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THE REPRESENTATIVE AND RELATIONAL NATURE OF MINISTRY AND THE RENEWAL OF THE DIACONATE

Clarification of the ministry of the deacon is tied up with the more general question of the nature of Christian ministry, lay or ordained, and this latter concern will form the main focus of this paper.[1] Although the general question has a direct bearing on all the other orders of ordained ministry, it is particularly urgent in the case of the diaconate.

Moves towards a greater emphasis on a permanent diaconate in the Church of England have encountered opposition from some who fear that it might inhibit the ministry of the laity. As we will demonstrate, such doubts arise from confusion about the concept of ministry or *diakonia*. In the Nordic context in contrast the struggle is to secure a clearer appreciation of the diaconate as part of a threefold ordained ministry. The Church of Sweden acknowledged the diaconate as an integral part of

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[1] In the English context the term 'ministry' is used in a number of connected but distinct senses. It can apply to the vocation of the ordained (as, for example, in expressions such as 'the sacred ministry' or 'ordained ministry') and *also* to the vocation of those who exercise a formal pastoral role in the Church as lay people ('lay ministry'). Confusingly the term is sometimes also used to denote the common calling of all the baptised (the 'ministry of the whole people of God').

the threefold ministry in 1987. The position is less clear in the Church of Norway and in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. There is still hesitation about including the diaconate within the ordained ministry in both of these countries. In the Church of Norway, for example, 'there is official approval for the view that the deacon is within the ordained ministry and for the opposite view, that the deacon is not ordained.'[2] In part these hesitations have to do with the Lutheran conception of ministry. Traditionally this has been presbyteral in focus, allowing room for only one ordained ministry of word and sacrament.[3] Another important reason lies in the development of various forms of lay 'diaconal' ministry in nineteenth century European Lutheranism.

This paper will address such issues by clarifying the conceptual and theological space occupied by the concept of ministry. It will begin with an examination of the concept of *diakonia* and then proceed to a wider discussion of the ecclesiological basis of ministry. Representation will turn out to be the key element in establishing the conceptual and theological distinction between ministry proper, whether lay or ordained, and the call to discipleship shared by all Christians. Although we will not be addressing directly the specific *charisma* of the diaconal ministry, the present essay can be regarded as an introduction to such a study. In considering what is involved in describing any action

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[2] Roar Meland, 'The Deacon in the Church of Norway' in, Borgegård, G and Hall, C. (ed.), *The Ministry of the Deacon 1: Anglican-Lutheran Perspectives*, Nordic Ecumenical Council, 1999, p. 59.

[3] See, for example the 1985 response of the Norwegian Bishops to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*, quoted in Borgegård and Hall, p. 86.

as a *diakonia* or ministry we will be laying the ground for the discussion of what might be considered proper to the specific *diakonia* of a renewed diaconal ministry. The paper will, therefore, conclude with some brief reflections on the implications of our enquiry for the renewal of the diaconate in the context of the historic threefold order of bishop, priest and deacon.

The Concept of Ministry or *Diakonia*

The Greek term *diakonia*, translated as 'ministry' or 'service' in the English New Testament, is applied to a range of activities. In Matthew 25:42–44, for example, the term includes feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked and visiting the sick and those in prison. Then again in Acts 6:2–4, which describes the appointment of the seven to wait at table, the same term, *diakonia*, is used to describe two apparently contrasting activities: ministry of the word and service at table. In this context it is clear that priority is given to the former activity, although elsewhere in the New Testament it is precisely service at table that is esteemed most.[4]

In his influential essay on *diakonia* in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* H.W.Beyer argued that the term means lowly or humble service (at table).[5] A generation of New Testament scholars and theologians followed his example and

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[4] Cf., Luke 22. 25–27.

[5] Kittel, G. (ed.), *Theologisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 2, 1935, pp. 81–93; Eng. Trans., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2, 1964, pp. 81–93.

identified ministry with the ethical demands of the gospel.[6] This fits well into a servant ecclesiology but it is ultimately unsatisfactory. While a uniform interpretation is established, the effect is to translate the idea of ministry from the language of *kerygma* and action to the language of values and behaviour. Ministry is, in effect, removed from the ecclesial context of the community as a whole and re-interpreted in terms of the individual Christian's ethical obligations. As we shall argue below, this interpretation is based on a misreading of the etymology of *diakonia* but we must first note a more general objection.

The ethical reading of *diakonia* is over-dependent upon the servant ecclesiology that gained prominence in the 1960s and 70s. Many theologians took their lead from the aphorism in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's posthumously published *Letters and Papers from Prison*: 'The Church is the Church only when it exists for others'.[7] Bonhoeffer's call for a humble servant Church contrasts with the kerygmatic ecclesiology of his *Ethics*, where the Church is called 'not to improve the world, but to summon it to belief in Jesus Christ and to bear witness to the reconciliation which has been accomplished through Him and His dominion'.[8] Bonhoeffer's prison correspondence marked a significant shift in his thinking, not least in his ecclesiology. He moved away from the ecclesially focused Christology of his

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[6] See, for example, Schweizer, E., *Church Order in the New Testament*, London, 1961, pp. 173–78; Moule, C.F.D., 'Deacons in the New Testament' *Theology*, 425, 1955, p. 405; Lietzman, H.A., *A History of the Early Church*, vol. I, London, 1961, p. 145. See also, Kerkhofs, J., *Europe Without Priests*, London, 1995, p. 66.

