

Sub-commission 2

MINISTRY

The Servant Church is called and sent to serve both God and man. These two aspects of service, united in the design of God, were perfectly fulfilled in the life and sacrifice of Christ. The ministry of the whole Church is to continue this service, in dependence upon Christ the Lord who was the perfect servant: that is to say, by participating in the benefits of Christ's salvation, the baptised community becomes the 'hierateuma' that radiates the glory of God and proclaims Christ's saving deeds (I Peter 2: 5, 9-10). Because the Church is the reconciled community, she is able to be in Christ the agent of the reconciliation. God chooses to work largely through the loving agency of men, as is manifest in the Incarnation.

The Incarnate Son of God, sent by the Father, appointed and sent the Apostles to be the focus of unity and organ of authority in his Church. "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 mis-conceive the situation." (Doctrine in the Church of England).

By his Holy Spirit Christ has continued to take from among his people some who are to exercise special ministries in order to enable the Church to fulfil this 'hierateuma'. These ministries are raised up to be the Holy Spirit's instruments (cf. Acts 9:15; 26: 16-18) for the building up of the Church as the Sanctified Community for the glory of God and the salvation of men. The ministers are chosen and sent by Christ himself through the Holy Spirit's empowering, a vocation recognised by the Church. The authenticity of these ministries depends on their relation to the Apostles. In the light both of the purpose of God and of the nature of the Church such ministries are necessary; but they exist for the community - a living organism - ^{and} retains (at least in the New Testament) a measure of flexibility.

Within the New Testament ministerial actions are varied and functions not precisely defined, so that we cannot from that source deduce a complete blueprint for structures of ministry. Nevertheless, at least by the stage of the Pastoral Epistles and I Peter, some ministerial functions are emerging in a more exact shape. Of primary importance are the proclamation of the Word and the preservation of apostolic doctrine, the care of the flock, and exemplariness of life. Even if there is no explicit mention of a ^{regular} liturgical role, it is a fair

presumption that this was in some way included. Because these functions are a permanent necessity for the life of the Church, they are becoming located in specific officers of the community - a development which reaches its culmination in the so-called Ignatian pattern: bishop, college of presbyters, deacons. Since the Church is built up ^{by the Spirit} primarily ^{but not exclusively} ~~and essentially~~ through these ministerial functions, some form of recognition and authorisation are already required in this New Testament period for their legitimate exercise in the name of Christ. Here we can see what will remain at the heart of what we today call ordination.