Vatican II ‘Decree on Ecumenism’, ‘Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions’ and the ‘Declaration on Religious Freedom’. See Abbott (1966) for analysis of these documents.

<sup>10</sup> See particularly Samartha (1981); Swidler (1983; 1990); Selvanayagam (1995).

each partner in the enterprise might gain greater insight into their own beliefs and worldview through engagement with and understanding of the “other” (Selvanayagam, 1995, pp.2-3; Swidler et al., 1990, pp.70-71) (cited in Longden, 2004). In the language of netnarratives, dialogue regards the ‘other’, with their countersubject, as an essential part of the counterpoint of mission and ministry.

Second, for many, dialogue is an essential response to God’s call to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’, moving community-grounded Christian service beyond pragmatic tasks, reflecting Selvanayagam’s caution that

If we are to improve only the present history which is but a fraction of a second of human history as a whole, we undermine the value of human life which is endowed with everlasting values of truth and love (2000, p.378).

So, as I have noted previously (Longden, 2004, p.6), ‘the dialogic Christian commits to a way of life that remains faithful to the biblical affirmation that “the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” (Psalm 24:1, quoted in World Council of Churches, 2003, p.7), accepts in open humility the corporate responsibility of all humankind to tend all of God’s creation and acknowledges that lordship over it is solely God’s, so people of faith necessarily take a vital, but fragmentary, part of the whole transformative work of God.’

Third, dialogue can form a process for authentic Christian witness in pluralist contexts, giving a new perspective on the role of humans in the *missio dei* (Jenkinson and O’Sullivan, 1991, p.292ff).<sup>11</sup> As Selvanayagam (1995, p.5) identifies, the Bible itself is dialogical, with a Christian understanding of God’s ongoing dialogue with humankind being rooted in the Incarnation. And the radical futurist vision of the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21) seems to raise an imperative to seek partners for dialogue. In these

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<sup>11</sup> Although Selvanayagam (1995, p.4) points to the problematic nature of the word ‘witness’ identifying its evangelistic implications as potentially unhelpful to the dialogic enterprise.

ways, just as God's dialogue with humankind is not exclusively with a 'chosen people' the dialogue of Christians can be both faithful to its own theological position, and open to acknowledging the Spirit to be unbound and the work of the Spirit as not limited to any inherently-partial human understanding (Archbishops' Council, 2004, pp.84-85; Selvanayagam, 1995, pp.7-12) (cited in Longden, 2004).

The subtleties of such expansive dialogical interplay in shaping ministry appear to be reflected in Paul's comment in 1 Corinthians 9 that he has 'become all things to all men so that by all possible means [he] might save some' (1 Cor. 9: 22b NIV). This also illustrates how seemingly dissonant transient vertical creative moments in ministry can be held in creative tension with a sense of broader permanence, but without losing their innovative edge.

As Thiselton (2000) notes, Paul's primary concern in this passage is not to stress any kind of apostolic omnicompetence. Instead, he illustrates how relatedness lies at the heart of the Christian gospel as a corrective to individualism. In this verse, Paul draws on the well-known Greco-Roman educational convention of employing 'flexible and adaptive approaches ... in the light of human diversity' (Thiselton, 2000, p.699). Dunn (2003, p.576) terms this Paul's 'principle of accommodation or adaptability', functioning equally within missiology and pastoral care. He goes on to note that

[Paul's] freedom as an apostle was freedom to adapt policy and practice to particular situations, even when that meant running counter to all precedent, and to both scriptural and dominical authorization (Dunn, 2003, p.577).

Paul's sense of freedom seems to cohere well with his understanding of what it means for ministry to be fruitful (cf. Gal. 5:22) grounded in his faithfulness to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). And this imperative leads him to employ whatever means in whichever way, whether this leads him to favour repetition or innovation in a

particular moment of encounter. The ‘how’ and ‘what’ of his ministry in Athens (Acts 17) might well have seemed unintelligible (and thus inauthentic) to the people of Corinth, and the ‘ringing declaration’ of Christian freedom expressed in Galatians 5:1-12 might have appeared foolishness to the Judaizers in Galatia (Longenecker, 1990, p.235), but Paul’s approach in each context negotiates a subjective authenticity for that transient moment in ministry alongside a more objective sense of connected authenticity through the integrity of the permanence of his apostleship and calling.

Mark 8: 27-29 takes this further, and raises issues of perfection and incompleteness in moments of encounter in mission and ministry, and of how the ways in which the minister is experienced and read interplay with their own sense of vocation in negotiating authenticity. In this passage, Jesus is recorded as asking: ‘Who do people say I am? ... What about you? ... Who do you say I am?’ (Mark 8: 27-29 NIV). As Yarbro Collins (2007, p.401) points out, these questions, addressed in Mark’s Gospel to Jesus’ disciples, continue the exploration of his identity, which began with the declaration of him as ‘the Holy One of God’ by the unclean spirit in 1:24.

The question of his identity elicited a multiplicity of understandings from those who encountered him, from the pragmatic, but disparaging, ‘carpenter’ offered by the people of Nazareth (6:3), through identifications as John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. The answers provided by the disciples form a summary of the many perceptions. But, from Peter, the answer comes: ‘You are the Christ.’

Initially this evokes the expansiveness of processes of dialogue in negotiating what ministry might ‘mean’ in particular contexts. Hooker (1991, p.201) notes that the meaning and significance of Peter’s confession has been the subject of much debate, and Mark’s account tells nothing of what it might mean to Jesus. But equally, Jesus’

sense of his calling and mission seems clear, and his subsequent teaching expounds the nature of his messiahship. Yet the Jesus of Mark's Gospel, having been declared by God to be His Son (1:11), with 'fearful acknowledgment' by the 'demonic world' (1:24; 3:11; 5:7), is still keen to gauge public opinion on his identity (Evans, 2001, p.14) - in other words, to discern how he and his ministry are received and experienced by others. But this passage also leads us towards considering how perfection and incompleteness are held in transient moments of ministry, when viewed in the light of the permanence of the *missio dei*. In eliciting the multiplicity of answers there appears to have been a recognition that each person encountering Jesus carried their own cultural encoding, grasp of Jewish Messianic teaching and agenda, and thus saw in him different dimensions of the reality that was present both in and beyond their immediate context. Yet the perfect was present in their midst. Expressed another way, the subjective authenticity of the moment of encounter, for each, was established through who they interpreted him as being, but its objective dimension lay in terms of who he really was and understood himself to be.

Some people established subjective transient authenticity by recognizing Jesus to be someone who stood in the tradition of the prophets, of Elijah or John the Baptist: all dimensions of the totality incarnated by Jesus. Yet those dimensions, perfect as the Son of Man reflected them, formed incomplete understandings of the whole incarnated before them. To Peter, the perfection of the moment lay in his recognition of Jesus as the Christ, weighing the reality he experienced against another part of the broad Jewish tradition. Yet, as Yarbrow Collins points out, even Peter's more comprehensive understanding of Jesus' identity was incomplete: as she describes it - 'ambiguous' (2007, p.402).

Expressed another way, despite those who encountered Jesus only seeing an incomplete fragment of the whole, a majority found sufficient perfection to facilitate an encounter with the reality Jesus incarnated. For ordained ministers to think that they are capable of embodying the whole of that which they imperfectly represent is, of course, dangerous and delusory (Dulles, 2002, pp.159-160). But, nevertheless, they are called to journey on towards ultimate completeness and perfection (Matt. 5:48). In the moment of encounter, there will be times when they ‘get it right’ in a way that they fully reflect, for that moment, one dimension of that whole, and so are read as perfect in spite of their incompleteness.

This conception of the holding together of transience and permanence and perfection and incompleteness is brought out in Paul’s use of a mirror metaphor in 1 Corinthians 13:12. As Fee (1987, p.647) notes, this metaphor is particularly apposite for its socio-historical context. At this time, Corinth was famous for the production of high-quality polished bronze mirrors. However, far from offering a straightforward contextual illustration of his point, the metaphor raises significant exegetical questions about its meaning (Thiselton, 2000, pp.1067-1068). To Thiselton, Paul’s use of this imagery most probably draws on Platonic philosophy’s presentation of the mirror ‘as a metaphor for indirect knowledge’ (2000, p.1069) and is, therefore, employed to make a distinction between ‘secondhand reflections and interpretations’ and ‘direct, face-to-face vision and complete knowledge’ (2000, p.1068). He warns, drawing on Senft, against expanding this context-specific usage into a more generalized ‘theory of knowledge’ (2000, p.1069), but it seems appropriate to offer this passage as a marker for tracing authenticity in ministry, since it can, in the language of the netnarrative paradigm, act as a useful corrective to tendencies towards premature resolution in a time of modulation.

In other words, the incompleteness of human understanding can mean that ‘the limitations, fallibility, and “interests” of the observation and inference ... lead to *mistaken* judgements and opinions’ (Thiselton, 2000, p.1069), and thus to ill-judged action.

In this way, if authenticity in ministry is to be found in the place between repetition and innovation, to insist that future moments in ministry form simple repetitions of those of the past is, arguably, to seek an early resolution that prematurely terminates expressions of the *missio dei*. It seems to rob them of their essential eschatological character, risking leaving them without the ability to modulate on towards a future glorious final statement and cadence.

But equally, this suggests that innovation in any moment of ministry, grounded in human discernment of God’s intentions, needs to proceed with a degree of caution and humility caused by recognition of its very incompleteness. Any perfection in a moment is inherently incomplete when viewed in the context of the *missio dei*: this seems no less true of expressions of church, and their patterning, than of ordained ministers themselves.

Paul’s concern in 1 Corinthians 13 is to point towards the ultimate fulfilment of both love and knowledge, which provides an imperative not to regard current practice as in any sense conclusive. ‘What works right now’ is never enough, nor is shaping ministry as a mere reaction to what is. Instead, as Farley notes, authentic ministry requires the minister to be constantly ‘reading the signs of the times’ in the light of scripture and tradition (Farley, 2001) as best they know it. It affirms that whilst current knowledge is always incomplete, it still has the potential to be a reflection of the perfection that is to come.

This brings us to my second conclusion: that authenticity in ministry is primarily a matter of vocation rather than role. It is specifically about how the gifts and charisms of individuals or communities are encouraged, offered, received and experienced in the mission of bringing glory to God and blessing to others.

Conventionally, self-sacrifice has been a guiding principle for negotiating the shape of ordained ministry, with the needs of the context and its people calling for all personal interests, ambitions and priorities to be laid aside. This call seems to resonate well with biblical imperatives such as Jesus' instruction to his disciples that those who are to follow him must die to self and take up their cross (Matt. 16:24), or Paul's observations about living life in the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:31; Rom. 8:4-13; Gal. 5).

But if, as the discussion above illustrates, it is the expression of their sense of vocation being real and ringing true that enables a minister to be read as such in role, questions soon arise in the light of previous research. A number of studies have identified a sense of cognitive dissonance among the ordained about their role in relation to their sense of vocation, which, they conclude, is increasingly leading to feelings of disillusionment or lack of fulfilment at best, and breakdown or early retirement at worst (Barley, 2010; Jackson, 2009; Senior Clergy Group, 2007; Watts et al., 2002, p.250ff). This interplay of role and vocation is explored in detail in Chapter 3. But it is worth reflecting theologically first on how self-sacrifice could be re-read in a way that neither falls into the trap of individualism, nor implies that how the gifts, skills and charisms of the individual are encouraged and used in ministry is of secondary importance to the needs and demands of denomination and context. Rather, re-reading self-sacrifice in a way that might lead to the flourishing of individual ministers being regarded as integral to the authenticity of ministry.



This re-reading can usefully begin with the words Jesus is recorded as offering to his disciples in Matthew's Gospel: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me' (Matt. 16:24 NIV).

As Hagner (1995, p.482) notes, the passage of which this verse is a part contains an 'unsettling revelation' that the path of discipleship must embrace a call to self-denial, or even martyrdom, sharing in the pattern exemplified by Jesus. In this way, the choice to follow Christ is a deliberate one, involving constantly 'dying to oneself' (1995, p.483). This self-denial is, though, only the preparation for Jesus' command to his disciples to 'take up one's cross' (1995, p.483). As Hagner (1995, p.487) notes:

This self-denial means a new set of priorities that will look foolish to the world. This dying to self makes possible the radical love and service that are the essence of discipleship.

Davies and Allison take this further, commenting that Matthew 16:24-25 elucidates that 'displacement of the ego from the centre of [a person's] universe and the accompanying willingness to give up personal ambition' are the factors that cause a person to gain the 'eschatological life' of which Jesus speaks (1991, p.671). In this way, for Matthew, it seems to function more in terms of creating space for knowing and doing the will of God than in subsuming the individuality of the disciple: in other words, a useful corrective to individualism and self-aggrandizement.

The key question, drawing on Hagner's commentary, appears to be one of whether placing greater value on the flourishing of individual ministers is in any sense the same as seeking to have life on one's own terms, something that would render a ministry inauthentic in both dimensions. The passage seems to speak to the concern that authentic ministry needs to avoid becoming self-referential, and thus, taking a 'pick and mix' approach to the shape of ministry. But this passage could also be interpreted as

raising the question of offering, or, using O’Dea’s language of musical performance, of good or bad faith. If the motivation of a priest is to awaken their creative imagination, through bringing their gifts, skills and charisms into dialogue with both the vertical dimension of a moment of ministry and the horizontal dimension of being a co-worker over time in a work that is always that of God but shared by the church and the individual (the *missio dei*), and their aim is to negotiate an expression that is an authentic tangible reflection of what it purports to speak, this willingness seems to point to something more than narrow self-interest.

All of this seems to cohere with Paul’s teaching on life in the Spirit from Galatians 5, and specifically his encouragement to the Galatian church to ‘keep in step with the Spirit’ if they ‘live by the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:25 NIV). As Longenecker (1990, p.265) writes, Galatians 5:25 forms a summary of Paul’s teaching in the earlier part of this chapter, in which he presents contrasting lists of the ‘works of the flesh’ and the ‘fruits of the Spirit’:

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these ... Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21 NRSV).

In this statement, his emphasis falls on the need for Christians to model their lifestyle on the guidance of the Spirit, rather than on legalistic rules or libertine concepts of the unrestricted freedom of the flesh. Significantly, his list of vices contains not only ‘carnal’ sins but also a complementary focus on ‘anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions and envy’. In this, Paul appears to be drawing attention not so much to specific behaviours as to the ‘self-centredness or egocentricity that underlies all of them’ (Longenecker, 1990, p.266). In other words, reliance on the self apart from God generates a lifestyle that manifests its issues in all manner of destructive ways.

The verse in question also begins a passage (Gal. 5:25-6:6) that Dunn suggests is the ‘earliest evidence of what we might call a “professional” Christian ministry’, considering what life in the Spirit might mean for the establishment of fruitful human relationships and encouragement for teaching others the same values (1993, p.328). As Silva notes, this corporate dimension is fundamental to Paul’s thought on life in the Spirit, as first century Mediterranean society characterized personality as ‘group-embedded’. Drawing on Malina, he points out that the ‘social body’ bears responsibility together for the regulation of ‘morality and deviance’ (Silva, 2001, p.109).

When read through the lens of authenticity, this acts as a useful corrective against individualism, but it also shows how individual flourishing does not necessarily compromise the kind of self-sacrifice that centres itself on the priorities of bringing glory to God and blessing to others. Rather, to use the language of the netnarrative paradigm: it is developing the horizontal dimension of an individual melody (the vocation of the minister), through a series of vertical harmonic moments (their engagement of vocation with contextual needs in ministry), for the purpose of realizing (performing) the work (the *missio dei*) in the present, with the aim of moving it towards ultimate resolution in a final cadence (the eschaton).

This sense of choosing individual flourishing in moments for a larger purpose than itself can draw resonances from the version of the Matthew 16 passage that is recorded in Luke 9. Here the qualification that a cross must be taken up ‘daily’ (Luke 9:23 NIV) is added to the action of putting aside self. When viewed through the lens of authenticity, this seems to point to an encouragement to all ministers to constantly examine choices carefully to establish motive and purpose, as part of the negotiation of authenticity both

in the permanence of the dialogue that constantly underpins the negotiation of ministry and in the transience of any particular creative moment.

Expressed another way, is choosing individual flourishing seeking authentication of self-interest or establishing the kind of personal authenticity that coheres with the message ordained ministry seeks to proclaim? In the language of hermeneutics, constant examination of choices identifies the critical self-awareness required of an authentic minister: viewing the self through a hermeneutic of suspicion to discover if the ministry an individual performs is pointing to the self or beyond the individual to God.

To this point, scriptural warrants have been proposed from passages that, arguably, have acted conventionally against regarding the flourishing of the individual minister as integral to authenticity in ministry. One more obvious warrant in favour is John 10:10. In this passage, Jesus is recorded as saying ‘I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly’ (John 10:10 NRSV).

Yet despite its obviousness, it seems to have been largely disregarded in favour of conventional readings of self-sacrifice. In other words, arguably, the operative interpretation at denominational and diocesan levels, which has been largely internalized by clergy as normative, is that abundance (or fullness) of life in the present is what clergy are to facilitate for God’s people, as a foretaste of its ultimate expression in the future. There is nothing wrong in that. But this reading of the passage seems to be extrapolated into the implication that clergy should apply an eschatological perspective to their own sense of fullness of life, so that individual flourishing in the present is ‘put on hold’ as denominational and contextual priorities take precedence (cf. in part Barley, 2010; Joyce, 2010; Senior Clergy Group, 2007; Watts et al., 2002, p.250ff). Therefore, it seems as though some re-reading is called for here also.

What it means to live in fullness or abundance of life in Christ has been subject to much debate. For some, it requires concrete action to liberate oppressed or marginalized peoples, whereas for others it takes an exclusively eschatological perspective providing ultimate righting of the evils and omissions of the present age. Both poles offer insights for authentic ministry, emphasizing its locatedness in the present but connectedness to that which has gone before and that which will come after. But of most significance to this study seems to be consideration of who the ‘they’ in John 10:10 are, and of what the role of the ordained minister is in the facilitation of fullness of life. As Pritchard (2007, p.xi) notes,

... the goal of ministry will always be the same – that men and women in every place may have life in all its fullness and abundance. And that fullness and abundance is meant equally for the priests of God’s Church.

John 10:10 falls towards the middle of a meditation on the parable of the good shepherd (John 10:1-16) and forms, as Moody Smith records, a ‘typically Johannine’ discourse that begins in ‘enigmatic language’ causing him to conclude that only an initiate would be able to comprehend the meaning of the passage (1995, p.118). Beasley-Murray contends that the ‘positive aspect’ of verse 10 should be understood in eschatological perspective: that the purpose of the Christ event was that all humankind might have the promise of life ‘in its fullest sense – the eternal life of the kingdom of God’ (1999, p.170).

A number of authors have separated the two statements made in verses 7 and 9 into a distinction between the shepherds and the sheep, which seems to support a distinction being drawn between clergy and laity. They claim the statement *ἡ θύρα τῶν προβάτων* in verse 7 identifies Jesus as the door through which genuine Christian shepherds enjoy access to the sheep; whereas *ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ θύρα* in verse 9 identifies him as the door

through which the sheep enter into the promise of eternal life (Schneider, Brown and Morris, cited in Beasley-Murray, 1999, pp.169-170).

