

# Finance, centralism and the quota

**David Holloway**

## Introduction

This is crisis time in the Church of England. The Church Commissioners have lost £800,000,000 - or so we are told.

The real problem, however, is not the financial management at Millbank, the home of the Commissioners.

The problem is on the one hand the centralism that has been growing since the 1970's and is now out of hand. Thus the dioceses (the power bases of centralism) rather than the Commissioners are the guilty parties.

On the other hand the problem is the doctrinal pluralism and unbridled comprehensiveness that has evolved since the 1970's - J.C. Ryle's "a kind of Noah's Ark" - where nothing is certain and any opinion is valid. This means that agreement regarding goals in terms of mission and ministry is progressively more unattainable; solutions and proposals, therefore, for getting out of the crisis cannot command general assent; and so nothing can be done by way of remedy at or from the centre.

The centre is able just to manage the decline of the church. The only hope is if the parishes of our land have the courage and the will to take back responsibility for the Church of England, as is being advocated by the Reform group. Then the parishes must recover and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and those evangelical Augustinian three "R"s - "ruin, redemption and regeneration". Translated they mean, "we and the whole world defy God and so are all in a mess; Jesus Christ and his cross is the only answer to that mess; and we need the Holy Spirit for new life."

The issue of the "parish quota" is currently centre stage on the agenda of the Church of England. The issue is most acute for churches that are "net-givers". How should they respond to ever larger quota demands?

Three factors have brought this to the forefront of current discussion.

## The factors

First, there is this fact of the Church Commissioners' inability to maintain past levels of subsidy for the stipends of the parochial clergy. This means that parishes are being asked to pay an ever increasing amount towards clergy costs; and many mainline-evangelical parishes are now asked to pay far more than their clergy costs. They are, in fact, being asked to be significant net-givers to their Diocesan budgets.

Secondly, there is also this fact of increasing theological liberalism at the centre of the Church of England and, in some quarters, near apostasy. Many mainline-evangelical churches are no longer willing to pay for a combination of ineffectiveness and doubt at the centre. As many parishes in the dioceses are still subsidized, and as the central "bureaucracy" itself always needs subsidizing, many mainline-evangelical parishes can thus be asked to pay for work and personnel they believe to be profoundly wrong and in error. Often this will be at the expense of productive work and personnel in their own parishes, in other evangelical parishes, or in evangelical parachurch or missionary organizations.

Thirdly, there is the fact that some of the mainline-evangelical churches that are net-givers to their diocesan budgets, like our own church in Newcastle, Jesmond Parish Church, have already "capped", or are proposing to "cap", their quotas. That is to say they inform, or will inform, their deaneries or dioceses of the ceiling for their central payments. This is a principled position of "thus far and no further". It is based on not being any cost to the diocesan budget by paying back all that is received and then paying a reasonable amount for central costs (*say 15 per cent, but no more*). It is a position that not only pays its way but thus releases £5/6/7,000 per clergyman of the Church Commissioners' block grant and/or "historic resources" for poorer parishes and the centre.

Principled "quota-capping" says, in effect, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive"; but the decision as to *where such giving is directed* must be that of the giver. It also says that "centralism" has to be reversed in the Church of England; and that central budgets have to be set in the light of promised income from the parishes and not at the behest of biased diocesan committees that know little of the practice of church growth, and

are serviced by non-parochial diocesan staff with a vested interest in keeping the central machinery going.

## **Setting the scene**

At the end of 1992 I was asked to convene a meeting in London of church leaders from evangelical churches that are net-givers or nearly net-givers to their diocesan budgets. That meant in practice people who paid in 1993 a quota *in all* of over £15,000 for an incumbent (with another £13,000 added for any curates or lay workers paid centrally).

I had been asked to convene this meeting in the light of my experience at Jesmond Parish Church; but also because of my experience of central finance in the Church of England. Not only have I been a long-term member of the Newcastle Diocesan Board of Finance; also I was appointed (1986-1990) as one of the three General Synod Standing Committee members to the Synod's Joint Budget Committee.

On that committee I was involved in assessing and approving global annual budgets for all central boards and councils, including the Synod itself; also I was required to have a specific involvement at one time or another with the budgets of the Board of Education, the Board for Social Responsibility, ACCM (now ABM) and the General Synod's own budget (as well as with the budgets of some smaller councils). I have chaired the central Diocesan consultations over the General Synod's quota to the dioceses; but unlike many of the clergy with wide central and synodical experience I have also been privileged to be in a parish for the last two decades that, under God, has seen a measure of growth numerically and financially.

However, I also have had experience of smaller churches. Although having had only one incumbency, I have nevertheless had a wide experience of rural and urban Anglican life. Over my 15 years' membership of the General Synod I was required to be a non-voting member at some time or other of many if not most of the deaneries in our diocese.

## **December 1992**

Believing therefore that I had something I could share, I agreed to convene this meeting. But there would have to be the following four assumptions.

First, that we recognize that financial problems are only presenting problems. Wider issues relating to the future of the Church would need to be explored at the same time.

Secondly, that theology should determine practice; and the goal must be the preservation and the proclamation of the gospel in our land - this also being the surest way to seeing the growth of congregations and, as a consequence, financial viability in the parishes.

Thirdly, that we recognize that "to whom much is given from those much will be required" and so those churches God has blessed with strong congregations must be responsible in giving - but responsible to God rather than to the diocesan secretary. And they must be responsible also in taking a lead in financial matters nationally and be prepared to reap the consequences (which from personal experience can be quite unpleasant).

Fourthly, that we recognize that there are temptations that accompany financial strength. But it is also necessary to recognize that ethically the fact of money or its financial power is neutral. The moral questions are these: "how did you get that power and how are you going to exercise it?" Perhaps a significant temptation is the "fear of man"; for instance, to "cap" a quota as a matter of principle requires courage.

The meeting took place. 30 church leaders were present, most from the biggest churches in the country. Some of these churches were individually subsidizing the Church of England by tens of thousands of pounds. And they were being asked to pay for people and programmes they profoundly disagreed with and sometimes they saw as unproductive. There was a unanimous feeling that things had got to change. People spoke of how they were either capping their quotas or preparing to cap their quotas. Many could not be present at the meeting but would have wished to have been. Some who could and should have been, were not invited as numbers were limited to enable free and frank discussion. I also wanted a representative spread from around the country. Most were clergy. Of the laity present one was a Church Commissioner.

