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THE THEOLOGICAL
UNDERSTANDING
OF ORDERS

by

Joseph D. Fry

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Introduction

Concern

The concern for this thesis began several years ago. As a member of the Student Christian Movement in the University I came into close contact with many students of other denominations. It was in the context of these relationships that I became aware of the tragic nature of the divisions within the Christian Church. As Christians we confessed one Lord but as a Church we were divided.

Those who have been vitally connected with the Student Christian Movement will, I am sure, bear witness with me to the worthy contribution which that body is continually making in the field of ecumenical relations. The membership of the World Council of Churches reveals that many of its leaders are former members of the Student Christian Movement.

In the context of the Student Christian Movement I, along with many of my fellow students, was first confronted by the ecumenical spirit and have been continually nurtured by it. My experience in the "Movement" has been similar to that of many other students. There is no need here for detail save to show the living context in which this ecumenical concern came to the fore.

The interdenominational nature of the "Movement" sets the stage. At first most students take this ecumenical aspect for granted. In fact, in our initial contact with the Student Christian Movement, we had little desire or interest to know the traditions in which

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others stood. However, this situation was short-lived for most of us. In the study groups, in our discussions, and in the very act of worship, we knew that we were a divided community.

The pain of division is keenly felt within a close community. It is a shattering experience for people when they are faced with the tragic nature of the divisions within the Church. As in most ecumenical gatherings we found that our divisions were clearly pronounced when the problem of intercommunion arose. Here, around the table of our Lord, where the expression of oneness should have been most visible, here, we were most divided. It was indeed difficult at first for many of us to understand why we could not partake of the Lord's Supper as one community, just as we had studied, worked and worshipped together. It must be admitted that often we did not seriously grapple with the real issues involved. Instead, we of different denominations received the sacrament together. Nevertheless, there was a certain strength in such action and it was done in good faith. If nothing else it gave expression to the desire and need for unity. We were soon to see, however, that such action rather than overcoming our divisions, really ignored them.

Many students refused to be bound by their own traditions. They resented the fact that the position of their Church increased the divisions within the

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Christian community. The suggestion that we should ignore the differences of the churches and take our stand for unity was always forthcoming, and many of us were susceptible to it. But the fact that dispelled such thoughts was the realization that we of the Church were caught up in the sin of its division. To ignore the fact of that sin did not in any way lessen the meaning of guilt. A real concern for reunion meant that we had to accept the sin of the Church's division as our sin.

This was the judgment that we felt as members of the Student Christian Movement. It is the judgment which came and only can come to those who have known something of the meaning of the community of Christ. This community, fragmentary as it is, comes to us because we stand within our various Churches each confessing Christ as Lord. But we share in its fragmentary nature also. Thus we know unity on two fronts. We are united in and through one Lord and we are united in our common sin of division.

We dare not rest in our divisions. The Holy Spirit forbids it. We are called to repentance and in the spirit of humility we submit ourselves to God that we might be useful instruments in His Church that we all may be one.

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The Church: Its Eschatological and Historical Dimensions

The New Testament always speaks of the Church in relation to Christ. The Church is never thought of as an entity within itself possessing its own life. Rather the Church consists for the New Testament writers in Christ. Only where Christ is present in the Holy Spirit is the Church a reality.

The Church for St. Paul is the "body of Christ." The Lord is Himself the foundation and the completion of the Church--the chief cornerstone and the head. The Church is the Temple of God, it is the body of the Son and the habitation of the Holy Spirit. When we address ourselves to the Church we speak to those who are "in Christ." Those who belong to the body of Christ are those who confess Him to be Lord through the Holy Spirit. The Church is a new Israel called of God, a people who have been "gathered and sanctified" by the Holy Spirit. The Church is created by the Word of God. It is the Word made "flesh" that dwelt among us and still dwells among us in all His risen and ascended power in the person of the divine Spirit. When two or three gather together in His name the promise is given that Jesus Christ is present in the Holy Spirit. There is the Church.

In speaking of the Church as the "body of Christ" Paul is using a figure of speech. It is, however, a

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useful figure because it vividly points up Paul's understanding of the fact that Christ and His Church are inseparable. The formation of the redeemed community is part of His saving work; the community is likewise ever dependent upon His presence and work for its very existence. The Church is for Paul the body of Christ "who is the head."¹ This not only indicates the inseparable relationship of Christ and His Church; it also gives an emphatic warning that the Church can never be thought of as being in its fulness apart from the "fulness of Christ."² To this we shall return presently.

The central significance of the Church needs here to be stressed. The Church is not something added on as of secondary importance. In the New Testament, to be "in Christ" is to be in "the body". It is not a matter of first coming to Christ and then joining the Church as a useful secondary step. The very act of faith itself drives us to the community. More than that, the community or "body" has been in some way the bearer of the whole meaning of Christ to us. There is no idea of an opposition between "individualistic" and "social" Christianity. On the contrary the Christian finds his real personhood in the life of the community; and the community is saved from being a mere "collective" by virtue of the fact that it is precisely a community of

1. Ephesians 4:15
 2. Ibid, 4:13

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persons whose personal and corporate life are alike animated and empowered by the presence of Christ. To be "in Christ" is to be in "the body of Christ", but the "body of Christ" is not something apart from the "people of God." To be true to Him who has claimed us we are exhorted "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."¹

The question that now presses in upon us is this: If the esse of the Church is Christ can the Church be anything but one united Church? This was most assuredly Paul's concern when he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians. "Is Christ divided?"² In one sense it is obvious that the Church cannot be divided and yet on the other the Church most assuredly is divided. But the situation is not peculiar to our day alone. It was so from the earliest of days. Paul's letters reveal this fact, that there was indeed division of a most serious nature in the early Church, "when you assemble as a Church, I hear there are divisions among you."³

The situation that we face in considering the nature of the Church is that the Church which is the "body of Christ" and cannot be divided is in fact divided. Can this mean that the divided Church is something less than

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1. Ephesians 4:3
 2. 1 Corinthians 1:13
 3. Ibid, 11:18

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the Church? In what way can the divided Church still be the Church? There is no more urgent question facing the ecumenical movement than this.

The Roman Church maintains that the Church is one and cannot be divided and it points to itself as the Church. For Rome the Church is the "extension of the incarnation" but this extension is in the historical institution. Therefore the body is this same historic institution. The Roman Church is the incarnation of Truth. It refuses to admit that the early Church knew division since its criterion of unity is not organismic but institutional and since it claims that the Church was unified institutionally it was therefore never divided. The Roman Church still maintains that position. The Church is still one. It is true that some have left the fold but they are in no sense the Church. For the Roman Church there is no division; hence there can be no talk of reunion but only of return.

By claiming that the historic institution is the extension of the incarnation the Roman Church thereby makes the institutional form the esse of the Church. Where the Roman Church is--there is the Church. Those who belong to Rome belong to the Church, the "body of Christ." It is true that Rome recognizes certain Churches to have appropriated some of her forms and to this extent they partake of the Church though they are

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not in the full sense the Church. It was the Reformation theologians who again gave fresh articulation to the conception of the Church as the "body of Christ," and Rome has appropriated the term to mean exclusively herself.

There is a simple logic in the Roman position which makes it very appealing to multitudes today. There can be no salvation apart from Jesus Christ but Rome monopolizes the means of salvation by her assertion that she alone is the Church; hence to her has been given the merit of Christ's suffering. She is the custodian of these merits which alone assure salvation. Grace is made a substance which she can dole out to her people. It was precisely on this issue that John Henry Newman made his decision to return to Rome. Once having accepted Rome's basic presupposition on the nature of the Church he was compelled to follow the logic of the position and go to Rome. At Rome there was assurance of salvation. Many have followed him on the same basis. To be sure, Roman apologists will never commit themselves to say that there is no salvation outside the Roman Church. It admits that there is salvation in other Churches where they have appropriated some of the ancient treasures of truth and grace that belong to Rome. In this way Roman apologists can say that there is salvation outside the visible Church, which is Rome, where the said Churches use the Catholic stuff from the original store of salvation. But at the

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same time let us be very sure we understand the dogmatic nature of Rome's claim. Thus writes Karl Adam: "if we believe that Christ is the only name in heaven and on earth whereby we may be saved, we must believe also that true salvation is to be found only in the one Church which He founded. The one Christ and the one Body of Christ belong indissolubly together. He who rejects the one true Church is all too easily brought, as by inexorable logic, to go astray also about Christ. As a matter of fact the history of revolt from the Church is at the same time a history of the progressive decomposition of the primitive faith in Christ." ¹ It might be well at this point to quote another Roman writer to show how completely the Roman Church seeks to possess within itself the meaning of its life. "At present we are, and very really, united in Christ--through grace and spiritual gifts, through certain sacraments, through the Holy Bible, etc. ...that which unites us is already considerable!--But we are not united in one Church." ²

1. Adams, K., The Spirit of Catholicism, Sheed and Ward, London, 1948, p. 194.

2. Conger, M. J., Amica Contestatio, essay in Inter-Communion, (ed) Baillie D. and Marsh, J., Harper and Bros., New York, 1952, p. 151.

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The Reformation was an attack on Rome's conception of the nature of the Church. The Church, in a very real sense, is the "extension of the incarnation" but it is not an incarnation in an institution but rather in that relationship between God and His people which relationship is constituted by grace on God's part and faith on man's. By claiming to be the "extension of the incarnation" Rome no longer ministers to its people on behalf of Christ but as Christ, possessing in herself without reference to any higher source, the power to forgive sins. "The Church replaces Christ, and it becomes no longer necessary to refer to the events by which the Church was initially called into being."¹ That is why preaching does not play a significant role in Roman worship. The Church that makes itself the beginning and end of its life can no longer preach the Gospel for in preaching the Gospel it must point always to Him who is the Head. It must point always to His Cross and Resurrection and be ever willing to submit to His authority.

Thus the conception of preaching as a confrontation of the people with God and His saving work is alive in the Protestant Church as related to the Gospel because in the acts it proclaims is to be found its historic origin and

 1. Newbigin, L., The Reunion of the Church, Harper and Bros., New York, 1948, p. 61.

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the reality in which it continually lives. Now and always the Church lives by this Gospel: "That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures."¹ This is not just something in the past to which we refer; it is that by which the Church now and ever lives.

The Protestant understanding of the Church is ever related to the Gospel which brought it into being. "The Protestant principle means the acknowledgment of God's judgment which stands above all infinite truth, forms, symbols and institutions. The Church itself is under the judgment of the Gospel which it proclaims. This means that all earthly authority is qualified. Not even the most sacred forms in which the Church expresses its faith can be regarded as guaranteeing in themselves that they are in every situation bearers of God's grace. All are subject to the protest which comes in the name of the God whose spirit is free above all forms."²

In asserting that the whole body of the Church is continuous throughout history, Rome gives no place to the risen and ascended Christ. It sees Jesus in the days of His flesh continuously extended in history. Since nothing

1. 1 Corinthians 15:3

2. Williams, Daniel Day, What Present-day Theologians are Thinking, Harper and Bros., 1952, p. 132.

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stands above the Church it "possesses the law of its own development. It can thus promulgate new dogmas in the name of the "Living Church". The Church can create the content of the faith."¹ As the incarnation of Truth it can develop particular truths. This Rome has clearly shown in the dogmas of papal infallibility and of the immaculate conception. She possesses the keys and nothing stands beyond her which can judge her.

Though Rome does speak of the invisible and visible Church, it makes no real distinction between these two important concepts. Where the visible historic institution is, there and there alone is the true Church. Therefore Rome would not understand the Reformer's position and still does not understand. In his attack upon the Roman Church Luther sought, not to deny the Church but, on the contrary, to affirm its true meaning.

