

Grosvenor Essay No. 13

**Theology of Authority
in the Ministry of the Church**

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Contents

Introduction	5
THEOLOGY OF AUTHORITY IN THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH	7
BAPTISM AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS.....	17
ORDAINED MINISTRY.....	30
The Episcopate	35
The Presbyterate	42
The Diaconate	51
LAY MINISTRIES	60
Lay Readers	60
Other Lay Ministries.....	66
CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS	68
Suggestions for Further Reading.....	69

Introduction

Authority is an inevitable and necessary aspect of the functioning of any human organisation, and the Church at all levels is no exception. Authority takes many forms, and may be vested in office-holders and in organs of corporate governance, but is not to be equated with the functions of either. It would not be possible within the scope of a single Grosvenor Essay to address all the issues relating to authority in the Church. Nevertheless, in focussing specifically on those relating to ministry, we need to be aware that those who exercise ministry in the Church do so within and alongside complex governance structures, and are accountable also for their compliance with the law of the state. Given the catholic tradition within which the Scottish Episcopal Church has evolved, and continues to develop, there is inevitably a clerical emphasis to this essay, which does not reflect at all accurately the significant contribution lay people make to the life of our Church, and which lay Christians make in Christian witness in and through their secular lives. A theology of the laity true to our Christian convictions and to the context in which we are called to be Christ's Church is for another occasion. But this treatment of authority in the exercise of Christian ministry is written, and must be read, in constant awareness that the Body of Christ has many members, with a variety of gifts and functions which cannot be reduced to the ordered and licensed ministries with which we are presently preoccupied.

This Grosvenor Essay is the fruit of many discussions in the Doctrine Committee, and has benefitted also from the insights and experiences of others engaged in the theology and practice of ministry in the Scottish Episcopal Church. The contribution of John Davies, Convenor of the Liturgy Committee, is particularly to be acknowledged. As ministry embraces the whole life and work of the Church, we have been conscious that others, including the Scottish Episcopal Institute, the Diaconal Working Group, the Provincial Director of Ordinands, and the College of Bishops, are engaging with many of the issues discussed. We have valued their contributions to our deliberations, and hope that this will prove a useful resource for their further work. The Doctrine Committee is not a mouthpiece for any of these, but an independent and critical, but supportive, dialogue partner to all. While much of the drafting, and of integrating the contributions of others, has been undertaken by Nicholas Taylor, this

is very much a collaborative project. We have sought to distil, and to make available to a wider readership, the fruit of scholarship and experience drawn from many parts of the Christian world. We hope that our own Church will find here a resource for further reflection, and a stimulus to further exploration of the complex and quotidian issues we raise, and which we believe will continue to challenge our Church as we seek to develop patterns of ministry to meet the needs of our mission in the future.

All quotations from the Bible are, unless otherwise indicated, from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

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Convenor, Doctrine Committee

THEOLOGY OF AUTHORITY IN THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

The Gospel according to St. Matthew ends:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age'.

Οἱ δὲ ἕνδεκα μαθηταὶ ἐπορεύθησαν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν εἰς τὸ ὄρος οὗ ἐτάξατο αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν προσεκύνησαν, οἱ δὲ ἐδίσταναν. καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· Ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς· πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν· καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος (Matt. 28: 16-20).

The Mission Charge makes unequivocally clear that the work of the disciples, which the risen Christ sends them to do, is dependent upon the authority that has been given to Jesus. This authority, ἐξουσία, is not transferred to the disciples or to the Church they were to build in Christ's name. Nevertheless, the operative commandment is to μαθητεύσατε, make disciples, in other words, through Baptism and teaching, to bring others into the relationship with Jesus which they enjoyed, and by implication into the role of in turn proclaiming the Gospel and forming new disciples to which they had been commissioned. While authority is not explicitly conferred on the disciples and those who would, through their work of making disciples, come to share in their mission, their commission is an exercise of Jesus' authority, and dependent on it. The plenary

ἐξουσία conferred on Jesus therefore continues to be at work in the mission of the disciples and their successors, *to the end of the age*.¹ The same word – ἐξουσία – is found also at the beginning of the Gospel according to St. Mark, when Jesus has preached in the synagogue in Capernaum: *They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority – ἐξουσία – and not as the scribes* (Mark 1: 22).

Rather than citing a tradition of earlier expositors, Jesus expounds his own teaching, and with the same ἐξουσία exorcises a man suffering possession (Mark 1: 24-27).² The ἐξουσία of Jesus is a function of his status as the beloved Son of God, upon whom God's Spirit had descended at his baptism by John (Mark 1: 9-11),³ and not upon any status or office in society. Christian doctrine has taught both the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in relation to God the Father/Creator, and also that the Church is Christ's Body, visible and active on earth, whose members through Baptism come to share in that relationship with God and to partake of Christ's divinity. It is only through identifying in Baptism with Christ in his death, and receiving God's Spirit, that Christians can share in the divine attributes of Jesus, and participate in his authority.

The nature of Jesus' authority merits further reflection. In his letter to the church in Philippi, the apostle Paul writes:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being

¹ For exegesis of this passage, see commentaries of W. D. Davies & D. C. Allison, *Matthew 19-28* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004); D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2007); U. Luz, *Matthew 21-28* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

² For discussion see S. L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer* (London: SCM, 1995); J. K. Howard, *Medicine, Miracle, and Myth in the New Testament* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010); G. H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

³ For discussion see R. E. deMaris, *The New Testament in its Ritual World* (London: Routledge, 2008); J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. II. Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).

found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφῇ δούλου λαβῶν, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ· διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν, καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα, ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψη ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων, καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσῃται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς (Phil 2:5-11).

Authority in the Church has taken forms remote from the example of Christ's submission to God, through which authority and lordship are given to him. Temporal and spiritual power have been asserted by ecclesiastical officers whose positions have been articulated over and above the people of God, the λαός. The theological justifications of the power structures which emerged during the early centuries,⁴ were challenged at the Reformation,⁵ and continue to divide the Church today,⁶ raising issues which cannot easily be resolved. As a Church we are committed to an ordained ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, within and on behalf of a community of Christ's disciples, *all* of whom have in their Baptism received God's Spirit and the call to make disciples of others. We need constantly to explore, within our own polity and in dialogue with our ecumenical

⁴ 1 *Clement* (c. 70-100 CE) and the letter of Ignatius of Antioch (c. 110-120 CE) are the earliest extant examples of the assertion of episcopal authority. For discussion see A. C. Stewart, *The Original Bishops* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014); F. A. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops* (New York: Paulist, 2001); N. H. Taylor, 'The Biblical and Historical Foundations of Episcopacy', *SEIJ* 2.4 (2018), 23-34.

⁵ D. N. J. MacCulloch, *Reformation* (London: Penguin, 2004).

⁶ D. A. S. Fergusson, 'Bishops, Moderators and the Kirk: A Discussion to be Resumed?', *SEIJ* 2.4 (2018), 18-22.

partners, how this ambiguity is to be addressed. That this has been a vexed, but also an illuminating, issue, may be illustrated by the substantial volume of published work arising from attention the subject has received in ecumenical discussions in recent decades. Several volumes of very varied material were generated by the World Council of Churches (WCC) document *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*.⁷ The first two Anglican Roman Catholic International Commissions (ARCIC) produced three reports on *Authority in the Church* between 1976 and 1998.⁸ The third, *The Gift of Authority*, builds on the first, *The Authority of the Church*, which begins with the clear affirmation of the absolute centrality of the Lordship of Christ:

The confession of Christ as Lord is the heart of the Christian faith. To him God has given all authority in heaven and on earth. As Lord of the Church he bestows the Holy Spirit to create a communion of [people] with God and with one another. To bring this koinonia to perfection is God's eternal purpose. The Church exists to serve the fulfilment of this purpose when God will be all in all.

From this we take our beginning.

The anthropologist Kenelm Burridge observed that religions 'are concerned with the systematic ordering of different kinds of power', particularly those seen as significantly beneficial or dangerous.⁹ In order to discuss issues to do with power and authority, it is necessary to clarify what we mean by the terms, not least in relation to each other.¹⁰ Theories vary considerably as to what constitutes authority and power, and how the two are related. C.K. Barrett's

⁷ Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982). *Churches Respond to BEM*. Faith and Order Papers 129, 132, 135, 137, 143, 144 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986-1988); *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry 1982-1990*. Faith and Order Paper 149 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990).

⁸ These and other ARCIC documents may be accessed from the Anglican Communion Office website:

<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/ecumenism/ecumenical-dialogues/roman-catholic/arcic.aspx>

⁹ *New Heaven, New Earth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 5.

¹⁰ Material in this section derived from Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 32-43.

treatment of δύναμις and ἐξουσία in the Gospels, where he describes the former as kinetic energy and the latter as potential energy, ἐξουσία being the authority antecedent to δύναμις¹¹ however useful in itself, cannot be used to equate the terms with contemporary technical usage. The crucial issue in contemporary social scientific debate appears to be whether authority is a form of power,¹² or whether the two concepts are independent but overlapping, authority being characterised by legitimacy and excluding coercive force, while power is the capacity to use force to achieve the given objective.¹³ As with other social scientific paradigms, those concerning authority and power are question-specific, and not of universal application.¹⁴ Authority and power are multi-faceted concepts, exercised in social relationships and phenomena of varying complexity, and therefore elude comprehensive definition and typology.

Several scholars have observed that authority can exist only within recognised relationships, whereas power may be imposed irrespective of any relationship. The Dominican philosopher J. M. Bocheński is particularly helpful in recognising both the competence and influence of the individual, and the relationship within which authority is exercised. He defines authority as *Status in Beziehung* (status in relationship), and notes that it is an ambiguous concept in that it has aspects of quality (*Eigenschaft*) as well as of relationship (*Beziehung*). This relationship is three-cornered, including not only the bearer of authority (*Träger*) and the subject, but also the context (*Gebiet*), the ideal sphere in which that relationship of authority is exercised.¹⁵

¹¹ *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1966), 78-79.

¹² J. H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge: CUP, 1975), 10-14; D. H. Wrong, *Power* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 24; R. Sennett, *Authority* (New York: Vintage, 1980), 20.

¹³ H. Arendt, 'What was Authority?', G. Friedrich (ed), *Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 81-112; E. de Jouvenal, 'Authority: The Efficient Imperative', G. Friedrich (ed), *Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 159-69; B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power* (Lund: Gleerup, 1978), 131-5.

¹⁴ K. R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge* (Oxford: OUP, 1972), 186.

¹⁵ J. M. Bocheński, *Was ist Autorität?* (Freiburg: Herder, 1974); cf. R. Bierstedt, 'The Problem of Authority', M. Berger & al (ed), *Freedom and Control in Modern Society* (New York: Octagon, 1954), 67-81; C. J. Friedrich, 'Authority, Reason, and Discretion', C. J. Friedrich (ed), *Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 28-48.

There is also a form of authority which has been described as ‘an institutionalised complex of norms’,¹⁶ which includes social conventions and other intangible forces which influence human behaviour, as well as that authority which is perceived to be vested in a specific person or office. In Anglicanism, this aspect of authority is vested in Scripture, as the repository of doctrine, received in worship and interpreted in the liturgy. Whereas other churches of the Reformation have subscribed to a Subordinate Standard,¹⁷ such as the Westminster Confession, this has not been the case in Anglicanism, in which the authorised liturgies have been the acknowledged repository of doctrine, providing a context in which Scripture is received and interpreted. Some Anglican Provinces, most notably the Church of England, elevate the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and appended Ordinal to a definitive status, and use these documents as a standard of orthodoxy against which later liturgical texts and theological statements are measured. Until the last century, the Book of Common Prayer and Ordinal were often supplemented and mediated by the Articles of Religion, which elucidated but did not define the doctrine of the Church of England in the sixteenth and subsequent centuries. The Scottish Episcopal Church, on the other hand, did not publish a Book of Common Prayer until 1929, acknowledged the Articles of Religion only from 1804 until 1977, and requires of its clergy a form of Subscription, a solemn declaration of conformity to the theological principles of the Church:

I assent to the Scottish Book of Common Prayer and of the ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, and to the other authorised liturgical formularies of this Church. I believe the doctrine of the Church as therein set forth to be agreeable to the Word of God.¹⁸

This, significantly, does not privilege either the English or the Scottish Book of Common Prayer above other authorised liturgies of

¹⁶ Talcott Parsons, ‘Authority, Legitimation, and Political Action’, C. J. Friedrich (ed), *Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 197-221.

¹⁷ A statement of doctrine, or code of discipline, secondary to Scripture as a repository of authority in the Church.

¹⁸ Canon 12.1, Appendix 11.

the Church. Rather than an immutable liturgical canon against which later innovations and deviations are measured, the SEC inhabits a dynamic liturgical and doctrinal tradition, in which the ordered liturgies mutate within a dialectic relationship with the living community of faith.¹⁹

The dynamic character of the doctrinal and liturgical tradition of the SEC places an additional burden on what might be termed the secondary authority, viz. that vested in the Canons, and in the constitutions of dioceses, congregations, and other entities within it, and indirectly in the laws of the state which regulate charitable and similar organisations, and the regulatory bodies established under these laws to oversee the conduct of such bodies. It is within the structures constituted under the Canons, and in particular in General Synod, that decisions concerning the life and work of the Church are deliberated upon and decided, in terms of their consistency with established principles and continuity with the received tradition of faith. Contentious issues in recent years have illustrated deep divisions as to how received authority is to be interpreted and applied. The three pillars of Anglicanism, Scripture, Reason, and Tradition, associated with Richard Hooker,²⁰ have become, or perhaps have always been, something of a vague and contested legacy.²¹ These issues may appear secondary to a study concerned

¹⁹ N. H. Taylor, 'Liturgy and Theological Method in the Scottish Episcopal Church', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 46 (2018), 143-54.
²⁰ *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Oxford: OUP, 2013).