[7] Bonhoeffer, D. *Letters and Papers from Prison*, London, 1971, p. 382.

[8] Bonhoeffer, D. *Ethics*, London, 1964, p. 350.

early work *Sanctorum Communio* towards an understanding of Christ as the 'beyond in our midst'. Christ was no longer portrayed as existing in the community of the Church but as the 'man for others.' There was a clear and definite movement in his thinking, from the early emphasis on the Church to a new emphasis on the world. Secularisation was to be welcomed as a positive sign of the world's maturity, and Bonhoeffer made his famous call for a non-religious interpretation of the Gospel.

Most of the significant contributions to ecclesiology in the 1960s and 70s were deeply influenced by this turn of thinking.[9] It was also enormously influential in ecumenical theology. On the surface it appeared to offer a way through the various confessional controversies about the nature of the Church and its ministry. The Church was seen as an agency for freedom, justice and peace rather than as an eschatological reality. It was a servant community rather than a community whose existence anticipates the coming reign of God. Within the Church of England, for example, Bishop John Robinson argued for a radical pruning in the Church's structures, claiming that the Church must work within the structures of the world, abandoning its own parallel structures. 'The house of God,' he wrote, 'is not the Church but the World. The Church is the servant, and the first characteristic of a servant is that he lives in someone else's house, not his own.'[10] The effect of such thinking was to secure the Church upon the foundation of the laudable human desire

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[9] Avery Dulles describes it as the 'secular dialogic' approach to ecclesiology. See his *Models of the Church*, Dublin, 1976, p. 89.

[10] Robinson, J.A.T. *The New Reformation?*, Philadelphia, 1965, p. 92.

for peace and justice rather than upon the unique reality of Christ's death and resurrection.

Although servant ecclesiology appropriated the biblical term *diakonia*, it paid scant attention to its original meaning and context. Whereas the new secular theology formed an ecclesiology around the idea of the Church's service to the world, 'in the New Testament *diakonia* usually means either the service of God or service rendered to Christians.'[11] More fundamentally servant ecclesiology, especially in its decisively secular forms, had the effect of undermining the Church's sense of the divine foundation of its mission. A sharp distinction was drawn between the Church and the kingdom of God and the former was seen as totally subordinate to the other. The Church took its place alongside other agencies in the struggle for the establishment of God's kingdom of justice and peace.

Although servant ecclesiology might serve as a corrective to institutional models of the Church, it is inconsistent with the eschatological and apocalyptic language used about the Church and the kingdom in the New Testament. In its pages the kingdom is regarded as God's work and not humanity's. Its fulfilment does not lie with any human agency for no one knows the hour of its final coming. Furthermore, it is hard to argue on the basis of the New Testament that other agencies apart from the Church are also signs and ambassadors of God's kingdom. Whatever service the Church owes to the world it is ultimately

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[11] Dulles, A. *The Resilient Church: The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation*, Dublin, 1978, p. 17.

a service at the hand of God, and its aim is not the social trans-formation of this world but the reconciliation of all things in God.

Recent exegetical studies have also called into question the tra-dition of interpreting *diakonia* as humble or lowly service. Die-ter Georgi's study of the opposition to Paul in 2 Corinthians is a case in point. Georgi insists that *diakonia* is not a distinctively Christian term, and that its primary meaning has nothing to do with the duty of service to one's neighbour. After examining classical parallels he argues that *diakonia* refers to the service performed by those whom God has chosen to be vehicles for transmitting his revelation.[12] John N. Collins confirms this approach in his recent detailed study of the New Testament re-ferences to *diakonia*.[13]

Collins rejects the association of the term with humble service at table and the claim that it has a uniquely Christian meaning. He argues instead that it is most often used in non-Christian sources to denote the carrying of messages or action as an emis-sary. It is this, Collins argues, that lies behind the meaning of the term in the New Testament. Words such as *diakonos*, *dia-konia*, and *diakonein* 'do not speak directly of "attitude" like "lowliness" but express concepts about undertakings for an-other, be that God or man, master or friend.'[14] This conclusion

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[12] Georgi, D. *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, Philadelphia, 1986, pp. 27–32.

[13] Collins, J.N. *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources*, Oxford, 1990.

[14] Collins, p. 194.

leads Collins to offer a new reading of *diakonia* which slants it in a theological rather than an ethical direction:

> In Christian writings...the verb (*diakonesai*) always signifies carrying out a task established either by God, by the terms of an ecclesiastical office, or by the authority of an apostle or by an authority within the community, in all cases with the special connotation of the sacred that characterises so much of its use in all senses and that of its cognates in non-Christian sources, and which leads Paul to designate both his own apostolic task and the spiritual functions of all Christians as 'ministries' or *diakonia*.[15]

Collins' exegetical work on *diakonia* in the New Testament, and particularly his view that it should be understood as a duty imposed by divine authority, has an important bearing upon our concerns. First, his location of *diakonia* or ministry within language to do with action on behalf of an authority helps to give sharper focus to a term that has become dangerously vague.[16] Secondly, and most significantly, Collins' exegetical work further undermines the confident individualism of much modern thinking on ministry.

The last point is particularly important. Modern discussion has tended to locate ministry within the ethical domain of general service or benevolence. The problem with this is that ministry

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[15] Collins, p. 251.