The Reformers saw that the Church existed in two dimensions. The Christian people are connected with both these dimensions. The Church is the invisible and visible body of Christ. It is the risen and ascended Christ which is the Church's given unity, holiness and catholicity. It is also the people of Christ who though claimed by Him and knowing the power of His grace, are still sinners knowing

1. Harland, H. Gordon, Main Issues in the Problem of Reunion, unpublished paper, United College, 1952.

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unbelief as well as belief, betrayal as well as trust, the "body of this death" as well as the saving Presence of the Holy Spirit. There are not two bodies but two dimensions of the one Church: the eschatological and the historical.

I mean by the eschatological dimension of the Church that the Church is ever related to the eschaton. The Church is founded on this solid basis: that the meaning of history came into history in the incarnation. The Christian life is therefore based on this given fact and lures Christians to hope and expect ultimate fulfillment. The solid basis of this ultimate fulfillment is given in the person of Christ. The Church must continually live in reference to this dimension of its life which is its foundation and ultimate fulfillment--its faith and hope. The New Testament bears witness to the fact that the eschaton has already come in Jesus Christ. The meaning of the end--telos--is given in Him. But we by virtue of the fact that we are still sinners participate in it in a fragmentary way. But by virtue of participating in it even in a fragmentary way we hope some day to know the meaning of fulfillment. Then we shall know even as we are known. What has been given in Christ is at once the foundation of our present redemption and earnest of what we shall be when we are "like him". The Christian lives on this foundation and by this hope. On this foundation and in this hope is our salvation.

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By eschatological dimension I mean that the eschaton has already come and the hope that is given by it. This has been put in classic form by John Calvin in his discussion of the relationship between faith and hope. "Hope is no other than an expectation of those things which faith has believed to be truly promised by God. Thus faith believes the veracity of God, hope expects the manifestation of it in due time; faith believes him to be our Father, hope expects him always to act toward us in this character; faith believes that eternal life is given to us, hope expects it one day to be revealed; faith is the foundation on which hope rests; hope nourishes and maintains faith." There are two poles to the eschatological dimension: the end that has been given in Christ and the hope of ultimate fulfillment which is given in such symbols as "final judgment" and the "second coming". By this the Church now and ever lives.

The two dimensions of the Church are not totally separable; on the other hand they must be distinguished. But Rome completely identifies the two. She sees herself, the historic institution as fully embodying both concepts. There is nothing transcendent which ever stands above the historic Church, judging, forgiving and redeeming her. All such power to Rome is given.

 1. Kerr, Hugh Jr., A Compend of Calvin's Institutes, Westminster Press, 1939, p. 94.

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When Rome claims that the esse of the Church is its historic continuity it completely ignores the given eschatological unity of the risen and ascended Christ. It is only in this sense that we can speak of the invisible Church. Christ has withdrawn from us but our hope is in things unseen. But He will come again in all His fulness and glory which is even now present among us in the Holy Spirit. When Luther challenged the historic Church and was even willing that its historic continuity should be broken, he did so that the given eschatological continuity should be asserted. He called the Church back to its given reality.

It was stated at the beginning of this chapter that the Church being the body of Christ must be one and hence could not be divided. This is most certainly borne out in the New Testament account. Here again the unity of the Church is a given unity. But that unity is eschatological. The Church is for all time one. The eschatological unity is given in the risen and ascended Christ. This is the invisible Church. "The Church as invisible is the conquest of the ambiguities of life in Spiritual creativity, spiritual greatness and Spiritual holiness. Since the Church is always invisible and visible at the same time, it is inadequate to transfer characteristics of the Kingdom of God to the Church by speaking of a triumphant Church."¹

1. Tillich, Paul, Systematic Theology, Fourth Part, preliminary draft.

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The visible Church is also referred to as the "body of Christ". "The Church as visible participates in the ambiguities of life, including its destructiveness, its fragmentary, tragic and demonic character. This refers, for instance, to its fanaticism, its corruption, its will to power."¹

There is not a visible and an invisible Church as two Churches. The visible and the invisible Church are two aspects of the same Church. The Church's existence in time is related to its existence in eternity. But the visible Church is not a Platonic reflection of the invisible Church. The visible and invisible are dimensions of the one Church. We belong to the Church which is grounded in the risen and ascended Christ but we belong also to the Church that is set in history and which shares in the ambiguities of historical existence. We are redeemed, yet sinners, simul iustus et peccator. We are one, yet divided. "The New Testament, and all authentic Christianity, lives between the accomplished redemption on the Cross and the longed-for victory when Christ shall come in glory, between thankfulness and hope. The Church takes its bearings afresh, so to say, on these two landmarks of its faith, every time it meets to show forth the Lord's death till He come. And any presentation of the Church's

1. Tillich, op. cit.

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nature which shifts its emphasis from these two points to the continuing historical process, in such wise as to make that determinative of the Church's existence, must be gravely suspect.¹ It cannot be maintained, therefore, that the Church only exists where the institutional continuity is maintained. Any account of the Church which does not make reference to the eschatological dimension of the Church's existence is not a true account of the essential nature of the Church.

The Reformation alone adequately understood the eschatological element of the Church. In its mighty assertion of the doctrine of "Justification by Faith" the Reformation asserted the eschatological understanding in the New Testament. The Protestant Reformers have often been misunderstood on this crucial point. Justification for them was not just a new relationship set up between man and God. They also articulated the substance of justification. Indeed, a radical change in the sinner's relationship with God takes place but "the substance of justification is a real and substantial union with Christ. Justification has ontological content."² This is precisely what Paul meant when he

1. Newbigin, op. cit., p. 77.

2. Torrance, Thomas, Book Review of The Church's Growth into Catholicity, Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 5, No. 1, March, 1952, p. 95.

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proclaimed "that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."¹ In that event in Christ: His birth, life, teaching, death and resurrection our justification is complete--"It is finished." Our salvation has been accomplished once and for all. Christ is not only the agent for our justification but He unites us to Himself and we are given a new humanity. Justification has ontological content; our whole being is involved. "Apart from this whole doctrine of union with Christ and incorporation into his body," says Calvin, "justification means nothing to us."²

The Protestant Reformers held the two dimensions of the faith always in tension. We belong to the body of the risen and ascended Christ and also to the visible body with its sins and divisions. The Reformers held that sanctification was not an addendum to justification but the working of the Holy Spirit who continually unfolded and maintained our justification. "Sanctification is not a response of man that must be added to justification but it is the continual renewing and re-enacting in the believer of a justification that is once

1. Romans 5:8

2. Torrance, op. cit., p. 97

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and for all."¹ This is the tensions in which the Church continually lives. One of the great insights of the Reformers was that the Church has as its essential pattern in history the death and resurrection of Christ. It can only live by continually putting off the old and putting on the new. Salvation has been accomplished for us and we are called to work out our salvation "with fear and trembling." In other words, sanctification is the actualizing in detail of the meaning of justification.

A Church which no longer sees the eschatological element of its own being is in danger of losing its own soul. It seeks to save its soul in refusing to admit there is anything transcendent in its life that can judge it. It possesses within history the fulfillment out of its own meaning rather than looking for its fulfillment from outside of history at the Parousia when the risen and ascended Christ comes to claim the Church as His bride. Such a Church "lives too little by faith and hope and too much by the pretensions of its righteousness."² It continually seeks its own rather than its

1. Torrance, op. cit., p. 97.

2. Niebuhr, Reinhold, Faith and History, Nisbet & Co., Ltd., London, 1949, p. 270.

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Head. It tries to prove to the world that it is the Church because of the continuity of its traditions and not by virtue of that fact that it belongs to the glorified Christ. There can be no final judgment for such a Church because without the eschatological dimension the Church already claims to be the Kingdom of God. "The Reformation was an appeal beyond the Church as it was to the living God Himself, known in His redeeming work in Christ and its central re-emphasis was upon the fundamentally eschatological idea, justification by faith."¹

Little has been said thus far concerning the Anglo-Catholic position since it is the Roman position that lends itself to more logical examination. Since the Anglican Church has repudiated the authority of the Papacy, Rome does not recognize the Anglican Church to be of the true Church. Thus the Anglican Church cannot claim, as does Rome, that the continuity of the historical and institutional Church as one body is of the esse of the Church. The Anglo-Catholics claim the esse of the Church to be in the historic episcopate. They can therefore claim to be of the true Church without belonging to Rome. The Church thus becomes dependent on the ministry. Only where there is a priest ordained by a bishop of the

1. Newbigin, op. cit., p. 79.

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historic episcopate can the Church be said to exist.

The implication of the Anglican claim is akin to that of Rome. The Church, through the ministry, possesses its own life. It looks to nothing else which transcends its own life, which continually judges and redeems it. For the Anglo-Catholic also the continuity and unity of the Church is historical rather than eschatological. Neither Rome nor the Anglo-Catholics can have an adequate concept of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit since the forms of history, whether an institution or an order, insure grace. Though both present a doctrine of the Holy Spirit it is a doctrine of someone less than the third person of the Trinity. For both of them grace is dependent upon the institution or the episcopate. The Holy Spirit is thus controlled and must act through these forms. Both Rome and the Anglo-Catholic apologists will qualify this statement by saying that the divine Spirit works through other forms but they do not answer the charge that the Roman and the Anglo-Catholic concept of grace is controlled grace. Where the Roman Church is there must be grace. When the bishop is present at ordination there grace must be bestowed. Churches that claim the esse of the Church to be in historic forms alone do not look to the guidance as Jesus directed His apostles but they look rather to themselves. The Church no longer relates itself to the Gospel nor lives by its saving and redeeming power.

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The Church lives in reference to the Gospel when it lives in reference to God's mighty act of salvation in the person of Jesus Christ--His life, death, resurrection and ascension. It lives also by the promise that He will come again--to judge. The Church must always look to the Parousia--the telos--when the invisible is made to become visible again. Then the Church will be transformed in "His glorious body" to be one and holy with Him. The eschatological dimension of the Church points to the end and fulfillment of history for there stands the ascended Christ come to claim the Church as His bride. In the eschatological dimension is the true continuity of the Church. There also is her unity. The Church visible partakes of the eschatological dimension through the Holy Spirit when she receives the Word and Sacraments of the Gospel.

The Church visible is ever called to look "to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."¹ It is the ascended Christ who judges His Church, ever calling it to repent of its sins

1. Hebrews 12:2

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and ever granting it forgiveness and newness of life. He is to His Church her ever Living Lord and present Head who calls us to Him, "that they may all be one."¹ The Church is ever called to show forth the risen and ascended Lord until He comes. This given unity is in measure visible in the Church through the operation of the Holy Spirit whenever the Christian people live by the purifying power of the Gospel.

The visible Church in history is called to show forth the unity of the Living Lord. This must ever be our concern in the ecumenical movement. We cannot rest in our divisions because Christ will not let us. He is the alpha and omega and in Him and Him alone is the true life of the Church.

When we speak of the one true Church we cannot do so in terms of historic forms alone be they institutional or "valid" orders. We must speak first of Christ proclaimed in the Gospel--the incarnate, crucified, risen and ascended Christ. Whatever continuity the Church has in history is through the Word and Sacrament of the Gospel. It is here that we partake of the finished work of Christ and are called to manifest it to the world through the visible Church in history.

1. John 17:21

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The Churches can begin seriously to consider reunion only after they know that they are but sinful fragments and always in need of the forgiveness of God. Only in the power of that forgiveness can the Churches go forth, led by the Holy Spirit into all truth.

Chapter 2

The Church's Ministry

To speak of the ministry properly it is important to remember that we are speaking of the ministry of the Church. It is precisely a ministry to and of the Church. Its function and status is that of servant. Jesus Christ is the "cornerstone" of the Church and the Church is "His body". Thus whether we view the ministry as a ministry to the Church or of the Church it is in either case a ministry in the service of Christ. The ministry can serve the Church only by being entirely in the service of Christ and "since the servant is not greater than his Lord" we are called to be His servants.

