

unity, as of all other grace. When we have come together in faith and penitence at the Lord's Table we may hope to realize such a unity as can most fittingly and effectively be expressed in the unification of the ministry in terms of the historic episcopate.

In the meantime, a true doctrine of priesthood will enable us to acknowledge that the ministers of non-episcopal bodies are, no less than their episcopally ordained brethren, priests in the priestly Church of God, commissioned by Christ to exercise His own priesthood representatively within the community of the priestly people. We shall recognize that the doctrine of the ministry need not be a barrier to intercommunion; and we shall be increasingly reluctant to be committed, as Anglicans, to a position in which our Church too often seems to the rest of the world to be concerned with a gospel which is no gospel, a gospel of the grace of God in bishops.

The Church of England and Apostolic Succession

BY COLIN BUCHANAN

IN his posthumously published work, Archbishop Benson wrote of the sacerdotal doctrine of episcopacy which Cyprian developed: "Was it then but an unconscious straining first of language, then of feeling, lastly of thought, which gradually warped with a hieratic distinction an office originally politic . . . or, was the belief a legitimate development of principles of the apostolic church . . . ? The alternative is an important one."¹ The alternative may be a simplification, and the choices more than two—but these two sketch the limit. Did the apostolic church contain within it the principles of episcopacy which have formed the platform of so many post-Tractarian Anglicans? The question is not a simple one and much clearing of the ground must precede the actual discussion of principles.

We must ask ourselves first, whether what *The Apostolic Ministry* calls the "Essential (as opposed to the 'Dependent') Ministry"² can be historically traced to the apostles. The book says it can, but Bishop Stephen Neill's comment is interesting: "Throughout, the reader has the disturbing feeling that the conclusions were reached before the evidence was considered, that a certain structure of thought has been imposed upon the facts . . ."³ Awful gaps and changes occur in our first century evidence. We may well allow, however, that a ministry has existed since the apostles' time—that there were those "*quibus Apostoli tradiderunt ecclesiam*".⁴ But does a fact imply a dominical or apostolic commandment? Bishop Headlam said that this apostolical

succession is a "fact not a doctrine".⁵ Bishop Lightfoot conceded the fact: "it seems vain to deny . . . that the position of St. James in the mother Church furnished the precedent and pattern of the later episcopate."⁶ But there are signs of a change before a threefold order of ministry and moniscopacy was established. Was then a mutable form of ministry of commandment in its later form? Now it is interesting to note that Bilson, Hooker, Andrews, Bramhall, Jeremy Taylor, and other post-Reformation Anglican divines say that it was. On the one hand, they have a defective historical sense, but on the other, quite properly, as Protestants, they ground their arguments on Scripture. Some of the arguments have achieved a form of succession of their own—notably the argument from the polity of ancient Israel, and that from the twelve and the seventy. This latter specimen of wrested Scripture occurs in Jeremy Taylor, in Keble's Tract 12, and in Austin Farrer's chapter in *The Apostolic Ministry*. Is this really the respective institution of Essential and Dependent Ministries?

Thus far we have only a matter of scriptural exegesis to dispute—though exegesis coloured by tinted spectacles. But even here we find concessions, such as Hooker's, that episcopacy is "that which best agreeth with the sacred Scripture".⁷ The better the exegesis the less sure did it seem; Bilson's argument strays furthest from Scripture, Jewel's and Whitgift's adhere most closely to it. But today we face a different argument. "The universal consent of antiquity" is the basis (the Scripture having honestly proved unhelpful). Newman writes of his Tractarian days: "As to the Episcopal system, I founded it upon the epistles of St. Ignatius, which inculcated it in various ways."⁸ Here is an abandonment of the Reformed position—he might just as well have founded a Presbyterian system on the epistle of Clement.

If anything is of the *esse* of the Church—a truly legitimate development of apostolic principles—then a Protestant will wish to find warrant for it in the Scripture. *Ubi episcopus ibi ecclesia catholica* is a stupendous claim: it virtually requires adherence to a bishop (not just in name, but in succession and Essential Ministry) for salvation. But the Articles and Ordinal forbid the Anglican minister to teach any such doctrine unless it be found in Scripture—which, it is tacitly admitted today, it is not. The phrase "uncovenanted mercies" is sometimes used to describe the gracious dealings of God with nonconformists. It is questionable whether this is not a contradiction in terms in speaking of the love of a covenant-making God. It is certain that Scripture knows nothing of a covenant with a visible Church, such that its *esse* is guaranteed by an Essential Ministry. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out"—these are the terms of God's covenant with man. "The Lord added to the church . . .," and not *vice versa*.

