

PORINGLAND SUBCOMMISSION

11th-15th June, 1973

Monday June 11th

The first day's discussion began from the two Co-Chairmen's drafts, 'Ministry: A Schema for discussion' (Bishop Clark) and 'A Draft Statement on Ministry' (Bishop McAdoo) which incorporated the three A.R.C.I.C. Subcommissions' work, the criticisms submitted of these, and the W.C.C., Dombes, and Lutheran-Catholic statements on the Ministry.

'An Outline for Discussion' was also worked out, but consideration of this led to a decision to approach the subject from a different point of departure. Instead of Christ: Church: Ministry, it was agreed to:

Start from where we are: two churches in which there are ministries and within these, ordained ministry.

Give our testimony on our rôle as ministers.

Give the theological and New Testament justification for this.

Tuesday June 12th

The first part of the morning's discussion developed the theme of the structure required for the Church to exist fully as a community. This structure, which the ministry provides, must be continuous, or identity with the past is blurred. It also provides a link between the local and the universal Church.

The local Church is never an inorganic reality, but God gives it 'proedria' and 'episcopē' so that his purpose for it can be fulfilled. God wills that all should be in communion with himself and with each other. He wills that the Gospel (not preaching the Word only but the Way of Life in Christ) should spread to the end of the world through the structured community in which the Word and Sacrament are proclaimed and celebrated, wherein the Event of Salvation occurs.

There is an 'Apostolic Succession' of the Church. Bishops are representative men in time and history of the Apostolic Succession of the Church, in virtue of which they incorporate men into the ordained ministry, which is a self-perpetuating body for the diakonia of the whole Church. (The Western Church stresses Ministry as an order into

which men are incorporated; the Eastern Church says Bishops are a college because the Church is a communion.)

The functions of ordained ministry

Most characteristic feature: Chairman, co-ordinator, point of unification. Proedria: leadership in humility and openness (III John). Episcopē: the ordained ministry is at the service of communion in all its dimensions. It is for this that it has proedria and episcopē, in word (in its widest sense) and sacrament.

N.B. Ephesians 4:11-14. For building up the body in unity.

A distinction was made (and its sharpness questioned) between authoritative bishops discerning and judging and charismatic theologians developing understanding (though both are under the judgment of the Word of God). N.B. Bishops have responsibility for the community and its life.

The founding of the Church

Israel, as a structured body, rejected Jesus. So He began to re-structure a new body, a new Israel. A structured body came into existence. The Subcommission opposed the view that Our Lord did not set up a structured body because He expected the End soon, arguing that a present and an eschatological reference are not mutually exclusive in the New Testament, e.g. hierateuma in I Peter.

Functions of episcopē, an essential part of Church life, exercised in different ways: Word of God, promoting life of the Church, reconciling (II Corinthians 5:18), judging. In those we call priests today a lot of the functions of New Testament ministers are located - but these do not necessarily belong to priests. Figureheads are needed, but elders share episcopē. Problem of relation of Bishops and Priests (cp. Paul and his collaborators?). Better to say "one ministry, historically diversified into three orders" rather than "only one order of ministry". The Bishop incorporates something which is of divine institution, that could be incorporated in another way. Episcopacy is a historical (and providential) expression of an essential function of ministry. The Holy Spirit guides the Church in history in this way: this is then of 'divine origin'. The Reformers were right to start again from the New Testament, but wrong to separate from the koinonia, and wrong to deduce that there is only one doctrine of ministry in the New Testament.

Episcopē exists - with certain functions in the Churches. Why is it necessary?

If the Church is to be an Incarnate reality, episcopē is necessary humanly speaking for it to be a koinonia in the world. God must will not only the end but also the means. There are indications of this in Scripture. The Church institutionalises episcopē, whose chief functions, to serve the needs of the priestly people, flow from the Gospel and from Christ the Apostle.

Jesus takes the rôle of the servant (for its full meaning, cp. Isaiah). In the Christian community the leader is the servant (Mk.10:42-44; Lk.22:24-27), and is willing to give himself utterly to serving the community. To lead means to guide, feed, shepherd.

