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# The Doctrine of Ordination and the Ordained Ministry<sup>1</sup>

MICHAEL C. SANSOM

The doctrine of the ordained ministry and the doctrine of ordination are inseparable concepts. We cannot talk about ordained ministry unless we have some clear idea of why ordination should be the appropriate mode of admission to it. Nor can we talk about ordination unless we have some idea of what ordination gives admission to. It is evident, however, that there is a good deal of confusion about both.<sup>2</sup>

If one thing has become apparent in recent years, it is that we have recovered an awareness that ministry is concerned with service. However tautologous that may now be seen to be, it is clear that in past years the ordained ministry has not always been recognizable as at the service of the church. As Moltmann says:

The traditional word 'ministry' has in some traditions an undertone of hierarchy and bureaucracy and has become open to misunderstanding.<sup>3</sup>

But he continues,

The more modern expression, 'service', is supposed to exclude claims to rule, though it can of course conceal these.<sup>4</sup>

And Geoffrey Wainwright makes much the same point when he reminds us that Gregory the Great's claim to be *servus servorum Dei* was an embryonic claim to 'universal immediate jurisdiction'.<sup>5</sup>

Again and again we have had to learn that the ministry is concerned not with power but with service to the church, in order to enable the church to be what it is intended to be and to do what it is intended to do. The existence of the ministry, then, is dependent upon the existence of the church, and not vice versa. The ministry is inseparable from the church. To quote the words of Anthony Hanson:

The ministry... is not something given to the Church from outside to create it and hold it together: it is rather something given in the Church by Christ to be the Church, to be and to do that which the Church, following it, must be and do.<sup>6</sup>

The ministry exists in order to serve the church so that the church should engage in its own ministry.

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Now an assertion such as that clearly begs a good many questions, not the least of which are 'What is the ministry of the church?' and 'Why an ordained ministry?'. Let us begin with the first of these.

### **What is the church's ministry?**

There are, of course, a good many images of the church in the New Testament, each of which gives us an insight into its character and purpose, but we may perhaps look to a familiar passage in 1 Peter for a concise summary of the church's calling:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.<sup>7</sup>

It is striking that when Peter wants to characterize the church and its ministry (i.e. its service) he does so by borrowing from the Hebrew Scriptures. The calling of the church is precisely the same as the calling of Israel as it is described in Exodus 19:5f., Isaiah 43:20 and elsewhere. It is striking because it asserts the continuity between the Old and the New Covenants, and between the people of God under each of those covenants.

If the ministry and calling of the church of the New Covenant is exactly what it was under the Old, we might assume that the official ministry of the Old Covenant and the New would also coincide. That very assumption, however unconsciously, may well have contributed to the later Christian elaboration of the threefold ministry under the analogy of the high priest, priests and Levites.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, we may positively assert that even if it was not consciously framed in such terms, it was that assumption which was the driving force. It was aided and abetted by the custom of speaking of Christian worship, and the eucharist in particular, in sacrificial terms, and undoubtedly given added impetus by the social inferiority felt by Christians whose religion lacked the marks of a 'proper' religion, namely a cult with cultic officials.<sup>9</sup>

But if we rightly reject the trend towards a sacerdotal caste within Christianity, we may be in danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. We are a little too hasty, perhaps, in drawing distinctions between the Old Testament ministry and that of the New Testament. True, it was no longer to be vested in a single tribe holding the inherited right to priestly activities. True, it was no longer concerned with the sacrifice of animals and the manipulation of blood. True, the Levitical priesthood is never in the *LXX* referred to as *diakonia*.<sup>10</sup> True, the Levitical priesthood came to occupy a mediatorial role. True, there may be a difference between the sacrificial vocabulary used of the people as a whole and the sacerdotal vocabulary used of the Levitical ministry which cannot be carried over into the New Testa-

ment. But when all is said and done, it surely remains true that, whatever abuse may have developed with the passing of the years, and however great the gulf may have become between priest and people (not as great as I think we sometimes imagine), the ministry of the Old Covenant had precisely the same calling and meaning as that of the New. It was a delegated service designed to enable the people of God to fulfil its calling as a royal priesthood and a holy nation. Thus, even if there is no exact coincidence between the Old and New Testament ministries, there is, nonetheless, a common *raison d'être*.

