The 'Limuru Principle' and Church Unity

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AT ITS FIRST MEETING at Limuru in 1971 the Anglican Consultative Council declared that:

> 'In considering full communion with the Church of South India, the Council has given some thought to the questions which will arise with the future formation and development of united Churches, of which Churches not hitherto episcopally ordered form a part. These questions do not permit simple solutions. Anglican Churches have always regarded episcopal ordination as a necessary element in any Church with which they can have full communion. The question of ordination, however, cannot be treated in isolation. In any episcopally ordered Church the minister who presides at ordination will of course always be a bishop. But the act of ordination is only rightly understood if it is seen within the context of the entire sacramental and pastoral ministry of the bishop. It is as the father of the family, as the leader of its worship and witness, and as its chief pastor that the bishop also presides at the service of ordination.
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> In the CSI all the clergy in a diocese form one family in full communion with the bishop, sharing with him in one common liturgical life and acting under his pastoral leadership. It may therefore fairly be said that they form one episcopally ordered ministry, even though some of them were originally ordained otherwise than by the laying on of the bishop's hands. It would seem clear that this is in fact the way in which CSI itself regards its ministry. The question arises whether Anglican Churches should accept this view of the matter, and be ready to accept this anomaly within the process of reunion' (*The Time is Now*, SPCK 1971, p. 4).

The Importance of the Limuru Statement

THE potential importance of this statement is very great. If the theory of the church, the ministry, and episcopal order which it implies

can come to be generally accepted, the present depressing state of inter-church relations can be radically and speedily transformed. Immense changes for the better in ecumenical relationships have taken place during recent years. There has been a most striking development not only of good will, co-operation in mission, and joint pastoral activity, but also of intercommunion, with or without official sanction. Nevertheless, the goal which was originally aimed at by most Anglicans, organic union, is still far off, and it looks as though the coming together of the United Reformed Church in this country will remain the exception which throws into strong relief the continuing failure of the Church of England, for all its traditional insistence that the churches ought to settle for nothing less than organic union, actually to achieve it with any other Christian body. The chief reason for this failure, as the United Reformed success reminds us, is, of course, the difficulty of uniting episcopal with non-episcopal ministries; and here the Limuru statement points a way forward beyond the present impasse.

The context of the statement is a short discussion of full communion with the Church of South India. Unfortunately, earlier in the report, the Council had spoken of 'full communion' in a way which created a precedent for confusion and ambiguity and which, to some extent, blunted the impact of its subsequent statement about episcopal ordination. 'Full communion,' as the term had come to be used in ecumenical discussion, for instance in the 1968 report, *Intercommunion Today*, is a relationship between two or more churches, intermediate between the stage of 'partial communion' which involves intercommunion, and organic union. Full communion involves not only intercommunion but also mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries. The churches concerned still retain their separate identities; their memberships and their organisations remain distinct, but they stand in a similar relationship to each other as was planned for Anglicans and Methodists in England at Stage I and, indeed, as the churches of the Anglican Communion enjoy among themselves. At Limuru, however, a badly misconceived warning was issued against a 'too rigid definition of full communion'. It was suggested that between the CSI and other churches 'full communion may lack completeness when a Church has a rule confining the ministration of the sacraments to an episcopally ordained ministry'; it was also stated that 'full communion between an Anglican Province and the Churches of North India and Pakistan may be limited by the requirement of those Churches that ministers who go to serve in them shall take part in the Rite of Unification of Ministries'.

This was altogether perverse. Full communion that 'lacks completeness' is obviously not full. It is partial communion. This was an attempt to have the cake of full communion and at the same time to eat it by introducing a limitation in the shape of 'local rules' that may exclude non-episcopally ordained ministers of one of the churches

that are supposed to be in full communion with each other from ministering the sacraments in another of these churches. It has already been used by the General Synod to enable the Church of England to appear to be in full communion with CSI while limiting the recognition and interchangeability of ministries so as to exclude from it the non-episcopally ordained ministers of CSI. This was disingenuous, not to say dishonest. The dishonesty is not intentional; it is caused by the desire, common in ecumenical dialogue and very dangerous, to avoid giving offence even at the cost of truth. To refuse to enter into full communion with another church seems offensive; so we establish full communion with it, but since we cannot really enter into full communion in the proper sense of the term we resort to the explanation that our domestic regulations entail that this must be a 'full communion' that must 'lack completeness'.