If we take full account of the ministry of the whole people of God, by which the ordained ministry is corrected and supplemented, then there is a greater need for the ordained minister to perform his real rôle:

as a unifying figure, as co-ordinator, as judge, as director,
as leader who serves.

(This would seem to describe the history of the modern papacy as well as reflecting the Lucan picture of an apostle in Acts 6 and 15 - an initiator who acts with the consent of the whole body.)

Tuesday June 12th (continued)

The afternoon session considered the theological and New Testament justification of ministry.

Christ is the true servant of His Church - He gives it His Spirit and feeds it with His Body and Blood.

(1) The minister is a sign that all comes from Christ. But

Christ remains the chief minister of His Church. Ministers are a historical link with what He said and did, through the Apostles and their witness to and understanding of Jesus, on which our faith is based. The authenticity of ministers, depends on their faithfulness to the Apostles' understanding of the Gospel, which is rooted in the Resurrection.

(2) The minister is a sign of the present activity of Christ, the Risen Lord who is present in His Church and in His Eucharist.

The fear was expressed that although Christ proclaimed a truth and preached a Gospel, the Church instituted a mystery religion.

The question was asked: in talking of ordained ministry are we concerned with providing officials to perform cultic acts, or with apostles to convey the message Jesus conveyed?

St. Paul was criticised for his 'fixation on Good Friday and Easter morning', but defended for his thinking in terms of life which sacramentally and by grace transforms lives: the life of Christ continuous with the Incarnate life of Jesus.

A due emphasis on the life and ministry of Jesus was necessary, and his death and resurrection should be proclaimed as the apex of the life.

A balance here is achieved by interpreting St. Paul (whose catechetical teaching we do not possess) in the light of the Synoptic Gospels, and by basing our theology on the whole New Testament.

For Our Lord, His death was His martyrdom to the truth He was teaching; He believed His Father would vindicate him and his dying for others.

It was argued, however, that our understanding of God and of Atonement requires that we see the Cross not as incidental to a life of self-offering but as essential because of the nature of man's sin and the nature of atonement.

What are ministers to proclaim?

Not simply imitatio Christi, but that the Kingdom of God is coming, the Spirit is given, Christ is risen. The Kingdom means that the love of God is manifested in forgiveness of sins and communion of man with God. The signs of the Kingdom in the Gospels (liberty to captives, forgiveness, preaching to the poor, speaking with sinners - which Jesus did in the power of the Holy Spirit) are related to the Paschal mystery.

These signs are seen also in the life of the Church. The power and compassion of God break in,

(3) The ministry is a sign that the Kingdom is present in the local community. This is a link with the apostles - this is 'apostolicity'.

But do the signs of the apostolic age continue throughout the history of the Church?

(4) The signs . . . the ministry today should show include care for sinners, which is a sign that the powerful mercy of God is limitless, all-powerful love, a power infinitely compassionate. In this sense, absolution is to be seen as a sign of the infinite love of God rather than being limited to "the sacrament of penance".

The sacramental life of the Church will nourish its capacity to express the infinite love of God. This opens up the life of the Church and points to its political dimension also.

It follows from all this that the minister is the sacramental presence of Christ (though this needs further spelling out). "Ministers, watchmen, stewards" are both signs and instruments by means of which the royal priesthood fulfils its vocation.

Here is a further description of "apostolic succession".

There is a preview of apostleship in the Synoptic Gospels where the apostles are sent out to do what Christ did, to proclaim the kingdom and heal the sick, (and "he who receives you receives me"). The coming of the kingdom is the same as the coming of forgiveness.

(5) Ministry is also a living sign of the judgment of God, for ministry highlights those who reject as well as those who receive. Ministers "reprove and exhort", though judgment (krisis, discernment) always has a positive end in view. This reminds us of the solemnity of ministry - we are not just benign benefactors.

A summary of signs of ministry.

The ministry is a sign: of the Word of God, of reconciliation, of care for the poor, of a pioneering ministry, of presidency in worship, of pastoral care.

(N.B. One can add from the afternoon's discussion:

The ministry is a sign: that all comes from Christ; that the Risen Christ is present and active in his Church and in his Eucharist; that the Kingdom is present in the local community; that the powerful mercy of God is limitless and infinitely compassionate; that God judges, reproves, exhorts.)