²¹ A. M. Allchin, *Participation in God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988); N. T. Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997); Paul Avis, *In Search of Authority* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); J. E. Booty, 'Richard Hooker', W. J. Wolf (ed), *The Spirit of Anglicanism* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 1-45; 'The Judicious Mr Hooker and Authority in the Elizabethan Church', S. W. Sykes (ed), *Authority in the Anglican Communion* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1987), 94-115; M. A. Brydon, *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); J. S. Marshall, *Hooker and the Anglican Tradition* (London: Black, 1963); P. Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952); P. B. Secor, *Richard Hooker* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1999); S. W. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (London: Mowbray, 1978); *Unashamed Anglicanism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995); N. H. Taylor, *Lay Presidency at the Eucharist?* (London: Mowbray, 2009), 11-29; 'Some Observations on Theological Method, Biblical Interpretation, and

with the authority wielded in Christian ministry, and in the people who exercise that ministry, but it is important to recognise that people function within structures, institutions, and relationships pervaded by a culture and tradition which exerts a sometimes diffuse but nonetheless potent authority. Furthermore, the distinction between Scripture, Tradition, and Reason is employed by the Roman Catholic liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff,²² suggesting a usefulness which transcends Anglicanism, and has been found relevant in contexts where the Church has struggled to discern its vocation in the face of oppression and of its own compromised position in society.

The typology articulated by Max Weber²³ has, for the past century, been profoundly influential in understanding the exercise of authority,²⁴ not only but not least in religious movements and organisations. For Weber, authority exists only in relationship, but is manifested in different forms. Patriarchal or traditional authority is legitimated on the basis of established cultural conventions, often reflects family structures and is inherited, and sometimes overtly sacralised. Rational or bureaucratic authority is legitimated on the basis of office and competence, and is associated with occupying legally established or informally recognised positions within an organisation, or manifesting skills, qualifications, and knowledge translatable into power. Charismatic or prophetic authority is legitimated on the basis of personal qualities interpreted as manifesting divine or quasi-divine inspiration, inciting devotion and thereby generating a movement, often in opposition or rebellion against established patriarchal or bureaucratic authorities. Whereas patriarchal authority is continued through traditional patterns of succession, and rational through prescribed modes of appointment to office, charismatic authority is not so easily transmitted to a

Ecclesiastical Politics in current disputes in the Anglican Communion', *Theology* 111 (2008), 51-58; S. R. White, *Authority and Anglicanism* (London: SCM Press, 1996).

²² *Church: Charism & Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church* (London: SCM, 1985).

²³ Weber was one of the most influential pioneers of what became the academic discipline of sociology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

²⁴ *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. T. Parsons (New York: OUP, 1947).

successor. For the movement to endure, therefore, charisma needs to become institutionalised or *routinised*, to assume the attributes of traditional or bureaucratic structures. None of these forms exists in a pure or ideal state, but aspects and attributes of different types are evident in bearers of authority in any variety of situations.

It would be not merely simplistic, but incorrect, to equate the theological gifts of the Holy Spirit with the sociological quality of charisma. The categories draw their meaning from quite different criteria, even if similar attributes may be perceived, and terms used in ways which at first sight appear analogous. It has been argued that Jesus was a charismatic prophet, and that the Church reflects the institutionalisation of this movement.²⁵ While there may be truth in this, the pejorative connotations frequently associated with this development, as a decline from spiritual purity to a mundane if not sordid institution, are not valid.²⁶ Similarly, the notion that the apostle Paul was the true founder of Christianity,²⁷ and that the communities he formed flourished in pneumatic anarchy akin to the narcotic dystopia of a hippie commune until corrupted by the emergence to power of venal and socially reactionary bishops, is without foundation.²⁸ Patterns of leadership and authority did mutate, and it was centuries before any institutional arrangement

²⁵ J. G. Gager, *Kingdom and community* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975); G. Theissen, *The First Followers of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1978).

²⁶ These assumptions have been reflected in much scholarship, especially that emanating from Protestant academies, during the nineteenth and twentieth century, and originate in the tradition of scholarship associated with the Tübingen School and the movement commonly known as the first quest for the historical Jesus. Cf. C. G. A. von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1908); A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 2000).

²⁷ J. D. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013). This view has been argued in some Jewish scholars, e.g. J. Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1944); H. Maccoby, *The Mythmaker* (London: Barnes & Noble, 1998).

²⁸ A particularly significant exponent of this position, widespread in Protestant scholarship where it functioned more as an article of faith than a rationally argued hypothesis, is H. F. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (London: Black, 1969).

approaching uniformity was attained.²⁹ Nevertheless, the dichotomy between institutional authority reinforced by socio-economic power on the one hand, and spiritual endowment on the other, is fundamentally false: social status and wealth have always been factors in the exercise of authority in the Church, no form of authority is immune to corruption, and protest movements against real or perceived corruption have often claimed theological or spiritual authority.

The authority exercised in the Church derives from and reflects some diversity of theological, ecclesiological, legal, and socio-economic bases. Notwithstanding the reality that authority is concentrated in people in positions of leadership, it remains a Christian doctrine, rooted in Scripture, that God's Spirit is bestowed on the Church as a whole, and its direction and empowerment should be discerned wherever, however, and in and through whomever the Church and its institutions are operating in the world. The authority vested in Scripture, in Canon Law, and in Synods and other institutions established under the Canons, is beyond the scope of this study. We are concerned here with the authority that is perceived or vested in people who exercise Christian ministry. In our Anglican polity, this authority is to be discerned in the Church as the body of the baptised, and in principle manifested in all who have been baptised, and have therein received gifts of the Holy Spirit, which they exercise in the life of the Church. Authority is vested also in ordered ministry, received through episcopal ordination, and in lay ministry authorised and exercised in particular ways in the life of the Church. It is with these specific forms of ministry, and the authority exercised therein, that this study is concerned.

²⁹ Taylor, 'Biblical and Historical Foundations of Episcopacy', and sources therein cited.

BAPTISM AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS³⁰

Christian Baptism confers membership of the Church, the body of Christ:

For indeed we were all baptised by one Spirit into one Body, whether Jew or gentile, whether slave or free.

καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες, εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν (1 Cor 12:13).

Christian identity is therefore essentially corporate, and Paul proceeds to emphasise the unity of the Body, within which a complementarity of pneumatic gifts are exercised by members in the service of the whole.³¹ It is the Church which is endowed with the Holy Spirit, which Christians receive in their Baptism,³² and the gifts of which they manifest and exercise in and on behalf of the Church, in the course of their lives.

³⁰ This section is substantially adapted from N. H. Taylor, *Lay Presidency at the Eucharist?* (London: Mowbray, 2009), 232-39.

³¹ N. H. Taylor, *Paul on Baptism* (London: SCM, 2016), 46-50.

³² That Paul implies that the Spirit is conferred through Baptism is denied by J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), 130; G. D. Fee, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 604-6; R. B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster, 1997), 214. E. J. Christiansen argues that the Spirit is active in conversion, and renders the phrase *prompted by the one Spirit, we were all baptised ...*, *The Covenant in Judaism and Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 305. The response to apostolic preaching which effects conversion is prompted by the Holy Spirit, and leads to Baptism into the Church. While not denying the central thrust of this argument, or the essential unity (but not uniformity) of the conversion-incorporation process in Paul's thought and early Christian experience, it should be noted that Paul understands the Spirit to be both the agent of Baptism and the power ritually conferred in Baptism. This is the view of most commentators, e.g. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1968), 288; R. F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1999), 463; H. G. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 212; J. A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians* (New Haven: Yale, 2008), 474-8; A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1000. See also S. J. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 280-3.

The theologies of Baptism in the New Testament, implicit most particularly in the letters of Paul,³³ and alluded to in the Petrine³⁴ and Johannine³⁵ documents, presupposes that the rite is experienced normatively as a conversion-initiation ritual. This does not imply that all the baptised were consenting adults, but rather that the theology is addressed to those who were, and articulated in terms of their experience. The majority of the first Christians were women, children, and adult men of subordinate and dependent, if not servile, status, who were not autonomous in matters of religious allegiance, but subject to the authority and allegiances of the patron of the household to which they belonged.

There is no evidence of a catechumenate or any similar process before Justin, who certainly does not imply a prolonged period of instruction and probation.³⁶ Indications from the narrative of Acts, which must be regarded as possessing verisimilitude if not historicity in every detail, are that Baptism followed immediately upon conversion, and that formation and instruction in the faith socialised converts into the community of the church.³⁷

³³ Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 1:13-17; 6:11; 10:1-5; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 3:26-29. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1962); L. F. Hartman, *'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus'* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997); R. Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St Paul* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961); Taylor, *Paul on Baptism*.

³⁴ 1 Peter 1:3-2:10; 3:21. F. L. Cross, *1 Peter* (London: Mowbray, 1954); J. H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (New York: Doubleday, 2000); J. B. Green, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); D. G. Horrell, *Becoming Christian* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); *The Epistles of Peter and Jude* (Peterborough: Epworth, 1998); D. P. Senior, *1 Peter* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2003).

³⁵ John 1:26-34; 3:3-21; 9:1-17. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (New York: Doubleday, 1966); J. R. Michaels, *John* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984); D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998).

³⁶ 1 Apology 61. E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 237-45; T. M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville: Glazier, 1992); Hartman, *'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus'*.

³⁷ 2:37-42; 8:12, 37; 10:44-48; 16:11-15, 33; 18:8. D. L. Matson, *Household Conversion Narratives in Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); F. Mendez-Mortalla, *The Paradigm of Conversion in Luke* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004); Taylor, *Paul on Baptism* 107-13. C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: T & T Clark, 1998); H. G. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday, 1998); E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the*

Baptism became a rite of passage or life-cycle rite at an early date.³⁸ While a radical departure from its initial purpose, this transformation was inevitable and, so far as records indicate, unconscious and uncontentious. For several centuries, and subsequently where mission realised rapid church growth, we should expect that Baptism functioned simultaneously as a conversion-initiation rite and as a rite of passage. When the majority of those baptised were not autonomous in matters of cultic affiliation and observance, it would have made little difference how the rite was understood, or even whether this distinction was acknowledged. It is not material to the transformation in the function of Baptism whether the rite was administered at birth or at some point in adulthood. Deferred Baptism in Christian families is widely attested at least until the time of Augustine,³⁹ and there is no evidence that a need to make autonomous adult profession of faith as a prerequisite to Baptism was a reason for this.⁴⁰ Rather, as well as concerns with post-baptismal sin, attested from the period of Hermas⁴¹ and Tertullian,⁴² it was a consideration among those eligible (who are, inevitably, those of whom most records survive) that Baptism should not be an impediment to a public career.⁴³ Perils to salvation were entailed in military exploits, maintenance of law and order, and political-judicial office, all of which are likely to have involved killing or causing the deaths of other people, as well in the performance of public cults in which the state and the emperor were at least implicitly deified. *Adult* baptisms seem not to have been administered at puberty, but

Apostles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971); L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1992).

³⁸ Taylor, *Paul on Baptism*, 10-13.

³⁹ Bishop of Hippo, late IV, early V cent, and a theologian of enduring influence in western Christianity.

⁴⁰ Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 617-33; J. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* (London: SCM, 1960).

⁴¹ *Vision* 3.7.3-6 (early II cent.).

⁴² *Apologia; De Baptismo* (late II, early III cent.). E. F. Osborn, *Tertullian* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997); D. I. Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

⁴³ Jeremias notes that the practice is attested mostly among men of high rank, *Infant Baptism* 88-89. As this is the demographic category for which most information is available, some caution is needed in assessing the significance of this observation.

more frequently on retreat from a public career (Basil),⁴⁴ or even in anticipation of assuming office in the church (Ambrose),⁴⁵ or in anticipation of death (Constantine).⁴⁶

The intentions in the development of the catechumenate are far from clear, except in that the earliest attestation coincides with the earliest explicit attempts to articulate Christian doctrine in the language of Hellenistic philosophy.⁴⁷ However worthy the aspiration that Christian theology acquire intellectual respectability, whether this is appropriately connected with Baptism is another question, and one directly related to the connection between baptism, ministry, and priesthood.

It has become something of a theological truism that '[a]ll Christians share in the priesthood of their Lord.'⁴⁸ This is by no means a distinctively Protestant principle, but is attested in Catholic theology, both eastern⁴⁹ and western.⁵⁰ In one sense, Christ's priesthood, as expounded in the New Testament in terms of the sacrificial interpretation of his death and resurrection, is unique and shared with no human being, including *all Christians* (Hebrews 5-9).⁵¹ The notion of the entire Church as a priesthood is nevertheless well established in Christian theology, and rooted in the New Testament. The priesthood of all Christians alluded to in 1 Peter 2:5, 9 and Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6 is a corporate identity, the activities

⁴⁴ S. M. Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014). Basil subsequently became a critic of delayed Baptism, *Homily* 13.

⁴⁵ *De Officiis* 1.4; Rufinus, *Hist.Eccl.* 11.11; Paulinus, *Vit.Ambr.* 6-9. N. B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 1-13, 44-52.

⁴⁶ Eusebius, *Vit.Const.* 4.61-62.

⁴⁷ Justin Martyr, *I Apol.* 61.

⁴⁸ *Lambeth Conference 1968: Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1968), 100. Cf. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), Ministry 1-6.

⁴⁹ N. N. Afanasiev, *The Church of the Holy Spirit* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); J. D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (New York: St Vladimir's Press, 1985).

⁵⁰ T. F. O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist, 1983).