This disastrous ambiguity takes the edge off the Limuru statement about full communion with the Church of South India. If, however, the term 'full communion' can be taken to mean no less than what it says, the implications of the statement are highly important. Anglican churches, as it points out, have always regarded episcopal ordination as a necessary element in any church with which they can have full communion. The question remains, however, whether 'episcopal ordination' in this context is synonymous with the 'episcopal ordering of the Ministry'. The Lambeth Quadrilateral laid it down that acceptance of the historic episcopal ministry is a necessary condition for union with the Church of England, and the re-expression of this principle in the Lambeth Appeal of 1920 and in the subsequent explanations of the terms of the Appeal did not materially alter its force. Full communion involving interchangeability of ministries has required the fulfilment of the same condition or of an alternative which, like the rite of unification in the Anglican-Methodist Scheme, is susceptible of an interpretation which would equate it with episcopal ordination. Acceptance of the historic episcopal ministry, however, need not necessarily mean that every minister of a church which accepts it must either have been originally ordained by a bishop or receive episcopal ordination, or an equivalent rite, before full communion or union is inaugurated. The discussion of conditions for intercommunion offers a certain parallel: many Anglicans who would otherwise think that episcopal ordination of all the ministers of the other church concerned would be a precondition for corporate intercommunion are prepared to grant that intercommunion with a non-episcopal church can be justified if there is a real desire on the part of the other church to aim at organic union with the Anglican church and so to become episcopally ordered in the not too distant future. Not all the individual ministers as yet, but the church itself, is to become episcopally ordered, and even the intention, though still at present unfulfilled, is held to alter the non-episcopal character of the church concerned.

The Church of England and the Historic Episcopate

IF it is possible for a church to be episcopally ordered, even though not all its ministers have received episcopal ordination, the question which the Church of England has to face is *why* it insists on acceptance of the historic episcopate as a pre-requisite for full communion, and *a fortiori* for organic union. This is not an easy question to answer, precisely because the Church of England has always been reluctant to commit itself to any one particular theory of episcopacy. It has been content to maintain a strict invariability of practice in its own internal order. For the purpose of preserving Anglican unity it is enough that every minister shall have received his ordination to the diaconate and the priesthood from a canonically consecrated bishop possessing authority to ordain; there is no need to ask questions about the doctrinal basis of this rule, nor to enquire what its implications may be concerning the status of non-episcopally ordained ministers in other churches. It is only when the Church of England becomes engaged in a serious consideration of its relations with other churches that it finds itself compelled to answer questions about the doctrine of episcopacy. Unless the other churches concerned are episcopally ordered in the sense that they not only possess bishops in the historic succession but also that their ministers, without exception, have been episcopally ordained, these questions can no longer be evaded under cover of uniformity of practice. We have to ask the decisive, and unhappily divisive, question whether 'episcopal order' is or is not to be interpreted as entailing the ordination by a bishop of every minister in a church so ordered.

According to a theory of apostolic succession such as that which was made familiar by the Tractarians, the answer is affirmative. The reason why union or full communion is possible only with an episcopally ordered church is that a non-episcopally ordered church has no priests. The authority and grace to execute the office and work of a priest in the church of God are derived from Christ through his commissioning and empowering of the apostles, through transmission by them to the bishops as their successors, and so through the episcopal succession down the ages. It is thus the succession of the historic ministry which constitutes and preserves the church; for where there are no bishops in the apostolic succession there can be no authentic ministers of the Word and the Sacraments. As J. M. Neale expressed it:

> 'So age by age, and year by year,
> His grace was handed on;
> And still the holy Church is here,
> Although her Lord is gone.'