The meeting agreed that what was now needed was a raising of consciousness; then a networking of churches with similar concerns; then a booklet summarizing and expressing the sentiments of the meeting; and then a second national open meeting to which many could come including PCC treasurers - with the agenda set by the booklet. I promised to write the booklet.

Belatedly, and so with apologies for its lateness (especially to those not at the meeting but who wanted information), here are a few thoughts on finance in the Church of England. Perhaps I should now think about organizing the national conference!

## **Where are we?**

One set of statistics tells us that since 1975 the Church of England has lost half a million people, a drop of 21 per cent. Another set shows a 9 per cent drop between 1976 and 1991.

What is certain is that the latest official statistics do *not* show an upturn in the one critical area for growth, namely "Usual Sunday Attendances". The latest figures show 1,137,000 per Sunday. The previous year it was 5,000 higher.

The decline in the Church of England is not dramatic. Indeed the slowness of its decline obscures the reality and induces a false sense of complacency. It also allows its "central managers" to "manage" the decline relatively painlessly. They can appear to be "restructuring for mission" under such slogans as "plugging into the Decade of Evangelism" or "exploring exciting new ways forward". In reality the goal (conscious or subconscious) is to make ever declining numbers (of people and money) operate in a shrinking institution but without radically shrinking the central bureaucracy or reducing the numbers of central managers. The only real options suggested by most managers are for the parishes to pay the centre more and more or for parishes to lose clergy.

But the problems are not only structural. They are also theological. The Bishop of Durham and his episcopal sympathizers who deny the virginal conception of Jesus Christ and doubt his empty tomb (the heart of the Christian faith) are, of course, mild in comparison with some in the

Church of England. Clergy of the "Sea of Faith" network now deny the very existence of God. They do so openly on BBC TV, yet still have a cure of souls. One prominent member, when recently questioned, said he did not believe that the word "God" had "a referent" (i.e. was referring to anything really there). He is, thus, a genuine atheist, yet he is still an Anglican clergyman.

Then there are moral problems. *The Independent newspaper* just prior to the London meeting on finance in December 1992 had revealed that the former Secretary-General of the General Synod (with a salary in excess of £50,000 paid out of parish quotas), and now ordained, was living (and travelling the world) with a gay man (a synod member) who was on drugs and who had another man friend just found dead in mysterious circumstances.

What has been aptly described by a highly placed "insider" as "the homosexual mafia" in the central affairs of the Church of England is not a fiction. Like the decline, it works its evil effects quietly and unobtrusively for the most part. But with the entire House of Bishops now seeming to validate homosexual intercourse amongst the laity - and with not one dissident voice - what hope is there of Reform at the centre?

## **Quota Capping**

These practical, theological and moral issues were part of the story of "quota capping" at Jesmond Parish Church.

But where did the idea of "quota capping" come from?

It all started with a conversation on 12 September 1979 with the then Rector of All Souls' Church, Langham Place, London, Michael Baughen. I had not thought of "quota capping" until that conversation. But Michael Baughen reported that in London their quota was at the time 83 per cent of income! All Souls', he said, was simply refusing to pay, as were one or two other big London churches. This, of course, was not only right but the only option. A church like All Souls', with all its commitments, even if it had wanted to, could simply not have handed over 83 per cent of its income to the London diocesan central bureaucracy for redistribution. But these matters were subsequently taken up with the Diocese. There was then a

tacit agreement that churches like All Souls' could make deductions for matters not common to ordinary parish churches.

Michael Baughen had acted responsibly and sensibly. Now, of course, he is the Bishop of Chester - a poacher, indeed, turned head game-keeper with a vengeance. As now part of the centre he vigorously opposes "quota capping".

Not long after that conversation, at Jesmond Parish Church we were asked to increase our quota payments threefold; in one leap we were asked to give thousands of pounds extra. At the same time, however, there were headlines in the regional evening daily, *The Evening Chronicle*, "Vicar Blesses Lesbian Couple". That was our next door neighbour.

We had no moral or ecclesiological problems. We simply said, "not with our money you don't". Also about that time the Bishop had just appointed as his nominee to the diocesan Board for Social Responsibility an active homosexual, who was not only active but with a missionary zeal for the gay cause.

Since then my conviction over the "rightness" of quota-capping has been confirmed by other experiences - not least some in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA). Our situation in the UK is at present modest compared to that in the US. But unless we take action we will soon be exactly where they are now.

Richard Neuhaus in *Guaranteeing the Good Life: Medicine and the Return of Eugenics* (published in 1990) refers to AID (Artificial Insemination by Donor):

A recently publicized example was the case of an Episcopalian priest who wanted a baby but definitely not a husband. She invited three friends over (two of them priests) to masturbate for her, and she then impregnated herself with the mixture of their sperm. The purpose of having several sperm sources, she explained on national television, was to avoid knowing who the father was, and thus to make sure that the child would have an intimate bond to no one but herself. The child is now three years old, and the mother has declared that she intends to have another baby by the same procedure. The *Washington Post* described her as the first artificially

inseminated priest in history, which is probably true. Her bishop, Paul Moore of New York, appeared with her on television and gave his unqualified blessing to this undertaking, citing the need for the church to come to terms with the modern world.

Soon after reading this book I was asked to give advice to the largest Evangelical Episcopal church in New York. I was shown their accounts and discovered that together with one or two other large churches in the city through their huge central payments to the diocese of New York they were funding the diocesan centre, and so Paul Moore himself. I had to challenge them over the rightness of taking significant sums of money given by Christian people for the gospel and offering it over to subsidize what the donors would never choose to support.

## **Wycliffe**

It was a unique coincidence that the lectionary for the day of our London meeting included words from Psalm 106. They spoke of how the Children of Israel "forgot the God who saved them" and "yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor" and how Moses "stood in the breach" and "Phineas stood up and intervened".

Without doubt the condition of the Anglican Church is calling for contemporary men and women to be like Moses and Phineas and to "stand in the breach." That "standing" is bound to include a stand over "money".

There is nothing new in the people of God drifting into near apostasy and then needing people to stand up against the tide. What is interesting is that in the past this has required financial action.

Wycliffe, the greatest of our own pre-Reformers, proposed as a key strategy of reform, the withholding of tithes. In his excellent treatise *On the Pastoral Office* he begins with the following words:

The office of a Christian, to which the faithful should diligently attend, ought to be twofold: to purge the Church Militant of false shoots not bedded in the highest Pastor, who is the vine of the entire Church: and to dispose its branches that they may better bear fruit for the blessing of the Church. One should mention in passing the four "sects" which are obviously harmful to the edification of the Church.

