

This booklet contains two addresses given by Archbishop Robinson at the Episcopal Evangelical Assembly held at St John's Church, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, in May 1991.

The general subject of the conference was "Ordination: for what?", and the Archbishop's two addresses appear here exactly as delivered:

Ordination for Oversight

Ordination for Teaching.

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# ORDINATION FOR WHAT?

Donald Robinson

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Archbishop of Sydney

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## ORDINATION FOR OVERSIGHT

May I begin with two preliminary comments. First, I have construed my aim fairly narrowly, limiting the scope of ordained ministry rather than expanding it. There is plenty of ministry which requires no ordination. That is widely acclaimed these days and has led some to diminish and even decry the very concept of ordination or its necessity. I shall argue the opposite: that, although ordained ministry has a limited definition, its proper exercise is essential for the exercise of other ministries in church.

My second comment is that I shall be using the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662 and especially its Ordinal as a yardstick for the classical Anglican tradition as to the meaning of ordination. I do so not only because this book happens to be, with the 39 Articles, the standard of doctrine and worship in my own Anglican Church of Australia (and so designated as recently as 1962 when our new Constitution came into operation) but because I believe the 1662 Book represents a more deliberate and concentrated attempt to understand and embody scriptural truth than has been the case in subsequent prayer books. I believe this is the case in regard to the meaning of ordination, so I shall in large part be setting out what I see as the BCP's fidelity to New Testament standards in its view of ordination. When I refer to the BCP, therefore, it is to the English 1662 Book unless I otherwise indicate.

### Order

Ordination, or admission to an order of ministry, belongs to the more general area of 'order' in the church of God. As "the household of God", the church has its proper *oikonomia* or management which includes the arrangement of who does what (1 Tim 2-3). The BCP Preface *Of Ceremonies* locates ceremonies - things to do - in the same



area and in so doing enunciates a principle for which it claims apostolic and indeed divine authority:

Let all things be done among you, saith St Paul, in a seemly and due order. The appointment of the which order pertaineth not to private men: therefore no man ought to take in hand, nor presume to appoint or alter any public or common order in Christ's church, except he be lawfully called and authorized thereunto.

Article 23 of the 39 Articles, *Of Ministering in the Congregation*, echoes the language of *Of Ceremonies* in regard to the necessity for those who minister in the congregation to be lawfully called and authorized. The word 'ordain' is not used, and the Article is drawn without reference to Anglican polity in particular: this is no doubt to give expression to a principle applicable to Christ's church wherever it may be found and whatever terminology may be customary in regard to its ministry.

1 Corinthians 14, from which the Pauline text comes, is indeed about order in ministry - who may speak and who may not when the church is assembled. The sanction for due order is compelling. "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (v.33), and "what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord" (v.37). Moreover there is a common order for all assemblies: "as in all the churches of the saints" (v.33); "What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?" (v.36).

Paul's phrase "in order", *kata taxin*, is intriguing. It could refer to nothing more than the "in turn", *ana meros*, of v.27 which regulates the number and sequence of those who speak in tongues. However, coming as it does as the conclusion of his treatment of both prophecy and tongues it is better seen as, along with "decently", "seemly" (*euschemenos*), a term summarizing the whole principle of corporate worship and relationship in the assembly of God's

people which has been under discussion from chapter 11:17 if not from 11:2.

**Note:** *Taxis* occurs in Paul elsewhere only in Col 2:5: "rejoicing to see your good order (*taxin*) and the firmness of your faith in Christ". But Luke and Hebrews use the term of the order of priesthood, of Melchizedek and Aaron.

The theme of 'order' is greatly elaborated in the Epistle of Clement to the Church in Corinth (c.96 AD), perhaps taking the cue from Paul's usage in 1 Corinthians. "We ought to do in order (*taxei*) all things which the Master commanded us to perform at appointed times" (40:1). Since the particular concern of Clement is the proper exercise of the ministry of the bishops or elders of the church at Corinth, this epistle is of special interest for seeing how the concept of ecclesiastical 'order' was developed in the immediate sub-apostolic days: the more so as our own formularies differ little if at all from the concept in Clement. Although we may not wish to go so far as to claim with Clement the authority of Isaiah 60:17 for bishops and deacons ("I will establish their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith", 1 Clem 42:5, quoting the LXX) and may be content to rest the authentication of their appointment on "divine providence", the Ordinal does claim that "these orders" have existed "from the Apostles' time".

It is perhaps worth mentioning here that it is to Clement we owe the origin of the term 'layman', *laikos*. The term does not mean, as some have supposed, any and every member of the *laos*, but, in the case of Israel, that member of the *laos* who does not belong to the order of priest or levite, and, correspondingly, that member of the Christian assembly who is not a bishop or deacon. As Clement says, "the layman is bound by the ordinances for the laity" (40:5).



