

Sub-Commission 2

MINISTRY

1. 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: that is to say, by participating in the benefits of Christ's saving work, the baptised community becomes the 'hierateuma' that radiates the glory of God and proclaims Christ's saving deeds (I Peter 2:5, 9-10). Inasmuch as the Church is the reconciled community, she is able to be in Christ the agent of the reconciliation. As the Son of God became man to save us, so God continues to work largely through human agents.

2. By his Holy Spirit Christ calls 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. Within the Church and in many cases through commissioning by the Church ministers are chosen and sent by Christ himself with the Holy Spirit's empowering. The authenticity of these ministries depends on their fidelity to the witness of the Apostles. In the light of both the purpose of God and the nature of the Church such ministries are necessary; but they exist for the community - a living organism - and retain (as evident in the New Testament) a measure of flexibility.

3. 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 time of the Pastoral Epistles and I Peter, some ministerial functions are emerging in a more exact form. Of primary importance are the proclamation of the Word and the preservation of apostolic doctrine, the care of the flock, and the example of Christian living. 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, deacon. Since the Church is built up by the Holy Spirit primarily but not exclusively through these ministerial functions, some form of recognition and authorisation is 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 today we call ordination.

More to
Priesthood than
Euch.

4. This ministry is never described in the New Testament in terms of priesthood nor is there any evidence that only 'episcopoi' or 'presbyteroi' could preside at the eucharist. By his offering, Christ, our High Priest, fulfilled the Levitical priesthood and brought it to an end. Though sacrificial language is occasionally used, (cf. Romans 15:16) a sacerdotal quality after the Levitical pattern is not present in the New Testament description of ministry. The ministry, nevertheless, exists to promote the holiness of the whole people of God, its priestly character - the fruits of the sacrifice of Christ. The office of ministry, however, is not simply a development out of the priesthood of all believers, but springs from the express purpose of Christ for his Church.

[that has taken place]

~~(The focussing of the Christian ministry upon the word priest is not in the teaching of the New Testament. In the New Testament a sacerdotal quality is not determinative of the character of Christian ministry, and therefore does not seem to belong to those scriptural elements necessary for a substantial agreement between our two churches.)~~

Note: On the last two sentences the Sub-commission could not agree.)

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