[16] Even though he makes use of the discredited interpretation of *diakonia* as servanthood, Thomas Franklin O'Meara also defines ministry as 'action on behalf of the community.' See his *Theology of Ministry*, Paulist Press, 1983, p. 3.

is detached from its theological basis in the divine commission bestowed upon the whole Church and is attached instead to the ethical responsibilities shared by all Christians. The axis of thinking on ministry has shifted from the collective life of the community to the life and duty of Christian individuals. A feature of the ecclesial life of the Christian community is confused with the obligations shared in common by all believers: ministry becomes a general ethical responsibility binding upon individuals and not a specific action undertaken on behalf of God and his Church. When *diakonia* is interpreted as humble service and treated as an ordinary feature of Christian life, it becomes impossible not only to distinguish between ordained and non-ordained ministry but also between what is and is not ministry. Ministry becomes part of the undifferentiated responsibility of all Christian individuals.

Diakonia and Representation

Collins' analysis of the New Testament evidence recovers something of the ecclesiological background to the concept of ministry. Ministry is the carrying out of a task established by God or his Church. It is a public and communally related act rather than a merely individual one. It belongs to the representational life of the Church as a whole rather than to the private life of the Christian individual.

There is an important sense in which the Christian life as a whole is meant to be a sacrifice offered to God. All that we do can be turned to his service but does this mean that everything

that we do as Christians is thereby a form of ministry? The formation of Christ within the Christian manifests itself in many ways: in the life of prayer; in the character of our relationships with others; in the development of a virtuous life; in the offering of worship and praise, and in countless other ways. Sometimes this will manifest itself in ways that reflect the whole life of the Christian community; at other times it will not. The key here is not so much the distinction between what is public and private – although that does have a bearing – but between that which is representational and what is merely individual. A few illustrations might make this clearer. Jesus reminded us of our duty towards Caesar: there *is* a Christian way of completing a tax return. When Christ is manifest in the honesty of our tax return, this is usually something known to God alone: it is an individual act carried out by a Christian. There is nothing representational about this act even though it falls within the compass of Christian discipleship. In the everyday course of life we are constantly brought into contact with strangers: this provides each of us with an opportunity for bearing witness to Christ. Christ is formed in us to the extent that we are honest, courteous and helpful in our dealings with others. However, the name of Christ will seldom feature in these transactions and so, again it is difficult to see how this can be described as a form of ministry. God may well be served in our dealings with others, but his kingdom is not necessarily publicly and explicitly represented in them. It is of course true that Christian ministry does not always include explicit reference to Jesus but context will usually make his name and presence clear. The life of

prayer presents something of a counter example. Here we encounter something that is essentially individual but which, under certain circumstances, can be described as a form of ministry. Prayer is by definition part of the normal life of Christians. In that sense it belongs to the vocation of all the baptised. However, a great deal of our prayer grows out of our own very individual needs and our immediate circumstances. In that sense it does not necessarily represent the whole life of the Christian community. However, when our prayer is consciously offered for and on behalf of the whole Christian Church: when it reflects in a clear and explicit way the priesthood of Christ in his Church, then it can be truly described as a ministry, a service on behalf of God's people. This ministry finds its clearest expression in the celebration of the Eucharist. This is a genuine ministry, which embraces the whole community, gathered to offer the sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. As a corollary of this when 'private' prayer takes on a eucharistic shape, pleading Christ's sacrifice for the Church and for the salvation of the world, then this too may appropriately be described as a ministry. We see from the example of prayer that the contrast is not between the public and the private; it is, rather, between individual action and action which is communal and ecclesial.

It is important, therefore, to observe a categorial distinction between ministry and discipleship. While baptism marks the admission of a man or woman into a ministerial community, it does not follow that every action performed by a baptised person is a ministry. A Christian who carries his or her discipleship

into their place of work is undoubtedly performing a work on behalf of the kingdom but this is not necessarily a form of ministry. 'For', as Thomas Franklin O'Meara observes, 'life is not a direct public action, for life is not clear and explicit'.[17] Christian discipleship is a way of life while 'ministry is something the Christian does explicitly for the kingdom and the Church'.[18] We could add too that the explicit nature of ministry is an implication of the sacramental identity of the ministerial community of the Church. Ministry always exhibits the characteristics of a 'sign', while discipleship is often an implicit expression of the Christian gospel. Discipleship is a common obligation of all the baptised but ministry is by its nature a summons to some particular, explicit, work for and on behalf of the Church.

The concept of representation has a number of different connotations, each of which is helpful to our task. A representative takes the place of another, acting and speaking for them. Such a person can represent either an individual or a group. In cases such as this, which might be described as delegatory representation, the individual or group usually commissions the representative, but sometimes a third party may appoint them. Examples of this would include a person elected to speak for a particular constituency in some public forum. Representation also includes the idea of standing for, symbolising or typifying someone or something. This would cover a range of examples: a group of people chosen to typify a particular population; and,

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[17] O'Meara, p. 157.
[18] O'Meara, p. 158.

a public person, such as a monarch, who embodies or symbolises a nation. This range of meanings is helpful in elucidating the theology of ministry, particularly that of ordained ministry.