## Overseers and Assistants

If we address our question "Ordination for what?" to the New Testament, or for that matter to the Apostolic Fathers, a sufficiently clear answer emerges. For sure, we know little of *how* men were formally admitted to minister in the congregation, so we can hardly speak of ordination in a ceremonial sense unless we suppose that prayer and imposition of hands had become regular; but certain men had recognition as overseers or rulers of congregations, and certain others had recognition as deacons or assistants. Since they had a recognized place in the 'order' of the church, we can ask, What did they do? or, more precisely, What were they expected to do? Why were some men recognized as overseers, and others as assistants? The question answers itself, at least superficially. Order requires oversight. Elders, or certain elders, were 'ordained' to exercise oversight or supervision of the congregation. Hence they were called, as to their task, supervisors or overseers, for which the Greek word is *episkopoi*. At first, 'bishop' meant nothing more than that. How the task of oversight was shared by a plurality of such bishops we do not know, but they no doubt worked something out. In the social context of Paul's communities there were, we may assume, a number of regulatory functions which any *episkopos* or group of *episkopoi* would be expected to perform by any group which accepted him or them. We see the apostles acting as 'bishops' in the church at Jerusalem in Acts 6 in regulating the daily distribution by appointing seven administrators. Who knows what the bishops of Paul's churches may have been required to do in the regulation of congregational life, much of it of the common sense variety of which Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, is the patron saint, who counselled Moses: "Delegate, O bishop, or you'll kill yourself".

Our bishops, however, were not free-wheelers. Though they had supervisory authority, they themselves were part of

a larger 'order', like the centurion of Luke 7 who was "ordered under authority", *hupo exousian tassomenos*. Our bishops were bound to the trust committed to them and to their church by their apostle and his associates. This trust (*pistis*), or deposit (*parathēkē*), or tradition (*paradosis*), contained the form of the gospel itself, "the sound words of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim 6:3), "the words of the faith and of the good doctrine" (1 Tim 4:6), by which the faith and conduct of the churches were to be sustained. Central to the task of bishops, therefore, and central also to the confidence of those who accorded them recognition - central, in a word, to their 'ordination' - was the fidelity of bishops to that deposit of apostolic truth and their capacity both to impart it and to ensure that the life of the church was regulated by it.

It is not so easy to say what deacons may have been expected to do. The name implies service and therefore assistance, and there seem to be connotations of menial or general domestic service at least in the cognate verb 'to serve', *diakoneo*. At an early stage the domestic servant is used, notably by Jesus himself, as a model for all Christian activity including leadership and supervision itself, even the most important apostolate of gospel preaching (eg Rom 11:13). Every one was a 'deacon'! In all this we have little or no direct evidence for what the person ecclesiastically designated a deacon actually did. The "seven men of good repute, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3) whom the apostles appointed to the duty of "serving tables" (i.e. administering the daily distribution of alms) in the Jerusalem church are not called 'deacons' in Acts, though they were subsequently seen as the model for the diaconate, and the BCP Ordinal so claims them. When the deacon emerges in post-NT times as an office he has a variety of tasks, in the liturgy and outside it, and the inference has been drawn that he was, or they were, the bishops'



ministers, doing whatever those who had oversight of the congregation required of them, in church or out of it.

What we need to observe is that the context of those offices which called for recognition or 'ordination' was the comprehensive and constant life of the whole local church. Gifts, *charismata*, of various kinds might be used and exercised by various members of the church, in the assembly as well as outside it, and in time some who exercised certain gifts regularly may have received a minor kind of formal recognition; but these did not constitute *episkopē* or oversight of a church or the assistance necessary to facilitate that oversight.

Our Anglican concept of ordination is similarly anchored to the necessity of a continuing ministry of oversight and the tasks ancillary to it. Its context, likewise, is the church, the congregation of believing people who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in this place or that. In Article 19 the character of the church is authenticated and its life sustained by the ministry of Word and sacrament. There is no indication of who performs this ministry, but in Article 23 those who minister the Word and sacrament must have a lawful call and commission. This is what elsewhere is called ordination. The Ordinal makes clear that God himself moves men inwardly by his Spirit for ministry, and that personal conviction is needed for a man to think himself qualified to minister "according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ and the order of" that particular church. Anglican ordination, therefore, is the Church's recognition of this inner call, the testing of it by examination, and an outward call and commission by prayer and the imposition of hands.

### Priesthood in Church Order

At the heart of this ministerial 'order' - what the Ordinal calls generally "the ministry of the Church" - is the

particular order of priesthood. Although the word 'priest' has acquired sacerdotal overtones from the fact that, in other contexts, it represents the Aaronic *cohen* as well as the functionaries of other religions, priesthood remains in our formularies (despite the ARCIC reports!) only what the NT means by eldership and its pastoral supervision. 'Priest' is, after all, only a contraction of 'presbyter'. We have also a legitimate order of those who *assist* the priest or priests in the ministry of Word and sacrament, which we call the order of deacons. These are also called and commissioned by ordination. Some priests are also called and commissioned to a wider oversight and presidency to meet exigencies created by the historical growth of a local church from a parish to a diocese.

**Note:** The terms 'parish' and 'diocese' themselves do not explain this growth. Originally *paroikia* meant 'a sojourning', and is so used in 1 Clem 1: "the church of God which sojourns (*hē paroikousa*) at Rome to the church of God which sojourns at Corinth". *Diokēsis*, on the other hand, meant 'housekeeping', hence 'management', 'government', somewhat like the term *oikonomia*, often rendered 'stewardship'.

