Anglican Perspectives on Christian Religious Education

by
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Abstract

This paper reviews the ambiguity behind the notion of Christian education in its application to Anglican (Church of England) schools, together with the ambiguities surrounding Anglicanism itself. It reflects on Anglican authority, comprehensiveness and distinctiveness, and on the established and parochial character of the Church of England, noting the theological and educational implications of these characteristic elements. Accounts of the 'spirit of Anglicanism' are discussed, with particular reference to this Church's claims to tolerance, inclusiveness, openness, freedom and a lay character; as well as issues relating to English character, Christian values and the role of worship and theological reflection in any Anglican theology of education.

To discuss this topic adequately, It is necessary to address a number of ambiguities intrinsic to my Christian tradition, and perhaps to my nation, as well as others relating both to the different forms of Christian religious education and to the nature of Anglican education.

1. Christian Education

The English phrase, "Christian education", is ambiguous. My main academic and professional concern for over 30 years, as Director of the North of England Institute for Christian Education, has been with the first construal of this term as *education into Christianity*: that is, education that involves not only learning about Christian beliefs, values, practices, and so on; but also assisting learners to adopt, hold and deepen these beliefs and values, and to embrace and engage in these practices. This is the main educational task of the Church, through its fellowship and congregations, with any children, youth and adults – inducting them into ("evangelizing") and forming them in ("nurturing") the Christian Faith. It also marks any confessional Christian RE that takes place in schools or other educational institutions, using the broader sense of "confessional" that denotes evangelizing and nurturing religious formation, rather than strictly denominational teaching and learning.

In Britain, however, "Christian education" is mainly used of the *general education of a Christian nature* that is supposed to characterize Christian educational institutions: church schools or, to the extent that we have them, "Christian universities". [1] The "implicitly Christian" nature of much of this education is particularly expressed in the values learned through the hidden curriculum of the institution's relationships, discipline, decision-making, etc.

The phrase is also sometimes, though rarely, used to designate the *education about Christianity* that forms a major part of RE in all British schools.

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[1] Eleven institutions of Anglican foundation, which originated as colleges for the training of Church school teachers in England, recently became universities: see https://www.churchofengland.org/education/colleges-universities/he/anglican-foundation-heis/anglican-institutions.aspx

2. Anglican Schooling

The second ambiguity that we should note revolves around the nature of Anglican schools, limiting this discussion to Church of England schools. In England, about 34% of all "maintained" schools (funded by central or local government) are schools "with a religious character"; around 24% of all children are educated in these schools. Most of these are Anglican (c. 4,700 schools, educating c. 1 million, mainly younger children) or Roman Catholic (c. 2,000 schools, educating c. 760,000 children).

Significantly, these Anglican schools are of two main types. In the *voluntary aided* (VA) schools the Church contributes 10% of new building costs, Church governors are in the majority, the Governing Body employs the teachers, the school's worship and RE may be denominational, and the school controls its admissions to *foundation places* (which may be reserved for children of Churchgoing parents, on criteria decided by the Governing Body) and other, open places. (Only about 3% of these schools currently operate with over 50% foundation places.) There are some 2,000 VA Anglican Church schools, plus approximately 360 "academies" with similar characteristics. (The organization of schooling in England is presently in considerable flux with the conversion of existing schools into, and the creation of new schools as, academies and so-called "free schools".)

In the *voluntary controlled* (VC) schools the Church pays nothing to any new building costs, its governors are in the minority, worship may be denominational but RE is normally non-denominational, and the Local Education Authority controls the school's admissions and employs its teachers. The Church of England has around 2,300 of these schools, together with about 40 rather similar "foundation schools".

In both types of school, a Church trust or foundation owns the school site and its buildings, but the local authority or central government pays all the recurrent costs (including its teachers) and most of its capital costs.

There are also over 500 Anglican non-State, *private schools*,[2] wholly controlled by their governors, which have been described as "part of the family of Church schools" (Church Schools Review Group, 2001, p. 78). Although private schools educate only 7% of English children, their former pupils are disproportionately represented in influential professions.

In the1944 Education Act, school worship and RE became compulsory in all maintained schools in England and Wales, subject to clauses allowing parents to withdraw their children (even in voluntary schools). Since that time, the aims of RE have radically changed in most schools, from a largely biblical, confessional induction into Christianity to a non-confessional education about the variety of world faiths represented in Great Britain (with a weighting towards understanding Christianity), together with some reflection on fundamental questions.

Much controversy still surrounds the compulsory status of worship in all schools, which legislation passed in 1988 insisted "should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" in non-Church, State-funded schools. In such a school, the worship should not be denominational, but its RE is still influenced by the Church of England as it must accord with a non-confessional, local syllabus agreed between representatives of the Church of England and of teachers, local government, and "other faiths and denominations".

