

# Refining the Reformers: A Theological Response to 'The Anglican Understanding of Church'

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## Introduction

Those who take Article XIX as being an attempt by the Anglican Reformers to provide a theological understanding of 'church' are, according to Donald Allister, 'hostages to fortune.'<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, they are people who 'ought to know better' and any tendency towards 'independency' is a sign of being of an evangelical stripe which is 'less doctrinal', whose roots are 'shallow in the soils of the reformation'. The character assassination is extended to some of our 'friends 'beyond these shores' (i.e. Australians) who are 'evangelistically strong' but 'ecclesiologically weak'. Those in the UK who have welcomed such teaching with 'open arms' are referred to as 'good leaders' and excused on the grounds that they are 'frustrated by the shortage of reformed leadership at the national level'. Such folk are further described as being 'seduced' by this 'plausible teaching, this natural but superficial reading of the articles'.

Having constructed one 'straw man' (one has yet to meet an Anglican evangelical either from the UK or from 'beyond these shores' who advocates independency), another one is set up, those whose ecclesiology is 'connexionalism' holding to no formal hierarchy of structures, where the diocese is simply seen as providing some framework for connection between local churches but not being allowed to have any influence over the local church which the local church does not want. This, asserts Allister, is neither fully biblical nor what the Anglican formularies teach. Instead, true Anglicanism is 'episcopal and hierarchical'. No one is denying this, and very few Anglican evangelicals would, as Allister maintains, see the minister as 'a law unto himself'.

So we come to the heart of what Allister is arguing, namely, that the Thirty-nine Articles (not simply Article XIX which defines the church in terms of 'a congregation' but other articles, such as Article XX speaking of "The Church" having power to decree rites etc.' or even those which refer to 'the Church of Rome'), 'precisely matches that of Scripture; the church can be understood as either local or universal, either visible or invisible: but the distinctions are not identical to each other. The local church is not the only form of the visible,

despite what congregationalists might like to think; and the universal church is not the same as the invisible, regardless to any claims to the contrary by Rome...*the Bible and the Articles clearly allow and encourage us to speak of the diocese or the denomination...as themselves being churches'* (italics mine).

This is an assertion, not a demonstration. While references are made to 'what is clearly taught in both the Bible and Prayer Book' only one Bible reference is cited—Acts 9:31 in which the singular for *ekklesia* is used to describe Christians throughout a region. This hardly constitutes a well reasoned case. In addition, while Allister claims the Reformers to be on his side, apart from one quote from Calvin, no careful consideration of writings of the magisterial Reformers is made. What we have is a paper which is strong on rhetoric (and often unwarranted demeaning rhetoric at that) but weak in demonstration.

This paper will attempt to show where the true biblical locus of the understanding of church lies. We will allow the 'ecclesiological weak' scholars to speak for themselves, demonstrating that what they teach is much more thoroughly grounded in biblical theology than that proposed by Allister. Finally, we will demonstrate that almost without exception, the theological instincts of the Reformers were well tuned to the Bible in their attempted formulations of the definition of church, as for example in Article XIX, but that they, like us, understandably used the term in a secondary extended way.

However, many of the tensions which existed within the Reformer's evangelical ecclesiology, leading to a somewhat compromised view by Hooker, could have been resolved had the primary biblical understandings been kept to the fore. In short, this will be an attempt to refine the teaching of the Reformers and so keeping in step with the spirit of the Reformers, namely, that all our teaching has to arise out of, and shaped by, Scripture itself. This is the touchstone of evangelical orthodoxy not a cherished reading of the Anglican formularies!

#### ■ 'Church'—derivation and meaning

The word often translated 'church' in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, which means 'gathering' or 'assembly'. This does not always have a religious association, e.g., Acts 19:32, 'The assembly (*ekklesia*) was in confusion', referring to a pagan rent-a-mob.

Generally speaking, *ekklesia* is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew *qahal*. It is

a term which describes the covenant making assembly at Sinai (Deut. 9:10) as well as Israel gathered before God for covenant renewal (Deut. 29:1). This view is confirmed by Stephen in Acts 7 where he uses the word ‘church’ to describe the Old Testament congregation of God. In the New Testament it is a term almost exclusively applied to Christian communities after Pentecost.