Our Ordinal is at pains to represent this ministerial order as a proper equivalent of the *episkopē* of the NT epistles and of certain *apostolic* tasks whereby the congregation is governed and taught in the faith once delivered to the saints - tasks assigned in the NT to apostolic delegates, elders and deacons.

By placing ordination in its context of *church* and *apostolic tradition of faith and order* we have gone some distance towards answering the question "Ordination for What?". But we can also no doubt already detect some of the elements against which we shall have to battle to keep our course! For example:



- Is our bishop today a modern Timothy? Is he really able to fulfil the role of apostolic delegate, able to keep the churches of his diocese in line with the apostolic doctrine?
- Is the historical development of having one presbyter in charge of a (often very large) local church an adequate discharge of the *episkopē* as envisaged in our charter documents? Has he turned into something other than his ordination commission required?
- What of the increasing number of 'lay ministers' who, unordained, swarm like ants all over the local church (with or without a piece of paper from the bishop)?

### **"The End of your Ministry"**

Before we are driven from our course by the pragmatic pressures of modern church life, let us be sure we understand the purposes of ordination as the Ordinal sets them forth. We have defined its general scope and purpose as for 'oversight', with special reference to the ministry of the Word and sacraments. But what is the 'end' of this ministry which calls for such careful authorization, and for such personal discipline and application as the Ordinal requires?

The description of purpose set out in the Ordinal's exhortation at the ordering of priests places that purpose at the centre of God's own plan of salvation. Priests are to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord. They are to teach and to premonish. They are to feed and provide for the Lord's family; they are to seek Christ's lost sheep. A number of scriptural passages come to mind relating to the roles of OT prophets and rulers (eg Ezekiel 33 and 34), and relating to Jesus himself and his ministry. The scriptures actually read at the ordination, chosen to indicate "of what dignity and how great importance this office is", are Eph 4:7ff, Matt 9:36ff, and John 10:1ff. The last two depict Christ's saving work as shepherd. The prayer of

thanksgiving which precedes the imposition of hands also invokes Ephesians 4 with its reference to the comprehensive commission of "apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and pastors", by whose labour and ministry, it says, Christ "gathered together a great flock in all parts of the world, to set forth the eternal praise of (God's) holy name". Here indeed is part of that "wonderful order" extolled in the Collect of St Michael and All Angels' Day, in which God has "ordained and constituted the services of angels and men".

However, notwithstanding this panoramic sweep of the divine purpose in constituting a ministerial order, the Ordinal repeatedly restricts the actual ministrations of the priest to a particular cure and charge. For example:

"the people committed to your charge"

"the people committed to your cure and charge"

"them that are or shall be committed to your charge"

"all such as are or shall be committed to your charge"

"the church and congregation whom you must serve".

At this point we encounter a difficulty which, in my judgement, has not been sufficiently recognized or analysed by modern Anglicans. The "cure and charge" envisaged by the ordination commission is a parish. It comprises people resident in that parish. The concept was reinforced in the 16th century by Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity which required everyone in the parish "to resort to their parish-church or chapel accustomed ... where the Common-Prayer ... shall be used ... upon every Sunday" etc. Failure to comply incurred a fine of a shilling! It was further reinforced by the canons of 1604, including canon 28 forbidding "strangers from other parishes" to be admitted to the Holy Communion and requiring churchwardens to "remit such home to their own parish churches and



ministers, there to receive the Communion with the rest of their own neighbours". Solemnization of matrimony was likewise restricted to the parish church of one of the parties, not least because "friends and neighbours" were expected to be present. Is this concept of the church being firmly anchored to locality, to neighbourhood and existing 'civil' relationships, a purely incidental and cultural feature of the church of a particular century or political structure? What then is the basis of church membership? The concept of the church of a place, meaning the assembly of the believers of a place, has its roots in the NT. It is implied in Paul's address to "the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ", with its probable allusion to the civil '*ekklēsia* of the Thessalonians' comprising citizens of Thessalonika. It is implied also in "the church of God which is at Corinth" and similar addresses.

**Note:** See Origen's extended comparison of assemblies of Christians and the assemblies of citizens in the same place. *Ekklēsia* is the term for both. E.g. "the *ekklēsiai* of God which have been taught by Christ, when compared with the *ekklēsiai* of the people where they live (*paroikousi*), are 'as lights in the world'", *Contra Celsum* III 29.

It is not possible to explore this question fully here, but I believe its resolution is essential if we are to have a firm basis for understanding the role of the ordained minister. The modern assumption is that we may go church shopping; that we are all at liberty to choose what church or congregation we shall belong to, and consequently whom we shall have to be over us in the Lord and minister God's word to us. But is this not a new phenomenon in Christendom? And should it go unquestioned? We are all aware of the greater social complexity of modern life and of the facility of travel. We have come to take for granted dissent, denominationalism, and their aftermath. The ecumenical movement for a long time sought to reverse this

trend, but it has made little progress since the World Council Assembly at New Delhi in 1958 which defined the unity it believed to be God's will as "*one* fully committed fellowship" of "*all in each place* who are baptized into Jesus Christ etc". I do not underestimate the obstacles in the way of returning to the primitive and catholic concept (also reflected in our Reformation formularies) of the church as consisting of those believers who, living in a particular neighbourhood, meet as the people of God and the body of Christ in that place; but I record my conviction that a radical rethinking of our present tendencies is essential if we are to understand both the church of God and the scope and direction of its ministry.