The language of representation has an ancient pedigree in the discussion of Christian ministry. Jesus gave the twelve authority to act on his behalf (Matthew 10: 1–8). Paul describes those involved in the ministry of reconciliation as ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). He also describes himself as an ambassador called to proclaim 'the mystery of the gospel' (Ephesians 6:20). Jesus also tells the seventy appointed to preach and teach, 'Whoever hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me' (Luke 10:16). In John's Gospel the representative nature of the disciples' ministry of reconciliation is linked to Jesus' own sending from the Father: 'As the Father has sent me, even so I send you' (John 20:2 1; cf. also 17:18). The preaching of repentance and forgiveness is done in the name of Christ (Luke 24:47). In Acts Paul is described as Jesus' 'spokesman' (Acts 19:13). Ignatius of Antioch also uses the language of representation when referring to Christian ministers. In the letter to the Magnesians the bishops, presbyters and deacons are said to represent the Church.¹⁹ Sometimes Ignatius describes the bishop as representing Christ;²⁰ at other times the bishop is said to 'preside in God's place.'²¹ Deacons are also said to represent the ministry of Christ, while the presbyters 'take the place of the apostolic council.'²²

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[19] *Magnesians*, II.
[20] *Trallians*, II.
[21] *Magnesians*, VI.
[22] *Magnesians*, VI.

The concept of representation plays an important role in the discussion of ordained ministry in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*. Ordained ministry is seen as fundamental to the life of the Church:

> In order to fulfil its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity. The ministry of such persons, who since very early times have been ordained, is constitutive for the life and witness of the Church.[23]

The statement identifies ordained ministry with Jesus' calling of 'the Twelve, to be representatives of the renewed Israel.'[24] The Twelve 'represent the whole people of God' and also exercise a leadership role in the Christian community.[25] In this respect they 'prefigure both the Church as a whole and the persons within it who are entrusted with the specific authority and responsibility'.[26] Those who are called to ordained ministry have a threefold ministry. As 'heralds' and 'ambassadors' they are representatives of Christ to the community. As 'leaders' and 'teachers' they call the Church to submit to Christ and, finally, as 'pastors' they assemble and guide the people of God.[27] The statement attaches particular significance to the role of the ordained ministry in the Eucharist. The ministry is described as

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[23] *BEM*, p. 21 § 8.
[24] *BEM*, p. 21 § 10.
[25] *BEM*, p. 21 § 10.
[26] *BEM*, p. 21 § 10.
[27] *BEM*, p. 21 § 11.

a 'visible focus' of the Church's communion with Christ. The tradition that Christ's eucharistic presidency is 'signified and represented' in the ordained minister is also noted, although no attempt is made to differentiate this in terms of the three traditional orders of bishop, priest and deacon.

The statement raises a number of questions that bear upon our own discussion. Although *BEM* attracted wide support across the different churches, the official responses raised a number of questions about the idea of representation. Some churches saw 'representation' as a functional term and would have preferred a clearer endorsement of the view that the ordained minister is 'the icon of Christ'. Other respondents, mainly Reformation and Free Churches, saw the task of 'representing Christ' as the calling of all members of the Christian community.[28]

This paper is concerned with Christian ministry in general and not simply the ordained ministry. The New Testament term *diakonia* and its cognates does not refer simply to ecclesiastical office, it also embraces a number of other activities and roles within the Christian community. Our analysis has shown that the common identifying feature lies in the representative nature of ministry. While discipleship is the common calling of all Christians, ministry is an explicit action or service undertaken in the name of God, and with the authoritative endorsement of the Christian community. This applies to all forms of ministry, whether lay or ordained.

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[28] *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982–1990. Report on the Process and Responses,* Faith and Order Paper No. 149, Geneva, 1990, p. 122.

Our analysis would, then, partly meet the concerns of those respondents to *BEM* who were looking for a wider interpretation of the idea of representation. However, we must resist the idea that ministerial representation is the calling of all the baptised. This results in ministry meaning everything and nothing. It is, moreover, inconsistent with the ecclesial nature and basis of ministry, a point we shall turn to in the next section of this paper. However, at this stage we must anticipate elements of that discussion. Ministry is first and foremost a feature of the life of the Church as a whole. It gains its form and substantive content from the eschatological life of the spirit-filled community of the Church. Ministry in this sense is not simply an action *on behalf* of the Church; it is also a *manifestation* of the life that animates the whole Christian community. Ministry is not only on behalf of the Church, it is also of and about the Church.

We would, therefore, want to expand the *BEM* statement in two directions. First, by insisting that ministerial representation flows from the representative nature of the Church itself as the principal sign of the emergence of God's kingdom. As *BEM* puts it, in the case of ordained ministry, those who exercise leadership 'are bound to the faithful in interdependence and reciprocity.'[29] Particular ministries are a sign of the primary sacramental representation of Christ in the whole body of believers.[30]

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[29] *BEM*, p. 23 § 16.

[30] For a discussion of the representative and sacramental nature of the Church see my 'Ecclesiology and Communion' in Hannaford, R. (ed.), *The Future of Anglicanism: Essays on Faith and Order*, Leominster, 1996, pp. 55–89.

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Secondly, we need to re-iterate that representation is not limited to the ordained ministry. It includes all those who are called to action on behalf of the Church. However, those called to a particular, explicit, ministry on behalf of the community do so in a way that publicly represents the ministry of the whole Church. That having been said, the concept of representation is broad enough to include a degree of differentiation.