It remains, however, to determine what is meant by the description of the calling of the people of God to be a royal priesthood. It is summed up for us by Paul in Romans 12, and by the writer of Hebrews 13: the task of the priesthood is to offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of lips which acknowledge his name. It is to ensure that there is a correspondence between the content of public and private worship and the individual and corporate life of the church that God is seen to be God. It is a sacrifice that is exercised in a multiplicity of ways and through a multiplicity of individual gifts. It is a sacrifice that can only be offered if the church is willing to recognize its corporate character. It is a sacrifice, therefore, that can be offered only if the members of the body are willing to submit their own gifts, and to help others to submit theirs, to the service of the body.

### **Why an ordained ministry?**

If the church is to fulfil its ministry, its service to Christ, undoubtedly it needs the co-operation and participation of its members. There must be ministry *within* the body as well as the ministry of the body, and both the New Testament and our own present-day experience give us ample evidence of the wide range of gifts and ministries exercised quite spontaneously as well as in a more organized fashion. Nothing is more inimical to the health of such a body than the demand that everything be regularized and ordered. That, we may hazard by way of controversy, is the problem that has come to plague the industrial life of the country as much as of the church.

Yet some parts of that wide range of ministries are ordered and regularized. It may be for the perfectly obvious and practical reason that it is ridiculous to have a half a dozen treasurers for one body, or that someone ought to be responsible for seeing that the musicians know what to do. So they are appointed, according to their God-given gifts, and authorized to act on behalf of the rest of the body. They have oversight over a particular aspect of the life of the church in order that it should be the church more effectively. Some assume such roles more informally: around them gather others who are similarly gifted, and so an informal group is informally recognized, with an oversight likewise informally recognized.

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But others are ordered in an altogether different fashion. Their appointment is more formal and includes the laying-on of hands with prayer. They are incorporated into a threefold order of bishops, priests and deacons, whose advancement proceeds from one rank to the next, never omitting a stage and never returning to a previous rank. Hierarchy and hands, we may call it.

Of course, it was not ever thus. There is little evidence of hierarchy in the church of the second and third centuries. It was only the conversion of Constantine that made the clerical state respectable and desirable, necessary even in order to hold at bay the hordes who crowded into the church anxious not to be disadvantaged.<sup>11</sup> Similarly it is clear that it was not assumed that a bishop *had* to be elected from the presbytery: in principle, at least, he could be a deacon or even a layman. A deacon, who certainly was not a probationer waiting for elevation, was likely to remain a deacon.<sup>12</sup>

Yet it is true that the concept of formal appointment, laying-on of hands with prayer, associated with recognized offices in the church, is very ancient. Why, then, should ordination to these offices be marked in such a way?

Since the appearance of the ordinal of the Church of South India, two features have become commonplace in thinking about ordination. The first is that ordination itself is properly accomplished by the laying-on of hands with prayer, preceded by a genuine election (however formalized it may appear during the ordination liturgy). The second is that ordination is not an act of the church, still less an act of the bishop: it is, rather, an act of God in his church.<sup>13</sup>

It is God who calls. If the people elect, and the bishop lays hands and leads in prayer, they do so because the church acts in recognition of, and response to, the call to God.<sup>14</sup> But to have said that is not to have explained why ordination with the laying-on of hands should be the appropriate mode of appointment to certain forms of ministry but not to others. There would appear to be at least six answers in current thinking.