"The four sects" we are told are "bishops ("Caesarian clergy"), monks, canons and friars." He was at this point attacking unfaithful non-parochial clergy.

He was deeply opposed to unjust central exactions. His sole criterion in determining money matters was the Bible - not the whims, wishes or threats of the centre. So he writes:

the faithful infer that a curate ought not through censures or other temporal threats to give to his lord prelate tribute from the alms of the people subject to him, which cannot be established from the law of the Lord ... and this rule ought to be observed in order that false prelates might mitigate their transgression.

But Wycliffe was not only opposing the "centre". If the parochial clergy were unfaithful, he advocated the use of financial sanctions against them too:

From these considerations the faithful conclude that when a curate is notoriously negligent in his pastoral office, they as subjects should, yea, ought, to withdraw offerings and tithes from him and whatever might offer occasion for the fostering of such wickedness ... Such people sustaining a curate thus notoriously give alms imprudently against Christ. No one should do this: therefore people should not support such a curate with alms. For Christ commands, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in the clothing of sheep, yet inwardly are ravenous wolves!" How therefore does he beware of them, who gives them temporal assistance in order to perpetrate such a great crime so harmful to curate, prelate, and subjects? There is no doubt that it is contrary to the rules of charity. And when parishes lost their clergy people certainly should stop paying the centre:

tithing people ought to take away their offering and tithes from such appropriated churches while the pastoral offices are notoriously and habitually withdrawn from them.

But it was not only Wycliffe who saw the strategic gospel importance of money.

In Germany the Reformation in the sixteenth century took off not simply because Luther preached justification by faith, but because Luther attacked

indulgences. Money for the building of St Peter's Rome then started to dry up.

## Facts and figures

Our goal is not to damage but to liberate the Church of England. This needs to be said loud and clear.

Two facts need to be kept in mind.

First, only churches that are net-givers to their Diocesan budgets can morally cap their quotas. Churches that are still charges to diocesan budgets and need to be subsidized by other churches are in a different position.

The second fact is this: the Church of England is on a downward spiral; *but some individual churches are growing vigorously*. Many of these are the churches or parishes that are labelled "mainline-evangelical". Not all parishes, of course, with that label are growing; some such parishes are, sadly, moribund. But overall such parishes are growing significantly.

This was the finding of the MARC English Church Survey. Surely it is important that the declining church learns from the growing church. Sadly, often those involved in church planning and strategy have little experience of how churches grow; and sadly, there are bishops that have little practice or experience of growth.

What are some of the overall demographic facts that we all now have to face?

First, Britain in general and England in particular is not a pluralistic country. It is not a "multifaith" society. This is a myth of liberal elites in the media and in the church who seem to take delight in running down the national faith of our land. In 1989 MORI gave a figure of 88.5 per cent for those who consider themselves Christian; Gallup in 1989 gave a figure of 77 per cent; and MORI in 1991 gave a figure of 84.5 per cent. At the same time the number for all other faiths was between 1.76 per cent and 2.4 per cent. We are talking about tiny minorities - at the maximum 4 per cent, and then they would not be necessarily all regular "attenders". Of course while

70 - 80 per cent of the population are identified as "Christian", only about 10 per cent would be weekly church goers. However up to 40 per cent would go to church during the course of a year, not counting required attendances at weddings or funerals.

The latest British Social Attitudes survey gives 61 per cent as claiming to belong to a Christian denomination, with 3.1 per cent of other faiths. However, in a very recent comprehensive survey of the North East of England 86.7 per cent claimed they belonged to a Christian denomination, with 2.1 per cent of other faiths.

Significantly these figures for self-identification are decreasing at the younger end of the spectrum. This suggests that unless the church sees some Reformation of itself, the future is bleak. That self identification as "Christian" could be very fragile. Good-will could easily be lost and the task of evangelisation much harder.

Of those who go to church, according to the MARC English Church Survey, during the period 1979-89 there was an overall 8 per cent decline. There was a 9 per cent decline among Anglicans.

And, according to MARC, of those who go to church, 1.4 million are "catholic" (including both Anglican as well as Roman "catholics"); 1 million are evangelical; but only 0.8 million are "broad or liberal". Yet members of that "broad or liberal" group are disproportionately in positions of leadership and at the centre of the church where budgets are planned and spent.

## **Further figures**

However, of most interest for our present concerns were the figures MARC discovered relating to where people went to church.

It discovered that most people prefer to go to larger churches. Indeed 72 per cent of those who go to an Anglican Church on a Sunday are in 35 per cent of the churches. Thus only 28 per cent of those who go to an Anglican Church are in 65 per cent of the churches. In simple terms three quarters of all Anglicans are in one third of the churches while only one quarter of all Anglicans are in two thirds of the churches.

But the result appears to be that this one third of the churches, instead of being able to minister to more people and make Christ known to them, are often drained of resources by having to prop up the centre or these other two-thirds of the churches. Yet apart from a few parishes where the clergy are in "non-jobs" many of these smaller churches could just scrape by if it were not for heavy central costs.

The moral issue, therefore, is simple - should our focus be on people or keeping an institution ticking? Should we spend our money to help people "mature in Christ" or in funding bureaucracies?

This is a difficult time for the church to answer these questions. There is so much confusion both doctrinal and organisational. And where there is no confusion - for example, where there is still strong conviction, whether evangelical or catholic - there can be an unwillingness to face hard facts. Not all "non-jobs" are those created by liberal parishes where the congregation has been driven away. Some evangelical and catholic parishes have question marks over them. But, with that caveat, *serious studies have consistently shown that growing churches are more likely to be conservative in their theology.*

But we need to discuss these matters from a sociological perspective as well as from a theological perspective.

It was the Anglican divine Richard Hooker at the end of the 16th century who said that the church was both a "society and a society supernatural".

By that he meant that it was both human and divine; but in so far as it was human you could not ignore basic, commonsense principles of human group or social behaviour and sociology. There is thus a "management" side to the church's life. In that respect managing the church is like managing any other organisation.

But there is also a spiritual or theological side to the church's life. In that respect managing the church is so *unlike* managing other organisations. However, both sides of the equation have to be taken into account. And especially they have to be taken into account in the matter of finance.

**The church - "a society supernatural".**

Dr John Rodgers until recently was the Dean of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (Drs John Stott and Jim Packer were involved in its inception.) This is the only evangelical episcopal theological college in the United States. It is often opposed by liberal bishops whose desire to be "politically correct" exceeds their desire to be theologically correct. The staff at the college is second to none in terms of academic excellence.

