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*The WCC Secretariat on Faith and Order held an international consultation on the Ordained Ministry at Marseilles in September 1972. The following draft is offered for study and comment. A revised draft will be prepared for the next meeting of the Faith and Order Commission in 1974. It is hoped that an ecumenical consensus can be attained.*

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## **The Ordained Ministry in Ecumenical Perspective**

### **Preface**

The different understandings of the ordained ministry and of its role in the Christian community represent one of the major obstacles to the unity of the Church. Much progress has been made towards reaching a consensus on the meaning of baptism and the eucharist. At its meeting in Louvain, Belgium, 1971, the Faith and Order Commission adopted texts on these two subjects which indicate that many of the issues which were divisive in the past have to a large extent been overcome. These texts were later forwarded to the member churches of the World Council with the request that they should react to them.

The question of the ordained ministry, however, remains different. Although it is being discussed in many circles, and there is no doubt that the inherited differences are losing much of their weight, it has not been possible so far to develop common views which would enable the churches to realize the unity they are called to by Jesus Christ. The Faith and Order Commission felt that there were sufficient signs of advance to justify the hope that a text on the ordained ministry could be produced similar to those on baptism and the eucharist. It decided to make every possible effort to reach this goal at its next meeting in 1974. The staff was instructed to pursue the task; a consultation was therefore held September 25-30, 1972 in Marseilles, France, to initiate a new phase of the study. The document presented here resulted from the discussion at this meeting. It is now submitted to all who take interest in the subject. As the reader will soon discover, the document makes extensive use of agreements reached at earlier Faith and Order Conferences. It was felt that, as far as possible, this fresh effort should be based on the careful work done in the Faith and Order movement. The report is not a simple summary, however, but makes the attempt to lead the discussion a step further.

All comments and suggestions for improving and completing this attempt will be gratefully received. The text is by no means final. In a year's time another consultation will revise it and it will then be submitted to the Faith and Order Commission at its meeting in the summer of 1974.

## I. The Setting of the Discussion

The question of the ordained ministry has long been a subject for discussion in the ecumenical movement. It played an important role in the early world conferences on Faith and Order in Lausanne (1927) and Edinburgh (1937). Much time was spent at these gatherings in establishing deeper understanding of the varying views held by the churches on this issue. But those engaged in the discussion at that time soon realized that the differences could not be overcome. Agreement seemed so difficult to reach that for many years the issue disappeared from the agenda of the Faith and Order movement. Only at the fourth World Conference in Montreal (1963) was the ministry to return to the discussion as a formal subject of consideration.

In the meantime the presuppositions of the discussion had changed in many respects and it was therefore not unreasonable to hope that a breakthrough could be attained. In the decades since the beginning of the Faith and Order movement the life of the churches had undergone many changes. Thus the different churches needed to re-examine their views on the ministry even independently from the encounter with other churches. This process was described by an earlier Faith and Order document in this way :

There are other reasons for taking up this question again. Perhaps most promising is the fact that the ministry discussion itself is undergoing an evolution in many Churches which makes a more comprehensive and balanced study possible. All Churches are being forced to ask, "How is the whole ministry of Christ being carried out in our tradition, in our ministry to the world?" All are being challenged to look at their total ministry afresh in the light of the Gospel. As a result of such reappraisal the last two decades have witnessed a new sensitivity to the ministry of the whole People of God, and of the place of the ordained ministry within this People. As the churches have opened themselves to the questions men are asking, as they are taking more seriously the problem of their task *in* the world, they are beginning to see the place and ministry of the ordained person in a new light also.

These questions are forcing *all* Churches to reconsider the relevance, adequacy, and pragmatic usefulness of their present understanding and employment of ministry, especially in light of the amazing fact that, even though they differ in their understanding of ordination, in considering what forms of ministry best fill the need of the present, they are reaching similar conclusions and initiating similar patterns ! . . .

There is today also a greater awareness among biblical scholars of the historical character of the patterns of ministry within the New Testament. Biblical scholarship has come to the conclusion that it is not possible to ground *one* conception of church order in the New Testament to the exclusion of others. It appears that in New Testament times differing forms co-existed and developed simultaneously in various geographical areas. Furthermore, it is increasingly realized that the forms of ministry in the apostolic period were historically, socially, and culturally conditioned and that it is, therefore, justifiable and even necessary in the present time to seek to adapt the patterns of the ministry to the needs of the current situation.<sup>1</sup>

Since the fourth World Conference of Faith and Order in Montreal, several attempts have been made to arrive at a common view of the ministry. They were summarized in a paper "The Ordained Ministry" (see *Louvain Report*) which was submitted to the Faith and Order Commission in Louvain. The Commission felt encouraged by this text and considered it to be a promising basis for progress

<sup>1</sup> *Faith and Order, Louvain 1971, Geneva, 1972, pp. 78, 79, 84.*

towards the mutual recognition of ministries. It recognized, however, that the task was not yet finished. It noted in particular the following areas which were in need of further consideration :

- (a) The connection between the ministry of the whole people of God and the ministry of the ordained ;
- (b) the degree to which the different Churches accept the ministries of others ;
- (c) the sacramental reality involved in ordination ;
- (d) the "personal existential relationship" of the minister with the Holy Spirit ;
- (e) the interior, personal and spiritual life of the minister, including marriage and celibacy ;
- (f) the ministry of women in the Church, in particular with reference to ordination ;
- (g) the implications of possible ordination for a limited term ;
- (h) the relationship between bishop, presbyter and deacon ;
- (i) the question of the nature and embodiment of apostolic succession within the Church.<sup>2</sup>

But this issue has been taken up not only by the Faith and Order Commission but by many other ecumenical bodies. In particular it has been discussed in a number of bilateral conversations between two confessions at world as well as national levels (cf. *Confessions in Dialogue*, by N. Ehrenström and G. Gassmann, Geneva, 1972). If a general agreement on the ministry is to be reached these efforts need to be taken into account.

It is in this context that the Faith and Order Commission approaches the task it has set itself. Obviously it has become more urgent than ever that the churches break through their disagreement at this point. Only as they overcome their divisions will they be able to cope fully with the task of renewal. The inseparable link between unity and renewal has become perhaps even more evident today. As the churches heed challenges that seem to carry the authentic spirit of Jesus Christ within new and surprising forms, they will discover that they are in closer fellowship. On the other hand, if they accept and strengthen the communion already existing among them they will be given more freedom to answer the lead of the Holy Spirit without undue respect for their inherited identities.

## **II. The Ordained Ministry and the Christian Community**

The ordained ministry is to be understood as part of the community. An understanding of the ministry must therefore start from the nature of the Church, the community of believers. This conviction is now shared by most of the churches. Thus the following considerations start from the Christian community ; they then try to define the nature and functions of the ordained ministry in the light of this community.