All these show the fruit of the Gospel and the breaking in of God's kingly rule.

Because all these exist to establish koinonia, and as the Eucharist is a proclamation of the death of Christ until he comes again, the same man is the president of the synaxis as well as minister.

If the coming of the Kingdom is the efficacious offer of divine charity in Christ, then its fruit is the Church growing as Charity Incarnate.

The Subcommittee then discussed Professor Scarisbrick's comments on the ARCIC drafts on Ministry, and in particular his contention that "there are three issues which most readers of any document we produce on Ministry will expect to find explicitly discussed:

- (1) Is episcopacy of the esse, plene esse, or bene esse of the Church?

(2) What does 'apostolic succession' mean in relation to 'valid' orders?

(3) Does ordination confer a permanent 'something' on the ordained?'

It was felt that we would wish to avoid the categories in which the questions were put, but that we have largely covered questions 1 and 2 already.

Question 3 was then debated, though it was questioned whether it was a real problem between our Churches. The dividing line is not between Catholics and Anglicans, but between both and those Protestants like Congregationalists who re-ordain where we should re-license after a period of not functioning as a minister.

The question which did arise for us, however, was: what do we mean by sacramental ordination, and can we define this solely in terms of functions? It was argued that we are ordained to be something, and are given the capacity (exousia) to function, as well as being ordained to perform functions. Ordination puts us in a new relation to Christ - an added commitment if we accept this vocation - which abides even if we default from it, or become morally or physically unfit to exercise it.

(God calls men to be Christians and to be ministers. These are the only uses of kletos and kalein in the New Testament and this fact might profitably be explored further.)

Wednesday June 13th

The morning's discussion continued consideration of how to justify the permanence of the gift of ordination.

In contrast with the Old Testament Covenant where men were born into Israel, and born into the Levitical or Davidic tribes with their particular Covenant of priesthood and kingship, the New Covenant is voluntarily accepted by Christians, as is the particularisation within this: the call to ordained ministry (which does not imply first and second class Christians).

Are we agreed that 'sign' is an essential category of ministry? There are different senses here: a saint is a sign of the kingdom (in fact) as the effects of the Gospel are reproduced in his personal life. A man like Alexander VI is only a conventional sign of Christ however. Our discussion has shifted between:

'Ministry is a sign' : 'Ministers are a sign'

'Sign of Christ' : 'Functions are signs of ministry'

One of the functions of minister is to be a sign of Christ. The Holy Spirit gives them the qualification for this. But this gives a special colour to their whole life, it is not just functional. A minister is a father of as opposed to a brother in the community.

This may be better expressed by defining ministry not only in terms of function but also of the special relationship to Christ and to the people, as 'proedria' and 'episcopē' are exercised.

The minister acts in the person of Christ insofar as he is shepherd (not head) of the community, as well as (not opposed to) a brother, and servant also.

The minister is representative of Christ (better than 'sacrament of') and makes Christ present in that capacity. I Thessalonians 2:13 "You received the word of God from us, not as the word of men but as the word of God."

Christ acts in the minister, so that he brings Christ and is Christ to the people in Christ's specific rôle as shepherd.

We need to set this properly in the ecclesial perspective and establish the multiple ministry of the whole people of God within which there is the episcopate of the ordained ministry described in the New Testament images of shepherd, ambassador, mimetes (representative and example), servant (doulos and diakonos) and steward (oekonomos of the dispensation). All functions (for a description of the Presbyter's work see Anglican-Methodist Ordinal) are exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit, as the ordination rites spell out, saying that Christ serves his Church and gives his Spirit for this. By stressing that the Church is Christ's, not the ministers', and that the Holy Spirit is Lord of the Church, not the possession of the Church, we shall avoid a false approach to the question: what makes a ministry efficacious? (see Bishop of Ossory: Draft Statement on Ministry, para.38).

We shall need also to speak of the three-fold ministry after the general exposition of ministry and episcopē within the community.

We may have reached substantial agreement, but this is not satisfactory for some until we add 'Christ is made present in the minister'. Not 'sacerdos alter Christus', but what may lie behind "rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands" (II Timothy 1:6), though some dispute whether this refers to ordination.