John Rodgers is not, therefore, a "loose gun". He is a distinguished figure in the life of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA). But he is now saying that finance is taking on a new role in the life of the Church.

In the September/October 1991 newsletter for the Friends of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, *Seed and Harvest*, (Vol XII, number 7), John Rodgers wrote a piece entitled, "Not with our money, you don't." It followed on from ECUSA's General Convention. It needs to be quoted in full.

"Under the banner of inclusiveness, all opinions and convictions on doctrine, all manner of worship, and all sorts of behaviour are now appearing unrebuted. General Convention was unable to speak a clear biblical word on any controversial subject.

"For example, we said that we still affirm traditional biblical sexual ethics. But we also said that we don't agree about that doctrine in practice (that is, we include everyone, no matter how they behave and what they believe). Instead, we said we will study the matter for three more years (and how many more after that?).

"Further, we made it crystal clear that we would not ask bishops to stop ordaining people with an active homosexual lifestyle, even for a few months. Nor would we discipline bishops and standing committees who do such things.

"If we can't draw a line in so biblically plain a matter as sexual morality, one wonders if there is any line we can draw.

"I can't help but recall the comment of that great Evangelical bishop of the last century, J.C.Ryle.

"It was written in 1884, but it could have been written in 1991. Bishop Ryle said that the pressing danger to the Church of England was "the rise and progress of a spirit of indifference to all doctrines and opinion in religion."

"Many Anglicans seemed "utterly incapable of discerning any difference between faith and faith, creed and creed, tenet and tenet, opinion and opinion, thought and thought." They couldn't tell the difference between ideas no matter how diverse, contradictory, and mutually destructive they may be.

"For them, he continued, everything "is true, and nothing is false, everything is right and nothing is wrong, everything is good and nothing is bad, if it approaches us under the garb and name of religion. You are not allowed to ask, "what is God's truth?" but "what is liberal, generous and kind?""

"Though written over a century ago, that in a nutshell was the General Convention. We were not allowed to ask - were even rebuked by some for asking - "what is God's truth?" We were expected to ask only "what is pastoral and inclusive?"

"It's obvious that biblical Episcopalians must do something. There are many ways to protest and we've tried almost all of them. We have only one way left to get the attention of our deputies, bishops, and national staff: to withhold our financial support of programs and structures beyond the diocese.

"Doing so would encourage those in the Church's leadership who would lead the Church away from its biblical teachings. It would also allow us to redistribute those funds to other, more appropriate and needy recipients.

"Besides that, and more importantly, withholding funds and using them more wisely has become for many of us an issue of conscience. God has made us stewards of His bounty. How, in good conscience, can we give of

that bounty to what seems to us to be indifference to the Bible and blatant immorality?

"How, in good conscience, can we support a church bureaucracy that supports such an agenda? Or a multimillion dollar General Convention whose resolutions are now regarded as mere advice and which refuses to discipline those who reject the guidelines for the Church's teaching that it does affirm?

"To all of this we really have to say in love, painful as it is to say it: "Not with our money, you don't." I pray that this will get the attention of our church leaders and speak the biblical Word our Church and the world so desperately need to hear.

"I shudder to think of what the 71st Convention will approve, if we fail to speak up now."

Good money, money given sacrificially for the Kingdom of God, cannot be released for people and programmes that are acting against that Kingdom. There is a moral requirement not to let it be spent in ways that would damage the Gospel.

We cannot avoid addressing this question of money from the perspective of the Church as a "society supernatural" and the furthering of God's purposes.

### **The church - "a society"**

But as we have seen we must also view the question from the perspective of the Church as a "society" - as a society that is no different from other human organizations in terms of motivation and dynamics.

It is now a well established fact that a Church that operates a "subsidy" system, as we do in the Church of England through the quota, is foolish in the extreme - that is, if the goal is the growth and health of the Church.

Financial subsidies, indeed, are a good way to reduce the congregation's size. Lyle Schaller, after experience of hundreds of congregations, calls this a "technique for reducing church growth that has been tested and

proved in literally 100's of congregations from many different denominations." He is referring to long-term financial subsidies organised by the denomination, such as many churches experience through the "quota" in the Church of England. "Usually the short-term financial subsidy, if continued only for a period of one to four years, does not have a major negative impact on church growth." But long term subsidies generate conditions that do not assist church growth. Schaller identifies at least seven negative conditions. First, there is what can be termed a "dependency syndrome".

Second, there is "low morale" - the feeling that "we never quite made it". Third, and related to that, there is a low level of congregational self-esteem.

Fourth, there is "passivity" - an inactive mode of expressing commitment to Christ and membership of his body. Fifth, there is a sense of powerlessness and a lack of control over the fortunes and destiny of the congregation. This hinders creative planning for growth. Sixth, (one of the most serious problems of all) there is "a fostering of the belief that a larger subsidy and more money will solve all problems."

And seventh, there is the inevitable focusing on the congregation/diocese (or other church body) relationship rather than on the evangelistic outreach to the community outside. Anyone involved in denominational finance will know how absolutely true that is."

I wrote those words some years ago, and see no reason to revise them now.

## **Jesmond Parish Church**

At Jesmond Parish Church we have capped our quota every year since 1981. The difference between our capping and the request has often, until recently, not been too significant. That is partly because much of the work we are involved in is funded by the Jesmond Trust. That is a separate Trust to which congregational members contribute and that then funds all our non-normal parochial work. Thus all the staff except myself, an assistant minister (technically a curate) and our church cleaner are now employed by the Trust.

The Trust was set up initially to hold property; but it can also employ staff.

Because of this Trust our PCC income and thus the amount we are quotaed is smaller than might be. Nevertheless the quota still needs to be capped as in real terms it is now quite large, indeed the largest in the diocese.

Dioceses vary so considerably in their methods of quota apportionment. I will not spend time detailing our present formula in Newcastle or those of other Dioceses. However, our own quota formula operates like a tax on congregational size and giving; thus growth in numbers and growth in giving are penalised. They require ever increasing payments irrespective of the number of staff paid for via the quota.

It became clear at our Jesmond 1991 budget meeting, when we decided on our "cap" of the quota for 1992, that the amount we would be defaulting by would be quite significant. So I as chairman of our PCC wrote about our intentions more fully than I had done in previous years. Here is an extract from the letter to our Deanery Treasurer.