### **A. The Christian Community**

The Lord Jesus Christ, through his Word and Spirit, forgives sins, and delivers men from the lordship of the powers of destruction ; he continues to gather worshipping communities out of this broken world, the one people of God, coming from the waters of baptism. By the power of the Spirit the life of those in these communities is hid with Christ in God.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223, 224.

Membership in the community of the Church involves fellowship with God the Father through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit — it means being in a relationship of mutual indwelling with Jesus Christ. This fellowship makes possible a unique experience of community, based as it is upon communion with God and repentance, upon mutual forgiveness and acceptance, and resulting in freedom and new life. God's purpose is that all men should be brought into this community.

This general description does not yet take into account the actual sociological appearance of the community. It only points to the power which calls it into being. Obviously the forms the community assumes change in the course of history. Traditionally it has gathered locally around the word and sacraments.

But in the twentieth century the meaning of *local* is undergoing extensive modification. Geographical areas no longer delineate certain social entities as they once did. Urbanization and the modern organization of society continue to develop; owing to the characteristic mobility, dispersal, and specialization of this society, persons tend to belong to several communities simultaneously, no one of which is primarily geographically defined. This development is tending more and more to be true of continuing "rural" societies as well.<sup>3</sup>

No doubt, the neighbourhood community of Christians will continue to be an important and living expression of the Church; traditional groupings of people and pastor in a relatively homogeneous neighbourhood, where such exist and are authentic, will continue to be meaningful and valid. In our day, however, Christian people have membership in a number of diverse communities, outside as well as inside of the Christian fellowship. This phenomenon brings with it new questions as well as unprecedented opportunities to the Church. Of course the great mobility characteristic of our time makes possible many new groupings of Christians on non-geographic bases. Many fruitful ministries are emerging in such new communities.

But Christians are also participating in many kinds of broadly-based groups with humanitarian goals. Since the values of some of these other social and political structures are sometimes almost identified as Christian values, there is a constant obligation for the Christian community to examine all concrete situations and realities in the light of that commitment which the Church confesses towards Christ alone.

Nevertheless Christ sends his Church into the world to participate in his ministry of reconciliation and liberation, and membership in these communities forces many pressing human concerns into the centre of the Christian fellowship. The Church needs to take the needs, worries and hopes of its surrounding culture seriously; these concerns can become the concern of the whole of the Christian fellowship. The daily scattering of disciples throughout this variety of communities provides new opportunities for them to participate in movements of human fulfilment, liberation, "consciousness-raising", and service. Through these groups too he is building up his kingdom in the hearts of men "to unite all things in him".

Obviously such changes in the structure of the Christian community require changes in the forms of the ordained ministry.

### ***B. The Ministry of the Whole Church and the Diversity of Charismata***

The Church as the communion of the Holy Spirit is called to prefigure and proclaim the Kingdom of God by being built up as the body of Christ and announ-

<sup>3</sup> *Faith and Order, Louvain 1971, p. 89.*

cing the Gospel to the world. The Spirit gives to the Church diverse and complementary gifts — the ordained ministry is one of them ; it can be faithfully exercised only in relationship with the other charismata.

Each member of the body is called to live his faith and to witness among men through his loving service and striving for justice, and to account for his hope, sharing alongside men the common life of joy and suffering, as well as the struggle of the oppressed toward that freedom and dignity promised with the coming of the Kingdom. Thus, in every place, the Christian community witnesses to the reconciliation which it experiences, and calls all men to be reconciled with God and one another.

The proclamation of the Gospel, service to the world, and the edification of the community require a variety of activities, both permanent and provisional, spontaneous and institutional. For this purpose the Holy Spirit gives diverse and complementary gifts to the Church, among which there is the ordained ministry. This ordained ministry cannot be faithfully exercised without a close relationship with the other charismata.

### *C. The Specific Role of the Ordained Ministry*

Whatever the diversity of charismata or functions in a Christian community may be, the specific service of the ordained ministry is to gather the community and to point out its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ — Christ who is the source of its mission and the foundation of its unity.

Ministers are given to the Church as the Lord's messengers, watchmen, and stewards and as such they have to give an account to him of their stewardship. They fulfil the following threefold function :

- to gather together, build up, and oversee the believers, and ensure that the community be present in the world ; that it might be answerable for the yearnings, joys and sufferings of men, and that it may grow in the holiness of the Spirit, in order that it might be the promise of unity for the whole of humanity ;
- to unceasingly announce and show forth, by their life, the good news of reconciliation, the foundation of man's liberation by God and of the unity of believers in the faith of the apostolic church ;
- to preside over baptism and the eucharist — the thanksgiving of the community and the intercession for humanity in its entirety.<sup>4</sup>

The presence of the ministry in the community signifies the priority of divine initiative and authority in the Church's existence. The continuity of the mission of God in the world and the bond between the various communities of the Church in the past and present are provided by the Holy Spirit. Thus the minister's function is to gather the community by pointing to God's initiating love. Word and sacraments are the privileged means to fulfil this mission.

All ministry in the Church is rooted in the ministry of Christ himself, who glorifies the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ stirs up, calls, strengthens and sends those whom he has chosen for the whole ministry of his Church and for the special ministry, making them the instrument of his message and of his work. Ministers are called to serve the work of the Lord by following him, by being conformed to him, and by announcing his name. The ordained ministry thus reflects and serves the redemptive love of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Louvain 1971, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> P. Rodger and L. Vischer, ed., *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, New York, 1964, p. 84.

The dependence of all on the one Lord and Saviour is expressed by the mutual dependence of the community and the minister. Their interdependence makes it clear that the Church is not the master of word and sacraments, nor the source of its faith, hope and unity. It also makes it clear that the minister does not exist on his own, nor for himself, and that he cannot deal arbitrarily with the Christian people. For Christian life and ministry are received from an Other, from Christ living in his Church, and they are made alive by the Holy Spirit, who is sent constantly to extend God's Kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the authority of the minister lies in his service to the Christian people sent by Christ into the world. He is not an autocrat nor an impersonal functionary. He is a companion to his people in listening for the Word of God. Particularly in this age of increasing education, liberation, and popular participation in decision-making, it is important that the minister actualize his calling as a fellow-servant among the servant-people. By way of dialogue and prayer, the ministers, bound to the faithful in interdependence and reciprocity, open themselves with them to the Holy Spirit.

