

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission, Southern Africa

THE MINISTRY

A Working Paper

I CHURCH AND MINISTRY

1. The Church

God has called his Church into being to proclaim his sovereignty over all creation, and to declare his loving purpose for all mankind. This purpose, foreshadowed in the Old Testament, is fulfilled in God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, whom he sent into the world to reconcile all men to himself.

2. Christ, the Source of Ministry

Christ continues this mission and ministry through his Body, the Church, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ, working through his Spirit, is the source of all divine gifts including that of ministry. Christ alone is the true priest, and all priesthood within the Church derives from his priesthood.

3. The Ministry of the Whole Church

Ministry is Christ's gift to the whole Church. It is not restricted to ordained persons but is expressed in many forms. Every Christian is committed by baptism to participation in the ministry of Christ in the service of God and the world.

4. Orders

As a visible and historic community the Church requires an organization and structure. This is provided by the ordained Ministry. The Church as the Body of Christ has a unique share in his mission as the prophetic, priestly and kingly servant of God. This inward reality of the life of the Church finds a sacramental expression in the representative action of ordained Ministers. Both our Communion accept the primitive three-fold ordained Ministry of bishop, priest and deacon. It is recognized that the Church may evolve

other patterns of ministry in response to changing conditions, provided that these patterns are not inconsistent with Scripture and tradition.

5. Ordination

God calls men to the ordained Ministry through the Church. It is the responsibility of the Church to seek and to foster vocations, and to test the conviction of each individual who believes himself to be called to the ordained Ministry. Through the laying on of hands and prayer of the Church, Christ, the real minister of ordination, commissions the candidate and gives him grace to fulfil his ministry. Ordination to the same form of Ministry is not repeated in either of our Churches. Through ordination a man is made a minister of the whole Church. He is authorized by appropriate canonical authority to exercise his ministry in specified areas from time to time.

6. Apostolicity

The whole Church is apostolic, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. This is the context in which the apostolic succession of the Ministry must be seen. Apostolic succession is regarded by the Church as signifying the continuity through history of its faith, witness, life, worship and commission with that of the apostles. In our two Churches the preservation of this apostolic heritage is ensured by fidelity to the apostolic tradition in the succession of responsible pastors and teachers of the Church.

II THE SACERDOTAL ASPECT OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

7. Introduction

The sacerdotal aspect of Ministry has been a point of controversy with a bearing on a full understanding of the Christian Ministry since the Reformation. In particular it is central to the dispute about the validity of Anglican Orders. Therefore a critical survey of the history of the concept is relevant.

8. The New Testament

a) The New Testament takes it for granted that priesthood in the ordinary religious sense belongs to the Levitical

priests, whose main priestly function is the offering of sacrifice, though there are some others. This priesthood has been abrogated by Christ, in his total fulfilment of what it sought to achieve. So the Epistle to the Hebrews presents Christ as the eternal high priest who has offered the perfect once-for-all sacrifice of himself. The old Levitical priesthood is seen as a type of this eternal priesthood of Christ, which is therefore to be understood analogically.

b) This priesthood of Christ, like his other messianic attributes, is shared in some manner by the Church: cf. 1 Peter and the Apocalypse. Priesthood is not mentioned in connection with the ministry of deacons, presbyters and bishops.

c) The Eucharist, however, is set forth in a sacrificial context, though not with any great emphasis. Thus it is instituted at Passover, and it is a memorial and showing forth of the death and resurrection of Christ, which in turn is understood by New Testament writers in sacrificial terms: cf. the allusions to Passover, Isaiah 53, and the day of atonement.

d) However, the New Testament never talks of the Christian community as 'offering' the Eucharist, but only as 'offering', for example, a sacrifice of praise, the offering of faith, your own bodies as a holy and living sacrifice, etc.

## 9. The Church up to the Reformation

a) But very early in the post-apostolic Church the language of offering and sacrifice is extended to the Eucharist. Thus from the Didache the text of Malachi 1:11 is applied by writers to the Eucharist.

b) As a result of this we find Tertullian and Cyprian calling bishops, as those who presided over the eucharistic worship, sacerdotes. This usage becomes commonplace in later patristic writings.

c) Origen seems to be the first to apply the title of sacerdos to presbyters, and his example is followed occasionally by Ambrose and the Apostolic Constitutions (c.400); but this does not become general usage until several centuries later.

d) From the Early Middle Ages onwards the ministry of presbyters (and bishops) is conceived of more and more exclusively as a sacerdotal one; a ministry of offering the Christian sacrifice, and of mediating between God and the Christian people. Liturgical texts of the period testify to this development by the way they assimilate the Christian Ministry to the Old Testament Levitical priesthood, and the Mass to Levitical sacrifice.

e) By the Late Middle Ages the Christian Ministry is thought of overwhelmingly in sacerdotal terms.