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[2] However, only 200 of these actually employ an Anglican chaplain.

One might expect that the freedom of VA schools to teach RE from an Anglican perspective would result in their adopting a broadly confessional (nurturing, even evangelistic) Christian religious education, if not a narrowly confessional, Anglican approach. But this is only rarely the case. Although official documents regularly employ apparently confessional rhetoric, they do not intend this language to be taken too literally. Thus we read that children in Anglican schools, are given "the opportunity to know Christ"; and that these schools are offering the Church's Faith or "offering Christ to the young", "as a gift to be experienced". But this is essentially through providing "an opportunity to experience the meaning of the Christian faith". This "life-enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ" must be, in such an educational establishment, an "open" encounter encouraging an "opportunity for informed choice" that allows for a "well informed response" on behalf of the pupils, who have been "enabled to deepen their understanding of God as encountered and taught by Christians". It must occur without proselytizing, and with no intention or even expectation of "Christian commitment" or "conversion" (Ibid., pp. 10–12, 15–16, 18, 24, 43; Church of England Education Division / National Society, 2010, p. 11; Church of England Education Division / National Society, 2011, §§ 5, 6, 7).

This cautious approach cloaks an unwillingness to engage in much debate over the role of nurture within education, despite the literature generated by the arguments of the philosopher of education Paul Hirst (although these were in fact rather simplistic, and he largely disowned them later) (Cf. Francis & Lankshear, 1993, sections 1 and 2; Astley & Francis, 1994, part 2; Thiessen, 1993; Hirst, 1993; Astley, 1994a, pp. 37–107 and 2002b). But it also reflects a recognition of the essentially dialogical and learner-centredness of all learning, even learning that leads to moral or religious conversion; and of the psychological and cultural spirit of the times (at least in England), which makes pupils resistant to any religious claims or "pressure". At any rate, most of the official literature treats full-blooded confessional RE as only appropriate in a small minority of Anglican schools, perhaps only in "the Aided school which admits only children from practising Christian homes" (Lankshear, 1992, p. 52). Even then, nurture must be clearly labelled as different from and complementary to the non-confessional teaching about Christianity that takes place within the broader RE of these schools (Francis, 1983). Although half of the Anglican VA schools follow diocesan RE syllabuses, these commend aims, objectives and subject matter that are very similar to the non-confessional syllabuses produced by local authorities, although with more emphasis on the study of Christianity and on some aspects of Anglican tradition.

Part of the reluctance to embrace a confessional approach to RE in Anglican schools derives from an overarching tension between the two main historic roles of all these schools, which should be held in balance (Church of England Board of Education / National Society, 2011, §§ 34, 35).

1. a "domestic", "nurturing" task of teaching Anglican children, including an education about Christianity coupled with (at some times and in some places) education into Christianity; and

2. a "general" or "service" role of providing a general education of a Christian kind for all children (which would also include some education about Christianity).[3]

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[3] Cf. Francis, 2000. By contrast, the Roman Catholic Church in England "sees its schools primarily in domestic terms providing for the needs of the Catholic community" (O'Keeffe, 1998, p. 190), but in

When Church and State were in principle a single entity these two roles were "indistinguishable", with "the domestic task … seen as including the general" (Commission on Religious Education in Schools, 1970, p. 207). Even when the nation became religiously more diverse, "Anglicans rarely expected their schools to be built only for Anglican children and taught by Anglican staff" (Brown, 2013, p.161). Over recent decades official documents have prioritized the service role rather than the domestic one (Church School of the Future Review Group, 2012, p. 10), a feature that mirrors the preponderance of controlled over aided schools and the fact that Anglican schools were originally mainly provided for the poor.

Reference has sometimes been made to a third, "prophetic" task of Anglican education, in voicing a Christian critique of society in general, and education in particular (Francis, 1990, pp. 359–362).

The current rhetoric requires that Anglican Church schools be both "distinctive" and "inclusive" (Church Schools Review Group, 2001, ch. 4; Church of England Board of Education / National Society, 2011, §36), with distinctiveness mainly described in implicitly Christian rather than explicitly Christian or specifically Anglican terms, and inclusiveness largely measured by an inclusive admissions policy. This inclusiveness works against the adoption of a more confessional RE as a mark of distinctiveness. Although the Church of England acknowledges that its schools "stand at the centre of the Church's mission to the nation" and are "at one with the mission of the Church", mission is here understood broadly, as opening people up to "what God desires for them". It includes proclaiming the gospel, nourishing Christians and bringing others to faith; but goes beyond these tasks to respond to human need by nurturing and maintaining "the dignity of the image of God in human beings through service", safeguarding "the integrity of creation", "speaking out on important issues", transforming unjust structures and working in other ways for social justice (Church Schools Review Group, 2001, pp. 1, 11; Church of England Education Division / National Society 2010, p. 10; Church of England Board of Education / National Society, 2011, §23).