Do we accept that ordination is a sacramental act?

On the basis of Article 25 and the Catechism (cp. Bishop of Ossory, para 21) this is answered affirmatively, as did the Lutheran-Catholic statement and the Dombes agreement. If so, then a gift of God, a qualification, is given to the minister, and Christ acts through the bishop's action - it is not merely a human disposition. It is wise to say this, as the meaning of sacramental action, rather than use these technical terms - emotive language - but without dodging the issues.

(The merits of explanatory notes and joint as opposed to individual commentaries were then debated. It was felt that substantial agreement in faith did not imply full agreement on theology or the canonisation of one interpretation.)

The time to draft a text has now come - a schema which covers what we have dealt with, which will also disclose the lacunas.

The question was asked: is there a transmission of ordained status down the ages which will link us with the apostles? Is this our common faith, that such continuity of authorisation exists, even though it is not historically traceable? In this way we are assured that a bishop is a bishop in the Church of God.

For some Irenaeus is sufficient. For others what is primary is our faith in God's guarantee that the Church will survive and that Christ will ensure some sort of episcopē. But it was also felt that the quality of episcopē should be in historical continuity with the commission of Christ from His Father. The thing Christ started continues by incorporation into the body of ministers. This goes back as far as the evidence goes.

N.B.: The episcopal lists always refer to one particular church - to the bishops who have successively occupied this see. This is the apostolic succession of the churches. The lists which connect the ordainer with the ordained are very modern in origin and exceptional. (They are the result of a theological deformation which separated the person of the bishop from the church over which he presided.)

The bishop was elected by his clergy and by his people (up till Chalcedon) and by the bishops of the region, and ordained as bishop of this particular church by all the bishops of the province or by at least three of them. The bishop is the sacramental personification of his church. By this ordination the bishops established the new bishop in this function and certified, in and through the very act of ordination, the identity of this church with their church, the identity of their churches with the Apostolic Church (and with the Body of Christ in the Eucharistic celebration).

In the Church the right to ordain was very soon reserved to the bishop, not because he is giving something which he (alone) has, but because he is the personification of the community, the head representing the body, and because his function is to co-ordinate the charisms and the ministries, to set in due order (i.e. 'ordonner') these ministries in his community and never outside it ('jamais au dehors'). This in no way prejudices the part played by the community in the choice of the candidate. Within the framework of the communion of the churches it belongs to him to participate in the election and consecration of a bishop of the vacant or "widowed" see of a sister church in order to ensure and manifest the fact of apostolic succession in this church.

Wednesday, June 13th

While Bishop Butler and Julian Charley began drafting, the other members discussed the Draft on Apostolic Succession by the Oxford Subcommittee, and the following points arose:-

HANSON (Groundwork for Christian Unity) writes of Apostolicity, based on Luke 1:2 and Acts 1:1:- "continuity in the Church is maintained by preserving the tradition of this beginning" (p.10) - 'this beginning' = the words and works of Jesus.

Apostolos (as expounded by the Oxford Subcommittee) should be added to the New Testament images of ministry. We should also emphasise the Apostolos for the world as well as the ministry for the Church.

Apostolos is a right description of ministry but not a sufficient description of ministry - the Apostolos is sent to preach the Gospel; the minister is sent to incorporate and the build up the community. We have identified ministry too much with apostleship in a missionary sense.

Commission

"Due authorisation or commissioning by the competent body" is not sufficient as a description of ordination. 'Commissioning' is an analogy. Ordination is a sign of the granting of the prayer to God who bestows the gifts. (Bishop of Ossory, para.21).

N.B.: II Corinthians 3;4-6: 'not that we are sufficient (hikanoi) of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency (hikanotēs) is from God, who has qualified (hikanosen) us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit'.

We can use this passage to show 'the mystery of the ministry'. This is our faith in the ministry because it is faith in God working through the ministry; it is faith in the power and authority of Christ in the Spirit in and through the minister, not in the minister's authority and power - we do not "claim anything as coming from ourselves".

HANSON (p.26) writes that 'Basic ministry is the apostolic ministry of the Word' which includes worship etc. He is sent by Christ to preach the Gospel - all other ministries are within this.