

## The Ministry of the Church of England.<sup>1</sup>

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THE Church of England, true to its character and genius, utters itself with equal decision and restraint upon the theory and functions of the ministry. Its leading utterances are given in the Twenty-third Article, and in the Preface to the Ordinal. The Article speaks decisively for the normal necessity of commission through the Church in order to regular ministry in the Church. The bearer of the office of preaching and of ministration of sacraments must be lawfully called and sent—called and sent by men who themselves have commission to do so. The Preface speaks with much more detail about both office and commission. It affirms that it is historically certain that “from the Apostles’ time there have been these orders, Bishops, Priests and Deacons”; that these were “evermore” regarded as so sacred that their proposed bearers were first tested as to qualification and then admitted, “by lawful authority,” with prayer and the significant act of the laying on of hands. Further, to ensure historical continuity for this triple order, and to surround it with “reverent esteem,” the Church decrees that episcopal consecration or ordination shall be, for all her ministers, a necessary condition.

Such are these utterances on the positive side, the side of decision. The great principle of commission in general, and the primeval date of the threefold ministry in particular, and its sacred dignity and value, and the firm adherence of the Reformed Church to this order, could not be more explicitly stated. On the other hand the utterances are marked by that restraint and tolerance which is characteristic of the Church of the Prayer-Book. In the Twenty-third Article no word is used which is not as a fact equally fit to express the convictions of, for example, the Presbyterian. In the Preface, and in the cognate statement of the Thirty-sixth Article, nothing is said to the effect that the very existence of the Christian Church is suspended on the three-

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fold order, so that this order can alone guarantee the working of the covenant of grace. And we have ample evidence that the framers of the Articles and of the Preface meant so to restrain their statement. Positively, they believed wholly in the primeval and Catholic authenticity of the triple system. But they had learnt great things from Scripture, and from the vast contemporary history around them. And they forbore to exaggerate a reverential adherence to the ideal into a condemnation of every other type under any other conditions.

The same balance of decision and restraint appears in the Ordinal itself. No other Ordinal known to me equals that in which our priests are set apart for its sublime assertion of the spiritual and moral greatness of the commissioned Christian ministry. It is not only a phrase here and there which produces this effect. It is the whole sacred thing. In detail, it is above all that long and sternly tender address which the Bishop is ordered to deliver to the men before him, just previous to the questions. Then the act of ordination itself is accompanied by words of the utmost gravity and power, in which the faithful dispensation of the Word and the sacraments is enjoined in the very phrases used by the risen Lord to His whole Church represented in the upper chamber on the evening of the Resurrection day. The commission to forgive and to retain, given in precisely this place in an ordination service for presbyters, has of course its history, and one point in that history is that the great formula was unknown there till the thirteenth century. But into this it is impossible now to enter. It must be enough to express my own belief that the Reformers, in retaining it, intended it to be construed mentally with the following words, "Be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God and of His holy sacraments." It was to be thus, by faithful dispensation of Word and sacraments, that the commission was to be fulfilled, as Jewel (an almost "voice of the Church") explains the matter. But my point is now that on any theory the ordaining words are of extreme solemnity. They invest the Christian presbyter with the responsibility for true Scriptural teaching and for true

ministration, which is as great and searching as human nature can sustain. And they guarantee to him, along with the laying on of hands of the presbytery, the power of the Spirit Himself, to be received and wielded in his work.

I do not remark in detail on the two other services of the Ordinal. The holy solemnity of the ordination of the presbyter stands pre-eminent. But the ordination of the deacon, and the consecration of the Bishop, though even this latter hardly reaches the spiritual elevation of its precursor, are altogether in harmony with it. From the first supremely solemn question put to the candidate for the diaconate to the last prayer over the new-made Bishop, the whole Ordinal keeps the thought of the ministry upon a level lofty and apart. It lays an emphasis throughout upon the ministerial offices as so great, so responsible, so needful to the Church, that Divine call, and human call, and Church commission, conveyed with deliberate solemnity, are all needed to form an adequate avenue to it.

Then, on the other hand, the restraint of the Ordinal, the thing which it does not say, is as noteworthy as its positive elements. All along, in all the three services, it regards the Christian ministry as essentially a pastorate, not a mediation. Compare it with the Roman Pontifical, and the difference is indeed conspicuous. There the deacon is commissioned, *inter alia*, to "read the Gospel for the living *and the dead*." The Roman priest receives a double commission, first presbyteral, with imposition of hands by Bishop and priests, then sacerdotal, by delivery of the holy vessels with the elements, followed shortly by imposition of the Bishop's hands, with authority to forgive and to retain. Place this beside our order, with the noble simplicity of its one combined imposition of hands, and the delivery of the Bible, and the contrast is significant. I venture to say that if in order to ministerial grace a sacerdotal commission, in a sacrificial and mediatorial sense of the words, as distinct from a commission for pastorate and leadership, is necessary, the Pope was right in denying a valid ministry in our ministers. This, I think, is unaffected by the

fact that we retain the formula concerning forgiving and retaining. For though this stands connected by the tradition of ages with a proper *sacerdotium*, it proves, I think, on reflection to have no essential connection with it. It is the function rather of the accredited messenger than of the altar priest.

The stress of our Ordinal, to sum up these comments, lies supremely upon the spiritual pastorate of the flock, that religious office which, as it has been well said, was the personal creation of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It commits to the man supremely the ministration of the Divine Word, and along with it the guardianship of the Ordinances of Christ. It bids him animate and enforce his ministry and leadership by his life, hid with Christ in God. It sends him out to do all in the spirit of a servant, not a master, reverencing the people of the Lord. And it sends to him, for all his needs, the special grace of the Holy Ghost.