In the New Testament epistles the plural is used when more than one church is in view—‘The churches of God’ (2 Thess. 1:4) and the ‘churches of God in Judea’ (2 Thess. 2:14, cf. 1 Cor. 7:17; Rom. 16:4; Gal. 1:2). There are one or two exceptions to the plural form. Paul speaks of ‘every church’ in 1 Corinthians 4:17, a distributive expression; or ‘the church of God’ (1 Cor. 10:32) used in a generic or localized sense. Otherwise, it is a term which is only applied to an actual gathering of people.

There are a few instances of an extension of the literal, descriptive use of *ekklesia* to denote persons who compose that gathering whether present or not—Acts 8:3; 9:31; 20:17 (see Donald Robinson’s alternative explanation below). But the primary use with the referent being a ‘gathering’ predominates and one should be wary of building a theological construct on one or two extended references.

#### ‘Church’—A Theological Understanding

Theologically the question arises—What is the relationship between ‘The Church’ and ‘the churches’? The ‘assembly’ might be theologically construed along the lines of thought expressed in Hebrews 12:22-24, ‘But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel’.

Christians thus participate in the heavenly, eschatological church of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul primarily has in mind when he speaks of Jesus as being the ‘head of the church’ (Col. 1:18). Therefore, each local congregation is not to be seen as one member parallel to lots of other members which together make up Christ’s body, the church. Nor is each church the body of Christ as if Christ has many bodies. Rather, each congregation is the full expression in that place of the one true heavenly church. Each church is an

outcrop or colony of heaven, reflecting the eschatological gathering of God's people around the heavenly throne.

### 'Church'—local, universal and catholic

Let us explore and tease out the implications of the type of thinking as laid down in Hebrews 12 and 13. First, a contrasting parallel is being drawn between the way God gathered his people around himself at Sinai (v. 18 cf. Exodus 19:4,5) and Christ gathering his people around himself (vv. 23-24). They are the church of the firstborn (cf. Ex. 13:2) approaching God through Christ the mediator, on the basis of a new covenant established by his blood. This is a present reality - 'You have come (present tense - *proseluthate*) to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God...'. When Christians gather on earth they at the same time gather around Christ's throne in heaven.

It is in the midst of the heavenly church that Christ is now seated (Rev. 7:9; 14:1) and in principle Christians are already seated there with him (Eph. 2:6). It is this heavenly church that Christ is building and against which the gates of Hades will not prevail (Matt. 16:18).

Second, the heavenly church is to be equated with the 'universal' church and the 'catholic' church of the Nicene Creed - 'I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church'. It is an object of faith precisely because it cannot be seen. It is also the principle of unity that by definition there can only be one gathering in heaven around the throne of the lamb. It is universal in that it is composed of people 'from every nation, tribe and language' (Rev. 7:9). This was the understanding of the term 'catholic' held by the early church as witnessed to by Ignatius who was the first person to use the term to describe Christians gathered around Jesus, 'Here Jesus is, there is the catholic church' (Ad Smyrn. 8). Where is Jesus but in heaven? That is where the catholic church is located. The longer recension of Ignatius' letter makes it even plainer that this is what he means for it paraphrases, 'Where Jesus is, there is the catholic church' by 'where Jesus is, there is the heavenly army drawn up at the side of the commander'.

In summary, we may say that the universal, catholic church is the heavenly church. This is a present eschatological reality gathered around the risen and ascended Christ. All true believers belong to this gathering and are members of it. As Christians gather on earth, forming the local church—they at the same time reflect the heavenly gathering as well as participate in it.

### Being 'church'

How is this local gathering brought into being and what is to characterize it? The gathering is realized by the Word of the Gospel, and so the proclamation of that Word is to be the central activity and one of the main defining features of the gathering.

When God gathered his people at Sinai we read that, 'The Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire, you heard the sound of words, but saw no form'. (Deut. 4:9). This constitutes the contrasting parallel with what happens when Christians gather according to Hebrews 12:18ff, 'You have not come to a mountain...or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken'. As New Testament believers gather, they come to 'God the judge of all men'. How is such a 'coming' made possible? It is through 'Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Able'. That 'word', a cry for vengeance and justice, the word of the Gospel, which is the word of Christ's blood, speaks of mercy. It is this word of God which gathers people into Christ's body, as it is believed folk become incorporated into him. It was the great Pentecostal gift (Acts 2) which led to 3,000 being added to that assembly in a single day.

