

THE FORM AND MANNER
OF ORDAINING MINISTERS IN THE
CHURCH OF GOD

according to
the Order of the Church of England and the
Methodist Church in Great Britain

PREFACE

THE MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

God the Father sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world to reconcile men to himself and to gather together in one flock the company of the redeemed which is the Church of God. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent upon the Church to inspire and to sanctify. The Church herself, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is sent by her Lord to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, to bring men to the knowledge of him so that being incorporated into his body they may there grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

2. The risen and ascended Lord has made his people 'kings and priests unto God and his Father' (Rev. 1.6). All the baptised are members of his Body, a royal priesthood consecrated to God's service. They exercise their priesthood by prayer and thanksgiving, joining together in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and by their witness of life and word, in all of which they show forth the Gospel of salvation. Christ the Lord is prophet, priest, and king, and the Church, the New Israel, reflects this triple office in her witness, worship, and common life. The New Israel, incorporated in Christ, is called to show forth his love towards mankind by proclaiming God to the world, by serving human need in all its forms, and by leading the world to worship and serve God.

3. The New Testament shows the Church on the Day of Pentecost as a body of believers having within it, as its recognised focus of unity and organ of authority, the Apostolate, which the Lord himself instituted. As the Report Doctrine in the Church of England says: 'There was not first an Apostolate which gathered a body of believers about itself; nor was there a completely structureless collection of believers which gave authority to the Apostles to speak and act on its behalf. To suppose that the organisation of the Church must have begun in one or other of these ways is to misconceive the situation. From the first there was the fellowship of believers finding its unity in the Twelve. Thus the New Testament bears witness to the principle of a distinctive Ministry, as an original element, but not the sole constitutive element, in the life of the Church.' So also the Statement on the Nature of the Church according to the Teaching of the Methodists says: 'In the New Testament the ministry of the Word and Sacraments is a divine gift to the Church, and was in those early days an integral part of its organic life. It was

a ministry within the Church, exercising in the name and by the authority of the Lord, who is the Head of the Church, powers and functions which are inherent in the Church.'

4. The royal priesthood which the whole Church has received from Christ her Lord, and in which each member of his Body shares, is exercised by the faithful in different ways. The distinctive Ministry is a special form of this participation. It is in this way that the priesthood of bishop and presbyter should be understood.

5. The Ministry is thus a divinely appointed organ which acts in relation to the whole Body in the name of Christ and which represents the priestly service of the whole Body in its common worship. Ministers are, as the Methodist Statement on Ordination says, both Christ's ambassadors and the representatives of the whole people of God.

ORDINATION AND THE ORDINAL

6. Ordination is a solemn act by which one who is acknowledged to have received God's call is brought into a particular Order of Ministry within the Church. Central to it is the action of the Holy Spirit in bestowing upon the person being ordained that which makes him a minister. The words of the Ordination Prayer indicate what that is in respect of each Order. As Hooker says: 'The power and authority delivered with these words is itself charisma, a gracious donation which the Spirit of God doth bestow'. Those who voice the prayer are themselves already ministers with authority to ordain, and they accompany it by laying their hands on those who are being ordained. Both Churches present their candidates in the belief that the Holy Spirit will act in response to this prayer. Thus, for both, prayer with the laying on of hands is the outward sign whereby the ordinand receives the gift of the Spirit making him a minister. Both Churches regard ordination as for life, and in neither is ordination to any particular Order ever repeated.
7. The commission given by Christ to the apostles has been perpetuated in the Church, and it is the desire of the Church of England and the Methodist Church, in following God's call to unity, faithfully to preserve and transmit this commission in their ordinations. The two Churches have provided in this Ordinal forms by which the historic Ministry may be continued among them and which they agree to use when they ordain men to any of the three Orders of Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon.
8. The form of ordination in each case follows the scriptural pattern of acceptance by the people and prayer with the laying on of hands. In each, therefore, will be found the presentation of candidates to the Presiding Bishop, which is the last step in the process of choice by the Church, and prayer for that gift of the Holy Spirit which is needed for the work of the Order to which the person is being ordained, together with the laying on of hands by the Presiding Bishop. At least two other bishops will join in the laying on of hands at the Consecration of Bishops, and not fewer than three presbyters at the Ordination of Presbyters. The titles used for each of the three Orders are found in Scripture and were those used in the ordination rites of the undivided Church; thus they indicate the continuity of each Order with the historic Ministry. The nature of each Order is indicated more fully by the functions which it performs in the Church, the more important of which are specified in each case in the Examination and the Ordination Prayer.