In much of the discussion that has taken place in ecumenical circles a division between the Church and the ministry has been made. The two are by no means the same but they cannot exist separately. The Church and the ministry are from the same source--Jesus Christ. The ministry of the Church is the ministry of Jesus Christ. We cannot talk about the Church without at the same time talking about its Lord who is its "cornerstone" and "Head". Just as the Church is the "body of Christ" so the Church's ministry is the ministry of Christ. Thus whether we view the ministry as a ministry to the Church or of the Church it is in either case a ministry in the service of Christ. Only as we see the ministry and the

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Church together shall we be able to understand the true nature of each.

The Church is the creation of the Word even as the heaven and earth is the creation of the Word which was "in the beginning." The Word creates the Church wherever and whenever the Holy Spirit reveals it to men. Thus the Church has a message to give and that message is its very life. It is the message which creates and sustains the Church. Without the preaching of the Word there is no Church. The Church's ministry is called to proclaim the Word of God which is the whole event of Jesus Christ--all that He said and did. To proclaim this Christ-event is to proclaim the Gospel. It is the Word which was "in the beginning", the Word which "was made flesh" and the Word which shall not return to God void. The Word is Jesus Christ himself. No man is a minister of the Church unless he makes known the Word to his people and that Word is Jesus Christ.

The activity of the Word of God is redemption. Christ came to redeem sinners. The ministry of Christ is the ministry of redemption--the ministry of reconciliation. "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."¹ To the Church has been entrusted the message of reconcilia-

1. 2 Corinthians 15:18

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tion. The Apostle Paul's great concern was that men might come to know Him who reconciled God and man.

"How are men to call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?"¹ That men know Jesus Christ is the controlling theme in the letters of St. Paul. In the calling and sending of the twelve the commission of ministry is given to them by Christ. "And He sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal."²

It is not an incredible claim to make, therefore, that without the preaching and hearing of the Word there can be no salvation. Men must come to know and accept Jesus as the Christ before they can know the fulness of His healing powers. There is no kingdom of God without Jesus Christ. He is the kingdom come. There is no salvation save Jesus Christ who "is the power of God for salvation."³ The Gospel is the mighty act of God's redemption of the world in the person of His Son. The Gospel is the Christ-event. Thus when Paul confesses to the Corinthians that he would preach nothing among them



- 1. Romans 5:14-15
- 2. Luke 9:2
- 3. Romans 1:16

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"except Jesus Christ and Him crucified",¹ Paul affirmed that in this act the fulness of Christ was revealed. All that He had taught and done was brought to light at the cross. In that sense Paul thought of that event as summing up all the events of the life of Christ. Paul knew himself to be commissioned into the ministry of the Gospel. "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel."²

St. Paul makes it very plain that he cannot be an apostle of Christ if he does not preach the Gospel of Christ. That is his commission. It is the sign and seal. This also he makes very clear that the Gospel he preaches is the Gospel of Christ, "not that there is another Gospel."³ This is the apostolic ministry. This is the ministry of the Church and there is no other for it is the ministry of its Lord. "The ministry is not an institution in its own right: it is the ministry of the Word of God in Jesus Christ. Since the 'servant is not greater than his Lord', the Word of God is prior to the ministry and it is only in the light of the Word that the ministry can be understood or its place in the Church and the economy of salvation seen."⁴

1. 1 Corinthians 2:2

2. 1 Corinthians 9:16

3. Galatians 1:16

4. Jenkins, Daniel, The Gift of Ministry, Faber and Faber, London, 1947, p. 17.

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No man can speak in the name of the Lord unless he is one who has been called by God to do so. To be called into the ministry of the Word of God in Christ is a gift of God confirmed by the Holy Spirit. Since the ministry of the Word of God is the Church's ministry it is the responsibility of the Church to prepare those who are thus called. In carrying out its duty the Church does two things. First the Church determines the validity of the call. Secondly it seeks to know whether the person who has been called is faithful to his calling. When the Church satisfies itself on these points it confirms the act of God and the response of man. The confirmation is the acceptance of God's gift to the Church by the Church when the man is ordained by the Church to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. The gift of ministry is a gift to the Church.

It is precisely over this matter of ordination that much of our present division exists. It is therefore imperative that we give much consideration to this question. The question of orders is a theological question because the whole meaning of the faith is involved. What we have to say about the meaning of orders virtually affects every sphere of the Christian faith. Thus an inadequate theological understanding of orders will have implications in the structure of the

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Christian message. Misunderstanding at this point will often reveal a misunderstanding of the nature of the Christian faith as a whole.

In his most illuminating little "The Gospel of God", Bishop Nygren points out that the first thing that must be said about the Church's ministry is that it belongs "in the midst of the hosts of all the Christian faithful."¹ As it was said at the beginning of the chapter, the doctrine of the ministry is an essential part of the doctrine of the Church. The Bishop of Lund proceeds to elaborate. "In actual fact there is no difference between us ministers and other Christians. Whatever is true of us is true of all. Or better said, only that which is true of all Christians, is also true of us."² This note of unity is continually struck in the New Testament. When it speaks about the differences it does so only in the context of unity. The biblical proclamation of the "royal priesthood" is true of all Christians without exception. "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare

1. Nygren, A., Gospel of God, SCM Press, London, p. 19.
2. Nygren, Ibid., p. 19

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the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."¹ "You are priests" is said of all the members of Christ. The "universal priesthood" reigns in the midst of all the Christian faithful. All who confess Jesus as Lord have a part in that deed which God wrought in Christ. "They are all those who like living stones built upon Christ who is Himself 'the living stone' are said to be built up into a spiritual house and thereby ordained to be a 'holy priesthood' which shall bring forth spiritual sacrifices, which through Jesus Christ are pleasing to God."²

The one thing that is true of all Christians is that they are all members in one and the same body. They have in common the essential and decisive fact of their lives. They are called "God's chosen ones, holy and beloved."³ Once they were "no people" but in Christ they are "God's people".⁴ When we now set about to discuss the minister's call and task it is important to emphasize again that all Christians in the deepest and innermost sense have one and

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- 1. 1 Peter 2:9
 - 2. Nygren, op.cit. p. 17
 - 3. Colossians 3:12
 - 4. 1 Peter 2:10

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the same call and election of God.

However, we must go on to say that to the ministry of Christ's Church a special task has been given. "For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us."¹ When we consider the meaning of the special task of the ministry we must surely give ear to the words of Scripture. In discussing the various gifts of the spirit, St. Paul is emphatic that all gifts "are inspired by one and the same Spirit."² The Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the Church's ministry is commissioned by the Holy Spirit. So it was at Pentecost that the disciples were baptized with the Holy Spirit. They were commissioned into the ministry of the risen and ascended Christ. And it was there that they really began their ministry, proclaiming to all "men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know--this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the

1. Romans 12:4-6

2. 1 Corinthians 12:11

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hands of lawless men. But God raised him up..."¹ The disciples knew the meaning of their commission to be the proclamation of the Gospel of their Lord. That was their ministry. It was their life. They were the same men who had forsaken their Lord, had run away and denied. They knew themselves to be an unworthy lot. And yet they knew also such grace that when they proclaimed the Gospel men "were cut to the heart."² Peter who arose in the midst of the brethren on the day of Pentecost was a man possessed by the Holy Spirit. Peter had made the great confession of faith and he was the rock on which Christ builds His Church and in whose relation to his Lord the true relation of the Church to her Lord is so clearly expressed. It was only at Pentecost that Peter really understood the meaning of his confession for now he understood the nature of Christ's ministry. Immediately after Peter had made the confession, "Thou are the Christ," he proceeded to show that he did not know the implications. Jesus told him that as the Christ He was to suffer and Peter had rebuked Him. Not even to the Pharisees did Jesus use such a harsh accusation, "get behind me, Satan."³ Before Peter was in the position to minister Christ to the world



- 1. Acts 2:22-24
- 2. Acts 2:37
- 3. Mark 8:33

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he must be prepared to receive the ministry in the form of a servant. "If I do not wash you, you have no part of me."¹ Their ministry was to be like His "even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister."² The disciples were called to deny any earthly dignity or merit which they might try to claim in virtue of their apostolic office. "The earliest sermons in Acts indicate clearly enough the apostles' recognition that they could expect no natural and easy acceptance of their ministry but that it also must take the same self-denying form of a servant that our Lord's did."³ "The servant is not greater than His Lord, neither is he who is sent greater than he who sent him."⁴

"The ministry of the apostles is never conceived of as a thing in itself but always in dependence upon, and as the expression of, the ministry of Jesus Christ. And the apostles are such not in virtue of any natural gifts they possess or any historical priority or any temporal prestige or power, but in virtue of their personal

1. John 13:8
2. Matthew 20:28
3. Jenkins, op. cit., p. 21
4. John 13:16

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commission from Him which they authenticate by their witness to Him. And that witness is always in word and life, by self-examination, repentance and ever-renewed subjection in faith, to Him as the One who, though He knew no sin, became sin for us.¹ "That we might become the righteousness of God."²

Thus we are ministers of Jesus Christ because we speak in His name and are His accredited representatives. Whatever else we may say about the Church's ministry it is clear that our Lord empowered men to speak in His Name and promised authority to their message. Christ is present in His Church through the Spirit and men are able to speak in His name as the Spirit leads them. If the Church's ministry speaks in His name, it is as though Christ spoke. That is the authority that is given to the herald of Christ. "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose in earth shall be bound in heaven."³

To speak in the name of Christ means that we are

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- 1. Jenkins, op. cit., p.24
 - 2. 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - 3. Matthew 13:19

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called to proclaim His Gospel; the Gospel of salvation.

"So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."¹ This is the meaning of God's incarnation. This is Christ's ministry that the world should be reconciled to God. Whatever else we may say about the Church's ministry we must say this: it is an authentic ministry only as it carries on the ministry of its Lord, the ministry of reconciliation.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the drama of God's saving act in history in the person of Jesus Christ. That is the Gospel He will have brought to His congregation and to the world. Therefore He seeks heralds and it is as such that He wills to use ministers. He calls us to be His Herald of His Gospel. "Whom shall I send and who will go for us."² Those who have heard this call and have answered that question with "Here am I, send me."³ are His ministers. "The Gospel which we have received from God constitutes our whole being as ministers. All that which otherwise can be said of our task as ministers is secondary to this, and must be traceable back to the fact that we are heralds and

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- 1. 2 Corinthians 5:20
 - 2. Isaiah 6:8
 - 3. Isaiah 6:8

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that God has a Gospel which He will have proclaimed through us. It is more important to make this fact itself utterly clear, because at various times, and in various parts of Christendom, a very different interpretation of that which is essential in the minister's call has prevailed."¹

The importance of the ministry is not derived from itself. It does not possess within itself that which makes it what it is. No power is laid in our hand. We are ministers not because we possess qualifications which equip us as spiritual leaders. We are ministers because "we are ambassadors for Christ"². We are ministers of the Church, the body of Christ, because we are heralds of His Gospel. Apart from its message the ministry is not a ministry. Upon the message everything is concentrated. The one thing that has been given to us makes us ministers of Jesus Christ and that is His Gospel, and a Gospel of which it can be said that power dwells within it. It is as Heralds of this Gospel that the ministry receives its sacredness. All other interpretations of the ministry and its task come, to a greater or a lesser degree to lay the stress upon the ministry itself, something which it possesses or it can do, apart from what has been given to it. "The power

1. Nygren, op. cit., p. 21
 2. 2 Corinthians 5:20

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does not come from us, rather it lies within the Gospel itself. We are but those who deliver it. We are heralds. That is the sacredness of our Call."¹

There can be only one ministry since there is but one Gospel. The New Testament states explicitly that this Gospel was given to those whom Jesus called to be His apostles. They were called to make known the saving act of Jesus Christ. Since this constitutes the esse of the Church's ministry, surely there can be no other ministry different from the apostolic ministry. One cannot be a minister if he would preach a Gospel different from the Gospel they preached--"not that there is another Gospel."² Nor can there be another ministry than their ministry.