1) It is still held in some parts of the Church of England that only if the correct procedure is adopted will it be possible for the church to continue to celebrate valid sacraments. That procedure includes the ordination at episcopal hands of certain individuals as priests. Thus a letter to the *Church Times* replied to a question raised about lay presidency at the Holy Communion,

...without [having been called, examined, tried and ordained to this sacred function]...he [the president] lacks the grace of holy orders, lacks the authority to celebrate and, many of us would say, lacks the power of consecrating the elements.<sup>15</sup>

But such a view can be held only if there is some way in which we can

be sure that it reflects the intention of Christ or the practice of the New Testament church seeking to obey its Lord. Presented in the terms of the letter in the *Church Times*, it seems a viable doctrine only if we are willing, in Anthony Hanson's words, to separate the ministry from the church and then allow the church to be delivered, bound hand and foot, into the hands of the ministry.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it makes the assumption that the essential, indispensable calling of the church is the celebration of the sacraments, rather than to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation living in obedience to God and offering the sacrifice of praise, to which the sacraments are subservient.

2) Closely allied to, but not inseparable from, this first point is the appeal to antiquity. We ordain with prayer and the imposition of hands because the church has done so from time immemorial. If the evidence of the *Apostolic Tradition*<sup>17</sup> is to be believed, it was well established by the beginning of the third century AD, and the evidence of the pastoral epistles points to a much earlier origin for the due authorization of a regular ministry. In addition, of course, Paul and Barnabas were appointed to their missionary task with the laying-on of hands.

We must beware, however, the simple argument from precedent. We must have a reason for what we do—mere appeal to past practice is, on its own, inadequate ground for current practice. Moreover, we must not indulge in argument that glosses over changes of practice that occur in the passage of time. Paul and Barnabas were 'ordained' as missionaries, not as part of a regular threefold ministry of bishops, priests, deacons. We do not know if hands were laid on them only once at the outset of a lifetime vocation, or whether the action was repeated. Again, there is little evidence to point in the direction of a threefold order of ministry in the Pastorals: it is here widely assumed that the New Testament knows only of presbyter-bishops and deacons. We know nothing of the duration, and little of the content of these offices. We do not know for what other tasks the imposition of hands was used.<sup>18</sup> What we do know is that, by the time of Hippolytus, imposition of hands had come to be associated solely with the orders of bishop, presbyter and deacon and that honesty forbids us to pretend that the offices held in the third century are to be thought of as comparable to our own situation in anything but the broadest outlines. The appeal to antiquity, *tout court*, will not do: we must understand why the laying-on of hands should be extended to certain forms of ministry but not to others.

3) It may be suggested that ordination is appropriate because the ministry of word and sacrament requires a particularly public and solemn authorization. The office is particularly public and therefore requires a particularly public form of authorization.

There is, I think, a sizeable element of truth in this view; but the judgement has to be tempered with the qualification, first, that it is public in the sense that it is public to the church. It is of no consequence

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whatever that the Church of England has an historic link with the state: ordination is not a matter of legitimation in the eyes of the state or of society at large, or of other professional bodies. The judgement has to be tempered with the second qualification that there are also other persons within the church who exercise ministries and carry responsibilities which are in their way every bit as public as those of any clergyman. Indeed, we may wish to consider that the diaconate as it is understood at present in the Church of England is not an office of sufficiently public character to warrant so public a form of authorization.

When all is said and done, however, the ministry of word and sacrament do lie at the heart of the corporate life of the church as it seeks to understand and express its calling. Though they are not its total nor its sole essence, yet it would seem not inappropriate that a distinction should be drawn at this point.

Having granted this, we must beware the trap of concluding that this ministry carries, of necessity, professional status or that it requires, of necessity, a full-time commitment, or that it is inconsistent with any other form of employment.<sup>19</sup>

4) A related argument is that ordination marks admission to what we might call the wider ministry of the church: that is to say, it marks admission to that ministry which crosses the boundaries between congregations and denominations. The ordained person represents the wider church to his (or her) congregation and the congregation to the wider church. He or she is, in this way, a focus of unity in the church.<sup>20</sup> The ordained person is called to exercise his ministry not simply in a self-contained, independent congregation, but in a congregation which is but one local manifestation of the whole church.