"... We are of the view that once a Parish covers all its own costs and so is not a charge to the Diocesan Budget, the Parish must directly determine where its giving goes, not Synods. Parishes must (and will, as the Church organisationally is a "voluntary non-profit" organisation) make judgments as to where their money will be most productive for the spread of the gospel. Synods, whether Deanery or Diocesan, must expect to be told how much they are likely to receive for central budgeting purposes once a Parish's stipends and housing costs have been met. If Synods want more, they should make out a case to merit extra giving. They have no right to expect their central costs automatically to be met by the Parishes. Indeed, these claims have to compete with other worthy causes that have a claim on a congregation's giving."

I then pointed out that we were committed to supporting, independently, other UPA parishes, missionary societies, parachurch organisations, our own missionaries, third world projects. We are certainly wanting to "give" - the question is, "to what cause?" It has been reckoned that one quarter of all mission giving in the entire diocese of Newcastle (of 132 benefices) comes from Jesmond Parish Church - *one out of 132 giving one quarter of*

*the whole*. Last year it might have been one third. Not unnaturally members of the congregation get very angry at charges of selfishness.

I then went on:

"The salaries of our own staff together with these expenditures, in the view of Jesmond Parish Church, take priority over our paying more for central Diocesan budgets which are already heavily subsidised and some of which we disagree with. Other Parishes are obviously free to decide such Diocesan claims as a priority for their own giving. But they cannot decide the priorities for Jesmond Parish Church.

"There are theological differences about the nature of the Church behind all of this. These affect attitudes to finance as decisions must be taken "locally". We have discussed these differences at the Diocesan Board of Finance. Some think that the local church is the Diocese. Others think the local church is the Parish. At Jesmond Parish Church we take the latter view. We argue that this is also the traditional Anglican position.

"Following the Thirty Nine Articles we affirm with Article 19 that "the visible Church of Christ is a *congregation* of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered" (in the BCP a "congregation" meant exactly what it means today - see the opening sentence of the 1662 Marriage Service; it does not mean the Diocese).

"This is the moderate reformed view; it seems to be the view of our own Anglican Reformers; it is the view that most [mainline] Evangelical Anglican Churches would hold to be correct. Nor is this "independency" or "congregationalism" - Evangelicals do not accept such charges when it is clear that they are more committed to the tradition of the Thirty Nine Articles than any other section of the Church of England. They believe in the "congregation" (with the Church of England being a federation of "congregations") and then in the Church of Christ "mystical" (which the BCP defines as "the blessed company of all faithful people").

"But we do not want to force this view on others. We simply believe that it is very foolish to construct a financial policy on an ecclesiology that a

number of key and loyal Anglicans do not subscribe to; for good or ill the Church of England is comprehensive."

## A principled position

We now are following a "principled" position as follows - we pay the actual cost of Jesmond Parish Church to the diocesan budget (without netting certain items) plus 15 per cent for central costs. This year (1994) it means we will pay £32,930. Actually the net cost to the diocesan budget is £24,169. Thus it can be said that Jesmond Parish Church is contributing £7,761 for central costs. Also, in lieu of each licensed parochial clergyman in Newcastle there is still about £6,000 of Church Commissioners money coming in. So it could be said that £12,000 (that we do not need to make use of for our two clergy) is coming as additional income into the diocesan budget for poorer churches. In reality it is probably used up by the centre.

Our parish administrator this year informed the deanery treasurer that "next year we intend to budget our central contribution under the same formula - actual cost of stipends received through the quota system, plus average parsonage cost, plus 15 per cent."

There are of course serious theological issues at stake. We do not treat the "diocese" as the fundamental unit of the Church of England, but the Parish.

The moderate reformed tradition that is "Anglicanism" at the time of the Elizabethan settlement had a catholic order (of Bishops, priests and deacons) but a protestant biblical faith. This created (and has always created) a certain tension. But Anglicanism has never been in doubt that matters of church order are secondary. Essential doctrine, as covered by the bible and the historic creeds, is primary.

So episcopacy, while being of the *bene esse* of the church (its well being), is not of the *esse* (its essence).

However, by the end of the last century things had changed. There is thus now in many quarters an assumption, accepted even by some non mainline-Evangelicals (mostly those at the centre), that the church is grounded in episcopacy. This is definitely not historic Anglicanism. Its plausibility has taken root, however, and so now it is difficult for many to

deny the essential nature of the episcopate. The bishop, it is claimed, is essential for the church to be the church.

That, of course, if it were not nonsense, would be idolatrous. But this view is now "religiously correct" for many in the Church of England. It then reinforces a centralism that sees the diocese and its central structures as the heart, hub and dynamo of all that goes on. Clearly, so it is alleged, the "diocese" is where the decisions must be taken; that is where every one must look for instruction and guidance; and no one must rock this boat.

Fortunately that is not the Church of England as by Law Established. The Church of England constitutionally is not defined as a church grounded on Bishops but as a church grounded on Holy Scripture. Since the passing of the *Worship and Doctrine Measure in 1974*, Canon A5 has been the "canon of canons" for the Church of England. Canon A5 says:

The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal.

Who could want for more?

## **Doctrinal confusion**

So why is the Church of England so doctrinally confused? The answer is simple. Since the mid-70's the clergy - the leaders of the church - have not had to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles. They now are free to believe almost what they like.

So you have the bizarre situation of an organization that is grounded and definite, with expressions of that definiteness in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal. But its leaders do not any longer have to be committed to that grounding and those definite expressions. Is there any organization that can long survive, once its leadership is not committed to the agenda of that organisation? I doubt it. That is why it is crisis time for the Church of England in particular and the Anglican communion in general.

Because there is such doctrinal division there is no way that there can be genuine and prayerful problem solving at the centre. That is the trade-off from the doctrinal pluralism our Bishops and Archbishops have been committed to over the past twenty years. It is a hard, business reality. And when the weak are not "poor believers" but "culpable unbelievers" episcopal cries for "mutual interdependence" and "the strong helping the weak" inevitably fall on deaf ears.

There are serious theological issues. The strong must help the weak. But when confidence in the centre is lost only the parishes can decide who are the weak. And, of course, the givers of the money are responsible to God for their stewardship.

### **An obvious lesson**

About the time we were first thinking about "quota capping" at Jesmond I had to visit Los Angeles. Having previously researched the [Pentecostal] "Church On The Way" in Van Nuys while studying Church Growth at Fuller Seminary, I paid a return visit in 1981. The pastor, Jack Hayford (the author of the popular song "Majesty") was preaching on 2 Corinthians 8.20-1:

We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the the eyes of men.