Beasley-Murray considers a more holistic reading of this passage to be its most convincing interpretation in which John is keen to establish Jesus as the only 'door to the salvation of the kingdom of God'. Verse 8 contains a sweeping condemnation of the messianic pretenders who have gone before Jesus, indicating not the key figures of the Old Testament, but instead the false messiahs of the Jewish and pagan worlds and, drawing on Matthew 23:13 and Luke 11:52, those who claim to be 'mediators of salvation'. Beasley-Murray concludes that a distinction between shepherds and sheep in this context is inappropriate: all are solely dependent on Christ to enter into the salvation of the kingdom (1999, p.170).

Viewing the passage through a liberationist optic reveals that many eschatological readings display a tendency towards over-spiritualization, with the consequence of ignoring contemporary contexts that do not evidence fullness of life for all. Whilst recognizing the partiality of the current age as a reflection of the kingdom that is to come, this perspective asks the complex hermeneutical question of whether over-spiritualization preserves societal norms that prevent some from enjoying any foretaste of fullness of life on earth. This is pertinent to the issue at hand.

Kabongo-Mbaya suggests that the 'central challenge' offered by John 10:10 lies in the proclamation of the message that any prosperity in life on earth is always less than the goodness of God (2002, p.151), but also considers the term 'life in abundance' to signify, for John, not simply 'some kind of salvation after death' (2002, p.154). He points out that John links the term to other notions of 'light, knowledge, truth, freedom, [and] love' in the fourth gospel. Kabongo-Mbaya encourages consideration of

understandings of ‘fullness of life’ as freedom from poverty or as the antithesis of ‘death in abundance’ (2002, p.155) alongside those of the mystical reality accessible only to initiates (Moody Smith, 1995, p.118).

In this sense, whilst ‘fullness of life’ inherently expresses ‘the fulfilment of God’s promises and the coming of the new age’ it also involves a commitment in the present to ‘signs of protest and resistance against all the “deserts of life” that surround us’ (Kabongo-Mbaya, 2002, p.160). Kabongo-Mbaya reflects that the proclamation in John 10:10 contains ‘a considerable liberating power’ which raises it beyond a mere application to prosperous living in the present and simplistic relegation to the future.

Drawing these eschatological and liberationist readings together suggests that whilst the meaning of ‘fullness of life’ in the fourth gospel points to something that is fundamentally future-grounded, its theological significance cannot be simply understood in terms of the parousia.

Bringing this back to discussion of ordained ministry, the discourse in Chapter 1 and in the synthesis above illustrates that ministers who hope to be read in a way that allows them to facilitate fullness of life for others will need to experience it for themselves, and then model it, not simply proclaim it.

If the role of an ordained person works out from an unhealthy conception of self-sacrifice in which their sense of vocation, and their gifts, skills and charisms become dislocated from the role they embody, it seems reasonable to suggest that inauthenticity is generated in both personal and corporate dimensions. In the personal, it leads to an assumption that living in fullness of life is a goal for the people among whom they minister, but not for them; or to working to an overly eschatological understanding that

the ‘sacrifice’ in the present somehow ‘qualifies’ them for fullness of life in the future, which, arguably, implies a somewhat Pelagian approach to life and ministry. In the corporate dimension, it negates their capacity to speak of that which they purport to represent, as their life is read as not ringing true with the reality beyond the self that they are proclaiming.

Paradoxically, for a profession so readily associated with the cult of celebrity, the theatre director Peter Brook, commenting on the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski, seems to capture well the centrality of personal flourishing in shaping authentic ministry, both in terms of the personal journey and in order to create something that is a gift for others:

The theatre ... cannot be an end in itself; ... the theatre is a vehicle, a means for self-study, self-exploration, a possibility of salvation. The actor has himself as his field of work. ... to explore [this] he needs to call on every aspect of himself. ... Seen this way, acting is a life’s work – the actor is step by step extending his knowledge of himself through the painful, everchanging circumstances of rehearsal and the tremendous punctuation points of performance. ... the actor does not hesitate to show himself exactly as he is, for he realizes that the secret of the role demands his opening himself up, disclosing his own secrets. So that the act of performance is an act of sacrifice, of sacrificing what most men prefer to hide – this sacrifice is his gift to the spectator (2008, pp.66-67).

This chapter began with a statement concerning curacy: that the Church of England intends curacy to be a journey of formation in which the curate grows ‘towards the role of an ordained person defined ... in terms of service, holiness, vocation and mission’ (Ministry Division, 2003a, p.39). In this chapter I have asked the question of what kinds of ordained ministers the twenty-first century Church of England needs, suggested them to be authentic ministers who are real and who ring true, and drawn two conclusions about authenticity in ministry: that it is primarily about creativity and vocation.

I now take discussion of both my conclusions and the Church’s curacy statement forward in Chapter 3 to consider how ‘the role of the ordained’, towards which curacy is aimed to move curates in formation, acts as expression of or barrier to authentic



ministry, before moving, in Chapters 4 and 5, into my specific field of evaluating and reframing curacy.

### **CHAPTER 3: ‘ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE’? VOCATION AND CREATIVITY IN THE ROLE OF THE ORDAINED**

Chapter 2 drew two conclusions about authenticity in ministry. First, that it is about creativity, found in the place between repetition and innovation, where transience and permanence and perfection and incompleteness are held in creative tension. Second, that it is about vocation, found in how the gifts and charisms of individuals or communities are encouraged, offered, received and experienced in the mission of bringing glory to God and blessing to others. In this chapter, I now go on to explore whether the role of the ordained, into which the Church of England expects curates to be formed during curacy, as it currently stands in its majority expression as parochial clergy, acts as an expression of or barrier to creativity and vocation.

I do this by examining the interplay between role and vocation from two perspectives, structural and personal, exploring two hypotheses. First, that vocation has been increasingly privatized in denominational understandings of the role of clergy. Second, that this process of privatization has generated a sense of inauthenticity in regard to role in a growing number of clergy.

I continue to use an interdisciplinary methodology in this chapter. In analysing the structural dimension of role and vocation, I bring ecclesiology into dialogue with Casanova’s sociological thought on privatization and deprivatization. And in considering its personal dimension, I engage with Bourdieu’s theory of habitus to explore the processes that might be underpinning heartfelt cries such as ‘I wasn’t ordained for this’, which many seem to interpret as an inability or unwillingness to change.

Before bringing them into dialogue, I will first introduce the sociological partners.

### **Casanova: Privatization and Deprivatization**

As Chapter 1 identifies, the work of José Casanova has proved one of the more significant in complexifying what had become regarded by many as an over-simplistic analysis of the decline of religion in society (Warner, 2010). Casanova particularly questions the inevitability of complete privatization, in which religion is relegated from the public arena to the private lives of individuals as a result of social differentiation, perhaps subsequently declining in importance there also as it becomes one 'lifestyle choice' among many, none of which acts as an influential unifying factor mediating their way of living.

Recognizing that privatization can function as a self-fulfilling prophecy, he notes that aspects of religious influence remain in the public life of most countries, albeit now contending for an influential role rather than assuming it as a right (Casanova, 1994; 2006), and calls for its deprivatization.

To Casanova, the place of religion in public life needs to be reconfigured in ways that 'do not attempt to re-assert the religious prerogatives of Christendom' (Hughson, 2011, p.179); this reconfiguration can then lead to its deprivatization as 'religion abandons its assigned place in the private sphere and enters the undifferentiated public sphere of civil society to take part in the ongoing process of contestation, discursive legitimation, and redrawing of the boundaries' (Casanova, 1994, pp.65-66).

In this way, he claims that the continuing role of religion in society, in its deprivatized reconfigured forms, offers enduring benefits to all humankind, through acting in the public arena against destructive features of secular paradigms, calling powerful states

and markets to account for their ways of being, and resisting a reductive approach to community that renders the common good the mere ‘aggregated sum of individual choices’ (Hughson, 2011, pp.182-183).

Following Casanova, I suggest that vocation is in the process of being privatized as an unintentional consequence of growing professionalization of the clergy role, which is acting against its creative expression, leading to a sense of inauthenticity among an increasing number of clergy. Recognizing that this privatization has not been total, I call for vocation to be deprivatized, and for it to re-enter the undifferentiated public sphere of clergy roles to negotiate greater authenticity in role for the minister to the benefit of others.

### **Bourdieu on Habitus**

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is somewhat multi-dimensional, and sets out to address questions of regularities in social practices. Significantly for this study, it particularly considers ‘how the “outer” social and “inner” self help to shape each other’ (Maton, 2008, p.52). It not only forms a connection between past, present and future in the shape of the life of an individual and their ways of being, but also conceptualizes the interplay between corporate (public) and individual (private) spheres, and objective and subjective dimensions (2008, p.53).

It links public and private spheres by considering how individuals always exist and act in relation to broader social forces, even if the choice made is to reject conformity to their expectations and norms. In this way, in Bourdieu’s analysis, the unique experiences of an individual (termed the ‘contents’ of their life) are held in common with others of the same cultural encoding (shared social class, ethnicity, gender,

occupation, for example), and thus commonalities can be traced in terms of their structure (Bourdieu, 1977, p.72). The fundamental point is that the individual, even when acting out of non-conformity, can only be unique in relation to the corporate.

It stresses the interplay between objective and subjective dimensions by considering how outer social realities become internalized, producing dispositions that affect how individuals act, and thus in turn contribute to social structures through the roles occupied by the individual, termed by Bourdieu the ‘externalization of internality’ (Maton, 2008, p.53).

In other words, experiences play a large part in making people who they are; similar types of people have similar options open to them for the gaining of experiences, and similar ways of internalizing those experiences, producing a typology of dispositions that shape the social realities within which experiences are gained.

Bourdieu’s typologies of relationality have led to reductionist evaluations of his conceptualization of habitus in which he is assumed to reduce individual uniqueness to mere social reproduction. They have also generated analyses in which habitus is used simply to delineate aspects of the social encoding of an individual assumed to be dominant in structuring their life choices, with little, if any, regard to the mutuality of relationship between the individual and their social setting. And, as Bourdieu himself notes, a question soon arises of whether, in ‘our fast-changing world, demanding from all of us multiple “roles” and quick adjustments’, habitus is a research tool of worth (Bourdieu, 2005, p.43).

However, in her theorization of the experiences of working-class boys who are also educationally successful, Ingram opines that the use of the concept in analysing the

‘misalignment of dispositions and practices acquired through early life experiences ... with dispositions generated through new life experiences’ remains useful (Ingram, 2011). She identifies how, when individuals straddle multiple social structural realities, habitus can be generated within fields that are fundamentally incompatible, leading to processes of negotiation and accommodation that shape both internalized dispositions and externalized social relations. She terms these realities the ‘field of origin’ and the ‘social field’ in which individuals now find themselves (2011, pp.289-290).

In Bourdieu’s theory, misalignments between dispositions and encountered conditions produce a ‘dialectical confrontation’ between objective (external) and subjective (internal) structures, leading to a sense of conflict as habitus is tugged between two conflicting fields, and the individual feels that they do not really ‘fit’ in either. The result of such conflict and ‘internal division’ is suffering (cf. Ingram, 2011, p.290).

Ingram develops this sense of internal conflict into three typologies: habitus tug - being ‘pulled by the forces of different fields simultaneously’; destabilized habitus - ‘when no one knows who you *actually* are’; and disjunctive habitus: ‘when the divided habitus causes division’ (2011, pp.292-300).

I will return to these typologies in the synthesis below, and present them as a process, adding to them a fourth, to sit between destabilized and disjunctive habitus: dissonant habitus - when nobody seems to care who you *actually* are.

### **Synthesis: Vocation on the Margins? Experiencing and Expressing Creativity**

#### *Structures: The Privatization of Vocation*

At the start of the nineteenth century, the role of clergy in the Church of England embodied no clear understanding of what a member of the clergy was for or was to do,

despite some commonalities (Percy, 2006; Russell, 1980). Expressions of vocation had become somewhat diverse, and there was almost complete freedom for individual priests to shape their role to fit their preferences, or, indeed, to ignore any demands of pastoral ministry in favour of other pursuits.<sup>1</sup>

This began to change with the establishment of the 1835 Commission by Peel's government, which saw something of a transformation of the role of clergy in the denomination as the century progressed. Corfield (2002), Haig (1984), Heeney (1976), Jacobs (2007) and Russell (1980) all hold this in what Derwyn Williams (2007, p.433) terms a professionalization paradigm, in which the clergy take their place among the newly developing professions through a narrowing of their tasks into a specialism, which required professional training, structural organization and regulation of its professionals. In this paradigm, the demands of the context for ministry and of the denomination become preeminent, held in the broader setting of the expectations of society of somebody who holds the role of clergy.

Taking his bearings from O'Day (1988a), Derwyn Williams (2007) proposes that clergy roles were only ever partially professionalized at this time. In his analysis, on a structural level, although the work of ministry began to centre on parochial duties, the generalist approach became normative, in which there 'is not one profession of ministry, but a number of professions within ministry' (Joyce, 2010, p.12). In addition, on a personal level, within the growing standardization, roles were largely shaped by both theological convictions and the sense of vocation of the minister, and were not understood as being professionalized. As Williams (2007, p.441) records,

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<sup>1</sup> However O'Day (1988a, p.199) cautions against overstating the case that beneficed clergy were living as gentrified society figures disinterested in parish affairs.

Calls to improve the 'profession' or living-out of ministers' vocations frequently poured scorn on the notion of preserving social status, an aim identified as a pillar of the 'professional ideal'.

There remained significant freedom for each member of the clergy to work out in his context both what he should be and do, and how he should be and do it. The individual priest held contextual needs, expectations, and tradition in creative tension with his individual sense of vocation, but nevertheless the role could allow space for the expression of vocation in its broadest sense, even when it was not solely religious or focused on parish duties. As Billings (2010, p.74) writes, reflecting on what he terms the 'classical model' of parish ministry:

It is worth remembering that the classical Anglican parsons were never wholly consumed by religion and often had other lives – they were farmers or scholars, they had families and kept diaries – without which they would have been impoverished human beings and, as a result, less able to fulfil their ministries. It is not just politicians who need a hinterland.

The denomination held the oversight of clergy with a similarly light touch, for the most part, expecting diligence and care and acting as a moral compass where problems arose, but allowing these freedoms.

In some ways, as Heywood (2011, p.4) notes, the professional role of clergy changed little through the twentieth century, in spite of contexts changing around it, although gradually an erosion of its areas of specialist competence advanced, in concert with growing forces of differentiation in society. This led to, as Boyd (1995, p.187) records, a growing feeling that the role was somehow not fit for purpose any longer, which generated a sense of unease among clergy about what they were for.

Analysing this through the lens of Casanova's social thought reveals that through the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth the role of clergy was firmly in the public sphere. This is unsurprising, given that it was the age of Christendom, but vocation also seems to have been public. Whilst in some sense always private to the individual, it



played a seminal part in negotiating the shape of their public role and, subconsciously, in the ways Billings points to, in determining how others experienced them. In other words, there seems to have been little privatization at work at this point in how both clergy and denomination understood the life and work of a priest, despite the kind of narrowing of specialism that is a feature of social differentiation. Public expectations of diligence and care were determinative, but also seem not to have acted against the expression of vocation and creativity.

Returning to history, since the 1960s, a growing body of literature had begun to chart both a sense of uncertainty concerning clergy roles on a personal level, and a broader sense of concern over the place of the Church of England in British society on a structural level. Alongside this corpus grew a collection of works identifying the problem of work-related stress among clergy.<sup>2</sup> Thus the 1990s saw a significant change in direction at the denominational level concerning clergy roles and vocation.

Drawing influences from management theory and psychology, analysts identified role ambiguity as a prime assumed generative cause of stress, with time and priority management considered a close second. Some studies persuasively illustrate how role ambiguity plays an important part in undermining the sense of wellbeing of an individual at work. For example, Lee and Horsman (2002, p.7) note that

... clergy who fundamentally do not know what they are 'for' ... Without this anchoring self-knowledge ... are prey to a host of inappropriate expectations, fed further by their anxiety'.

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<sup>2</sup> This has remained a somewhat contentious issue. Anecdotal evidence suggests it to be a significant problem, but research reaches no definite conclusion concerning its extent and significance. Hills and Francis (2005, pp.187-190) provide a comprehensive review of previous studies, some of which conclude that the extent of clergy stress is widespread, and others which evidence a claim that clergy display 'comparatively high levels of work satisfaction' and 'above average levels of physical well being.'

However, Boyd (1995, p.187), writing, somewhat prophetically, in 1995, questioned the assumption that redressing the balance in favour of role clarity would serve as a panacea for clergy who experienced their role as inauthentic:

The most obvious and most tempting [solution] is to try to replace uncertainty with relative certainty: attempting to define the duties and functions of the minister, and specifying what can reasonably be expected of clergy in the performance of their duties. This approach is not, fundamentally, a theological one.

He goes on to comment that the uncertainty about role has ‘more to do with the aims and ends that ought to be pursued in and through these duties’ (Boyd, 1995, p.187). In other words, it is a question of vocation grounded in theology that can be expressed in role.

Nevertheless, as Joyce (2010, p.12) notes, the first decade of the twenty-first century has seen an advancement and consolidation of standardization and professionalization of clergy roles, with a drive for clarity in both the scope of those roles and in systems for their evaluation and management. He sees three denominational initiatives as key. First, the introduction of the 2003 *Clergy Discipline Measure* (Church of England, 2006). This was supplemented by the *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy*, which, grounded in the Ordinal, sets out the expectations of the denomination for the role of its clergy (Church of England, 2003). The third, *The Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure 2009*, effectively forms a human resources strategy that is claimed to offer greater security to clergy, through offering clear terms and conditions of service, ministerial review, transparent capability and grievance procedures, and common tenure to replace the uncertain tenure of the priest-in-charge or the team rector/vicar (Church of England, 2009a).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of the July 2011 session of General Synod, only a small percentage of those who could choose to transfer voluntarily to common tenure had done so: some 34 per cent of bishops in post, 21 per

Joyce, taking an optimistic view of the potential of these initiatives to nurture clergy wellbeing, opines that

The effect of these initiatives is to improve clergy professional accountability and to improve some of the working practices ... that undermine their wellbeing. They will benefit from a clearer professional working framework and ministerial review by their diocese (2010, p.12).

But Barley's research among field clergy reveals a somewhat different view of both clearer human resource management systems and ministerial review. Whilst appreciating their potential, particularly in creating greater transparency in the appointments system, clergy expressed concern about their implementation, in two respects. First, that introducing standardized systems may lead to the loss of a sense of the personal (Barley, 2010, p.28). Second, and related to this, that ministerial review should be more effective. Some were concerned that it lacked transparency, and could act to damage confidence and block career development (2010, p.30), whilst others longed for 'honest discussions' about gifts and skills with definite action taken to find ways of using those that might be currently underused (2010, p.29). This latter concern was also shared by senior clergy, and is reflected in the recommendations made by the Senior Clergy Group (2007, p.35ff).

When brought into dialogue with processes of privatization, the language employed by the recent denominational initiatives seems to reflect a situation in which vocation is becoming increasingly privatized in the process of negotiating the public role of clergy. This can be illustrated through the differences in focus between the 2010 *Criteria for Selection for Ordained Ministry in the Church of England* and that of the *Ministerial Development Review Guidance*, published in the same year.