This analysis has shown that representation encompasses both delegation and symbolic association. Ordained ministry includes both aspects of representation but its particular association with the sacramental life of the Church links it more strongly with the symbolic dimension. The ministry of the ordained is representative in the sense that it symbolises the ministry of Christ in the whole Church. It is this that has led some Christian communities to define ordained ministry as a sacrament because they see it not only as a symbol but also as an effective sign. Divisions on this question tend to revolve around the question of the precise nature of this particular sign. Is it a sign and sacrament of Christ or of the Church? There is not the space here to pursue this at any length, except to point out that the implied distinction is a bogus one. Although the Church cannot be said to exhaust the reality of Christ, he *is* the reality of the Church. Looked at from one point of view the Church is a body of sinful men and women yearning for salvation, but in its full eschatological reality it is the kingdom of those whom Christ has made his own. This also means of course that the reality of Christ cannot be separated from the new community

that emerged in response to his life and ministry. Christ is the 'first of many brethren'. He is revealed in those who come after and their engagement with him. The Church is both the fruit and the historical manifestation of Christ's reality as saviour. This means that those who represent the Church, *ipso facto* represent Christ. We do not say 'also' because this would imply the possibility of a distinction between Christ and his body, the Church. Ministry is, then, a representation of the whole Christ, in head and members.

Ministry as an Ecclesiological Concept

Compared with the theology of the Church a disproportionate amount of attention has been given to the question of the theology of ordained ministry. Indeed, ecclesiology or the discussion of the theology of the community of the faith as a whole, is a relatively late invention. When the fathers of the ancient Church turned their attention to this it was usually to address some matter of Church discipline or else the question of apostolic order. Given the crucial role that bishops, priests and deacons played in cementing the corporate identity of the nascent Church, this is understandable, but it had the effect of distorting the theological picture. The concern for order and orthodox doctrine led to the Church being defined in terms of the apostolic ministry, and not *vice versa*. Rather than ministry being explained ecclesiologically the Church was explained in ministerial terms.

An accident of history produced a long-term theological effect whose consequences are still with us. Most modern ecumenical statements, especially those issuing from dialogue between particular churches, give what some might see as disproportionate attention to the question of the reconciliation of ordained ministries. One important effect of this is that the theology of ministry is usually discussed in two parts, first, the theology of the ordained, and then, as an afterthought, the theology of the laity. Thus little or no attention is given either to the foundation of ministry in the life of the Church itself, or to the sense in which ministry is a dimension of the life of the whole people of God. The problem is, as Yves Congar points out, that ministry, and indeed the Church itself, has been defined in terms of the hierarchical ministry of the ordained.[31] We need to recover an ecclesiology of ministry, where ministry is seen as the horizon of the whole Church. We need, in other words, to recover a sense of the foundations of ministry in the life of the people of God as a whole.

The foundation of all Christian ministry in the life and ministry of Jesus is powerfully expressed in Peter's defence before the authorities in Jerusalem.[32] Ministry of word and deed is in the name of the crucified and risen Jesus. The apostles act in his name because 'there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12b). Attempts are sometimes made to draw a contrast between the teaching of Jesus himself and the early Church's proclamation of salvation

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[31] Congar, Yves M.J., *Lay People in the Church*, London, 1957, pp. 22–52.

in his name. For example, Ernst Troeltsch, once wrote, 'Jesus did not bring the kingdom of God; the kingdom of God brought Jesus'.[33] It is true that the proclamation of the kingdom of God forms the substance of Jesus' preaching ministry in the synoptic gospels. However, it would be wrong to overlook the attention given in scripture to Jesus' own direct role in the coming of the kingdom. Resolution of this question depends upon the interpretation of New Testament eschatology. In a survey of work on this, George Eldon Ladd points to a growing consensus that the kingdom must be understood as both present and future in the teaching of Jesus.[34] Jesus announces not only a hope for the future but also a time that is fulfilled (Mark 1:14).[35] Gunther Bornkamm points out that the Greek term *basileia* (kingdom) can be used synonymously with God himself.[36] Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom is a declaration of the presence of God himself. In Jesus' life and ministry the kingdom of God has become an event in human history.[37]

Jesus is minister of the kingdom as herald and prophet but he is also minister in a much more direct sense. The kingdom is no longer simply a promise for the future. In Christ it is already becoming a reality in history. 'It is not simply proclaimed in expectation and promise', as L.S. Thornton puts it, 'It is present in fulfilment; for it is a present reality to the mind of Jesus.'[38]

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[32] Acts 4. 8b–11.

[33] Quoted in O'Meara, p. 27.

[34] Ladd, G.E. *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, London, 1980, p. 3.

[35] Cf., also Matthew 4.12–17, 4.23, 9.35; Luke 4.43, 8.1, 9.11.

[36] Bornkamm, G., *Jesus of Nazareth*, New York, 1960, p. 200.

[37] Bornkamm, pp. 169ff; cf., Ladd, p. 35.

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Jesus does not proclaim a reality that lies in the future; he is the one through whom God is bringing about the eschatological promise of salvation for all things. He not only taught 'as one who had authority' (Matt. 7:29); he is also the one whom even the winds and seas obey (Matt. 8:27). Jesus is not simply a messenger of salvation. He has power and authority to forgive sins and to raise the sick from their beds (Matt. 9:6). Christ is first to be born from the dead but he is also the source of resurrection for all (1 Corinthians 15:20-24). Jesus ministers the kingdom not only as prophet and preacher but also as its ground and fulfilment.

We return then to Peter the Apostle, standing before the Jerusalem authorities. He is able to defend his ministry 'in the name of Jesus' because he believes Jesus to be the cornerstone of the kingdom of salvation (Acts 4.10). This provides the authority for the Church's ministry of reconciliation and the substance of its message. It would be wrong to describe this ministry unequivocally as a continuation of Jesus' own ministry of the kingdom; only he is, in the words of Origen, *autobasileia*, the kingdom in person.[39] However, the Church's ministry is nonetheless a participation in Christ's own ministry. Great care needs to be taken about how this is expressed; giving due care and attention both to the union between Christ and the Church and his distinctiveness as its head and source (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15–16; 5:23–27).