⁵¹ H. R. McAdoo, *The Eucharistic Theology of Jeremy Taylor Today* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1988), 100; H. Küng, *The Church* (London: Burnes & Oates, 1968), 363; J. M. R. Tillard, *What Priesthood has the Ministry* (Nottingham: Grove, 1973), 14-27.

associated with which are worship and witness, which cannot be equated with the self-sacrificial priesthood of Christ articulated in Hebrews. Nevertheless, Christians, through Baptism, share corporately in a priestly character and service defined in relation to Christ. This is expressed very clearly in the Collect in the Scottish Ordinal 1984:

Almighty and everliving God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all members of your holy Church; that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your Name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The corporate identity of the Church as a priesthood derives from different traditions in the New Testament to that of Paul, who describes the Church as the Body of Christ, to which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given, conferred on individual Christians to be exercised within and on behalf of the Body as a whole: Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 11:29; 12:12-28; Ephesians 1:23; 2:16; 4:4-16; Colossians 1:18). Nevertheless, the principles of unity and complementarity, and of empowerment by God's Spirit for the work of the Church, if relevant to Christian life, must pertain also to its priestly character.

At Ordinations, the presiding Bishop states:

In baptism every disciple is called to make Jesus known as Saviour and Lord and to share his work in renewing the world. Some by ordination are given particular tasks.

The ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of all believers are related. Each in its proper way partakes of the one priesthood of Christ.

As neither *ministerial priesthood* nor *priesthood of all believers* is previously identified or defined, how precisely they *are related* remains distinctly vague. The sense of the priesthood of all believers is presumably that, *In baptism every disciple is called to make Jesus known as Saviour and Lord and to share his work in renewing the world.* Priesthood in this sense does not imply liturgical office, but it

does imply corporate Christian identity and the obligations of worship and service in the world. Clearer reference to the rites of Holy Baptism and Affirmation of Baptism, and allusion to the promises, might articulate this more clearly. The authorised rite of the SEC, Holy Baptism 2006, makes no reference to priesthood, but does refer to discipleship, with the promises to

- *continue in the Apostle's teaching, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers*
- *proclaim the good news by word and deed, serving Christ in all people*
- *work for justice and peace, honouring God in all Creation*

Worship, witness, and service are *the task of the Church to live and work for the kingdom of God.*

Ministry, empowered by the Spirit, therefore cannot be directly equated with priesthood, though clearly there are commonalities between these images of the Church. Subsequent theology has sought to integrate these traditions, and it is perhaps the confusion of priesthood with ministry which has contributed most deleteriously to the clericalisation of the Church. Conversely, it has also meant that the role of the laity has been secularised and profaned, and this requires remedial attention. While priesthood, when applied to the laity, may be a quality of collective identity rather than a function within or on behalf of the Church, ministry by its definition implies commitment and action. *Ministry is God-given work for the cause of God that is acknowledged by the Church.*⁵² It is exercised on behalf of the Church, and may be distinguished from the universal call to discipleship precisely in that the person exercising ministry represents the Church in particular ways, which may include representing the universal Church to the local congregation. The issue at present is not the corporate priesthood of the Church in which lay Christians share, but what the ministry of the laity actually

⁵² P. D. L. Avis, *A Ministry Shaped by Mission* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 58; cf. O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 210; T. P. Rausch, 'Ministry and Ministries', *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood* (ed. S. K. Wood; Collegeville: Liturgical, 2003), 52-67.

is, within and on behalf of the Church, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is not feasible or justifiable to limit *ministry* to the proclamation of the word, administration of the sacraments, and pastoral oversight. This would be to restrict ministry to what have until recently been exclusively clerical functions, and to perpetuate the secularisation and profanation of other activities engaged in by lay people, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, in conscious or subconscious fulfilment of their Christian vocation. We need therefore to ask: what is the specific role entrusted distinctively and pre-eminently to lay Christians, not so much in the liturgy as in the ministry of the Church in the saving work of God in the world?

The laity, as an order of ministry in the Church rather than simply as the recipients of the ministry of the clergy, has been emphasised in recent theology, and also in modern Anglican liturgies, in particular Baptism, Confirmation and Affirmation of Baptismal Promises, but also the Ordinal. The laity are understood as all baptised Christians, who are in principle committed to the faith and the way of life reflected in the vows made at Baptism. This is problematic in a number of respects. As is generally recognised, this definition includes the ordained clergy among the laity, and emphasises that their ministry is offered from within and on behalf of the laity. While the theological truth of this is not to be disputed, or even diminished, it does not form an adequate basis for defining or understanding the distinctive function of the laity within the Church and in God's saving work in the world.

A rather different problem with the definition of the laity as an order of ministry embracing all the baptised, is that, outside traditions which stipulate *believers' baptism*, this includes babies and young children who have not reached the point of responsible adult commitment. These are not yet able to exercise ministry or other functions of which autonomous, committed, and responsible adult Christians are capable, but this does not exclude them from membership of the Church through Baptism, or from participation in the corporate priesthood of all Christians in prayer and worship. Similarly, baptised adults with limited cognitive capacity may not be able to play the role expected of other adult members of any organisation, such limitations would not diminish their membership of Christ's Body or participation in Christ's priesthood, nor indeed the potential for particular *charisma* to be discerned in them and

exercised in the life of the Church. While children nurtured within the Church and educated in the faith may be deemed to be in a process of formation as Christian laity, this does not apply to the many who are baptised in infancy, or for that matter at any other stage in life, but whose membership of the Church is nominal, whose families have no intention of nurturing them in the faith, and who are unlikely to reach any point of commitment to the gospel and the life of the Church unless they subsequently experience renewal or even conversion during their adolescent or adult lives.⁵³

As Baptism in Anglicanism is predominantly a birth rite, in itself it effects no transition of the individual into active involvement in the life of the Church. This is not to deny that Baptism is the sole and definitive rite of Christian initiation, or, perhaps more accurately, incorporation into the Church. But in Christian communities into which membership is, if not formally conferred through birth, then at least in effect a direct consequence of birth into a Christian family, or even into a nominally Christian society, Baptism cannot function meaningfully as a rite of Christian profession and commitment. It could therefore be argued that Confirmation, or a rite analogous to that which Confirmation has traditionally fulfilled in Anglicanism, is still needed as the appropriate liturgical rite of entry into the laity, if the laity are understood as active in Christian ministry rather than simply as members of the priestly community. There would therefore be enduring value in young adults' and others who have come to faith and commitment during adulthood making a liturgical profession of their Christian faith before their bishop and the gathered congregation, and pledging their commitment to a life of discipleship and witness as members of the Church. The sacrament of Confirmation has mutated over the centuries, has been a matter of debate within the Church, and has no clear and unambiguous purpose rooted in Scripture or undivided ancient tradition.⁵⁴ The sacrament as envisaged in the Book of Common Prayer may be regarded as redundant in a Church whose doctrine recognises Baptism as the sole rite of incorporation into the Church and the occasion on which the Holy Spirit is ritually invoked to inhabit, strengthen, and guide the new disciple of Christ, and whose practice

⁵³ For treatment of these issues, in light of H. R. Niebuhr's analysis of *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), see Taylor, *Paul on Baptism*, 144-62.

⁵⁴ A. Kavanaugh, *Confirmation* (New York: Pueblo, 1988).

is accordingly to administer chrismation at Baptism. Confirmation might therefore be amenable to a new purpose and significance in the life of the Church, as a Christian rite of passage into adulthood, and into commitment to active discipleship and ministry. Any development here would be in continuity with Resolution 25 of the 1968 Lambeth Conference, in terms of which the admission of adults and children to communion after Baptism, and before or without Confirmation, has already been implemented in several Provinces, including the SEC.

If this were to be meaningfully implemented, however, it would require a renewed commitment and rigour, on the part both of the Church and of candidates, to catechetical instruction or other formational disciplines before Confirmation, as envisaged by Resolution 27 of the 1968 Lambeth Conference. There would be need also for the Church to provide such training as may be necessary to complement the gifts and abilities, education and professional competence, of its members for the effective exercise of their life of discipleship.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the role of the bishop in the rite should be emphasised, as representing the universal Church, not because it is liturgically or sacramentally necessary, which it clearly is not, but because it demonstrates the commitment of the Church to supporting the life, ministry, and witness of its lay members. The last century has seen an exponential increase in the range of activities in the life of the Church in which lay people have exercised leadership, and also in the numbers of both men and women who have assumed such responsibilities.⁵⁶ Despite this, and perhaps precisely because this has consisted largely in incremental delegation to lay people of functions which there are no longer sufficient numbers of clergy to perform, the identity and vocation of the lay Christian, both in terms of Anglican ecclesiology and ecumenically, remain vague and ambiguous. The process which has brought increasing numbers of lay Christians into ministerial roles in the life of the Church has not been guided so much by theological insight into the significance of Baptism, as by the practical demands created by declining clergy numbers. There is now a clear need for a more thorough and coherent theology of the laity, in the context of which the role of lay

⁵⁵ Insurance, safeguarding arrangements, etc. are also necessary where relevant, and required by the law of the state.

⁵⁶ S. C. Neill & H.-R. Weber, *The Layman in Christian History* (London: SCM, 1963).

Christians in the life of the Church, and in the world, can be explored in relation to the ministry of word and sacrament, and in relation to the ministry of the ordained.

It has traditionally been recognised that, for the majority of lay Christians, their vocation and mission consist primarily in discipleship in the world, in family life and in their places of work, but also in the community, in charities and organisations concerned with 'civil society', and in politics.⁵⁷ With the exception of such public office holders in national churches as church wardens in the Church of England, and people with particular skills such as organists, the church has been the place at which Christians have gathered for corporate worship and the exercise of their priesthood, but not the primary context in which their Christian commitment is actually lived out and their vocation fulfilled during the week. In other words, lay Christians are present and active alongside their neighbours in all aspects of community life, not excluding their workplaces, and it is there that their witness is proclaimed and their discipleship exercised, in often intangible and subconscious ways, but faithfully and meaningfully. Declining clergy numbers have made the Church increasingly dependent on lay people, certainly in ways which never strictly required the presence or action of a priest or deacon in the first place, but also in liturgical and pastoral activities which have traditionally been the function of the clergy – which is not the same as those restricted to the clergy by Church discipline or reserved to the ordained as a matter of theological principle. In absorbing the time and energy of increasing numbers of lay people, and drawing them away from life and witness in the world to maintenance of its own structures and routines, the Church has in many ways turned in on itself, and thereby arguably accelerated its own decline. Furthermore, in effectively giving priority to traditionally clerical roles, the Church, intentionally or otherwise, implies that these are more important than those activities in and through which lay Christians have, over the centuries, been the "leaven" which has brought Gospel values to bear upon life in the world. While it is observed that secular as well as religious voluntary organisations have

⁵⁷ Cf. *Lambeth Conference 1968*, 96-97; *All are Called: Towards a Theology of the Laity* (London: Church Information Office, 1985); Neill & Weber, *Layman in Christian History*.

declined even more rapidly than the churches,⁵⁸ the question needs to be asked whether the Church, in monopolising the spare time of its more committed and public spirited lay members, is thereby contributing also to the decline of voluntary associations and charities, through which its lay members previously exercised their mission in the world and made the contacts on which evangelism depends. It might be suggested that this theologically ill-considered development has denuded the Church of its most effective agency in its mission outward to the world.

The increasing delegation to lay ministers of roles hitherto exercised all but exclusively by clergy has been undertaken with inadequate theological reflection on the nature of priesthood and the ministry of the laity. This is not a matter of defending clerical prerogatives, but of recognising that, far from supporting the laity in the fulfilment of their vocation, this very often diverts them from it and weakens the presence and witness of the Church in the world. When the time and energy of committed Christian laity is increasingly absorbed into the institutional life of the Church, and in liturgical leadership, to compensate for the lack of clergy, faithful lay people are being clericalised and the work of the laity neglected. A direct consequence of this has been that lay Christians are no longer as active or as prominent in the wider community, and the value of such time and energy as they do expend in voluntary involvement with the wider society is increasingly deemed secular, and irrelevant to their lives of Christian discipleship. The presence and the influence of the Church in society are accordingly diminished, and its mission impeded. The reaction of the Church to decline, both in clergy numbers and in lay adherence, has generated a collective introversion which, unless reversed, will simply aggravate and perpetuate that decline.

It has increasingly been recognised in recent years that there are many lay Christians who have followed secular careers through the early years of their adult lives, and even for the duration of their working lives, but whose gifts and vocation ought to be acknowledged and affirmed, and indeed empowered, through ordination to the diaconate and presbyterate. Nevertheless, this

⁵⁸ G. Davie, 'From Obligation to Consumption', S. J. L. Croft (ed), *The Future of the Parish System* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006), 33-45.

should not be seen as the natural or appropriate, still less a spiritually or theologically necessary, culmination in the ecclesiastical lives of all baptised Christians. The pressures on lay people in many places to concentrate on church activities such time and energy as are not consumed by their employers is an inappropriate and ineffective panacea to the decline, both in clergy numbers and in lay adherence to the local church. A more robust theology of the laity is needed, which will resist the clericalisation of those whose gifts and ministry lie in being and representing the Church in the world, and doing so in ways which are less overt or specific than the ministry of the clergy in the wider community.⁵⁹ This theology will also need to subvert more thoroughly than has hitherto been achieved the sacerdotal hierarchy of ordained ministries over lay, and the ascription of superior pneumatic powers to the former. Genuine and sustained renewal in the life of the Church is more likely to be achieved if the laity are freed to exercise their ministry as laity, in a manner that is equal and complementary to that of the clergy, being an active Christian presence and influence in all aspects of society and community life.