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cent of archdeacons, 5 per cent of deans, and 7 per cent of freehold incumbents (Church of England, 2011, p.16).

Despite the 2010 vocational criteria for selection seeming to use role-focused language, they nevertheless explore the person-in-role, rather than simply the role. On the one hand, they stress the need for obedience, in that the candidate should

Demonstrate clearly that he/she understands the importance of being open and obedient to the needs of the Church in terms of his/her future deployment (Church of England, 2010a, p.4).

But on the other hand, the criteria as a whole seek to identify the gifts, charisms and character of the individual, weighing those against the current needs of the denomination expressed in role, and encouraging negotiation through ‘an openness to whatever God may have in store for the future’ (2010a, p.4).

In contrast, one of the two expressed purposes for ministerial review is

to look back and reflect on what has happened over the last year or two of ministry and ... look forward to plan, anticipate and develop a clearer vision for what lies ahead. In looking back there is an opportunity to acknowledge all there is to be thankful for and anything that is a matter for lament, and in looking forward to anticipate the changing demands of the role, identify future objectives and areas for potential development (Archbishops’ Council, 2010, Para. 2(1)).

The advent of role descriptions under common tenure similarly centre on what a priest is to be and do for the parish:

A role description describes a role at the time of writing. It describes what the role holder is required to do to carry out the role effectively and can be used ... to provide a clear description of the role for applicants ... to clarify roles and responsibilities for existing role holders ... to inform training and development needs [and] ... to inform Ministerial Development Review (Archbishops’ Council, 2009, p.2).

In some ways, this seems entirely appropriate: as Chapter 2 noted, ministry, to be authentic, must always be for God and to the benefit of others, and, in one sense, both ministerial review and role descriptions are what is made of them as they are negotiated. But issues remain of what kinds of vocation can be creatively expressed in systems that seem focused on role and, arguably, on aiming for corporate organizational neatness;

and of the capacity of role-focused, outcomes-based descriptors to encapsulate that place between repetition and innovation in which authentic ministry is formed.<sup>4</sup>

Grundy, writing about the renewal of vocation, notes that ‘alongside the practicalities of ministry a developing sense of vocation to new and different roles and tasks are being required’ (quoted in Joyce, 2010, p.36). Grundy’s language arguably reflects this trend towards the privatization of vocation, and raises three questions.

First, who ‘requires’ vocation to develop, in what direction and to what purpose: God, the Church, or society? As Chapter 1 illustrates, this is far from a straightforward issue, and clashes of expectations and aspirations generate the kinds of habitus tug that seem not to be easily resolved by the individual putting aside their personal sense of vocation in favour of externally-determined expressions of the public role in their new social field. As Chapter 2 discusses, when creativity in vocation is stifled, even unintentionally, authenticity diminishes, as the minister no longer embodies that which she seeks to communicate to others.

The second question is whether vocation can be engineered to develop in an organizationally neat way. Certainly, as Joyce (2010) has illustrated, it seems credible to suggest that clergy can, through leadership programmes and other approaches, be helped to negotiate the feelings of dissonant habitus that arise as they face new contextual demands. But, as he also notes, ‘there is [still] a challenge for the wider church to take more seriously the nature of the vocational stream within [the] clergy’ and the effectiveness of such programmes is only ever partial if clergy do not give time

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<sup>4</sup> Similar questions have been raised over the adequacy of outcomes-based assessment schemes in the pre-ordination phase of initial ministerial education. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

to ‘keep[ing] vocational development at [their] core and not an issue consequent upon a role’ (Joyce, 2010, pp.41-42). I will return to this in my discussion of habitus below.

The third question asks what place there is in these standardized roles for the expression of vocation that cannot simply be defined as being and doing on behalf of the parish, but that is, nevertheless, for God and to the benefit of others. An example is that of the priest-scholar, perhaps called to be a public intellectual, outside the academy, but speaking into contexts other than the parish in addition to exercising parochial ministry.<sup>5</sup> Or the increasing number who, in the face of falling budgets to employ specialist diocesan officers, hold additional diocesan posts that do not carry a negotiated time allocation. Are these leisure time activities, or a seminal part of the vocation of the individual, that play a part in forming them into the person they can be for the parish?

In conclusion, recent structural moves towards professionalization seem to have unintentionally begun to move clergy away from the freedom to reshape role through creative dialogue between context and vocation enjoyed by their nineteenth and twentieth century counterparts, towards a situation in which every choice made has to be justified and its effectiveness evidenced. Consequently, vocation is increasingly privatized. And, using the language of the netnarrative paradigm, this raises questions of the integrity of the development of the melody that is the vocation of minister in the horizontal dimension, and of how that moves forward the overall form of the work of the *missio dei*, if the transient harmonies of the vertical dimension (the public role at this point in time) preclude its progression.

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<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to my colleague Dr Victoria Johnson for the illustration of the priest-scholar through her recent unpublished paper *Wisdom as a Prelude to Action*.

I will now go on to consider these issues in their personal dimension, asking questions of how clergy experience their twenty-first century roles, and of why they might feel a growing sense of inauthenticity.

*Personal: Role and Vocation – Clashing Cultures?*

Percy (2006) characterizes the ‘species’ of clergy as highly adaptive, persuasively showing how it has evolved in response to the internal and external forces that have shaped its roles. In support of such analyses, Joyce (2010, p.14) notes, drawing on internal denominational statistics, that the number of clergy leaving the Church of England payroll is comparatively small, at 3 per cent per annum, when measured against teachers (13 per cent) and nurses (11 per cent). But despite his encouragement to regard such statistics as indicative of a largely engaged workforce, Joyce arguably fails to take account of the ability of exit statistics to adequately reflect the level of clergy fulfilment in their role.

McDuff and Mueller, writing in an American context, draw a useful distinction between intention to leave an employer (a local church) and intention to leave a profession (ministry). They conclude that, whilst clergy generally do not plan to leave their current church, they are even less likely to leave ministry (2000, p.105). Among their participants, the sense of vocation in the individual largely directs both, generally acting strongly against leaving ministry, but exerting a much weaker effect on a minister remaining in a particular role (2000, p.107). Peyton (2009, p.255) reaches a similar conclusion, suggesting that their original vocational commitment forms a strong thread of loyalty that results in few ordained people seriously considering leaving ministry.

This is, perhaps, unsurprising, but it does raise the question of whether this level of commitment to ministry in its broad sense would continue if roles become standardized, and so have little differentiation between contexts, with vocation becoming privatized.

Recent British studies raise interesting questions of how vocation is experienced in role by clergy. Barley's 2008-2009 survey of mid-career clergy in the Church of England records that whilst the majority of clergy in her study felt they were broadly 'fulfilling their vocation', they nevertheless experienced frustration in terms of the roles they were appointed to, seeing tensions between vocation and role as very probably increasing in the future (2010, p.9).<sup>6</sup> Most of her participants 'were living in a situation of conflict', whether that conflict was internal or external, describing the former in terms of 'personal aspirations' clashing with 'institutional demands' (2010, p.27).

Fletcher (1990), in an empirical study of over two hundred parochial clergy in the Church of England, records that some 60 per cent felt that their perceptions of their role did not accord with those of other people, 77 per cent felt under a great deal of pressure and 41 per cent felt that inessential aspects of the job subsumed what they saw as their primary role (cited in Watts et al., 2002, p.253). Yet he also records that only 3 per cent of the respondents said that they would leave ministry if they were able to do so (cited in Hills and Francis, 2005, p.189).

Jones and Francis, in their analysis of the self-esteem of the clergy, found that some 57 per cent of male clergy surveyed<sup>7</sup> and 65 per cent of women often doubt their abilities, and 44 per cent of male clergy and 55 per cent of women sometimes feel that they can

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<sup>6</sup> Half of Barley's participants gave a clear 'yes' answer to the question about whether they were fulfilling their vocation in their current post, and a third said 'sometimes' or 'perhaps'.

<sup>7</sup> Jones and Francis's survey was undertaken by sending the Eysenck Personality Profiler Questionnaire in December 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1996 to all clergy ordained into the Anglican church in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales in that year. The response rate each year was between 62 per cent and 72 per cent.



never do anything right (2003, p.26). 55 per cent of women and 48 per cent of men sometimes withheld their opinions for fear that they would be laughed at and criticized. They conclude that overall, the clergy surveyed display lower levels of self-esteem than the normative sample of the general population used in their study. They go on to observe that this is consistent with a lack of affirmation and public reward (2003, p.27).

Bringing, first, the history of clergy roles charted above into dialogue with Bourdieu and Ingram's habitus theories seems to suggest that, for much of the history of the Church of England, a process of negotiation of clashing cultures has constantly been at work in the formation of clergy roles, in which the sense of habitus in an individual is inevitably tugged and destabilized, as clergy bring their understanding of who they are called to be (with all the cultural encoding of their background before ordination) into dialogue with what society and their contexts understand them to be. In any new social field, habitus is destabilized, as there is a feeling, however temporary, that no one knows who the minister *actually* is.

In some ways, such tugs would have been experienced from the point of ordination, or perhaps during initial training, as clergy negotiate the cultural shift between that of a layperson and that of an ordained minister. At this point in their career, though, the focus is on the development of the individual for the benefit of others, and programmes of formation in the pre-ordination stage of initial ministerial education (IME 1-3) focus on that same sense of individual flourishing without individualism. This seems significant.

For feelings of destabilized habitus to subside back into coherence or low-level habitus tug, rather than leading to disjunctive habitus, a sense of being known for who they really are and being able to bring their vocation into their role seems seminal among

clergy.<sup>8</sup> Two participants in recent studies encapsulate the former sense. From the perspective of actually being known as a person, one comments that ‘the dynamic of being known as an individual is so important’ (Barley, 2010, p.29); and from that of perceiving that at least people care enough to try, another notes ‘the investment that the diocese has put in me through this [leadership] programme has been very affirming; just that they think I’m important enough to be included ... is great’ (in a 2008 study by Plowman, quoted in Joyce, 2010, p.36). In the latter sense, the Senior Clergy Group present numerous examples in their study among senior clergy;<sup>9</sup> that of ‘Tim’<sup>10</sup> is perhaps the most striking.

Tim is a parish priest who realized that his role would not give him the depth and wide stimulation he needed, and so, with the permission of his Bishop, worked in another setting outside the Church that still offered benefits to the wider community, for one afternoon each week. This additional dimension provided a clearer expression of an aspect of his vocation that was absent from his parochial duties, and resulted in greater overall fulfilment, which led to greater effectiveness in his parochial role (Senior Clergy Group, 2007, p.28).

Destabilized habitus can, if appropriately addressed, be a productive process through which the individual discovers more about their vocation and, thus, about the self, in the light of God and the context of the Church.<sup>11</sup> As Blanch writes

If [ordained ministers] have any self-knowledge at all, their ministry makes them less confident in themselves, less assured, less doctrinaire, and therefore less secure. They become more aware

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<sup>8</sup> This is supported by Maslach and Jackson (1981), whose study identifies depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment as two of the three main facets of burnout among clergy.

<sup>9</sup> By which they meant clergy in their final ten years of ministry before retirement.

<sup>10</sup> The names of participants in the study were changed to protect their anonymity.

<sup>11</sup> Hennessey explores similar issues, using a different framework, through a psychological analysis of priests as objects and subjects. He concludes that ‘part of the balanced process of priesthood consists in the ability to form a bridge between these two statuses’ in order that the priest, through experiencing their own ‘inner world, facilitates others in ... expressing ... theirs’ (2003, p.177).

of the dark places in their own lives and in the lives of others. Anyone who has been long in the ministry will know the time when they have to say 'I stumble, where once I firmly trod' (quoted in Senior Clergy Group, 2007, p.33).

But, if inappropriately addressed or ignored, destabilized habitus can lead to dissonant habitus, where the impression is formed that nobody seems to care who you *actually* are. Barley records a growing sense that role and vocation are becoming increasingly separated (2010, p.32), with a majority of her participants feeling 'stuck' at some time in their ministry and living in a 'situation of conflict', either internal or external, as the personal comes into conflict with institutional demands or the expectations of others (2010, p.27).

Morgan records similar problems among Self-Supporting Ministers in which role and the expectations of that role have constrained the expression of vocation. She writes:

The happiest stories come from those [SSMs] who have created a unique package of activities for themselves (which might ... include teaching, writing, spiritual direction or acting as some kind of adviser to a diocese or division) (Morgan, 2011, Part 1).

But she also notes that some 41 per cent of her participants, ordained since 2003, had experienced no change in their clergy role since ordination, leading to a sense of vocational stagnation. And only 10 per cent of those who had experienced a major change had found a lead to make it coming from somebody other than themselves (2011, Part 1). Morgan opines:

Creating your own package is fine if you're that kind of person and have a particular ministry, but ... dioceses which want to make the most of their clerical resources shouldn't be leaving it to SSMs to come up with their own ministry (2011, Part 1).

Here, good practice from human resource management could offer a way of negotiating this sense of dissonance by encouraging suitable intervention to lead struggling clergy back towards shaping their role for greater coherence with their sense of vocation. Yet this seems not to be the experience of many. As participants in Barley's study report:

The rhetoric [of diocesan initiatives] doesn't always match the practice ... 'don't work too hard, look after yourself, by the way will you do x, y and z' (2010, p.28).

It would be good to have honest discussions about what gifts we have and how they can be used, not just a pat on the back (2010, p.29).

In the light of the discussion above, it seems that to reverse the negative effects of dissonant habitus and to avoid it descending into disjuncture, care needs to be taken to consider how individuals can creatively express their sense of vocation in role, alongside how effective they are in that role.

### **Conclusions**

Linking structural and personal dimensions, the discourse above illustrates that a process of privatization seems to be happening in the negotiation of the public role of clergy that is analogous to that of the place of religion in wider society, in which vocation is becoming marginalized as an unintended consequence of professionalization. In common with Casanova's reading of the privatization of religion, however, it is important not to overstate the case, and to recognize that aspects of the expression of vocation are still readily to be seen in the majority of clergy roles.

The kind of standardization, monitoring and evaluation that acts against the creative expression of vocation in locally-shaped roles, appears to have the potential to lead towards increased levels of habitus dissonance, which, if not addressed, could generate higher levels of disjuncture among clergy in the future. As Joyce (2010, p.33) concludes, 'it is crucial to safeguard the inherent vocation of ... clergy which, influenced in the right way can be responsive and powerful drivers to adapt to ministerial needs in a way that is priceless.' The importance of this task cannot be underestimated. Jackson (2002, p.157) notes that

when it comes to the growth and life, or the decline and death, of the Church, the clergy are key people. Therefore a Church that wishes to grow and live needs to invest in the well-being of its clergy, in their practical resourcing, and in the renewal of their faith, vision and skills.

As both Chapter 2 of this study and the discussion above illustrate, issues of creativity and vocation are central to how clergy successfully negotiate issues of *habitus tug*. Thus they need to continue to play a seminal part in determining how role is shaped, in dialogue with context, if the ministry expressed in that role is to be experienced as authentic by the minister, and so be potentially able to be read as such by others. This is supported by such empirical studies as that of Hills and Francis (2005). They conclude that the understandings clergy hold of their vocation generate particular expectations of their ministry which, if matched to an appropriate role, are likely to lead to high levels of work satisfaction (2005, p.202).<sup>12</sup>

Similar conclusions are reached by the Senior Clergy Group, who recommend that diocesan authorities actively seek out the gifts, skills and charisms of senior clergy and use them for the wider benefit of the diocese (2007, p.35), and that continuing ministerial education staff encourage clergy ‘from the outset of ministry to develop professional interests and specialisms’ (2007, p.37). Barley further concludes that there is a need for vocation to be effectively supported during ‘career’ (2010, p.2).

Reconfiguring the negotiation of role in ordained ministry in such a way as to deprivatize vocation is not to uncritically turn back the clock to the nineteenth century. Rather, following Casanova, it is to call for a more nuanced framework that is capable of embracing the complexities of moments of ministry in the kinds of contexts Chapter 1 of this study describes, and bringing them into dialogue with the horizontal vocational

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<sup>12</sup> Hills and Francis discuss these understandings and expectations in terms of theological orientation, rather than vocation, but express this in the language of evangelical clergy deriving satisfaction primarily from religious instruction and catholic clergy from pastoral care, which accords with a broad sense of vocation (2005, pp.201-203).

journey of its essential raw materials: individuals created to be unique yet to use that uniqueness to bring glory to God and blessing to others.

This process of remaking draws an interesting parallel from Casanova's reconfiguration of religion in public life in ways that 'do not attempt to re-assert the religious prerogatives of Christendom' (Hughson, 2011, p.179), leading to its deprivatization as 'religion abandons its assigned place in the private sphere and enters the undifferentiated public sphere of civil society to take part in the ongoing process of contestation, discursive legitimation, and redrawing of the boundaries' (Casanova, 1994, pp.65-66). This is not a simplistic attempt to regain lost ground, but rather to find ways in which religious influence might take a different form whilst still being true to the gospel.

When questions of role and vocation are viewed in this way, a call to deprivatize vocation does not imply a wholesale abandonment of the considerable advantages of twentieth-century approaches to greater accountability and transparency, but rather implies that vocation should re-enter the undifferentiated public space of the role of clergy and once again take its rightful place in negotiating authentic expressions of ordained ministry in the twenty-first century Church.

I will now continue this exploration of role and vocation by narrowing discussion to the specific field of this study, and tracing how the role of curates in the Church of England has evolved into its current expression.

## **CHAPTER 4: MISSION-SHAPED CURACY?**

This Chapter traces the history of curacy in the Church of England, from its origins in the vicarious exercise of the cure of souls by deputizing clergy on behalf of absentee benefice holders to its twenty-first century expression as an amalgam of assistantship and apprenticeship. It identifies curacy, as it currently stands, as the unplanned product of changing nineteenth-century clergy deployment patterns, and contends that its single-context model is increasingly becoming unable to form an effective context for formation in authentic ministry.

### **Parallel Classes: Curacy before the Nineteenth Century**

In the wake of its conversion to Christianity around the year 600, early medieval Britain fell under the influence of missionaries and bishops who were, predominantly, members of religious orders. The several forms of monasticism became the driving force behind the fledgling ecclesiology of the British Church (Yorke, 2006, p.158), and much ecclesiastical life, such as it was, was ordered around religious houses, with their accompanying ‘minster’ churches (Hart, 1971, p.13).

Several church historians have proposed that a systematic provision of pastoral care for the whole population developed around the sixth century, which was served from the minsters by monks.<sup>1</sup> However, Yorke, drawing on Cambridge and Rollason (1995) and Blair (1995), and supported by contemporary sources, such as Bede’s Ecclesiastical History, suggests this provision to be a tenth or eleventh century ecclesiological development. She concludes that it forms ‘the regularization from the ninth century onwards of a much more haphazard earlier system’ (Yorke, 2006, p.171).

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Spurr (2006, p.236).

Many new religious houses were established from the tenth century, and their founders, predominantly Norman noblemen, endowed 'their' monastic communities with their estates and 'rectories': the churches that fell within those estates. Monks were appointed to serve as vicars: exercising the cure of souls vicariously in place of the titular rector. These monks were the first 'curates' in the English Church.