Nowadays there are few defenders of Neal's theory of episcopacy. The historical assertions on which it was based are generally recognised

as belonging to a pre-critical and anachronistic conception of Christian origins; and it is interesting to see how completely these assertions have been discarded in the Anglican-Roman Catholic agreement on the ministry. Nor is there any need today to labour the obvious theological objections to Neale's idea that Christ is absent, but the church is still here because the ministry, in succession to Christ through his apostles, acts as *vicarius Christi*, usurping the role of the Holy Spirit. The 'pipeline' theory of the transmission of grace in ordination has often enough been discredited by unanswerable theological and historical arguments, and no attempt to re-state it in terms less obviously objectionable than Neale's caricature-like hymn has been at all successful. Nevertheless, the Church of England continues, as a body, to act as though it still believes that theory to be true. Its policy towards other churches would sometimes be inexplicable unless it held that 'episcopal order' involved the ordination of every minister either by his own bishop or by another, in the historic succession. This is the principle, unstated in the official resolutions, which alone makes intelligible the present relationship of the Church of England to the Church of South India: full communion which nevertheless 'lacks completeness' because no exception has been made in favour of the non-episcopally ordained presbyters of CSI to the law which restricts sacramental ministry within the Church of England to priests who have received ordination from a bishop in the historic succession. The official explanation is simply that the local rules of the Church of England impose this unavoidable limitation on full communion; but this is purely legalistic: the reason why it has so far been deemed inexpedient to create an exception to the local rules is the theological conviction that a non-episcopally ordained minister, even though he may serve in an episcopally governed church, is not an authentic minister of the sacraments.

Limuru issued a welcome reminder that episcopal order admits of another interpretation. Thereby it forces us to clarify our thinking about the theory that underlies our uniformity of practice. Is our refusal to acknowledge the interchangeability of non-episcopal with episcopal ministries due to a continuing belief, notwithstanding the arguments that have been directed towards its refutation, that the former represent a break in the 'pipeline' and that consequently they cannot possess the grace and authority to celebrate the sacrament which is authentically Christ's and the church's Eucharist? Or, on the other hand, is our refusal due not so much to a belief that these individual ministers have not received Christ's grace in ordination as to a conviction that the historic episcopate is an effective sign and seal of the unity and continuity of the church, and that, in consequence, the ministries which lack episcopal ordination are signs of schism and disunity? On the latter view, it is not primarily the sacramental status of the particular minister which is the question at issue: that is to say,

his possession or lack of a transmitted grace of orders. The question ultimately refers, rather, to the church. If the bishop is the focus and the outward sign of the unity of the Christian church, must not a minister who claims to have been ordained to the church's ministry by some person or persons other than a bishop break the unity of the church when he celebrates the Eucharist? His ordination, on this view, represents not a break in the 'pipeline', but a breach of unity, making it impossible to regard him as an authentic minister of the church and to treat his ministry as interchangeable with that of an episcopally ordained priest.

A theory similar to the latter is implied in the Limuru statement. It points out that the ministry of a bishop comprises much more than ordination. Ordination cannot be treated in isolation. It must be seen within the 'entire sacramental and pastoral ministry of the bishop'. The suggestion is that when ordination is set within this broad perspective it can cease to be the decisive factor. What makes a church's ministry to be 'episcopally ordered' is not the episcopal ordination of every one of its individual ministers, but the fact that they are all in communion with the bishop, acting under his authority and sharing with him in the church's common liturgical life. If all the ministers of a church are in this relationship of communion with the bishop, are subject to his jurisdiction, and serve under his authority, then that church is episcopally ordered, whether or not they were all themselves originally ordained by a bishop.