While only a few still argue that Anglican school RE should be more confessional or "catechetical", "more distinctive and faith-based" (See Chater, 1997, p. 271; Wright, 2013, pp. 203–204), there has been a recent tendency to claim that the Anglican Church school is *"itself* a religious community" and "a kind of Church" (Williams, 2003). I am in sympathy with interpreting the school in ecclesial categories, but the qualifier "a kind of" must be taken seriously and pleas to regard Church school pupils as belonging to the Church more fully should be resisted (Elbourne, 2009, p. 25; 2013). My preferred model, even of the Church aided school, is of a "mixed economy" or "half-way house" between the Church and the State and local community.[4] Certainly, the Church school is first and foremost a school. It is not simply or straightforwardly a Church and should never be assumed to be wholly Church, even when its admission policy favours Church families. It may be "part of the Church", belonging to it; but it is "in it" rather than "wholly of it" (Astley, 2002a, pp. 6–15). For the Church school is part of the Church's "threshold" with the secular world, which is a place of varying degrees of religious commitment and kinds of belonging (Bouteiller, 1979). Viewed in this way, the Church school:

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practice they often include pupils of non-Catholic and indeed non-Christian parents. All Roman Catholic schools run on the VA model.

[4] Leslie Francis calls the Church school "a proper hybrid, being extensions both of the church and of the secular educational system" (Francis, 1998, p. 226).

"could quite appropriately see itself as encouraging the development of learning outcomes that lie somewhere *between* the educational outcomes of the secular school and those of the seminary or the Church. Such a school might well strive to provide its pupils with a fuller understanding of Christianity than does the community school, by trying to make them [...] somewhat "more Christian". In particular, it might seek to produce more by way of Christian feeling: by developing more implicit and characteristic Christian attitudes, emotions and experiences (such as trust, compassion, a sense of awe), and a few of the explicit and distinctive ones (such as reverence for Christ, a positive attitude to the Church, Christian prayer and worship experiences). This should strengthen the pupils' understanding of Christianity, without necessarily developing the *full range* of Christian attributes, especially those beliefs and actions that are more properly the objective of the *Church's* Christian education (such as churchgoing, sacramental practice and belief in the Trinity)" (Astley, J. in Francis & Astley, 2002, p. 158).

These claims may be permitted if the difference between Christian nurture and RE about Christianity is understood as a difference of degree rather than a difference of kind, when measured by their learning outcomes; and if we take into account the significant role of the Christian affections within the Faith and the role of empathy in understanding about religion (Astley, 1994b, 2012).

The language of thresholds relates to an aspect of Anglicanism stressed by Archbishop Robert Runcie: "[We] are not a Church of hard edges. God has worked to keep our borders open" (Cited in Carr, 1992, p. 28). This suggests that in our attempt to understand Anglican education, we should enlarge our perspective by exploring Anglicanism itself.

3.   The Church of England in Anglican Perspective

"Anglican" may refer either to the Church of England or to other Churches that form part of the "Anglican Communion", a group of independent, self-governing Churches derived from or related to it, which comprises some 80 million people in 165 countries (over 75% of Anglicans live in Africa). Although some of what is said here about Anglican RE and the Christian nurture of Anglican congregations may also apply to a number of these other Churches, most of it will not – especially in schooling, which varies dramatically around the globe.

However, debates over the variety and integrity of this wider grouping have repercussions for how the Church of England thinks about itself. Many speak of Anglicanism's "lived authority" as located within "a conversation" (Kay, 2008, p. 203), and as a "dispersed" rather than a "centralized" authority. The Anglican Communion is a fellowship of equals that acknowledges no one absolute authority; the Archbishop of Canterbury is not its Pope. In principle, this allows for more experiment and a greater sense of fallibility, and more emphasis on reception, participatory consensus and individual conviction than might otherwise be the case.

Such characteristics, however, are not always salient features of Anglicanism. Henry Chadwick has written of the surprise of Anglicans who discover that their self-portrait of a liberty-loving, comprehensive, tolerant and coherent faith and practice does not seem to accord with the picture that others have of it (Sykes & Booty, 1988, p. 95), possibly generated by their personal experience or honest empirical studies. There is

too often a radical mismatch between ideals and realities in ecclesiastical matters (and manners), and an arrogant disregard of difference.