Between 1150 and 1250 an extensive provision of parishes serving the whole of England developed, and a large number of new churches was built (Edwards, 1989, p.156). Whilst this ensured a more appreciably equitable level of pastoral care for the English people, it simultaneously created a clergy deployment issue.

It became clear, at the Lateran Council of 1179, that many of the monastic foundations responsible for providing clergy to staff the growing number of rectories that fell under their jurisdiction were no longer using their monks as vicars. Instead they were employing secular chaplains to undertake the parochial duties (Hart, 1971, p.18).<sup>2</sup> By the time of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, this practice was sufficiently widespread to warrant the establishment of a formal process for the appointment of a 'vicar' to act as deputy for an absentee 'rector'. For the first time, he was to receive a set salary, rather than a share of the revenue from the benefice, and be given security of tenure. The Council's pronouncements make clear that diocesan bishops, rather than religious communities, were to assume responsibility for the supply and maintenance of suitable clergy across a diocese (Doctrinal documents, 1202, of the Fourth Lateran Council, quoted in Evans and Wright, 1991, p.108).

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<sup>2</sup> Secular in this sense signifies clergy who were not monks. Osborne argues that for the first millennium of the Roman Catholic Church, there was an internal 'fourfold' division of status and authority: 'cleric, [Holy Roman] emperor, monk, and layperson' (2006, p.65). This changed as the papacy challenged the emperor's role, from around 1100, leading ultimately to the twofold division between clergy and laity that persisted until the Second Vatican Council.



The Council effectively established the model of curacy that was to persist until the nineteenth century through the creation of the 'perpetual vicarage'. The rector's representative, the *vicarius*, was to exercise pastoral ministry autonomously, whilst living in the parish he served, and would serve no more than one parish (Hart, 1971, p.18).

In practice, however, the Council's instructions were not thoroughly enforced. Several of the larger religious houses were, as Edwards (1989, p.158) notes, exempt from the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop, being accountable to their own abbots and ultimately directly to the Roman pontiff. And rectors or patrons often employed poorly educated inadequate men on subsistence wages, without reference to the diocesan bishop (Hart, 1971, p.20). Many bishops, who oversaw vast dioceses, also had little interest in providing the level of oversight required by the Council and complaints against the parochial clergy abounded.

Throughout the Middle Ages, most parochial ministers were unbeneficed vicars and chaplains. Hart observes that not more than 900 of the 40,000 ordained men active in parochial ministry in the thirteenth century were incumbents (1971, p.29). The larger, wealthier parishes maintained a staff of several curates in priestly orders, assisted by deacons and subdeacons; the smaller benefices were typically staffed by a curate and a parish clerk (1971, p.29). The greatest number of these unbeneficed men remained as curates or chaplains for the whole of their career, held captive by a combination of lowly birth and poor education.

Some contemporary writers considered the illiteracy of many curates to be a source of 'scandal'. But others celebrated them, declaring their lack of opportunity for preferment as making them preferable to a 'learned but presumptuous' (beneficed) priest (1971,

p.37). The fourteenth-century writer John Mirk draws a comparison between the two, describing the former as

The Priest of God, whose soul is in his hands always, knows that he is hired to celebrate every day ... therefore he disposed himself to live soberly as to himself, justly as to the master he serves, and piously towards God (Manuale Sacerdotus, quoted in Hart, 1971, p.37).

who sits in stark contrast to the latter:

[he]...loves the world, to be well fed, well clothed and to lead an easy life ... on taking office he goes to the altar, not when devotion invites him, but when his lord insinuates; not out of devotion, but from habit; thinking nothing of Christ's passion, but only thinking how to prolong or shorten the mass to the will of his lord (Manuale Sacerdotus, quoted in Hart, 1971, p.38).

There were no substantive changes in the deployment of unbeneficed clergy in the English Church between the thirteenth century and the advent of the English Reformation. The parochial system, especially in rural areas, depended almost totally on the army of ill-paid, lowly curates and chaplains and their number was 'very large indeed' by the sixteenth century (Hart, 1971, p.46).

Among the comparatively small number of beneficed men, pluralism was becoming commonplace. In the years before the English Reformation, a growing number of church dignitaries, Oxbridge fellows, and courtiers held sees and benefices that were not under monastic patronage in plurality, commonly not being resident in any of them and employing chaplains or curates to serve them. Some pluralists held them whilst undertaking other ecclesiastical work, which, as Owen Chadwick (1972, p.11) proposes, could be claimed as justifiable. However, as the abuses became ever more blatant, and the quality of parochial pastoral care was widely perceived to be inadequate, the calls for reform intensified.

At the start of the sixteenth century, curates,<sup>3</sup> who substituted for monastic titular rectors or absentee pluralists, staffed most English parish churches. In effect, two parallel castes of beneficed men and unbeneficed deputies had developed that were to grow further apart for almost four hundred years.

In 1536, King Henry VIII suppressed all monasteries with an annual endowment value of less than £200. From November 1537, the larger, wealthier houses began to surrender themselves by agreement. The last religious house, Waltham Abbey, closed on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1540 (Chadwick, 1972, p.105).

This situation created two issues for the unbeneficed clergy. First, a significant number of the former monks became parochial clergy, some being appointed to incumbencies previously held by the monasteries, and others seeking employment as curates. Second, all of the benefices that had formerly endowed the monasteries were now appropriated to the Crown. Patronage of a growing number of these comparatively poor benefices passed to laypeople, who, through impropriating the tithes, became 'lay rectors'. This process changed the employment situation of some curates (Spurr, 2006, p.236). Now some private patrons began to appoint rectors who would, in turn, engage other clergy to undertake the parochial duties. This employer-employee relationship widened the gulf in status between the parallel castes of clergy.

The State also passed legislation to eradicate pluralism among incumbents, which threatened to reduce the curates' employment prospects further. The Pluralities Act of 1529 instructed that incumbents who held benefices in plurality were to live permanently in one of them, and to spend a reasonable amount of time in residence in

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<sup>3</sup> The first use of the term curate is not clear. Contemporary evidence suggests the terms chaplain, curate and vicar to be interchangeable in their use until the Restoration.

all of them during each year. Furthermore, they were only to provide curates to undertake parochial duties while they were employed in their other parishes (Hart, 1971, pp.46-47).

But these ideals proved difficult to maintain, as the unsettling ecclesiastical climate had, by the mid-point of the sixteenth century, generated a considerable shortage of clergy. Consequently, up to 2,000 of the poorer English benefices remained vacant (Hart, 1971, pp.48-50). This continued well into the seventeenth century. The civil wars had depleted clergy ranks, and the Bartholomew ejections of 1662 saw some 1,760 ministers removed from office, of whom 220 were assistant clergy (1971, p.86). The Restoration Church continued to struggle to staff its parishes with ministers, particularly graduates. As the hierarchy of the Church was keen to maintain the ideal of an entirely graduate clergy, particularly among its beneficed men, pluralism continued to offer the only solution (1971, p.83ff).

Coupled with the shortage of clergy, the inadequacy of endowment in many of the benefices that had passed out of monastic patronage made it difficult to finance the appointment a resident minister. Thus, the uneven quality of ministry provision continued, and pluralism survived, despite the Puritans' best efforts.

As a result, there was still plentiful employment for the curates in what had become the Church of England, even if their salaries remained low, their conditions of work often harsh and demanding, and their status further demeaned as they increasingly became employees of other (beneficed) clergy (Hart, 1971, p.101; Spurr, 2006, p.237).

At the start of the eighteenth century, there were four types of curate. Still the most numerous were the stipendiary curates who deputized for non-resident rectors. Where a

beneficed man was sick or the living sequestered, a temporary curate was employed. Third, a small number of curates were working as assistants to resident incumbents. And finally, perpetual curates were employed to serve parishes from which the lay patron took the income but was required to pay a priest to undertake duties there (Hart, 1971, p.103). Of these, only the perpetual curate enjoyed security of tenure, as, once licensed, only the diocesan bishop could remove him.

The circumstances of curates in the eighteenth-century Church remained far from satisfactory, a fact that came to be recognized by the State and the denomination's hierarchy. In 1713, a Curates' Act (12 Anne 2. c.12) was passed that sought to place the responsibility for appointing, dismissing and paying curates with the bishops, rather than with the incumbents. It included a process for appointment in which the incumbent would propose the name of an appropriate curate to the bishop for licensing, and stipulated that the stipend to be paid, which was to be between £20 and £50 per year, should be set out and agreed before a licence could be issued (Hart, 1971, p.102).

But again, as Hart (1971, p.102) notes, in practice the Act was widely ignored and incumbents continued to pay their curates subsistence stipends. There is also some evidence of incumbents not formally presenting the curate to be licensed, thus undermining any security of tenure (1971, p.111).

It appears that the poor situation of the curates persisted through the eighteenth century without denominational interference because of a reversal of the seventeenth-century balance between the number of potential clergy and available posts. The Church now had insufficient title posts for the number of candidates for holy orders produced by the universities. Therefore many men found great difficulty in obtaining a title to which to be ordained (1971, p.101). Consequently, where titles existed, an incumbent needed to

offer little to secure the services of a curate. And so, the starving, pale curate became an accurately represented, if somewhat idealized, stereotype of eighteenth-century literature.

In 1796, the Act of Parliament 36 George III c.83 aimed to effect a more widespread improvement in the financial situation of curates who deputized for absentee pluralist incumbents by setting a comparatively generous figure of £75 as their maximum stipend. Despite its good intentions, the legislation failed to bring about any significant improvement, although this was not so much a consequence of the incumbents' wilful refusal to comply, as flawed law.

Unscrupulous incumbents exploited two loopholes. First, whilst the Act established a maximum stipend for a curate, it did not prescribe a minimum figure. By 1830, just under half of the 4,254 curates working in the denomination were still paid no more than £60. Second, the Act contained no provision for those curates who were employed as assistants to resident incumbents or for perpetual curates (Hart, 1971, p.109).

In contrast, the position of the beneficed men had improved significantly through the century. A large number of less well-endowed benefices benefited from income increases through grants from Queen Anne's Bounty. Accordingly, the difference in position between beneficed and unbeneficed clergy was accentuated further.

### **Reform and Revival: The Curate in the Nineteenth Century**

The nineteenth century forms a pivotal period in the history of curacy in the Church of England in which the model that became normative for its twentieth-century expressions evolved. Two fundamental paradigm shifts in the meaning of the term

‘curate’ underpinned its development. These appear to be unplanned consequences of a combination of spiritual revival and structural reform.

At the start of the nineteenth century, the *status quo* of eighteenth-century clerical life in the denomination was maintained, in which a majority of the unbeneficed clergy active in parish work<sup>4</sup> served as curates to absentee incumbents. In 1812, some 3,694 clergy worked as curates to non-residents (cited in Haig, 1984, p.241), a figure that was to stay fairly consistent until 1838, when 3,078 men served in this capacity (1984, p.220).

Despite their lowly status and often-disadvantaged lifestyles, they continued to enjoy considerable autonomy and security of tenure, and acted, to all intents and purposes, as incumbents. Most were career curates, a large proportion of whom were of mature years.

Even those who eventually progressed to incumbencies commonly spent a significant period of time as curates before being instituted to a first living (1984, p.215). Several authors cite periods of between twelve and fifteen years as usual, based on contemporary surveys. A.M. Deane, writing in 1874, reflects that

In point of fact a rate of promotion did not exist, for we may almost say that, as a rule, the clergy were divided into two classes, incumbents and curates, at the time of their ordination, and remained as such for the whole of their lives (quoted in Haig, 1984, p.222).

Deane’s account, despite its pessimistic view of the possibility of preferment, evidences a stable career structure in which employment seems plentiful. However, the broad strokes of his analysis perhaps overstate the case through inferring the curates’ willingness to regard their situation as satisfactory. As Hart (1971, p.127ff) illustrates, whilst some relished such stability, many keenly felt their lowly status, and considered reform to be long overdue. In the context of subsequent developments, though, it is

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<sup>4</sup> Haig (1984, pp.216-218) notes that a number of unbeneficed clergy in the nineteenth century were engaged in teaching or chaplaincy work either permanently or until being instituted to a living.

important to note the degree of autonomy a deputizing curate enjoyed in parish affairs at the start of the nineteenth century.

The absentee incumbents for whom the curates deputized were mainly pluralists who commonly held multiple livings, served concurrently as Oxbridge fellows, or held Cathedral Chapter appointments. They frequently resided at some distance from their curate(s) and showed little interest in the exercise of the cure of souls in the parish. This has led a number of writers, including Haig (1984), Russell (1980) and Hart (1971) to place emphasis, in their accounts of nineteenth-century ecclesiology, on the further widening of the gap between the two parallel clerical castes, in which the continuing paucity of the curate's lot is starkly contrasted with the growing gentrification of the beneficed men.

O'Day cautions against overstating the case that beneficed clergy were living as gentrified society figures disinterested in parish affairs. She writes that, by 1830, barely a quarter of parochial clergy were 'comfortably financed' by contemporary standards, and only 'about a fifth of the clergy active in the 1830s had links with either gentry or peerage'. This leads her to the conclusion that in the first part of the century parishes were not so much poorly served as 'differently served than [mid-] nineteenth century clergymen would have wished' (O'Day, 1988a, p.199).

Despite O'Day's corrective, in which she draws on evidence from the Diocese of Exeter in the Georgian period, and despite her encouragement to consider local trends, contemporary sources reveal over three thousand autonomous deputizing curates who exercised the cure of souls on behalf of absentee incumbents (Curates' Augmentation



Fund, 1866, p.30).<sup>5</sup> This appears to support the claim that, although the gentrification thesis might be overstated, pluralism remained a significant factor in clergy deployment in the first three decades of the nineteenth century.

The first move away from what had become the dominant pattern of curacy in the Church of England happened between 1838 and 1866. This wholesale paradigm shift in the meaning of the term ‘curate’ was an unplanned consequence of the convergence between two powerful forces for change. On the one hand, there were externally driven pastoral and administrative reforms, beginning with the Ecclesiastical Commission of 1836 - a series of measures that, as Parsons notes, was somewhat fragmentary and ‘overlapping, sometimes conflicting’ (1988, p.20). On the other hand, as Vidler comments, ‘there was ... [an internally guided] spiritual revival in the Church ... [that] had a number of causes, of which the Oxford Movement was the most conspicuous’ (1974, pp.48-49). Among the many changes that resulted, the most significant for this study was the growing conventionality of a resident incumbent engaged in ministry in a single parish.

In 1835, Robert Peel’s government established a Commission to ‘consider the state of the Established Church’. It was initially to consider issues regarding the efficacy of pastoral care, absenteeism, clerical discipline and the distribution of ecclesiastical wealth. Subsequently, the Commission was assigned a broader brief: ‘making better provision for the cure of souls’ (Parsons, 1988, pp.20-21).

By 1840, it listed forty-nine members, with all diocesan bishops serving *ex-officio*, and its proposals for reform changed the direction of parochial ministry in the Church of

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<sup>5</sup> The CAF pamphlet cites a figure of around 5,000, but as Haig (1984, p.241) notes, this figure appears to be something of an exaggeration.

England to a system of 'one [beneficed] priest resident in one parish'. This had profound repercussions for the unconsidered ranks of curates that had formed the backbone of parochial ministry in the denomination to this point.

Working to its expansive brief, the Commission advocated the division of large parishes into smaller benefices, particularly in the increasingly industrialized urban contexts, and supplementation of the income carried by poorer livings to ensure sufficient finance for the support of a resident incumbent. Two Acts of Parliament cleared the way for these reforms. The Dean and Chapter Act of 1840 led to a redistribution of revenue gained from the abolition of several cathedral offices in favour of such parishes.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Church Building Act of 1843 created a simplified process for the sub-division of established benefices (Parsons, 1988, pp.21-22).

The preferment prospects for unbeneficed clergy should have improved significantly because of these initiatives. Similarly, the patronage of a majority of the new benefices resting with the diocesan bishop, rather than private patrons, could have rendered the preferment of experienced deputizing curates more easily facilitated. However, two factors militated against such a positive outcome.

First, the number of ordinations rose considerably during this period. As Haig (1984, p.223) observes, this upsurge was, to a degree, ameliorated by natural wastage among the existing clergy, but, through the 1870s and 1880s, their overall number continued to expand to a level at which the growth rate could not be assimilated through the creation of new benefices. This made longer curacies 'a mathematical necessity' (1984, p.222).

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<sup>6</sup> Parsons (1988, pp.21-22) cites the augmentation and endowment of 5,300 parishes between 1840 and 1853 from the abolition of cathedral offices.

Second, and most significantly, the passing of the Pluralities Act of 1838, reinforced by the Church Discipline Act of 1840, ended absenteeism and the holding of multiple benefices. Beneficed clergy were now required to be resident in their parish and could only hold livings in multiplicity by archiepiscopal dispensation. Whilst this resulted in a number of benefices falling vacant, it also resulted in some curates being displaced and others experiencing a fundamental change in their work conditions.

In almost every context, the curate lost some of his already meagre ground. In some of the better-endowed livings, the practical *status quo* between curate and incumbent persisted intact, although the latter now resided in the Rectory. In this situation, although the curate retained his autonomy in the exercise of the cure of souls, he lost his hard won right to residence in the parochial house. Arguably, the inferior replacement accommodation underlined his comparatively lowly position.

However, the curates felt their loss of autonomy more keenly in livings where the incumbent exerted his authority but evidenced no vocation to parochial ministry. Numerous contemporary accounts survive showing the incumbent behaving as an ecclesiastical ‘commanding officer’ dispatching his lower-ranking curate to do the work of the parish and then calling him to make his report, emphasizing the disparity in status between them at every opportunity (Hart, 1971, pp.130-131).

In other parishes, incumbents fell under the influence of either the Evangelical revival or the Oxford Movement and rediscovered their vocation to parochial ministry. As

Owen Chadwick writes:

No one doubted in 1860, and few will doubt now, that the clergy of 1860 were more zealous than the clergy of 1830, conducted worship more reverently, knew their people better, understood a little more theology, said more prayers, celebrated sacraments more frequently, studied more Bible (1971, p.127).

Despite the welcome developments in parochial ministry brought about by the spiritual revivals, the situation of the curate in these contexts was often gravest, since he might be considered unnecessary to the better endowed livings, and could not be afforded by the poorer parishes (Haig, 1984, p.219). Thus the deputizing curate lost his final ‘privilege’: security of tenure. Several contemporary publications raised this issue, most interestingly the 1843 pamphlet *The Whole Case of the Unbeneficed Clergy* which suggested that ‘curates should be appointed by bishops, thus breaking the direct and allegedly degrading employer-employee relationship between the incumbent and his curate’ (quoted in Haig, 1984, p.225).

This convergence of reform and revival forced a fundamental change in the role and mode of operation of the curate in the majority of English parishes: a sea change so comprehensive that the 1866 Curates’ Augmentation Fund pamphlet *The Position and Prospects of Stipendiary Curates* recorded that

It is of the utmost important ... to set forth clearly the fact that Assistant-Curates, holding the position and performing the duties which they now do, are, as a class, the creation of the present century (1866, p.4).