A further consequence of clericalising selected lay Christians has been both confusion of identity and roles between clergy and laity, which many may see as an innocuous or even a beneficial development. It has also been argued, on sociological grounds, that this would be fundamentally destructive both of the Church and of the society it serves and to which it is called to bear witness.⁶⁰ We have seen this in the collective introversion, and even sectarianism, of many congregations, where collapsing the distinction between clergy and laity has led to neglect of the ministry of the latter: the assumption of traditionally clerical tasks by active and committed lay people has meant that roles essential to the vitality and outreach of the Church have been abandoned. As well as being damaging to the laity, this tendency is also destructive of clerical identity and vocation. There is a real danger of priests in particular becoming reduced to ritual functionaries, whose perceived role in the community is merely the performance of archaic and quasi-magical acts, divorced from the religious experience and spiritual needs of increasing numbers of Christians, and even more of their secularised

⁵⁹ S. K. Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

⁶⁰ D. Martin, *The Breaking of the Image* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

neighbours, in the modern world. 'There comes a point where the practical distinction between minister and layman is the ability to say one prayer at the communion service ... it is not surprising that there are voices which say the distinction is meaningless.'⁶¹

The natural conclusion to this process might be to abolish the ordained ministry altogether,⁶² and it needs to be acknowledged that there are Christian communities which exercise an effective mission to the world, complemented by pastoral care and the teaching and formation of their members, without the agency of an ordained or professional clergy. The question therefore to be asked is whether the complementarity of lay and ordained ministries is a gift of Anglican and Catholic order to the universal Church, or whether the ordained clergy represent an obsolete caste system, to the point of constituting an impediment to Christian mission. If an Anglican polity is to be an effective vehicle for Christian mission, then it will need to be recognised that the increasing delegation to lay people, with or without training, authorisation, and supervision, of the functions traditionally reserved to the ordained, is not an exercise of the priesthood of all Christians, but rather a symptom of the decline and introversion of the Church. In Baptism the Holy Spirit consecrates and empowers the lives of Christian people in the world. As a priesthood they worship God corporately, but at the end of the Eucharist they are sent out into the world, there to *love and serve the Lord*, and, in the words of the Roman Catholic Missal, to *proclaim the Gospel* in their lives of Christian discipleship.

⁶¹ C. O. Buchanan, 'Some Anglican Historical Perspectives', B. T. Lloyd (ed), *Lay Presidency at the Eucharist?* (Bramcote: Grove, 1977), 11-19; cf. A. E. Harvey, *Priest or President?* (London: SPCK, 1975).

⁶² J. Goldingay, *Authority and Ministry* (Nottingham: Grove, 1976).

ORDAINED MINISTRY

The ordained ministry is distinguished by the lifelong commitment to a distinctive vocation, acknowledged by the Church in and through the indelible sacrament of orders. This vocation may in principle be received at any stage in life, and those ordained may cease to hold office in the Church, but do not cease to be deacons, presbyters, or bishops. Ordination is, in Anglican discipline, conferred by bishops. Those ordained receive a grace which is in principle ontological and immutable, but the authority to exercise this grace is limited to that sphere of activity defined by the licence issued by the diocesan bishop on appointment to a particular role. The bishop exercises both a spiritual authority as custodian of the sacrament of Orders in the Church Catholic, and a jurisdiction within his or her diocese to license presbyters and deacons, and also particular lay people, to certain ministries defined by the canon law of the Scottish Episcopal Church and the constitutions of each diocese, and of the congregation and other institutions within and a part of that diocese.

The authority, in terms of the Weberian typology discussed above, which is vested in the ordained ministry, and in particular in the episcopate and presbyterate, has historically and until quite recently been patriarchal. With its origins in the house churches of the first Christian century, quasi-familial notions of authority have been perpetuated through the image of the Church as the family of God. Clergy have been viewed as custodians of sacred tradition, irrespective of their ability, education and experience, and their moral character. For much of Christian history, bishops and other dignitaries have tended to be drawn from aristocratic and other powerful families, and the structures of the Church have been aligned to feudal and other economic and political systems in which wealth, status, and power have tended to be inherited. With the extension and secularisation of education since the Enlightenment, secular professions have asserted their independence of the Church, and established their own procedures for approving the competence and conduct of their members. While many legal and medical practices, and commercial concerns, have been dominated by particular families over generations, criteria of competence and fitness to practice have nonetheless been established, and are often validated by external authority in the form of educational qualifications and professional accreditation. This tendency began to

influence the Church well before the emergence to prominence of alternative or competing caring professions informed by the modern social sciences. The clergy gradually evolved into a professional cadre, exercising authority by virtue of their imputed skills and knowledge, and the status vested in the particular offices they hold. Residual shamanic notions may inform the superstitions of some lay people, and indeed of some clergy, but these tend to be found more in unofficial cults on the periphery of official religious institutions.

The professionalisation of the clergy has effectively brought them into competition with medical and psycho-therapeutic practitioners, and also with social workers, against whom their competence is measured, and frequently found wanting. Furthermore, increasing numbers of lay people have asserted a claim to equal or greater competence than the clergy in relevant areas of knowledge, often not without justification. Theological insight has seldom been valued, or recognised as an indication of competence in ministry. While most of those now revered as Church Fathers were bishops, they frequently owed their positions not so much to the profundity of their theological vision or their spiritual stature, as to the socio-economic status of their families, and the prestige this accorded them in the Church, and increasingly also in the state. Exceptions such as John Chrysostom were unable to survive the intrigues of the imperial court.⁶³ Theologians of outstanding calibre who were not bishops, such as Tertullian⁶⁴ and Origen,⁶⁵ were viewed with suspicion and ultimately ostracised as heretics, and one might wonder whether Pelagius⁶⁶ and Arius⁶⁷ might have been received differently had they enjoyed the social and economic status of their episcopal critics. Anselm⁶⁸ was a rarity in the mediaeval Church, in which most bishops were relations of royalty and the aristocracy, sometimes no more than semi-literate, and more adept with the sword than with the pen, and functioned more as feudal nobility than as successors of

⁶³ John, Bishop of Constantinople in the late IV cent., was deposed more than once, and died of starvation in exile c. 407.

⁶⁴ Lay Christian in Carthage, late I, early II cent.

⁶⁵ Lay Principal of Catechetical School in Alexandria late II cent., subsequently ordained to the presbyterate in Caesarea Maritima, died c. 254 CE.

⁶⁶ British theologian, late IV, early V. cent.

⁶⁷ Presbyter of Alexandria, early IV cent.

⁶⁸ Abbot of Bec, then Archbishop of Canterbury late XI, early XII cent.

the apostles. Despite its emphasis on studying Scripture, the Reformation made little difference, notwithstanding Cranmer's skill at liturgical composition: episcopacy for centuries remained largely a branch of the aristocracy, and the parochial clergy adjuncts of the landed gentry, in many ways indistinguishable from minor landowners. An exceptional period in Anglican history saw eminent theologians William Temple, Michael Ramsey, and Rowan Williams as Archbishops of Canterbury, Robert Mortimer as Bishop of Exeter, and Joseph Barber Lightfoot, Brooke Foss Westcott, Michael Ramsey, Ian Ramsey, and John Habgood as Bishops of Durham. In Scotland, the nonjuring Episcopal Church of the eighteenth century elevated some noted antiquarians to its episcopal College, of whom Thomas Rattray was the one to leave an enduring legacy.

With modern professional conceptualisations of ministry, the nature of the authority vested in the ordained clergy requires clearer theological definition. The distinction made by Jeremy Taylor⁶⁹ in the seventeenth century, between *vis* (quasi-supernatural power) and *facultas* (authority by virtue of office) 'to intervene between God and the people',⁷⁰ may avoid ascribing connotations of magical power to the priesthood, but it does not in itself explain why this *facultas* is restricted to the ordained priesthood if the clergy are not endowed with a distinctive *vis*. The dependence of ministerial priesthood on the priesthood of Christ,⁷¹ and on the power of the Holy Spirit, however true in itself, does not necessarily account for the restriction of this empowerment to bishops and presbyters. A distinction between powers and functions conferred by Jesus on his disciples during his earthly ministry, and continued within the apostolic ministry, on the one hand, and the conferral of the Holy Spirit on the Church at Pentecost, on the other,⁷² would be impossible to sustain with any confidence on the basis of critical scholarship. There may nonetheless be theological value in this distinction, and it may point to a truth about the Church and its ministry which no amount of historical reconstruction could sustain. A distinction between the

⁶⁹ Bishop of Down & Connor, died 1667.

⁷⁰ *Clerus Domini*, 7.3. Cf. W. Temple, *Thoughts on Some Problems of the Day* (London: Macmillan, 1931), 110.

⁷¹ F. D. Maurice, *The Kingdom of Christ. II* (London: Rivington, 1858), 125–6, 149. Cf. S. W. Sykes, 'The Theology of Priesthood', *Sewanee Theological Review* 43 (2000), 121–9.

⁷² Cf. Taylor, *Clerus Domini*, 8.1.

apostolic ministry, represented particularly by bishops, but also by presbyters, with deacons in a supporting capacity, and the life and ministry of the Church, each rooted and founded in Christ and empowered in distinctive ways by the Holy Spirit, may prove helpful in defining a theology of ministry for the modern Church,⁷³ if it can be done without seeming to denigrate the identity and ministry of the laity.

Where it is maintained that priesthood is not defined by its functions, but by some abstract essence,⁷⁴ this ontology all but invariably becomes the basis not only for a spiritual hierarchy, but also for reserving certain functions to bishops and presbyters in particular, and also to deacons. If this priestly attribute is not an endowment with supernatural power, then what precisely it is needs to be defined: how it distinguishes clergy from the laity, and how the Church is served by this particular quality being visited upon some but not all its members. Whether such notions of priesthood are attested prior to the introduction of sacerdotal notions to ecclesiastical office is, furthermore, doubtful. Bishops, presbyters, deacons, and laity alike are defined by their relationships with God and one another, and, secondarily, by the ministries within and on behalf of the Church which they offer. Personal qualities and attributes, and even spiritual attainments, can be no more than signs of vocation and of endowment by the Holy Spirit for the fulfilment of that vocation and the exercise of ministry. If priests 'personify the embodiment in the Church of God's work to bring truth and healing to the world', and ordination serves or effects this 'personification',⁷⁵ then it needs to be explained why particular functions of ministry, as well as offices, require such a 'personification'.

⁷³ Cf. D. N. Power, *Ministers of Christ and his Church* (London: Chapman, 1969), 166.

⁷⁴ R. P. C. Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined* (Guildford: Lutterworth, 1979), 108; H. M. Wybrew, *Called to Be Priests* (Oxford: SLG Press, 1989), 3; cf. K. Leech, *Spirituality and Pastoral Care* (London: Sheldon Press, 1986), 127–36.

⁷⁵ D. W. Hardy, *Finding the Church* (London: SCM, 2001), 93.

If the authority of the apostolic ministry derives from God or Christ, apart from the Church,⁷⁶ then it could be argued that only a priest can 'give sacramental expression to Christ's priestly action'.⁷⁷ This would be consistent with the notion of *facultas* which Jeremy Taylor associates with the priesthood. In the Eucharist, the priest would, in terms of this conception of apostolic ministry, represent Christ to the Church rather than the Church to Christ. However, this raises a further question as to how a ministry that derives from Christ relates to the idea of the Church as the Body of Christ. While some caution is needed in conflating theological metaphors, the principle that Christ is present in the gathered congregation, and that all Christians have received the Holy Spirit at Baptism, cannot be ignored. There must therefore be some doubt as to whether vocation and authority deriving from God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, can ultimately be distinguished from vocation and authority derived from the Church, the Body of Christ endowed with the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Ministry and Ordination: A Statement on the Doctrine of the Ministry Agreed by the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission* (London: SPCK, 1973), 7.

⁷⁷ B. Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976), 645.

⁷⁸ Cf. J. Dallen, *The Dilemma of Priestless Sundays* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 119.

The Episcopate⁷⁹

In his *History of the Scottish Episcopal Church* (1843), John Parker Lawson emphasises from the beginning the absolute centrality of the episcopate. Everything derives from the bishop. The successions in the Episcopate are carefully narrated as of the utmost importance, for while the ordinations of Deacons and Presbyters are merely local and personal, the Church universal and at large has a vital interest in the consecration of every bishop.⁸⁰

Lawson begins his history with the pronouncement that ‘the Church in Scotland twice received the Episcopal Succession from the Church of England, first in 1610, and again in 1661.’⁸¹ In fact, of course, the Episcopal Church has its origins from an earlier date – 1582 – when the Church of Scotland rejected episcopal authority and adopted Presbyterian government and a reformed theology. Through all the vicissitudes of the seventeenth century, the significant moment, after the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89, was the final restoration of Presbyterianism in the established Church of Scotland, and the consequent acknowledgement of Episcopalians as Dissenters. In 1689 about sixty Episcopalian clergy were *rabbed* out of their livings by Presbyterian mobs,⁸² while loyalty to the Stewart dynasty in the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745 brought about the near extinction of the Episcopal Church in Scotland, penal laws being rescinded only in 1792.

The recovery of the SEC in the nineteenth century was largely under Tractarian influence, the Oxford Movement being naturally drawn to its preservation of spiritual independence and anti-Erastian Church principles. While he was still an Anglican, John Henry Newman wrote rhapsodically in *Lyra Apostolica*⁸³ of ‘our brethren of the North... Cast forth to the chill mountain air.’ Indeed, the survival of

⁷⁹ Material derived from David Jasper, ‘The Question of Episcopal Authority in the Scottish Episcopal Church’, *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal* 2.4 (2018), 4-10.

⁸⁰ John Parker Lawson, *The History of the Scottish Episcopal Church* (Edinburgh: Gallie and Bayley, 1843), x.

⁸¹ Lawson, *History of the SEC*, 1.

⁸² See Stewart J. Brown, *The National Churches of England, Ireland and Scotland, 1801-46* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 41.

⁸³ (London: Rivington’s, 1836).

Scottish episcopacy was an act of defiance against Presbyterian compromise on the historic orders of the threefold ministry. The question that this poses today is of the nature of this apostolic and catholic calling in Scotland, and thus the particular nature of the Scottish episcopate. To what is God calling the SEC in its particular ministry and mission? The Scottish bishop is elected in each diocese and, unlike the bishop in the Church of England, is not appointed by the monarch as Supreme Governor of the Church and through the Crown Appointments Commission. He or she therefore does not have any rightful participation in national government, unlike Anglican bishops in England, twenty-six of whom sit in the House of Lords. It is clear why the Tractarians found the Scottish bishops so important.