I can only offer here my own Anglican perspective; there are many others. Does this mean that there is no specific "Anglican Christian religious education"? A useful distinction may be made between what is "distinctive", in the sense of unique to a topic, and what is merely "characteristic" of it. Anglicanism as a whole may have a distinctive content yet little that is unique about it, except perhaps the combination of all these characteristics in one entity (See Sykes, 1978, p. 68 and in Bunting, 1996, pp. 22–23; Avis, 1988, pp. 414–415; cf. Astley, 1994a, pp. 17, 112, 141–142).

4. Authority

In Anglicanism the sources of authority are viewed as "dispersed […] through many channels" and "mutually restricting, mutually illuminating", which is beneficial in creating a climate of spiritual liberty when allied to freedom from the fear of ecclesiastical censure (Avis, 1988, p. 422). The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 designated four *loci of authority* in Anglicanism:

1. Old and New Testaments as the ultimate standard of faith, containing all things necessary for salvation;

2. Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as a sufficient statement of the Christian Faith;

3. Dominical sacraments of baptism and eucharist;

4. Ministry including episcopacy adapted to local needs, with a claim to a historical succession from the Apostles (although not all regard episcopacy as being of the essence of the Church).

Two other elements were added in the Lambeth Statement of 1948:

"the witness of the saints, and the consensus fidelium, which is the continuing experience of the Holy Spirit through his faithful people in the Church". This has been understood as underscoring the claim that all God's faithful people, including the laity (and the ordinary, non-scholarly clergy), serve as the judge of whether a proposal is "of God" (Sykes, 1978, ch. 7; 1995, pp. 159, 167–169, 220–223).

The Church of England historically recognized, and was bound together by, a "threefold cord" of *formularies*.

1. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer (BCP), for a long time the only permitted form of public worship, operated historically as a confessional document. (It has now been supplemented and largely replaced by Common Worship (2000), which incorporates some BCP rites.)

2. The 39 Articles of 1563, which express a mix of Catholic, anti-Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist positions (and now require no more than a token assent from clergy).

3. The 1662 Ordinal (now revised in Common Worship) providing the theology of ordination.

A three-fold *Anglican appeal* takes us beyond Scripture and tradition to embrace *reason* also, and "implies choice and freedom" (McAdoo, 1991, p. 11). For Richard Hooker, reason is the instrument we must use to engage the other sources and fill gaps where Scripture is silent. It is said to contribute to "a latitude in faith" that allows for religious differences between people; and many follow Jeremy Taylor in deploring any excessive definition. Yet reason is also said to serve as "a counterpoise to unthinking biblicism or unthinking conformity to historical precedent" (McGrade in Sykes & Booty, 1988, p. 106).

Since the Enlightenment and the rise of biblical criticism, freedom of intellectual enquiry has been seen by most as a positive part of English Anglicanism. Anglican scholarship in the twentieth century was particularly strong in a philosophical approach to theology and religion (as well as in historical theology, Patristics and New Testament scholarship). Trained largely in the analytic tradition, Anglican philosophers explored both the central doctrines of, and preambles to the Faith (Hebblethwaite, 1997). This standpoint was naturally suspicious of any extreme indoctrinatory approach to formation, and sympathetic to a critical Christian education (Mitchell, 1994, ch. 7 and *passim*; cf. Astley, 1994a, ch. 5).

There are thus many voices of authority in Anglicanism. Naturally, there will be many occasions of conflict and discord between these voices (White, 1996, pp. 75–76). And the responsibility is placed on individuals to work out their own salvation (Neill, 1965, p. 424).

5. Comprehensiveness

The claim to Anglican comprehensiveness is a feature of this Church's inclusiveness. In embracing a variety of "Churchmanship" – theological and ecclesiastical positions, and preferences in liturgical and non-liturgical worship – Anglicanism brings together three approaches to Christianity in an uneasy synthesis: Catholic, Protestant, and Liberal or Broad (Molland, 1959, pp. 144–147; Wolf, 1982, pp. 139–157). These terms are also used for the parties or factions constituted by distinctive types of clergy and congregations. The existence of theological colleges, associations and publications that are exclusive of Evangelical, Catholic or Liberal traditions has exacerbated these distinctions and narrowed the perspective of many Anglicans (Randall, 2005; Francis, Robbins & Astley, 2005, ch. 7).

1. *The Catholic Element* is especially expressed in sacramental life and episcopal Church order, and is represented by a spectrum of degrees of "High Church" expression. It was reasserted by the nineteenth-century "Tractarians" whose more radical descendants, styled "Anglo-Catholics", tended to adopt Roman Catholic ceremonies, vestments, furnishings and even orders of service. A major clerical movement in the 1920s and 30s, they are now much diminished in influence, although they succeeded in establishing the eucharist as the main Sunday service in most Anglican churches (Pickering, 2008, ch. 11 and postscript).