By the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the term ‘curate’ had ceased to signify a priest who exercised the cure of souls autonomously in the absence of the incumbent and bishop and so was pastor to his people. Rather, it indicated a formalized lowly rank within an increasingly professionalized hierarchical structure. *The Habits of Good Society*, a handbook of behavioural conventions within Victorian society, published in 1855, amusingly illustrates the gulf in status between an incumbent and his curate. It instructs that ‘one must never smoke, without consent, in the presence of a clergyman, and one must never offer a cigar to any ecclesiastic over the rank of a curate’ (quoted in Hart, 1971, p.137).

By 1879, there were only 387 men working as deputizing curates to non-resident incumbents, and 4,888 assistants were employed by, and serving, resident beneficed men (Haig, 1984, p.241). The average assistant curate was, by this point, working under direct supervision, did not live in the parochial house, and still competed for preferment, albeit now ‘for 7,000 adequate ... livings with some 5,000 incumbents of inadequate livings and 5,000 other curates’ (Owen Chadwick, quoted in Hart, 1971, p.135).

There was, as some Victorian curates keenly felt, little sense of equality or collegiality among the clergy as a result of their common ordination as priests, which is, perhaps, surprising in the light of the Oxford Movement’s public concern with the ‘apostolic descent’ of ordained ministers (Newman, quoted in Podmore, 2005, p.20). Moreover, the hierarchy of the denomination expressed little interest in the continuing problems experienced by its curates.<sup>7</sup>

This initial paradigm shift from deputizing curate to assistant curate seems to have been effective and wholesale. Although it was unplanned, the presence of a previously absent resident incumbent firmly underlined it on a local level, thus ensuring understanding of the redefinition of the post at every level of the Church.

The pastoral reforms and spiritual revivals at work in the Church during the nineteenth century seem also to have led to a growing awareness of professionalism and professional responsibility among its clergy (Russell, 1980). In parallel, there was a growing feeling that the ordained were not being adequately trained for the ministries to which they were called. These trends led to a second revolution in the meaning of

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<sup>7</sup> The CAF Report of 1866 discusses the continuing problem of low salaries (quoted in Haig, 1984, p.219); and Hart (1971, p.137) records that attempts to petition the First Lambeth Conference of 1867 about the issues facing many assistant curates failed as there was ‘insufficient time’ to consider the document submitted for discussion.

‘curacy’, in which the term was intended to signify a training post in which the newly ordained were prepared for advancement to an incumbency in due course.

However, despite subsequent consistent use of this definition of curacy within the Church of England, this second paradigm shift does not seem to have proved anywhere near as comprehensive as the first. Two overlapping factors seem to have acted against its effective redefinition of curacy.

First, despite the increasing recognition that some kind of vocational preparation for the ordained was desirable, the Church authorities narrowly perceived such training as pre-ordination academic study, which was to take place under an overarching philosophy of an entirely graduate clergy. Consequently, until well into the twentieth century, little formal attention was paid to the post-ordination stage of training. In some quarters, there was an assumption that learning would continue, particularly during the diaconal year, but there do not appear to have been any official proposals of methodologies or frameworks under which doing the tasks of parochial ministry might become effective learning experiences.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, there was the issue that nineteenth-century incumbents had themselves not undertaken any vocational training, so were expected to mentor the newly ordained in ministries for which they had not been adequately prepared.

Second, there seems to have been no definite reframing of curacy away from assistantship towards apprenticeship. Instead, the existing assistantship structure had some elements of apprenticeship unsystematically grafted onto it over time. Arguably, the resulting hybrid post carries an inherent fundamental tension between two

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<sup>8</sup> There were, however, some notable exceptions. See the discussion below of Canon Philip Green at St Philip’s Church, Salford, in the first half of the twentieth century.

conceptions of the term ‘curate’ that has not yet been resolved, despite subsequent attempts to provide frameworks within which training might be more adequately effected and reflected on.<sup>9</sup>

At the start of the nineteenth century, clergy education had remained as it had been for centuries before. In the 1820s, contemporary authors were noting that the ancient universities were now large enough to supply sufficient clergy to staff England’s parishes, causing some bishops to refuse to ordain non-graduates (O’Day, 1988b, p.264). The majority of ordinands, until the 1840s, were graduates of either Oxford or Cambridge and were ordained without further training (O’Day, 1988b, p.264). Despite their extensive general education, a number of these men had a very limited theological knowledge (Haig, 1984, p.73), causing the contemporary author Richard Seymour to note that

Unprepared in general by distinct training for their office, stimulated by no hope of temporal regard to gain thorough mastery of all that belongs to their calling, the clergy are tempted to consider a decent performance of needful pastoral ministrations the beginning and end of their work (quoted in Russell, 1980, p.44).

The ‘steady growth’, from the middle of the century, in acceptance of the idea that a university education alone formed insufficient training for ordination was, as Haig (1984, p.72) writes, not a partisan claim. The lack of spiritual formation in the secular universities formed the heart of the Tractarians’ critique; those of the broad church tradition cited a lack of intellectual rigour in the graduates’ grasp of theology; and evangelicals focused on the problems of untrained men being called upon to exercise pastoral ministry and to preach (Haig, 1984, p.73).

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<sup>9</sup> As Burgess (1998) somewhat pessimistically observes, this is frequently played out on a local level in competing understandings of the balance between study time and practical work in a curate’s working week.

As early as 1833, Pusey was proposing the foundation of 'Cathedral colleges' to offer vocational training to graduates, but in many quarters his plans were met with opposition, mainly on grounds that colleges established and staffed by churchmen would fall prey to partisan influences.

In response to growing concern, and a number of different proposals for the reformation of theological education, the Cathedral Commissioners made enquiry, in 1854, of the universities concerning their opinion of the adequacy of their preparation of candidates for ordination. The University of Cambridge responded by introducing an examination in theology, which was to be taken by candidates for holy orders after their degree. This voluntary paper became compulsory for ordinands within ten years, and was, by 1873, expanded into a single honours degree (Haig, 1984, p.75ff).

The situation at Oxford was more complex, because of the influence of the Tractarians. On the one hand, Pusey and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce strongly supported the establishment of Cathedral colleges. On the other hand, the heads of houses and professors of the University remained convinced of the rightness of a university education for the clergy, and established an honours theology degree in 1869 (Haig, 1984, p.77).<sup>10</sup>

The Commissioners concluded their enquiry by expressing a cautious preference for some kind of post-university vocational training. However, by 1891 only half of the graduates ordained had taken part in such training (Haig, 1984, p.88), despite the

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<sup>10</sup> Whilst this study has focused on Oxbridge, as the universities supplying the greatest number of graduate candidates for ordination until the second half of the nineteenth century, the role of the 'new' universities (particularly Trinity College, Dublin; King's College, London; Durham; and Queen's College, Birmingham) should not be overlooked, particularly as, from the 1860s, the cost of an Oxbridge education resulted in an increasing number of candidates for ordination having attended these institutions (O'Day, 1988b, p.265).



growth in the number of diocesan theological colleges, and it was not to become mandatory until after World War I.<sup>11</sup> Haig concludes that:

The whole story of post-graduate training can be seen to reflect a fundamental organisational problem in the [nineteenth-century] Church: the lack of ability to take and enforce central policy decisions (Haig, 1984, p.89).

The consequence of this continuing problem was that newly ordained university graduates arrived in their parish largely unprepared for the work they faced, and many of their incumbents, whilst having the benefit of experience, were comparatively ill-equipped to guide them, through their lack of vocational training.

The vocational education of non-graduate clergy seems to have been no less problematic. Whilst a graduate clergy remained the ideal for most bishops through the nineteenth century, the less affluent urban areas increasingly required a greater number of clergy than the universities could supply. Consequently, by 1870 there were diocesan colleges at Chichester, Gloucester, Lichfield, Lincoln, Salisbury and Truro (O'Day, 1988b, p.265), and by 1890 they had admitted some 5,300 non-graduate students (Haig, 1984, p.117). In the earliest days of the non-graduate colleges the students tended to be young and of humble birth (Haig, 1984, p.124). By the mid-1840s the tide had turned, and older men who came from another career seeking ordination were attending these colleges (1984, p.126).

The most relevant question to this study about the theological colleges is whether the training they offered was any more appropriate to the work of a parish priest than a university education. For the most part, it seems to have been different rather than more appropriate, and heavily influenced by the bishops' graduate ideal.

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<sup>11</sup> The 1908 Lambeth Conference adopted the recommendations of the Archbishop of Canterbury's *Report* of the same year that a year of theological training should be mandatory. The date set for the implementation of the recommendation was January 1917, but this was deferred because of the First World War (Haig, 1984, p.89).

The curricula of the colleges became tailored towards meeting the requirements of the centralized ordination examinations. In 1874, the Universities Preliminary Examination (UPE) became a requirement for all ordination candidates. It was set and marked by the universities, rather than the colleges, and favoured those with a university education, proving particularly popular with graduate candidates from the 'new' universities (O'Day, 1988b, p.266). The theological colleges became academic 'crammers' and were diverted away from offering vocational training.

By 1893, the Central Entrance Examination (CEE) had replaced the UPE. This centred on the elements of a grammar school 'classical' education, and worked against those without such grounding. In practice, the CEE seems to have been less a genuine marker of a candidate's ability than an indication of their level of privilege expressed through educational opportunity (O'Day, 1988b, p.266).

The notable exception to the general shortage of vocational training in the colleges was the idiosyncratic St Aidan's College in Birkenhead. Its students were required to serve in local parishes as visitors during their training from its earliest days (Haig, 1984, p.152), but even the suitability of this college's approach was frequently called into question.

Baylee, the charismatic and difficult Principal of St Aidan's, wrote a spirited defence of the place of the colleges, claiming they were best suited to more mature candidates who brought a considerable amount of life experience, but his words betray the academic focus of much of their curricula:

To such a man a judicious course of theological training, including a fair knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Testament, is far more congenial than a course of heathen classics and natural science (quoted in Haig, 1984, p.138).

In one sense, the colleges seem to have offered a more vocational training than the universities, at least until the latter's introduction of theology degrees, as they were concerned with the study of theology, rather than the acquisition of a general education. But, as O'Day (1988b, p.277) observes, there was still no 'teaching on how to be a pastor, especially in the new circumstances of Britain's big cities'.

The training of non-graduates in the nineteenth-century Church of England forms an account of missed opportunity. The potential the colleges offered for high quality vocational education was subverted by the question of status: particularly whether or not an entirely graduate clergy would maintain the position of the ordained ministry within the professions at large (Russell, 1980). As Haig (1984, p.146) perceptively notes, such concerns raised the question of what it was 'that made the English clergy effective'.

The primary consequence of the continuing lack of a vocational component in both of these parallel paths to ordination was that new curates had been ill prepared for parochial ministry. There was an assumption that curacy would somehow 'make up' this lost ground, yet there was little interest on the part of diocesan authorities to ensure that curates received appropriate training once in post. Instead, much depended upon the incumbent's interest and ability in training curates. Such training patterns as were established were the result of local initiatives, and the value placed on continuing study differed widely across contexts.

Haig attributes these problems to a general lack of understanding of what kind of training was required for what kind of ordained ministry, grounded in an insufficient grasp of how the work of a clergyman had changed through the century, in the context of competing 'partisan' interpretations of 'priesthood' and 'ministry' (1984, pp.89-90).

The result of the lack of a centralized policy governing the ongoing training of curates was that the paradigm shift from assistant to apprentice remained partial, and was subject to often-conflicting interpretation. As early as 1854, Conybeare was writing to *The Times* describing curates as analogous to naval midshipmen: ‘in a humble position, but at the foot of a ladder on which promotion is the rule’ (quoted in Haig, 1984, pp.226-227), thus emphasizing curacy’s transient nature as an apprenticeship. His analysis is accurate in as much as the deputizing perpetual curate was rapidly becoming an anachronism. However, his language could be said to reflect the broader issue of the denomination’s continuing emphasis on issues of status and deployment to the detriment of effective ministerial training.

The training offered within curacy at this time was, although patchy and often unsystematic, not entirely without potential. The revival of the medieval minster model of deployment, towards the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, offered possibilities for effective training contexts. Significantly, though, priorities other than improving post-ordination training guided this revival. As Halcombe noted in 1880, a deployment model of ‘one man working a large parish with a staff of Curates’ provided a convenient way to increase staff levels to meet the demands of the growing urban population, without the difficulty of creating and endowing new incumbencies (cited in Haig, 1984, p.234). Again, at denominational level, the curates’ training needs appear to have taken second place to other concerns, despite the subsequent efforts of individual training incumbents to realize this deployment model’s training potential.

In conclusion, by the end of the nineteenth century curacy had become an amalgam of assistantship and apprenticeship that depended entirely on local factors for its effectiveness as a context for post-ordination training. Subsequently, a number of

denominational initiatives aimed to establish curacy more firmly as primarily a training post. However, through the twentieth century, it seems to have continued to reflect the tension of competing conceptual understandings through a lack of consensus at all levels of the Church on the balance in practice between the curate as minister-in-training and as an ‘extra pair of hands’.

### **Evolution into Confusion: Twentieth-Century Curacy**

In many ways, the curates’ lot improved significantly through the twentieth century. Curates gained representation in convocation through the Patronage Measure of 1930, and, from the 1940s, the Central Advisory Council of Training for the Ministry (CACTM) assumed responsibility for managing the selection and training of new clergy. Stipends were significantly increased, and paid through the central financial systems of the denomination. Security of tenure was re-established by the appointment (and dismissal) of curates by bishops, rather than incumbents. Housing remained precarious, however. Single curates were commonly required, until well into the century, either to live at the parochial house or to lodge with a family in the parish, and where self-contained accommodation was provided, its quality could be a cause for concern (Burgess, 1998, pp.117-118; Hart, 1971, p.182).<sup>12</sup>

The national and diocesan hierarchy of the Church increasingly came to understand curacy as primarily a training post forming a bridge between initial training and a first incumbency. Consequently, there was greater practical attention paid to the need to train the newly ordained appropriately during their curacy. Nevertheless, the quality of the training remained variable:

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<sup>12</sup> The amalgamation of individual benefices into teams through the latter part of the twentieth century improved the situation for a number of curates who were able to occupy vacant vicarages.

In the few 'large Basilicas' like Leeds and Portsea the work might be hard and the discipline tough, but you were sure of a first-class grounding in the priesthood ... But it was often far otherwise for the single curate in the ordinary ... parish. For most ... parsons were busy men who tended to think of their new assistant simply in terms of the amount of work that could be unloaded onto him, rather than to ... try to prepare the young man for his future ministry (Hart, 1971, p.177).

As a number of scholars have identified, training contexts such as the 'minster' model of clergy deployment, to which Hart's positive comment refers, offer a number of potential advantages. The staffing pattern of several curates working in a single context provides a learning cohort, and such settings can facilitate stimulating opportunities for peer-assisted learning, under the guidance of a suitable mentor, within collaborative working systems.<sup>13</sup>

In practice, the quality of ministerial training offered through this model was far from assured. In common with other expressions of curacy, its effectiveness was subject to the abilities and ministerial philosophies of incumbents, in the continuing absence of an overarching denominational training policy. However, when supervised by a rector whose concern was primarily to train curates, such as Peter Green at St Philip's Salford, it could prove highly effective.

Green's expression of the model tailored work undertaken to the gifting and training needs of each curate, allowing them a considerable degree of autonomy in exercising ministry. He guided their reading, encouraging them to spend at least four mornings each week engaged in academic study, and facilitated group reflection on both their reading and practice of ministry (recorded in Hart, 1971, pp.187-188).

When considered in the light of the recommendations of the Church of England's 2003 Report *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* (Ministry Division, 2003a),

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<sup>13</sup> Chapter 5 considers the potential of these features in detail in suggesting how the structures of curacy might be reframed.

and the discussion of the creative expression of vocation in role in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study, Green's practice seems somewhat ahead of its time. His curates were being equipped to exercise ministry within a framework of lifelong learning grounded in the systematic integration of theological reflection, academic study and ministerial practice, and to shape their role to express their vocation, bringing it into dialogue with contextual needs.

Elsewhere, the model did not prove so inspired, even if curates remember their experiences and incumbent with fondness. The overspill estate parish of All Saints and Martyrs, Langley, Manchester consistently maintained a staff of one incumbent and up to four curates during the 1960s. Several of the curates of this time speak with admiration of their incumbent, Victor Whitsey,<sup>14</sup> and are quick to point out how much they learned during their time in the parish.<sup>15</sup> However, their accounts of living and working at Langley illustrate individual training needs consistently taking second place to the demands of parochial ministry. Their 'training' consisted of schooling in the practical elements of ministry according to Whitsey's conception of best practice, supplemented by such unsupervised reading as they cared to undertake in their 'free' time.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the considerable potential of the minster model as a training context, expressions of it that assumed learning to happen through assigned tasks, with little encouragement for study or reflection, seem to have been normative.<sup>17</sup> And, as Hart

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<sup>14</sup> Whitsey was later Bishop of Chester.

<sup>15</sup> Their view that 'something' happened that prepared curates for effective future ministry seems to have been shared by the hierarchy of the Church of England, given that a comparatively large number of Langley curates from that time subsequently received preferment as Archdeacons and Bishops.

<sup>16</sup> Owing to a lack of written evidence, informal unstructured conversations with former curates, and sermons preached during their visits to Langley, have informed this analysis.

<sup>17</sup> Demonstrated 'competence' in the execution of these tasks commonly evidences learning in this training philosophy.

(1971) and Burgess (1998) evidence, this approach to training was frequently shared by parishes that did not maintain multiple curates. Thus the tension between assistantship and apprenticeship remained apparent in many curacies, despite growing national and diocesan affirmation of curacy as a training post. Arguably, this resulted in the placing of a sometimes inappropriate degree of reliance on the capacity of the individual to learn under such conditions and, whilst some found value in the training offered, many found it unsatisfactory:

On the one hand I was held back from doing things because I'm not experienced enough ... on the other hand [the vicar] will throw me into things when it's convenient. ... Especially as a deacon ... there I was, cassock and dog-collar, and all I was allowed to do [in the liturgy] was read the gospel – wow! ... and on the other hand being dropped into things that were too heavy to have to be doing in the first few weeks (unnamed curate, quoted in Burgess, 1998, p.58).

From the mid-1960s, a new wave of calls for reform in theological education emerged.

The Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry (ACCM) published the Report

*Ordained Ministry Today* in 1969, which raised some uncomfortable questions

regarding the efficacy of theological training, and suggested substantive changes in the future:

The traditional pattern of clerical education equipped men for a (typically solo) incumbent ministry in a stereotyped parochial structure. We need an orientation from the start towards a *shared* ministry, towards team-work between priests and active laity, team-work among priests themselves. For this careful training is needed. And we need an orientation towards adaptability of the ordained role to a wide variety of situations, not all of them foreseen by any means when the initial training takes place (*Ordained Ministry Today*, quoted in Hart, 1971, p.201).

Among the many subsequent developments in initial and continuing ministerial education, the most noteworthy for this study was the broadening of training pathways for ordination. From the establishment of the Southwark Ordination Course in 1960, part-time courses grew alongside residential college-based training.