R. P. C. Hanson observed that ‘authority for the Christian is a combination or harmony of several forms of authority, all fused in faith’.⁸⁴ In the same essay Hanson asserts that ‘the authority of the church lies ultimately in the Word of God whom it obeys and whose witness it finds in the Bible.’⁸⁵ The church’s authority is not its own but is of God and for the SEC we might add that this authority is rooted in Scripture and Sacrament. Of these, within the apostolic and catholic tradition, the bishop is the primary guardian. Here is not the place to rehearse again the early history of episcopacy and the nature of its authority.⁸⁶

The *Apostolic Tradition*⁸⁷ includes the following prayer used for the consecration of a bishop. This document makes it quite clear that a bishop is chosen by God to be a *high priest* whose task it is to be a shepherd of the flock and offer to God the gifts of the Church.

Knower of the hearts of all, bestow on this your servant whom you chose for the episcopate, to feed your holy flock, and to serve as high priest for you blamelessly, ministering night and day, unceasingly to propitiate your countenance, and to offer to

⁸⁴ ‘Authority’, *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1983), 60.

⁸⁵ ‘Authority’, 59.

⁸⁶ See Taylor, ‘Biblical and Historical Foundations of Episcopacy’.

⁸⁷ For discussion of the date and provenance of the *Apostolic Tradition*, see P. F. Bradshaw, M. E. Johnson, & L. E. Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).

you the gifts of your holy church; and by high priestly spirit to have authority to forgive sins according to your command; to assign lots according to your bidding; to loose every bond according to the authority that you gave to the apostles; to please you in gentleness and a pure heart, offering to you a sweet-smelling savour.

Da cordis cognitor pater super hunc seruum tuum quem elegisti ad episcopatum pascere gregem sanctam tuam et primatum sacerdotii tibi exhibere sine repraesensione seruientem noctu et die, incessanter repropitiari uultum tuum et offere dona sanctae ecclesiae tuae, spiritu primatus sacerdotii habere potestatem dimittere peccata secundum mandatum tuum, dare sortes secundum praeceptum tuum, soluere etiam omnem colligationem secundum potestatem, quam dedisti apostolis, placere autem tibi in mansuetudine et mundo corde, offerentem tibi odorem suauitatis (3:4-5).⁸⁸

A number of points are to be noted here. First, it is God who chooses the bishop, and thus any form of election needs to recognise this as a fundamental element in that process. The role of the bishop is high priestly in service to God, his (or now, her) ministry, with its apostolic authority, to the church reflecting this. Apart from the forgiving of sins, the duty of the bishop is to *assign lots*, that is, to assign ecclesiastical duties, 'derived from the allocation of priestly duties by lot in the OT'.⁸⁹ Thus it is clear that the bishop's primary duty is to God and then as a pastor *to feed your holy flock*.

The role of the bishop has always been subject to the particular circumstances of the church in different times and places. It seems quite clear today that a bishop in the SEC functions in the light of the church that somehow found its vocation after 1690 to preserve, against all the odds, the catholic and apostolic tradition in Presbyterian Scotland, and was perceived as such through the admittedly romantic vision of the Tractarians in the nineteenth century, as evidenced by such buildings as Glenalmond's College of

⁸⁸ Citation from the *Epitome*, thought to preserve the Greek text from which the Latin and Ethiopic derive, as well as the Canons of Hippolytus and the *Testamonium Domini*.

⁸⁹ Bradshaw & al., *Apostolic Tradition*, 36.

the Holy and Undivided Trinity, St. Ninian's Cathedral in Perth, and the College of the Holy Spirit in Millport, Great Cumbrae in the 1840's. The chapel at Cumbrae would later become the Cathedral of the Isles in the diocese of Argyle and the Isles. With its history of persecution, the SEC was described by Sir Walter Scott as 'the ancient but poor and suffering Episcopal Church.'⁹⁰ For William Perry in his book *The Oxford Movement in Scotland*,⁹¹ the SEC was at the very heart of Scottish identity as a spiritual and social force.

In this context it was very clear that the Scottish bishop is allowed a spiritual freedom that is not available in the same way to English bishops, entrenched as they are in the fabric and politics of the national church. The nature of the Scottish bishops' authority is less easy to define but theologically, in a way, more profound. They might, it could be said, provide an opportunity for proper theological reflection on the Anglican tripod of Scripture, tradition and reason as the tools to think theologically as a church and to think of the church theologically. A valuable exercise would be to return to the mind of the high church evangelical George Howard Wilkinson.⁹² As a parish priest in London, Wilkinson had pioneered parish missions for which he was accused of a mixture of 'unhealthy emotionalism, Methodist extravagance and the Romish confessional!'⁹³ In fact, as a bishop in Scotland holding a high doctrine of the Eucharist as a sign of Christ's presence, Wilkinson sustained a remarkably balanced ministry of practical ethics, theological reflection based on scriptural principles and the Prayer Book, and sacramental liturgy. He affirmed that 'We come to Holy Communion first of all, as says the Catechism, in order that we may offer to our God the continual remembrance of the Sacrifice of Christ.'⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Cited by Stewart J. Brown, 'Scotland and the Oxford Movement', *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World, 1830-1930*, ed. S. J. Brown & P. B. Nockles (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), 56.

⁹¹ (Cambridge: CUP, 1933).

⁹² Bishop of Truro, subsequently of St. Andrew's, Dunkeld & Dunblane, and Primus, late XIX, early XX cent.

⁹³ William Marshall, *Scripture, Tradition and Reason* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2010), 153.

⁹⁴ Quoted in D. Voll, *Catholic Evangelicalism* (London: Faith Press, 1963), 64.

Bishop Wilkinson is a good example of a bishop who sees his place as a theologically reflective centre in the church, and despite his English episcopal experience represents a clear alternative to the feudal model of the English episcopate, most apparent in such titles as the Prince Bishop of Durham. While the office of bishop is not simply to be equated with the idea of theologian, nevertheless a bishop's calling is certainly to ensure and promote the theological self-reflection of the Church and its ministry. At the same time, Bishop Wilkinson's biographer, Arthur James Mason, makes it clear how the particular history of the Scottish Episcopal Church defines the deeply pastoral nature of the bishop within and alongside the ordained ministry of the church while being the primary witness to 'the Divine purpose in the institution of the Apostolic ministry.'⁹⁵ The principle of leadership in equality is maintained in Scotland by the replacement of the title of Archbishop by that of the Primus (*inter pares*), who is elected by his or her fellow bishops. Within the threefold ministry, Mason indicates also the historical origins of the Scottish bishop's priestly function alongside his fellow clergy in the particular stringent circumstances of the eighteenth century.

In the last century Scottish Bishops had no chapters, no cathedrals, usually devoted themselves to a parochial charge, often in another bishop's diocese, and occasionally made a confirmation tour.⁹⁶

Even after the rescinding of the penal laws in 1792, at the end of the wilderness years, and the renewal of canonical discipline in the Synod of 1809 which forbade a bishop to interfere in any diocese but his own,⁹⁷ in this form of the episcopate the history of the eighteenth century persecutions casts its shadow over the SEC, and it is a shadow that is not without its virtues.

For this history maintains, to an extent at least, a safeguard for the spiritual, theological and sacramental functions of the bishop in what

⁹⁵ *Memoir of George Howard Wilkinson. II* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1909), 370.

⁹⁶ *Memoir of George Howard Wilkinson*, 370.

⁹⁷ Marion Lochhead, *Episcopal Scotland in the Nineteenth-Century* (London: John Murray, 1966), 50.

the *Apostolic Tradition* and the more ancient *1 Clement*⁹⁸ call his high priestly role and prevents them from being overwhelmed by bureaucratic matters of government, the improper exercise of authority, and the ever-present dangers of managerialism.

The SEC has, since the nineteenth century, demonstrated a remarkable theological vitality, despite or, perhaps, because of its relatively small size and its position in dissent from the national Church. As Bishop Luscombe remarks, 'its theology has been developed, tried and tested by the threefold witness of Scripture, tradition and reason.'⁹⁹ One might add that its life is theologically sustained and promoted within the liturgical and worshipping life of the church, of which the bishop is the central figure, for, as the 1984 Ordinal of the Scottish Episcopal Church affirms, in words said by the Primus before the bishop-elect:

There is one great High Priest of the new covenant, in whose name bishops preside over the church's offering and call all to be of one mind and purpose, that in unity they may present to God a single, holy, living sacrifice.

It is entirely appropriate to come towards a conclusion of this section with reference to the Scottish Ordinal 1984, since it reflects very closely the *Prayer for the Consecration of a Bishop* that we find in the *Apostolic Tradition*. Indeed, in the Ordinal we see a good description of the divine command to *assign lots*, as *within the diocese the bishop ordains and sends out new ministers, guides and serves the priests and deacons who share in the bishop's responsibility to nurture the community of the baptised.*

⁹⁸ *1 Clement* 40-44 is the earliest extant document to employ the Old Testament hierarchy of high priest, priest, and levite as a type of the Christian ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. For the date and context of *1 Clement*, see T. J. Herron, 'The More Probable Date of the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians', *Studia Patristica* 21 (1989), 106-21; C. N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), 18-19, 163.

⁹⁹ L. E. Luscombe, *The Scottish Episcopal Church in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: General Synod Office of the Scottish Episcopal Church, 1996), 124.

It needs to be noted that we find no language of domination here, for bishops are called by God to *oversee and care* for the Church in succession to the apostles who were sent out by Christ, and this is effective only when they are found to be *people under authority [who are] attentive to the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth.*

The Presbyterate

The relationship between bishop and presbyterate is a complex one. Notwithstanding the vastly higher status of the bishop as perceived in the secular world, the temporal power and wealth which have accrued to the episcopal office in many parts of the Church (though not in Scotland since the Reformation), and the symbols of status and office reflected in their attire and in the rituals which surround them, for much of western Christian history bishop and presbyter have been understood as essentially identical in their priestly office, and as quite distinct from the diaconate.

The historical origins of the episcopate and presbyterate in the Church of the first century are beyond reconstruction, other than to recognise that no uniform Church order became established until the second or third century.¹⁰⁰ Even then, the relationship between the orders was understood differently in different parts of the Church, and was still unresolved in the western Church at the Reformation, resulting in different ecclesiologies evolving in the denominations which emerged in the sixteenth and subsequent centuries.¹⁰¹

The Swiss-German theologian and Roman Catholic priest Hans Küng has observed that a

theological or dogmatic distinction is impossible to draw not only because episkopoi and presbyters were differentiated either differently from today or not at all, but because there are no specifically episcopal functions which have not, in the course of Church history, been legitimately assumed by priests.¹⁰²

In 1563, the Council of Trent defined episcopacy as a distinct order of ministry, and reserved the sacrament of Orders to bishops.¹⁰³ This overturned what had been the dominant position of the

¹⁰⁰ R. E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop* (London: Chapman, 1971); R. A. Campbell, *The Elders* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994); A. C. Stewart, *The Original Bishops* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014); Taylor, 'Biblical and Historical Origins'.

¹⁰¹ Taylor, *Lay Presidency at the Eucharist?*, 239-50.

¹⁰² *The Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 430; cf. K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations. XIX* (London: Burns & Oates, 1983).

¹⁰³ *De Sacramento Ordinis* 7.

mediaeval Church,¹⁰⁴ that bishops and presbyters exercised different offices within a single order of priesthood; a view shared by King Henry VIII of England (and Ireland) and by Thomas Cranmer, his Archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁰⁵ It was not until the publication of the Anglican Ordinal of 1561, with its Preface stating

It is evident unto all men diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christs Church: Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Which Offices were evermore held in such reverend estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by publick prayer, with imposition of hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful Authority.

Anglican Ordinals, and the theology of the ordained ministry which they reflect, with the implicit but unambiguous differentiation between bishop and priest, derive from the 1661 Ordinal of the Church of England. This includes the rites of the SEC, however independent its liturgical heritage may otherwise be. The 1984 Scottish Ordinal states:

The ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of all believers are related. Each in its proper way partakes of the one priesthood of Christ.

Presbyters share in the priestly ministry of their bishop. With their fellow presbyters they serve and sustain the community of the faithful that we may grow into the fullness of Christ and be a living sacrifice acceptable to God.

Presbyters pray and care for those committed to their charge, enabling them to respond freely to God's call.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3 Sup 35.2; 37.1-3; Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* 4.24.

¹⁰⁵ 'Questiones and Answers' 10, *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer*, ed J. Edmund (Cambridge: CUP, 1846); *De Sacramentis*, G. P. Jeanes, 'A Reformation Treatise on the Sacraments', *JTS* 46 (1995), 149-90.

They proclaim the coming of the Kingdom, calling sinners to repentance and absolving them in God's name.

They preside at the Eucharist and draw together in worship those who come to the Lord's Table, so that fed by the Body and Blood of Christ they may go out to serve God in the unity of the Spirit.