What is more, it is this word of grace (Acts 20:32) which nourishes the spiritual health of the church. That is why the writer goes on to say (v. 25), 'See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks' (which is what the Sinai 'church' did—they didn't want to hear that voice). How does one hear this voice? Earlier in the letter we are told how, 'So, as the Holy Spirit says (present tense)' and then comes a quotation from Scripture (Psalm 95), 'Today, if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts'. It is through the Scriptures that God the Holy Spirit speaks. The same Word that he spoke then is the same Word he speaks now.

For this purpose of edifying the church God has appointed leaders, that is why the writer exhorts, 'Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith....Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings' (13:7-9); and 'Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over your souls as men who must give an account' (13:17).

Holiness is to be a mark of the church, 'Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, without holiness no-one will see the Lord' (12:14). This

is linked to the call to brotherly love, 'Keep loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers...remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners' (13:1-3); 'And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased' (13:16).

One aspect of the church which reflects the heavenly assembly is praise, 'You have come to...angels in joyful assembly' (12:22). 'Through Jesus, therefore let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name' (13:15).

One other notable activity which should characterize the earthly gathering is prayer, 'Pray for us...I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon' (13:20).

All these things are being achieved in the church by its great pastor who gathers them to form his 'little flock' and who is in their midst by his Spirit, 'May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ' (13:20).

### The 'shallow' Australians

What has been outlined above has come to be known as the 'Robinson–Knox' view, named after the two Australian scholars who, with a clean sheet, as it were, rigorously studied the Bible to formulate a biblical ecclesiology. More recently similar findings have been presented by another Australian scholar, P.T. O'Brien. None of these men can be described as having shallow roots in the 'soil of the reformation', especially Broughton Knox whose Oxford Doctorate was awarded for a thesis entitled, 'The Doctrine of Faith in the Reign of Henry VIII! What did they teach? Simply what the Bible teaches coupled with that Reformation spirit to put into practice what it says.

Here we have Donald Robinson writing in the 1962 edition of the New Bible Dictionary,

'Church' in the New Testament renders the Greek *ekklesia* which mostly means a local congregation of Christians and never a building. Although we often speak of these congregations collectively as the New Testament Church or the Early Church, no New Testament writer uses *ekklesia* in

this collective way.<sup>2</sup>

Later he writes, 'The local *ekklesia* was not thought of as part of some world-wide *ekklesia*, which would have been a contradiction in terms'.

How, then, are we to understand Acts 9:31 which is made so much of by Allister? Robinson argues, 'The reference in the best texts of Acts 9:31 to the church "throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria" *is not an exception* (italics mine). Since this verse concludes the pericope describing the scattering of the Jerusalem church (8:1), it seems right to take *ekklesia* here to be the Jerusalem church so spread as to occupy the territory of "the ancient Ecclesia which had its home in the whole land of Israel" (F J A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 46)'.

What of the idea of 'one church'? Here is Robinson's answer after a careful consideration of the biblical data. 'While there might be as many churches as there were cities or even households, yet the New Testament recognised only one *ekklesia* without finding it necessary to explain the relationship between the one and the many. *The one was not an amalgamation or federation of the many* (italics mine). It was a "heavenly" reality belonging not to the form of this world but to the realm of the resurrection glory where Christ is exalted at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:20-23; Heb. 2:12; 12:23). Yet since the local *ekklesia* was gathered together in Christ's name and had Him in their midst (Matt. 18:20) it tasted the powers of the age to come and was the firstfruits of that eschatological *ekklesia*. The individual church was called the church of God which he hath purchased by his own blood, (Acts 20:28; cf. 1 Cor. 1:2).'

Broughton Knox<sup>3</sup> says pretty much the same thing, but he develops the biblical understanding in a direction which enables us to grasp the true significance of the Nicene Creed. He writes, 'Since Christ is now in heaven, it is there that the New Testament thinks of him as building his church, because the church of Christ is the assembly which he calls into being around himself....This is the church affirmed in the Nicene Creed, "I believe in one Holy Catholic Apostolic Church". Its principle of unity is the fact that Christ has assembled it around himself. It is logically impossible for him to assemble two churches around himself, for Christ is to be thought of as in one place only, that is, in heaven, if we were to use biblical imagery, which is the only imagery available. This gathering or church is holy, because it is God's....It is catholic because the gospel is no longer confined to the literal

seed of Abraham, but rather Christ is gathering into his church “out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues”. It is apostolic because it is founded on the apostles, that is to say, Christ commissioned missionaries who founded the church by preaching the Gospel of Christ. It is the heavenly church which is apostolic (Rev. 21:14) as well as catholic, holy and indivisibly one.<sup>4</sup>