This may decide the position of the ministry with relation to the Church. "Which is prior, the Church or the ministry?" sounds like a "hen or egg" question. But certainly the Church does not depend on the ministry as a picture does upon a cord. Equally certainly the picture will look wrong if there is no ministry in it. The Church depends immediately upon the Word of God, and mediately upon the ministers of the Word. Ordination is a function of the Church, through

“men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation” (Article XXIII). Thus, in Headlam’s words, “ordination depends upon the authority of the Church, and not the Church on ordination.”⁹ Similarly, Till summarizes Hooker’s doctrine: “His doctrine of episcopacy . . . is high, but his doctrine of the Church . . . is higher.”¹⁰ Did the Church in Jerusalem call St. James to the episcopal position he occupied? The onus of proof is on those who would say not. Even missionaries have to learn that as a local church comes into being their position has to be regularized and sanctioned by that body. The sense in which the ministry is given to the Church by the ascended Christ is in the call of each individual. The Scriptures would lead us to expect that this call will be, if not mediated through the Church, certainly ratified by it. Cyprian traced a bishop’s position to the judgment of God, the approval of the clergy, and the consent of the laity.¹¹ Where a man lacks these let him doubt his call.

A modern Anglo-Catholic doctrine leads surprisingly to the same conclusion. The newest doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass avoids many of the older blasphemies, by attributing to the priest, not a share in the priesthood of Christ, but the delegated priesthood of the Church. That the characteristic priesthood of all believers is by definition untransferable is irrelevant—the doctrine accords a significant logical and juridical priority to the Church above the ministry.

There remains one question to be asked. An evangelical redefinition of the “apostolical succession” would be etymologically profitable, but controversially stultifying. The terms of the controversy are clear. We have examined the question whether there is an Essential Ministry, and adumbrated the answer. Questions of validity and invalidity, tactual succession, indelibility of orders and the “character” and “grace” of ordination usually start at this point. But a big link in the chain of argument is missing and until that is supplied there is no good guide to answer these other questions. The rest of the essay is devoted to an examination of the features of that link. If, as I suspect, it proves the weakest link, then there may be nothing left on which the usual questions of validity can turn.

The question is obviously: what is episcopacy for? Neglect of this question leaves broken chains in most arguments. Newman saw it, and wrote in Tract 7: “Can we conceive that this Succession has been preserved all over the world, amid many revolutions, through many centuries, *for nothing*?” It might be just a contingent fact, but he ignores that. Episcopacy was not in fact valued for its own sake by the early Church, but because it served certain ends. It is my contention that today episcopacy does not guarantee those ends in the Church of England. I have restricted the enquiry to that communion, where the current tensions are so crucial. One can approve the office of a bishop without subscribing to an exclusive doctrine of episcopacy. Similarly, where the “apostolical succession” is a fact not a doctrine, it can be valued as an adornment to the Church of England. It is like a pre-Reformation parish church. Its shape had doctrinal significance before the sixteenth century. The shape, and the beauty of the building have been retained and adorn our Christian heritage, but its doctrinal *raison d’être* has been abandoned. What follows is an

examination of one of the ends variously advanced through Christian history which only episcopacy could secure. Some of the ends the Church of England does not seek, the rest can be secured without episcopacy, and the way will thus be cleared for a more promising approach to scriptural nonconformist Christians than has ever recently proved possible.

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Unity is a note of the Church of Christ, and the visible unity of the Church must be constantly sought. Cyprian's controversy with the Novatianists (and Augustine's with the Donatists) sprang from a hatred of schism. But catholicity was not always easy to prove—and was usually only done by the pressure of numbers or the ravages of time. Novatianism was really doomed when first Alexandria, then Antioch adhered to Cyprian. But the claim to be catholic was exclusive—the catholic Church was one just because it was co-extensive with its own communicants. In Cyprian's time the unity of the Church was guaranteed by adherence to the bishop. Every Christian could trace his communion to a catholic bishop. Thus, Cyprian's insistence on the episcopal office is comprehensible. A move against him in his own see is schism, and the consecration of Novatian as bishop of Rome is worse schism. He writes that it is "against God's ordinance . . . to have consented to the creation of another bishop, that is, to a thing divinely and humanly impossible, the founding of a second church".¹⁴

But that which is divinely impossible has proved possible with men. The "churches" of Christendom number now, not two, but hundreds. The power of number or emperors, which preserved the unity of the Church through the various schisms of the early centuries, has since proved more fruitful than curative of fragmentation. Uniformity was not found in the early centuries. Liturgies varied from place to place—not even Quarto-Decimanism was allowed to break communion when Polycarp visited Rome. But as East split from West, unity in the West became increasingly a question of adherence to the see of Rome. This did not produce unity automatically, as antipopes occur. But in principle, the test of adherence to a universal bishop is the easiest test to apply. Anything else is schism or worse. The unity of the church of Rome, as the Gallican controversy witnesses, springs entirely from the centre.