### **III. The Apostolicity of the Church and Apostolic Succession**

All churches agree that the Church needs to be apostolic. They differ, however, on how this apostolicity needs to be visibly expressed. While many churches maintain that the ordained minister must stand in visible apostolic succession, others do not attach the same importance to this visible sign. All churches agree, however, that the primary expression of apostolic succession is to be found in the life of the Church as a whole. It is in the context of the apostolicity of the Church that the apostolic nature of the ordained ministry needs to be discussed. Therefore the ecumenical discussion of the ordained ministry must proceed from a discussion of the apostolicity of the Church.

#### **A. The Apostolicity of the Church**

Among the attributes of ministry, apostolicity has a central place. This apostolicity is rooted in God's sending his Son into the world. Christ is the true apostle. Through him the world is reconciled to the Father. The whole Church—the people of God, the Body of Christ—is called and sent to participate in this ministry of reconciliation in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus the entire Church has the apostolic mission and ministry of being an anticipatory sign of the coming Kingdom of God. This essential apostolicity is sustained by Christ's faithfulness and the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church. There is, then, an apostolic succession of the whole Church. According to the unanimous tradition of the churches the Church is apostolic because it is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Rev. 21 : 12-14 ; Eph. 2 : 20).

This apostolicity received its first historical embodiments in the early Christian communities and in the diversity of gifts which they were given. Within these communities, the apostles, as the eye-witnesses of the risen Lord, exercised a unique and fundamental function, which could not be handed on.<sup>7</sup> However,

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Dombes, 1972, Pour une Réconciliation des Ministères, Eléments d'accord entre catholiques et protestants*, an unpublished manuscript.

<sup>7</sup> For a fuller discussion on the meaning of "apostle" see the report "Catholicity and Apostolicity", *Louvain 1971*, pp. 133-158.

In so far as they bore special, but not exclusive, responsibility for proclaiming the message of reconciliation, establishing churches, and building them up in the apostolic faith, their ministry had to be continued. Such a ministry is essential to the Church in all times and circumstances. Because of the historical nature of the Church, it is inevitably exercised in diverse ways and through varied structures, but wherever it is carried out in faithfulness to the first apostles' mission and witness, it is an apostolic ministry and stands in succession to the apostles.

Yet the apostolic succession in ministry can never be isolated from the apostolicity of the Church of which it is a part. The fullness of the apostolic succession of the whole Church involves continuity in the essential characteristics of the Church of the apostles: faithful witness to the apostolic teaching, transmission of the ministerial responsibility, community in love, sacramental life, service to the needy, dialogue with and openness to the world, and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each. Where these characteristics are present in the community, the special ministry is also in a real sense apostolic.

## *B. The Role of the Apostolic Ministry*

In order that his redemptive work might be proclaimed and attested to the ends of the earth, and that its fruits might be communicated to man, Christ chose apostles, witnesses of his resurrection, and committed to them the word of reconciliation. Having clothed them with the Holy Spirit he sent them to gather all nations into the Church and to build it upon the one foundation which is no other than himself, and to inaugurate the ministry of the accomplished reconciliation for the salvation of all men. Thus the whole Church and its special ministry have their origin in the sending of the apostles. The unique witness of the apostles to Christ is preserved by the Church in the New Testament. Their mission is continued by the Church and in its ministry.<sup>8</sup>

The apostolic succession of the whole Church is an expression of the permanence and, therefore, continuity of Christ's own mission in which the Church partakes. In ensuring this participation and succession to which it is bound, the ordained ministry — after scriptures, creeds, and sacraments, plays a vital role:

1. constantly to recall the Church to its apostolic origin and task through an authoritative proclamation of the Gospel in word and sacrament, through a fresh interpretation and concretization of the apostolic witness and mission;
2. serving all members of the Church in order to equip them to participate in the apostolic mission and service of the Church;
3. serving and signifying the unity of the local churches with one another through time and in space.

Accordingly the ordained ministry is instrumental to the preservation and actualization of the apostolicity of the Church. The orderly transmission of the apostolic ministry in ordination is normally an essential part of the means by which the Church is kept from generation to generation in the apostolic faith.<sup>9</sup>

Where this ministry is lacking a community must ask itself whether its apostolicity can be maintained. This signifies that every church is under permanent obligation to renew, and if need be, to change its ministerial structures.

<sup>8</sup> *Montreal, 1963*, p. 63.

<sup>9</sup> *Cf. Montreal, 1963*, pp. 65, 66.

### C. *Episcopal Succession and the Validity of Ministry*

Under the particular historical circumstances of the growing Church in the sub-apostolic age, the succession of bishops came to be the predominant form of ministry (among others) in which the apostolicity of the Church was expressed. This succession was understood as serving, symbolizing and guarding the continuity of the apostolic deposit of faith. All Christian traditions have been concerned to preserve, propagate, and live the apostolic faith. But some believe this faith to have been preserved uniquely in this form of ministerial succession, even though there have been varying interpretations and understandings of this succession among these same traditions.

Today a growing tendency is noticeable in these churches to interpret episcopal succession as an efficacious sign, not a guarantee, of the continuity of the Church in apostolic faith and mission, which is manifested in doctrine, proclamation, sacraments, worship, life and service. They value this sign as a gift of God, which they must preserve. Some of the factors which are leading these churches to this interpretation are as follows :

1. There is growing agreement that the New Testament presents diverse types and even several principles of organization of the Christian communities, according to the difference of authors, places and times. On this basis, there have been developed, in the course of history, multiple forms of church order, each with its own advantages and disadvantages: papal, patriarchal, conciliar, among others. Such diversity suggests the need and the freedom to respect and accept diversity and complementarity in church structures.

2. There is further agreement among scholars that although ordination of ministers of the eucharist by bishops was the almost universal practice in the Church very early, it is impossible to show that such a church order existed everywhere in the Church from the earliest times. In fact, there is evidence that even this practice did not become uniform until after several centuries. Further, there have been well-documented cases later in the Church's history in which priests — not bishops — have ordained other priests to serve at the altar. The Church itself could and did make decisions regarding such cases.

3. There is growing agreement that it is impossible to demonstrate from the New Testament that the only minister of the Lord's Supper was an ordained person. There is no clear biblical evidence that the Twelve were the exclusive ministers of the eucharist in New Testament times or that they appointed the only persons who presided at the eucharist. On the other hand, it may be noted that neither is there evidence that *all* Christians were eligible ministers of the eucharist. While in the local churches, founded by apostles like Paul, there were leaders or persons in authority, very little is said about how such men were appointed and nothing at all about their presiding at the eucharist.

4. A study of church pronouncements during the Middle Ages and at the Council of Trent suggests strongly that even though there is a constant insistence that only ordained priests can consecrate the eucharist, there is no explicit dogma about what happens — or does not happen — when, for evangelical reasons, a baptized but unordained Christian leads the eucharist. Even at Trent the only reservation made about the Protestant ministry was that it was not "legitimate", that is, not established according to canonical norms. At Trent, however, nothing whatever was said about the presence, or absence, of the sacramental body and blood of the Lord in the communion services of the Reformation Churches. Even after Trent Roman Catholics could hold St. Jerome's position



that the bishops are superior to priests because of custom rather than because of an ordinance of the Lord.