2. *The Protestant Element* is usually designated *Evangelical*, or in its more establishment and less zealous expression, "Low Church". The focus here is on Scripture and preaching, substitutionary atonement, justification and conversion. Those who embrace this element have been in the ascendancy over recent years, particularly where their worship is more exuberant and non-liturgical, though some still appreciate the biblical content of the BCP and its

successor liturgies. Some recent movements within Evangelicalism have been accused of being only loosely attached to the Church of England, or even anti-thetical to its ethos (Furlong, 2006, ch. 23; Billings, 2013, ch. 4).

3. The *Liberal Element* suggests an appeal to reason or experience, tolerance of diversity and a high view of "sound learning". Some advocates prefer to speak of "liberality", as a reconciling emphasis that holds together complementary principles and leads to moderation, caution and a recognition of the limits of speculation. *Broad Church* tradition expresses this in its claim to hold together the best of the other elements of Anglicanism, by espousing a "middle-of-the-road" or "central" position. Openness to criticism and new knowledge, and a readiness to live with intellectual tension are sure signs of a liberal Anglican-ism (Habgood, 1991). "Liberal" is an adjective that has now been adopted by some Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals (though many prefer "open")[5] to dis-tinguish themselves from their more conservative fellows; but more compre-hensive Liberalism has lost the dominance it enjoyed in the 1960s and 70s.

Anglicanism sees itself as a *via media,* keeping the mean between two extremes. The seventeenth-century bishop, Simon Patrick, declared the Church of England to be "a virtuous mediocrity between the meretricious gaudiness of the Church of Rome and the squalid sluttery of fanatical conventicles". John Henry Newman expressed this slightly less contentiously in his own time, arguing that true Anglicanism "with equal discrimination … takes the middle ground between Roman teaching and mere Protestantism" (Newman, 1990 [1836], p. 288). The middle of the road, however, is a dangerous place to travel; as the top of a fence is an uncomfortable place to sit. Comprehensiveness is often seen as harbouring Anglican "flabbiness" (Pickering, 1988, p. 373).

In its official documents, in most schools and in programmes of Christian formation within Church congregations and parishes – especially at diocesan level – a broad or central position is assumed; and in places the influence of liberal theology (plus rather tame versions of liberationist theologies) and a liberal approach to education are readily identified. But the Churchmanship of Catholic or Evangelical clergy influ-ences the worship and overt teaching in their congregations, and sometimes the ethos, worship, teaching and approaches to other faiths in the parish's VA school as well – although this will largely depend on its head teacher.

6. The Spirit of Anglicanism?

Many writers seem compelled to fall back on claims about a nebulous "spirit of Angli-canism", Anglican "attitude and atmosphere" or "distinctive method, ethos or praxis", or Anglican "temperament" (McAdoo, 1965; Neill, 1965, ch. 15; Wolf, 1982, vi; Avis, 1988, pp. 410–411; Westerhoff, 1998; Avis, 2007, pp. 24, 28–32). These are some of the components they identify.

1. Compromise and comprehensiveness; moderate, dialectical (in the sense of accepting tensions between different points of view), inclusive – "the spirit of liberality, of comprehensiveness, of reasonableness and of restraint" (Wolf, 1982, p. 186).

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[5]   "Charismatic" may also be applied to some Catholics and Evangelicals, or – more rarely – Liberals.

2. Ambiguous, intuitive, aesthetic, practical, pastoral, historical, spiritual, liturgical, political; *not* speculative, intellectual, theoretical, doctrinal or systematic – "it is in corporate worship that Anglicans find the common ground for their confession of faith" (Weil, 1988, p. 63). Their theology has no huge intellectual pretensions, and Anglicanism is largely "a pastoral and practical creed" (Avis, 2007, p. 155; cf. Pickering, 2008, p. 77).

3. Focused on lay concerns and common tasks, rather than exclusively clerical or episcopal (Wand, 1961, p. 242). The Prayer Book was a book for the laity as much as the clergy, and has been described as aiming not at mystical heights, enthusiasm or perfectionism, but something more ordinary and conforming: a "godly, righteous and sober life" for "men and women soiled by involvement in the ambiguities and compromises of the world" (Wakefield, 1990, pp. 261–263).

4. Pragmatic, empirical, adaptable – including "a pragmatic adjustment to the facts of history" (Avis, 1988, p. 411). The Church of England is "rooted in the everyday world" (Paxman, 1999, p. 97), always returning to "the ordinary experience of ordinary people" and placing great value on common sense (Wolf, 1982, p. 186). Anglicans justify their beliefs "by the pragmatic test of experience, namely 'Does it work?'" (More, 1957, xxxiii).