#### 10. Critical Examination of this History

a) The New Testament sometimes expresses its understanding of Christ and the Church in the Old Testament language of sacrifice and priesthood. Hence the explicit extension of such ideas first to the Eucharist and then to the Ministry was certainly inevitable, and not always illegitimate. But in making such an extension the following qualifications should be made:

i) the idea of sacrifice should not be narrowed down to that of expiatory sacrifice; nor should it be applied to the Eucharist in the ordinary cultic sense which it has in the Old Testament;

ii) the ministerial priesthood should be seen as representative of Christ and of the priesthood of the people of God. (See Church Unity Commission of South Africa, Ministry, 5.);

iii) the Christian minister as priest should not be seen as mediating between God and the Christian people, but as sharing in and representing the whole Church's participation in Christ's reconciliation of mankind with God.

b) The assimilation of the Christian Ministry to the Levitical institutions of the Old Testament is to be deplored as "counter-revolutionary revisionist deviationism".

#### 11. Conclusions

In applying the language of sacrifice and priesthood to Christ, Church, Eucharist and Ministry, great care should be taken to make it clear that there are dangers in taking this language too literally; e.g., by assimilating Christian Ministry to the Levitical priesthood.

In view of the ambiguity of the word 'priest', which stands both for presbyter and sacerdos, equivocation in the use of the word should be carefully avoided.

The priestly office of the Ministry should be presented as representative of Christ and of the priesthood of the Christian people. (See Ministry, 5, referred to in 10 (a) (ii) above).

Priesthood should not be thought of as constituting the specific difference between the presbyteral order and the unordained members of the Church.

### III ANGLICAN ORDERS

#### 12. Roman Catholic Arguments against Validity

The main Roman Catholic arguments against the validity of Anglican Orders are stated in Apostolicae Curae, and cover the following points:

i) The 1550 Ordinal was defective in form in that it excluded all reference to a sacrificial priesthood. This argument is based on the premise that priestly power is "pre-eminently the power 'to consecrate and offer the true body and blood of the Lord' in that sacrifice which is no 'mere commemoration of the sacrifice performed on the Cross'". (Apostolicae Curae, 25.)

The 1550 Ordinal was also defective in intention in that the exclusion of reference to a sacrificial priesthood was deliberate, and thus opposed and cancelled any intention of conferring priesthood as Christ willed it. (See Apostolicae Curae, 35.)

ii) The Apostolic Succession in the Anglican Church therefore became extinct as a result of the use of the 1550 Ordinal, even though the additions to the form in the 1661 Ordinal "might have lent the form a legitimate signification". (See Apostolicae Curae, 26.)

#### 13. The Anglican Reply to these Arguments

a) Forms at least as general as those in the 1550 Ordinal can be found in other periods of the Church's history, as was pointed out by the Responsio of the Anglican Archbishops in 1897. (Footnote I)

b) Furthermore, even though the formulae in the 1550 Ordinal may not themselves contain an unambiguous reference to the Orders which they convey, they are used in three distinct contexts: the making of deacons, the ordering of priests, and the consecration of bishops. It would be absurd to suppose that when the candidates who have been made deacons are subsequently ordained to the priesthood no change whatsoever was signified and effected in their status and responsibilities.

c) The late medieval Mass system and the theology based upon that system were rightly and necessarily criticized by the Reformers. The Ordinal certainly intended to abolish a sacrificing priesthood as then understood. But, more important still, there is no doubt that the Ordinal intended to perpetuate the apostolic Ministry, and reserved the right of presiding at the Eucharist to bishops and priests only.

Therefore, since form and intention were not defective in the Edwardian Ordinal, apostolic succession was not lost.

#### 14. Subsequent Developments

##### a) Defect of Form

Hughes has sufficiently demonstrated that the forms of the Edwardian Ordinal, taken as such, cannot be defective.

(Footnote 2) Apart from instances of more general forms dating from before 1550, the 1947 forms of ordination as defined by Pope Pius XII are certainly not more specific than the Edwardian rites. Therefore the argument has now shifted to the single question of intention.