The Scottish Ordinal prioritises the relationship between the ordained (ministerial) priesthood and the priesthood of all believers, locating the foundations of both in the unique priesthood of Christ. The correlation, but not equivalence, between the priesthood of the laity and of the presbyterate is not defined further, meaning that this may mutate as the ministry of both takes new forms in response to changing circumstances in the life of the Church. Unlike the diaconate and the episcopate,¹⁰⁶ the presbyterate is *related* to the corporate priesthood of the baptised. The explanation for this is surely to be found in the corporate and collegial aspect of the presbyterate, *shar[ing] in the priestly ministry of their bishop*. Laity and presbyterate are corporate entities, therein representing something of the nature of Christ's presence in the world; while the embodiment of God's image is unique in each individual, they are empowered by the same Spirit with a diversity and complementarity of *charisma*, so that the Church is complete only in the ministry of all, together. The office and ministry of a presbyter may include, but cannot be reduced to, that of the rector of a charge into which s/he is instituted by the bishop to *the cure of souls which is mine and yours*. Many presbyters exercise a ministry which is not a cure, but exercise no less pastoral a ministry, as chaplains to educational and healthcare institutions, or to secular workplaces, or to other particular communities. These, and those who teach or exercise other specialised ministries, participate no less in the presbyterate of the

¹⁰⁶ It is intriguing, but not immediately clear why there should be no such correlation between the service offered in and on behalf of the Church by lay people and the diaconate. Despite the mediaeval legacy of anointment of kings (and queens), and of power struggles between Papacy and local episcopate on the one hand, and the Holy Roman Emperor and lay rulers on the other, and notwithstanding the relationship the SEC sought to maintain with the deposed Stewart monarchs during the decades following the abolition of episcopacy in the Church of Scotland, there is no clear position on the relationship between the episcopate and lay rulers, and in particular anointed monarchs.

diocese, in communion with the bishop, and, through the bishop, with the Church catholic. The collegial nature of the priesthood consists of more than the division of the diocese into however many pastoral units. The diversity of gifts and ministries which appropriately find expression within the presbyterate of the diocese form part of the same priestly ministry of the Church, reflecting the one and unique priesthood of Christ and enabling the priesthood of all the baptised to be realised in the communities they serve.

Canons and synodical structures at present make no provision for the bishop to meet with the presbyterate of the diocese, and thereby to give expression to the essentially collegial relationship between bishop and other priests. However important Diocesan Synods undoubtedly are, and however essential the inclusion of lay people and deacons in their deliberations, the House of Clergy is not the same as the presbyterate, not only as it includes deacons but also in that it has no identity and function apart from synodical processes. Synodical structures do not enable the presbyteral body to share meaningfully with the bishop in the role of oversight of the people of God in the diocese. Cathedral chapters may reflect an archaic relic of this principle, but an inadequate one in that the collegiality of the presbyterate needs to include all the priests of the diocese, not a representative sample or an elite inner circle.

The 1661 Ordinal implies that the ministry of the 'parish priest', exercising the cure of souls in the particular place to which he had been instituted, is the normative function of the presbyterate. The Scottish Ordinal retains the sense of ministry being to a particular community *committed to their charge*, in which the presbyter exercises a ministry of Word, Sacrament, and pastoral care, sustained by prayer. This cannot imply, or ever have implied, that presbyters whose ministry is exercised in teaching, administration, or in mission in places where there is no established community within which the cure of souls may be exercised, are any less a part of the priesthood of the diocese. Nor do presbyters who have retired from office cease to be members of the priestly body, even if they cease to play a role in the synodical government of the Church. Such clergy may find that they are not regularly part of a gathered community, and particularly not as the priest inducted to the cure of souls there, and that their exercise of the ministries of Word and Sacrament may accordingly be very irregular, by invitation or request

rather than by virtue of office. But they are nonetheless part of the presbyterate of the diocese, represent that corporate priesthood, and form a link between the congregation they serve, however transiently, and the bishop, and, through the bishop, with the universal Church of which they are a part.

This is not to deny that the presbyter instituted by the bishop to *the cure of souls which is mine and yours* does not exercise the priesthood in particular ways, representing the bishop in the sacramental life of the congregation, teaching the Gospel through proclaiming the Word and by example, and in pastoral oversight and governance. It is in this role that authority takes legal form, and ceases to be merely an intangible spiritual quality. Canon 13 deals with the modalities of appointment of clergy to charges, and of their vacating office, but says nothing of the ministry exercised by those appointed and instituted to such roles. The Deed of Institution states:

We commit to you the pastoral care of all those who are members and adherents of the said charge;

We assign to you the oversight of the work of ministry undertaken by this Church within the district canonically assigned to the said charge;

We authorise you to administer the sacraments, to preach the word and to perform every other sacred office competent to a priest according to the rites and ceremonies of the Scottish Episcopal Church;

We prohibit every other cleric from performing any function or sacred office within the said church or from interfering directly or indirectly with the pastoral charge now committed to you, except with your consent and approval; and

We expressly reserve to us and our successors in the episcopal office the right to perform all pastoral duties in the said incumbency committed to you as provided in the Canons of this Church.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Code of Canons, Appendix 14.

While making explicit reference to *oversight of the work of ministry*, implying that this ministry is not a monopoly of the rector, the Deed does not stipulate or explain how this oversight is to be exercised. Each rector needs to discern how his/her oversight, and example, can most effectively support, encourage, and coordinate the ministries exercised by the people of God in the charge, ensuring that the diversity and complementarity of gifts given to the baptised are used to build up the Body of Christ.

Canon 60. 1 requires that vestries

co-operate with and generally assist the Rector in all matters relating to the spiritual welfare of the congregation and the mission of the whole Church, subject always to the canonical rights and duties of the clergy.

Despite the clarity of canon law on this matter, there is a widespread misconception in the SEC that the rector is an employee of the vestry; something of a contrast to George Herbert's extravagant claim that the 'Pastor is the Deputy of Christ for the reducing of Man to the Obedience of God.'¹⁰⁸ Notwithstanding that the vestry is responsible for the stipend and other emoluments payable to the rector, and tax-related business with the civil authorities is transacted as for employees, the rector is accountable to the bishop with whom s/he shares the cure of souls, and not the vestry. Given that the canon is widely not understood, and the Deed of Institution not widely known and far from explicit, the nature of the authority vested in the rector requires further elucidation, not in order to empower arbitrariness but to ensure that authority is rightly exercised and supported, by the bishop and by the vestry and congregation, so as to enable the community to flourish and the mission of the Church in and to the world to prosper.

It is precisely in the governance of individual congregations that the authority vested in the rector, to exercise the grace of Orders in ministering the cure of souls in a particular context, might seem to clash with notions of collaborative ministry.¹⁰⁹ The rector, as the

¹⁰⁸ *A Priest to the Temple, or, The Country Parson: His Character, and Rule of Life*, I; [1632], ed. J. N. Wall (New York: Paulist, 1981).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Pickard, *Theological Resources for Collaborative Ministry*.

priest instituted to the cure of souls, represents the bishop and presbyteral college of the diocese, and through them the Church catholic. While this implies a degree of authority, in which accountability is to canonical authority in the wider Church, this authority is exercised in leadership and oversight of a community of baptised Christians, all of whom have been endowed with gifts of the Holy Spirit. Any notion of an inspired community, in which all have received gifts of the Holy Spirit which they are to use in the life of the church, needs to allow for the gifts of oversight and leadership vested in the rector. It needs also to recognise the essentially collegial nature of the priesthood of the baptised, and the purpose for which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are bestowed (1 Corinthians 13).

A clear understanding of vocation is essential to resolving the tension between Spirit-filled community and the office of rector: the priest, in responding to his/her own call, articulates also God's call to others, and facilitates and encourages them to respond to God's call to them. In responding to the pastoral oversight of the rector, and his/her invitation to discover and use their gifts, the baptised are affirmed in their own vocation, and their enthusiasm and diffidence alike contained within the discipline of the Church. In the Ordinal of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, the bishop asks those to be ordained priest, *Will you help those in your care to discover and use to God's glory the gifts and ministries he [sic] gives them?*¹¹⁰ This gives emphasis not only to a role in discerning gifts in others, but also to the inextricable connection between the priestly ministry of the ordained and the life of the Church in which the baptised exercise their pneumatic gifts as active and living members of the Body of Christ. Any revision to the Scottish Ordinal might include a question similar to this.

The ministry of discernment is not a matter simply of helping individuals to discover and to use their gifts, but also of giving direction to the life of the community and its mission to the world. The gifts of individuals are not exercised in a vacuum, or on a podium before a captive audience, but in a community with others who are similarly discovering and learning to use their pneumatic gifts under the oversight of the priest who has the cure of their souls.

¹¹⁰ *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* (London: Collins, 1989), 589.

The role of discerning, coordinating, and overseeing the exercise of spiritual gifts vested in members of the community is reflected in liturgical presidency, as the priest proclaims the Word and administers the sacraments which form, guide, and feed the Christian community, absolve the penitent of their sins, and strengthen and renew them for the work to which they are sent out in the world. The integration of liturgical presidency with pastoral oversight, and exercise of the authority vested in the one who exercises the cure of souls, is most fully experienced in the ministry of the rector. It pertains in a more narrowly defined sense in some chaplaincies to particular communities, such as schools and universities, where the chaplain's oversight is limited to certain aspects of the life of the institution. Other priests are no less a part of the presbyteral college of the diocese in which they serve, but they do not exercise priestly authority in the same way. Whether they are engaged in secular employment or in sector ministries, in teaching or chaplaincy, or are junior members of the clergy team of a large charge, such presbyters exercise no less a priesthood, but their ministry of Word and Sacrament is not complemented by that of pastoral oversight, and does not involve sharing with their bishop the cure of souls in any congregation.

As well as enabling and encouraging the ministry of the whole people of God, priests exercise a vicarious ministry. As George Herbert¹¹¹ expressed it,

The Country Parson, when he is to read the divine services, composeth himself to all possible reverence being truly touched and amazed with the Majesty of God, before Whom he then presents himself; yet not as himself alone, but as presenting with himself the whole Congregation, whose sins he then bears, and brings with his own to the heavenly altar¹¹²

The daily Offices, and disciplined life of prayer, are not a prerogative of any order of ministry, and this aspect of ministry is exercised at least as fully by lay and ordained members of religious orders as by priests in pastoral ministry, and indeed by lay people for whom it is a voluntary spiritual discipline rather than an obligation. Nevertheless,

¹¹¹ Priest and poet, rector of Fugglestone with Bemerton, Salisbury, died 1633.

¹¹² *A Priest to the Temple*, VI.

there is a vicarious aspect to this role, in that clergy and religious observe a discipline, nurtured in their formation, which consumes their time and attention in ways that would not normally be compatible with the daily lives and obligations of most lay people. Yet, lay people with the leisure and the temperament can and do assume a discipline of prayer, which may also be vicarious even if not incumbent upon them in the same way as it is a solemn duty of the priest instituted to the cure of souls in the community. The life of prayer does not in itself translate into any formal authority, but it may equip the person to offer spiritual counsel and nurture to those who seek it, as well as prayer on their behalf.

Conversely, the prayers of the faithful, and particularly of the clergy, may be sought by people apparently secular and non-observant in their daily lives, at times of crisis or distress, or generally as discharging a function they consider beneficial even if they would not consider undertaking it themselves. Whether or not this is an attitude which ought to be encouraged, the perception needs to be acknowledged that the Church, and in particular the clergy, exercise a spiritual role on behalf of the wider society.

The ministry exercised by presbyters in the Church, and the authority attached to pastoral office, are diverse, have mutated with cultures, and will undoubtedly continue to mutate in response to changes in society. The one priesthood which bishops and presbyters share is exercised in particular offices, which involve relationships with particular communities, and also with the Church catholic through the bishop.

The Diaconate

The role of the deacon in the Scottish Liturgy has its roots in the Mass of the Roman Rite and the Eucharistic Liturgies of the Eastern Orthodox churches, which give a special place to the deacon in the liturgical action. In continuity with both traditions, the reading of the Gospel, the introduction to the prayer for the Church, and the delivery of the cup, were explicitly allowed to the deacon in the First Prayer Book of Edward VI, of 1549, which is the ancestor of the various forms of the Scottish Liturgy. In the English Ordinal of 1550, which accompanied this Prayer Book, the bishop addresses those to be ordained deacon:

It pertaineth to the office of a Deacon [in the Church where he shall be appointed,] to assist the Priest in divine service, and specially when he ministereth the holy Communion, and [to] help him in distribution thereof, and to read holy scriptures and Homilies in the congregation, and [to] instruct the youth in the Catechism, to Baptise and [to] preach if he be [commanded] by the Bishop. And further more, it is his office [where provision is so made] to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish, and to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell to the Curate,¹¹³ that by his exhortation they may be relieved by the parish or other convenient alms: will you do this gladly and willingly?

Following the imposition of hands, the bishop addresses the newly ordained deacon(s):

Take thou auctoritie to reade the Gospell in the Church of God, and to preache the same, yf thou bee thereunto ordinarily commaunded.

The Scottish Ordinal did not depart from this wording in any significant way before 1984. The Scottish Liturgy, from 1637 onwards, began to introduce explicit roles for the deacon in the rubrics. Following the so-called Clementine Liturgy of the *Apostolic*

¹¹³ By which is meant the rector or vicar, i.e. the presbyter whom the bishop has inducted to the cure of souls in the parish, not the assistant curate, the office commonly abbreviated to 'curate' in modern parlance.

Constitutions, published by the Bishop Rattray mentioned previously, the deacon was authorised to administer the chalice. The role of the deacon was extended in 1764, to include saying, *Let us present our offerings to the Lord, with reverence and godly fear.*¹¹⁴ The role of the deacon was further expanded from 1912 onwards, with explicit sanction to read the Epistle and Gospel, to introduce the confession, the prayer for the Church, and to read the exhortation after Communion. All explicit mention of the role of the deacon in the rubrics of the Scottish Liturgy was lost, however, from 1970 onwards, and Scottish Liturgy 1982 notably has no rubrics at all. The Scottish Ordinal 1984 (amended 2006) gives us the following diminished and somewhat vague picture of the diaconate.

Deacons share with the bishop and presbyters in the ministry of word and sacrament and in works of love.

In a distinctive way deacons are a sign of that humility which marks all service offered in the name of Christ. They bear witness to the Lord who laid aside all claims of dignity, assumed the nature of a slave and accepted death on a cross.

In the name of the Church, deacons care for those in need, serving God and the world after the pattern of Christ.

This represents a significant shift away from the ancient understanding of the role of the deacon. The SEC Diaconate Working Group's second report, published in 2013, has nevertheless outlined what it understands to be the liturgical role of the deacon, as follows.

