In this article the Rev. G. L. May, Vicar of St Matthew's Church, Elborton, Plymouth, discusses some of the issues raised by the Leslie Paul Report and a recent reply, The Paul Report Considered.

The Church of England is certainly going through the mill at the present time. What with 'South Bank Religion', the 'National Church of England Commission', and the Mutual Responsibility document from Toronto, one hardly knows which way to turn. Add to this Mr Leslie Paul's report on The Deployment and Payment of the Clergy (Church Information Office, 1964. 311pp. £2. 6d.), and our cup is full.

Is this significant? Obviously it is. On the very lowest level it suggests a reappraisal of all that has hitherto been accepted or taken for granted in the Church of England. The problem is how we are to view all these new ideas and developments. For the average minister this is no academic matter. It often seems to be suggested that the problems raised by the Paul Report are to be approved and accepted on the basis of the evidence obtained at that of Mr Paul's conclusions are unwarrantable. Viewed as a sociological document, Dr Paul has certainly been impossible to do justice to his brief. It is the duty of the sociologist to present and sift the evidence, but not to moralize and draw conclusions as Mr Paul does.

This goes to the very heart of the Report. How far can any man's assessment of what is by any standards a vast and most complex matter be the basis of the far-reaching proposals put forward? Part of the answer to this may be to remember Mr Paul's original brief from CACTM (the Central Advisory Council for the Ministry) which originally commissioned the work. It was this board which suggested that a single man be responsible for the work. It was this board which asked him to collate evidence and draw conclusions. Therefore, in the last resort responsibility for the Report and its conclusions must lie with CACTM.

But this still does not get round the basic point: Can one man's report be enough? He is, after all, working for one man, obtain, by whatever means he uses, a realistic and fair assessment of the situation? It may be granted, for instance, that he was not asked to take into account the different shades of Churchmanship in the Church of England. But to fail to do so is to bury one's head in the sand. If the blame for this is to be laid at CACTM's door, then Bishop Treacy are guilty either of wishful thinking or downright dishonesty. There is a half-hearted attempt to deal with this matter in one of the recommendations of the Paul Report makes on the Report to the Church Assembly. But this is hardly enough. The omission is not a matter of raising purely party issues; it is a typical of some of the basic inadequacies of the Report and the assumptions it makes.

The Church's Purpose

Another basic inadequacy revealed in Bishop Treacy's article is the obvious but crucial point that Mr Paul does not seem to have understood what the Church is for. Organization and statistics have a rightful place in the Church and there can be no place for muddle, but ultimately the Church is a divine body. If it is to be truly itself, it must be controlled by God, who can make all reports by Mr Paul or anyone else so much nonsense, since spiritual matters cannot be measured in purely human terms.

This raises the equally crucial point that, when considering the ministry of the Church, it is not possible to do so without considering the nature and purpose of the Church as a whole. Again this is obvious, but there seems to be little understanding of this in the Paul Report. It is perhaps not without significance that there is virtually no quotation of Scripture in the whole of the Paul Report. This is a most important aspect of English Christianity in the past has been the relationship between person and people. In his essay on the Anglican-Catholic answer is well known. But is this to determine future policy in these matters?

The Freehold

Dr Hart has also something to say about Mr Paul's proposal to abolish the parson's freehold, the minister's right to minister the gospel in his parish, free from the fear of being removed by the bishop or party factions. The Paul Report proposes to replace the freehold by a leasehold which would permit a vicar to remain in his parish for a period of ten years (with the possibility of renewal for a further five). Abuses of the freehold are well known. But Dr Hart is in no doubt that the proposed alternative would lead to the virtual extinction of all but safe central churchmen. 'When Methodism stank in the nostrils of the Establishment, and its all too Anglican' ministers were regarded as little better than talets or quibbling within the Church's gates, men like William Grimshaw of Haworth, Henry Venn of Huddersfield and John Berriedale of Elburton, who would not have retained their livings except for the freehold.'
Several essayists touch on the proposal to divide the church into ‘major’ and ‘minor’ parishes. The latter will be parishes more or less as we know them, served by a vicar. The former will be more like Methodist circuits, run by a team of clergy pooling their labours and talents.

But for whose benefit are these ministries, the clergy or the parish? In all honesty, one is compelled to feel that the former are the main consideration. Incidentally, the prospect of housing a team of clergy and their families under one roof, with a communal dining room for all, is distinctly chilling. The thought of all being gathered together for breakfast on a wet Monday morning in February is too awful to contemplate!

There is, however, a very important point behind these suggestions, and that is the attempt to cope with the problems confronting clergy in tough industrial areas with vast parishes. In other words, consideration of all the suggestions about team ministries, etc. must begin with the question: Will they really help forward the work of proclaiming the gospel and building up the church? Much as one is attached to the church of England and its peculiar ‘character’, it must not blind us to the real position or stop progress. It may be small consolation to a single-handed, overworked vicar in the middle of Bolton to be told that suggestions to help his sort of situation as put forward in the Report should be ruled out because they are against the ethos of the Church of England! If there is a criticism of the symposium, it is that it perhaps fails to give a picture of things as seen by such a minister.

**PATRONAGE AND DIRECTION**

Of the other articles in the symposium, Dr G. C. B. Davies on patronage is helpful, especially in his obvious but vital point that any change here must not result in a monochrome ministry of dull uniformity. It must allow for proper diversity and take care not to place too much power into the hands of bishops or bureaucratic regional boards.

Admittedly, too much diversity can be a bad thing, and if we who are Anglo-Catholics are anxious about patronage because of what might happen to us, we must also realize that Anglo-Catholics may feel the same thing. Patronage can be a safeguard to truth and to oddities. But to dispense with it may well bring a worse evil.

This argument can also be applied to the matter of the direction of ordinands. It is interesting to note that CACTM disagrees here with Mr Paul in its pamphlet, *A Study of the Paul Report on the Deployment and Payment of the Clergy* (Church Assembly, 15, 6d.). Whereas Mr Paul would direct ordinands for the first five years of their ministries, CACTM prefer to drop the word ‘direction’ and speak in terms of ‘making every effort to secure that a man is placed where his training and his work will be most effective in meeting the church’s need’. The important issue here is the training of newly-ordained clergy, and this is best effected by a good and helpful relationship between curate and vicar, as the present reviewer would testify, and as John Tiller in his essay on ‘Curate Recruits’ seems to imply.

The Bishop of Taunton has some excellent things to say in his article on the country clergy today, stressing so rightly the opportunities and work provided by the few as opposed to the many, and also the basic contentedness of many country clergy in their work. On this point, it is interesting to note that country clergy are as mobile as any. In this reviewer’s deanery, there are only four clergy who have been in their curates longer than he, and he has only been here six-and-a-half years. And this is out of twenty-three clergy.

To sum up, *The Paul Report Considered* is a good symposium, though perhaps rather slight in its treatment of some aspects of the Report. Perhaps this was inevitable. But it does provide a reasonably balanced view of the Report and its background, and it succeeds in its aim of providing a jumping-off point for much further discussion. It is to be hoped that Evangelicals in the Church of England will not be too reactionary in considering the whole matter. The Report provides us with a chance to offer constructive criticism and suggestions, and these can only come from considered thought on the problem which the Report poses. The symposium is a real help in this direction. We need, however, to return all the time to first principles, and to base our argument and suggestions soundly and fearlessly on Scripture. It is as we are loyal to Scripture that we shall be able to discern the real issue and to see where the remedy lies.