Much of the controversy with regard to church union centres around the question of what constitutes the true apostolic ministry. The Roman church gives a clear answer to this question. She has always maintained that the doctrine of the church and ministry be kept together as has the Orthodox church. Therefore for Rome there is no problem about the nature of the ministry. Since she alone is the true church, she alone can have a true ministry. There is

1. Nygren, op. cit., p. 24

2. Galatians 1:7

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no indication, at the present at least, that Rome will rethink its own position. To do so would mean that she would follow the path of the Reformation and this is most unlikely. The position of the Orthodox church is similar to Rome but lines are not as rigid because of the fact that she was not directly related to the Reformation and has developed no counter-reformation. Both the Roman and Orthodox churches view their own ministries as alone the true ministry for each makes the claim that it is the true church. The meaning of its ministry is derived from the church as an historical institution. Since Rome views itself as the "extension of the incarnation" it alone has the power to create a ministry since it alone is the true representative of Christ on earth.

It is the Roman church more than any other which regards its ministry as a sacrificing priesthood. Very early in the life of the church an interpretation pushed its way into the church which regarded the primary function of the ministry to be that of a "sacrificing priesthood." Men who by virtue of their ordination were in a position to present an efficacious and purifying sacrifice.

The Roman church in fact has two priesthods. Though many Protestants are unaware of it, the Roman church also makes the claim for the priesthood of all believers. In the Catholic Catechism of the Council of Trent there is express mention made of the double priesthood." There is

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an inward and an outward. 'All the faithful who are baptized are called priests. Especially so are those good men among them who have the Spirit of God, and by the kindness of God's grace are made living members of the High Priest Jesus Christ. Such men, by a faith inflamed with love, offer spiritual sacrifices to God on the altar of their souls; and to these sacrifices belong all good and honourable deeds which tend to the glory of God.' 'Thus', quotes the Catechism, 'Christ made us a kingdom and priests to God and His Father by washing us in His own blood. We are a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' All such texts refer to the inward priesthood. 'But', the Catechism goes on to say, 'The outward priesthood belongs not to all the faithful, but only to certain men, who are instituted and consecrated by the imposition of hands and the due rites of the Church to a specially sacred ministry. And the power of this outward priesthood is the power of offering to God the great sacrifice of the Church for the living and the dead--the Mass.' "

The ministry of the Roman church is understood in a mechanistic way largely because of the theory of the sacrifice of the Mass. This follows in line with the Latin

1. Forsyth, P. T., Rome, Reform and Reaction, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1899, p. 187.

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conception of the atonement. As the sacrifice of the Mass is repeated the priest stands as the representative of humanity just as Christ in His sacrifice stands before God as the representative of man. Through the sacrifice of the Mass he presents an achievement to God which becomes a store of merits for man. The ministry is not from God to man but from man to God and it becomes in this way a mediation between God and man.

There was a place for the sacrificing priesthood in Judaism for the atonement of sin was made from man to God. In other religions there is also a place for sacrificing priests but the interpretation of the Christian ministry as a sacrificing priesthood is wholly false. In such an interpretation the ministry does not carry on the ministry of Jesus Christ, it replaces it. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the old. The sacrificing priesthood is no more for in Christ we have our high priest and he is the only one. He is also the sacrifice given, "for Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God."¹ The mighty work of atonement is finished and in it is grace to cover all our sin. There is no need for repetition nor can it be repeated by man for the sacrifice which reconciles us to God is not

1. 1 Peter 3:18

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man's act but God's.

Through the cultic rites of the pre-Christian era the priest sought to control God by carrying out the ritual of the cultus. It was thought that God's action could be directed through the performance of these cultic forms. Thus by the sacrifice of the lamb in the desert they believed that their sins would automatically be taken away. God, they believed, was involved in these rites and by performing them God could be controlled. The very same principle is involved in the Roman conception of the sacrifice of the Mass. Here the priest who need not be "the truly consecrated man, but only the duly consecrated" goes through the ritual forms of the Mass and thus repeats the sacrifice of Christ. In the Roman church the ministry of reconciliation, in ministry, in sacrament and Word, has been thus interpreted in a way totally foreign to Christian faith. "It was not an accident that Luther's criticism of the Roman Mass was concentrated on the sacrifice of the Mass. By this criticism he struck also at the Roman perversion of the office of the ministry."¹

This is not to say that we have no part in the drama of reconciliation. The act of reconciliation is God's through Jesus Christ. The Church as the body of Christ is

1. Aulen, Gustaf, The Faith of the Christian Church, The Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia, 1948, p. 413.

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called to carry on this ministry of reconciliation. To say that the Church's ministry is a ministry of reconciliation means that it has its foundation in the finished work of Christ. The Gospel of Christ is a Gospel of reconciliation and the Church's ministry is called to proclaim that Gospel. "The Gospel is a power of God unto salvation for each and every one who believes."¹ The reconciliation demands a ministry, not because the atonement needs to be completed or repeated. The act of reconciliation has been accomplished once and for all and it is for all times and generations. But the reconciliation is not a static thing, rather it must be understood as a living experience in the context of life and it demands a ministry because it addresses itself to every new age and every new generation. The atoning work of Christ does not have to be repeated as Rome insists but each man in each generation stands in need of appropriating and actualizing the work of Christ in his own life.

The power of the Gospel does not come from those who proclaim it, rather it lies within the Gospel itself. No one saw this with greater clarity than did Calvin. When the Roman interpretation of the ministry was attached to a magical view of the sacrament it put complete power in the hands

1. Romans 1:16

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of the priest.

It is in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper that Rome really shows how she controls the Gospel. Wherever the host of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar is reserved, Christ is there. In the holy wafer, Christ Himself is present. In the Eucharist as offered by the priest, Christ becomes physically and locally present. "In view of this fact, the following statement by one of the cardinals of the Roman Church cannot be regarded as an exaggeration. 'Where in heaven is such power as that of the Catholic priest. ...One time only Mary brought the heavenly child into the world, but lo, the priest does this not once, but a hundred and a thousand times, as often as he celebrates (the mass)....To the priests he transferred the right to dispose of his holy humanity, to them he gave, so to speak, power over his body. The Catholic priest is able...to make him present at the altar, to lock him up in the tabernacle and to take him out again in order to give him to the faithful for their nourishment...in all this, Christ, the only begotten Son of God the Father, is yielding to his will.' "

The Roman Church binds both God and man. "Sacraments and priesthood, and what they represent and signify are the 'mystical body of Christ'. No one is a member of this

1. Pauck, Wilhelm, The Heritage of the Reformation, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1950, p. 161

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body, unless he partakes of the sacraments and submits to the administration of the priests. Man becomes acceptable to God as a believer in Christ only through the justification represented in baptism. He is cleansed of his sins only when, absolved by the priest in the sacrament of penance, he participates in the passion and resurrection of Christ by means of the Eucharist. He is assured of his salvation only if the blessings also of the other sacraments--confirmation, marriage, extreme unction and, most of all, priestly ordination are available to him. He has no communion with God and he cannot live the Christian life unless he becomes identified with the life of Christ in a mystical way by means of the sacramental-hierarchical institution in which the divine operates as a living, active reality."¹

The Anglo-Catholics have a conception of the sacraments similar to Rome though not as extreme. Her priests can administer the Eucharist because they are of the "historic" episcopate, the ministry which Christ Himself commissioned in the days of His flesh. In their understanding, the sacraments are not of the Church but of the ministry.

It must be admitted here that there is much confusion in Protestantism with regard to the sacraments. Ultra Calvinists such as Karl Barth do not recognize the validity of the sacraments. They argue that nature cannot be the bearer of the Holy--except once-and-for-all in Christ. I must con-

1. Pauck, op. cit. p. 161

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fess that I share in the confusion of the Protestant Church. Very little has been written of a positive nature. Insofar as I have been able to understand it, the thought of Dr. Paul Tillich has stimulated for me a new concern for the meaning of the sacraments. Dr. Tillich states that the natural can be the bearer of the Holy. In the sacraments the elements can be bearers of the Holy because they are always determined by that event when the natural was made to be the bearer of the Holy when "the Word became flesh." The bearer does not in and of itself constitute the sacrament. It must be related to the events of the history of salvation. The "Protestant Principle" can have no tolerance for conditioned objects claiming power of the unconditioned. Rome has done this when she identifies the element with the Holy. The elements are no longer related to the events of salvation but become the essence of the events.

The Protestant understanding of the Gospel has also on occasion been corrupted by the false conception of how the Word is a means of grace. This happens when it identifies the Word with sound doctrine rather than on a living presentation of the claims and power of Christ. But Calvin always insisted that true proclamation was the preaching and hearing of the Word and this was dependent of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ

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efficaciously unites us to Himself."¹

The Roman view most certainly stresses the fact that her ministry is the ministry of the Apostles. It is, in fact, the ministry of Jesus Christ. But it is the true ministry by virtue of the fact that it was created by the one and only true church, the visible institutional church of Rome. The ministry is thus not dependent on the message it proclaims, the Gospel, but on an institution which decrees what is truth because it is the incarnation of truth. One can have no quarrel with such an interpretation of the ministry if one can accept the claim that the Roman church makes for itself.

There has been no serious discussion of reunion between Rome and any of the large Protestant bodies since the time of Reformation. The Official Roman Church cannot admit that the church is divided; it can only say that some members have fallen away. The call of Rome is not reunion but return.

Since the turn of the century, and especially in the last three decades, much talk has taken place between the Anglican community and large Protestant bodies. Some real progress has been made but whenever discussions have bogged

1. Calvin, op. cit., p. 89

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down they have done so over the question of orders. The most powerful element in the Anglican fold is the Anglo-Catholic branch. This minority body has been the most vocal in reunion talks and to a large extent has shaped the policy for the entire Anglican church. Whenever the word Anglican is used here it is well to remember that it is the Anglo-Catholic position that is being referred to.

Since the Anglican church does not stand within the Roman fold it cannot claim that the continuity of the historical and institutional church as one body is of the essence of the church. It finds the continuity of the church not in the church as an organic whole, but in the episcopal ministry. The episcopacy is the guarantee of the Church's existence. The Anglican church will then recognize as true ministries only those episcopally ordained. That is, only those ministries which are of direct historic line from the apostles can claim to be true ministries.

It is obvious that the whole question of the nature of the faith is involved in this claim. Those orders which are not of the "historic" episcopate cannot claim to be true ministers of Jesus Christ. Their ministry cannot be a means of grace since they do not possess the grace given through the imposition of the hands of a bishop. Their churches are not of the body of Jesus Christ and thus the sacraments are not really sacraments; they

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cannot be means of grace. So claim the Anglo Catholics. "On the one hand, no minister now living has an authority recognised by the whole Church to act for the whole Church; on the other hand, that ministerial authority conferred by Christ is limited to those in apostolic succession has never been proved, and, short of distinct proof from Scripture, it is an intolerable presumption that men should suppose Christ to be so bound that He cannot raise up true ministers of His sacraments in separate bodies once schism has happened."¹

Let us begin our consideration of this claim by quoting from a group of Anglo-Catholic scholars who are ardent exponents of the historic episcopacy. In their book, The Apostolic Ministry, they define their position most exactly. "The episcopate is the divinely ordained ministerial instrument for securing to the Church of God its continuous and organic unity, not as a club of like-minded worshippers or aspirants to holiness, but as a God-given city of salvation."² This definition makes two things very clear. By defining what it is, namely, the church, it defines what others are not.