In determining scope and direction, the Ordinal goes further than merely designating the outer limits of the cure and charge. The most searching description of the goal of ministry is in the exhortation. Having defined "the church and congregation whom you must serve" as "the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood", the bishop then charges the ordinands to "consider with yourselves the end of your ministry towards the children of God, towards the Spouse and Body of Christ, and see that you never cease your labour, your care and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you ... according to your bounden duty ... *to bring all such as are or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion or viciousness in life.*"

The substance of this charge appears to be based on Paul's description of his own ministry in Col 1:21 to 2:6, especially 1.28f:

Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man



mature in Christ. For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me.

The comprehensive nature of this concept of ordination, based as it is on the goal of the apostolic commission itself, forces us to observe a distinction between what we can fairly call 'the apostolic ministry' and a whole range of gifts and graces given to, and exercised by, members of any congregation for their mutual benefit. I judge that there was a difference between the lavish distribution of gifts of utterance and knowledge which characterized the Corinthian church (1 Cor 1:5-7) and the peculiar responsibility of Paul, and of Timothy (1 Cor 4:17 and 16:10), for the *oversight* of the Corinthian church, corporately and individually. At what point this ministry - for *recognition* of which Paul was forced to contend - devolved on to local elders at Corinth, we cannot say for certain. 1 Cor 16:15-17 may well indicate that elders of the household of Stephanas, with other "fellow workers" (*sunergoi*), had already assumed that role: "be subject to such men". A generation later Clement, writing to this church, reminded them that the apostles "preached from ... city to city, and they appointed their first converts, testing them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of the future believers" (1 Clem 42:4). Just as it was Paul's task to regulate the exercise of gifts within the church at Corinth, as 1 Corinthians testifies, so we may assume that such regulation was a continuing responsibility of elders/bishops.

The BCP Ordinal does not envisage the exercise of any gifts publicly within the assembly by anyone other than the priest himself and his deacon or deacons (if any). The significance of deacons should not be ignored. In theory they could be multiplied, especially if some of our canons were modified, and so provide for more recognized regular participation by others than priests. But it would seem right to provide for the exercise of gifts which is more occasional and does not call for permanent recognition. So long as the

regulation of such is in the hands of those who have responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the whole body, the way would seem to be open for a ministerial structure which is apostolic and which also preserves the distinction to which I have drawn attention.

In to-day's ordination debate the question for many people is not oversight but who may celebrate the Holy Communion. One might be led to suppose that the purpose of ordination was chiefly to provide for the administration of the sacrament. Some argue against the ordination of women to the priesthood, for example, on the ground that, as they put it, a woman cannot represent Christ at the altar. (St Paul's question was whether a woman could represent Christ in the pulpit!) For sure, we are committed to a presbyteral ministry of the Word and sacraments. In my second paper I shall endeavour to place the ministry of the Word in its context of oversight of the congregation. Here I would point out not only that our Reformed theology has always seen the sacraments as dependent on the Word and as expressions of it in visible and tangible form, but also that the Lord's supper, in its very nature, presupposes the congregation and the necessity for order, which means the necessity for a ministry of oversight and lawful authority. There is no direct indication in the NT as to who presided at the Lord's supper; the disciples at the last supper were instructed by Jesus as communicants, not as prospective ordinands. But we can scarcely doubt that the answer to the question, Who presided? is a corollary to, Who exercised oversight of 'the whole church'? With so many celebrations of communion detached from the corporate life of the whole congregation these days proclaiming our *schismata* rather than our unity as a body, it is little wonder we are asking the wrong questions about ordination and its purpose.

One other implication of some magnitude will also have occurred to you. If the concept of ordination and its 'end'



which I have propounded is correct, there are many ordained people who are not fulfilling that 'end', and who are not even pursuing it. However worthy is the work they are doing, and whatever gifts they may be exercising, the existence of so many ordained priests who do not have the cure and charge of a congregation constitutes a serious distortion of the image of priesthood as set out in the Ordinal and, I believe, in the NT.

It may be alleged that my view of things is unrealistic, that conditions of life have so changed that a new view of ministry (and therefore of ordination) must be adopted; indeed has been adopted in reality. That is as may be. For the purposes of this discussion I am content to let my exposition stand, and carry whatever challenge is inherent in it. If we will allow that ordination is, essentially, for oversight of the congregation, we can proceed to explore the consequences for our own day.

I conclude with the BCP Prayer for the Clergy and People, which looks to the God of Pentecost for the kind of church and ministry which is pleasing to him:

Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels; send down upon our bishops, and curates, and all congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our Advocate and Mediator, Jesus Christ.

## ORDINATION FOR TEACHING

The ordination of a priest in our Anglican tradition is to 'curacy'; the priest is ordained to the cure and charge of a congregation. That congregation is the flock of Christ, his body and spouse the church, in a particular place. Ordination to diaconate is authorization to assist the priest in his 'curacy'.