Again, there is much to be said in favour of this view, but it has to be recognized that it tends to attract to itself various assumptions that, leech-like, suck the vitality from it. One such assumption is, once again, that admission to this wider ministry involves a lifelong commitment. Hard on its heels comes the concept of an indelible character conferred by ordination, and with it the conclusion that ordination is a once-for-all affair. Thus, when the ordained ministry of the church assumes the status of profession, the clergyman looks for a career structure (where 'preferment' is read for 'promotion') and expects to make periodic moves from parish to parish, taking up the principal role in each new appointment.

Is it not curious, we are bound to ask, that in general the Church of England seems unable to countenance the possibility of an incumbent returning to assistant curate status without a considerable loss of income, or that a bishop who ceases to exercise his office should also surrender his title, or that a clergyman who retires should surrender his clerical status? It is no doubt convenient that he does not, but does it make sense to anyone but the pure utilitarian? Undoubtedly it does, and to that issue we shall return.

5) Related to this argument is the assertion that ordination is to be understood not as ordination to the ministry of one particular denomination but to the ministry of the church of God.

Now this would be a splendid argument if there were any sign that our churches took it seriously: for, if we assert that ordination is to the church of God yet decline to acknowledge the ministry of those who have been ordained in other denominations, we suffer from a serious credibility gap.

Of course, there will be some who will respond to this by objecting that refusal to acknowledge the ministry of those who have been ordained in other denominations is grounded on theological impediment: to wit, that ordination is valid only if accompanied by episcopal laying-on of hands, or if it expresses the intention to make a man (not, of course, a woman) a priest. In practice, however, the concept of validity turns out to be singularly subjective and much of the argumentation that accompanies it is accordingly bogus, amounting either to uncritical acceptance of tradition or, worse still, to mere protectionism.<sup>21</sup>

If the argument holds any water, and I am convinced that it does, then the churches must be prepared to live with its consequences, which means, among other things, that the Church of England must take the Covenant with utter seriousness.

6) Finally, in close relation to the first answer, there is the insistence that ordination is not simply about authorization, but about prayer for the Holy Spirit's equipping for a task. 'Ordination' is not a synonym for 'laying-on of hands': it is, rather, a portmanteau word signifying the whole process of God's call and the individual's obedience, accompanied by the response of the church.

There is no doubt that the awesome range of responsibilities to which the ordained person is committed requires the fervent prayer of the whole people of God, but it is also true that any ministry, be it never so humble (perhaps the humblest ministries above all!) require prayer for the equipping of the Holy Spirit. We *could* argue that any ministry requires that it be entered upon with the laying-on of hands.

To this the immediate response comes that the church has consistently appointed people for certain tasks with the laying-on of hands. But true as it may be that we should not lightly set aside long established tradition, we must again acknowledge that appeal to historical precedent will not, on its own, suffice.

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If a case is to be made, then it would appear that it must rest on more than a single argument. The cumulative case argued from several of the points made in the preceding survey may be much more weighty than any one taken on its own, especially if, as in the case of the fifth, we are prepared to live with the consequences of our assertions. But I

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suspect that the heart of the matter lies elsewhere, and is discovered only by a close inspection of our understanding of the ministry.

In discussing point 4, I made the somewhat cryptic assertion that the retention of the episcopal style, or of clerical status after retirement from active and public exercise of the appropriate ministry, makes sense not simply to the pure utilitarians who want a reservoir of clergy to wheel out of retirement for interregnum, holiday and sickness duty, but also to others in whose opinion ordination confers an indelible character. Like it or not, they would say, a priest remains a priest unless he commits so scandalous an offence that he is deprived of his orders. Ordination is not a matter of mere appointment to a function or role: it confers, rather, a permanent status which, by implication, sets him apart from the rest of the church.