He pointed out the obvious - namely that one of Paul's great concerns was to make sure the donors were confident that their money was being spent where it was supposed to be spent. There were criticisms of Paul in Corinth. They were quite untrue. But people seemed to be suggesting that he was pocketing the money himself. So Paul was concerned that the Corinthians should have every confidence that the money was being spent where they intended it should be spent. No doubt this was a matter of prudence on the part of Paul; nothing so demotivates giving as doubts as to the propriety of what is going on.

The application of this, according to Pastor Hayford, is that in Christian giving you must always make quite sure Christian money is going where the donors want it to go.

I had never seen this obvious lesson quite so clearly. I was forced to ask some basic questions. What about all those people who give sacrificially in Jesmond Parish Church - and other Anglican churches? They know little or nothing about quotas. But what would they think if they were told that their money was going to fund diocesan officials who supported active homosexual clergy? What would they think if they were told that their money was going to subsidize clergy who deny the virgin birth, doubt the empty tomb, or question the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of men and women? Or what would they think if they were told that their money was going to prop up useless work at the centre - and sadly in some of the parishes - *when vital Christian work around the country and around the world is being starved of funds?* Of course, they would be horrified and redirect their giving.

Things became clear to me both as a matter of principle and as a matter of common sense. If there was to be continuing generous giving at Jesmond Parish Church, there had to be total scrupulousness with regard not only to the handling of money but also the areas of expenditure. The mere fact that a Diocesan synod voted new non-parochial staff or wanted to subsidise certain churches did not automatically mean that Jesmond Parish Church would foot the bill.

The parallel with the Jerusalem church and Paul's concern for the Greek churches to give to this Jewish church was relevant for us in other ways.

### **Giving to the poor**

First it was giving to "the poor". But we did not think that giving for civil service level salaries of diocesan officials qualified as "giving to the poor"; that meant that for us a priority would be our commitment to mission situations in the Third World. We, however, have never directly opposed these salaries nor other churches that want to give towards them.

But my views are changing. There have been some recent bad experiences.

For example, it will be seen in the masterly survey of Religious Broadcasting by Professors Andrew and Juliet Quicke entitled *Hidden Agendas - the politics of religious broadcasting in Britain 1987 - 1991* that the main opponent to allowing Christians a freer system of Religious

Broadcasting in Britain was the man now appointed to head the Communications department at the General Synod and who is paid greatly in excess of a parochial clergyman. And this money comes entirely from the quota the General Synod levies to the dioceses and that the dioceses then pass on to the parishes. I personally had to spend great energy (and expense) in helping to raise huge sums for the campaign run by the Evangelical Alliance "Christian Choice in Broadcasting" to defeat his efforts. Of course, I respect his perfect right to take the position he did. I simply cannot raise a great deal of enthusiasm for a quota system that pays him a salary very much in excess of what he formerly received as a clergyman in a parish.

Another example comes from the Board of Education at the time of the Education Reform Act 1988. It was General Synod officials who for a considerable period of time were opposing the strengthening of Christian RE in our schools as proposed by Baroness Cox and supported even by the Chief Rabbi as well as by nine Bishops including George Carey.

Two members of our congregation at Jesmond, one the educationalist on the Archbishops' Commission for Urban Priority Areas (ACUPA) and a most distinguished headmaster, the other the director of the Christian Institute, worked with Baroness Cox and had to spend considerable expense in trying to frustrate these Synod officials. Eventually they were successful but no thanks to the General Synod's Board of Education who were forced to concede. To expect Jesmond to support through payments and contribute to, even minimally, the large salaries of such synodical officials is mighty strange. Indeed, for others to request the funding of these salaries out of parish quotas paid by ordinary Anglicans that have no idea where their money is going, begins to look highly questionable. What would Wycliffe have said to such a request?

Secondly, in the case of giving to the Jerusalem church, there was symbolic value. It was to be a sign of unity. It did more than relieve the needs of the poor; it was to show solidarity with Jerusalem, for church political reasons. It was to be expressive of a Jewish-Greek church unity, but a unity *that had already been established*.

Giving money works in the same way today as an expression of unity. Conversely, as Wycliffe understood so well, the absence of giving is expressive of disunity. When, for example, the General Synod did not increase its contribution to the liberal WCC in the way some would have liked, this was rightly read as a sign of Anglican disapproval of the WCC. It was an indication of disunity.

It is the same in the church today. Of course we are all to strive for unity. But not unity at any price. And where there is radical disunity, as there is in the Church of England at present over fundamentals, the great need is not to express a unity or solidarity when there is none. Rather we first need to face that disunity and then deal with it properly. But we do not do that by papering it over by giving money simply to solve a Board of Finance's problems. We need Reform first. We need to remember that Paul's gift for the poor of Jerusalem was *after* he had sorted out his problems with the Jerusalem Church (Gal 2.10). And even then he had to generate some disunity to secure the truth of the gospel. He had to withstand Peter, the first pope of Rome as some would have us believe, to his face. In Antioch he dealt with issues by facing them head on.

## Centralism

But what precisely do we mean by "centralism"? How has it evolved?

The post-war evolution of the Church of England in a centralist direction is due to Archbishop Fisher. His virtues were those of a headmaster. He treated the church as his public school and, not unreasonably, wanted it to be efficiently organised. So the church's energy in the fifties and sixties was not spent in evangelism and church growth. This had been one of the last hopes of his remarkable predecessor, William Temple. A strategy had been outlined in a report on Evangelism entitled *Towards the Conversion of England*. Instead time was spent in Canon Law Revision and the setting up of the General Synod and Synodical Government.

History may well judge this costly and time consuming project a disaster. The advantages are by no means clear. For no sooner had the Canons been promulgated and Synodical Government established in 1970, than the Canons were made redundant.

The Liberal ascendancy at the time and at the centre secured the removal of clerical subscription to the Thirty Nine Articles. This has had the effect of allowing the clergy to believe what they like; thus the canons' usefulness now is only for secondary matters of church order. But as the Church of England has always argued for a comprehensiveness in matters of church order, the canons often are now either adhered to with little conviction or ignored. Canonical obedience in all things "lawful and honest" is for many no more than a theoretical ideal and for some not even that. The new collegiality among the Bishops that endorses, *de facto*, denials of fundamental doctrine and homosexual intercourse among the laity, brings into question what is "lawful and honest".

At my own ordination when there was still subscription the then (godly) Bishop of Ripon produced a piece of paper that told us quite explicitly that we did not have "to believe every word" of the Thirty Nine Articles - in other words we did not have to mean what we were saying. Such a tradition dies hard. Those, like myself, that stick fairly rigidly to the canons now have a great sympathy for those that ignore them. If the Bishops encourage us to use words in an equivocal sense and if the Bishops themselves, like the Bishop of Durham and his many sympathisers, use words in an equivocal sense, they cannot then be surprised when some of their clergy do use words in an equivocal sense or, more likely, say that the whole thing is a charade.