But no Anglican can take that ground. And hence we come to a very subtle Tractarian argument. Each see, is the claim, is an individual church, with the bishop in his see in that very position of pope, as the centre of unity. This looks plausible from the situation before Nicea. Intercommunion with other sees is a sort of optional extra, the argument continues, though this looks less plausible. Thus, instead of bewailing that the one great catholic Church has split into three parts (Eastern, Western, and British), not in communion with each other, we can instead rejoice that so many of the autonomous sees of catholic Christendom are in fact in communion with each other. If we start at the bottom the situation looks rosier—and particularly it is wonderful to have a united British church. The see, however, is the sacrosanct unit. Hence the original outcry at the suppression of the Irish bishoprics in 1833. Hence, too, Newman's statement: "I considered

[In 1839 to 1841] that each see and Diocese might be compared to a crystal, and that each was similar to the rest, and that the sum total of them all was only a collection of crystals."¹³ He also says that he never cared for the Bench of Bishops, Provincial Councils, or Diocesan Synods. But "what to me was *jure divino* was the voice of my Bishop in his own person. My own Bishop was my Pope; I knew no other . . ."¹⁴

Keble, in his introduction to Hooker's *Works*, writes of what "the papacy . . . had done . . . to weaken all notions of independent authority in bishops."¹⁵ The most extraordinary fruit of this doctrine was borne in the actions of two Anglo-Catholic bishops. After the Gorham Judgment in 1851, Bishop Philpotts of Exeter excommunicated Archbishop Sumner of Canterbury. Even more bizarre was the proceeding following the raising of B. H. Streeter to a prebendal stall in Hereford (in 1912). Thereupon, Zanzibar Cathedral carried a notice of excommunication of John, Bishop of Hereford, and all who adhered to him. Communion between the sees has, I understand, since been restored. Further lip-service to this theory was paid by the infamous F. G. Lee of Lambeth, who is reputed to have been consecrated on the high seas lest he act in schism. His subsequent invasion of the catholic sees of Britain was presumably only venial. The clearest statement of the implications of this doctrine are in Palmer's *Treatise on the Church of Christ*. Anglicans in South America would be schismatics, but so are papists in North America, and "the Romish or Popish party in England and Ireland who fell [*sic*] from the Catholic Church in the reign of Queen Elizabeth."¹⁶ Anglicans have indeed been lamentably slow to evangelize in South America—but it is difficult to call the 97% of Romanists in Eire schismatics from the catholic body.

This is the only formulation of the doctrine which can make adherence to a bishop the acid test of unity. But this refuses to face certain facts. Firstly, by Cyprian's time the succession of bishops was visualized as a network, not merely (as it was to Irenaeus) a succession in a single see. The attempt to trace a succession in a single see back to St. Augustine or St. Patrick is not, therefore, a guarantee of catholicity. By this standard neither Anglican nor Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark has any title to the adjective "catholic". Yet both claim it. Woolcombe writes that the Fathers "clung to the rule that there must never be two bishops in one place. The bishop represented the unity of the Church."¹⁷ We now have more than one bishop in one place, and we have to decide which network is catholic. Cyprian's problem was ours. The obvious answer is that Roman Catholicism has lost the proper marks of the visible Church, but this no Tractarian theoretician would allow.

Secondly, the "crystal" view of the diocesan church itself neglects a *sine qua non* of Tractarian theory—the tactual succession. Cyprian was consecrated by his comprovincials, but who is to consecrate a successor to a bishop who dies out of communion with all the other catholic bishops? Practically, united action by a college of diocesan bishops is required to ensure the succession—unless, which Ignatius and Jerome might have allowed, the manner of consecration is indifferent. But no Anglo-Catholic allows this.

Thirdly, we have to face occasional schisms within the English episcopal church. The most famous of these is the nonjuring one. The nonjurors claimed to be "the Catholic Remnant of the British Churches",¹⁸ and that, in the time of emergency, "the whole world is but one diocese".¹⁹ (At the same date as this phrase was written, another English clergyman was deciding that the whole world was but one parish!) How could a layman decide? Only by predilection or politics—both anathema to the Tractarian. Could the nonjurors thus abolish the sees, or are the sees in fact above the bishops?

We don't know. But history does show us the view the pre-Tractarian bishops took of the Protestant and Roman churches on the Continent. Neither Whitgift, Cosin, Sancroft, nor Wake would have written, as Newman did: "Lutheranism and Calvinism are heresies, repugnant to Scripture . . ."²⁰ Nonconformity at home, to Whitgift and others, was schism. But whereas to leave the Church of England was schism for an Englishman, to leave the Roman church was almost a duty for a Frenchman.

Here is the heart of the matter. Catholicity springs not from above, from a universal bishop or a diocesan bishop. It is the privilege of every man regenerated in Christ. "The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance" (Article XIX). Where there is no faith, there is no church. No congregation, no church. No Word of God, no church. No sacraments, no church. The unit of the visible Church is not the diocese but the congregation, the test of it not the bishop but the faith, doctrine, and practice of the local congregation.

