

Stephen Sykes
Power and Christian Theology

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Here is a scholarly book on a subject close to the hearts of all thoughtful Christians, perhaps especially members of mainstream denominations with historic and established structures of governance.

Its author has in turn occupied a professorial chair, an Episcopal throne, and whatever it is that college principals sit on - so his knowledge of the subject is more than academic.

Sykes defines his terms, weighs the biblical pros and cons with the help of subsequent doctors of the church and theologians - Augustine, Luther, Moltmann, to name a few - and then in the most difficult chapter examines the contribution of sociological theory to our understanding of power, before applying this accumulated wisdom to today's church. Here he draws heavily on the treatise 'Pastoral Care' by Pope Gregory the Great (responsible for Augustine's mission to England), and ends with this sentence which refers to the church's leaders:-

'Their powers are best employed when they are recognised by them and by us as genuine and proper, not as a substitute for service or love, but as an expression of them; and when both we and they are conscious of the dangers which accompany them.'

Anselm SSF