Communion with the Bishop

THE question, then, is first of all what is meant by a minister of a church being 'in communion with' his bishop. It might be argued that in the case of a layman 'communion with the bishop' is established by confirmation, and in the case of a clergyman or ordination. Some such interpretation may seem to be implied by our strange practice of using confirmation as a rite of reception into the Church of England of members of non-episcopal churches, even if they are already mature and advanced communicants, confirmed long ago in their own churches. There is, however, increasing dissatisfaction with this practice. There is also a strong feeling in many quarters that confirmation need not be treated as a necessary preliminary to admission to communicant status within our own membership. Communion with the bishop, it would seem, is established primarily through membership of a parish or other congregation of which the bishop is the chief pastor and the leader of mission, the local minister of which celebrates communion as, in theory, the bishop's deputy and representative. Communion with the bishop, on this view, is not to be referred only to a layman's initiation into adult and responsible church membership by the rite of

confirmation; it is a continuing relationship, formed and expressed in the bishop's continuing pastoral ministry and the on-going worship and mission of the entire local Christian community in its relation to him. Similarly, the communion of a clergyman with his bishop should not be referred only to his initiation as a minister by the rite of ordination, but to his continuing relationship with the bishop as his chief pastor and the leader in worship and mission under whose authority and guidance he carries out his own ministry; communion with the bishop is a relationship which he shares with the church as a whole.

The further question is whether a clergyman's communion with the bishop can actually be held to be established in some circumstances apart from, and without, the relationship created by ordination. It would seem that it can. If a layman can come to be in communion with the bishop without having been episcopally confirmed (as most schemes of union presuppose), it is reasonable to suppose that a clergyman can come to be in communion with the bishop without having been episcopally ordained. This, as the Limuru statement points out, is the way in which CSI itself regards its non-episcopally ordained clergy. There is a similar precondition, however, in each case. It must be presupposed that a person who has not been episcopally confirmed can nevertheless be acknowledged to be a fully initiated layman in the church. It must also be recognised that a minister who has been ordained non-episcopally can nevertheless be fully acknowledged to be a true minister of the word and sacraments in the universal church of Christ.

If an episcopally ordained clergyman from elsewhere becomes one of the clergy in a diocese who 'form one family in full communion with the bishop', acting under the bishop's authority and representing him in the local situation, his relationship to the bishop is formally expressed through the granting to him of the bishop's licence. A non-episcopally ordained clergyman in an episcopally ordered church, formed in accordance with the CSI pattern, would similarly be licenced to act under the bishop's authority and with his backing and guidance. Licensing does not, however, in any sense take the place of ordination and in itself make a man a minister of the word and sacraments. A man cannot be licensed unless he has first been ordained. The theory that a person can enter into communion with the bishop by being, in effect, licensed by him to work as a minister under his authority, therefore rests upon the prior acknowledgment that such a person is already in fact a minister of the word and sacraments. If a non-episcopally ordained minister can receive from the bishop a status that corresponds to his being licensed, this presupposes that he is already recognised as being as authentic a minister of the word and sacraments in and of the universal church of Christ as his episcopally ordained colleagues. If he is this, and is therefore truly a minister and not a layman, he can receive the bishop's authorisation to represent

him and to exercise his ministry within the bishop's jurisdiction and under his direction. The 'Limuru principle' thus rests on the presupposition that the former ministers of non-episcopal churches who have come to serve in a united episcopal church were made true ministers of the word and sacraments by their (non-episcopal) ordination.

The Obstacle to Union

THE obstacle, therefore, that must be overcome if full communion or organic union is to be achieved between an Anglican church and the church to which such ministers belong is not, according to the Limuru principle, a belief that non-episcopally ordained ministers have really received no ordination at all, but are properly to be regarded as laymen. According to a strict interpretation of the 'Tractarian' doctrine of priesthood and episcopacy this would in fact be the case. These ministers would be really laymen; they would not have received Christ's authority and commission, bestowed exclusively through ordination by a bishop in the historic succession, to minister the word and the sacraments, and they would not have received the grace of orders, transmitted from Christ through the apostles and the bishops who are their successors. There is then only one remedy for their deficiency which can make them into true ministers of Christ's church: ordination by a bishop standing in the apostolic succession. Until they have received ordination at the hands of the bishop they cannot become members of the 'family' of his clergy or receive authority to act on his behalf; for they are not priests.