We cannot leave the problem here—for the tragedy of Christendom today is that two or more congregations meet in the same area, and often excommunicate each other. England is not in the same position as South India, where spheres of influence had always been observed by Protestant missionary societies. In England we have Christians living next door to each other and out of communion with each other. Sometimes one or more congregations lack the "notes" of the visible church. Separation for the layman may then be almost inevitable. The Methodists as a body found it so even before John Wesley died. History is not all on our side, however. Most of the secessions from the Church of England are traceable not to our formularies, but to pig-headed bishops. We do well to note the words of Pilkington: "Succession of good bishops is a great blessing of God; but because God and his truth hangs not on man nor place, we rather hang on the undeceivable truth of God's Word in all doubts, than on any bishops, place, or man."²¹ When preaching the pure Word of God has been lost in the Church of England so have many of her godliest members. Let us first restore to the pulpit and the homes the place the Bible already has in our Articles and Prayer Book. Then, and then alone, we may suggest to other Christians, not that we have excommunicated them, but that those causes for which they separated have become outdated by events.

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Before Cyprian's time the succession to the apostles was a favourite

theme of Irenaeus. Against heretical sects he even appeals to it as a note of the true Church. He lists the bishops of Rome since the apostles, traces his own teaching through Polycarp to John, and points out that there were no Valentinians before Valentinus, nor Marcionites before Marcion. We can see that here, too, we have no insistence on an apostolic succession for its own sake, but only for a certain end. If we examine that end we shall see that the "succession" will not guarantee it today.

Irenaeus was writing against heretics, particularly gnostic ones. Against their claim to a secret gnosis he opposes an open and unchanging church tradition—an apostolic tradition. He claims that that which is taught by the Church is that which the Apostles taught. The proof is easy: consult the Apostles' writings. Church and Scripture say the same thing—they are a check, one against the other. In effect the heretical gnosis can only be maintained by denying *both*. We should note also that he is even prepared to write of "*successiones presbyterorum*"²⁸ as an alternative to "*episcoporum*". No Anglo-Catholic dare write of such a succession today.

Irenaeus thus asserts that the visible Church, with its continuous unchanging tradition since the Apostles' time, has the truth. Nor was he the only champion of this view. Kelly writes: "The immense stress which Ignatius placed on loyalty to the episcopate is best explained by the assumption that he regarded the bishop as the appointed guarantor of the purity of doctrine."²⁹ Similarly, Tertullian appeals to the unity of the common teaching of the visible Church to prove its truth.

But this ground is also denied us. We cannot point to a single unbroken continuity of church teaching. The Reformers specifically rejected the teachings of their immediate predecessors. Even if many Anglicans today prefer medieval doctrines they still cannot maintain an unbroken succession of those doctrines. No longer can a history of church teaching stand comparison with the Scriptures, as Irenaeus was claiming. The Reformation sprang from a tension between the two. From that time on, one or other had to prevail and correct the other. We cannot treat them as co-ordinate because they patently are not.

The Anglican position is the Reformed one—that the Scriptures are perspicuous and contain "all things necessary to salvation". Irenaeus would undoubtedly have said the same. We have to remember the comparative rarity of the Apostles' writings in his day. The New Testament would not be found in every home. Catechetical instruction, actual preaching, and informal conversation would be the Christian's normal method of receiving the apostolic *depositum fidei*. The gnostics would use the same methods, and also claim apostolic origin. The answer was thus twofold—"the Church's teaching has always been open, and the Church's teaching is the Apostles' teaching". We have seen that our communion today cannot claim an open tradition of unchanging doctrine back to the Apostles. Attempts to make the claim (such as the renowned "*catenae*" of the *Tracts*) are almost laughable. But we can claim to teach what the Apostles taught, and in the last analysis this is the best claim.

The Apostles' Teachings, however, are the New Testament writings.

The post-apostolic writers would never have used the *petitio principii* : "because we teach this doctrine today it must be apostolic." That was exactly the claim of Valentinus. Only the actual history of doctrine, or the Scriptures, would confute gnosticism. A simple assertion that the Church teaching was apostolic would not. Of the two good proofs history has now, no show of unanimity—but apostolicity is still demonstrable from Scripture, and from that alone.

Indeed, divergences between church teaching and Scripture, because they produced controversy, helped to hammer out the truth of Scripture. It is notorious that the early apologists lacked a rigorous Christology. But when the teachings of Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism were successively found in the Church, then the limits of scriptural orthodoxy had to be meticulously drawn. The conciliar definitions were not summaries of tradition, but (like the creeds which contain them) were "proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture". Similarly, church tradition on the holy communion was notably vague until controversy occurred in the time of Ratram and Paschasius. The difference here was that the unscriptural party prevailed, so that the controversy, despite the late decree of transubstantiation, was not ended, but buried only to spring to new life at the Reformation. That period also witnessed soteriological controversy and thus begot the scriptural definitions which we inherit today. Today the doctrine of revelation is similarly at stake, and the Scriptures are being examined that the doctrine may be accurately formulated. This is the result of a divergence of teaching *within* the Church, such as the previous eighteen centuries never knew.