The general scope and function of priesthood, therefore, is all that is implied by the biblical notion of *episkopē* or oversight. It is a ministry directed to "all such as are or shall be committed to (his) charge". This includes not only those who faithfully adhere to the congregation but also "Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad", that is, those who should be there but aren't.

The object of the priest's ministry is to bring all in his cure to maturity in Christ, so that ultimately all should "be saved through Christ for ever".

For many reasons, this concept of priesthood, and hence of ordination, is obscured, or at least distorted, in modern church life. The priesthood having acquired the contours of a profession, it is inevitable that questions of discrimination and equal opportunity should arise in connection with qualifications for ordination. The structure of church life itself, not least in the competitiveness due to denominationalism, has placed demands on the efficiency of leadership which further shape the common perception of ordination. However, unless the basis, the objectives, and the limits of this ministry of oversight, to which he has been solemnly ordained, are constantly in his mind, the priest is unlikely to address himself to the means by which the oversight can be exercised. He will turn to management, or church growth, or counselling, or media work, or ecclesiastical choreography, or church politics, or social work, or almost anything rather than the heart and soul of that to which he was ordained. I do not mean that such



activities should be eschewed; only that they should never take the place of the paramount objective and the pursuit of means to attain that objective.

## The Visible Role

In practical terms, the first task of the priest ordained to the oversight of a congregation is to take his place as president of the congregation when it meets for worship. This exhibits his *locus standi*. What the Book of Common Prayer calls "the public liturgy of the Church" provides distinctly for the role of 'the curate' or 'the priest'. This role establishes his pastoral relationship with the people committed to his care, and it is right for it to be seen and heard. For instance, if God has given "power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins", the priest must be ready to fulfil this role, without hesitation or ambiguity, when the people "assemble and meet together".

There are, broadly, two kinds of authority with which we are familiar. There is inherent authority - the authority of the expert or artist who simply 'has it in him' - and there is delegated authority, the authority of the emissary or the policeman. Jesus warns against authority which is tyrannous or self-serving. "It shall not be so among you", he said to his disciples. But service is not incompatible with proper authority. Jesus exhibits both. "I am among you as one who serves", he says, but also "You call me master and lord, and you say well, for so I am". While the presbyter has, at least in the NT, an inherent relational authority vis-a-vis the church in which he is an elder, his authority as a minister of God's word is delegated. He does not speak in his own name, and his licence to exercise his ministry, that is, the recognition that he has such a word for the church, is accorded to him by the church in ordination. His first

practical task, therefore, is to take his due place at prayer desk, lectern, pulpit, font and communion table, with humility as one who serves, but also with the assurance of whose he is, and of the Lord Christ whose word he brings. The priest may certainly be 'assisted in divine service' and the diaconate exists in part for that. My point here is that his oversight should have proper expression in the liturgy.

In passing, I observe with some regret that in many modern prayer books the liturgy has floated free from its moorings. We have services without pastoral context. 'The priest' or 'the curate' of the BCP has disappeared, and with him the nexus between minister and congregation. He has been replaced by the 'president' in the English *Alternative Service Book 1980* and by 'the officiant' or 'the celebrant' in the ECUSA *Book of Common Prayer 1979*. 'The bishop' survives in appropriate places in both books, so at least there is an explicit diocesan context on occasion. But what used to be "the common prayers in the church" (BCP, *Concerning the Service of the Church*) have become a mobile liturgical form revealing no necessary pastoral connection between the celebrant and the congregation. The ASB draws attention to the Canon which requires that "the president" of the Holy Communion "must have been an episcopally ordained priest". This has the effect of emphasising the celebration of the sacrament as the purpose of ordination while weakening the more fundamental purpose of ministering to a particular congregation.

## Teaching

While leading public worship is what I have called the first practical task to which a priest is ordained, the heart and soul of his oversight is teaching. This is located formally in his liturgical role (eg in BCP in 'the sermon' and in the instruction and examination of children in the Catechism after the second lesson at Evening Prayer), but it



by no means stops there. It moves outward to every member of his cure, "as need shall require, and as occasion shall be given" (BCP Ordinal).

It is to *teaching* as the principal means of exercising *episkopē* that I wish to give my chief attention in this paper. I hope the justification for this approach will become evident as I proceed to expound the scope and meaning of teaching as it appears in the NT, but I think there is *prima facie* justification for the primacy of teaching in St Paul's conjoining of 'pastors and teachers' in Eph 4:11. In this passage he enumerates those gifts of the ascended Christ to mankind which are the means of securing the building of the body of Christ and the ultimate unity of the new Adam. Apostles, prophets and evangelists suggest an untrammelled ministry of utterance; but pastors and teachers, linked as they are by a common article, suggest a local, congregational ministry, and also "one common group which complements the other three groups". So Marcus Barth, who ventures to translate *tous de poimenas kai didaskalous* as "teaching shepherds", (Anchor Bible Commentary *in loc*).