5. Implied in all the above data is the increasing awareness that there is more than one way to validate or legitimate the ministries of the various churches. Ordination by a bishop, which has been called ritual validation, is one way. Therefore episcopal as over against presbyteral church order cannot be regarded as an adequate justification of division. There can also be what has been termed an ecclesiological validation (which argues from a true manifestation of the Church which Christ founded to true ministry). There is also a charismatic validation, which argues from charismatic church order in Corinth to the possibility of having such a non-episcopal charismatic church order today. Neither of the latter two requires the laying-on of hands by bishops, but both are grounded in the Church's authentic tradition. Thus the question is posed: If the charismatic ministries were laid aside for pastoral and historical reasons, could not these ministries be resumed for similar reasons? <sup>10</sup>

Such factors, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the apostolicity of the Church, and the means of its preservation and actualization as they do, make it possible to recognize a continuity in apostolic faith, mission and ministry also in churches which have not retained the form of historic episcopacy. This recognition finds additional support in the fact that the episcopal functions and reality have been preserved in many of these churches, with or without the title "bishop".

But the importance of the historic episcopate has not been diminished by the above-mentioned findings. On the contrary, these new insights are enabling churches without the historic episcopate to appreciate it as a sign of the continuity and unity of the Church. More and more churches, including those in church union negotiations, are expressing willingness to see episcopacy as a pre-eminent sign of the apostolic succession of the whole Church in faith, life, and doctrine, and as such, something that ought to be striven for if absent. The only thing that is incompatible with contemporary historical and theological research is the notion that the episcopal succession is identical with and embraces the apostolicity of the whole Church.

In chapter VI we shall see what implications this convergence has for the mutual recognition of ministries and what steps the churches need to take in order to achieve it.

## **IV. Ordination**

### **A. The Meaning of Ordination**

It may be said that the Church, in ordaining new persons to ministry in Christ's name, is attempting to follow the mission of the apostles and remain faithful to their teaching; ordination as an act attests the binding of the Church to the historical Jesus and the historical revelation; at the same time recalling that it is the Risen Lord who is the true ordainer, who bestows the gift. In ordaining, the Church attempts to provide for the faithful proclamation of the Gospel and humble service in Christ's name. The laying on of hands in ordination can be seen as the sign witnessing to the connection of the Church and its ministry with Christ, binding the ministry to a conscious awareness of its

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Louvain 1971*, pp. 97-99.

anchorage and roots in the revelation accomplished in Him, reminding it to look to Him as the source of its commission.<sup>11</sup>

Ordination confers an authority (*exousia*) which is not that of the minister himself, but which demonstrates the authority of God received by the community; it also ratifies and manifests the fact that the minister is called and sent by God. But ordination is not the giving of a "thing" or a "possession" or even an "office" *tout simple*; it arises from and results in a personal, existential relationship with the Holy Spirit, and it inescapably binds the ordained person with the aforementioned community; it is the sign and instrument of Christ in this community.<sup>12</sup>

Properly speaking, then, ordination denotes an action by God and by the community which inaugurates a relationship in which the ordinand is strengthened by the Spirit for his or her task and is upheld by the acknowledgement and prayers of the congregation. The word ordination refers to the liturgical act of laying-on hands, accompanied by prayer for the Holy Spirit. The term is the common translation of the Greek word *cheirotomia* which literally describes the action done.

Necessarily, however, the public marking of this spiritual relationship has been expressed in social structures and understood in terms of social metaphors available to the Church in each time and place of its history. The Latin term *ordo*, with the concept of legally defined status that went with it, not only served as a conceptual vehicle for the relationship-to-community of one on whom hands had been laid, but lent itself for common use in translating *cheirotomia* in several Western languages. Similarly the distinction between "clergy" and "laity" arose as a means of putting words to this relationship at a time when the ability to read and write, or status as "cleric" or "clerk", was a notable distinguishing mark of the one set apart. The hardening of "clerical" status into one of the "estates" of medieval society further emphasized the element of social stratification that had crept into the usage, and powerfully influenced the assumptions associated with ordination. Even the Reformation habit of calling only ordained people "ministers", thus disqualifying the term for reference to the ministry shared by all Christians, tended to have an impact on the habits and thoughts of the denominations involved. Most New Testament terms for ministerial leadership are, by contrast, functional. But even these words involve a borrowing of social imagery. The *diakonos* is a waiter, the *episcopus* an overseer or foreman, and the *presbyteros* an old man!

We may think of this inevitable expression of spiritual reality in available social categories as sacramental, since God's work of grace is present and operative "in, with, and through" the social conventions of which he avails himself. At the same time, we should be careful not to let the social metaphor that may happen to be in use influence us, even unconsciously, in our construction of the theological argument.

Yet it is inevitable that some such metaphor be employed, for this is implied by the very fact of incarnation. Thus, whatever language is preferred, ordination does not place the ordinand in a higher spiritual status in the community. It does not grant him or her entrance into a closed company of initiates with access to special traditions or privilege, nor does it imply the possession of a special secret knowledge. It does not give the ordained person a ministry which he exercises in total independence and isolation from the rest of the people of God. Yet the ordained minister is one in whom the ministry of the whole community finds focus, definition, and visibility.

<sup>11</sup> Louvain 1971, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

## B. The Act of Ordination

The act of ordination is at one and the same time three things: *invocation of the Holy Spirit (epiclesis)*; *sacramental sign*; and *commitment*.

It is:

1. "An invocation to God that he bestow the power of the Holy Spirit upon the new minister" and upon the community to which he is related.<sup>13</sup> The otherness of God's initiative of which the ordained ministry is a symbol is here acknowledged in relation to ordination itself. The Spirit blows where it wills, and invocation of the Spirit involves risk. The invocation of the Holy Spirit is at once indispensable to the act of ordination and a reminder that what takes place in this act may not be wholly contained within the limits of the community performing the act.

2. "A sign of the granting of this prayer by the Lord who gives the gift of ministry."<sup>14</sup> The community ordains in the confidence that—free as the Spirit is—God enters sacramentally into historical forms of human relationship and imagination and uses them for his purpose. Thus the sign of ordination is performed in faith that the spiritual relationship signified is present in, with and through the words, the acts, and the churchly forms in use.

3. A commitment by the community and the one ordained to the testing and service required in the new relationship. By receiving the minister in the act of ordination, the community commits itself to responsibility for and openness toward this new minister. Likewise the one ordained commits himself or herself to the responsibilities of this new relationship.