5. Tolerant and open-minded (about beliefs but not behaviour, as was well expressed in the Elizabethan stress on outward expression rather than inner conviction); although this tolerance developed only slowly.

A Church that may be characterized in this fashion is likely to produce a theology of education that shares rather similar attitudes, perspectives, and general tone of voice and style.

Some commentators have acknowledged the significance of a particularly English Christian literature, found within the BCP and King James Bible, as key to any sense of continuity in the Church of England: their language even amounting to the "real essence" of English religion (Scruton, 2012, p. 96; cf. Bragg, 2011). At least until the liturgical reforms of the second half of the twentieth century, the influence of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's Prayer Books through their 1662 successor was immense. That the English Reformation ensured that Scripture was to be read and heard in the language of the English, and in the context of the emphases and cadences of English prayer and worship, came to define the nature of English Christianity deeply. But this aspect of Anglicanism is much less easy to identify today in the Church of England generally, and especially in its education.

It is routine to say that Anglicans have "no distinctive doctrines", even no faith of their own (Neill, 1965, pp. 15, 418; Weil, 1988, p. 63). Stephen Sykes argued, however, that it has "a specific content" that should be expressed systematically; it asserts its authority to determine what constitutes the apostolic faith and expresses its standpoint through its control of authorized forms of worship (Sykes, 1978, p. 68; 1995, xii, pp. 217–218). But Anglicanism has rather resisted theological systematizing, and its theology is often developed in collections of essays and reports of committees rather than in individual systematic theologies.

Nevertheless, it does have certain *theological priorities* such as ecclesiology (Sykes & Booty, 1988, part V; Avis, 2007) and, especially, the incarnation – the Anglican Church has been described as "the Church of Christmas" (Molland, 1959, p. 148; Wolf, 1982, p. 186). Anglican theology normally evidences and embraces an internal

variety, often an ecumenical instinct, and very frequently a liberal approach.[6] It is also said to focus more on practice, devotion and loyalty than it does on belief; for Anglicans, *lex orandi, lex credendi* "represents a fundamental principle" (Molland, 1959, p. 158).

Roger Scruton interprets the Anglican embrace of collaboration, and its shunning both of doctrinal extremes and of too close an interrogation of faith, as responses to its experience of internal bloody conflict: "when kindness is opposed by conviction, it is conviction that must go". The English, he writes, most readily received messages that:

> were not shouted … like the harangues of the Ranters and the Puritans, but filtered through the web of spires, pinnacles and finials …, through the hymns, carols and oratorios …, through that fragment of the Prayer Book that they recited each day, promising to "forgive those who trespass against us", and never sure what the word "trespass" really means (Scruton, 2012, pp. 107–109)*.

It is not surprising that this is the Church "to which those with but a nebulous Christian faith have been assumed to belong" (Wakefield, 1990, pp. 258–259). Its educational endeavours are often imbued with this same spirit.

7. National Church, Local Church

Until the 1830s, England was a "Church-State". It was only possible fully to contract out of the Church of England in the nineteenth century (Orme, N. in Chadwick, 2010, pp. 246–247). For Hooker, the ideal was that there be not "any man a member of the commonwealth which is not also of the Church of England".

The Church of England – but no other Anglican Church – is *established*, in the technical sense of having a well-defined relationship with the State. Historically this has meant a great deal, for its Reformation model was certainly "Erastian"; it now means much less. But the monarch is still Supreme Governor of the Church of England and must be a confirmed member. Although crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury in a service that asserts monarchy's "sacred character and divine ordination" (Bradley, 2012, pp. 258–259), both she and Parliament now have a minimal role in the Church's affairs. It is significant that the Church of England has received no State financial support since 1868.

Defenders of establishment claim that it means that the Church is a part of the nation, with "a broad sense of responsibility to all and sundry" that transcends any narrow denominationalism (Habgood, 1983, pp. 97–98). This has fed a general expectation in the English that it is "our Church", there "for us" – whether or not they ever attend it.

The Church of England is essentially a *parochial*, not a gathered or congregational Church. The parish is a real territorial area; originally it was a civil as well as an ecclesiastical unit. All who live there may call on its occasional offices and pastoral care. This has been called "the 'earthed' establishment" (Carr, 1992, p. 8). "If […] the Church were to abandon this model […] for that of a gathered Church, it would cease to be the Church of the English people." (Billings, 2013, p. 121; cf. pp. 101, 108–109)

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[6]   Cf. Hardy, 2001, p. 82, and the reports of the various Doctrine Commissions published in 1938, 1976, 1987, 1991 and 1995. The 1976 publication notoriously comprised a joint report of 39 pages followed by 113 more pages made up of individual essays.