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[38] Thornton, L.S. *The Incarnate Lord. An Essay concerning the Doctrine of the Incarnation in its relation to Organic Conceptions*, London, 1928, p. 168.

[39] Origen, 'In Matt. Tom. xiv, 7', GCS, 40, p. 289.

The key here lies in the decision about where to position the Church's ministry in relation to the kingdom of God. Although few would now want to press for the absolute identification of the Church and the kingdom of God, there are dangers in pressing the distinction too far. If we deny altogether any relationship between the kingdom and the Church, we make ministry impossible and, moreover, relegate the kingdom to the realm of utopian ideas. On the other hand, if we press the link between the two too far, then we end up with a dangerously historicised view of the kingdom. What we need in short is a clear grasp of the eschatological foundation of ministry.

In the resurrection of Jesus and in the gift of the Holy Spirit the promise of the kingdom is already having its effect. The Church is the principal sign of the coming reconciliation of all things in God's eternal kingdom (Colossians 1:18–20). Paul's passionate defence of Jesus' resurrection is apposite here. He is quite clear that believing in Jesus' resurrection means believing that the new age is already dawning: 'If the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised' (1 Corinthians 15.16). Believing in the resurrection of Jesus means believing in the new order of things established by God (1 Corinthians 15:23b–26). It is for this message and in the context of this eschatological hope that Christians labour in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58). Moreover, theirs is not simply a message about the future; it is also a declaration about the power of God at work in the present. The kingdom of God is not only a hope for eventual fulfilment, it is also a reality that is making its presence felt in the

community of the baptised. Christ as 'first fruits' is the 'first-born among many brethren' (Romans 8:29). The Church is the community of the Spirit, the community of those who have been 'set free from the law of sin and death' (Romans 8:2). It is the community of those who are already anticipating the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:2 1b).

Although the Church is not synonymous with the kingdom, it is the community of those who are already experiencing the promised reconciliation of all things. The Church exists at the point where the kingdom meets time and history. It looks forward to the final fulfilment of God's promises but it also experiences its own life as the first tangible effect of Jesus' preaching of the kingdom. We might say that it exists in the related modes of promise and fulfilment. In both respects, it represents the kingdom: after the manner of expectation and yearning in the case of the former, and after the manner of anticipation and celebration in the case of the later. The eschatological nature of the Church's ministry has led some to describe the Church as existing in the 'between times' but it would be wrong to see promise and fulfilment as simply two temporal stages in the development of the history of the Church. It is more fruitful to think of promise and fulfilment as two modes of the kingdom in dialectical relation with one another. They are dialectical in the sense that they are distinct but mutually constitutive ways in which the kingdom manifests itself. The kingdom as promise is precisely the promise of fulfilment. From this point of view the Church cannot be said to inhabit an interim stage in the

history of salvation; the Church is rather a community of both promise and fulfilment. Even in its ministry of proclamation, when the Church acts as a declaratory instrument of the promise of fulfilment in the age to come, it already experiences in its own life the substance of that promise. The earnest of that promise is the Pentecostal gift of him who both recalls to mind all that Christ did (John 14:26) and makes known the things that are coming (John 16.13). Along the same lines, the author of Mark's Gospel states that when Christians fulfil a particular ministry it is not they who speak but the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:11), the same Spirit whose advent is the principal sign of God's kingdom come in power. Furthermore, the community of Christians is promised that the sufferings occasioned by the ministry of proclamation are part of the birth pangs of the kingdom (Mark 13:12–13). In ministry the Church is both an instrument of the kingdom and a sign of its realisation. The Church is not simply a bare vehicle for the proclamation of the kingdom, in its ministry it also anticipates the very promise that it proclaims.

The Church has what Ladd describes as a 'dual character'.[40] In this age it is subject to persecution and the limitations imposed by human sinfulness but even in its tribulation it already anticipates the power of the age to come. Although, in its body, the Church experiences the Lord's *pasch*, it is already the recipient of the Spirit, the final gift of the risen and ascended Lord.

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[40] Ladd, p. 268.

THE MINISTRY OF THE DEACON

When it is defined apart from ecclesiology, or, even more, when the Church itself is defined in terms of the ordained ministry, ministry is detached from its ground and basis in the eschatological life of the whole people of God. Ministry loses sight of its reflexive character as a witness to the eschatological hope of the Church and is seen instead as merely an agency for the proclamation of a powerful idea. Earlier we were careful to insist that, in the case of Jesus, message and person is one. Uniquely he is both herald and source of the kingdom. The Church itself also reflects something of this union. Although the Church's ministry proclaims a promise whose fulfilment it awaits, this same ministry is also the first sign of the dawning of the new age of the kingdom: it is a ministry of both promise and fulfilment. Just as Jesus spoke as one having authority, so too the Church's ministry has authority because it reflects and springs from the power of God at work in the spirit-filled community of the Church. Ministry is reflexive in the sense that it emerges from and reflects the eschatological life of the Church. Just as Jesus' message about the kingdom is reflexive or points back to his own person and life, so too the Church in ministry points to its own life as sacrament and sign of the kingdom. This is why ministry is not simply the vehicle for a message but also a manifestation of the fulfilment of the kingdom.

