

A NOTE ON APOSTOLICITY

- 1) Traditional formulae, such as "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" or "I believe.....the apostolic church" express the church's belief that its faith and life must truly reflect the witness to the life and work of Jesus Christ given in the early church by the apostles and their collaborators, the "apostolic men". In this basic sense, the church is apostolic in its faith. This apostolicity pertains to what christians believe. It is God's gift in Christ which relates the Church to the Incarnate Lord and sends it on its mission.
- 2) In a derived sense ("second level") apostolicity is the quality of all the factors which contribute to the preservation of this fidelity, such as: the fellowship of the disciples (koinonia), the scriptures of the New Testament, the paradosis as rule of faith, the succession of ministers in office, the early Councils (creeds). These are not strictly "objects" of faith, as is the Word of God which they mediate and safeguard, but indispensable signs and criteria of apostolic continuity, or "notes" by whose convergence the later church may, under the Spirit's guidance, recognise itself and its faith as apostolic ("first level").
- 3) The apostolic character of these criteria ("derived", "second level") has become clearer as the church has reached deeper awareness of its paradosis, has discerned the canonical scriptures, has structured the threefold pattern of its ministry, has ensured

the proper transmission of authority through episcopal ordination, has resolved the patristic controversies, has elaborated its sacramental system. Through this process, the mystery of the church has been more fully manifested. As a result of the cumulative effect of the signs of its apostolicity, the church has obtained a deeper appreciation of the importance of the early apostolic witness for its continuing faithfulness to the Gospel.

4) We are not aware of divergences between our two communions on the basic apostolicity of the church. Some divergences concerning the signs and criteria of apostolicity seem to be compatible with agreement in faith: they belong to the realm of theology and they cross through lines of ecclesial identification. Further reflection will be required on a number of these, e.g.

1. The succession of ministers in office.
2. The significance of imposition of hands and ordination.  
(the sacrament of order - credentials for authentic ministry).
3. The functions of bishops and presbyters.
  - (a) The priestly quality of the ministry:
    - (i) its relation to Gospel;
    - (ii) its relation to Eucharist;
    - (iii) development of priestly language to describe ministers of the Eucharist\*
  - (b) The forgiveness of sins: sacramental nature of absolution.

\* See over for footnote

\* Footnote

It seems that affirmation by the primitive church of the sacerdotal ~~character~~<sup>quality</sup> of the ministry rose out of reflection on the eucharist as a memorial of the one and only sacrifice of Christ.

Just as in the Epistle to the Hebrews Christ is presented as the High Priest of a unique sacrifice, so the president of the eucharistic celebration is seen as the priest of the celebration of this memorial. To affirm the sacerdotal ~~character~~<sup>quality</sup> of the minister of the eucharist is not to question the new, unique and definitive ~~character of the sacrifice~~<sup>priesthood</sup> of Christ: any more than to call the eucharist sacrificial is to question that the sacrifice of Christ is once-for-all and sufficient. It is a question of an analogical ~~reality~~<sup>application</sup> of the sacramental order.

It is in this sense that in the Catholic tradition the priest celebrating the eucharist is said to act "in persona Christi".

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### Sub-Commission 1.

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### Supper's Scheme.

- 1 Ministry in N.S.
- 2 Apostolicity of Church
- 3 Apostolic Ministry
  - ① its place = apostolicity
  - ② its functions (esp. forgiveness of sins)
  - ③ priestly quality
- 4 Forms of ministry - bp  
- pres  
- deacon
- 5 conditions of ministry - ordination, sac. of order.

- 1 deficient theory of ministry was deficient
- 2 deficient theory of succession was deficient
- 3 Anglican history never denied essentials.

Sub-Commission 1

4. In the New Testament, Christ alone is represented as High Priest on our behalf. Ministers are never described as priests (hier~~eu~~s-sacerdot~~as~~), nor is there any evidence whether or not it was only 'episcopoi' or 'presbyteroi' who could preside at the eucharist. Though sacrificial language is occasionally used (cf. Romans 15:16), a sacerdotal quality after the Levitical pattern is not present in the New Testament description of ministry. The whole people of God exercises a priestly ministry - the fruits of the sacrifice of Christ, — and within that people the ministry exists to promote its holiness and further its mission. As such it springs from the express purpose of Christ for his church.