But who says so? On what grounds do we arrive at the conclusion that ordination is for life? Is it, conceivably, a doctrine that owes more to the professional spirit and to uncritical attitudes to ordination itself than to a considered understanding of the ministry *in relation to the church*?<sup>22</sup>

Why was it that the early church came to have an ordained ministry? We cannot answer the question with any certainty, but James Dunn's guess is as plausible as any and more plausible than most, namely, that this development was related to the change in eschatological perspective that accompanied what has come to be known as the delay of the *parousia*.<sup>23</sup> The church was preparing for longevity: it had, therefore, to endure some sort of continuity in its leadership and oversight that would both guard the purity of the faith and press forward with the apostolic task. It is one thing to rely on charismatic leadership emerging spontaneously and informally if a movement is intended and expected to be short-lived. It is another thing to rely on that pattern when the movement becomes an institution and responsibility has to be handed on.<sup>24</sup>

What evidence we have in the New Testament points to the ordained ministry as being primarily pastoral and practical in character. Their ministry is exercised in sound teaching or in seeing that the pastoral requirements of a congregation are fulfilled (Acts 20:28ff.; Titus 1:9). But their ministry is exercised as a ministry to the church (Paul does not, for example, write his letters to the elders at Corinth but to the church at Corinth, so that it is clear that even if it were the elders who might have to take disciplinary action, they would do so as representatives of the whole congregation). No evidence is afforded of this ministry as having a liturgical character, but that should not lead us to the conclusion that it had none: someone or some people had to ensure the orderly conduct of worship. We should not be surprised to find Ignatius insisting on the importance of the bishop (or at least someone authorized by him) as president at the eucharist.<sup>25</sup> It would be perfectly natural that those who exercised pastoral oversight should

express that oversight in presidency at the eucharist; for their oversight included the transmission of apostolic doctrine, and the worshipping life of the church was a major vehicle of that transmission.<sup>26</sup>

In essence, then, the ministry exists for the church; to describe it, therefore, as existing to serve the church is in keeping both with the reality of the early church and with its Lord's example and precept (cf. Mark 10:42-45). It is easy to forget that, despite his appeal that they should not exercise their power irresponsibly, the author of 1 Clement knows full well that the laity can depose their presbyters.<sup>27</sup> It is easy also to forget that even Cyprian knew that the people must be consulted on important matters such as the choice of a bishop. Their recognition of these principles (on both of which the Church of England is woefully deficient) stems from their awareness that the ministry arises within the church as God's gift to the church, not as something which is independent of the church.

If then, the ordained ministry is a matter of status, it is the status of servant that we are speaking of. If it is a matter of function, it is the function of a servant that we are speaking of. If it is a matter of office, it is the office (*officium* = duty) of a servant.<sup>28</sup> If a person offers for ordination, it is ordination to the service of the church. It may be a very public, very responsible and sometimes onerous service, but nonetheless it is service.

I find myself worried sometimes at the failure of ordinands to perceive this truth. Not that it is entirely their fault: both the structure of society as a whole and of the ministry of the church give ample reason for the ordinand to think of himself as entering a career. It is almost axiomatic for commerce and industry that some are management material and some are worker material. Ordinands have every reason, then, to think of themselves as the church's management material, called to leadership and oversight.

But is there not something very strange in this assumption? Is it not strange that ordinands can be considered as material for the exercising of pastoral oversight on what is often very slender evidence of their ability to serve, to do humble tasks willingly and without complaints? Is it not even more strange that candidates should seek ordination to pastoral oversight on the basis of a private sense of vocation? Is not a call to exercise pastoral oversight a call that should be mediated by the church itself? Of course the structures of selection conferences and the like are designed to offset the individual's tendency to have grandiose ideas about himself, but we may have cause to wonder whether it really is proper to expect individuals to feel themselves called to pastoral oversight. That they should be called and equipped for every conceivable form of service, and that service should lead in some cases to oversight is one thing, but it would appear that the sense of God's call to service is frequently transformed into a general call to leadership. There is no doubt in my mind that this transformation is often effected

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by what is seen of the threefold order of ordained ministry as it appears in the Church of England at present.