It is important to add certain correctives here. Although Jesus is *autobasileia*, he is also careful at every point to defer to the ultimate authority of the Father. Furthermore, just as Jesus' own proclamation of the kingdom only points back to his own

person by way of the cross and resurrection, so too the Church in ministry points to the kingdom only by way of penitential discipleship and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Indeed in both cases – Jesus and the Church – ministry ultimately reflects the power of God himself. All authority derives from the Father and ultimately returns to him.[41]

The Relational Nature of Ministry

A number of recent discussions have linked the relational nature of ministry to the doctrine of the Trinity.[42] Before we look at the foundations for such an approach to ministry we ought to give some attention to the question of terminology. Relationality refers to the existence of a mutual connection between two persons or things. There are many such connections and some are more significant and far reaching than others. Clearly a relationship of love between two people is more substantial and mutually enriching than, say, the ordinary relation of teacher and pupil. It is important to note, however, that any kind of relation is a two way process. It is dependent upon a degree of mutuality and reciprocity. In our exploration of the relational nature of ministry we will draw upon our consideration of the ecclesial basis of ministry. Describing ministry as ecclesial means both that it exists in relation to the Church *and* that it is social in nature. Ministry is representative only in relation to the whole Church and in relation to the *koinonia* or sociality of the Church.

[41] Cf. 1 Cor 15:27–28.
[42] See, for example, Drilling, P. Trinity *and Ministry*, Philadelphia, 1991.

It is important to be aware that drawing doctrinal inferences from the trinitarian being of God is a complex matter, requiring careful consideration of a number of methodological issues. Arguing that ministry is relational *because* God's nature is relational inverts the normal ordering of trinitarian reflection. As I have argued elsewhere, from an epistemological point of view the trinitarian nature of God should be regarded as a consequence rather than a condition of the experience of salvation.[43] We come to know that God is Trinity because God was in Christ reconciling us to himself. It is this insight that led Rahner to insist on the identity of the economic and immanent Trinity.[44] The doctrine of the Trinity emerges from the Christian experience of salvation. Once identified the trinitarian being of God is then, of course, established ontologically as the ground and basis of creation and redemption. That is to say, the salvific reality of Jesus is subsequently interpreted as a derivation of the trinitarian being of God. It follows, then, that the doctrine of the Trinity emerges from and at the same time secures the Christian understanding of salvation. When reflecting on the Church in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity we need to recognise the complexity of the exercise. As the historical manifestation of the *koinonia* of God's kingdom the Church is internal and not external to the revelation of God as Trinity. We are compelled to speak of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit because his revelation is also an impartation of himself in the healed relationships of the new community. It is this that led

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[43] Hannaford, 1996, pp. 62ff.
[44] Rahner, Karl. *The* Trinity, London, 1970, pp. 21ff.

John Zizioulas to describe the Church as 'the image of the Triune God.'[45] The Church is an image of God because its *koinonia* is part of the divine economy of salvation. It follows that when reflecting on the relational nature of ministry this must be seen as integral and not merely consequential to trinitarian theology. Establishing the validity of this pattern of reflection would involve a wider discussion of the relationship between ecclesiology and the doctrine of the Trinity. Although we do not have the space to pursue this at length, we will give some consideration to the question in our discussion of the Church and *koinonia*, for the moment we will look briefly at the trinitarian and hence relational context of ministry.

It is already clear from our earlier discussion that ministry has its grounding in the ministry of Christ himself. Those who minister do so in the name of Jesus and at his behest (Luke 10:1, 16]. They are ambassadors for Christ engaged in the ministry of reconciliation, participating thereby in God's own reconciliation of the world to himself in Christ (2 Corinthians 5: 18–20). This sending by Jesus is a reflection of Jesus' own sending by the Father (John 20:21b). Those who are called to minister are enfolded in the divine mission of the Son. At the same time those who are sent by the Son receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and hence are embraced also in the second divine mission (John 20:22). Having discussed the Christological dimension of ministry at greater length earlier in the paper we must turn now to the question of its pneumatological form.

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[45] Zizioulas, J.D. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Crestwood, NY, 1985, p. 19.

Christian tradition always associates the gift and person of the Holy Spirit with the *eschaton*. In doing so it takes up an important theme in the Old Testament where the outpouring of the Spirit is seen as a clear sign of the last days (Joel 2;28). At his baptism the heavens open over Jesus and the Spirit descends upon him signalling that the new age has dawned and that he will baptise 'with the Holy Spirit and with fire' (Matthew 3.11b). Jesus' exorcisms in the power of the Holy Spirit are also a sign that the kingdom of God has come (Matthew 12:28). Moreover blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable because it amounts to a denial of the ultimacy of God's kingdom (Matthew 12:32).