While there is some overlap between teaching and preaching in the NT, especially in the content of what is taught or preached, there is, for the most part, a difference. It seems to me that the terms *kērussō* (*to euaggelion*) and *euaggelizomai*, 'preach (the gospel)' and 'evangelize' are practically synonyms in the NT, and for both the appropriate correlative term is 'repent' or 'believe'. In broad terms this activity relates to the initial approach to unbelievers and has in view their conversion. On the other hand, teaching, that is *didaskō* and its cognates, generally presupposes a compliant audience and some accepted relationship between teacher and taught. The normal correlative term with teach is 'learn', *manthanō*, which reminds us that 'teach' is very close to *mathēteuō*, 'make disciples', as in Matt 28:19 "make disciples of the nations",

Matt 13:52 "instructed/trained for the kingdom of God", Matt 27:57 of Joseph who was "a disciple of Jesus", cf Acts 14:21. Teaching, then, relates to a continuing process rather than an initial impact.

Also closely connected with teaching in NT terminology is handing over or delivering the deposit of the faith and its various components. The term for this handing over is *paradidōmi* with its cognate *paradosis*, usually translated 'tradition', and its correlative term is *paralambanō*, 'receive' or 'take receipt of'.

As we look at these terms in the NT and the activities they represent we must be careful not to read our rather loose use of the same terms into them. Today, 'preaching' is likely to cover anything done from the pulpit or at a certain point in a liturgical service, regardless of its content or thrust or seriousness. 'Teaching' is a very general word. Even in the church it may cover a wide range of activities of an instructional kind. But 'teaching' is much more specific both as to content and purpose in the NT; it is not just any imparting of information or any sort of discourse. It relates to a specific body of truth, the deposit of the faith. It even relates to the imparting and receiving of Christ himself. Christ is not only 'preached' - and 'believed'; he is 'taught' - and 'learned' (Eph 4:20f). (He is also 'received', Col 2:6, and therefore, by implication, 'delivered' or 'handed over' to the believer, Col 2:8.)

The Greek words for 'teaching' are not in themselves charged with any special divine virtue, but their predominant use in the bible is for an activity which is highly authoritative and central to the divine purpose of salvation. Let me sketch that usage.



## God as Teacher

In the OT, teaching is both God's revealed will and the 'way' by which his people are to live. Moreover it is primarily God himself who teaches his people:

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go. O that you had hearkened to my commandments (Isa 48:17f. Cf Jer 32:33).

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go (Ps 32:8).

God promises the continuance of this when Israel turns to him again:

Your teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your teacher, and your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, 'This is the way, walk in it when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left' (Isa 30:20f).

And again:

All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children (Isa 54:13).

Thus both in the initial revelation of God's *torah* - which is the reference in Isa 48 - and in the constant guiding of his people and leading them to salvation, the LORD *teaches* his people the true and right way. And this will be the pattern not only for Israel but also for the Gentiles:

Many peoples shall come and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths'. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isa 2:3).

When others teach in Israel - Moses, the priests, parents in Deut 4, the father or mother in Proverbs, Koheleth, the just who impart wisdom - it is in the LORD's name and with his authority. This teaching is the means by which God secures the sanctification of his people and the fulfilment of his purposes. Constant in the response of the Psalmist to all that he knows of God and expects from him is the prayer: "Teach me thy way, O LORD", "teach me thy statutes", "teach me thy will". Truly *the* teacher is God.

In the NT the mission of Jesus is in large measure cast in terms of teaching. His initial impact was as a preacher of the gospel of the kingdom, but most characteristically he taught both his chosen disciples and those who were willing to listen to him. He was acknowledged as a rabbi, a teacher. His followers were called 'disciples', learners. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me" was his invitation. Said Nicodemus, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God" (John 3:2). And that was the point. The origin of Jesus' teaching is the Father. There is direct continuity and authority. "Jesus answered them: 'My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. If any man is willing to do his will he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority'" (John 7:16f). "I speak thus as the Father taught me" (John 8:28). Jesus continues the teaching role of the Father; he quotes Isa 54:13, "They shall all be taught by God", and adds "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me" (John 6:45).

The teaching so essential for Jesus' disciples did not cease with the end of his earthly ministry. It was continued by the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, whom, said Jesus, the Father will send "in my name", and "he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26).



Father, Son and Holy Spirit all engage in the task of teaching, imparting with effect the saving truth, the way of salvation, the path of life. Although the mystery of unbelief and disobedience is acknowledged, the aim and object of teaching is to secure a right response in truth and righteousness. 'Teaching' is not complete without that response. God's teaching is not idly scattered information or casual advice; it is the constant application of the work of salvation to the whole life of those who are his.

If the cutting edge of God's overture to the world is described as 'preaching the gospel' with its response in 'repenting' and 'believing', the activity of 'teaching' and 'learning' is an immediate and essential consequence of such 'preaching'.

### Apostolic Teaching

What had its model in Jesus' ministry is reproduced in the apostolic church. In 1 Tim 2:4-7 St Paul speaks of the design of God that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. He declares that there is one God and one mediator between man and God, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all. The testimony to this was duly borne, he says. Then, "for this I was appointed a preacher and apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (cf 2 Tim 1:11). To say the least, teaching implies continuance in imparting the truth inherent in the gospel; it is necessary to grow in understanding of, and conformity to, it.