The Limuru statement assumes that the obstacle to union is of a different kind from this. What is at present keeping the churches apart is not a defectiveness inherent in the non-episcopal ordination of the individual ministers of one or more of the churches; it is, rather, the defectiveness of the churches themselves, and, in the case which Limuru is considering, the defectiveness of the non-episcopal churches from which ministers have been drawn into a united church. This defectiveness is really nothing less than disunity itself. The historic ministry expresses the unity of the whole church and its continuity with the church of the past. Non-episcopal churches lack this sign; but it does not necessarily follow that their ministries are not authentic ministries of Christ in his universal church. What needs to be remedied, if the churches are to move into closer unity, is not a defect of ordination which makes it impossible to recognise non-episcopally ordained ministers as other than laymen. It is schism itself which has to be healed; and the ending of schism is signified by the uniting of churches in an organic union of which episcopal order is an outward and visible sign. Those ministers of the united churches who have

not been ordained episcopally are now recognised by the bishop as being true ministers of the word and sacraments by virtue of their non-episcopal ordination; they are received into communion with him, act henceforth with his authority, and work with him under his pastoral care and leadership. Since they, with their lay people, are no longer in a state of separation but have been integrated in a single fellowship of which communion with the bishop is the visible bond of union, disunity is no longer a bar to full communion or organic union with other episcopal churches.

On this view it is churches rather than individual ministers which are 'episcopally ordered'. A church is episcopal because it possesses bishops in the historic succession, not because all its clergy, individually, were ordained by bishops. For, as the Limuru report so clearly states, ordination must be seen in a wider context. It is not true that the apostolic succession of bishops and the episcopal ordination of priests maintains the church in being and secures its link with Christ. The ministry does not create the church, so that without it there could be no church; nor does the unity and the catholicity of the church depend exclusively upon its possession of the historic episcopate. The ministry is but one of many aspects of the church's life and worship which mediate to it, and give visible and concrete expression to, the apostolicity and catholicity of its faith and mission. The 'apostolic succession' is, or should be, embodied and manifested by the church as a whole in its service to God and in its witness in the world; it ought not to be predicated of the ordained ministry in isolation from the wider ministry of the believing and baptised community of the whole 'people of God'. All the many ministries which are the varied forms and expressions of the working of God's Spirit in the church are the visible signs of the continuity of the church in the faith and mission of the apostles. The historic forms of the ordained ministry have their special place within this much wider succession; they are not constitutive of this succession by themselves, in the sense that where they are lacking the continuity of the church is broken, for this continuity depends upon far more than an unbroken succession of episcopal ordination. It consists, primarily, in the continuity of faith, of the preaching of the gospel, ministry of the sacraments, witness, mission. Within and transcending the apostolic succession of the church is the continuity of God. The church continues to be recognisably apostolic, and indeed Christian, in so far, and only in so far, as the Spirit of God re-presents in it, and through it to the world, the judging, reconciling, and loving presence of Christ. All those aspects of the church's life which effectually express its apostolicity and catholicity are modes of the working of the Holy Spirit who gives the church continuity, because he is himself unchanging, and unity, because 'there is one Spirit'.

The 'Pipeline' Theory

THE choice that is presented to us by the Limuru statement is nothing new. Basically, it is whether we understand episcopal order in terms of a 'pipeline' transmission of the grace of orders, or whether we interpret it as an expression, within the complex variety of the work of the Spirit in the church's life and ministry, of the unity of Christian people in the historic and continuing apostolic mission to the world. The historic episcopate, on this view, is a sign of the church's commission from its Lord and of the grace which he imparts to it through his Spirit; it is not an indispensable channel of authority and grace to an ordained ministry on which the maintenance of Christ's sacraments depends.