Perhaps the church does not expect to be the vehicle of vocation, and for that reason God calls individuals directly. Perhaps by its very structures the church does not encourage the notion that it should be the vehicle of vocation. As a result, the people have no part in the election of their bishops, and the channelling of ordinands toward ordination is almost exclusively in the hands of the clergy. So we may wish to conclude that, when the Churches' Council for Covenanting says

those who are ordained are called by Christ in the Church and through the Church,<sup>29</sup>

we may only express heartfelt agreement *provided that* the assertion is not allowed to have the covert qualification, 'as represented by its clergy'.

I have insisted that at the heart of the ordained ministry is pastoral oversight. If 'priest' is a proper term, then it is so only as a derivative of presbyter, i.e. one who, as an elder, exercises pastoral oversight.<sup>30</sup> The only priesthood that the ordained ministry has is by participation in the priesthood of the whole company of believers. The presbyter has a role to fulfil within that priesthood: in no sense is he independent of it.

Failure to acknowledge this (and it is a grave weakness that so many languages seem unable to offer clear distinctions, in their terminology, between *presbyter* and *sacerdos* and their Greek cognates<sup>31</sup>) results in a division between those who interpret the office principally in terms of pastoral oversight, with presidency at the eucharist its concomitant, and those who interpret it principally in eucharistic terms with oversight stemming from that. The latter see ordination as essential for the valid celebration of the eucharist; the former see it as part of God's gift for the maintenance and furtherance of the faith. I would submit that the ordination services of the *Book of Common Prayer* and of the *ASB* alike give far more support to the former view than to the latter.

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## Conclusions

### 1) *The exercise of oversight*

Even the exercise of oversight is a form of service, but it is sad that this particularly onerous form of service has so often been vested in a single individual. Despite a mounting volume of criticism of the traditional one-man-band parish ministry, there is little sign of change in the institutional thinking of the Church of England on this subject. It ought to be evident that only rarely is the wide range of gifts necessary for proper pastoral oversight to be found in a single man, and even then it is doubtful whether it is for the good health of the congregation

(or for his own) that he should exercise them all. It makes much better sense to expect to find the necessary qualities and gifts within a group. Not that the sharing of pastoral oversight by a group will eliminate power-seeking or guarantee an outward-looking church: but where responsibility is genuinely shared in a church committed to look beyond matters of bricks and mortar, it may well be that the church will be more effective and that none within it will be expected to bear a crushing burden.

### 2) *Bishops and pastoral oversight*

While on the one hand the Church of England is keenly commending episcopacy to the Free churches, it is also being forced to acknowledge that the present episcopal system does not work. Episcopacy exists but often does not or cannot exercise *episkope*. One reason for the creation of suffragan bishops in the last century was to provide a little more adequately for pastoral oversight. The office of rural dean was revived first in the diocese of Norwich in the 1830s for essentially the same reason, and I have heard the suggestion made that the deanery is the more natural unit of organization than the diocese.<sup>32</sup> But none of these tactics or proposals seem to me to attack the fundamental problem, for they simply assume the one-man-band *status quo* and aim to offer some kind of pastoral oversight to the parish priest, who may resent intrusion or simply ignore the care directed towards him. The fact of the matter, I believe, is that we already have a genuine episcopacy which resides not in the hands of the bishops but in the hands of the parish clergy. The present-day parish is much more like the area over which a bishop in the early church might have presided, than is the present diocese. What we now call a priest (or presbyter—*ASB*) is in actual fact more like a bishop.<sup>33</sup> It is he who needs the support of presbyters (elders).

This is not to say that we do not need some kind of focus of unity in the church. I am not advocating independency, still less the isolationism that such independency produces. We need a church in which genuine communication, and so genuine unity and fellowship, can exist. We need a church that can shape a strategy. We need a church in which those who exercise pastoral care can be challenged and called to account, but we also need a church that can exercise genuine *episkope*, a church less cluttered with structures of bureaucracy, a church that is more mobile and less wedded to the maintenance of traditions.