The Deacon's traditional ministry in the liturgy represents the ministry of service and mission of the whole Church. This includes: calling the community to confession of their sins; proclaiming the gospel; preaching; leading prayers of intercession; receiving the gifts and preparing the altar for Holy Communion; assisting the president with the distribution of Communion; and sending the community out in the service of the Lord.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ *The Ancient Liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem* (London, 1744), 113.

¹¹⁵ *Truly Called ... Two*, 7.

In 1990, John N. Collins, a Roman Catholic scholar, published *Diakonía: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources*.¹¹⁶ Nearly three decades later his philological study of *diakon-* words remains unsurpassed, and his conclusions were adopted in the third edition of *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*,¹¹⁷ and have been reinforced by the work of Anni Hentschel.¹¹⁸ Collins began by identifying a particular understanding of *diakonía* taken up among theologians of the Lutheran churches in the nineteenth century and which had become entrenched (especially in German theology) by the 1940s, and then also by many in the Roman Catholic Church from the 1960s. Based on a (mis)reading of Acts 6¹¹⁹ in conjunction with other key texts (especially Mark 10:45), this understanding has seen *diakonía* as meaning self-giving service to the poor and needy. The Scottish Ordinal 1984 reflects this also: *In the name of the Church, deacons care for those in need*.

Collins has demonstrated, however, from examination of secular and sacred Greek usage, that the word *diakonía*, and its cognates, have a quite different root sense: that of one person's commissioned service to another person. The deacon is ordained to a ministry defined fundamentally by the delegation to him or her of particular functions, in executing which he or she acts on the authority of the bishop.

The essence of the diaconate is not following Christ who came to *serve rather than to be served*, or bearing witness in a special way to *the Lord who laid aside all claims of dignity, assumed the nature of a slave and accepted death on a cross*. The deacon's basic purpose is not to wash the feet of the poor and to feed the hungry. Such works of philanthropic love and charity are certainly good and worthy in themselves, and are indeed the essence of Christian discipleship.

¹¹⁶ Oxford: OUP, 1990.

¹¹⁷ Ed. Frederick Danker (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001).

¹¹⁸ *Diakonia im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2007).

¹¹⁹ The traditional identification of the 'seven' of Acts 6 as the first deacons of the Christian Church has no basis in the text. While the imputed role of those appointed was to relieve the apostles of responsibility or the welfare of impoverished Greek-speaking Christians, this is not the role of Stephen and Philip in subsequent chapters. For further discussion see C. C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

Diakonía, however, is not fundamentally about such works of *humble service*, and to associate such attitude and activities exclusively with the diaconate is another example of clericalising the vocation of all Christian people.

In its essence *diakonía* is not about particular functions, but about being commissioned and delegated by the bishop. In liturgical attendance on the bishop, and in discharging such pastoral and administrative functions as may be delegated by the bishop, the deacon represents and extends the presence and ministry of the bishop him- or herself. It is instructive to observe the role of the deacon in the *Apostolic Tradition*: to attend the bishop (8:2) and *report to him who are sick so that he, if it seem good to him, may visit them* (34). Their ministry is primarily to the bishop (8:2), rather than to those to whom the deacon extends the ministry of the bishop.¹²⁰ This conceptualisation of the diaconate survives almost verbatim in the classical English and Scottish Ordinal already mentioned: the deacons are *to search for the sick, poor, and impotent ... to intimate their estates, names . . . to the Curate*; the *Curate* here being the rector, the priest instituted by the bishop to the cure of souls in the congregation, and who stands in the place of the bishop in overseeing the work of the deacon in that context.

Diakon- words, which have deep roots in Greek religious language and culture, and which also occur in the Septuagint (a Greek transmission of the Old Testament), can apply at the highest levels of civic and religious functions, always expressing the notion of a mandated authority. In religious contexts, a connotation of the noble and even of the divine characterises the usage. In most contexts in the Hellenistic world, the person or activity designated by *diakon-* would be held in the highest respect, and even in awe. There is no imputation of inferiority, and *diakonía* was in certain circumstances unthinkable for slaves. *Diakon-* words implied no personal service in relation to the recipient of the *diakonía* and never expressed or connoted love of any kind, and the values expressed by these words in Christian writings were no different from those expressed in Hellenistic and classical Greek. There is, indeed, no nuance or shift between New Testament and non-Christian usage.

¹²⁰ John N. Collins, 'From presbyter to priest to ... minister?', *Gateway to Renewal: Reclaiming Ministries for Women and Men* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 137.

Bearing all this in mind, it comes as no surprise to find that the early ordination rites of the Western churches do not make reference to the notion of humble service. Instead there is an emphasis on the deacon's function in Christian worship. The prayer for the ordination of deacons, which is found in all the earliest sacramentaries (whose origins lie before the seventh century), reads,

From the beginning the sons of Levi were chosen as faithful guardians, devoting themselves to the mystical offerings of thy house, who would possess as an everlasting portion the inheritance of an eternal blessing. We beseech thee, O Lord, to look with favour also on these thy servants, whom we humbly set apart for the office of deacon to serve in thy sanctuaries.

*electis ab initio Leui filiis qui mysticis operationibus domus tuae fidelibus excubiis permanentes haereditatem benedictionis aeternae sorte perpetua possiderent. Super hos quoque famulos tuos quaesumus Domine placatus intende quos tuis sacrariis seruituros in officium diaconii suppliciter dedicamus.*¹²¹

Here the deacon is seen as the successor of the sons of Levi. Just as the Levitical ministers of the Jewish temple served the sacrificial priesthood, so Christian deacons are set apart to do service at the holy altars presided over by the bishop as *high priest*.

The evidence strongly suggests that this language of the earliest Roman sacramentaries, in use until the late twentieth century, has firm roots in the earliest traditions of the Roman Church, as expressed in *1 Clement*, written towards the end of the first century:¹²²

¹²¹ *Sacramentarium Leonianum*, ed. Charles Lett Feltoe (Cambridge, 1896), 121; see also *The Gregorian Sacramentary under Charles the Great*, ed. by H. A. Wilson, Henry Bradshaw Society 49 (London, 1915), 8; *The Gelasian Sacramentary: Liber sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae*, ed. H. A. Wilson (Oxford, 1894), 27.

¹²² Lightfoot's text is reproduced in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. Michael W. Holmes, 2nd edn (Leicester, 1997), 98, 99.

Those, therefore, who make their offerings at the appointed times are acceptable and blessed, for those who follow the instructions of the Master cannot go wrong. For to the high priest the proper services have been given, and to the priests the proper office has been assigned, and upon the Levites the proper ministries have been imposed.

οἱ οὖν τοῖς προστεταγμένοις καιροῖς ποιῶντες τὰς προσφορὰς αὐτῶν εὐπρόσδεκτοί τε καὶ μακάριοι· τοῖς γὰρ νομίμοις τοῦ δεσπότη ἀκολουθοῦντες οὐ διαμαρτάνουσιν. τῷ γὰρ ἀρχιερεῖ ἴδιαι λειτουργίαι δεδομένα εἰσίν, καὶ τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν ἴδιος ὁ τόπος προστέτακται, καὶ Λευῖταις ἴδιαι διακονίαι ἐπίκεινται· ὁ λαϊκὸς ἄνθρωπος τοῖς λαϊκοῖς προστάγμασιν δέδεται. (40. 4-5).

Collins has argued that this passage shows that the term *service* (λειτουργία, *leitourgía*) and its cognates refer exclusively to worship ('those who make their offerings at the appointed times'), so that 'the office of bishop' (ἐπισκοπή, *episkopē*) 'is referring to the central function within Christian cult'. The term 'priesthood' of the Levitical cult therefore changes to one 'meaning something like 'presidency' in Christian assemblies'.¹²³

1 *Clement*, and the Gregorian Sacramentary, see the Christian ministry in terms of the Old Testament Hebrew priesthood. The bishop is the high priest; the deacons are the levites. There is nothing in the early writings of the notion that *diakonía* is to be read in terms of ideas drawn (mistakenly) from Acts 6 about service to poor widows, and there are no references even to the protomartyr Stephen. Such allusions and illustrations of the meaning of the diaconate drawn from the text of Acts are historically secondary, or even tertiary.

With the evidence of Clement of Rome, we can see that this idea goes back to a point in the first century before the New Testament scriptures had become universal or normative. Not until Irenaeus,¹²⁴ Cyprian,¹²⁵ and Eusebius¹²⁶ do we find speculation on a link between the Seven of Acts 6 and the diaconate.

¹²³ Collins, *Diakonía*, 238.

¹²⁴ Bishop of Lyon, late II CE.

¹²⁵ Bishop of Carthage, mid III cent.

¹²⁶ Bishop of Caesarea Maritima, early to mid IV cent.

The Roman ordination rites, before the reforms of Paul VI, maintained the understanding of the diaconate as a levitical and cultic office, containing nothing of the 'service-to-the-poor' concept of *diakonía*. Later medieval additions to the earliest texts added a mention of Stephen, commending him for his example of chastity rather than his philanthropy. A final prayer, of Gallican origin, which also alludes to Stephen and the Seven, continues to focus on the deacon as one who ministers in the sanctuary. The text of Acts itself, moreover, after the debatable material in chapter 6, gives no evidence for a reading of Stephen and Philip as having a particular ministry to the needy; their recorded activity is proclaiming the Gospel, and in Philip's case baptising, rather than the table service at issue in Acts 6.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the noun *διακονος* is not used, and the only members of the Seven who appear again are engaged in proclaiming the Gospel, not table service.

The Prayer Book Ordinal reflects continuity with ancient and catholic tradition in its understanding of the ministry of deacons. It develops the mediaeval Sarum formula in the words of the bishop in examining the candidates:

It pertaineth to the office of a deacon, in the church where he shall be appointed to serve, to assist the Priest in Divine Service, and specially when he ministereth the Holy Communion....

Responses to Collins have accepted his philological conclusions, but their implications have generally not been acknowledged or implemented. Most notable is the continued insistence that the diaconate is to be understood in the context of Mark 10:45, rendered as, *the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve (διακονησαι) and to give his life as a ransom for many*, an expression of Jesus's self-humbling and self-offering for others, a value reflected in Luke 22:26–27 as the voluntary self-humbling of the disciple, ideas pointing to a radical change in the previously held values, and hence *loving action for brother and neighbour*.¹²⁸ Agreeing with Anni

¹²⁷ F. S. Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); N. H. Taylor, 'Stephen in History and Tradition, *Scripture Bulletin* 37.2 (2007), 21–29.

¹²⁸ Collins, 'A monocultural usage: *διακον-* words in Classical, Hellenistic, and Patristic sources', *Vigiliae Christianae* 66:3 (2012), 287–309, at 292,

Hentschel's interpretation, Collins renders Mark 10:45, *The Son of man did not come to have people attending upon him but to carry out his mission and give his life as a ransom for many.*¹²⁹ Collins goes on to support this interpretation on the basis of Origen's Commentary of the Gospel of Matthew:

*in order to carry out his mission and to go to such an extent in this mission for our salvation as to give up his own life.*¹³⁰

The argument is not that deacons should never have anything to do with charitable and philanthropic activities, but these are neither the defining characteristic of the office nor its monopoly; on the contrary, they are acts of Christian love in practice, and thus integral to the calling of all the baptised. The diaconate is essentially a cultic office, rooted in the celebration of the Eucharist, at which the deacon attends the presiding priest. Outside the liturgy, the deacon discharges other functions *in conjunction with the bishop and presbyterate.*

Notwithstanding these observations, the nature of the diaconate is a very much more complicated issue. Not least among the other components of *diakonía* is the ministry of upholding the presence of the Word of the gospel within the community (that is, the local Christian assembly, or *ekklēsia*); in this, the relationship of the deacon with that local church and its worshipping life is crucial. Before we go further, therefore, questions are to be asked about how the ministry of the deacon and the deacon's calling relate to the eucharistic community, out of which the candidate has been called; how deacons in general minister within the eucharistic liturgy, and in the wider worshipping life of a particular local Christian community where they are placed; and how any deacon will relate liturgically to bishop or presbyter (presiding pastor). For if a deacon is to be a specially commissioned minister of the bishop, then the primary liturgical relationship must surely be with the bishop and the wider diocese, rather than the local congregation. Likewise, if a deacon is commissioned to minister within a local congregation, then the primary liturgical relationship must surely be that which mediates

citing *The New International Dictionary of New Theology*, ed. L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, H. Bietenhard (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 546.

¹²⁹ Collins, 'A monocultural usage', 307.

¹³⁰ 'Monocultural Usage', 308.

between pastor and congregation. The pastor here is the presbyter whom the bishop has instituted to the cure of souls in that congregation, who exercises *episcopate* in that congregation on behalf of the bishop. The liturgical role of the deacon defines and reflects the pastoral relationships within which he or she exercises a wider ministry in the community, and defines also the authority which he or she exercises in discharging that ministry.

LAY MINISTRIES

Notwithstanding the plethora of *minor orders* attested in such ancient documents as the *Apostolic Tradition*, and the persistence of lay staff in generally menial or at least subordinate roles through most of ensuing Church history, the ministries exercised by lay people have not been subject to the same depth or intensity of theological consideration as the clergy. Whereas in at least some Eastern Orthodox Churches, the diaconate has continued to provide identity and affirmation to subordinate functionaries within a theologically rationalised ordained priesthood, in the western Church, particularly since the Reformation, such roles have been filled by lay people whose employer happens to be the Church, and even those whose roles have been primarily liturgical have not found any particular theological rationalisation.

In the contemporary SEC, as in other provinces of the Anglican Communion in Britain and Ireland, two quite distinct levels of officially recognised lay ministry may be identified: Readers, and an assortment of roles and titles validated by an episcopal authorisation but not necessarily supported with any training or meaningful oversight.