"In order to experience and demonstrate the truth that setting apart is not to some superior level of discipleship, but rather to service *within* the Church, it is important that the entire process of ordination involve the whole body of the people. There needs to be continual emphasis on the fact that ordination is neither "over-against" nor *vis-à-vis* the congregation, but rather, that a person is addressed in the midst of the people. It is also important that the congregation have a part in the calling, choosing and training of an ordinand, preserving the basic significance of the call to the ministry. This means more than the inclusion of a sentence or two in the liturgy and ordaining in the *presence* of the laity, important as that may be.

A long and early Christian tradition placed ordination in the context of worship and especially of the eucharist. Such a place for the service of ordination preserves the understanding of ordination as an *act* of the *whole* community, and not of a certain order within it or of the individual ordained. Even if one believes that the act of ordaining belongs to a special order within the Church, it is always important to remember that the entire community is involved in the act. Ordination in association with the eucharist keeps before the Church the truth that it is an act which initiates a person to a *service of the "koinonia"*, (the fellowship), a service both to God and to the fellow man. It is this *koinonia* that the eucharist expresses *par excellence* and by continuing to relate ordination to the eucharist this dimension of ministry is called to mind. Ordination within the service of the eucharist also reminds the Church that the ordained ministry is set apart to point to Christ's own ministry and not to some other. By placing ordination in the context of worship and especially the eucharist, this act is referred to God Himself and the ordained person is dedicated to the service of "His Servant" who offers Himself for the salvation of the world.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89.

These thoughts raise the question whether our present liturgies and formulas for the act of ordination are adequate to express what we believe about this act in the life of the Church. Liturgical reform or renewal at this point could be the occasion for ecumenical convergence and for the further overcoming of barriers to the mutual recognition of ministries.

### C. *The Ordination of Women*

The question of the ordination of women has been under discussion in the ecumenical movement for some time. More than seventy member churches of the World Council of Churches now ordain women to the sacramental ministry and since the Second Vatican Council the question has also been increasingly discussed in the Roman Catholic Church.

Since those who advocate the ordination of women do so out of their understanding of the meaning of the Gospel and ordination, and since the experience of the churches in which women are ordained has been positive and none has found reason to reconsider its decision, the question must be asked as to whether it is not time for all the churches to confront this matter forthrightly. Churches which ordain women have found that women's gifts and graces are as wide and varied as men's, and that their ministry is fully as blessed by the Holy Spirit as the ministry of men. But even churches which already ordain women must guard against discriminatory tendencies, since a real ambiguity can be observed in these churches—the women ordained have usually been given positions of juridical and pastoral inferiority. The force of nineteen centuries of tradition against the ordination of women cannot be lightly ignored. But traditions have been changed in the Church. This question must be faced, and the time to face it is now.<sup>16</sup>

The perspective in which this issue must now be confronted brings into view the question of what the deeply relational character of humanity (Genesis 1:27) means for the form of our response to the Gospel. The duality of our sexual nature can be interpreted in different ways. Those traditions which ordain only men tend to view the differentiation of the sexes as a complementarity which justifies clear-cut institutional differentiation of male and female roles. Traditions which do ordain women tend to treat sexual differences as unimportant in this context, however relevant such difference may be in other areas of concern. Thus the debate reaches an impasse, borne of reading the same facts in different ways.

Part of the difficulty no doubt arises from the predominance of male assumptions in Church organizations and of male imagery in theological concepts. But this male predominance, where it is a factor, is only an instance of our larger failure to think deeply about the relevance of our full, relationally understood, nature as sexual beings for our calling to the ministry of Christ's Church. It is equally superficial to take our sexual duality for granted and to say it makes a fundamental difference for ministry as to take it for granted and to say it makes no difference at all. In both perspectives the relational nature in which men and women share if they are to be fully human is slighted and the resulting patterns of ministry are impoverished through a lack of engagement of the full humanity of those who serve the Church.

Such issues as the feeling of some men that their security and authority are challenged, and the frustration that some women feel as they seek greater involve-

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

ment and influence, are real but subsidiary in the present context. The real issue is that the Church is perpetuating a situation in which both men and women are diminished. Because of this, it is hard for both men and women to achieve a satisfactory understanding of their potential ministerial roles. Yet this dilemma can be resolved in the actual working situation, providing no previous limitation of role has been assumed by either man or woman, and provided that a mutual openness is present.

For most communions, the role of women in the ministry is a matter of discipline and not of doctrine, although there are doctrinal positions relevant to the question. If agreement could be reached that the disciplinary status of the question predominates, the issue could be decided by a future ecumenical council. Short of that, differences of opinion on this subject need not, even now, be obstacles to the mutual recognition of ministry. Ecumenical considerations need not restrain a full and frank facing of this question.

#### D. Necessary and Unnecessary Conditions for Ordination

It follows from what has been said about ordination that certain pre-conditions and expectations regarding the ordinand are indispensable, while others are not. It is especially important today to be clear about this in view of the multitude of experiments in new forms of ministry with which the churches are approaching the modern world. At various times and places, the churches have dispensed with some or all of the following conditions, which, given the appropriate circumstances, may be recognized as *adiaphora*:

1. *Completion of an academic programme.* While the ordained ministry requires a competence suitable to the style of ministry to be undertaken, it does not follow that such competence is achieved only through formal study or the acquisition of degrees, or even through prescribed patterns of preparation laid down by the Church. In the case of team ministries, a variety of types of preparation for the ministry can enrich the capacity of the group to serve. This observation, of course, is in no way intended to diminish the importance to the Church of its Doctors of Theology, its trained interpreters of scripture to God's people, or its experts in other disciplines. It is merely to say that certain kinds of ministry may need other competences, including extensive experience in the "secular" world, even more.

In order that it may more adequately fulfil its pastoral responsibility to Christian people, and its mission of service in the world, the Church needs to avoid a monolithic pattern of professionalism in its ministry. Indeed practice has varied more than many realize, in that large numbers of ministers teach in theological faculties or even in public education, or follow (at least part time), other vocations commonly considered similar or congruous to the ministerial profession. At the same time, in assuming that ministers do not work in factories, for example, or in other positions not characterized by academic attainment, the Churches have lost contact with, and ceased to minister to, important elements of the population.<sup>17</sup>

2. *The prospect of ministry salaried from church sources.* Financial support from the Church is not essential to ordained ministry, and may even, in some cases, diminish its effectiveness. While the Church has a clear duty to make

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

financial provision for its servants, given appropriate conditions, support may also come from elsewhere.

3. *The prospect of full-time service.* Nothing in scripture demands that all ministers be full-time. The New Testament, indeed, gives the opposite impression. While full-time ministry has advantages, and may be indispensable in some situations, there are other circumstances when part-time arrangements make ministerial leadership possible, and the secular experience of the minister may enrich the ministry.