Is it too much to say that such a programme of the Christian ministry is true throughout to a Scriptural basis?

In the New Testament, on the threshold of this question, we meet at once the great phenomenon not of a hieratic mediation (the word *hiericus* is never once used of the Christian priest), but of a pastorate, as an integral factor in the life of the Church.

The Lord nowhere defines with precision the work of His Apostles. But beyond question He means them to be not only witnesses but guides, leaders, and, in a sense limited yet real, governors of order. They in their turn, early in the history of their work, pass over some of their functions, namely, the ministry of temporal relief, to other men, doing this not anyhow, but by an ordaining act, praying and laying on their hands. Then somehow (we shall never know precisely how), a ministry of eldership took shape later in the Mission Churches and at Jerusalem itself—a ministry, which also, so far as we can divine, needed an ordaining act, prayer and imposition of hands to begin it. Later, nearer to the end of the first age, we find, side by side in the Missions, the deacon and the presbyter, busy

evidently with each his department of pastoral work, the elders particularly with the Word and doctrine. Then again in the same period, we find arising, as if under the suggestion of circumstances, but assuredly not without Divine light upon them, a pastorate of pastors, a presidency among equals, for great purposes of order and coherence. It is not yet called an Episcopacy. That word still includes *all* spiritual "overseers," *all* superintendents, whether of one Mission or of several; it awaited the call of later needs to appropriate itself to the presiding ministry. But in idea and principle the actual functions of Timothy and Titus were Episcopal, such as the English Reformation understood Episcopacy, such as Ussher understood it, with the one reserve that the office may possibly have been only temporary in its bearer. It was, however, while it lasted, a commissioned leadership of pastors, and through them and with them, of people, and it was an organ of transmission of ministry. It was the provision of just that element which is essential for strong coherence and for the best guardianship of order—the presence of one man, personally responsible for the duties of guidance, warning, encouragement, and the cultivation of union. And this is an element desiderated by many thoughtful non-Episcopalians. The absolute governmental equality of presbyters within an area is an idea with something noble in it. But experience not seldom finds it poorly operative, where an acknowledged and permanent presidency would do truer and deeper work. This was provided for in Crete and in Ephesus. And Crete and Ephesus prepare us for the phenomena of the Ignatian time, and for the long successions even until now.

Thus, in rapid, but I hope not careless, outline, I have traced the Biblical basis for the words of our Preface: "From the Apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church." The Biblical picture calls for vastly more remark, even on its salient features, than is possible here. It indicates, among other things, a singular freedom on some sides in the relations between pastor and people, a certain homeliness

in them, such as allows an Apostle to address his inspired letter to "the saints in Philippi, *with* the overseers and deacons," and again allows a salutation to "the leaders" to be sent *through the congregation*—proof enough, if it were needed, that the Apostolic Scriptures were intended for the most direct possible reception by the laity, not for a reserved conveyance to them through the ministry. We have no information again whether the upper ranks of the ministry were at first supplied only from the lower. We have many indications, again, that public work for God was often done, as in the singular and impressive case of Apollos, without the normal commission. And the whole phenomenon of the Christian *prophet* warns us to-day not to turn sacred order into the chain rather than the stay and girdle of the Church. But those points lie out of the main line of our present inquiry. They leave undisturbed what is, in my own conviction, the main result of it, namely, that the Christian ministry, as conceived and exercised according to our Anglican order, is true in all its essentials to the New Testament basis.

In the New Testament, as with us, the normal ministry is a Divine institution, not originated by the community, but commissioned and gifted from above, with a commission of which the existing ministry is the effecting agency, and which thus secures a permanent succession. In the New Testament, as with us, three main functions emerge out of the primeval Apostolate, none of them singly its successor, but each bearing something of its office, while the Apostolate had also functions never transmitted to any successors. In the New Testament, as with the Church of England, judged by her authentic utterances—this I must say with as full a conviction as ever—the Christian ministry is not the successor of the Temple priesthood. It is not a sacrificing and mediating *sacerdotium*. It labours rather for an unseen Head who, having sacrificed Himself for us, now sits upon the Throne of Grace, dispensing His High Priestly blessing, exalted rather upon a heavenly Ark than standing at a heavenly altar. In the New Testament, as with us, the Christian is contemplated as needing indeed

pastoral aid in spiritual exigencies to clear his faith and reassure his soul, but not as needing any mediator with his One Mediator. He is not *more* dependent on human intermediaries than the Jewish believer was before him, as the medieval theory of confession, totally without primitive warrant, would make him to be ; he has access direct to his God through the blood of Christ and in the grace of the Spirit. Yet none the less, because Christians are a holy community, and also because in the Divine order, man is God's great instrument for the spiritual service of man, the Church in the New Testament, as with us, needs, and has, a sacred pastorate. The community is tended, guided, served by a ministry, commissioned from above, constitutionally and temperately authoritative, successional within itself, a mighty factor for permanence and cohesion, capable, if true to itself and its gifts, of incalculable potencies for example and inspiration. It is not the creature of the Church but the Lord's gift to the Church. It is not the depository of His grace, but it is the commissioned bearer of His message and of its effectual seals. It is the attendant, not the mistress of the holy society. It exists altogether for the Chief Shepherd and His flock. It lives and it is continued in order to preach and to set forth Christ Jesus as Lord and itself as bondservant of all, for Jesus' sake.



### The Divine Name Jah.

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WHAT is the origin of the name "Jah" (or, rather, *Yāh*, יה), what is its meaning, and in what relation does it stand to "Jehovah" (more correctly *Yahweh*)? These questions are of great interest not only to the Hebraist but also to all devout students of the Bible. We desire to consider them, with all reverence, in this article.