Lay Readers

The ancient office of *Lector* / ἀναγνῶστης designated little more than the obligation of the literate minority to use their skill for the benefit of the majority of Christian people.¹³¹ A rite of inauguration, distinguished from ordination by the absence of imposition of hands and anointment, is nevertheless attested from the end of the second century.¹³²

¹³¹ *Apostolic Tradition* 41 (III cent); cf. Justin, *Apologia I.* 67.4; 2 *Clement* 19.1 (II cent); Cyprian, *Ep.* 23; 29.2; 32.2; 35.1; 38; 39 (III cent).

¹³² Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 41. Cf. later prescriptions for such rites: *Apostolic Tradition* 11; (Sahidic) 35; (Arabic, Ethiopic) 26; *Epitome (Apostolic Constitutions)* 13; *Canons of Hippolytus* 7; *Testamentum Domini* 1.45.

The modern office of (Lay) Reader has its origins in the Church of England during the nineteenth century, notwithstanding an unsuccessful attempt to establish the order during the Elizabethan phase of the Reformation. The office was introduced in the Province of Canterbury in 1866, and in the Province of York in 1889, with arrangements standardised by the Bishops in 1905.¹³³ This followed the gradual secularisation of local government during which the Parish Clerk became a civil rather than an ecclesiastical official. The ancient office of *clericus*, clerk, was occupied from the Saxon period to the nineteenth century by a literate person (presumably always male) appointed by the rector or vicar to assist the clergy in the conduct of the daily Offices, and to conduct them in their absence, as well as attending to a variety of more menial duties if there was no other person employed to discharge these. Readers were not appointed to a freehold, but have always been volunteers, and would therefore not normally have been required to dig graves, clean the church, or attend to other such tasks in the absence of a sexton or vergier. Notwithstanding that the role is perhaps the one with which Readers are today most closely associated, their authority to preach was not established until very much later, and was still being disputed and contested in the 1960's. Their remit has continued to expand with the decline in ordained clergy numbers, to include pastoral as well as increasingly wider liturgical functions.

The SEC is unencumbered by much of the historical legacy of the Church of England and its civic paraphernalia, but has nonetheless depended on lay people to assist the clergy in the discharge of their liturgical and other duties. The office of Lay Reader was established by 1865, and is now governed by Canon 20. This has, since the 1970/72 revisions, made provision for women as well as men to be admitted to the order. In 1966 General Synod had authorised lay people to assist in the distribution of the sacrament. Often following developments in the Church of England, the remit of Lay Readers in the SEC has continued to expand to include pastoral and teaching functions, as well as all liturgical roles not reserved to the ordained clergy. Nevertheless, as elsewhere in the Anglican Communion, developments such as the ordination of women, the extension of non-stipendiary ordained ministries, and the removal of such

¹³³ *Regulations Respecting Readers and other Lay Officers* (London: SPCK, 1905).

inhibitions to ordination as divorce and homosexual relationships, alongside the development of other liturgical and extra-liturgical lay ministries, have raised questions about the continuing relevance of an order of ministry which is not ordained, but involves a very much higher standard of training and transferability than most other lay ministries.

Referring to a debate in the Church of England's General Synod in 2006, the National Consultant for Reader Selection, Nicholas Daunt, noted that,

[N]o one seemed to have a very clear idea of what Readers should be doing or, indeed, what Readers really were.... [The church] cannot be effective in selecting people to a ministry if we do not know what that ministry really is.¹³⁴

Selecting, of course, presupposes that there is a group from which to select – i.e. members of the Church who have expressed a sense of call to this particular ministry. But the inability to articulate an agreed position on the nature and role of this ministry is detrimental not only to recruitment and selection, but to the thoughtful and prayerful processes whereby prospective readers consider their vocation, before presenting themselves to relevant officers of the Church, and to their training and formation, and, most importantly, to the ministry they will exercise in the Church thereafter.

The recognition that Baptism is the basis of Christian vocation, and therefore that all the baptised, and not only those ordained or aspiring to ordination, have gifts to use and vocations to be discerned,¹³⁵ has brought many of these issues in ministry into focus, without as yet generating clear answers to the questions raised. In the meantime, the distinction between the roles of clergy and lay people, especially those in authorised ministry, has become increasingly unclear, with Lay Readers relegated to a particularly ambiguous and liminal position in the minds of many in our Church.

¹³⁴ 'What is Reader Ministry and how can it be discerned?' (2006), available at https://www.readers.cofe.anglican.org/u_d_lib_pub/p180.pdf.

¹³⁵ Cf. Stephen Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions: Ordination and Leadership in the Local Church*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008), 11; Susan K. Wood (ed), *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2003).

The 'Core Responsibilities' of the Lay Reader are listed in a document entitled *Ministries in the Scottish Episcopal Church*¹³⁶ as:

- Leading the Ministry of the Word or non-Eucharistic public services
- Administering the Reserved Sacrament at services when requested
- Conducting funerals
- Teaching and preaching on Sundays and during the week
- Encouraging faith development, for example in study groups
- Preparing candidates for baptism
- Pastoral work, e.g., visiting and distributing the Reserved Sacrament to the sick

What this amounts to and looks like in practice is certain to vary considerably, depending not only on the demeanor with which individual Lay Readers approach their ministry, and how they use recognised or arcane symbolism to identify themselves, but also on what other forms of ministry may be exercised in a particular charge at a particular time.

Unlike the Church of England, the SEC has retained the title *Lay Reader*, which emphasises and clarifies that this minister is not ordained, but does not in itself indicate what this means. When roles traditionally discharged by Lay Readers are increasingly being assumed, with or without canonical authorisation, by others whose vocational discernment and training have not been nearly as rigorous, e.g. when sermons are preached by lay people who are not Readers, this raises questions about whether Readers in fact do exercise a distinctive ministry, and whether they bear an authority not shared by others in authorised ministry.

A radical review of the office and ministry of Lay Readers may be timely, but it would be beyond the scope of this essay to determine whether this particular ministry, as currently constituted, has served

¹³⁶ This document, described as 'a first draft of a paper requested by the Institute Council of the Scottish Episcopal Institute, in response to recommendations by the TISEC Review Working Group Report (2013), may be downloaded via a link at <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/vocation-and-ministry/ministry-scottish-episcopal-church/>.

its purpose – undoubtedly with distinction – and the time has come for it either to be abolished or to mutate according to the changing needs of the Church. We might well find that it is not so much a question of function and purpose as of the theological foundations of a lay office, to which has increasingly accrued functions traditionally reserved to the ordained clergy, and which has resembled the clergy in demeanor and attire, creating perceptions which raise quite fundamental questions of identity.

Lay Readers may be distinguished from other lay people engaged in pastoral, liturgical, and teaching ministries in the Church primarily in that their office is established and regulated by Canon 20, and is therefore formally recognised throughout the SEC. The process of vocational discernment, and the requirements for training, are at least theoretically uniform. While they are licensed by the bishop of the diocese in which they serve, their standing as Readers is recognised throughout the Church, and they may in principle be deployed to any congregation or other sphere of ministry by agreement of the bishop and the rector and vestry. In this, Lay Readers resemble ordained clergy, but their status, while transferable, is not indelible, and is not conferred through the sacrament of Orders.

Nevertheless, Lay Readers are invested with an authority to teach and preach which is not, officially at least, conferred on other lay people, irrespective of their qualifications, experience, and imputed *charisma*. This reflects some continuity, but also considerable development, in their ministry as originally conceived. The extension of their liturgical ministry, most notably in the administration of the sacraments, has been shared with others in lay ministry, and is not distinctive to the order of Lay Readers. There may well be some evidence that Lay Readers exercise a degree of responsibility in pastoral care beyond that entrusted to other lay people, and that this is accorded some official recognition, not least in congregations in vacancy or whose incumbent is remote and seldom visits. This authority, however, would seem difficult to quantify or to distinguish from the roles played by lay leaders in other isolated communities. Where Lay Readers are exercising the teaching office, leading the community in worship, attending to the pastoral needs of the congregation, and in many places being the visible human presence of Christian ministry in the locality, and therefore representing the

wider Church in their particular area, profound questions need to be asked: is there any quality, other than their not being permitted to preside at the Eucharist, which distinguishes their ministry from that of the clergy of the charge? If not, is there any justification in withholding ordination to the diaconate and presbyterate?¹³⁷

If a distinctively lay ministry, proper to the office of Lay Readers, is to be developed, then some convergence of the needs of the Church with the *charisma* and vocations of individuals will be needed, which does not simply replicate ministries already been exercised by authors, clerical and lay. Lay Readers will need a sphere of ministry in which they exercise the primary responsibility, rather than being perceived as a poor substitute for a priest, or being indistinguishable from other laity. If no such distinctive and significant contribution can be clearly identified and persuasively articulated, then it must be asked whether the office and ministry of Lay Readers has served its purpose, and, with thanks to God for the contribution of numerous faithful men and women over many years, it should be phased out so that a diversity of lay ministries, appropriately resourced, may rise in its place.

Writing for the Church of England,¹³⁸ Nicholas Daunt has suggested that Readers ought to focus their attention on the ministry of the Word, leaving the Sacrament to priests, and pastoral care and service to deacons and others. Irrespective of whether his model for diaconal ministry is appropriate,¹³⁹ this approach assumes that all congregations would have access to the ministry of priest, deacon, and reader, a luxury which would be rare in the SEC. It is highly unlikely that committed Lay Readers will be willing to withdraw from pastoral relationships in order to concentrate exclusively on preaching and teaching. Furthermore, this proposal implicitly redefines the ministry of the ordained: any suggestion that presbyters should be ministers of the sacrament only, and leave the Word to Lay Readers would tend to reduce the priesthood to an order of mantic ritual functionaries. Any suggestion that priests are not ministers of both Word and Sacrament, and embody in their lives and ministry their inextricable complementarity, is to be repudiated

¹³⁷ Cf. Taylor, *Lay Presidency at the Eucharist?*, 254-56.

¹³⁸ 'What is Reader Ministry and how can it be discerned?'

¹³⁹ For discussion of the issues, particularly as affecting the SEC, see contributions to *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal* 4.2 (2020) *fc*.

unequivocally. The suggestion that the Lay Reader should be understood primarily as a *lay theologian* – one who *speaks* in an informed, challenging and faithful way about God, both in the church and in the world, at the very least requires further and more careful elucidation. How is a *lay theologian* licensed as such by canonical authority to be distinguished from the priest or theologically literate deacon in their teaching role? In short, can a *lay theology* be distinguished from a *clerical theology*, or are ordained and lay ministers who preach and teach alike servants and messengers of the same Gospel of Christ?

Other Lay Ministries

Authorised lay ministries vary very considerably from diocese to diocese, each having evolved patterns of ministry which have related to its context. It would not be possible or, indeed, helpful here to generalise about the diversity of ways in which baptised members of the Church have assumed defined, or perhaps undefined, roles in their local congregations, with some acknowledgement but limited training or support from the dioceses. There are currently initiatives among the Bishops to rationalise the diversity, introducing some degree of uniformity in nomenclature and parity in training, while enabling the evolving needs of the Church to be met by harnessing the potential of lay members, through discernment and training, for the exercise of their *charisma*. It is recognised that many are already involved, in the local community and the voluntary sector, where their Christian vocation is being fulfilled, but where authorisation or training on the part of the Church is not required and would not be appropriate: while such people assuredly represent Christ and the Church to the world, they do not do so under the auspices of the Church, and they require no training or authorisation which the Church is competent to provide. Where training, registration, and licensing are required, the Church is not the relevant or appropriate authority to furnish these. Others contribute to the life of the local congregation in ways which need to be acknowledged and affirmed, but which require little or no training and continuing oversight. There are, however, roles which, on account of their prominence in the liturgy, access to vulnerable people, and potential to cause harm, require the consent of the Vestry, appropriate training at local or diocesan level, authorisation from the bishop, and continuing

oversight from the rector. Appointment to such roles is in principle temporary, and at the least subject to review and renewal at regular intervals. All these in their various ways live out their Baptism in accordance with their particular gifts and the time they are able to commit, and in accordance also with the needs of their congregation, without being called to a role in the wider Church which requires further training or ordination. On the contrary, continuing to be identified and recognised as laity is part of their vocation, and often advantageous in their interactions with their communities, within and beyond the congregation with which they are identified. Authority is not so much vested in such ministers as perceived in them.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

This Essay has identified a complex range of issues pertaining to the exercise of ministry in the Church, and specifically in the Anglican tradition and the distinctive form it has evolved in Scotland. History has been a, perhaps unexpectedly, important aspect to this study, as we have considered the heritage of the ancient Church as well as the struggle for identity, ethos, and stability through the vicissitudes of recent centuries in Scotland. Sociology has proved an invaluable, if perhaps contentious, adjunct as we considered ways in which authority is asserted in Christian ministry, and how this has evolved as the relationships within which authority is exercised have mutated in response to changes in culture. We have perhaps been less successful at defining a theology of authority, but have hopefully provided here a resource through which our Church can continue its quest to understand, and to exercise more effectively, that authority given to the risen Christ and manifested by and within his Body, the Church. We have recognised that the relationships between bishop, presbyterate, and diaconate, and between the rector, other clergy, and lay ministers of all varieties, and the accountability of all to structures able to check the abuse of power, are vital to the health of the Church. In exploring the diaconate, in particular, we have seen how the liturgy, and liturgical roles and relationships, are crucial to understanding the nature of ministry, and therefore the authority vested in the people who exercise it. Collegiality has been identified as of the essence of ministry, particularly in the presbyterate and in the priesthood of all the baptised, so that the complementarity of pneumatic gifts may most effectively be used to further the work of God. In emphasising complementarity, relationality, and collegiality, we may be considered countercultural. The challenge we pose to the individualistic culture of the present day, with its emphasis on self-interest and self-assertion, which corrode the values and integrity of Christ's Body, is, we believe, vital to renewing our life as a Church, and vital also to rightly exercising authority within it.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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