It should scarcely be necessary nowadays to bring forward arguments to show that the theory of the 'pipeline' has been discredited on theological and historical grounds. It is now nearly thirty years since the appearance of K. E. Kirk's *The Apostolic Ministry*, the last major attempt to revive the doctrine of an 'essential ministry', identified exclusively with the historic episcopate, and the Statement on the Doctrine of the Ministry agreed by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (*Ministry and Ordination*, Canterbury, 1973) shows how far the thinking of these churches has moved during that time. This Statement clearly recognises that the full emergence of the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon 'required a longer period than the apostolic age', that the early churches exhibited 'diversity in the structure of pastoral ministry', and that 'the terms "bishop" and "presbyter" could be applied to the same man or to men with identical or very similar functions'. Like the Limuru Report, this Statement asserts that the ordained ministry can only be rightly understood within the broader context of various ministries, all of which are the work of one and the same Spirit. It regards responsibility for oversight (*episcopē*) as 'an essential element in the ordained ministry'; it nowhere suggests that it is essential, in the sense that otherwise there would be no true Church, that *episcopē* should be exercised exclusively by bishops in the historic succession. Its positive interpretation of 'what is meant in our two traditions by ordination in the apostolic succession' comprises two main points. First, the ordination of a presbyter by the bishop, with the presbyters who are present joining with him in the laying on of hands, 'signifies the shared nature of the commission entrusted to him'. Secondly, the participation of other bishops in the consecration of a new bishop signifies that the new bishop and his church are within the communion of churches and also, because they are representatives of their churches in fidelity to the teaching and mission of the apostles, it ensures the historical continuity of this church with the apostolic church and of its bishop with the original ministry of the apostles. 'The communion of the

churches in mission, faith and holiness, through time and space, is thus symbolised and maintained in the bishop.'

The importance of this interpretation of apostolic succession lies chiefly in the way in which it transfers the concept from the chain of ministerial succession to the wider continuity of the church. Within this continuity the bishop acts as a focus and symbol of the communion of the churches through space and time. This strongly reinforces the view, implicit in the Limuru statement, that, since it is a church, rather the individual minister, which is 'episcopally ordered', a minister from another church may enter into its episcopally ordered life and ministry by the act of joining it; and the means by which he comes to join it and be integrated into it is by coming to be in communion with the bishop who 'symbolises and maintains the communion of the churches in mission, faith and holiness, through time and space'.

The Evidence of the Early Church

THIS concept of the significance of the bishop's office and function is by no means a novelty. It is on these grounds that the historic episcopate is generally valued and defended today, but the roots of this interpretation run deep down to the very beginnings of the historic threefold ministry. Ignatius and his fellow bishops presumably ordained their presbyters and deacons, but Ignatius makes no mention of this function. The bishop is for him the focus and the safeguard of the unity of the church. To be in communion with him, to 'do nothing without the bishop', is to share in the life of the authentic church of Christ. Where the bishop or his deputy presides, there is the church's Eucharist. To separate oneself from the congregation that gathers round the bishop is to be in schism. The bishop symbolises and represents the presence of God the Father, as the deacon, the servant, represents Christ. It is the presbyters, orchestrated around the bishop, who stand for Christ's apostles; for Ignatius' bishop is nowhere said to be a successor of the apostles or to be himself an apostle as having been incorporated into the 'apostolic college'—a modern notion which can claim little support from the Fathers. It is not because he stands in an historic succession, nor because he is the exclusively authorised channel through which the grace of priesthood is handed on in ordination, that the bishop's ministry, in Ignatius' view, is so essential to the life of the church. It is because, at a time when the churches are threatened by Judaistic counter-propaganda, docetic heresy, and a tendency among church members to fall away into schisms, the bishop as chief pastor, teacher, and leader in liturgy and administration, stands as the focal point of unity. The cohesion of the local church depends upon him; he is the outward sign by which the catholic church can be distinguished from heretical and schismatic

congregations. Ignatius may, certainly, have attached importance to the regularity of ordination in the churches, but he does not speak about this. He lays the emphasis, rather, on the vital necessity for clergy and laity to be in communion with the bishop.