Another definition of the apostolic task is in Christ's authoritative commission of Matthew 28. "*Make disciples*", said Jesus. "Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teach them to observe all that I have commanded you*, and lo, I am with you always". The last assurance is not to be separated from the command. It is the promise of Christ's authority and

backing in their teaching ministry: "the Lord working with them, and confirming the word" (Mark 16:20). The assurance is parallel to Matt 18:18ff: "what you bind or loose on earth is bound or loosed in heaven, for I am in the midst of those who act together in my name".

The apostle is the link between Christ and the body of subsequent believers. It is possible to discern three aspects of the apostolic task which relate to imparting the word of God. First, he preaches the gospel, eliciting repentance and faith. Secondly, he hands over the credal content and moral obligations which belong to 'the faith', to be received and acknowledged by the convert (see, for example, 1 Cor 15:1-11, 1 Cor 11:2, 1 Thess 4:1-8, 2 Thess 2:15, 3:6). Thirdly, he constantly teaches, expounding, applying and admonishing on the basis of what has been proclaimed and delivered. Although there is some overlap in the terminology, the aspects of this three-fold activity are distinct. Preaching the gospel, and delivering the rudiments of the faith to a new convert or group of converts, are relatively punctiliar. They are 'once for all'. Teaching, insofar as it is a distinct activity, carries forward the gospel and all its implications, and is continuous. Rengstorff, in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (under *didaskō* etc) defines teaching in the NT as the means of securing "complete conformity to the will of God in the moral response of believers".

The source of this teaching is Jesus Christ, and it comes via his apostles. But how?

In the NT we have evidence, in the case of the Apostle Paul, of three means by which he continued to exercise his role as "teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" after his initial proclamation of the gospel and imparting of the fundamental traditions regarding the gospel and Christ's words to the resulting church. First, he would sometimes visit a church for further consolidation; secondly, he would



write letters in which he rehearsed heads of teaching with appropriate exhortations; and, thirdly, he would send delegates such as Timothy "who does the work of the Lord as I do" (1 Cor 16:10) "to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church" (1 Cor 4:17).

Paul himself distinguishes between his initial handing over of the traditions basic to faith and conduct and the consequent need to continue to practise what had been received. For example, to the Thessalonians:

Finally, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God ... you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through our Lord Jesus (1 Thess 4:1f).

Or to the Corinthians:

I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you (1 Cor 11:2).

This delivering and receiving was not a cold formality. The shortest form of the transmitted creed is 'Jesus is Lord', and to receive Christ's words was to receive Christ. But this entailed a continuance, and teaching was directed towards this. "As therefore you *received* Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk*, so live, in him". Having been *rooted* in him, it was now necessary to *grow* in him, to be "built up in him and established in the faith just as you were taught" (Col 2:6f).

### Episcopal/Presbyteral Teaching

I have spoken of three means by which the Apostle Paul continued his teaching role: personal visits, letters, delegates. The visits ceased, and so did the delegates. The letters, or some of them, remained and, collected under the

simple title of 'Apostle', became, along with a collection of records of Jesus' words and deeds, known as 'Gospel', the canon or standard of the church's apostolic teaching - what we now call the New Testament. But there was a fourth means provided by St Paul. Acts 14:21-23 tells us that Paul and Barnabas, on a visit to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthened the souls of the disciples, exhorted them to continue in the faith, appointed elders for them in each church (with prayer and fasting), and committed them to the Lord in whom they believed. This seems to have been Paul's general practice, and he also instructed Titus to "appoint elders in every town" on Crete. There were "bishops and deacons" in the church at Philippi whom Paul greeted at the beginning of his epistle to that church, though he does not say how they got there. At Thessalonika there are those "who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you" (1 Thess 5:12). Paul calls on the Thessalonians to "respect" them, and "to esteem them very highly in love because of their work". They are given no title, but this call for their recognition is an important element in what we now call ordination. Incidentally, they were 'reverend', if not by title at least in fact; they were 'to be esteemed'.

The most explicit connection between elders or bishops and teaching, however, is in the Pastoral Epistles. Here it is to the elders or bishops that the continuing responsibility for teaching in the congregation belongs. The bishop, like Timothy himself, must be *didaktikos*, able to teach, which in 1 Timothy 2:24 seems to imply not only knowledgeable, but also possessed of kindness, forbearance, and the ability to correct with gentleness; there is a strong relational element. Most of all, the teacher-bishop must "hold firm to the faithful word according to the teaching so that he may be able to give instruction in the sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9). This whole passage shows that the teacher-bishops are to carry on the



teaching and admonishing task with which Paul had charged Titus. The same can be deduced from the epistles to Timothy. The oversight of the church, the measure of 'ruling well', the task of building and protecting and nurturing, are all related to the teaching role. Moreover, Paul links this insistently with the teaching of Jesus himself: the continuity in teaching from Jesus to the apostles now extends to the teacher-bishops through the apostle's delegate: Timothy is to:

Be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the good doctrine which you have followed (1 Tim 4:6).

Follow the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth which has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us (2 Tim 1:14f).

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:1f).

Such teachers must agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which accords with godliness (1 Tim 6:3).