It is P T O’Brien who has given the most comprehensive and detailed biblical treatment of this understanding of the relation between church—local and Church—universal or heavenly.<sup>5</sup> He summarises the Pauline usage as follows, ‘Paul consistently refers to the church which meets in a particular place. Even when there are several gatherings in a single city (e.g., Corinth) the individual assemblies are not understood as part of the church in that place, but as one of the churches that meet there. This suggests that each of the various local churches are manifestations of that heavenly church, tangible expressions in time and space of what is heavenly and eternal’.<sup>6</sup> However, one might point out that there is no evidence that there were several gatherings in a city like Corinth, there may only have been one gathering which would strengthen the argument further.

He also gives a cautionary word of warning to those like Allister who would try and make more of an extended meaning than the Bible allows. ‘In one or two New Testament instances *ekklesia* is found as an extension of the literal, descriptive use of “an assembly” to designate the persons who compose that gathering whether they are assembled or not. This is a natural extension or linguistic development of group words (note our use of ‘team’) and may explain references such as Acts 8:3; 9:31; 20:17. However, two significant observations need to be made: first, the primary use of the word *ekklesia* as ‘gathering’, ‘assembly’ predominates overwhelmingly in the New Testament—and indeed through the *Apostolic Fathers to the Apologists*. (italics mine) Secondly, no theological constructs are made on the basis of these very few *extended* uses.’<sup>7</sup> In other words, the very thing the biblical writers refuse to do, Allister is wanting to do. Furthermore one might want to add that there is a mighty leap to be made from the extended use of the term *ekklesia* in Acts 9:31 to the claim that a denomination is a church. Acts 9:31 simply cannot bear the theological weight Allister wishes to place upon it.

#### Reviewing and Refining the Reformers

When we turn to the writings of the magisterial Reformers, not surprisingly

we find much which reflects this biblical understanding that the church is a congregation of professing Christian believers which is brought into being and sustained by the word of the gospel. Martin Luther commentating on Psalm 110:2 writes,

In his invisible essence he (Christ) sits at the right hand of God; but he rules visibly on earth and works through external visible signs, of which the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments are the chief ones, and through public confession and the fruits of faith in the gospel'. However, for Luther it was the Word of the Gospel which supremely defined the church. 'These are the true marks whereby one can really recognise the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian Church: namely, wherever the sceptre is, that is, the office of the preaching of the gospel, borne by the apostles into the world and received from them by us. Where it is present and maintained, there the Christian Church and the kingdom of Christ surely exists, no matter how small or negligible the number of the flock.'<sup>8</sup>

Note the use of the definite article for even the smallest Christian community—it is the Church. This is very much in accordance with the biblical view we have been considering.

It is the word of the gospel which constitutes the formal principle of the church. 'Wherever the word of God is preached and believed, there true faith, that immovable rock, exists, where the bride of Christ is, where there is to be found all that he has betrothed to himself.'<sup>9</sup> What else is this but a feeling towards the view that the full expression of the universal church is found within a local congregation?

The second generation of Reformers such as Philip Melancthon and John Calvin sought to develop Luther's thought giving it shape. In the Augsburg Confession (1530) Melancthon states, 'The Church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and administered rightly'. As with Luther, for Melancthon it was the preached word which constituted the church, 'The Church, or the true people of God is bound by the gospel. Where the gospel is truly acknowledged, there are some who are holy.'<sup>10</sup> Later, for a variety of reasons, Melancthon moved in a direction which clericalised his ecclesiology, adding discipline to the word and sacraments as the third mark of the church, 'Obedience owed, next to the gospel itself, to the ministry.'<sup>11</sup>

Calvin's mature formulation of church is strikingly similar to that of Luther and the Augsburg Confession, 'Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists'.<sup>12</sup> The converse is also true, 'On the other hand, where the gospel is not declared, heard and received, there we do not acknowledge the form of the Church'.<sup>13</sup>

While he may not have fully arrived at a biblical understanding of the universal church as being that which is invisible and heavenly, there is nonetheless a straining towards this;

There is a universal Church, that there has been from the beginning of the world and will be to the end, we all acknowledge. The appearance by which it may be recognised is the question. We place it in the word of God or (if anyone would so put it), since Christ is her head, we maintain that as a man is recognised by his face, so she is to be beheld by Christ....But as the pure preaching of the gospel is not always exhibited, neither is the face of Christ always conspicuous. Thence we infer that the Church is not always discernible by the eyes of men, as the examples of the ages testify...let us hold on then that the Church is seen where Christ appears and where his word is heard.<sup>14</sup>