Here is a very early pointer in the direction of Limuru, and it is reinforced by two important aspects of the early church's thought and practice concerning the ministry. One is the central importance attached to *office:* to the regular appointment of ministers, and especially of bishops to their sees. Ordination of deacons by the bishop and of presbyters by the bishop in conjunction with existing presbyters, and consecration of bishops by the bishops of neighbouring sees became universally established practices during the second century, apart from the peculiar and still obscure case of the bishop of Alexandria. Yet what was most important was the fact that a bishop duly succeeded to a vacant see by the recognised legitimate procedure, rather than the mere fact of his canonical consecration; hence the historic succession of the episcopate was a succession of bishops in their sees rather than merely a succession of consecrations. There is no need to develop this theme which was fully treated as long ago as 1918 in C. H. Turner's celebrated essay in H. B. Swete's *Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry.* It is no long step from the realisation of this fact to the recognition that what makes a minister a presbyter of the catholic church is not merely that he has been ordained by a bishop but that he exercises certain functions in the church, holds a particular office within it, and is duly acknowledged by the bishop to be doing so with his approval and under his authority. From this position it is, again, no great step to the further recognition that, provided always that he is acknowledged to be a true minister of the Word and Sacraments by virtue of his non-episcopal ordination, a minister from another church is now a presbyter of the catholic church because, *without* having been ordained by a bishop, he now performs the functions of a presbyter in communion with the bishop and with his authority.

The other relevant aspect of early Christian thought and practice is the manner in which Augustine, in attempting to heal the Donatist schism, was prepared to justify the incorporation of ex-Donatist presbyters into the ministry of the catholic church. In his doctrine of baptism he had provided a more clearly thought-out and thoroughly articulated rationale for what had been the practice of Rome and the opponents of Cyprian in the third century. This practice was to refrain from baptising (as Cyprian would express it) or re-baptising (as it would seem to Stephen of Rome) those who had been baptised by schismatics and subsequently joined the catholic church. According to Augustine the baptism which such people had received was authentic Christian baptism. It must not, therefore, be repeated. Yet until these baptised people enter the catholic church their baptism remains

inefficacious. It is like a frozen credit. It is, as it were, in suspense, for it was conferred outside the sphere of the Holy Spirit whose chief mode of operation is charity; schism negates charity, so it can only be when these baptised persons abandon their schism and enter the fellowship where charity reigns that the grace of their baptism is released and can come alive.

Augustine was prepared to apply a similar principle to ordination. Donatist presbyters and bishops were really, or validly, ordained; but the grace of their ordination could not become efficacious until they came over into the true church, the sphere of the Spirit of love and unity. When they did so, it would be possible for them to exercise their existing orders, without reordination, as bishops and presbyters of the catholic church. Again, it is the fact that they are now within the church, in communion with the bishops who symbolise and guarantee its unity in the Spirit, that matters essentially, not the status of their original ordination. On the analogy of Augustine's doctrine of baptism, their ordination could be regarded as authentic because ordination is Christ's sacrament, not the church's. The fact that Donatist bishops and clergy could claim an unbroken succession by consecration and ordination from the hierarchy of the church before the schism began was not really relevant to the question, for the schism had broken the apostolic succession as it was then understood: the succession of bishops duly appointed to vacant sees.

Conclusion

WE ourselves would not wish to assert that non-episcopal ministers were ordained outside the sphere of the Holy Spirit of love, nor that their ordination was inefficacious. We should claim that they were ordained by Christ with his ordination. If Augustine could recognise that by abandoning their schism and coming into communion with the catholic church the Donatist clergy rectified the irregularity of their ordination and could be acknowledged as true bishops and priests, it should be easy for Anglicans to acknowledge as true priests those who have been ordained to the ministry of God's authentic word and sacraments in churches whose faith we share, and who now, by joining a united church and entering into communion with the bishop, have finally removed the barrier of disunity.