In arguing that the Church of England is "the Church of *somewhere*", Scruton identifies it as "the face of a country, a jurisdiction and a culture rooted in a place" (Billings, 2013, p. 121; cf. pp. 101, 108–109). Are there some things about England and the English that in part explain aspects of its Church and perhaps its theology of education, even though they will not be unique to this nation only characteristic of it? I would pick out the following from Scruton's list (Scruton, 2012, pp. 6, 39–40, 77–78, 86–89, 93, 128–129, 185, 194–195): seriousness (which others distinguish from over-earnestness,[7] and which is preferred to any doctrinal concern); routine (rather than the extremism of enthusiasm); sceptical, hesitant, or muddled; moderate and compromising; "spiritually second-rate", ordinary sinners living an ordinary life – "fleetingly spiritual" folk, in need of sanctification.

In the light of such an analysis, one would not expect this Church to be too sharp-edged, explicitly and unambiguously Christian, or doctrinally focused in its educational mission. Acknowledging the significance of the following claim may be more helpful in understanding the Church of England's educational style.

There is a case for saying that the invention of the Church of England *was* the invention of England. However, this is not to say that the English are a churchy people … The Church of England is the maddening institution it is because that is how the English like their religion – pragmatic, comfortable and unobtrusive (Paxman, 1999, pp. 97–98).

8.   Further Reflections

Anglicanism claims to be a faith and practice that is *open, inclusive and tolerant of* difference. The Church of England encourages inclusivity in the admission policies of its VA schools (Church Schools Review Group, 2001, pp. 17, 78), and inclusivity is inevitable in its VC schools. The comprehensiveness of Anglicanism and its parish system also demand an inclusivity of pastoral concern (Avis, 2000, p. 26); with the service and prophetic tasks of the Church school best realized in a vocation to serve the poor (Church of England Board of Education / National Society, 2011, §28; Astley, 2013; Terry, 2013, p. 122, cf. p. 126).

This national Church exists as a service "free at the point of need" (Rooms, 2011, pp. 81–82). But because is not paid for through taxation, it is also a *gift*: a form of grace that goes beyond both reciprocal altruism and any mandatory redistribution of wealth. Its schools share something of this spiritual and symbolic strength.[8]

Such claims inevitably relate to wider notions of *belonging* than those that are measured only by regular Sunday Church attendance (Walker, 2006; Billings, 2013, pp. 1–33). What is meant by "belonging to the Church of England" is central to debates about who is entitled to attend its schools, and to govern, lead and teach in them.

Inclusivity is a notion that may also be extended to a certain *open-endedness in belief*, which is sympathetic to and even encouraging of freedom of enquiry, critical thinking and intellectual dissent (Warner, 2013, pp. 350–353). The Church of England's most considered educational report commended openness as an educational virtue, and advocated an "exploratory RE" in which pupils are helped "to explore and appreciate", "rather than to accept", Christianity – not only in non-Church schools but

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[7]   Cf. Fox, 2014, *passim*. Fox explains English behaviour, attitudes and values as responses to our anxiety over social interaction. On this view, English courtesy, moderation, modesty, pragmatism and support for fair play look rather less virtuous.

[8]   Although the schools' recurrent costs are met out of general taxation.

even in Anglican VA schools (Commission on Religious Education in Schools, 1970, pp. 58–59, 80, 103, 265). Subsequent publications referred to the Church school as a safe place for encountering and exploring religious questions (Waddington, 1984, p. 71; cf. Brown 2013). The idea of a meeting place remains a potent model for the Church school (Worsley, 2013, pp. 265–267).

A focus on intellectual liberty leads to wider notions of *freedom*. "What I like best about the Church of England," many say, "is that it leaves you alone" (Furlong, 2006, p. 11). And that is true, to a large extent, even for the clergy. The Church's structure and style is essentially non-controlling, to the chagrin of some of its bishops. Nor can the congregations hire or fire their clergy. Yet the historical lay office of Churchwardens, its Parochial Church Councils, and lay representation in the synodical structure of governance ensure that the Church of England is at least partly democratic. Does this translate into an educational ethos? It perhaps encourages clergy and laity to be independently minded people who don't like being told what to think and do, or what and how to teach.