What we have here in Calvin's thought is a coinherence of Word, Church and Christ. If this were to be refined further in the biblical direction we have outlined above, it could be said that the universal church has always existed since the creation of the world in that God has always gathered around him people by his Word. The visible expression of this universal church (where it is to be found impurely as distinct from where it is found in pure form in heaven) is the local gathering of professing believers, called into being by the preaching of the gospel, and so in a secondary sense the Church is universal, in that it is manifest around the world in the form of local congregations.

A similar case for refinement could be made for Luther's understanding of the universal Church. 'Wherever the substance of the word and sacraments abides, there the holy Church is present. The Church is universal throughout the world, wherever the gospel of God and the sacraments are present'.<sup>15</sup> If Luther had followed through the biblical data more closely and applied them consistently a clearer conception of the way the universal Church is to be seen 'throughout the world' might have emerged.

### What about Rome?

It is when we come to the Reformers view of the 'church' of Rome that we detect a certain degree of ambiguity, tension and self-contradiction. Having surveyed the Lutheran confessions, Schlink concludes,

Taking all their statements together, we find that the confessions refer to the Roman Church as both Church and non-church, and do this in a manner that leaves things unadjusted and unsatisfactory for systematic thinking. The question is left open whether the Church is still there and where it is to be found.<sup>16</sup>

Pretty much the same could be said of Calvin. At one point he states categorically, 'Rome is not a Church of God'.<sup>17</sup> But then elsewhere argues that there is a church amongst the papists, 'but hidden and wonderfully preserved'.<sup>18</sup> In the final edition of the Institutes he writes, 'while we are unwilling simply to concede the name of Church to the papists, we do not deny that there are Churches among them'.<sup>19</sup>

As we consider the English Reformers we observe an essential continuity with those on the continent, that the primary mark of the true church is the word of God. Lacking the essential marks Rome, concludes Jewel, is no true Church, 'We truly have renounced that Church wherein we could neither have the word of God sincerely taught, nor the sacraments rightly administered, nor the name of God truly called upon'.<sup>20</sup>

It is with Richard Hooker that we see a significant and radical departure in positively acknowledging Rome as a true Church;

Notwithstanding so far as lawfully we may, we have held and do hold fellowship with them. For even as the Apostle doth say of Israel that they are in one respect enemies but in another beloved of God; in like sort with Rome we dare not communicate concerning sundry her gross and grievous admonitions, yet touching those main parts of Christian truth wherein they constantly still persist we gladly acknowledge them to be of the family of Jesus Christ.<sup>21</sup>

However, what led Hooker to this conclusion was not a careful consideration of the scriptural teaching concerning the church, but a moral problem

concerning the salvation of those who had lived and died within the Roman communion. Proceeding on the assumption that no salvation is to be found outside 'the Church', it followed that if Rome were to be placed totally beyond the pale as not being a true Church, then there is no hope of salvation for 'thousands of our fathers living in popish superstitions'.<sup>22</sup>

We submit that the ambivalent stance of Luther and Calvin towards Rome and the compromised position of Hooker could have been avoided had a clearer and more consistent biblical understanding of *ekklesia* been grasped and applied. Confusion was inevitably introduced by applying the term 'church' to an institution without the necessary qualifications which a biblically lead theology would have provided. It can be granted as a plain historical fact (let alone a biblical promise along the lines of God providing a remnant) that within the prevailing corrupted institution of 'Rome' true believers existed (where do we place Wycliffe and the Lollards?) and that congregations (true churches) also functioned with varying degrees of faithfulness (as many do today). Here the true Church was manifest. This is the theological direction in which both Luther and Calvin were leaning.

Here also lies the answer to Hooker's moral dilemma. If there is but one isolated individual who cannot meet with other Christians because circumstances do not allow it and yet throws himself upon the mercy of Christ, trusting in his death, then he belongs to the true Church, the heavenly invisible Church which Christ is building. There is no need to dignify a corrupted institution with the title 'Church' conceived in a primary sense.