Theological education in the Church of England began to change course significantly with the publication, in 1987, of *Education for the Church's Ministry*, which became



known as ACCM 22 (Ward, 2005, p.72ff). This Report called for greater recognition of the wide range of ordination candidates now coming forward for selection, and recommended practical consideration of the variety of ways in which adults learn. It challenged the denomination to view education for ministry as a ‘lifelong process of personal development’ (Ward, 2005, p.74), in which ‘the student [could] grow in those personal qualities by which, with and through the corporate ministry of the Church, the creative and redemptive activity of God may be proclaimed and realised in the world’ (ACCM 22, quoted in Ward, 2005, p.74). In 1995, the Advisory Board of Ministry (ABM, formerly ACCM) published proposals for mixed-mode training, in which ‘qualified’ candidates could train through sustained contextual placements and short periods of college-based learning (Advisory Board of Ministry, 1995, p.7ff).<sup>18</sup>

These initiatives fostered a change of culture in initial ministerial education away from the assumption that standardized single pathway training programmes met the needs of all candidates, in favour of finding the most appropriate programme for the circumstances of each within a necessarily restricted number of options. In ways that now seem limited, but that were revolutionary for the time, initial ministerial education became more learner-focused.

In parallel, categories of ordained ministry expanded. Non-stipendiary ministry (NSM) began in the diocese of Southwark in 1963, an experiment that led to wide debate and ultimately to the publication of *The Bishops’ Regulations for the Selection and Training of Candidates for Auxiliary Pastoral Ministries* in 1970 (Hodge, 1983, pp.17-20).

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<sup>18</sup> Suitability for admission to such a training programme broadly rested in holding theological qualifications. This, arguably, continues to reflect the long-established philosophy of the equation of academic attainment with qualification for ministry that was prevalent in some quarters of the Church of England.

This move caused the demographic profile of candidates for ordination to change.

Alongside the young men who were training at the full-time colleges for stipendiary ministry, NSM attracted older men (and, from 1986, women) who predominantly trained part-time.

Subsequent demographic changes, through the latter part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, were less category-specific and more fundamental. The average age of ordination candidates rose, especially after, though not as a direct consequence of, the 1986 legislation that permitted the ordination of women. In 1975, 63 per cent of the recommended candidates were aged between 20 and 29 years. By 2004, this age group represented only 13 per cent of the total, and candidates aged between 40 and 49 years formed the largest, at 30 per cent, closely followed by those aged between 50 and 59 years, who comprised 28 per cent. In the same year, women formed 50 per cent of the total number of the recommended candidates for ordination, their number having totalled 9 per cent in 1974 (Ministry Division, 2005, p.17).<sup>19</sup>

From 1994, some dioceses also introduced Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) schemes, training, initially, a comparatively small but notable number of candidates locally to serve in their home parishes (Ministry Division, 2003a, p.151). Inevitably, for the most part OLM tended to attract older, long-established congregation members.

Self-supporting ministers, a group that includes NSM, OLM and ministers in secular employment (MSE), form a category of ministry that is of increasing significance to the future deployment patterns of the Church. In 2009, the denomination had some 11,658 clergy, of whom 3,100 were self-supporting (Church of England, 2009b). As currently predicted, by 2017 the number of stipendiary ministers will have fallen from its 2009

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<sup>19</sup> Women were licensed as deaconesses at this point.

figure of 8,558 (Church of England, 2009b) to 7,200, assuming a standard projection, or 6,730, at the lowest projection level (Greenwood, 2009, pp.160-161).<sup>20</sup> It is becoming increasingly widely recognized that, if the Church of England is to retain its ordering in the parish system, in whatever way parishes might be organized into clusters or teams, its front-line pastoral ministry will increasingly come to depend on self-supporting ministers. This raises both ecclesiological and practical questions, many of which are relevant to curacy in as much as curacy forms a foundational period during which habits and skills begin to be formed that will sustain the kinds of ministries into which curates will move.

In the pre-ordination stage of training, colleges, courses and denominational policymakers began to appreciate the need to create appropriate learning environments for this wide range of ordinands.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, these co-ordinated moves towards an appositely learner-focused approach to training seemed not to extend into curacy. ACCM 22's agenda for change was not carried forward into post-ordination training until the publication, in 1998, of *Beginning Public Ministry*. This document attempted to establish curacy fully as a training post through setting out aims and objectives for a common three-year training scheme within which the training incumbent was to act as 'coach or learning facilitator, there to develop the foundation laid by the initial training period' (Ward, 2005, p.77). It also builds on ACCM 22's concern to encourage the individual curate to take greater

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<sup>20</sup> Standard projection is based on the projected numbers of ordinands on a moving average figure based on numbers for the years 2003-2007 against totals retiring or leaving active ministry. Lowest projection is based on an average of the years 2005-2007.

<sup>21</sup> There have been calls, from the turn of the twentieth century, for initiatives aimed at reversing the trend in favour of younger vocations, in order to address numerical decline in congregations. Such calls, most notably that of Bob Jackson, are based on research suggesting that younger people are attracted to churches led by younger clergy (Jackson, 2002, p.158; 2005, p.117ff).

responsibility for their learning in order to develop the ability to discern their own training needs and seek appropriate ways of meeting them.

However, *Beginning Public Ministry* seems to fail to consider two important questions: first, whether curacy was sufficiently acknowledged at the local level as a formal apprenticeship, and second, whether the structures of curacy commonly formed an environment conducive to learning and formation. Instead, it seems to ground its recommendations in a partially inaccurate myth of effectiveness, despite a growing body of evidence to the contrary.<sup>22</sup>

Twentieth-century curacy remained staunchly entrenched in a one-size-fits-all philosophy, worked out as one curate<sup>23</sup> in one benefice, supervised by one training incumbent, for a fixed three- to four-year duration despite the increasing broadening of categories for ministry and demographic changes in the profiles of ordinands. This increasingly raised pertinent questions about the continuing place of curacy in the life of the Church.

In particular, it was questioned whether a model developed to form men in their early twenties with little experience of life and, arguably, few transferable skills, the efficacy of which had already been called into question, offers an appropriate space for the formation of people of more mature years, who commonly have significant life experience, may have held responsible jobs in their secular careers, could have an extensive knowledge and previous involvement in the Church as laypeople, and may

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<sup>22</sup> For example the accounts presented in Burgess (1998).

<sup>23</sup> With the growth in OLM towards the end of the twentieth century, some larger parishes returned to a quasi-minister model of multiple OLM curates, or of a combination of curates drawn from the several categories of ordained ministry. In some contexts, this seems not to have lessened the training issues common to the different 'inherited' models of curacy.

already be theologically qualified. In several ways, the one-size-fits-all model seemed difficult to justify, yet it did not change.

Similarly, its formal study element began to seem largely ineffective, as ability levels and experience of previous study among curates widened. Despite denominational encouragement to the contrary, structured, time-dedicated, continuing study was, for many curates, limited to diocesan continuing ministerial education programmes, the quality of which was 'uneven' (Ministry Division, 2003a, p.43). As the Report *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* noted, curates in a single peer group within a diocese might commonly include those working academically at diploma level, alongside those at degree, masters and doctoral levels. Whilst noting that formal study in curacy should not just take the form of work undertaken in isolation, it points to the need for it to work on multiple levels, rather than adopting a common approach within which some learn whilst others seem to stagnate (2003a, pp.125-126).

In retrospect, it seems that through the twentieth century three factors further strained the already problematic conceptual amalgam embodied by curacy: the welcome expansion of the categories for ordained ministry; learner-focused initiatives in initial ministerial education; and the changing demographic profile of ordinands. Curacy was widely assumed to form an apprenticeship, yet there seemed to be no consensus on what types of training it was supposed to offer for what kinds of ordained ministry.

The increasing prevalence of accounts of unsatisfactory curacies reported in such studies as that of Burgess (1998) formed a point of concern for the authors of *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* (Ministry Division, 2003a). The Report rightly stresses the pivotal role of the supervisor in the continuing education of the newly ordained, and advocates training them in the 'best practice' of supervision. It

also recommends that dedicated time be allowed in the working life of curates for ‘continuing studies and reflection’ (2003a, p.45). It places great importance on the creation of a culture of commitment to lifelong learning among the clergy, advocating a more flexible approach to pre-ordination training, and proposing an overarching concept of ‘agreed phases of development in a formational journey’ that stretches from ‘entry into training up to appointment to a post of responsibility’ (2003a, p.48ff). In many ways, the considerable potential of its many recommendations was lost in the years that followed, until the implementation of the 2003 Clergy Discipline Measure (Church of England, 2006) and the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure 2009 (Church of England, 2009a) raised the issue of competencies, and particularly how ineffective training could act as a barrier to dismissal in the event of disciplinary capability proceedings (Church of England, 2010d, p.1).

These issues, which formed part of the twenty-first century drive towards professionalization of clergy roles in the denomination, described in Chapter 3, generated discussion of questions of how curates should demonstrate competence in curacy, and of what models might form effective ways of assessing this. But again, the structures of curacy remained largely unchallenged, and this left unanswered the question of whether curacy, as it stands, forms an appropriate or effective space for formation.

Having now traced the evolution of curacy into its still prevalent form of ‘one curate in one benefice, under the supervision of one training incumbent’, I shall now raise questions of the effectiveness of its structures as a space for formation in the kind of authentic ministry that was presented in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study, and that will be addressed in Chapter 5.

## **Cultural Disjuncture: Static Structures and Changing Contexts**

As Chapter 1 illustrates, the ministerial culture of the Church of England has undergone something of a paradigm shift, which began in the twentieth century, but which has gathered pace since the publication of the Report *Mission-shaped Church* (Archbishops' Council, 2004). The vision of the mixed economy of church, coupled with changes in the deployment of clergy, as a result of both theological exploration and pragmatic choices generated by financial stringency and falling numbers of vocations to stipendiary ministry, has seen clergy increasingly working in teams and across contexts. Moreover, both the denominational landscape and that of the wider society is now a complex one that offers both challenges and opportunities. As Croft writes:

[The biggest challenge is that] we need to connect everything together into one community. There must be unity as well as diversity because we are all part of the one Body of Christ. The fresh expressions of church need to be connected to the whole of the Christian tradition and the Church worldwide. The most traditional of congregations needs to be connected to the cutting edge (Croft, 2006, p.77).

These fundamental cultural shifts away from one priest in one parish, working to one model of ministry shaped by their tradition, place a particular importance on curacy as the post-ordination stage of formation; this has been recognized at denominational level in terms of both the curriculum content and assessment models for curacy (Church of England, 2010d). Yet, as the discussion above illustrates, the structures of curacy have stood largely unchanged. This seems to create several issues for its effectiveness as a space for formation in the kind of authentic ministry presented in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study. I will consider three of these issues.

First, the model in which one training incumbent supervises one curate in one benefice appears problematic, if formation in cross-contextual, trans-expressional, collaborative working is to form one of its training goals. Current expressions of curacy seem

naturally to create a culture of parallel working in which it is difficult to establish where a newly ordained person might gain experience in the kind of 'connected' oversight that Croft envisages (2006, p.77). In a similar way, deploying just one curate in each setting seems not to offer a clear way to undermine the kind of territorialism, actual and intellectual, which seems to work against collaboration among clergy: a culture Burgess terms 'heroic individualism' (1998, p.146).

This model's effectiveness in providing enough contexts through which the newly ordained person might begin to form habits of skill and wisdom needed to engage in the process of role negotiation can also be questioned. Whilst a single benefice might offer a number of churches, arguably it does not typically offer a diverse range of church traditions or a large number of contrasting contexts for engagement.

This is of particular relevance in the context of the changing demographic profile of ordinands, and the growing diversity in expressions of ministry. Recent initiatives that have seen the introduction of pioneer curacies for those sponsored as Ordained Pioneer Ministers provide a welcome move towards matching the form of curacy to the vocation of curates in the twenty-first century Church. But arguably, this also acts to reinforce territorialism through unintentionally creating parallel expressions of curacy. A second issue arises when those curates who are also members of religious orders, or whose sense of vocation centres on chaplaincy, are considered. Currently, two pathways are open to them. First, an expression of curacy that is often difficult to negotiate, in which the curate divides their time between contexts, with co-supervision that anecdotal evidence suggests to be frequently problematic. Second, a vocation (to chaplaincy or within a religious order) that has to be put 'on hold' for three years whilst the curate learns what it is to be a member of the parochial clergy, despite possibly not embodying



that role after curacy. In both cases, the continuing appropriateness of a one-size-fits-all model of curacy seems difficult to justify, against a broader clergy deployment pattern of increased flexibility.

Perhaps, instead, greater flexibility in structures and diversity of opportunity needs to be extended across all curacies, if an increasingly wide range of curates, often with significant prior experience of the Church and its ministry, are not to experience vocational stagnation.

Now considering the second issue, licensing an individual curate as ‘assistant curate’ to a benefice could be seen to perpetuate the confusion between, on the one hand, the denominational understanding of curacy as a training post, and, on the other, the understanding of many parishes of the curate as an extra pair of hands. This confusion seems to have generated many of the substantive problems experienced by curates during curacy, as Burgess’ (1998) study illustrates. The recent introduction of common tenure across the denomination (Church of England, 2009a) has led to certain appointments, most commonly title posts in curacy, being specifically designated as training posts (Church of England, 2010d, p.4). But, arguably, the current practice of licensing and deploying individual curates as ‘assistant curate of x’ undermines this welcome move towards clarification through continuing to reinforce the idea firmly established in the minds of many church congregations (and some training incumbents) of the curate as assistant to the vicar, and thus an extra pair of hands.

In some ways, this seems difficult to avoid given that, once ordained, the transitional deacon, and later the priest, is called to exercise a ministry appropriate to that order. However, the culture of curacy described in the Report *Formation and Assessment in Curacy* makes a clear distinction between ‘the old model of theological education’ in

which ‘a group of [curates] clustered around a wise priest’ and a new approach in which mission forms an emphasis, with the aim being to form ‘reflective practitioners’ with tools that are ‘flexible and able to change as the task changes’ (Church of England, 2010d, pp.5-6).

In other words, within an intentional approach to training grounded in the framework of Being, Knowing and Understanding, and Doing, which was presented in the Report *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* (Ministry Division, 2003b, p.58ff), and on which subsequent strategies for curacy have built, gaining experience in praxis, that is, being the extra pair of hands, forms only one dimension of the task of formation. Creating structures that do not undermine the praxis of a curate being recognized as simultaneously ‘now but not yet’, and that regard time and space for the other two dimensions to develop as essential rather than peripheral, seems a pressing task.

Regarding the third issue, the continuing appropriateness of a one-to-one training relationship between a curate and their incumbent is open to question in three respects. First, its intrinsic clericalism seems anachronistic alongside the every member ministry theological grounding of *Mission-shaped Church* and subsequent diocesan pastoral reorganization plans. To some degree this anachronism has been ameliorated by recent initiatives encouraging the curate to seek written feedback against learning outcomes from key lay people in addition to or in place of the training incumbent as they compile their evidential portfolio for assessment (Church of England, 2010d, p.4).

Second, in the light of the growing professionalization and evaluation of clergy roles, of which the role of curates forms a part (Church of England, 2010d), the dual focus of

nurturing mentor and evaluative supervisor embodied in the training incumbent role seems increasingly difficult to manage.

Third, falling numbers of stipendiary clergy (Greenwood, 2009, p.168ff), coupled with the consequential increase and broadening of their parochial workload, makes it difficult to see how even the most accomplished training incumbent will continue to find time to undertake this demanding role.

As Chapter 5 will suggest, building on the recommendations made in the Report *Shaping the Future* (Ministry Division, 2006), it might prove more productive to reframe the several dimensions of supervision and mentoring in ways that involve a team of appropriately qualified and experienced people, some of whom may not be ordained (cf. in part Croft, 2006, p.75ff; Ward, 2005; Wright, 2004).

For the reasons outlined above, it seems reasonable to conclude that contrary to frequent assumption, curacy, since its partial reframing as an apprenticeship, has proved not to be as comprehensively effective a model for formation as might have been hoped, despite good practice being noted in some expressions. In turn, this raises the question of whether addressing this issue requires a far-reaching revision of its structures rather than their partial reframing.

One solution could be to abandon curacy in favour of appointment to a position of responsibility from the point of ordination. This approach offers the possibility of reversing its first nineteenth-century paradigm shift and reverting to a system in which the newly ordained have pastoral charge under the supervision of a mentor who is not resident in the parish.<sup>24</sup> However, this can be subject to the same blanket policy critique

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<sup>24</sup> The Methodist Church in Great Britain currently operates such a scheme for its probationer ministers during their first two years of public ministry.

as the *status quo*, on grounds that not all newly ordained people would be sufficiently experienced or confident to hold such a position from the point of ordination. A second counter lies in the ministerial order into which candidates are initially ordained in the Church of England. Their presidential role is limited as deacons, most significantly in their inability to preside at the Eucharist. This raises questions of the practicality, or theological appropriateness, of sole pastoral charge from the point of ordination within the established ecclesiology of the denomination.<sup>25</sup>

Other factors also suggest that a wholesale move away from curacy as a fixed duration training post seems unhelpful. First, in an appointment that is under supervision and recognized as a training post, there is a certain space to make and learn from mistakes, widely recognized to be an essential part of experiential learning. Whilst, in some ways, this process can be costly, given that from the point of ordination people, most especially those who are not regular worshippers, encountering that minister will expect his or her ministry to be authentic; it is, arguably, less costly than a poor appointment to a position of responsibility. Second, as Burgess (1998) and Tilley (2006) (cited in Lamdin and Tilley, 2007) evidence, despite the inherent structural issues in curacy identified above, where best practice is present, and where it works well, its efficacy centres on relationships: primarily that between the curate and their training incumbent. In addition, despite the many stories of unsatisfactory curacies, such as those recorded in Burgess' (1998) study, Lamdin and Tilley (2007, p.31) present evidence that shows a majority of curates surveyed to be broadly satisfied that their curacy met their expectations of it. This is supported by Hills and Francis (2005), whose survey of new

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<sup>25</sup> Although it should be noted that several dioceses, faced with falling numbers of stipendiary clergy, are informally discussing what form pastoral charge should take, and who should exercise it. However, at the time of writing, this seems not to be moving towards a Methodist model for curates.

clergy in, or shortly after, their first year of service, shows high levels of work satisfaction.

The discourse above suggests that, whilst a wholesale reconfiguration of curacy seems unnecessary in order to shape it more productively to form curates in authentic ministry, there are structural issues that act against the realization of its full potential. In Chapter 5 I will go on to suggest ways in which the structures of curacy might be reframed to work towards that end.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS - REFRAMING CURACY FOR FORMATION FOR AUTHENTIC MINISTRY**

Revisiting the research questions posed for this study in its Introduction in the light of the discourse of the preceding chapters identifies a number of conclusions, each of which has bearing on how curacy might be reframed to form a more adequate space for formation.

Chapter 1 examined the wide general field question of a way of reading and holding together the complexities of internal and external contexts for ministry in the Church of England. It concluded that British society, and the internal life of the Church of England, often assumed to be poles apart with the former rapidly changing and the latter standing unchanged or lagging behind, are sharing common processes in which established metanarratives that govern patterns of life and belief are being broken down. It further concluded, taking bearings from Casanova and John Williams, that analyses assuming the wholesale replacement of the communal landscape of the Christendom metanarrative with either that of the secularization thesis or with networks of individualized micronarratives seem over simplistic, and consequently their adequacy as a sociological basis from which mission and ministry strategies can be extrapolated can be called into question.