The *lay-ness* of this episcopal Church is striking, and means that a lay-led and staffed school may be viewed as a natural part or extension of it. The Church school is "a community of the laity *working*", even "working at its own relationship to God's will". This involves recognizing the unique vocation and leadership role of lay teachers (who teach, of course, lay children; and are governed by a largely lay Governing Body) as part of the Church's ministry (Jones, 2005; cf. Church Schools Review Group, 2001, pp. 49–50, 91–92). Further, the Church and its "threshold" schools are part of Christianity's interface with the wider, secular society. Lay people cannot but live in a secular world; they and the schools they run are at the front line of the Church's dialogue, mission and ministry with and to the world, operating as its "ordinary theologians" (Astley, 2002c, pp. 147–62; cf. Astley & Francis, 2013). The existence of VC schools adds strength and a further dimension to these assertions.

Values are key to the role of the Church of England and its schools, and Christian values are major components of Christian spirituality. The Church of England's National Society intended that character in its schools "would be formed by exposure to and participation in the teaching and worship of the Established Church". The Dearing Report commended "promoting Christian values" in Anglican Church schools, especially love for God and neighbour; but not specifically Anglican values.[9] Christian values should be part of the "distinctively Christian ethos" of Church schools. The distinctiveness of Church schools is said to be rooted in the values exemplified by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and the experience of community that is based on them (Pritchard, 2012, p. 10).

These values are also expected to be supported by the experience of school *worship* and participation in Christian festivals. The expressive and evocative power of worship and celebration is a potent aspect of implicit Christian enculturation-learning in Church congregations and school assemblies. As John Hull contends, "the greatness of God is nurtured and affirmed in worship […] Education into worship must always be a central part of Church schools" (In Francis & Lankshear, 1993, xii; cf. Astley, 1992). One relevant concern here may be the loss within the Church of England of a truly common liturgy, as was provided for over 350 years by one authorized prayer

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[9]　Church Schools Review Group, 2001, pp. 15, 19. Lists of Church school values also include reverence, wisdom, thankfulness, respect, service, self-sacrifice, trust, justice, hope, humility, forgiveness, self-worth and endurance (cf. www.christianvalues4schools.co.uk; Church of England Education Division and National Society, 2010, p. 12).

book. Things changed when Anglo-Catholics began to use Roman Catholic liturgies, and the Church of England undertook liturgical reform partly to accommodate them. (The Lambeth Conference of 1920 had already accepted that other Churches in the Communion would devise their own liturgies.) Paul Bradshaw argues that, though tightly regulated in principle, reform led to wider experimentation and a loss of discipline in liturgical matters. The current Common Worship volume includes very many alternatives and options, including a new, non-eucharistic "Service of the Word" that has very little mandatory content and was devised to reflect the practice of many Evangelicals. Bradshaw claims that the present situation breaks the traditional "liturgical bond" that bound together worshippers of different theological persuasions (Bradshaw, 2013, pp. 130 –131). Others express concern that the Church of England has "too rapidly and too casually surrendered" its ideal of a common liturgy that connected with "profound resonances within society", and reflected "a solidarity with all and not just with the overtly pious" (Carr, 1992, pp. 16, 34). If this is the case, this loss may eventually further erode the spiritual link between the Church and English society, on which so many aspects of Anglican theology of education seem to be based, including assumptions and arguments about school worship and the values learned through it.

Like Anglicanism in general, Anglican education has been largely *unreflective about its theology and practice.* Anglican dialogical methodology, which relies on the "wisdom of shared discernment grounded in common prayer and practice", needs to become stronger and more specific (Singer, 2005, pp. 301, 303). But in view of the Church of England's reluctance to analyse, define or sharpen its thinking, will it rise to this challenge, particularly in its educational ministry?

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Theoretical Perspectives on Religion. Functionalists believe religion meets many important needs for people, including group cohesion and companionship. (Photo courtesy of James Emery/flickr). This power dynamic has been used by Christian institutions for centuries to keep poor people poor and to teach them that they shouldn't be concerned with what they lack because their "true" reward (from a religious perspective) will come after death. Conflict theorists also point out that those in power in a religion are often able to dictate practices, rituals, and beliefs through their interpretation of religious texts or via proclaimed direct communication from the divine. The feminist perspective is considered to be another conflict theory view that focuses specifically on gender inequalit In Religion and Nationhood: Insider and Outsider Perspectives on Religious Education in England. Gates, Brian Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. 327-348. Astley, Jeff (2014). Being Faithful: Trusting Beyond. In Teaching Virtue: The Contribution of Religious Education. Felderhof, Marius & Thompson, Penny. London: Bloomsbury. In Anglican Church School Education: Moving Beyond the First Two Hundred Years. Worsley, Howard J. Bloomsbury Academic. 101-118. Christian Teaching, Christian Learning and Christian Love: Education as Christian Ministry and Spiritual Discipline. In The Idea of a Christian University: Essays on Theology and Higher Education. Astley, Jeff , Francis, Leslie J., Sullivan, John & Walker, Andrew. Milton Keynes: Paternoster.