Allister maintains that 'historic Anglicanism must mean that we will not choose to go against the Prayer Book, the Articles and the Ordinal—or that if we find ourselves doing so we will be honest enough to recognise that we can no longer call ourselves Anglican'.<sup>23</sup> This, of course, is a false choice. Within the articles themselves it is recognised that there is a hierarchy of belief and that it is Scripture which is to be determinative (Article VI). If the Reformers teaching can be shown to be inadequate at points as not being entirely consistent with Scripture (and we have attempted to show that is the case) then we are being most true to the Reformers when we depart from them and draw closer to the teaching of the Bible. Here is an instance where change is necessary to remain the same—Reformed evangelicals.

### Some implications of the biblical doctrine of 'church'

First, given that the local church is the expression in time and space of the heavenly/catholic/universal church, we need to encourage a more precise usage of the term. For many, the church is still often associated with a building or denomination and not the local gathering of believers. This tends to have all sorts of perverse effects on thinking and action.

This view of church must mean that loyalties to a denomination must be relativised against the priority of the local evangelical congregation. Denominational structures at best should facilitate Bible ministry in the local church. What we must not do is transfer the sort of allegiances which the New Testament demands we give to the local and heavenly church to a denomination. That would be verging on idolatry making us more than hostages to fortune, but to all sorts of tyranny. If at any point the functioning of a denomination hampers local church ministry, steps should be taken to correct this.

Second, ministries should be promoted which will encourage in practice this view of the church. Biblical teaching must be central to the activity of church. Praise and prayer should be encouraged which best reflects the heavenly gathering. Holiness and Christian love should be clear marks of a church—we are to watch both life and doctrine closely. Opportunities for Christian service must be provided and means must be provided for people to get to know each other—one cannot love and serve in anonymity—the church must be more than a 'preaching' or 'worship centre' if it is to be true to its heavenly calling.

Third, although a visible unity will only occur when Christ returns (then there will be one gathering of all the saints) none the less we would contend that there should be some tangible expression of evangelical unity between the churches (e.g., 2 Cor. 8 and 9). Ways in which this can be shown should be explored and encouraged. The aspects required which could be said to properly constitute a church (see Calvin) should be as narrow and as wide as the New Testament's. Not every gathering which would call itself a 'church' is a church, even though it may be linked to a denomination. On the other hand even a cursory consideration of the appalling problems the apostles had to face in terms of error and immorality in the churches under their care did not mean they immediately 'unchurched' them. 1 and 2 Timothy provide the sort of advice to ministers and people who find themselves in what is often called 'a mixed church'.

## Conclusion

Far from being seduced, many evangelicals today are being persuaded that the sort of ecclesiology argued in this paper is theologically robust, biblically warranted and pragmatically needed. At a time when the Anglican denomination is in the midst of tremendous flux facing a large degree of uncertainty regarding its future, this is an ideal opportunity for evangelicals to argue for a more thorough-going biblical ecclesiology and to demonstrate it in action. This, of course, will be highly unpopular with the 'powers that be' and will be costly. But personal integrity and faithfulness to the gospel surely demands it.

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## ENDNOTES

1. Churchman 115/3, 2001.
2. D W B Robinson, "Church" New Bible Dictionary (IVP 1962), p 228.
3. D B Knox, "'The Church' and 'The Denominations'," *Sent by Jesus* (Banner of Truth 1992), pp 55-65.
4. *Ibid*, p 57
5. P T O'Brien, "The Church as the Heavenly and Eschatological Entity," *The Church in the Bible and the World* (Paternoster 1987), D A Carson (ed).
6. P T O'Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, Word Commentary Series (Word 1982), p 61
7. "The Church in the Bible and the World", p 92.
8. Luther's Works (St Louis and Philadelphia 1955), 13.272
9. Cited in Paul Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers* (MMS 1981) p 18
10. *Corpus Reformatorum* (Halle 1834), 12.431.
11. *Ibid*, 12.433.
12. *Institutes*, IV.1.9.
13. Cochrane (ed), *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century* (London 1966), pp 124f
14. J Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises*, T F Torrance (ed), (Grand Rapids 1958), 102f.
15. Luther's Works, 25.25.
16. E Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, p. 224.
17. Quoted by Avis, *op.cit*.
18. *Ibid*, p. 42.
19. *Inst.* IV.ii.12.
20. Parker Society, *Works of the English Reformers* (Cambridge 1840), 3.91f.
21. R Hooker, *Works*, J Keble (ed), (Oxford 1845), 1.347
22. *Ibid*, 3.501.
23. Allister, *op.cit*, p. 204.