It is in this context of oversight and responsibility for the congregation as a whole, and in relation to the controlling ministry of teaching, that Paul says "I permit no woman to teach" (1 Tim 2:12). In other words, what he excludes women from is the supervisory responsibility for the faith of the congregation. *Episkopē*, including its primary role of teaching, belongs to the elders. This is not a question of personal faith, or virtue, or spiritual worth, or status before God. It is a question of order in the household of God. There were women who served the churches as patronesses, like Phoebe and Lydia, women who prayed and prophesied,

older women who instructed younger women in their Christian duty, women, like Prisca the Jewess, who were able to 'explain the way of God more accurately' to educated men, like Apollos, women who laboured with Paul in the evangelistic mission. We need not doubt that a whole range of gifts and graces were given to, and exercised by, women. But there is no sign of the recognition of women as overseers or bishops of the church of God. So much might be taken for granted given the structure of the family and the divine imprimatur on the family and its relationships. The point where this role of oversight could have been upset was teaching the faith in the congregation; hence Paul's specific exclusion of women from this office.

Others also are warned against intrusion into this area. There were some who coveted the office, who desired to be 'teachers of the law', but who did not have the understanding requisite for the task (1 Tim 1:7). They, too, must keep silence. James warns against the desire to be a teacher. We who teach, he says, are judged with great strictness. The tongue is a fire! It has far-reaching effects for good and ill. The right course for the wise and understanding church member is to express his wisdom meekly by his good life and works (James 3).

In the BCP Ordinal eight questions are addressed to the candidate for priesthood. The first relates to conviction of call, and the last four relate to the priest's manner of life and discipline. The remaining three all relate to the teaching office. The first of these three shows that the office is grounded in the Scriptures. The priest must instruct his people out of them, and teach nothing, as required for salvation, except what may be concluded and proved by them. The second question articulates the ministry as being concerned with the doctrine, sacraments, and discipline of Christ. The priest is to minister these "according to the commandments of God", and teach the people committed to his cure and charge with all diligence to keep and observe



them. The third question calls on the priest to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's word, and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations to both the sick and the healthy, according to need and occasion.

It is on the assurance of the answers given that the candidate is ordained as "a dispenser of the Word of God", and the prayer is offered that the word spoken by his mouth may have such success that it may never be spoken in vain.

## Epilogue

Such is the exposition of ordination and its purpose in the BCP Ordinal. It accords well with the picture of eldership and the solemnity of the apostolic charge in the NT. Can it be made a reality today? As bishop of a large metropolitan diocese, I am not unaware of the difficulties which attend such a concept of ordination, or rather, its implementation. Not all 'forward' moves are necessarily consistent with the purpose of God for his church as revealed in some of the passages of the NT we have traversed. Church growth which is not a growth in the word of God - the NT image of growth - may well be a cancerous growth. A decade of evangelism which detaches proclamation of the gospel from the transmission of the faith once delivered to the saints and from the whole teaching ministry could spell disaster. The expansion of lay participation in worship and lay ministry, if it is at the expense of proper oversight and the teaching authority of the priesthood, could produce the schismatic condition which troubled the church at Corinth. Authority itself is at a discount, largely because it is misunderstood or abused.

In the 1650's two books on the pastoral office appeared within four years of each other in England: the first by George Herbert, who was 39 when he wrote *The Temple and A Priest to the Temple* or *The Country Parson*, at

Bemerton, and the second by Richard Baxter, who was 41 when he wrote *The Reformed Pastor* at Kidderminster. Both books have become classics. Both are aware that ordination is to the cure of souls. Both see the bond between pastor and people as the basis of the ordained ministry. Baxter, taking his text from Acts 20:28 ("Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"), writes: "From this relation of pastor and flock arise all the duties which mutually we owe. As we must be true to our trust, so must our people be faithful to us and obey the just directions that we give them from the Word of God". A hard saying in today's church? George Herbert is more down to earth and domestic than Baxter in his delineation of the country parson's "rule of holy life", but he is no less aware of the weight of authority which lies on him, and its source.

Let me conclude by reading his opening words:

A pastor is the deputy of Christ for the reducing of man to the obedience of God. This definition is evident, and contains the direct steps of pastoral duty and authority. For, first, man fell from God by disobedience. Secondly, Christ is the glorious instrument of God for the revoking of man. Thirdly, Christ being not to continue on earth, but after he had fulfilled the work of reconciliation to be received up into heaven, he constituted deputies in his place: and these are priests. And therefore St Paul, in the beginning of his epistles, professeth this; and in the first to the Colossians plainly avoucheth that he 'fills up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church'. Wherein is contained the complete definition of a minister. Out of this charter of the priesthood may be plainly gathered both the dignity therefore and the duty: the dignity, in that a priest may do that which Christ did, and by his



authority and as his vice-gerent; the duty, in that a priest is to do that which Christ did, and after his manner, both for doctrine and life.



**This booklet contains two addresses  
given by Archbishop Robinson at the  
Episcopal Evangelical Assembly held at  
St John's Church, Huntingdon Valley,  
Pennsylvania, in May 1991.**

**The general subject of the conference  
was "Ordination: for what?", and the  
Archbishop's two addresses appear here  
exactly as delivered:**

**Ordination for Oversight**

**Ordination for Teaching.**

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