4. *The prospect of uninterrupted service for life.* While the initial commitment to ordained ministry ought normally to be made without reserve or time limit, leaves of absence from this service are compatible with ordination, and ought to be granted in cases of need. Further, there may be cases in which an ordained minister wishes, subsequently to his or her ordination, to lay aside this relationship to the community and rejoin the common ministry of all Christians. Such a desire need not mean that the initial act of ordination was a mistake or that the minister's service was not blessed by the Holy Spirit. A request to lay aside the ordained ministry ought to be granted without opprobrium or reproach.

5. *The prospect of service in the traditional parish structure.* Many forms of non-parochial ministry need to be accorded a place in the structures of the Church on an equal basis with parochial forms.

6. *The prospect of service within the Church's visible organization.* The possibility of ministry performed entirely within the academic, the business, or other "secular" context must always remain open.

If theology is indeed the "attempt to relate the truths of God to the torments of the world", then an attorney, an economist, a youth sensitive to injustice, a housewife, a school teacher, a junior executive, or a scientist, none of whom have ever had formal theological education, may bring the word of God with particular power in certain situations. By a careful drafting of its standards for stated posts or types of appointment, and by more varied and imaginative approaches to education for such persons in the meaning of faith, the Church may use their services without compromising its commitment to learning or to theological responsibility.<sup>18</sup>

In considering new forms of ordained ministry, the Church must always be on guard against creating situations in which certain ministries, for practical purposes, have second class status. This may happen in one way where the parish ministry dominates the Church's political structure and tends to exclude experimental or specialist ministers from decision-making power. It may happen in another way where specialist ministries gain unwarranted prestige and the Church looks down upon the service of the parish generalist. Both these tendencies, in fact, may be present at the same time. These are matters not only of internal political structure, but of basic attitudes which need to change as our understanding of the scope of ministry grows.

On the other hand, and just because the understanding of ministry is becoming broader, it is important to state those preconditions which do seem indispensable for ordination. Four such qualifications seem worthy of consideration :

1. That the ministry for which a Christian is ordained have a demonstrable relationship to the Church's *mission*, however innovative the proposed pattern of activity.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

2. That the ministry be one which gathers and builds up some form of missioning community, and hence that the ordained minister take responsibility for aiding and enabling the ministry of others.
3. That the ministry be carried out in informed fidelity to the good news of God's reconciliation in Christ, and the minister be appropriately prepared.
4. That the ministry be conducted in such a way that the minister relates himself or herself to brothers and sisters in ministry, thereby living out a relationship of mutual accountability and concern within the people of God.

## **V. Renewal of Ministry**

### **A. *The Inescapability of the Challenge to Renewal***

Renewal is a perennial aspect and a continuing demand of the Church's apostolic character. In our time God has placed the Church in a world of which bewilderingly rapid change is one of the most obvious characteristics. Whether we like it or not, this world inevitably impinges upon the churches and upon their ministries. This fact requires the churches to be constantly open to renewal. The will to renewal is a measure of the vitality of a church and of its ministry. A complacent ministry, which blinds itself to the need for renewal, is a spiritually moribund ministry. A church and its ministry renew themselves by returning to the source of spiritual life, to the Bible and the apostolic tradition; by responding to the call of the Lord who confronts his people in every new situation that they face; and by opening themselves anew to the Holy Spirit who spoke and speaks through the prophets, the apostles, and the teachers of the Church in the past, but who also challenges and instructs the people of God through the work that he carries on in the world today. Thus the response of a church to the changing situations in the world must combine the resources which God has imparted to his pilgrim people in the past with the insight that they receive from the world in which God has placed them.

(1) All the churches have had to rethink the way in which the Bible is authoritative for their formulated theology and for their life.

(2) All the churches have had to become aware of the common ground that they share with other religions and ideologies and to specify more precisely the real differences between Christianity and these other religions and ideologies.

### **B. *The Problem of Conflicting Interpretations of the Minister's Role(s)***

Any doctrine on the ministry conveys the image of a role which the minister has to fulfil in the community. As he accepts the ministry, he approaches the community with this understanding of his mission. He will soon discover, however, that the actual expectations of the community differ from his own understanding. Since the ordained ministry fulfils a representative function in the community, he needs to take these expectations into account.

Very often problems arise from this tension and many ministers experience a difficult dilemma. Either they adhere to their vision of the ordained ministry and lose contact with the community or they adjust to the role they are actually expected to play and experience feelings of guilt. Renewal can be achieved only if the two understandings of the minister enter into a creative tension. The

minister is called to lead a congregation against their understanding, but he must also respect the conscience of his fellow Christians. The community must become aware that their expectations may need correction.

Many examples of this tension could be given. The minister may be expected to serve the religious needs of the existing community. The minister, however, needs to fulfil his missionary calling. He may be expected by the community to be a symbol of order. But he may feel called to ally himself with reformatory or revolutionary movements. The roles can also be exchanged. The minister may see his role in holding back the community from reforms and changes, while the community may wish him to assume a forward-looking leadership.

(1) When the mutual recognition of ministers is being discussed, this tension between different roles must be taken into account. Agreement on a doctrinal level does not necessarily open the way to unity. The image which goes with the ministry is not encompassed by any theologically-formulated understanding; therefore mutual understanding of the actual role the minister plays in community and society is an important matter for ecumenical debate.

(2) A serious problem faces the minister who sees himself called to realize what he sees as the "kingdom of God" but whom the institutional church that has ordained and supports him expects to devote his ministry chiefly to producing statistically measurable results and to keeping a church plant in repair.

(3) Increasingly, many ordained ministers have had to determine for themselves how closely they may or can ally themselves with reformatory or revolutionary movements. They have had to do this in the tormenting awareness that the initial and praiseworthy purpose of these movements was to right injustices and to reform dehumanizing social and political structures, but their progress has sometimes disclosed that they may have within themselves the seeds of other injustices and of other dehumanizing structures.

### *C. New Ministries and Old Ministries*

The experience of God's pilgrim people in both the remote and the recent past makes it clear that new forms of the ministry may turn out to have as much to recommend them as the forms that a church in a given time or place may have inherited. At the same time, patterns of the ministry with a long history in the Church frequently have proved to be eminently adaptable to new situations. A church in a given time and place ought not therefore lightly to abandon an inherited pattern or replace it with a different arrangement merely because the inherited pattern is old and the different arrangement is new. For that reason, a church today may indeed find it possible and even highly desirable to retain or take over a venerable and traditional pattern of the ordained ministry — for example, the historic episcopate or the threefold order of bishop, presbyter, and deacon — as long as this pattern shows itself capable of accommodation to the needs of a new situation that a given church confronts. At the same time, a church should not be faulted if it supplements an inherited pattern with new forms, or if it devises totally new forms because totally new needs can be met in no other way. For example, ministries to members of specific professions and occupational groupings have filled vital needs in many places. At any rate, for the creation of new forms of ministry, the churches have paradigms in the multiformity of the ministry in the apostolic and sub-apostolic church as the New Testament reflects it, as well as in subsequent periods and in other places in the Church's long history.