Synodical Government itself has fared little better than the Canons. My last contribution to the General Synod was the drafting of a "Green Paper" on Synodical Government. We wanted radical questions to be asked. The paper was meant to raise questions about the whole structure of Synodical Government and the value of all its levels. But any Synodical Government Review is unlikely to be very searching.

Those most involved in Synodical Government have a vested interest in not asking radical questions and so keeping it going. And keeping it going is what they are doing. It spends time passing Measures and promulgating Canons that have little effect. The most fundamental of all measures, the *Worship and Doctrine Measure 1974* with its special endorsement of Canon A5, has not secured a biblical or Anglican faithfulness among the clergy (be they Bishops or presbyters). The current *Pastoral Measure* has

not secured the pastoral care in the Church of England that it was intended to do. It is flouted by Bishops and their advisors in suspending livings against the spirit if not the letter of the measure. The current *Benefice Measure* of which I was on the Steering Committee and that secured the principle of patronage is now being subverted by many Bishops and their advisors. It is these advisors that make up what we mean by "the centre". They are "dignitaries" (archdeacons, assistant bishops, residential canons etc.) and diocesan staff (ordained and lay).

## **The problems**

And while the number of clergy has been drastically reduced, dignitaries have been increasing as have diocesan staff. In 1961, when I was at the University, there were 12,886 parochial clergy and 231 dignitaries (archdeacons, assistant bishops etc.). In 1991 there were 9,671 parochial clergy and 385 dignitaries. Over that period there was thus a 25 percent reduction in parochial clergy, but a 66 percent increase in dignitaries. In terms of cost, dignitaries are more expensive. They are paid 50 percent more than the parochial clergy (nearly £20,000 instead of £13,000). Why?

Their main function in many dioceses seems to be to generate "centralism" in the form of plethoras of committees that get nowhere, generate costs, cause aggravation and waste much of everyone's time. It is not that there is an evil intent. They will plead that they are only trying to follow the letter of this measure or that measure. Indeed they are. But they are in danger of becoming the modern Scribes and Pharisees. They can strain at gnats and swallow camels when it comes to measures and canons. The farce, of course, is that since 1963 and the *Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure* of that year, no layperson is under Ecclesiastical law any more. Clergy alone are bound by the canons. But as we have seen, their force is diminishing by the day.

The sickness of the Church of England in institutional terms is directly related to Synodical Government and the centralism that it has spawned. This centralism started at the General Synod level with all its boards and councils. These were then copied at the diocesan level. There they generated an even worse form of centralism because less competent. Now there is a growing deanery centralism.

All of this needs to be seen for the failure that it is. The General Synod is great fun at times; but the fun is a self-absorbed enjoyment. Modelled on Westminster it tries to ape the Commons. Undoubtedly there are some people in the General Synod who are more able than some in Parliament. But these people cannot make a faulty system work. And they cannot do it for two good reasons.

First, all General Synod elections are by proportional representation. This secures a wide comprehensiveness in the Synod but also a "lowest common denominator" solution to problems. It does not result in "strong" decisions or "strong" leadership. It maximizes the ability to veto. It minimizes the ability to initiate.

Secondly, there is no "loyal opposition". Democracy in the West works because you have not only Government, but Opposition. In synodical government there is no "opposition". This allows enormous scope for the "Government" (the Bishops, their advisors and the central bureaucracy) to manipulate business and outcomes. It indeed takes considerable stamina and inner strength to mount a substantial challenge. Few undertake such challenges. This then results in the church "government" often developing an unwarranted attitude of autocracy and arrogance. Of course, unlike our national Government, this church "government" has no sanctions to back up its wishes and proposals. Unlike non payment of taxes, non payment of quota will not, nor can it, send you to prison. It is a voluntary payment. It is a gift. It is part of Christian giving. You cannot force giving. It comes from inner motivation. And motivation is so vital in the Church as it is a voluntary non-profit organisation. Motivation is, therefore, everything. It is the one essential ingredient in any church leadership. When "motivation" is lacking inevitably this sort of church "government" fails. Synodical Government generates no motivation - certainly it does not in Newcastle Central Deanery, or the Newcastle Diocese, or in the General Synod. Everything is an exercise in damage limitation. A colleague used to say of my efforts on the General Synod that they were worthwhile as "stopping others pulling the plug out - but they did not, nor did those of others, ever fill the bath."

## Actual Costs

What does all this cost? What is the cost of centralism?

The costs are quite simple. I will take our own diocese as typical. I will only give approximate figures. Our diocese, I believe, is more enlightened than many. I know that what I am describing is not a worst case.

Every diocesan budget can be divided into two parts. The amount spent on the stipends and the housing of the *parochial clergy in the parishes* on the one hand; and all central costs on the other hand.

Every diocesan budget in the country can be so divided. But it is not easy for the average member of a diocesan or deanery synod to see this division. In fact the concern of many at the centre is to conceal those facts. In Newcastle, for example, the figure in the budget for "clergy stipends" intentionally conceals both parochial *and non-parochial* clergy stipends. Diocesan and deanery synod members can then not see the precise stipend costs of the parochial clergy relative to the rest of the costs - the central costs. This then allows archdeacons, finance board members, diocesan advisors and other officials to tell the parishes and the deaneries that most of the quota is for "clergy stipend". Quite so. But it is misunderstood by the parishes to mean paying for men in the parishes. I have registered strong disapproval, but to no effect.

So what are the costs?

In the diocese of Newcastle the total budget is three million pounds. Two million of this is spent on *parochial clergy stipends and the housing of the clergy*. One million is spent on central costs. This is not immediately obvious, for the reason I have explained. But it is true. Those of us on the Board of Finance know it is true.

How does our diocese fund that three million pounds? On the one hand there is the Church Commissioners' allocation. Because we have few historic resources that is still quite large. Other dioceses, with less of an allocation from the Church Commissioners because they have higher historic resources, will nevertheless have a similar, if not higher, figure (relative to the total number of licensed clergy).

The Church Commissioners allocation to Newcastle is about one million - a now diminishing amount. But it still covers one third of the entire budget. That leaves the diocese to find two million pounds. How does it do it? It quotas that amount out around the parishes; and it expects the parishes to pay.