### 3) *The diaconate*

A report by the Anglican Consultative Council for the Ministry (ACCM), published in 1974,<sup>34</sup> recommended the abolition of the diaconate and that course is, I believe, the only cogent option, despite the subsequent rethinking done by another ACCM Working Party in 1977.<sup>35</sup> The present arrangement in the Church of England is nonsen-

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sical, and the Roman Catholic experiment with a permanent diaconate has not turned out as its advocates had hoped.<sup>36</sup> There may be far more to be said for suspending the somewhat contentless order of deacon, and commissioning members of congregations to undertake specific forms of service with no expectation that the commissioning be regarded as permanent. The form of service could include roles such as director of music, caterer, theological teacher, treasurer, youth club leader, administrator, and be either paid or unpaid. Where some form of training is appropriate, it should be required prior to commissioning.

### 4) *Ordination*

Ordination should be reserved for bishops and presbyters (as outlined above), the 'parish priest', as he is now, being the bishop. A better way of putting it, despite the apparent tautology, might be to say that presbyters and elders should be ordained, dispensing with the title—though not the office—of bishop (where oversight continues, there episcopacy remains). The 'presbyter' would then function as presiding elder.

Who then lays hands on the candidate? Hippolytus tells us that a deacon is appointed to the service of the bishop, and so the bishop alone lays hands on him. In the case of a presbyter, his fellow presbyters join in, but not, Hippolytus insists, in order to ordain. They do so here as an act of welcome into the presbyterate.<sup>37</sup> I submit that he is talking nonsense, simply seeking to justify an existing practice which lacks an articulated theological basis. I suggest that it makes much better sense to see ordination as an act of God in the church, and at the same time as an act of obedience by the church. In this case it is perfectly appropriate that members of the laity should be involved in the laying-on of hands. To preserve the catholicity of the church, no ordination should take place without the presence and involvement of one of those who act as a focus of unity beyond the parish (we might tentatively refer to them as metropolitans), but neither should it take place without the presence (in the case of elders) of presbyter and fellow elders or (in the case of a presbyter) his elders.

There is, of course, no guarantee against corruption in the church, nor against laziness or carelessness, but it may just be that an ordained ministry structured along these lines might be better able to face the challenge of the coming years, precisely because it would be more clearly accountable for its action and also provide some very necessary support structures.