##### b) Defect of Intention

i) It cannot be disputed that the Anglican Reformers intended to preserve and continue the Christ-given Ministry of the Church. The argument that this intention is cancelled by the contrary intention of excluding a sacrificial priesthood can be answered by the traditional Roman Catholic solution to the moral problem of conflicting intentions.

ii) This solution states that the dominant intention prevails. Since the Preface to the Edwardian Ordinal states that the form has been drawn up "to the intent that these Orders should be continued, and reverently used and esteemed in this Church", and since this must be considered to be the dominant intention, the intention to exclude

the sacrificial priesthood does in fact not affect the validity of Anglican Orders.

iii) The argument from the principle that the dominant intention prevails retains its cogency even if the objection could be sustained that in excluding a sacrificing priesthood an essential element of Orders was abandoned.

iv) However, note must be taken of the Anglican comment that the Ordinal intended to abolish a sacrificing priesthood as then understood. The forcefulness of their intention to exclude a sacrificing priesthood must be judged in the light of the abuses prevalent at the time, and their intention to emphasize the many-sided aspects of the priestly ministry.

c) A Re-Statement of the Theory of Double Intention

i) Perhaps it can be said that the Reformation theology of the Eucharist did not sufficiently explain the re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice in the celebrating community, and that the theology of the Roman Catholic Church of that time did not obscure the once-for-all nature of Christ's sacrifice. This had immediate consequences for the understanding each Church had of the role of the ordained priest in the eucharistic celebration. There were deficiencies in both views.

ii) On this view the disruption of Church unity at the time of the Reformation need not be regarded as simply the breaking away by some groups from the Church.

iii) The classical form of the argument from double intention can imply that one Church remained wholly faithful to the true understanding of the Christian Ministry. The other, suffering from some misconceptions as to its nature, nevertheless was granted the true Christian Ministry in virtue of the Church's supposed desire to possess it.

iv) The doctrine of double intention can perhaps be given a more acceptable presentation if the secondary intention is understood as that interpretation, however deficient, of the meaning of the Christian Ministry held by a Christian community. The dominant intention would refer to that perfect fullness of Christian Ministry which exists in Christ's will alone.

v) It would therefore be unrealistic to maintain that a community would abandon its interpretation of the Christian Ministry - however inadequate - (secondary intention) in favour of the understanding of the fullness of the Christian Ministry (the dominant intention). In the nature of the case the community believes its interpretation of the Ministry does conform, as closely as lies in its power, to its understanding of Christ's will for the Ministry.

vi) If it be admitted that understanding of the Ministry was defective in both the Reformation Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th Century, the condemnation of one Church's Ministry by another Church cannot be justified. Such an admission should rather lead to the acknowledgement that Ministry continued to exist in the divided Churches. The recognition of the positive aspects of the Ministry of one Church can then be seen to contribute to the enrichment of the Ministry of another Church.

vii) The two Churches were separated from each other in the 16th Century by the fact that their theologies of the Eucharist and, consequently, the priesthood were to some extent divergent. In the 20th Century, the two Churches have reached substantial agreement on the Eucharist, and this must imply a convergence in their understanding of the priesthood.

#### IV CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM WITHIN ROMAN CATHOLICISM

15. Increasing numbers of Roman Catholic scholars are trying to find a solution to the problem of Anglican (and indeed, Protestant) Orders outside the traditional thought-categories of actual succession. They base their arguments on the principles of "economy", "ecclesia supplet", and on a fuller understanding of apostolic succession.

##### a) Economy

i) In theological language the term oikonomia originally referred to the divine plan. It was then used to refer to the implementation of the divine plan in Christ's incarnation and saving work. A further extension of the term was to the work of the Church and its Ministry in building up the Body of Christ. (1 Cor. 4:1.) A yet further and perhaps commonest meaning is a principle



justifying certain actions seen as a departure from the norm, in view of the over-riding consideration of the salvation of souls.

ii) In our context the principle is invoked to justify the possible acceptance of Anglican Orders by the Roman Catholic Church by a simple act of validation. Such an act would not require any reordination, whether absolute or conditional, or indeed any laying-on of hands ceremony. This principle presupposes the existence of a power within the Church that can affect the validity of a sacrament such as Orders. (This power is at times called "economic".)

iii) There is indeed in history strong evidence for the existence of this power. Many examples are quoted from the history of both the early Western Church and the Eastern Church prior to the Schism of the following practice: when a bishop consecrated another bishop contrary to canonical norms (e.g., in a diocese other than his own) then the consecrated bishop was regarded as indeed validly consecrated but as unable to exercise validly the order he had received; before he could do so he had to undergo a ceremony of laying on of hands, but not reordination. (Footnote 3)

iv) This practice is opposed to that recognized within the Roman Catholic Church today, when a bishop consecrated validly but unlawfully can exercise his order validly, even though unlawfully.