It is their belief that our Lord, in sending the

1. Greenslade, S. L., Intercommunion, Harper & Bros., New York, 1952, p. 228.

2. Kirk, K. E., The Apostolic Ministry, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1946, p. 8.

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twelve to preach, established the historic episcopacy. To them and to them alone was the true ministry given. By this act the disciples, later referred to as apostles, were endowed with two great gifts: "the means of grace and the ministry of grace."¹ Only these apostles could in turn give to others what had been given to them. This they did by the imposition of their hands on the heads of those to be ordained into the church. Those who were thus ordained were later appointed Bishops, who alone had the power to ordain. The ordaining body is now referred to as the Essential ministry. The Anglican Church claims that its ministry is in this direct historic line. Its ministry is of the historic episcopacy, thus it is of the true ministry for "without the succession the ministry is no ministry."² All who have not been ordained by a Bishop are obviously not ordained. The esse of the ministry is maintained through the external forms of history.

Dr. Kirk and his fellow authors of The Apostolic Ministry agree that the problem concerning the nature of the ministry is a theological one. This must certainly be so for it is the theological understanding alone that goes to the heart of the problem. Since the fulness of grace is

1. Kirk, op. cit., p. 16

2. Kirk, op. cit., p. 24

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given to the bishop alone, from the apostles, he who is ordained by a bishop has a valid ministry because in that ordination he is given special grace which the bishop alone can give. "By the laying on of the hands of the Essential Ministry the aspirant to ministerial office received not only the commission to exercise certain functions; he was ushered into a special and distinct sphere, possessed of spiritual gifts and of the power as well as the right to dispense them to others; and in no other way could he enter that sphere."¹

Two things are made very clear by the Anglo-Catholic claim. They see the apostolic succession inaugurated by Jesus in the days of His flesh and the grace which was given to them was theirs to pass on to those whom they saw fit. Anglicans admit, as does Kirk, that they are not justified in trying to prove or assert that they have found a fully organized system of church order in the New Testament. This, of course, is a most obvious admission since it is quite evident that such is not to be found in the New Testament writings. Their claim that episcopacy is of divine origin is not made in the sense that our Lord instituted it directly but rather that it and it alone can permanently carry on in the Church the Essential

1. Kirk, op. cit., p. 15. (italics his)

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Ministry derived from the apostles of our Lord.

After making such a statement, however, Kirk still persists in saying, "Our ultimate appeal is to scripture."¹ But such use of scripture surely cannot go unchallenged. It is quite evident what Anglo-Catholic apologists have done. They have taken the theory of episcopacy, the continuity of which is perpetuated by historical form alone, and with this presupposition have turned to the Bible to find scriptural authority. But the criterion for the truth of their position does not lie within the scriptures, rather the scriptures stand under the judgment of their presuppositions regarding the historic episcopacy. With such an atrocious method they seek scriptural authority for their position. An illustration of this is worthy of note.

In terms of the 'historic' episcopate the Anglicans look to the commissioning of the twelve by Jesus as the inauguration of the apostolic succession. To these twelve, and only to these, was the special grace which constitutes the Essential Ministry given. They now possessed it. It was theirs to pass on. "The church receives its mission

1. Kirk, op. cit., p. 16

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entire Pauline corpus.

St. Paul states explicitly that after he had been called by God to preach the Gospel of His Son, "I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me."¹ The apostle Paul is convinced that his call is valid and that the Gospel he preaches is the true and only Gospel of Jesus Christ. He states, "For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ."² When Paul finally did go up to Jerusalem he laid the Gospel he preached before "those who were reputed to be something" and they "added nothing to me."³ They did not give grace to St. Paul. On the contrary, they had to admit that Paul's apostleship was as valid as theirs. "and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship."⁴ The right hand of fellowship was nothing more than recognition of that fact. There is no foundation in the letter

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1. Galatians 1:16
 2. Galatians 1:12
 3. Galatians 2:6
 4. Galatians 2:9

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for Kirk to make the inference that Paul's apostleship depended in any way on those who had been apostles before him. The grace the other apostles perceived in Paul did not come from them or through them. His commission to preach the Gospel did not come from Christ in the flesh. It came from the resurrected and ascended Christ. Paul did not "run in vain."¹

In his first letter to the people of Corinth, Paul assures them that the Gospel he preached to them was the Gospel of Jesus Christ--"so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift."² What Paul was so desperately concerned about was not that he should be recognized as an apostle so that he might exalt himself but it was for the Gospel's sake. He asked no man to be his follower. His whole ministry pointed beyond himself to the Gospel--to Jesus Christ "who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace."³ He reminds the Corinthians that they belong not to Paul or Apollos or Cephas but to Jesus Christ! Paul thus assures them that if they are Christ's all things are theirs because Christ is God's. There is no indication in any of Paul's letters that he considers his Gospel to be true and the other apostles'

1. Galatians 2:2

2. 1 Corinthians 1:7

3. Galatians 1:15

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false or less true. He defends his apostleship on the grounds that his call to be an apostle came from Christ. That was the criterion--nothing else. "An apostle came only by the calling of Jesus Christ Himself and no one else could give that special authority."¹

As the Church grew she found it necessary to place supervisors over the Gospel that she was entrusted with. We know there were many perversions of the message it sought to proclaim. Some of the writings excluded from the canon reveal that a disastrous transformation of the Gospel had been made. The letter of St. Thomas can be taken as an example. It presents a Christ foreign to the scriptural accounts. The New Testament mentions the problem of false prophets which was troubling the early church. There are numerous instances mentioned in patristic literature. The Church took action against those who preached a Gospel different from that handed on by the apostles. It set up certain forms to prevent their entry into Christian communities. The Church saw herself as the guardian of the Gospel and it ordained into the Church only those men whose call was valid and whether the person called has been faithful to his calling. The criterion was the Gospel itself. God calls no one to preach a false Gospel. By

1. Craig, C. F., The One Church, Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York, 1946, p. 68.

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refusing to ordain those who were not true to the Gospel the Church sought to keep the Gospel pure. This grave task was given to the Bishop.

This view of the episcopacy does not relegate the office of the bishop to a purely administrative one nor does it make it the rubber stamp for ordination. What greater commission is there than that which seeks to preserve the Gospel of salvation for the Church and for the world? But still it is the Gospel which is the criterion of the faith. It is the Gospel--the mighty act of God in Jesus Christ--which creates and sustains the Church. It is the Gospel--the Christ-event of reconciliation--which is the salvation of man. It is the Gospel--Jesus Christ Himself--full of "grace and truth" who imparts grace to all who receive Him. "It is useless to talk about apostolic succession if it simply means an unbroken series of particular manual acts. No thinking man believes that the grace of a personal God is transmitted mechanically."¹ Nor will the scriptures allow us so to think.

Anglicans have sought to prove their claim of the "historic" episcopate through recourse to history. They try to show that the historic continuity of the ministry

1. Robinson, Wm., The Biblical Doctrine of the Church, The Bethany Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 1948, p. 174.

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is of the esse of the ministry. History will not substantiate their claims. It is true that the "historic" episcopate can be traced through history but only to the second century. Here an impasse is reached. There is no historic proof that from the very beginning the continuity of the church was sustained through the "historic" episcopate. "No one can rightly insist upon the ministry for a continuous chain when the first link is missing."¹

Anglicans, as was said earlier, see the inauguration of the apostolic succession as taking place when Jesus sent the twelve out to preach. It is impossible for them to prove a continuity from this inaugural stage to the second century where the episcopacy had taken actual form. Still the attempt is made. Professor Torrance refers to this attempt as the "tunnel theory". There is no historic continuity in the sense that Anglicans claim. The theological structure which is built on that claim collapses also.

Even if the claim for the historic episcopate could be substantiated, the Protestant Church would refuse to accept the theological structure that it is made to carry. The Anglican apologists have tried to liken the apostolic

1. Craig, op. cit., p. 34

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commission to that of the Old Testament Shaliach. They have sought to understand the position of the Shaliach to be that of a representative of the king who acts on behalf of the king. His words are indeed the words of the king for he has been given the authority by the very fact of his commission. This much is certainly true and there are numerous instances which could be recounted. But the Anglicans have pressed this further. They insist that the Shaliach possesses the authority of the king. It is his to pass on to another. It is precisely at this point that the analogy breaks. T. W. Manson, in his masterful little book, The Church's Ministry, has shattered the Shaliach theory. Manson points out most convincingly that the Shaliach never possessed the authority of the king in such measure. He acted on behalf of the king as his representative but at the Shaliach's death the authority reverted back to the king from whence it came. It is obvious what this does to the Anglican concept of the apostolic commission. They were indeed commissioned by Christ but they did not possess the grace which comes from Christ as King. Grace can never be considered as a thing apart from Him who gives it. The apostles were commissioned by Christ and to them was given grace. But nowhere did Jesus set up a form which alone could convey grace. Rather He continually pointed to Him who was to come--the Holy Spirit.

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It is the Holy Spirit who baptizes us with the grace of ministry. That is not to say that grace cannot be conveyed through forms but it most emphatically does mean that grace is not dependent upon the forms. To say that grace is dependent on forms alone is a denial of the Holy Spirit. One thing we must never do or allow to be done is to think that the Holy Spirit can be controlled through external forms.

The identification of form with reality constituted a major struggle for St. Paul. He unweariedly asserted that the Gospel was not dependent upon external forms. There was nothing prior to receiving the Gospel. He fought a continual battle against those who would make the Gospel dependent on the outward form of circumcision. The Judaizers asserted that a man could not come to Christ unless he accepted a certain form. Again grace was made dependent upon a certain form. Salvation came, not through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but something prior to it. The form stood over the Gospel. But Paul "did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved."¹

This is what the Reformation asserted with fresh strength and clearness. Salvation was not dependent upon

1. Galatians 2:5

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outward forms whether it was an institutionalized Church or an outward rite. Grace was not something, a supernatural quiddity, that could be controlled by man but always it was the forgiving, creative love of God given by Christ through the Holy Spirit in the relationship of faith.

Justification by faith was not a Protestant invention but a reaffirmation of Holy Scripture. The Protestant conception of grace is the renewal of life "grounded in God's forgiveness of our sin which we apprehend in the personal relationship of faith, trust and commitment."¹ Grace cannot be detached from the presence of Christ because grace comes to us from the Holy Spirit Who is the real presence of Christ among us.

In principle the Anglo-Catholic position must deny this because all that is needed for grace to be given is the presence of the bishop pronouncing the correct words. This is precisely why they will not accept the orders of non-episcopal ministries as valid ministries. If the required forms are used by the ordaining agents grace will be given. Indeed, it must be given. It is controlled grace. There is no room here for an adequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit. For if the meaning of grace is dependent

1. Harland, op. cit.

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on external forms one cannot speak about Holiness or Spirit. Confidence comes not through the promise of the Holy Spirit by our Lord to sinful men who trust in Him, but rather in the possession and manipulation of the substance of grace. The gifts of grace are changed from "your gifts" to "our gifts". Then our boast is not of Jesus Christ but of "correct" forms. Discussing this same issue as applying in a somewhat different area, Reinhold Niebuhr has put the situation most concisely. "The church which claims to be itself the end of history, the fulfilment of history's meaning, seeks to prove the truth of its message by the continuity of its traditions, the "validity" of its order and the solidity and prestige of its historic form. There is an obvious pathos in this attempt to achieve a transcendent perfection within history. The traditions and continuities by which the church seeks security before the final judgment can be proved by any rigorous scholarship to be more dubious than the church admits."¹

The criterion of the apostolic ministry is no longer considered from the Gospel which they were commissioned to preach but rather from the form of

1. Niebuhr, Reinhold, Faith and History, Nisbet and Co. Ltd., London, 1949, p. 271.

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commission.