It concluded that the concept of the mixed economy of church is not without value, suggesting that, contrary to many evaluations, its inherent complexity may form its strength, but that its potential seems to have been underdeveloped in the extant strategy of fresh and inherited expressions of church, which has arguably created a parallel

economy in which churches, rather than containing differentiated Christendom and post-Christendom paradigm people, commonly include both in each.

It then proposed an alternative way of conceptualizing the complexity of internal and external contexts for mission and ministry through the netnarrative paradigm, out of which a mission and ministry strategy grounded in the vision of the mixed economy might proceed.

Taking inspiration from the counterpoint of musical fugue, it offered a framework encompassing three dimensions: the underpinning form (the work of the *missio dei*) through which the vocational journey of an individual and their community through time (horizontal melodic development) enters into creative dialogic negotiation with individual contexts at particular points in time (the vertical moments of harmonic dissonance or consonance) as the work progresses towards its ultimate resolution in the final cadence of the eschaton. It then concluded that in this paradigm, the task of the ordained could be understood as one of holding and moulding. Adding the metaphor of deep sea fishing, they cast their net into a moment of ministry, interpret the complexity of what they find in it in the light of the other moments through time that together form the tradition within which they stand, and hold it together for the task of moulding a collection of individual melodies competing to be heard into a coherent work, regarding both moments of dissonance and consonance as essential to the task of journeying towards ultimate resolution.

Recognizing the changed place of religion in British society in which the right to influence has to be contested and negotiated, Chapter 1 further concluded, in answer to the narrow general field question, that the kinds of ordained ministers who can embody

this role, in both fresh and inherited expressions, are authentic ones who are both real and ring true, and so are potentially capable of being read as such by others.

Chapter 2 then carried this forward to draw out key aspects of authenticity in ministry, asking what it might mean to be an authentic minister. It drew two broad conclusions, which were then taken into theological reflection as their dimensions were explored.

First, that authenticity in ministry is about creativity, particularly in how the holding and moulding of ministry in rapidly shifting contexts necessarily happens in a place between repetition and innovation.

Taking bearings from the conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt's evaluation of authenticity in musical performance, this Chapter concluded that authenticity in ministry is a matter of being true to the composition rather than being faithful to the score. In particular, that the primary intention of a composer is to create a work to be performed, experienced and appreciated, with an aim to draw the audience into the work and the beauty of which it speaks. Its authenticity in performance, therefore, rests on this aim, which is always a creative one.

In this way, authenticity in ministry forms a dialogic process that can only be negotiated in performance, in which the simple repetition of past performances fails to engage the creative imagination of those involved in the performance, whilst total innovation carries the risk of misrepresenting the work of which the performance hopes to speak.

This Chapter further concluded, taking bearings from the netnarratives analysis, that authenticity in ministry requires transience and permanence and perfection and incompleteness to be held in creative tension. In this way, the dialogic process of negotiation of authenticity should not be self-referential, either in terms of the



individual moment in ministry, or the ministry of an individual minister. The authenticity of any transient moment in ministry is always, to some degree, dependent on its standing within the broader tradition of other moments of which it is a part, but that tradition is itself ultimately transient: both rest on the permanence of the *missio dei*. Similarly, for the minister, any authenticity evidenced in their ministry in terms of the perfection they might be able to reflect in an individual moment rests entirely on their inherent incompleteness.

Chapter 2 then drew a second broad conclusion, that authenticity in ministry is about vocation, specifically in how the gifts, skills and charisms of individuals and communities are encouraged, offered, received and experienced in the mission of bringing glory to God and blessing to others. In this way, repetition of past performances of ministry without space for innovation, or insisting on performance practice that does not give space for the expression of the gifts, skills and charisms of individuals, fails to awaken the creative imagination of both minister and context, and reduces their capacity to be read as authentic and, in turn, their ability to influence others.

Chapter 3 examined the question of whether clergy roles, in their majority form as parochial clergy, act in favour of or against the expression of vocation and creativity. It concluded that, whilst their expression can still be evidenced in many clergy roles, a trend towards the privatization of vocation could also be noted, as an unintentional consequence of professionalization, which is generating issues of dissonant habitus among an increasing number of clergy, leading to feelings of inauthenticity. This is something, which, it contends, needs to be addressed: how should clergy roles be

negotiated if they are to be experienced as real and ringing true by the minister, and, thus, have the potential to be read as such by others?

Chapter 4 began the process of narrowing the discourse to its specific field of curacy. It traced the evolution of the role of the curate in the Church of England, and evaluated its most prevalent contemporary expression, reaching three conclusions in the light of those drawn in the preceding chapters. First, that curacy, as it stands, is largely the unplanned result of nineteenth century deployment trends. Second, that it currently embodies an uncomfortable amalgam of assistantship and apprenticeship, the working out of which in practice has never been appropriately resolved. Third, that demographic changes in the profile of ordinands, coupled with recent denominational initiatives in theological education and the ethos and assessment models for curacy, have created a situation in which the adequacy of its structures can be increasingly called into question.

Whilst it recognizes that elements of good practice are present in extant structures of curacy, and that curate experiences are not necessarily as bleak as such studies as that of Burgess presents them, Chapter 4 confirms the overarching qualitative hypothesis for this study: that the structures of curacy, as they currently stand, no longer offer the most fruitful space for forming the kinds of ordained ministers needed by the twenty-first century Church of England, and so need to be reframed, at least in part.

This chapter takes these conclusions forward, to offer an answer to the final research question, that of how curacy can be reframed to provide a more effective space for fruitful formation in authentic ministry without losing good practice elements of the current model. In this task, I take bearings from Stanislavski's approach to method acting in identifying an approach to formation in authentic ministry, after which I

consider the structures of curacy through discussion of deployment and mentoring and supervision.

### **An Approach to Formation**

The issue of authenticity in acting has, since the first half of the twentieth century, formed one of two major strands in the training of actors, asking critical questions of how the role is formed and for whom it exists. Method acting, a system developed by Russian director Konstantin Stanislavski (1968; 1980; 1981), formed a corrective to the prevalent declamatory acting style of nineteenth-century Russia. In a way analogous to recent trends in musical authenticity, rather than establishing authenticity as dependent on conformation to stylistic norms, it focuses instead on bringing the personal experiences of an actor into dialogue with those of their character, both explicit in the script of a play, and implicit.

Stanislavski's system encompasses three stages. In the first, the actor prepares for their role by reading the script through a lens that facilitates their discovery of the character as a person. Once they have discerned the explicit elements of the character through concentration on the words on the page, the actor should then enter into the role and develop psychological bonds with it. Ultimately, as Stanislavski narrates, they shall reach 'that closeness to your part we call perception of yourself in the part and of the part in you' (1980, p.305).

In the second stage, the actor develops physical and vocal elements for the character, bringing the limits and potential of their own physicality and vocal range into dialogue with how they have imagined the character to be, exploring the parameters within which they either enhance or detract from portrayal of the role (Stanislavski, 1968, p.5).

Having then ‘fleshed out’ the character into a ‘real’ person, in the third stage the actor continually revisits the script, examining each line and its delivery from the perspective of the character to the point at which they think, feel and act as the character, with the joins between the self and the role becoming seamless. Stanislavski (1981, p.194ff) identifies this approach as facilitating engagement with the subtext of the script.

Through employing this system, the actor is able to step into the world of the character and thus, by embodying the role, is able to represent it in a way that draws the audience into the person of the character and through it, into its world.

Stanislavski’s method raises a number of points of connection with ordained ministry, and several notes of caution. The first is that the act of performance is where authenticity is negotiated. This emphasises a view of reciprocity that has resonances with the musical analogies used to draw out dimensions of a dialogic approach to negotiating authenticity in ministry in Chapter 2. Specifically, in locating the process of negotiation of ministerial authenticity firmly on a discourse plain that avoids the poles of absolute repetition of past performances (with its inherent risk of aridity through stifling creativity) and total innovation (with its self-referential view of authenticity), both of which have proved equally unsatisfactory in the task of negotiating authenticity in musical performance practice. Immediately, though, it also raises issues in terms of how useful ‘playing a role’ is as an analogy for the practice of ordained ministry.

Theologies of ministry have long been resistant to concepts of role-playing, or acting in performance, for reasons that seem to be grounded in one of three understandings.

First, there is an understanding that performance simply means ‘what is done’ and so limits the creativity of the performer. N.T. Wright expresses this as ‘the composer

composes and the orchestra implements.’<sup>1</sup> This accurately represents one dimension of performance, that of the responsibility of the performer to bring to life the written text, but, as the discussion of musical authenticity in Chapter 2 illustrates, it could be said to be unduly utilitarian and failing to take account of the subtle interplays of tradition, text and creativity in the processes of transmission and reception that make up any one performance. If applied to ordained ministry, in terms of ‘the Church shapes and the minister implements’, the analysis seems to lead to the kinds of habitus and privatization issues discussed in Chapter 3.

Second, to perform has been assumed to imply inauthenticity: that being in role somehow is used to mask the true self, perhaps with resonances of the false prophets of Mark 7:15 whose innocent outward appearance disguises inner darkness; or, more innocently, drawing its suspicion from the many examples of ordained ministers who seem to adopt another *persona* or style of speaking when performing liturgical ministry, coming dangerously close to being living caricatures.

Yet Stanislavski’s work illustrates that preparing and inhabiting a role is not a simplistic covering of the self with an *alter ego* but rather bringing the self into dialogue with the text and role in question, with the aim of inhabiting it and shaping it into a performance. In other words, the actor, to engage successfully with method acting, is clear where the role ends and the self begins, but those boundaries appear seamless. There are clear resonances here with both Harnoncourt’s distinction between faithfulness to the score and being true to the composition and Paul’s description of becoming all things to all people in 1 Corinthians 9:22b, discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. For Harnoncourt, as for Stanislavski, the crucial difference lies in how a performer makes a work (or a role,

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<sup>1</sup> Expressed during a lecture at the Manchester Diocesan Clergy Conference, July 2010.

to use the language of theatre) her own, without falling into the kind of egocentricity that points exclusively to the virtuosity of the self or rendering it so unattractive that it no longer has meaning for those who encounter it. For Paul, in so much as he effectively shapes his multiplicity of roles over time for the task at hand without suppressing his foundational vocation and gifting.

Third, there is an understanding that being a performer somehow equates with being an egotist. Again, numerous anecdotal and biographical accounts cite examples of both musicians and actors who could be said to have fallen prey to such temptations, but the question arises of whether this should most appropriately be attributed to the social phenomenon of the cult of celebrity rather than being an inherent flaw in the concept of performance. Here O’Dea’s question of ‘bad faith’, discussed in Chapter 2, returns to the discourse. Performance, as a concept, carries an inherent implication that somebody will do something for others: a musical performer might practise alone, or with a limited number of colleagues, but the performance is offered for an audience. The individual satisfaction felt by the performer lies in the way in which their performance is experienced and read by others.

This intention can be corrupted, as fame takes its toll on the successful performer, but it is far from inevitable. Despite resisting performance as an analogy for ordained ministry, similar accounts can be advanced of corruption through the cult of celebrity (or personality) in the ministries of the ordained (Dulles, 2002), so a simple assumption of cause and effect relating to performance seems difficult to justify.

From the perspective of an orchestral conductor, the ‘gift’ of performance lies in enabling the members of the orchestra to ‘own’ the music for themselves. As a member of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra comments, ‘a lot of conductors come in and they

interpret the piece for you. The great conductors interpret the piece *with* you' (quoted in Davidson, 2006). The pitfalls of comedy performing illustrate how feeding egotism is far from normative. Although there are comedians who are said to feed off the audience, performance is always more of an exchange in which the upper hand can quickly switch from the comedian to the audience. A notorious example of this was formed by the Glasgow Empire, a variety theatre known as the 'comedians' graveyard'. In this venue, many performers were crushed by the reactions of audiences who did not appreciate their brand of humour, or by the bottles they threw onto the stage. In this circumstance, the performer may well have the expertise, but an expression of egotism through the act of performance is far from guaranteed.

Inge (1995), reflecting on his experience of parish ministry, identifies similar interdependency. He employs the analogy of a pantomime, likening the role of the ordained person to that of an actor-director, who performs alongside others, but who, with a mind to ensure the success of the production as a whole, will also encourage the creativity of others, drawing it together and facilitating coherence.

The discussion above illustrates that, despite the examples of those who misuse it, Stanislavski's approach to performance can be read in terms of bringing into being the space for creative exchange in a place between repetition and innovation, without individualism or egotism. Interpreting this through the lens of the netnarrative paradigm, the performer comes into dialogue with text, tradition and audience as together they negotiate the meaning of that moment in performance, both in its immediacy and its location within a tradition beyond itself, and as different interpretations of text and role negotiate for the right to be heard.

In these ways, the points of connection with the negotiation of the role of an ordained minister quickly emerge, as through the performance of ministry in moments of creative exchange, text, tradition, context and actors are brought into dialogue, hold together contradictory understandings and together negotiate what might be.

Expressing this in terms of a space for formation, a number of things are necessary for the kind of formation in method acting that embodies Stanislavski's method to happen. First, there need to be sufficient opportunities to rehearse and perform with others, as the interpretations of the actor are tested out, brought into dialogue, reshaped and reflected on. Second, there needs to be a director (or perhaps an actor-director) whose role is to engage with the actors as together they interpret the work, drawing out their individual creativity and building on their gifting as they come to embody their roles, but always with a primary focus on the success of the production as a whole. Third, there need to be sufficient other performances of the role for each actor to critically study. Fourth, in the initial stages of the career of an actor, as they become used to the processes of method acting, be it at college or as they start out in show business, there needs to be an 'elder statesperson' who acts as mentor, offering advice specifically tailored to the individual, rather than any particular role they are employed to embody, although their feelings about each role might enter into discussion at particular times.<sup>2</sup>

Bringing this back to curacy: the curate, to use a similar process, would need working contexts that contain multiple opportunities to perform and to rehearse, with a range of performers and audiences with whom to engage. They would need a supervisor who

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<sup>2</sup> Formalized mentoring arrangements are very rare beyond college environments in show business. However, many successful performers relate examples of how the wise words and constructive criticisms of senior members of the profession have provided a much-needed change of direction or insight into their development as a performer, some of which develop into the types of critical friendships that are definitive of mentoring.



would function as director, engaging critically with the effectiveness of the ministry role embodied by the curate, drawing out their individual gifting and creativity, but primarily having a focus on how that role contributes to the totality of ministry in that place. They would need to experience sufficient other performances of the role to facilitate critical study. And, finally, as they get used to the processes of negotiation in authentic ministry, they need an elder statesperson who is an experienced ordained person capable of helping the individual to reflect critically on their vocation and how it is expressed in role - in other words, focused on the person-in-role rather than on the role.

I will now take these key areas in turn, discussing them in terms of deployment (a space for formation) and supervision and mentoring (the direction and oversight of formation).

### **Structures: Deployment – A Space for Formation**

As I have worked to develop a model of curacy that might offer a more effective space for formation in authentic ministry over the past seven years, taking bearings from some of the points noted in the Church of England Report *Beginning Public Ministry* (Advisory Board of Ministry, 1998), unsurprisingly the thoughts of others have moved in similar directions. Of particular note among the models that emerged from the recommendations made in the subsequent Report *Shaping the Future* (Ministry Division, 2006, p.87ff) is that proposed for the Diocese of Lincoln (Rossdale, undated). Rossdale outlines similar issues as I shall raise, and I hope that my detailed analysis of them will contribute to refining his model, as well as generating further work from others.

Extending the acting analogy, and bringing Inge's (1995) reflections on amateur pantomime into dialogue with my experience as a musical director in professional theatre, a fundamental distinction can be drawn between commercial pantomime and that of a repertory company, in their contemporary expressions, which offers a useful starting point for considering a reframing for the structures of curacy.<sup>3</sup>

In commercial pantomime, the name and popularity of the star of the show, coupled with spectacular special effects in how the performance is staged, is largely what attracts audiences. In repertory theatre, although there may be a 'top of the bill', and some of the cast may have a reputation, the focus is on the whole company. Each role within the performance is unique, but all the roles are integral to its success. Thus, each role both depends on others and needs to be developed to its fullest potential. The operative truism is that the strength of the show depends on its weakest part, and commonly during rehearsal actors will informally learn from each other, under the overall guidance of the director, with experienced performers offering help and advice, and those with particular skills, for example, dancing or fight staging, guiding the less experienced as the show takes shape.

When this approach to forming the individual in role is taken forward to curacy, structural problems soon arise. As Chapter 4 notes, the basic dominant structural metanarrative of curacy is still that of one curate in one benefice under the oversight of one incumbent. This model has been strongly influential through the twentieth century, and has been defended against proposals for reconfiguration from two perspectives.

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<sup>3</sup> I stress their 'contemporary expressions' here because, until the final decades of the twentieth century, the approach of some commercial pantomime acting companies showed elements of the repertory approach, given that a number of their star performers had either worked in variety theatre or in repertory companies, where camaraderie exerted a strong influence in many cases.

First, that Anglican Church polity is grounded in a concept of rootedness in place, which is reflected in its predominantly geographical ordering. The concept of a church in every community arguably forms a major aspect of the distinctiveness of the Church of England, and, as Chapter 4 illustrates, is a longstanding feature of its life. However, the concept of one priest in one parish is less well established, despite its prevalence, being a nineteenth century ecclesiological innovation. And even if its normativity is considered desirable, denominational deployment strategies are increasingly moving away from this model, arguably more for pragmatic than theological or ecclesiological reasons. This raises the question of the purpose of curacy. If, as the denomination expresses, this is primarily to be a journey of formation in which the curate grows ‘towards the role of an ordained person defined ... in terms of service, holiness, vocation and mission’ (Ministry Division, 2003a, p.39), it seems credible to suggest that the role into which the curate should begin to grow during curacy should be that which they will be asked to embody after curacy.

The second defence lies in cross-contextual curacy being assumed to be largely akin to a series of placements. Some authors have critiqued placements in terms of their perceived failure ‘to provide a meaningful “real experience”’ (Cameron-Jones and O’Hara, 1992) (cited in Morgan and Turner, 2000, p.454), whilst others consider them to be inherently *ad hoc* and thus of limited value (Kemp and Seagraves, 1994) (cited in Morgan and Turner, 2000, p.454). Whilst this danger is inherent in a cross-contextual model, Cheetham and Chivers (2001, p.285) conclude that whilst learning through experience is a ‘natural process’ which may seem to indicate support for a more rooted model, maximizing the potential of informal learning seems to rest less on the length of exposure to a context than on offering structured exposure to a range of learning skills

through which to interpret experience. In this, they advocate taking diverse approaches, and structuring placements so that learning opportunities can be guaranteed. Similarly, Morse found work-based placements to be of significant value to students, supervisors and organizations, concluding that this may lie less in the direct work than insights gained by all parties into a 'wide range of factors' (2006, p.750). Arguably, such benefits can be achieved in a single context, although there remain significant questions concerning exposure to a sufficient number of contrasting settings to enable the newly ordained to begin to engage with questions of similarity and difference, have preferences and biases challenged, and start to discern how to read contexts in the kind of subtly nuanced, multi-layered ways proposed in Chapter 1.