Doctrine must always be scriptural; on that, the early fathers (including the unjustly famous Vincent of Lerins) and the churches of the Reformation are agreed. The meaning of Scripture to Irenaeus was witnessed by the unanimity of the Church (exemplified by the succession of bishops), whereas to us, it springs rather from the controversies of the Church (in which the bishops might be on either or both sides). The open succession of witnesses has gradually been replaced by an equally open succession of confessional truth. Some hints of this are in the New Testament, but the classic cases from the early centuries are the Trinitarian and Christological definitions of the first four councils. The Reformation was rich in confessions, and attempts were made by Edward VI and Crammer to have an evangelical ecumenical council to agree on one confession. In the event each "particular or national church" had its own—ours, of course, being the Thirty-Nine Articles. They are not sacrosanct, and if later controversy shows them to be deficient, then changes must be made. We cannot, however, jettison the lessons of the sixteenth century any more lightly than we can those of the fourth and fifth. The Articles are our greatest claim to apostolicity.

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The purpose of Roman ordination is succinctly stated by Aquinas : "The sacrament of Order is directed to the sacrament of the Eucharist."⁴⁴ Traditionally, arguments about validity tend to trace back to this purpose. It has been admitted since Augustine's day that anyone

(even heretics and schismatics) can confer valid baptism. But who can celebrate a "valid" eucharist? The Council of Trent states: "The Scriptures show, and the tradition of the Catholic Church has always taught, that this priesthood was instituted by the same Lord our Saviour, and that to the Apostles, and their successors in the priesthood, was the power delivered of consecrating, offering, and administering His Body and Blood, as also of forgiving and of retaining sins."⁴⁶ We are clearly committed to an examination of the Anglican doctrine of the eucharist (and other ordinances) to see whether this doctrine is ours.

Now clearly in both Roman and Anglican communions celebration of the eucharist is confined to priests and bishops. But in England all doctrine of "offering" the elements has been repudiated. The question of who should administer is trivial. So we return to ask whether consecration is restricted *de fide* to episcopally ordained priests or bishops. If we can show that no change occurs in the elements at consecration, and that this is performed with a view only to administration, we shall also avoid a long digression refuting the complex doctrines of "offering" which abound.

In Rome the emphasis on the eucharist is so great that the only real "order" in the Church is the priesthood. The other orders all subserve the priesthood—the episcopate is not an order and consecration confers no "character". Now this is clearly not true in England. The "Preface" to the Ordinal clearly calls the episcopate an order, and knows nothing of the five Romans orders below deacon. More important still, the order of priesthood in England is not "directed to the sacrament of the eucharist". The ministry is of word and sacrament, with the emphasis rather on the former, as the delivery of the Bible indicates. The administration of the holy communion is by no means the most important of a minister's responsibilities.

We must go further than this. The Scriptures nowhere connect holy communion with the ministry. There is no dominical restriction, and the part of the minister is a most notable omission in Paul's first letter to Corinth, as also in the twentieth chapter of the Acts. Hooker supplies a commentary on this omission: "I see not which way it should be gathered by the words of Christ—when and where the bread is His body, or the wine His blood, but only in the very heart and soul of him which receiveth them."⁴⁷ Christ's words and Paul's letter were addressed to Christians as recipients, not celebrants. Thus "validity" (like grace) must be tested *a posteriori* and not, as in Rome, *a priori*. The only case where celebration is impossible is where there are no communicants—and the rubrics of our Prayer Book are designed to prevent non-communicating attendance, and "private masses". The limitation of the administration to the ordained presbyter is a matter of order. The Lord's institution is not flouted if a layman officiates—but opportunity occurs to fence in the Lord's table by private predilections, and promote schism. The history of the Brethren movement is a sober warning to us, if we take seriously the unity of the visible Church round the Lord's table. Ignatius' insistence to "do nothing without the bishop"⁴⁸ similarly provides against, not invalidity, but schism. Bishop Cosin, of course, communicated with non-episcopal Christians of

France when in exile, when presumably he could have celebrated communion by himself, or for his own household. Did he, who showed such inflexibility to "schismatics" in England, fear in France to be found in schism himself? Certainly it is an attitude to be commended to all Anglicans on the Continent today.

We might go even further than this. The presentation of de Laune to a living in Norfolk in 1629 without re-ordination reflects the pre-Commonwealth outlook. There is abundant further testimony, not only of their English doctrine of the eucharist (which could lay no stress on consecration), but also on the view of non-episcopal celebrations. Jewel writes against Harding, "If you had ever known the order of the church of Geneva, and had seen four thousand people or more receiving the holy mysteries together at one communion, ye could not . . . thus untruly have published to the world that by M. Calvin's doctrine the sacraments of Christ are superfluous".³⁰ Jewel had no need to defend Calvin, but he does so in detail. To have jettisoned him or bracketed him with Anabaptists, would have been easier, and more in line with Tractarian teaching. There was no re-ordination when Bancroft re-established episcopacy in Scotland in 1610. Episcopacy was a form of government, not an indefeasible means of grace. If the conditions of the "Preface" to the Ordinal were tightened in 1662 the reason is not far to seek. The returning Royalists were only too eager to twist the Puritans' tails. To demand submission and re-ordination by the bishop would be more than they would stand. And so it proved. Sheldon's fear that they would conform was not realized, for the provision for re-ordination was a very potent dissuasive.