It is Dr. Kirk's contention that non-episcopal orders are real but not valid. Here are his own words: "To say that a thing is valid, or de jure, implies that we are morally bound to respect its claims; if we admit a particular ruler to be king of his country de jure it would be immoral of us to abet any one who were planning to overthrow his regime. But when we admit a man to be ruler de facto only, we are not by that admission committed to any attitude towards him. We assert his might only: and might never creates rights or carries them with it. Similarly, to say that non-episcopal ministries are 'real' ministries, or ministries de facto (and if this is what is meant by the word 'real' we do not quarrel with it for a moment) does not in itself commit us to any special behavior towards them--to what is called 'interchange of pulpits', for example, or to intercommunion."¹ At first glance this might seem to be a most persuasive argument but seen in its own context it defeats its purpose. Dr. Kirk admits that non-episcopal ministries have clearly been owned by our Lord and shown the fruit of His presence. But Dr. Kirk uses

1. Kirk, op. cit., p. 44

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another analogy where he likens non-episcopal ministries to a common-law marriage which can bring forth many of the same results and achievements as a regular marriage. In both analogies, however, validity is determined by law. In the light of grace this legalistic interpretation is itself not valid--though it is real. The fruits of the ministry are not the fruits of law but of grace and as such are a gift of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be denied says Dr. Kirk that non-episcopal ministries do "produce results such as the validly ordained minister ought to produce."¹ Since the validity of orders depends upon grace from the Holy Spirit, it must follow that the fruits of the spirit can only be produced where the Holy Spirit is: "by their fruits you shall know them."² The work of the Holy Spirit is recognized de facto but not de jure in non-episcopal ministries. Even on his own terms Dr. Kirk's argument for the validity of episcopal orders alone is most unconvincing and absurd.

One must readily see now why the question of supplemental ordination cannot seriously be thought of by the Protestant communities. It would bespeak a lack of integrity on both sides. It is obvious from the Anglican

1. Kirk, op. cit., p. 37

2. Matthew 7:16

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position that if their orders alone are valid nothing could be given them by supplemental ordination. On the other hand the non-episcopal communities would be denying the existing validity of their own orders because of the Anglican claims for the episcopacy.

It should be pointed out that other denominations who also have the "historic" episcopate do not make the same exclusive claims for themselves as does the Anglican church. The Church of Sweden has an episcopal order and the Church of England recognizes that church's ministry to be valid. Such an attitude has caused surprise in the Swedish Church which frankly admits that it does not and cannot make similar claims for its orders since it is not in keeping with the New Testament records or the spirit of the Gospel. The Church of Sweden is in full communion with other non-episcopal churches. "No particular organization of the Church and of its ministry is instituted iure divino, not even the order and discipline and state of things recorded in the New Testament, because the Holy Scriptures, the norma normans of the faith of the Church, are no law, but vindicate for the New Covenant the great principle of Christian freedom, unweariedly asserted by St. Paul against every form of legal religion, and applied with fresh strength and clearness by Luther, but instituted by our Saviour Himself, as, for instance, when,

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in taking farewell of His disciples, He did not regulate their future work by a priori rules and institutions, but directed them to the guidance of the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost."¹

The question had often been raised as to the possibility of reunion if non-episcopal churches agreed to an episcopal order. To a large extent this question has been answered by the union of the Church of South India. The churches which went into union were both episcopal and non-episcopal. There were indeed many problems that had to be overcome but finally in June, 1947, the Church of South India became a reality. It became a reality because men were convicted by the sin of their division but even more by the healing grace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

After careful deliberation the scheme for union decided that it would adopt the "historic" episcopal form of church government because "it is the principle that the church should not depart from a very ancient practice in the manner of its government."² The Church of South India rejected the claim that the episcopacy

1. Bell, G. K. A., Documents on Christian Unity, Oxford University Press, 1924, p. 187.

2. Newbigin, op. cit., p. 168

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is the sole guarantee of the Church's existence. It went on to affirm that the episcopal order must always serve the needs of the Church that it might better prepare itself to proclaim its message and to this end "the Church of South India must--along with the rest of the Church--hold itself ready to correct and reform itself in the light of its supreme and decisive standard."¹

All ministries of the various Churches which went into the Union were thus held to be valid and real ministries, episcopal and non-episcopal alike. There was no re-ordination or supplemental ordination and thus not all the ministers of the Church of South India are at present episcopally ordained. Eventually all will be in that all ministers ordained after the Union was effected were ordained by a bishop. In this way the Church of South India has found itself in the tradition of the "historic" episcopate.

How then is she regarded by the wider Anglican community? At this point there is much division within the Anglican fold. The reactions are indeed varied. From one side there is rejoicing and welcome while from the other, the Anglo-Catholic, come threats of excommunication or a

1. Newbigin, op. cit., p. 169

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"wait and see" attitude. While negotiations were being carried on, Lambeth gave every encouragement to the Anglican Church in South India. After the Church of South India had become a reality the 1948 Lambeth conference was severely divided on its attitude to this Church. "Most of us....rejoice that we are able and feel bound here and now to accept the Church of South India as a living part of the holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ, to recognize bishops and presbyters as consecrated or ordained in the Church of South India as true bishops and presbyters in the Church of Christ, and to recommend that they be accepted as such in every part of the Anglican Communion."¹ This much certainly shows that there are many in the Anglican Church who sincerely desire reunion. "Others....yet hold that it is not at present possible to make any definitive judgment on the Church of South India and its ministry.....They are unable therefore to associate themselves with any such recommendation as that indicated above."²

The Anglo-Catholic group, though it is a minority, is extremely powerful and vocal and has dominated the

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- 1. The Lambeth Conference, 1948, London, 1948, p. 47
 - 2. Ibid, p. 48

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to the world not by union with Christ in the Spirit but by its relation to a ministry which is derived by authorization from Christ in the days of his flesh. Pentecost need not have happened."¹ But the scriptures bear witness that Pentecost did happen and that there the apostles were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the ministry of our Lord. Paul is the apostle of Pentecost.

Paul was not commissioned to be an apostle by Christ in the days of His flesh and it was indeed because of this that his apostleship was often doubted. Kirk tries to make us believe that Paul went to Jerusalem because "he is not accepted as a true apostle until his credentials have been scrutinized by those who were apostles before him."² He quotes from Galatians 11:9 as proof of this. But what could be a greater misunderstanding of Paul's own position! Paul makes it most explicit that his purpose in going to Jerusalem is precisely the opposite, that his gospel is not dependent on man. That is how he begins his letter to the Galatians--"Paul an apostle--not from men nor through man but through Jesus Christ and God the Father."³ This tone pervades the

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- 1. Newbigin, op. cit., p. 164
 - 2. Kirk, op. cit., p. 10
 - 3. Galatians 1:1

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Anglican Church when the question of reunion has been discussed. It appears that before the Church of England can seriously consider reunion with non-episcopal churches in the future she will have to deal with the apparent division within. The Reformation asserted that nothing must be placed before the Gospel. It was the Gospel that was at stake and Luther challenged Rome that it had put an institution, and all the claims that it made for itself, before the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Reformation understanding must never be lost to sight. The Anglican Church has never really faced the issues of the Reformation. She may yet have to do so before reunion is possible. The evangelical Anglicans may well be faced with the same situation that the reformers were faced with, to assert the meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ even in the face of historical division. "The time has come, as Reinhold Niebuhr has recently said, for the Anglican communion 'to make a decision on the meaning of the Reformation.' 'It must decide,' he says, 'whether it regards the Reformation, on the whole, as an aberration or a creative event in the history of the Christian faith, an event which delivered the church from the heresy of identifying itself with the Kingdom of God and of making a particular and highly authoritarian organization of the church the only possible basis

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for a world-wide Christian fellowship."¹ If Anglo-Catholics continue to hold to the position that the forms of the ministry determine the ministry of Jesus Christ rather than the presence of Jesus Christ in the Spirit, then the Gospel is indeed at stake and must be defended at all costs.

Historic unity simply for the sake of outward unity is not a justifiable basis for reunion and must never be considered by Protestantism. To unite on the conditions laid down by Anglo-Catholics would be a denial of the Reformation and hence a denial of the Gospel.

Non-episcopal churches will have to admit that there is much that they can learn from the episcopacy as retained by the Anglican Church. Churches which are at present non-episcopal may even conclude that an episcopal form of ministry could better serve the needs of the church today. But it must be on the basis that the episcopal system is not the only form in which the Church's ministry can exist. It may possibly be the best form but not the only form. This always has been the case in the church. "Episcopacy can teach us much about an understanding of the ministry but it stultifies its ability to do so by constantly making extravagant claims for itself which the plain facts of Christian

1. Morrison, C. C., Can Protestantism Win America?, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1948, p. 173.

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experience obstinately refute."¹

The ministry is God's gift to His Church. In ordination the Church receives this gift through the Holy Spirit. Men are ordained not only into a church but into the Church which is the body of Jesus Christ. They are valid ministries then insofar as they are His ministries. God has always raised up men to speak and witness in His name. The true prophets were not those necessarily who exercised the correct forms of the cultic rite but those men alone who could truly say, Thus saith the Lord." The phrase signified that God stood behind their words. In Jesus Christ God Himself spoke the Word of salvation to men. His Word "became flesh and dwelt among us." The saving act of God in the person of Jesus Christ is the Gospel. It is God's activity in the lives of men in the birth, teachings, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the deed of salvation carried out by God through His Son. The Gospel is that which proclaims Jesus Christ as God's mighty drama of reconciliation of heaven and earth. The Gospel is the proclamation that in Jesus Christ's suffering on the Cross God has overcome the powers of sin which enslave man in death.



1. Jenkins, op. cit., p. 55

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To hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to hear God's benediction of forgiveness and to know that power that makes all things new. The fulness of the Gospel, the fulness of God's Christ is an ever living reality in our presence only through the Holy Spirit. The Church, which is the body of Jesus Christ is the temple of this same Holy Spirit. It is He who "gathers and sanctifies" the ministry of His temple. He is the guardian of all Truth, who reveals the mystery of the Gospel. It is the Holy Spirit who gives utterance to our mouths and gives ears to hear the eternal Word of God. The man ordained into the Church's ministry is one who enters into the ministry of Jesus Christ, who is the body of the Church, and is thus ordained into the temple of the Holy Spirit by His grace. The work of the Holy Spirit is to make God's mighty act of salvation in Christ eternally available to every man.

A church which seeks through 'correct' forms to control the activity of the Holy Spirit has no true doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Through the sacrifice made by the priest at the Mass, the Roman church seeks to control the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Anglican church does the same when it claims that grace can be given to an ordinand only by the bishop in the laying on of hands. So indeed does the fundamentalist who makes his religious experience or creed a prior condition to the effective working of the

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Holy Spirit.

The Protestant Reformers had a true understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. They saw that God's living Word was spoken in the flesh in Jesus Christ and is continually spoken through the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit which convicts us of God's Word. The Reformers did not disregard the forms of the Church for they were aware that grace did not come in a vacuum. Rather they sought always to point out that the 'correct' forms alone could never ensure grace. They were the Church's vehicle for the means of grace but they themselves did not possess grace. Thus we exercise our ministry in constant dependence upon the living presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit. We are the Church's ministry "not by ourselves or in our own power but by faith, in Christ and through Christ and for Christ."