v) Examples of the ordination of priests by priests with papal authorization are sometimes quoted in support of the existence of this "economic" power, but there is a measure of debate about them.

vi) However, an appeal can be made to a long tradition frequently put into practice. Even at a time when the minor orders, and especially subdiaconate, were recognized by a large number of theologians as sacraments, it was held that the Pope could by decree enable simple priests to confer these orders. (Footnote 4)

vii) Consideration must also be given to the possible implications of Pius XII's decision that the porrectio instrumentorum would simply not be required for validity in the future.

viii) Finally, the example of contemporary Roman Catholic practice regarding Confirmation may be quoted. A priest

unable to confer the sacrament validly one day, could do so the following day on the strength of a simple enabling permission granted by his bishop.

ix) The Church enjoys and exercises this power that affects the validity of certain sacraments. There appears to be no cogent reason why this power could not be used by the Church, acting as Ursakrament, to validate by a juridical act Orders which have hitherto been regarded by the Roman Catholic Church as invalid.

x) A simple statement of recognition based on this principle would be a significant step towards unity. However, such an act, implying validation, might well be unsatisfactory to Anglicans. For this reason a more promising line of thought is that which follows.

b) Ecclesia Supplet

i) This phrase is commonly understood to refer to the supplying of jurisdiction which would otherwise be lacking. It has recently been increasingly used to refer also to a power within the Church that would ipso facto ensure the validity of a sacrament despite the presence of certain defects that would normally invalidate it. This power is but another aspect of the Church's basic reality as Ursakrament.

ii) It would seem that there is every reason to believe that such a power exists within the Church. Congar is strongly of the opinion that if the reality of this principle is not admitted then a great number of sacramental acts have been invalid down the centuries. (Footnote 5)

iii) Granted that this power exists, the conclusion seems warranted that the principle operates wherever "Church" exists. And its operation will ensure that wherever the existence of a community that merits the name "Church" is recognized, there must be recognized the existence of a Ministry that possesses to some extent at least the reality that is ascribed to "Orders". The chief question then becomes: what are the criteria for the recognition of "Church"?

c) Apostolic Succession

i) The Anglican Church believes that it has retained all the

elements of apostolicity. But it seems impossible to deny the designation Church even to communities which have preserved apostolicity in every respect except that of unbroken episcopal succession, even if episcopacy is considered to be an element in apostolicity. (Footnote 6)

ii) Wherever then there are found enough elements of apostolicity to warrant the recognition of the presence of Church, the presence of a true and valid Ministry can be affirmed: and where there is found the traditional three-fold Ministry, the existence of bishops, priests and deacons must be acknowledged.

iii) The New Testament and the early history of the Church suggests that recognition by the ecclesial community was the fact that determined the validity and the form of Ministry. "The process of appointment or ordination was almost certainly quite varied in the early centuries ... Recognition by the Church is what is essential for sacred ministry; ordination by the laying on of the bishop's hands is simply the standard way of conferring recognition in episcopally structured Churches". (Footnote 7)

iv) The contention therefore by modern Roman Catholic scholars that in exceptional circumstances a community has the power and the right to create its Ministry has a lot to recommend it. This argument becomes most cogent, as was noted above, in the case of a community already possessing a well-established form of Ministry created centuries ago.

Far from standing outside the apostolic succession, then, such a Ministry is an essential element of the apostolicity of the community in question.

### Notes

1. See e.g.,       Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus. (215)  
                  Ordination Rite of St. Sarapion. (4th Century)  
                  Gelasian Sacramentary. (5th Century)  
                  Mozarabic Rite. (8th - 9th Centuries)
  2. See J.J. Hughes: Stewards of the Lord. Chapter I.
  3. K. Duchatelez: De gerdigheid der wijdingen in het licht  
der 'Ekonomie' in Tijdschrift voor Theologie. 1968. No.4.
  4. E. McDonnell: Ways of Validating Ministry in the Journal  
of Ecumenical Studies. Spring 1970. p. 237.
  5. Y. Congar: Quelques problemes touchant les ministeres in  
Nouvelle Revue Theologique, October 1971, p.799.
  6. R.E. Brown: Priest and Bishop. p.82.
  7. R.E. Brown: Priest and Bishop. p.84
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