We thus hold no doctrine that the eucharist can only be consecrated by an episcopally ordained minister. The opposite opinion was never held till the nineteenth century, except by what Archbishop Wake called "*quidam furiosi*".³¹ Today a more scriptural view is prevailing. The "Memorandum on behalf of the Church of England Representatives on the Joint Conference at Lambeth Palace, July 6th, 1923," stated: "Ministries which imply a sincere intention to . . . administer the sacraments as Christ has ordained, and to which authority so to do has been solemnly given by the Church concerned, are real ministries of Christ's . . . Sacraments in the Universal Church."³² If the high-water mark of Anglo-Catholicism was reached at the 1920 Lambeth Conference, even there, in the plea for a universal episcopate, no greater claim was made for the Anglican eucharist than that worship could thus be offered "without any doubtfulness of mind".³³ That high-water is now past. The mark it made lingers a little. But the recognition of non-episcopal ministries (with their sacraments) has been hastened by events in South India, and seems to be explicit in the recently republished *Historic Episcopate in the Fulness of the Church*.

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The Elizabethans were faced with a cry that Presbyterianism is God's chosen method of church government. The text book, as ever, was the *Institutes* and the clamour was unceasing. Whitgift, Bilson, and Hooker were all concerned in the reply. Bilson alone in this reign

asserted the absolute necessity of episcopacy, and restricted the power of ordination to bishops. Yet even he, as Dimock points out,³² cites the practice of the Alexandrian church, in which the presbyters consecrated the bishop. Whitgift and Hooker took what Keble calls the "lower ground",³³ that forms of government were not decided in Scripture. Whitgift writes: "That may be profitable for the churches of Geneva and France, etc., which would be most hurtful to this Church of England".³⁴ Similarly, Hooker says: "Men oftentimes without any fault of their own may be driven to want that kind of polity or regiment which is best".³⁵ This was the general Anglican view and countless testimonies to it could be summoned. The Thirty-Nine Articles know nothing of a doctrine of episcopacy at all (Article XXIII is studiously vague). It is therefore rather ironical to read in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* that a differentiating feature of the Irish is that they "make no mention of the threefold ministry nor of the necessity of Episcopal Ordination".³⁶ Perhaps the contributor had only read the English Articles through Sancta Clara's eyes.

Some of the English Reformers' reasons for advocating episcopacy have been stated. They were fearful of schism, and of heresy; and in the days of a national church episcopacy was a proof against these, which today, as we have seen, it is not. However, three other factors strengthened their inclination and these we must consider.

Firstly, the whole Anglican principle of reformation was conservative. Nothing was jettisoned unless contrary to the Word of God. The aberrations of Rome were rooted out, and the services were re-drawn retaining what was compatible with Scripture even where a resemblance to Roman forms was also thereby preserved. The value of this conservative reformation was threefold. Firstly, the alternatives are very difficult to follow. One alternative is to construct everything anew just from the Bible. But this is psychologically impossible—a man's past experience sways him to one side or the other. Alternatively, this fact can be admitted, and the new principle followed of being as unlike Rome as possible. But this is just foolish. Hooker shows that Rome retains much that is valuable, that where the Greek and Roman churches disagree (as on the use of wafers) one of them inevitably must be followed, and that unless a use be incompatible with Scripture the very fact that it exists in the Church lends a presumption of utility of it. He also employs the old trick—citing the Genevan use of wafers to embarrass his opponent.³⁷ The second benefit of conservative reformation is that it etches more strongly the value of the changes actually made. The worshipper (or the candidate for ordination) would recognize the significance of every actual change. Radical reformation suggests either that all matters are optional, or that every detail of unreformed use was objectional—a dichotomy much to be eschewed. And, thirdly, conservative reformation conciliates the conservative temper of most churchmen. Hence the retention of the minister's surplice and the ring in marriage. And hence, too, the retention of episcopacy. As methods of church government were held to be in themselves indifferent, this method of reformation meant that episcopacy was the best for England. To impugn it was to assert that it was contrary to the Word of God. And in Elizabeth's reign this would

have also meant blackening the fair names of Latimer, Hooper, Ridley, and Cranmer.