1. Jenkins, op. cit., p. 71

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Biblical Authority

The Church was not called into being that it might be entrusted with certain truths, to guard them and proclaim them. The Church was called into being by the person of Jesus Christ and is continually sustained by that person through the Holy Spirit and will be finally redeemed at the "second coming" of Jesus Christ. The Church, by its total witness, is called to proclaim this person Jesus Christ, who alone is the Truth, and not certain truths about Him. Only as we understand that first of all can we go on to say that in proclaiming this person Jesus Christ the Church is proclaiming by word and life God's mighty act of redemption of the world in Jesus Christ. This is to proclaim the Gospel.

The Church is not left without a visible witness of God's activity in the life of mankind. In St. Paul's words, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." ¹ The Bible makes visible God's dealings with his creation. From the creation of the heavens and earth to the appearance of a "new heaven and new earth" is the range of the Biblical message. It bears witness to God's saving acts as He has revealed Himself to man in the creating, sustaining and redeeming of the world. The Biblical message is the



1. 2 Corinthians 4:7

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proclamation of God's dealings with His creation.

The central theme of the Biblical message is thus concerned with the revelation of the living God. This revelation is described by the Bible in the form of a story--the story of God. The story unfolds with the creation of all things by God. In mythological concepts it describes the fall of man and the salvation of the world through the Word of God made flesh in Jesus Christ. The story ends in the renewal of all things. This is not just another story among other stories of God. "This history is a description of God's revelation of Himself because the Bible describes the events as His acts."¹

Whenever we speak of the authority of the Bible we must always see that its authority is based on its relation to the revelation of the living God. This authority does not point to itself but it is rather the authority of a witness which points away from itself to God as He reveals Himself in the lives of men. The sole real authority of the scriptures is God Himself. It is only such to the believer whose eyes have been opened to the Word of God by the Holy Spirit. The authority of scripture is God authenticating His revelation of Himself by the Holy Spirit.

1. Prenter, Regin, Biblical Authority For Today, SCM Press Ltd., London, 1951, p. 98.

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Revelation must likewise be seen in relation to history for God does not reveal Himself in a vacuum. God revealed His Word to the prophets in concrete historical situations and the incarnation is the coming of God Himself into the limitations of history--"the Word become flesh." It is history, therefore, that contains this drama of revelation and not some other medium. But nevertheless it is not history which is the judge as to the reality of God's revelation, for revelation, as recorded in the scriptures, of God's act of redemption comes from outside of history and hence stands as judge on history. The Bible is not the proof text of God's revelation for God's action cannot be proved; "it can only be proclaimed and then believed in faith."¹

The Bible does not have authority simply because it contains the earliest writings of the Church. If that was so then the Bible could be regarded merely as the first chapter in the history of the Church and it would have more authority than contemporary writing of the Church, simply because it is the oldest record. The authoritative nature of the Bible does not rest in the fact that it is the record of infallible truths in the form of religious propositions. The authority of the Bible is the personal authority of Truth and it is Jesus

1. Prenter, op. cit., p. 99

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Christ who is the Truth. What is ultimately authoritative for the Christian is not the Bible as such, but the Gospel of God to which it testifies. The Bible ever points beyond itself to Him whose work among and on behalf of men it is both record and witness. The Bible is the record of the apostolic witness upon which the Church is founded and as such is part of the revelation of God Himself.

When we appeal to scripture as the Word of God we cannot identify the words of the Bible with the Word. The Bible as the Word of God is none other than God's saving activity in the Redemption of the world. One might well speak of the first redemptive act of God as the creation of the world--from the chaos of nothingness. It was this same God who chose a people from among the nations that they might be the instrument of revealing God to mankind. From this people He continually raised up prophets who spoke to this people in His name that they might be faithful to Him and live. To this people also was given the promise of the Anointed One. And in the "fulness of time" He sent His only Son. The Word that created the heaven and earth, which was revealed to the prophets and which "became flesh and dwelt among us" is the "history of salvation". The Bible is the Word of God, not in any abstract form, for it bears witness to God who works redemptively in the concrete situations of

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the world's history. He comes into our world in the person of Jesus Christ at a particular time in history and has revealed Himself and wrought redemption for us. When we say that our appeal to scripture is an appeal to the Word of God it is precisely to those events by which the Church's living Lord wrought the salvation by which the Church now and ever lives. When we appeal to Scripture "we go to the Bible to meet Christ, our present and living Lord."¹

The scriptures are decisive because they are the testimony of the witnesses to God's redemptive acts. The Church believes on their testimony: that the living God revealed Himself decisively in the events recorded in the Bible. "If God has in fact spoken through prophetic oracles or the words of Jesus and his disciples, then it becomes a matter of vital importance to establish the true text and to ascertain the exact meaning of the Biblical records. If God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, if God demonstrates his love towards us by the fact that while we were still sinners Christ died for us, then it is of vital importance to us to know as fully and as accurately as we can what manner of life and death it is in which God acts in this way. This is

 1. Newbigin, op. cit., p. 131.

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not an easy task, and there are, and always will be, temptations to take short cuts: either to say historical certainty is impossible and therefore we must take refuge in ecclesiastical dogma; or to say historical certainty is impossible and therefore we must be content with the simple moral teaching of Jesus."¹

In selecting the canon the Church did so in an act of faith. From the large amount of material at hand it sought to obtain the most reliable account of what really happened. "The controlling fact was that Christ had lived, taught, done mighty works, died, risen again and appeared to His disciples. The appeal was to those who could claim either to have seen and heard and handled these things, or to have been in direct contact with those who had. The canon of scripture is the result of that appeal."² It is most certainly true to say that the Church selected the canon but it is not true to assert that she therefore has primacy over the Bible, adding to it or subtracting from it whatever she wished. The canonicity of scripture is the expression of the fact that it is the actual event of God's

1. Manson, T. W., The Interpretation of the Bible, Society for the Promoting of Christian Knowledge, London, 1944, p. 104.

2. Newbigin, op. cit., p. 132.

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work in the person of Jesus Christ and is the supreme and decisive standard for the Church. By its act of faith in establishing the canon the Church looked not to itself as the supreme judge of faith but to her Lord who is the revelation to which faith is her response. Thus the Church affirms that the Bible "contains all things necessary to salvation and is the supreme standard of faith."

It was the Reformers who gave the Bible its rightful place in the Church. Their appeal to scripture was the same as the appeal of the early Church when she established the canon--to those events in which the Church's living Lord wrought salvation. Their appeal was not to biblicism, though they came close to it at times, but to the Gospel of God to which it testifies. Rome claimed and still claims today that the tradition of the Church is the supreme standard of faith which in fact means that she is final judge. While this thesis was being typed a recent book of Emil Brunner's, The Misunderstanding of the Church came into my hands. He traces the process by which the meaning of tradition was changed until it was subtly placed in authority over the Bible with such cogency that I beg to give a lengthy quotation. "Henceforth tradition is no more what hitherto everyone understood it to be: an extant chain of witnesses

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binding the present uninterruptedly with the remotest past. Now tradition is instead something of which the Pope alone has knowledge and which he handles with sovereign authority. 'The present has power over the past.' It is now de jure exactly as Pope Pius ix declared: 'La traditione son io.' I, the Pope, am tradition. What the Pope declares to be tradition, that is tradition and every Catholic Christian must profess his belief that it is tradition, even though no trace of such a tradition exists. The absence of evidence of tradition in the customary sense can offer no difficulty: for the Pope alone has authoritative insight into what constitutes tradition. What he explains to be traditional must be believed as such, on pain of the loss of eternal felicity.

"That means then: the process which began with the institution of the episcopate as the guarantee of original apostolic truth has here reached its logical conclusion. The formal institution has triumphed over living tradition. The institution as such guarantees apostolic truth. The notion of tradition has been completely emptied of its true content. Tradition has ceased to be the chain of witnesses reaching back to the original revelation; instead, it has become a myth. It is now a dormant reserve fund of the Church, from which, from time to time, the inadequate Biblical evidence is completed, a reserve fund which the Pope alone has at his sovereign disposal and in the exploitation of which no one may call him to account. Since the

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Council of Trent every appeal to Scripture is rendered null and void by the conception of the tradition which completes--and eventually, in point of fact, eliminates--Scripture. Since the Vatican Council every appeal to real tradition also is made inefficacious through the theory that the Pope alone has authoritative knowledge¹ of tradition."

Rome has, on the strength of such claims, created dogmas which are foreign to the Bible. The infallibility of the Pope and the bodily ascension of Mary are examples of its claim. Luther's attack on Rome was at the same time an appeal to scripture. Rome sought to generate the knowledge of what God had done out of its own religious resources which it pleases to call tradition. Luther sought to bring the Church to see that it lived now and always by those events in which Christ wrought our salvation. The events of salvation were not just part of the tradition of the Church but were the determinatives of the tradition. What knowledge we have of God's saving act in history in Jesus Christ we receive from the Bible. The testimony of the Bible is the only basis of our knowledge. "...we have to avoid, as a no less deadly

1. Brunner, Emil, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, Lutterworth Press, London, 1952, p. 44.

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pestilence, the method of reading into the plain words of scripture, by forced and artificial methods, meanings which do not belong to the words, and, in all probability, could never have crossed the mind of the prophet or apostle with whom we may be dealing. In this field there is no substitute for sincere faith, intellectual integrity, and spiritual insight. Above all courage: courage to believe that God has spoken; that his word is a challenge to the very best we can achieve in scholarship, in honest inquiry, in spiritual insight; that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us' is no empty verbiage; and that God is the rewarder of them that seek him."¹ However, we do not confess Jesus Christ as Lord just because the words of the Bible tell us that He is Lord. It is the Holy Spirit who moves us to such confession. Apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit the Bible remains a closed book. For this reason, Calvin always stressed that the Word must always be annexed to the Holy Spirit.

The Bible belongs to the Church and it can only be understood in the fellowship of the Church which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. In challenging the Church with the Bible, Luther did not attempt to sever the authority of the Bible from its context in the life of the Church but

 1. Manson, op. cit., p. 106

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rather he was calling the Church back to the title-deeds of her existence. He sought to affirm the Church by calling it back to the living Lord whose action brought it into being. Rome has failed to understand Luther's position and views the Reformation as advocating that every man interpret the Bible as he sees fit. Nothing could be further from the truth. Luther knew better than Rome that the Bible belonged to the Church but he also knew that the Church was called to stand under the Scriptures. The Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit but the gift of the Spirit is the fruit of the hearing and receiving of the Gospel. "The Church cannot, therefore, regard the promise of the Holy Spirit as delivering her from the obligation of submission to the authority of those Scriptures in which the events which are the content of the Gospel are set forth. The Church is liable to error and has erred. When she treats her own traditions as finally normative, she delivers herself over in a kind of bondage which Christ never imposed, to a law which is not the law of God. She is to live always in penitent and alert obedience to her living Lord, and has the revelation of His nature and the record of His mighty acts done for her redemption in those Scriptures which she treasured from the days of those who were witness to them." ¹ The Scriptures,

1. Newbigin, op. cit., p. 136.

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therefore, are the supreme and decisive standard of faith for the Church. She is ever called to turn to the Gospel as recorded in Scripture that there she might again receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit to know the present will of her Lord.

The appeal to Scripture by the Church in no way lessens the responsibility of the Church to state in every new generation how it interprets the historic faith now. The Church must ever relate its faith to the new thought and experience of its time. She is a living Church insofar as she is able and willing to confess her faith to her Lord in living terms before the world. By examining her own life as she exposes herself afresh to the Gospel, she will also expose and combat errors destructive to the faith. The Church must always expel from her body doctrines which pervert the faith. As the shepherd of the faith she must lead the flock into a full and vivid apprehension of the faith. The Church must decide what is and what is not of the faith. As she accepts this responsibility she cannot look to her own resources but to the one place where God has revealed Himself in the Word made flesh. The Bible is the record and witness of that revelation and it is by that revelation that the Church lives.