(1) The need for a sharpened sense of ecumenical responsibility at this point cannot be overstressed. The inter-relatedness of the churches that has made the modern ecumenical movement both possible and necessary should have made us all aware that no church can wholly escape the impact of another church's action. It may not always be possible to implement changes in the ministry through an ecumenical forum — desirable as this may be. Indeed, certain problems, even certain almost universal problems, may be amenable to solution only at a denominational or even local level. But in the process of making changes each church should seek to be as sensitive as possible to the potential ecumenical implications of its solutions to its problems, especially in so sensitive an area as the ministry.

(2) We observe that for many lay people the problems of renewal in the ministry and of the mutual recognition of different ministries often appear less formidable than they do to ordained ministers and church leaders. In some areas this may reflect on the part of the former their ignorance of or their indifference to the issues involved. But it could also reflect a clearer grasp on their part of the essentials of a situation that have escaped the vision of persons preoccupied with institutional considerations.

(3) Participation in an interdenominational or interdisciplinary team ministry has created questions for many ordained ministers about the significance of ordination as their churches have conceived it or about the validity of the reasons for further withholding recognition of the ministry of a dedicated teammate of a different denomination.

#### *D. Renewal and the Social Milieu*

The particular pattern and orientation of ordained ministry, and the particular demands the Church must make upon the ordained ministry, will be prescribed by the needs of the Church in a particular environment and at a particular point of history. The Church never ceases to be part of the world, to be set in this or that socio-cultural matrix, to be in a sense the prisoner of history. Because the incarnation dictates the radical historicity of the Church, it must always seek to be *contemporary* in its understanding of its task, and therefore of its ministry. When the circumstances of the Church change, its inherited patterns of ministry will need reformulation and reshaping; there is the continual need for the ministry to incarnate itself in the culture in which it finds itself.

Such obedient adaptation is made more difficult when the previous historical experience of the Church is "absolutized" and regarded as normative for all time, or even given an "ontological" rationale. For example, when Christianity was first brought to the Philippine Islands it was not socially possible for Filipinos to be ordained. But there was no justification for perpetuating this tradition for 400 years. Or again, Jesus did not in fact include any women or Gentiles among the Twelve, and there were understandable reasons for this. But it is quite another matter to assert, on this ground, that women, for example, are by nature physically, personally and ontologically incapable of receiving the grace and responsibility given in ordination.

The question of the renewal of each tradition of ministry is seen to be the more urgent when one remembers that it is the Church's task under God, not meekly to accept and follow a society's custom of devaluing certain people by categorizing them and treating them all in a certain manner. Although the Church will inherit the values and attitudes of the society and era of which it is a part, it will nevertheless seek to criticize and transcend these attitudes according to the mind of Christ. It is certain that every culture and every society will have

its own difficulties in attaining the full humanization of its inhabitants. Both racism and unjustified prejudice regarding the place and capabilities of women, for example, abound in the Church as well as the world. The Church has to take the limited vision of its people seriously. But it is also bound to bring the judgment of the Gospel to bear upon its cultural predicament. It is also bound to stand as best it can for the principle that it is the gifts and calling of God which should determine the possibility of ordination, not a classification by race, colour, social level, or sex.<sup>19</sup>

### *E. Renewal and Mutual Recognition of Ministries*

Renewal is not mere change, novelty, or mere accommodation. Renewal in the church always involves a new measure of commitment to Christ's will for the world that he has reconciled to the Faith through his life, his sacrificial death, and his rising to life again. Renewal is the realization in human time and space of the purposes of the perennially recreating Spirit and of the Christ who makes all things new. But in our imperfect world and in its bondage under the present age we are still, even in renewal, under the judgment of God.

(1) This situation demands that both the institutional church and the individual ordained minister devoutly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in contemplating, implementing, and evaluating any given change in ministerial patterns and practices.

(2) At the same time, renewal is neither an absolute precondition of mutual recognition of ministries nor a guarantee that such recognition will inescapably follow. The absence of the kind or degree of renewal that a part of the church or an individual in the church may envision must not become a pretext for withholding recognition. On the other hand, renewal must not be sought merely because mutual recognition is an anticipated consequence.

Precisely because renewal is so intimately linked to the continual repentance to which Christ calls us, renewal has a necessary priority in both our personal lives and in our corporate existence. We can refuse the call to renewal only at our great spiritual peril. But we may confidently hope that, in renewing us, our common Lord (and the Holy Spirit that he gives to all his brothers and sisters) bring us closer together with one another.

## **VI. Towards the Recognition of and Reconciliation of Ministries**

### *A. The Unity of the Church and the Recognition of Ministries*

For the Church to be one the full mutual recognition of ministries is required. The statement on the unity we seek which was adopted by the New Delhi Assembly (1961) makes this point clearly. As it enumerates the conditions which need to be fulfilled to be able to speak of a fully committed fellowship it also mentions the ministry. Unity will have been achieved only when members and ministers are recognized throughout the Christian community. It is not only necessary that the ministers of one community be admitted to fulfil certain functions in the other community. This would still be only limited recognition. It must be possible, at

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 93.

least in principle, that ministers be able to fulfil their ministry in any community. Of course, there may be restrictions of an administrative nature which limit the exercise of the ministry to certain areas. Such restrictions can exist within the one Church. But unity requires that the calling to and fruit of the ministry be recognized everywhere.

Division among the churches has often found expression in the mutual rejection of ministries. This rejection is not always due to a difference in the understanding of the ministry as such. Recognition of the minister can be withdrawn because the minister is associated with what is regarded to be error in his community. He cannot be accepted as long as his community persists in its particular confession or ethical decision. As soon as agreement on this point of division has been reached, the minister will also be automatically recognized. Division can also be due, however, to the understanding of the nature of ministry itself and efforts towards unity must therefore include the working out of an agreement on the ministry.

The first kind of division mentioned above is found, for instance, between the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches or between certain Protestant Churches. The second kind is found for example between the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Reformation, including the Anglican Communion. The sign of the apostolic succession has become a major factor of disunity in the latter cases. It follows that mutual recognition cannot be achieved in the same way with all churches. While in some conversations the emphasis must be laid on matters of faith which divide, in others attention must centre on the understanding of the ministry itself.