Perhaps most significantly, the 'one curate in one setting' model works against the kind of collaborative formation outlined above, and, in terms of ministerial cultures, seems to perpetuate a territorialist culture akin to that of the commercial 'star-led' pantomime, rather than that of the potentially more productive repertory company.

Territorialism has been widely suggested as a block to realizing the vision of the mixed economy church, on several levels, from the question of which expression might be considered to be genuinely church, through the question of who might have the ability to interpret scripture truthfully, to the practical expression of the vision in the parish system, for better and for worse. A territorialist approach to ecclesiology also sits uncomfortably with the kinds of fast-morphing contexts described in Chapter 1, in which the right to speak with a controlling authority seems no longer to be the prerogative of churches, but where there remains an openness to churches speaking in an authoritative and influential way, albeit contending for such a right rather than assuming it.

In terms of its approach to clergy formation and deployment, the Church of England seems to be moving away from systems that reinforce territorialism, for a combination of pragmatic and theological reasons. Yet the structures of curacy, for the most part, have remained unchanged and arguably perpetuate cultures in which curates are formed exclusively in one tradition, with little preparation for future situations in which they might need to work with integrity across several churches, of diverse traditions.

The Lincoln model of cross-contextual curacy identifies benefits from a curate being deployed within a larger structural unit, such as a deanery, with devolved supervision and mentoring, through their immersion in a culture of collaboration from the point of ordination (Rossdale, undated). Drawing inspiration from this starting point, I want to suggest additional potential benefits to both curate and diocese in terms of teaching and learning, mutual support, and, indirectly, clergy morale, through deploying curates in groups across such a unit, and with a combination of one-to-one and group supervision and mentoring.

Collaborative working has become a focus in both the pre-ordination and post-ordination stages of initial ministerial education in the Church of England, in response to denominational initiatives, generating a body of literature, which identifies its benefits in undermining territorialism.<sup>4</sup> However, in the formation of medical professionals, another form of collaborative working, that of peer-assisted learning, has long been a key informal feature. This sees junior doctors, and increasingly medical students, combining individual practice and study with a system of partnership or small group work in which one or more participants will teach their peers, supplementing the formal input from experienced practitioners (Ross and Cameron, 2007).

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Nash et al. (2008); Pickard (2009); Robertson (2007).

As Topping (1996, pp.321-322) notes, writing from the context of teaching and learning in higher and further education, uncritically seizing on peer tutoring as a solution to ‘doing more with less’ given an increasing shortage of experienced practitioners to take on these roles, is not without problems, because of the amount of organizational time needed to set up and oversee peer-assisted learning frameworks. But a number of authors have pointed out its benefits to students in encouraging verbalizing and questioning, in consolidating learning through the act of teaching (Topping, 1996, pp.323-324), and in offering clarity in addressing their areas of weakness (Ross and Cameron, 2007, p.532). Furthermore, in terms of wellbeing, some studies, most notably those of Goldschmid and Goldschmid (1976) and Greenwood, Carta and Kamps (1990), evidence a reduction in anxiety and higher levels of self-disclosure among students participating in peer-assisted learning, and these things in turn encourage increased ownership of the processes of learning, and greater motivation to learn (cited in Topping, 1996, pp.324-325). Ross and Cameron (2007, p.532) have further identified raised achievement of more ‘social objectives’ through meeting others engaged on the same study course and through role modelling.

Reported benefits for the institution include the creation of a culture of collaboration and co-operation across the student body, and increased levels of student morale, in addition to higher levels of academic success (Goldschmid and Goldschmid, 1976; Morris and Turnbull, 2004; Rhodes and Swedlow, 1983; Sobral, 2002) (cited in Ross and Cameron, 2007, p.532). In this way, socialization of curates at this early stage in their ministries into a more coherent ‘community of practice’ (Wenger, 1999), that crosses church traditions and expressions of church, may also help to move Rowan

Williams' vision of the mixed economy analysed in Chapter 1 beyond parallel economies and towards further realization of its potential as a model of ecclesial being. As Ross and Cameron (2007, pp.532-534) note, there are different ways of identifying those thought to be suitable to act as tutors. Some models insist on the recommendation of the experienced professionals (Lake, 1999; Walker-Bartnick et al., 1984), and others on demonstrated competence through the completion of a course on teaching (Sobral, 2002), or evidenced high levels of personal competence (Escovitz, 1990; Forester et al., 2004; Howman et al., 2002; Hurley et al., 2003; Trevino and Eiland, 1980). But the majority are open to the possibility of all students acting as tutors in differentiated areas (Reiter et al., 2004).

Given the increasing diversity among entrants to ordination training, with the range of experiences and skills they bring into ordained life, it seems reasonable to suggest that the majority, if not all, of those ordained to curacies will have gifts and charisms that can usefully be shared in a suitably designed framework for peer-assisted learning. Taking seriously Topping's (1996, pp.321-322) warning concerning this approach becoming a replacement for the input of experienced practitioners, and Ross and Cameron's (2007, pp.538-539) stressed need for such processes to be carefully set up and managed, this should not become a question of doing more with less in straitened times, but rather one of finding ways for the gifts and charisms of the curate to be appropriately used in a role that is consistent with the approach to authenticity in ministry that is traced in Chapter 2 of this study.

In the field of medical training, stress and burnout have been identified as 'endemic' in postgraduate medical training, but Satterfield and Becerra (2010, p.908) note that little research is available to guide supportive interventions. A similar situation exists within

curacy. Whilst, as Tilley cautions (in Lamdin and Tilley, 2007, pp.30-31), it is important not to overstate the case, there are numerous accounts of unsatisfactory and stressful curacies (Burgess, 1998), and clergy burnout remains an issue. Satterfield and Becerra's (2010, pp.914-916) study notes that peer relationships form the most effective type of support among junior doctors throughout their post-qualification training, with formally organized 'resident support groups' being well used both for seeking second opinions and for airing concerns and struggles. Yet, as Barley (2010, pp.28-29) illustrates, such groups within the Church, such as deanery chapters, are rarely looked upon as positive environments within which it is possible to be honest and open and to receive and offer support. This suggests that a change of culture is overdue, and deploying curates in groups so they are socialized in such a culture of collaboration seems useful to that process.

The cross-contextual curacy model offers further potential for avoiding the vocational stagnation experienced by some curates after their second year, when the steepest learning curves of the diaconal and priesting years have been surmounted (cf. in part Burgess, 1998). The Report *Formation and Assessment in Curacy* rightly points out, in defence of formal assessment, that 'poor appointments [to a position of responsibility] can be hugely costly all around further down the line' (Church of England, 2010d, p.1). However, it would be a mistake to assume that a poor appointment is simply a matter of competence in role. As Hills and Francis (2005, p.202) note, a mismatch between the sense of vocation of an individual minister and the contextual demands of particular roles also has the potential to generate a poor appointment, however competent the priest in question. In the current model of curacy, there is little formal scope for exploration of additional expressions of vocation, although some curates find informal



ways of doing this. In the light of the discourse of Chapters 2 and 3, however, it seems credible to propose that retaining the current three or four year duration, but creating the flexibility and space in how curacy is structured to allow for organized broader explorations of vocation in role, may also help to prevent costly poor appointments in the future.

Having outlined suggestions for structural reframings and their potential benefits to curates and to dioceses, I now turn to discussion of the supervision and oversight of curacy.

### **Structures: Supervision and Mentoring**

As Lamdin and Tilley (2007) illustrate, the role of a training incumbent is both multi-faceted and demanding, and historically it has included both mentoring and supervision in its remit. Their use of the word ‘supervision’ is telling:

[W]e will be using the word in the senses of both management and mentoring and will seek to make clear which sense is employed when the context does not make it obvious (2007, p.5).

They develop two models, proposed respectively by Alan Wilson and Mary Wilson, each of which is helpful in drawing out how the Church of England understands best practice in the role of the training incumbent.

Alan Wilson’s model categorizes the roles undertaken by a training incumbent in four broad terms: support, education, management and mediation. That of Mary Wilson defines supervision as ‘a method of working closely with an individual, for whom you have a defined responsibility, which is structured, creative, challenging and enriching and is based on mutual respect and trust’ (Lamdin and Tilley, 2007, pp.5-6).

Where curacies have worked well, and Tilley’s (2006) research presents a more optimistic picture than that of Burgess (1998) on the efficacy of curacy, much of the

success can be attributed to the supervisory relationship. Yet both among curates and training incumbents, and in other situations where those exercising oversight are called to be both mentor and supervisor (or shepherd and judge<sup>5</sup>), questions are increasingly being raised concerning the tenability of this dual expectation where, as Chapter 3 illustrates, roles are increasingly monitored, evaluated and subject to legislation, with opinions needing to be clearly evidenced against competencies.

Despite offering clarity in terms of expectations, it is far from clear, as Riem (2003) and Bryant (2003) have discussed in the context of the use of competencies-based assessment processes in the pre-ordination stage of training, whether such processes are apposite for the task of evaluating formation in curacy. And, in some ways, it is still too early to evaluate how far recent initiatives such as those generated by the denominational Report *Formation and Assessment in Curacy* (Church of England, 2010d) are changing the ways in which both curates and training incumbents perceive their relationship. But previous studies, coupled with deployment trends in the Church of England, suggest that a division between the supervisor and mentor roles, currently combined in that of the training incumbent, seems increasingly useful.

From the perspective of deployment, more is being asked of training incumbents in terms of their time commitment and development of their professional practice at precisely the moment when statistical trends show that the number of stipendiary clergy exercising ministry in the Church of England is decreasing, and is projected to continue to fall for the foreseeable future (Greenwood, 2009, p.158ff). As the breadth and scale of their responsibilities outside curate training increase, it is more difficult to see how

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the comments of Bishop Nigel McCulloch on the limitations placed on the Diocesan Bishop and their Senior Staff Team by the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003, which he sees as acting against the expression of their vocation (Diocese of Manchester, 2007, p.2).

even the most accomplished training incumbent will continue to be able to undertake this demanding and multi-faceted role.

A number of dioceses have drawn distinctions to reconfigure the training incumbent role in different ways. The Lincoln model advocates the use of a facilitator, who provides a 'home base' for a curate and facilitates their pattern of engagement in ministry, a supervisor, who is the person responsible for the formal reporting, and a theological reflector (Rossdale, undated). Southwell and Nottingham Diocese has experimented with 'cluster curacies' in which co-supervision is exercised by the incumbents of the respective benefices within the cluster.<sup>6</sup> The Diocese of York has used a mentor to act as a combination of external sounding board, reflector and mediator for both curate and training incumbent (Diocese of York, 2010, pp.27-29).

A process of change similar to that currently occurring in the role of training incumbents has already been noted in nurse education, where, in Wilkes' (2006) evaluation, there has been a progression from 'mentor as advisor, through uncertainty of the role of mentor as assessor, to the current role as both teacher and assessor of competence'. She notes a number of difficulties with 'competing expectations' (cited in Webb and Shakespeare, 2008, p.564).

Le Maistre et al. (2006) take this further, in a four-year study of the helping professions, finding an inherent contradiction between 'supervision-as-mentoring' and 'supervision-as-evaluation'. First, they note that even those supervisors who were comfortable with offering criticism disliked engaging with the formal evaluation process, feeling that their 'gatekeeper' role, in which they had the 'professional life of a person in [their]

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<sup>6</sup> Described by Canon Terry Joyce, Director of Ordinands for the Diocese, in a telephone conversation with the author.

hands' compromised their ability to support and nurture the new practitioner (2006, pp.350-351). Second, they point out that when evaluation is introduced to apprenticeship models of mentoring this may result in the distortion of the praxis of a supervisee as the supervisor unintentionally exerts a pressure to conform (2006, p.351). Third, they identify raised potential for confrontation and stress when performance in role is unsatisfactory. As one participant in their study comments, 'having a failing student is draining on everyone' (2006, p.351). This identifies the stress placed on supervisors by a dual focus model such as that of the training incumbent, in as much as the quality of their student is assumed to speak of their ability to supervise (2006, p.352), and, possibly, where selection of training incumbents is perceived to be a reflection on the quality of their ministerial praxis, of their ministry itself. Their study concludes that, whilst it is possible to mediate against these negatives to some degree through communication training, it is desirable 'as far as possible [to] separate the role of mentor and evaluator' (2006, p.353).

Sexton et al. draw a useful distinction between 'professional socialization' and 'professional education' in their study of supervision of athletic training professionals. As they succinctly point out, 'learning the culture of a profession is not the same as learning the knowledge and skill necessary to practice a profession' (2009, p.15). Yet, for the ordained minister, both are necessary for the process of negotiation of authenticity in ministry to be effective in forming roles that allow for the creative expression of vocation.

These tensions seem always to have been present in the role of the training incumbent, but, arguably, this inherent contradiction in combining mentoring and supervision is exacerbated where formal detailed evaluation is required.

There is, however, a fundamental difficulty involved in separating the two aspects of the role. As Pohly (2001, p.138ff) notes, it is impossible to separate fully the role of the ordained from the person called to embody it, and so there will always be a degree of overlap between mentoring and supervision. Perhaps, drawing on the analogy of the director and the elder statesperson above, it is more a question of focus: the supervisor (like the director) seeks to draw out the creativity and gifting of the individual, but primarily addresses their attention to the person's role in the context of the work being performed, whilst the mentor (as elder statesperson) is primarily concerned with the person-in-role.

The issues raised by previous studies seem to suggest that it is desirable for two people to take on these responsibilities, rather than one. This is supported by the recommendations made in the Church of England Report *Shaping the Future* (Ministry Division, 2006, pp.88-89). For these reasons I propose that the group of curates deployed in a deanery should have both a supervising incumbent, who will oversee the formation programme of each curate in the group, and a mentor, who will meet with each on a one-to-one basis and provide space and encouragement for critical reflection. Delineation of the two could be along the following lines.

The supervising incumbent, like a theatre director, would look to the effectiveness of each of the group of curates in role, acting alongside them, managing their overall formation programme, and ensuring that vocation is not privatized as they negotiate their role. But theirs is primarily a ministry of oversight, with a focus on the role. In other words, they observe how curates negotiate expressions of ministry that are both authentic to them and read as such by others, and (here I am building on Sexton et al.'s

terms) they help them to learn the knowledge, skill and wisdom necessary to practice ministry in this dialogic way.

The mentor would primarily provide the tools and space for the curates to reflect critically one-to-one both on their own performances and the habitus issues they generate, and on the performances of others, including the supervising incumbent, as they learn and critically engage with the culture of ministry in the Church of England.<sup>7</sup>

However effective the support of the peer group might be, there are times when a one-to-one approach is more appropriate, perhaps most especially during a time of intentional formation. This is recognized by the denomination through diocesan bishops insisting that licensed clergy have a spiritual director. Both the spiritual director and the mentor address themselves to the person rather than the role, but a useful subtle distinction can be drawn between guidance addressed to the person and that to the person-in-role. In the former, the spiritual director, in their confidential space, seems best placed to support the ordained, whereas a mentor in curacy can usefully look specifically at the person-in-role: at how they creatively express their vocation, and at how effectively they manage the external and internal processes that are at work as negotiation with context progresses. So whereas the supervising incumbent looks particularly at outcomes (the effectiveness of each role in the show as a whole, using the language of theatre), the mentor looks at how the role is being played (working with the actor to help them to ‘flesh out’ their role and recast it, to use Stanislavski’s language).

In terms of evaluation and reporting, given the overlap and the importance of both processes to how the whole person of the curate is engaged in formation, it seems

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<sup>7</sup> This distinction has, arguably confusingly, been explored in other studies as different expressions of supervision. For example, Leach and Paterson (2010, p.2), offer a useful definition of ‘pastoral supervision’ in terms of oversight and accountability, but their model does not involve a formal evaluative element beyond that of ensuring good practice.

appropriate for both supervising incumbent and mentor to be involved, although different assessment models may be needed for each area of work.

Beyond these two roles, as recent experiments in dioceses such as Lincoln and Southwell and Nottingham have found, it is useful to have a range of supervisors (or facilitators in the Lincoln model) whose task is to provide opportunities for each curate to gain experience in context, either individually or partnered, and who also generate other expressions of the role of clergy on which the curates can reflect with their mentor, through their own praxis.

This approach to oversight could be subject to the critique that it is, in effect, advancing an expression of functional differentiation, one facet of the secularization thesis, through creating an oversight structure of several specialists, each of whom works only in their specialist area. But reading this approach through the lens of authenticity, particularly the centrality of creativity and vocation to authentic ministry identified in Chapter 2, makes it credible to suggest that the roles of supervising incumbent and mentor are not simply that: they are, in themselves, expressions of vocation. Not every good practitioner has the kind of teaching and communication skills needed by a supervisor, and not every good supervisor has the empathetic reflective skills evidenced in a capable mentor. Thus care needs to be taken that their selection by diocesan authorities is a matter of vocation expressed in role, not simply a reflection of a perception of somebody who is effective in the role of an incumbent.

This raises issues of how, in the light of the discussion in Chapter 3, their role as parochial clergy can itself be reframed so as to create space for their expression of vocation. Here, again, the role of diocesan authorities is seminal. Webb and Shakespeare (2008, p.566) point out that having time available for mentoring students

directly affects the effectiveness of the mentor in the mentoring relationship within nurse education. There is no reason to suspect that this would be different for a supervising incumbent or a mentor in curacy. Within each structural unit, be it deanery or archdeaconry, the people called and appointed to these crucial roles in shaping the ministry of the present and future need to devote dedicated time both to the task of supervision or mentoring, and to attending to their own professional and personal development in those roles.

In conclusion, in answering my final research question, that of how curacy can be reframed for potentially greater effectiveness in formation for authentic ministry, this chapter has suggested an approach to formation that embraces dialogic negotiation between the whole self of the minister, their sense of vocation, the tradition that has formed clergy roles over time, and the needs of particular contexts and specific points in time. This approach sees each expression as an authentic individual moment that needs to stand in the collection of other moments in ministry through time, as the role that ministers embody is negotiated and renegotiated.

This chapter has then suggested two ways in which the structures of curacy can be reframed so as to better accommodate this kind of approach. It concludes, first, that curates could usefully be deployed in groups across a larger structural unit, such as a deanery. Second, it suggests that the multi-faceted role of the training incumbent could be recast to keep the kinds of relationships that form the basis for current good practice, but that would provide more appropriate support for the development of the curate both in role and as person-in-role.

This study has deliberately addressed the structures of curacy. In so doing, it hopes to offer a small, yet timely, contribution to the task of reframing curacy in a way that will



enhance its potential to be a fruitful space for formation by suggesting insights that could both help to refine existing experimental models, and give rise to further thought and action. The reframing of structures forms only one part of the reconfiguration of curacy. There are many other potentially fruitful avenues along which future work might proceed, and perhaps the most inviting of these lies in discussion of how authentic ministry can be evaluated and assessed, particularly of what models might offer productive frameworks through which to do this. In addition to offering a contribution to academic knowledge through its re-readings of contexts for ordained ministry and that ministry itself, this study has aimed to contribute to professional practice in the life of the Church of England through advancing conclusions that may help the denomination in its task of forming ordained ministers who are capable of proclaiming the gospel afresh in each generation (cf. Preface to the Declaration of Assent, quoted in Church of England, 2000, p.99).

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