Secondly, the Reformers had a great admiration of the early Church. This in turn gave them a consciousness of episcopacy as the norm of government. They still acknowledged it was not of commandment. Jewel indeed cites Chrysostom and Jerome to show that bishops and presbyters are the same.⁴⁰ But a sense of the fittingness of it was inevitable to any soaked in the Fathers. Hence, they would sometimes refer to a "defect and imperfection"⁴¹ elsewhere. This in turn has recurred today, and seems to be the general ground of the Lambeth Conferences, the "Memorandum" cited above, and the contributors to *The Historic Episcopate in the Fulness of the Church*. This view of the "*plene esse*" remains to be considered in the next section—for the moment it is fair to say that if the Elizabethans were influenced by this then they may have been guilty of an unconscious duplication. To insist on episcopacy as a remedy against heresy and schism is allowable—to insist on it because the early Church did so is also possible. But the arguments are not cumulative, but merely restatements and should be recognized as such.

The third factor was probably decisive. All the Protestant churchmen of the sixteenth century were strong Royalists. The reasons are not far to seek—the break with Rome, the theological Reformation, and the Elizabethan settlement all sprang from monarch and council. Cranmer, Parker, and Whitgift would all today be called Erastian. Church affairs, whether the revision of the Prayer Book in 1552, or the coercion of Puritans in Elizabeth's reign, were all decided by imposed force. There was a natural feeling that a political monarchy ought to have a parallel ecclesiastical polity under the same head. Popular church government might be acceptable in a democracy like Geneva, but not in England. Evidence of this feeling is abundant. Parker wrote to Cecil in 1559: "God keep us from such visitation as Knox have attempted in Scotland; the people to be orderers of things".⁴² To Burghley in 1573 he wrote about the Puritans: "Neither do they only cut down the ecclesiastical state, but also give a great push at the civil policy".⁴³ The only episcopal reaction against this view came from Grindal, and he was promptly inhibited by Elizabeth. James I, coming himself from Presbyterian Scotland, gave the pithiest summary of the doctrine thus: "No bishop, no king".⁴⁴

But this ground is completely untenable today. The Anglo-Catholic is the first to complain at the connection between church and state. The monarch's throne is not dependent on episcopal control of the country. The "apostolical succession" is found in many countries where the state assumes no ecclesiastical powers. The state appointment of bishops seems anachronistic. The method of government is by all parties admitted to be indifferent within certain limits. Bishop Kirk wrote: "If we agree about orders, we can compromise to an unlimited extent upon organization".⁴⁵ We may have bishops-in-presbytery, rural deans in episcopal orders, moderators of the Church of South India, establishment, disestablishment, a House of Laity, or anything else that seems useful, if we retain the orders of the "Essential Ministry". But Elizabeth and Parker would have been horrified.

Their emphasis upon episcopacy for England sprang from a refusal to compromise upon organization. As ever, episcopacy served an end. If it does not serve that end now, then their retention of episcopacy loses all controversial significance.

* * * *

Is there a gap between the alternative views of episcopacy as of the *esse* and of the *bene esse* of the Church? The recent authorities mentioned in the last section seem to say there is. They contend that we are in fact asking the wrong question, and hence getting the wrong answer. The right answer to the right question is, apparently, that it is of the fulness or pleroma of the Church, and that other ministries are not valid or invalid (which are outdated terms) but defective. And this view not only hits a charitable mean within the Anglican Communion today, but also has a show of historical plausibility behind it as well.

We have seen the various reasons which caused the Elizabethan and Stuart divines to insist on episcopacy without unchurching non-episcopal congregations. We have also seen that episcopacy today does not serve the ends which have in the past lent importance to it. We thus have a difficult concept to grasp. The filling of the Church with the gifts of ministry is found in Scripture in Ephesians iv. A church without ministry is a defective church. But nowhere is a form of ministry connected in Scripture with the fulness of the Church. We should therefore give the straight lie to this doctrine. It comes to us as dogma, in which respect it resembles the claim for the "Essential Ministry". The recognition of a certain form of ministry as being of the *bene esse* of the Church, on the other hand, is purely pragmatic and undogmatic. Bishops have unrivalled opportunity for setting standards of doctrine and conduct for the Church. Their job is ideally pastoral and disciplinary. Their functions are of the *bene esse* of the Church. This may be claimed even when the individuals fail to fulfil their functions, for the functions themselves can be tested, as they ought to be, *a posteriori* from good examples. But the dogmatic claim admits of no test, except from doctrinal authorities. And the only admissible authority, the Scriptures, gives no sanction to the pleroma claim. It is a claim that would have been incomprehensible to the early centuries. To be without a bishop was to be in schism, and thus outside the Church. In this sense episcopacy was of the *esse*, because of the end it fulfilled. But as no decision on non-episcopal orders of the sort that is required today was ever necessary, the controversial implications of that doctrine cannot be tested.

Further notes for alarm occur. We may, for our part, acknowledge the defectiveness of our church in many respects, for example, in the place accorded to the laity. Methodist hymn-singing perhaps may be of the fulness, and will gain its rightful place in the united Church to come. But the advocates of the pleroma claim have a further nasty shock up their sleeves. Webster says that "Catholics" (including himself) would list as other features of the fulness of the Church, "the acceptance of the lesser sacraments such as Confirmation and Penance; the practice of mental and affective prayer; a loving awareness of, and respect shown, to the Saints, and specially to the Mother of Jesus;

religious communities ; . . . ”⁴⁴ Why not add the infallibility of the Pope? The authority for such a claim would be just as good. Kirk, Thornton, and Dix themselves could hardly have offered a more unacceptable pattern of reunion to nonconformists.