A common understanding of the ministry will thus not have the same effect on all relations between divided churches. This question is certainly of vital importance for all churches, and it is clear that without a common understanding no decisive progress can be made on the road towards unity. But while for some churches a common view and practice of the ministry will not immediately change the situation, for others they would represent the breakthrough which is required. A common understanding is a necessity, but it is clear that these efforts be supported in each particular case by supplementary avenues towards unity. Full mutual recognition can be achieved only through a multiplicity of individual efforts.

Furthermore, the conditions under which divisions occurred must also be taken into account as the achievement of mutual recognition is contemplated. They will determine to a large extent the way to be followed to attain agreement. For instance, mutual recognition between the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Reformation can be realized only through a re-examination and re-evaluation of the event of the Reformation at the beginning of the 16th century; unity between Anglicans and Methodists must take into account the conditions of their separation in the 18th century. This historical dimension should not be over-emphasized, however. Common understanding among all churches is necessary today precisely because the churches have moved beyond the conditions of their separation. A mere re-enacting of the division cannot heal the rift. The churches must move together as they renew themselves today.

### *B. Different Degrees of Recognition*

The transition from separation to unity cannot be made all at once. It must be made step by step. The churches find themselves at different stages on the road. While some churches are very close to mutual agreement, others still find

insurmountable obstacles. In order to understand the present situation it might be useful to distinguish different degrees and modes of mutual recognition.

1. The least degree of mutual recognition — generally achieved among churches participating in the ecumenical movement — is that of mutual respect. The minister of the other church is not simply considered as a private individual but as one who is invested with a certain authority, which enables him to be the spokesman for his community. His representative character is recognized, at least for the purpose of carrying out the ecumenical dialogue. This acceptance does not prejudice the spiritual value of his ministry but suspends any negative judgment for the sake of positive encounter. Though no theological conclusions are drawn from this attitude it has more theological implications than most churches would admit.

2. Another degree of recognition is reached when the ecclesial nature of the other church is acknowledged; then the ministry, though it may not be without defects, cannot be declared to be without any spiritual significance. The ministers are seen to have been raised up by God for the equipment of his people and to be actually engaged in the task assigned to the ordained ministry. Their ministry just lacks the fullness which is promised to the apostolic ministry.

While in many cases, such recognition does not lead to any practical effects, it very often provides the basis for extensive collaboration. Though the churches cannot recognize one another as Christ's Church in the full sense of the word they allow their ministers to work together in many respects. They may engage in common witness in areas of ecumenical experiment or in missionary situations. They may even, where the ecclesiological conditions permit it, preside together over the celebration of the eucharist on exceptional occasions, although their churches have not yet reached a full accord on the eucharist and remain separate from one another.

3. Still another stage is reached when the ministry of the other church is officially acknowledged as the apostolic ministry given by Christ. Such recognition would lead in some cases to full communion between the two churches; in any case it provides the basis for more extensive collaboration and is normally the basis for more frequent common celebration of the eucharist. But for some churches it would affect the relations only if agreement on the other divisive issues could be reached as well.

4. The decisive stage is the mutual recognition of the communities, implying the mutual recognition of the ministry. When the churches reach this stage, they agree to recognize the other church as Christ's Church as much as they regard themselves as such. This does not necessarily mean that they need to adopt the same organizational structures but it implies a readiness for interpenetration where demanded by the witness to the Gospel.

This description of stages is obviously schematic. It does not imply that each relation between two churches must pass through all these stages. It is just an attempt to identify the different degrees of recognition which can actually be found among the churches.

### *C. Proposals for Advancing on the Way towards Mutual Recognition*

In order to advance towards the goal expressed in the New Delhi statement deliberate efforts are required. Discussion can help to clarify the issues but discussion alone will not solve the problem. The churches must ready themselves for actual changes in their approach and their practice.

According to what was said above, two things are of crucial importance for mutual recognition of ordination practice. First, the rite used must express the intention to transmit the apostolic ministry of the word of God and of the sacraments. Second, the rite must include an invocation (*epiclesis*) of the Holy Spirit and the laying-on of hands. The invocation of the Holy Spirit is intended to safeguard and to attest what in some traditions is called the "sacramentality" of ordination.

In order to achieve mutual recognition, different steps are required of different churches :

1. (a) Churches which have preserved the episcopal succession have to recognize the real content of the ordained ministry that exists in churches that do not have such an episcopal succession. In spite of the mutual separation of both kinds of church, the God who is ever faithful to his promises gives to the communities that lack the episcopal succession but that live in a succession of apostolic faith, a ministry of the word and sacraments the value of which is attested by its fruits.

(b) The churches without episcopal succession have to recognize that, while they may not lack a succession in the apostolic faith, they do not have the fullness of the *sign* of apostolic succession. If full visible unity is to be achieved, the fullness of the sign of apostolic succession ought to be recovered.

2. (a) It is necessary that the value of the episcopal ministry, particularly in its pastoral aspects, should be reasserted, and that its significance as a personally embodied sign of visible unity should be rediscovered.

(b) On the other hand it is necessary to recognize ordained ministries that exist apart from an episcopal succession but which embody a succession of ordained ministers who combine in their ministries the functions of both bishop and presbyter. It may also be possible to recognize some ministries that do not claim a formal episcopal or episcopal-presbyterial succession but that in fact exist with the express intention of maintaining a succession in the apostolic faith.

#### *D. Towards a Universal Ecumenical Council*

The issue of the ministry is being discussed in many different conversations. It is of crucial importance in union negotiations and bilateral talks between world confessional families. It is also being discussed intensively where increased collaboration is being proposed. All these efforts need to be pursued.

The churches need to go as far in mutual recognition as their ecclesiological positions allow. They are being pressed by the urgency of the witness they have to proclaim. But they will discover the answers to the questions on which they are divided only as they advance. Thus they will make progress on the road to mutual recognition as they realize the communion which they are given to see among them.

For some churches this may mean extending their collaboration and undertaking common pastoral work in areas of particular need (mixed marriages, diaspora situations, etc.). For other churches, the time for more frequent common celebration of the eucharist may have come and they may be called to approve officially the practice of occasional common celebration when particular circumstances require it.

In any case, all efforts need to converge towards one goal. If they do not, they will lead in different directions. The suggestion of a "universal ecumenical council" may provide this common goal. As the churches prepare for this goal they are quite naturally being driven to reach common understanding and practice of the ministry. The goal of the council would force them to re-examine their systems of representation in view of a common event. In the end, the council may not convene. But it may, as a tentative goal, help to hold the differing efforts together and lead towards the mutual recognition mentioned in the New Delhi statement. The common preparation may at the same time serve as a framework for their joint efforts at renewing their ministries.

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