If they do not, they are treated like naughty children, unless they are Jesmond Parish Church. Then they are heaped with abuse and unpleasantness. In 1992 the vicar of the church where Hugh Montefiore was a curate and then the PCC of the church where Robert Runcie was a curate tried to make the Bishop deprive Jesmond Parish Church of its clergy. They were unsuccessful. We pointed out that it would have been uncanonical and so illegal; also silly because the diocese would have received even less money; but more importantly we were preaching the gospel, sinners were being saved, young people were being helped and we seemed to be a good support for mission.

So in our diocese it can be argued that *50 per cent of all quotaed money goes to central costs*. Out of our three million pound budget in Newcastle, two million pounds are for parochial clergy stipends. But the amount from the Church Commissioners is morally for those clergy stipends.

Conceptually, therefore, the Commissioners' one million needs to be offset against that two million parochial clergy stipends bill. That means that only one million of the total parochial clergy costs have to be found by the parishes. But they are quotaed not for one million but for two million. Of course, that extra one million is for the central costs. Hence, *50 per cent of all quotaed money goes to central costs*.

## Questions

Some will say, "I do not believe what you are saying; how does this fit in with what my diocese tells me is the cost of a clergyman? Figures of £25,000 pounds have been proposed as the cost of a parish clergyman."

I have in front of me a Southwark Diocesan booklet. The Bishop describes it as offering "details of the way in which the Diocese of Southwark both receives and uses the money at its disposal." It says that for each

Southwark clergy person the Church Commissioners pays £4,080, while for each Southwark clergy person the diocese pays £20,215.

First, the money that the Church Commissioners contributes by way of pension, national insurance or clergy car loan scheme has nothing to do with the diocesan budget at all; and so it has not to do with the diocesan quota.

True, if the Church Commissioners had more money by not having to pay for pensions, NHI and the car loan scheme, they could subsidise Southwark a little more. But that is irrelevant to current quota requirements - the concern of the parishes and this diocesan leaflet. If a parish wants to reimburse the NHI and pension costs of their incumbent, they can make a private capital gift to the Church Commissioners.

Secondly, this leaflet claims that the Church Commissioners are contributing annually towards each Southwark clergy person's pension £2,900. On another page it claims as part of "facing facts" that "because of the large number of retired clergy, the present clergy pension bill averages £5,550 per serving clergy person." That is to say that if you add together all the annual pension payments made to retired clergy and divide it by those still in post, you get a figure of £5,550. So what? All this is misleading as these confusing figures have nothing whatsoever to do with Diocesan budgets or quotas. What can be said, however, is that the parishes and clergy can reckon to have a claim on the Church Commissioners money.

The Church Commissioners were formed in 1948 from an amalgamation of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and Queen Anne's Bounty (QAB). QAB was to augment the stipends of the poorer clergy, while the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had also a Common Fund to make additional provision for "the cure of souls" in parishes where assistance was most required and "in such a manner as should be deemed most conducive to the efficiency of the Established Church." The Ecclesiastical Commissioners also held on trust money designated for specific livings - their endowments. My own parish certainly has a present claim on the Commissioners from such money.

In 1861 the then "central authorities" refused to appoint an evangelical clergyman to St Thomas' Newcastle. The congregation of St Thomas' wanted an evangelical as a successor to the great Richard Clayton. On this refusal there was a desire to plant a new church to continue that evangelical succession. Contributions were canvassed for the new "Jesmond Church" building and £1,000 was lodged with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for the stipend of the vicar of the new parish, Jesmond. That was a lot of money in 1861. It is now part of the Church Commissioners millions. But it was given so that the parish of Jesmond, of which I am the current incumbent, should benefit from it. Probably it is now going to support the centre.

## Conclusion

But what of Southwark's claim that each clergy person costs Southwark £20,215? The stipend, we are told, is £13,400. But what is the remaining £6,815 spent on? Answer: training; in-service training; removals; the council tax and the parsonage.

Training is necessary. Southwark has a figure of £836 per "clergy person." That is not an unreasonable figure. But Reform is suggesting that radical new approaches to training need to be explored. This may involve decentralising training, or at any rate, letting the money follow the ordinand. The critical figure, however, is Southwark's £4,763 for the "annual maintenance and repair of a parsonage." This is not including a mortgage cost - this is repairs and improvements. But the parishioners of Southwark would be horrified to spend more than £1000 annually on their own properties. This indicates either something other than parsonage repairs, which, therefore, is not a proper charge to the parish or very poor management.

The only real cost of the incumbent to the diocesan budget is his stipend and housing. In Southwark that is £13,400 plus (to be generous) an average annual figure of £2,000. This equals £15,400.

The council tax should be paid by the parish and not centralised. Richer areas will pay more. That seems reasonable. Training should be computed under "central costs", so should "in-service training" and "removals". A

parish, therefore, in Southwark, at present could legitimately feel it ought to pay, via the centre, for its incumbent £15,400 (£13,400 + £2,000) plus 15 per cent (as I would submit) for central costs, £17,710.

If it did that the centre would have £2,310 for these "central costs"; also it would be having the share of that parish's claim on the Church Commissioners allocation and the total of historic resources and other diocesan income. In Southwark this averages out at well over £5,000 per clergy person. By not needing to make use of that money, the centre would in fact be having a total of £2,310 plus £5,000 (£7,310) to construct its central budgets and to use to give extra subsidy where needed to poorer parishes.

As for those poorer parishes so as not to be a charge on other parishes they only need to pay, via the centre, £17,710 minus £5,000 (£12,710) - this £5,000 being their share of the Church Commissioners grant and the historic resources.

These are approximate figures and for illustration only. But they point to an unpalatable conclusion for the church's bureaucracy. Radical "cuts" must come at the centre. Central costs must be limited to something like 15 per cent of the stipends costs plus reasonable housing costs. The growth of the centre once there has been radical cutting back, of course becomes a future option; but this can only be as there is growth on the ground as numbers in the parish congregations and so the giving base expands. By gearing central expenditure to parochial clergy costs, a sense of reality is ensured.

There are other ways to decentralise. In 1973 when I first came to Jesmond, the parish treasurer paid my stipend. The centralization of stipends is a relatively new phenomenon. It is part of the "Wilson Years" of the 1970's. While not necessarily endorsing all of the "Thatcher Years" of the 1980's much good has been done by the process of decentralisation in a number of areas, with "those on the ground" becoming responsible for budgets. The Church of England must certainly leave the 1970's. It wants to absorb the best of the 1980's. But it needs to make sure that in the 1990's it does not follow fashion, but God and his word.