The Church of Rome will not accept the Scriptures as

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the supreme and decisive standard of faith. She is herself the standard of the faith. Claiming, as Rome does, that she is the 'extension of the incarnation' her voice is the voice of Christ. Nothing stands above her. Her reasoning is as follows: since the Church was in existence centuries before the Bible came into being the Church could not have looked to the Scriptures as the supreme standard of faith. The Church lived by its traditions which were from its beginning. It was the Church that canonized the Bible and brought it into being and therefore it is the Church which stands above Scripture.

Moreover, this type of reasoning is based on an identification of the Bible and the Gospel. The two cannot be thought of separately but an identification results in a disastrous situation. The words of the Bible cannot be identified with the Word. The ultimate authority for the Church is not the Bible as such but the Gospel of God to which it testifies. The Bible ever points beyond itself to the Church's living Lord. It points to those events in which God wrought the salvation which created the Church and by which the Church ever lives. Thus nothing can be put before the events of salvation, neither Church nor tradition, for it was these events which created and determined both. The Church ever lives by the faith that God revealed Himself decisively in the events of

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salvation recorded in the Bible. "The Church's purpose in establishing the canon was not, as has sometimes been said, to prove her primacy over the Bible, and hence her power to depart from the Bible....but precisely the reverse. By making the Bible authoritative over all that she said....she asserted in the strongest way that she does not belong to herself but to her Lord and that her ministers are precisely ministers."¹

In one of its articles of reunion the Church of South India states: "3. The uniting Churches accept the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary to salvation and as the supreme and decisive standard of faith; and acknowledge that the Church must always be ready to correct and reform itself in accordance with the teaching of those Scriptures as the Holy Spirit shall reveal it."

This confession of the Church of South India has come under severe criticism from the Anglo-Catholic element of the Anglican Church. They fear that an appeal to scripture must lead either to biblicism or complete lack of authority by wanton interpretations. They look to the preservation of the Church and its message in the historic episcopate. They make their appeal to Scripture but it is an appeal to

1. Jenkins, op. cit., p. 31

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the Bible as the first chapter in Church history.

The Anglo-Catholic appeal to Scripture is only to confirm what they already possess in the historic episcopate. The faith which the Church has ever held is guaranteed by forms of the episcopate.

The Anglo-Catholics like Rome fail to understand the Protestant view of the Scriptures. They fail to see that it is to the Gospel of the Living God to which Scripture itself points--the Word of God become flesh in Christ. Thus it was the Gospel that created the Church and it is the Gospel by which the Church continually lives and it is this same Gospel that the Church must proclaim. If the Church saw fit, as indeed it did, to use the episcopate to make this Gospel known to the world, it developed a form that it thought would best serve the Gospel. But the episcopate is not what the Church is but what the Church has and is always determined by the Gospel which is the content of the Bible.

The faith of the Church must ever be faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God. But all things, including what the Church has or says must stand under the judgment of that revelation of which the Bible is the record and witness. We must continually profess ourselves ready to accept correction in the light of the Scriptures as the Holy Spirit shall reveal it to us.

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The Ecumenical Church

To speak of the One Holy Ecumenical Church is to speak of the true nature of the Church. The ecumenicity of the Church is to speak of her catholicity. It is the essential nature of the Church that she be one even as the Head of the Church is one. It is important to note then that the Church can never be made one with human hands. It is in fact one in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus it is to Him that we must ever look for our true unity. We are called to appropriate more fully His nature that we might profess our true oneness in the Church and thus confess one faith to the world.

The task is so gigantic that we do well to fear-- if we were alone--but our boldness must ever be in His promise that He is with us to the end. The Church ecumenical is called to go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit to do the will of her Lord and Head.

The ecumenical spirit is alive because men have been quickened with the Holy Spirit. The laborious task has been taken up afresh by each new generation in this century. Men in almost every Church are seriously concerned about the sin of the Church's division. They have felt it to be a scandal involving the sacred name of Christ. The divisions have made the Church a less effective instrument of God's purpose of salvation.

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The Church today is living in an age of a new spiritual awakening. The 'Protestant Principle', which was the informative power of the Reformation is being brilliantly reinterpreted by some of the greatest Protestant theologians since the Reformation. The most formidable of them are consecrated churchmen.

The actual structure of the Protestant Church has indeed registered visible signs of change. Protestantism is vitally concerned with the restoration of the lost ecumenicity of the Church. It is more conscious of the Church's catholicity. "In 1900 despite the influence of men like Schaff and Huntington, no churches were formally discussing unity--not to speak of union. In 1920 only 70 in all the world were willing to discuss the subject informally at the call of the American Church. Today 158 denominations....are now officially a part of the World Council of Churches and have gone on record with the affirmation: 'We intend to stay together.' They have affirmed their conviction that God wills unity and have dedicated themselves to try to manifest more fully the unity which He has already given them."¹

The World Council is not a Church in any sense of the word. It is a great spiritual landmark on the road to

1. Nash, Arnold S., Protestant Thought in the Twentieth Century, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1951, p. 267.

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reunion. But it will only live and grow as more Christians are themselves caught up in the spirit of ecumenism.

Rome was not officially present when the World Council of Churches met at Amsterdam. Indeed she could not be present: Rome cannot admit that the Church is really divided. The one, holy, catholic Church is fully embodied in her. Thus she does not have an ecumenical spirit. Rome will not talk about reunion; she can only say, "Repent and return." It is true that an official Mass was offered by Rome for the success of the World Council and though one does not suspect the sincerity, one can only speculate as to Rome's real reaction.

Church reunion is not just something that churchmen are talking about. There are two monumental expressions of visible Church union which have taken place in the last twenty-eight years. The United Church of Canada which came into being in 1925 brought together three non-episcopal Churches: the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches. This union stands as an expression of faith, on the part of its founders, that the Church is one in Christ. The United Church of Canada is the pioneer in the field of the ecumenical Church on this continent.

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The other United Church is the Church of South India. This Union is all the more important because it brought together episcopal and non-episcopal Churches. This union has afforded the greatest hope yet that the great episcopal churches are seriously concerned with reunion as well as with the problem of division. The Church of South India which came into being in 1947 is a visible expression that some members of the Anglican Church do desire reunion.

The final act of the South India Church was marred by the fact that because of strong opposition of a vocal minority, the Anglican Church does not recognize the Church of South India to be in full communion with her. The Anglo-Catholic element in the Anglican Church is the sole reason why these two Churches are not completely united. The main objection of the Anglo-Catholics centres around the question of the nature of the Church's ministry. Since not all the ministers of the Church of South India have been ordained by a bishop of the "historic" episcopate, they are not valid ministries. Hence, the Church of South India is defective in certain aspects. The opposition of the Anglo-Catholics to the South India Union has been a severe blow to all ecumenical discussions between the Anglican Community and non-episcopal Churches. Do the Anglo-Catholics, who seem to control the policy of the Anglican Church, really want reunion? A large part of this

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thesis deals with the question of the Church's ministry in an effort to show that the true nature of the ministry is dependent for its life on the person of Christ and not on anything less than this.

However, the Protestant non-episcopal churches can never accept the episcopate as the esse of the Church and as such the only valid ministry. "The claim that episcopacy by itself and in isolation is the sole organ of the Church's apostolicity, will be rejected by the great Roman and Eastern Churches as by the non-episcopal."¹ The tragedy of the Anglo-Catholic position is that in the attempt to justify itself against Rome and the East it has excommunicated the rest. The Anglo-Catholics have thus cut themselves off from all sides. They do not accept non-episcopal ministries and they in turn are not accepted by Rome or the East.

It is not at all surprising that it has been the Younger Churches which have been most concerned with reunion. They have seen clearly the need to present to men one Christ and one Church. This concern of the Younger Church was most evident at the Third World Conference on Faith and Order held in Lund last year. "It is for this reason that my heart responded to almost

1. Newbigin, op. cit., p. 189.

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every word I heard spoken, whether from the platform or in private conversation, by representatives of the Younger Churches. Beneath their courteous restraint of speech it was easy to discern their impatience with the 'caution' and 'inhibitions' and 'slowness of movement' of the Churches of ancient traditions; their feeling that we are fully alive neither to the urgency of the missionary task nor to the relevance of unity to it, and still less to the fatefulness of the time-factor¹ in respect of both mission and unity."

The emphasis of the Conference was given by Oliver Tomkins. In his address he asked the question, "Which is of greater ultimate significance, the unity that we have as Christians by faith in One Lord, or the differences that we have because of varying interpretations of His Will?" He went on to answer this question. "I do believe that if we took seriously our 'given unity in Christ,' it would, in course of time, completely reverse our normal structure of church organisation. The implication of our confessed unity in Christ, beneath and above our divisions, is that we should do together everything except what irreconcilable differences of sincere conviction compel us to do separately. Our present structure

1. Craig, A. C., The Ecumenical Review, Vol. 5, No. 2, January, 1953, p. 121.

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of Christian co-operation is too often based on the assumption that we do everything we can separately, and only when we have reached the end of our resources there do we act in unity. When we act thus, we are fighting against the deepest truth about our being in Christ.¹

Our deepest need in the ecumenical movement is not a synthesis of our several conceptions of the nature of the Church and the traditions in which they are embodied, but it is repentance. Only as we draw closer to Christ shall we draw closer to one another. We have to penetrate behind our divisions to our given unity in Christ. The different Churches will have to be brought to the realization of a deeper and richer understanding of the mystery of the God-given union of Christ with His Church. We of the different Churches must increasingly realize that our Churches will find their "fulness" only as we see that God deals with His whole people.

The Younger Churches at Lund had their eyes on the people who needed the healing message of the Gospel and on Him who had brought forth that Gospel. These Churches who were in the midst of the missionary task of the Church saw vividly the need of a united Church and made passionate pleas to the Conference. Their words brought a picture

1. Craig, op. cit., p. 119

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to the mind of A. C. Craig who was a member at the Lund Conference. He says, "It is a picture of two companies of travellers camped on opposite sides of a deep chasm. They want to come together for they know they are kinsmen and they are both threatened by dangerous enemies, so that even prudence demands a junction of forces. But the chasm has proved to be unbridgeable, and it is too wide for anyone to jump across if he insists on carrying his luggage with him. Not awake to their danger, and delighted to be able to say kind words and blow kisses to their kinsfolk across the gulf, some are content enough to stay where they are. Others are saying, 'Give us time and we shall find a way across higher up or lower down the gully, although to reach it we shall probably have to abandon some of our baggage, and almost certainly most of our non-theological factors.' On either side of the gulf still others are shouting, 'Jump to our side! The best landing-place is here! You can easily manage it if you will only leave all your luggage behind!' And then a lad comes forward and says, 'Could we not all take just our jewel-cases and jump at the same moment to meet one another in the middle of the gulf?'

"Of course, it's boyish folly, of course, it means death, but isn't the profoundest thing in the New Testament

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quite certainly not any teaching about principles which can be excogitated in seminaries and defended in learned treatises, but its witness to the mystery of life through death--bitter, painful, existential death endured and embraced for love's sake? Perhaps, after all, the deepest wisdom at Lund came out of the mouths of the Church's babes and sucklings."¹

The ecumenical Church must look to two poles as it considers the problem of reunion: it must look to the given unity in Christ and to the world in need of the Gospel. We must look out from ourselves, trying to justify our various positions and submit all our traditions to Him who brought them forth. We must look to Him who came into the stuff of our common life; endured the Cross and was lifted on high that He might forever be with us. The Church faces a world of need; a world that looks to us for His saving grace and power. And standing looking at these two realities we know also the way. The way is Christ who has been "lifted up" and who draws all men to Himself.

1. Craig, op. cit., p. 122.

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