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NOTES

- 1 A paper given at the Evangelical Theological College Staffs' Conference, September 1980.
- 2 So A. T. Hanson writes: 'Anglicans in the past have either leaned heavily on the theory of apostolic succession to supply them with a theology of the ministry, or been quite content to have no particular doctrine at all' (*Church, Sacraments and Ministry* [Mowbray, London 1975] pp.100f.).
- 3 J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (SCM Press, London 1977) p.300.
- 4 *ibid.*
- 5 *Studia Liturgica* Vol. 13, 1979, No. 2-3-4, p.135.
- 6 A. T. Hanson, *The Pioneer Ministry* (SCM Press, London 1961) p.105; cf. the Report of the Churches' Council for Covenanting, *Towards Visible Unity: Proposals for a Covenant* (London 1980) 5.2.1.2 and 5.2.2.4.
- 7 1 Peter 2:9.
- 8 It is, however, instructive to reflect on the fact that it was the Gallican ordination prayers which, despite the Gallican tendency towards innovation, held firm to NT lines for its understanding of the ministry, while Roman ordination prayers interpreted it along OT lines.
- 9 R. P. C. Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined* (Lutterworth, London 1979) p.44; *The Attractiveness of God* (SPCK, London 1973) p.181.
- 10 A. T. Hanson, *The Pioneer Ministry*, p.99.
- 11 R. P. C. Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined*, p.62ff.
- 12 cf. H. Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Penguin, Harmondsworth 1967) p.48f.
- 13 cf. the preface to the CSI Ordinal (*The Book of Common Worship*, p.160f.).
- 14 There is here an inevitable and quite proper tension. In the *Babylonian Captivity*, 1520, Luther sees the ministers as elected and called by the congregation and deriving their authority from them. In the *Address to the Nobility* he speaks of the ministry as a distinct divine institution deriving its call and authority from God. See B. A. Gerrish, 'Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther', *Church History*, Vol. 34, 1974, pp.402-22. There is no contradiction here if the congregation is a congregation living in obedience to God. It may be suggested, however, that Luther was apt to change his emphasis as occasion demanded—the ministry must be defended from papal or institutional domination, but it must also be defended from domination by the instruments of government.
- 15 *Church Times*, 16 May 1980.
- 16 A. T. Hanson, *The Pioneer Ministry*, p.139.
- 17 For text see G. J. Cuming ed., *Hippolytus: A Text for Students* (Grove Books, 1976).
- 18 The view, often taught as established fact, that Christians adopted ordination in conscious limitation of rabbinic practice (I have even maintained the view myself—see C. Buchanan, ed., *Anglican Worship Today* [Collins, London 1980] p.236) is challenged by Lawrence Hoffman ('Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity', *Studia Liturgica*, Vol. 13, No.2-3-4, 1979, pp.11-41). Hoffman maintains that none of the alleged evidence for rabbinic practice of laying-on of hands should be so interpreted.
- 19 Anthony Russell has traced the rise of professionalism in the English clergy in the nineteenth century and demonstrated the connections between that phenomenon and the protectionist attitudes of clergy towards their role (*The Clerical Profession* [SPCK, London 1980] ad. loc.).
- 20 cf. A. E. Harvey, *Priest or President?* (SPCK, London 1975).
- 21 cf. Russell, *op. cit.*, pp.233-306.
- 22 The doctrine of indelibility, modelled on the doctrine of baptism, is in essence of medieval origin (cf. R. P. C. Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined*, p.106).

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- 23 J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (SCM Press, London 1979), pp.341ff.
- 24 This is in no way to prejudge the issue of the Acts' description of Paul as appointing elders (Acts 14:23) as an attempt to present the church as having a unified practice (cf. Dunn, op. cit., pp.354ff.).
- 25 *ad Smyrn.*, 8.
- 26 As Maurice Wiles has reminded us, *lex orandi* and *lex credendi* are intimately related in the history of the early church (*The Making of Christian Doctrine* [CUP, London 1967], pp.62-93).
- 27 1 Clement 44.
- 28 cf. H. Küng, *On Being a Christian* (Collins, London 1977), p.486.
- 29 *Towards Visible Unity*, 5.2.3.1.
- 30 cf. Küng, op. cit., p.487f.: at least one Roman Catholic is willing to acknowledge this truth!
- 31 cf. T. J. Talley, 'Ordination in Today's Thinking', *Studia Liturgica* Vol. 13, no. 2-3-4, 1979, p.10. (This edition is also published as *Ordination Rites*, ed. W. Vos and G. Wainwright.)
- 32 'Why not allow archdeacons to confirm?' asked Michael Green in 1977 (John Stott, ed., *Obeying Christ in a Changing World* [Collins, Glasgow 1978], Vol. 2, p.90), the implication presumably being not simply that the bishop's load should be lightened but that the units of pastoral care are too large for a bishop to manage.
- 33 It is perhaps salutary to remind ourselves that it was the bishop who used to preside over baptisms, and that the practice of allowing parish clergy to take over the office was in part at least due to the inability of bishops to manage the load. In effect the church had already recognized the real locus of *episkope*.
- 34 ACCM Working Party, *Deacons in the Church* (CIO, London 1974).
- 35 General Synod, ACCM, *The Ministry of Deacons and Deaconesses*, GS 344, (CIO, London n.d.).
- 36 'We have already seen how the revival of the diaconate has tended to produce clericalized laymen to plug sacerdotal gaps rather than any real penetration into the secular world of work' (P. Hebblethwaite in *The Experience of Ordination* [Epworth, London 1979] ed. K. Wilson, p.75).
- 37 *Apostolic Tradition* 8. See note 17.