We are on perhaps slightly better ground if the doctrine be merely that denominational ministries “ have not on them the stamp of approval of the whole church ” (Bicknell).⁴⁵ But if this is so, we must say the same of our own. And this has led to the farcical North India proposals of a mutual imposition of hands by all ministers to start a new church with a new ministry, having the sanction of all. But the Anglican claim (never made good *vis-à-vis* Rome) is to ordain to “ the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God ”. No school of Anglican thought has ever really admitted that our orders are defective, and to that extent the North India scheme seems hypocritical. Far better is the South India one where no defectiveness anywhere has been admitted. If sanction of contracting parties is always to be stamped by the imposition of hands are we to see a new merry-go-round in North India every time another non-episcopal body joins the scheme? Ordination ought to be for life.

One suspects, however, that the doctrine of the fulness stems from tinted spectacles also. Episcopacy will give the “ right look ” to a united Church, even if it serves no ends. Unity is also of the fulness of the Church, but if it could be obtained without episcopacy, the Church would presumably still be defective. It wouldn’t look right. This claim is difficult to combat. A sense of the fitness of an institution which is confessedly without command, and in certain circumstances without purpose, is a conservatism akin to Colonel Blimp’s.

The truth is that the age has overtaken the Church of England and found her unprepared. The Tractarian solution is simple to understand. L. R. Kingsbury, who was previously a nonconformist minister, writes : “ Either there is a true Church, One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic—or there is not . . . If . . . there is or has been such a Church, the problem is that of schism ”.⁴⁶ This begs dozens of questions, but it is straightforward dogmatism. The solution of Carey’s book is a cross between this unfounded dogmatism and an uncritical charity. I find the result obscure, undoctinal, and impractical. This is not to deny the usefulness of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, for that reference to the episcopate is purely pragmatic, and not dogmatic.

NOTES

¹ Benson, *Cyprian : His Life, His Times, His Work*, p. 40.

² Kirk and others, *The Apostolic Ministry*, p. 8.

³ Neill and others, *The Ministry of the Church*, p. 8.

⁴ Irenaeus, *Adversus Omnes Haereses*, V. xx. 1.

⁵ Prayer Book Dictionary. Article by Headlam, “ Orders.”

⁶ Lightfoot, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 206.

⁷ Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, III. xi.

⁸ Newman, *History of my religious opinions*, p. 50.

⁹ Headlam. *Op. cit.*

¹⁰ Carey and others, *The Historic Episcopate in the Fulness of the Church*, p. 30.

¹¹ Cyprian Epistles, LXVI.

¹² Cyprian Epistles, XLIII.

- ¹³ Newman. *Op. cit.*, p. 107.
¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.
¹⁵ Keble, "Preface" to Hooker's works, p. LX.
¹⁶ Palmer, *Treatise on the Church of Christ*, Vol. 1, p. 305, quoted in Brilioth, *Anglican Revival*, p. 200.
¹⁷ Carey, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
¹⁸ Collier, quoted in Bell, *Christian Unity*, p. 85.
¹⁹ Deacon, *Catechisms*.
²⁰ Newman, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
²¹ Pilkington, "Works" Parker Society, p. 599.
²² Irenæus, *op. cit.*, III. ii. 2.
²³ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, p. 35.
²⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Vol. III supplement, 37. 2.
²⁵ Council of Trent. Session XXIII, Cap. I
²⁶ Hooker, *op. cit.*, V. lxxvii.
²⁷ Ignatius, *Philippians*, 7 *et passim*.
²⁸ Jewel, *Defence of Apology*, vii. 2. Parker Society, III, p. 370.
²⁹ Wake to the pastors of Geneva 1719—quoted in Dimock, *Christian Unity*, pp. 41-42.
³⁰ Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity*, p. 159.
³¹ Lambeth Report 1920, "Appeal to all Christian People", para. VIII.
³² Dimock, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
³³ Keble, *op. cit.*, *passim*.
³⁴ Whitgift, *op. cit.*, I. p. 369.
³⁵ Hooker, *op. cit.*, III. xi.
³⁶ *Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*. Article on "Irish Articles".
³⁷ Hooker, *op. cit.*, IV. vii-x.
³⁸ Jewel, *op. cit.*, III. p. 439.
³⁹ Hooker, *op. cit.*, III. xi.
⁴⁰ Parker, "Correspondence," Parker Society, p. 105.
⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 434.
⁴² Cardwell *Conferences*, p. 184.
⁴³ Kirk, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
⁴⁴ Carey, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.
⁴⁵ Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles*, p. 493.
⁴⁶ Article in *Prism*, July 1959, p. 5.