The resurrection of Jesus in the Spirit of Holiness (Romans 1:4) marks this as the final eschatological event destined to bring all things to fulfilment and completion. The Spirit is the guarantor of the freedom of the new age, bringing men and women into the presence of the Lord, where beholding his glory they are being 'changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another' (2 Corinthians 3:18). Thus the Spirit is the 'guarantee of our inheritance' (Ephesians 1:14). John presents the Spirit as the gift of the glorified Christ (John 7:39). The outpouring of the Spirit will not only remind the disciples of all that Jesus said; he will also declare 'the things that are to come' (John 16:13). The Church is the community of those who are in receipt of God's plan for the fullness of time 'to unite all things in him' (Ephesians 1:10). Moreover, the Church is not simply the bearer of this message; already, in this age, it is 'sealed with

the promised Holy Spirit' (Ephesians 1:13). The Church in ministry is the body of Christ 'the fullness of him who fills all in all' (Ephesians 1:23). There is then the strongest possible link between the role of the Spirit in Jesus' life and the Church's own participation in the eschatological consequences of his ministry, a point expressed powerfully by Wolfhart Pannenberg:

> The...Spirit bears witness that in Jesus Christ the eschatological consummation of the theme of human life has come already...In the light of the eschatological consummation of creation the Spirit enables us to see the universal truth of the sending of Jesus and glorifies Jesus as the Messiah and the new human. The Spirit's specific work in the Church always relates to Jesus and to the eschatological future of God's kingdom that has dawned already in him.[46]

The Spirit is also the power that ensures the eschatological significance of Christian ministry. The risen Jesus promised that the disciples would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, enabling them to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.80). Moreover, the context makes it plain that this ministry will itself be a sign of the kingdom long hoped for by Israel (Acts 1:6–7). Barnabas and Paul are set apart by the Spirit for the work to which they are called (Acts 13:2). Paul as 'a minister of Christ Jesus to the gentiles' in the 'priestly service of the gospel of God' (Romans 15:16) sees his own work, which includes 'signs and wonders', as a manifestation of the

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[46] Pannenberg, W., *Systematic Theology*, 3, Edinburgh, 1998, p. 20.

power of the Spirit (Romans 15:19).[47] The words of the apostles are a demonstration of the power of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4).

In John's Gospel the pre-Pentecostal gift of the Spirit is linked to the authority given to the disciples to forgive sins (John 20:22–23).[48] The ministry of reconciliation is a clear and direct sign of the eschatological consequences flowing from the death and resurrection of Jesus. Those who are embraced in his mission receive authority to bind and loose, an authority that attracted the opprobrium of the Pharisees when claimed by Jesus. Jesus' own sending by the Father is in the power of the Holy Spirit, reflecting the fact that Jesus' coming is with power. Jesus speaks 'with authority' because his ministry is a manifestation of the Spirit of God. He now pours out the Spirit upon those whom he has called and sent. As F.X. Durrwell points out, the breath breathed on the disciples recalls the creation of Adam.[49] Consecration to the ministry of the apostolate is a creation. However, this is not to be seen as dividing the apostles from the Church. On the contrary since the only new creation is that of the sons of God in Christ 'the grace of the Spirit consecrates a man to the apostolate by making him a Christian.'[50]

The authority given to the twelve by Jesus to cast out spirits and to heal every disease and infirmity (Matthew 10:1) is also a

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[47] cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

[48] See Pannenberg's discussion of this passage, pp. 13ff.

[49] Durrwell, F.X. *Holy Spirit of God*, London, 1986, p. 83f.

[50] Durrwell, p. 84.

sign of the kingdom (Matthew 10:7) and a manifestation of the power of the Spirit of the Father (Matthew 10:20). Miracles, signs, wonders, preaching, visiting and even suffering are seen as the necessary prelude to and anticipation of the end (Matthew 10:22), when the Son of man comes (Matthew 10:23). The Spirit incorporates those who are called to minister into Jesus' own ministry of the kingdom.

Ministry is ecclesial and hence relational because it is a manifestation of the reality and power of the eschatological life of the kingdom at work in the Christian community. Christian ministry is simultaneously a declaration of the prophetic word of God and a manifestation of that same word. It points to a reality in which it is also included and enfolded, namely God's kingdom of mercy and peace. Although rather cumbersome the term 'reflexivity' provides us with a useful metaphor. Just as light is capable of bending or turning back upon itself, so in a significant sense Christian ministry refers back to itself. In pointing to the Lord of the Church, it also and always refers to itself because the Lord cannot be separated from the community for which he was content to be betrayed and to suffer death upon the cross. Every ministerial act is an eschatological event manifesting and imparting what it also declares in promise and in hope. Some concluding reflections on the relation between ministry and *koinonia* will strengthen this point.

Christian ministry is reflexive because it is a sign and manifestation of the Church's ordering to God's eschatological kingdom. At the heart of this lies *koinonia* (communion), which

links the Church not only with the kingdom but also with the trinitarian being of God. In their *koinonia* with Christ and one another, Christians enter directly into the reality of the kingdom. Communion ecclesiology has gained wide prominence in recent theology of the Church. It is a fundamental element in most of the recent bilateral dialogues between Churches.[51] Although the term itself is used infrequently in the documents of the second Vatican Council, *koinonia* is central to its teaching on the Church. Pope John Paul took up this theme in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* insisting that 'Communion is the very mystery of the Church'.[52] This same document also posits a clearly Christological and Trinitarian foundation to the Church's *koinonia*:

> The communion of Christians with Jesus has the communion of God as Trinity, namely, the unity of the Son to the Father in the gift of the Holy Spirit, as its model and source, and is itself the means to achieve this communion: united to the Son in the Spirit's bond of love, Christians are united to the Father.[53]

As a communion the Church is a sign of union with God in Christ and thus of the unity of the whole human race. *Koinonia* in the Holy Trinity is both the divine basis and the end of the Christian understanding of salvation.

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[51] *Fifth Forum on Bilateral Conversations*, Faith and Order Paper No. 156, Geneva, 1989, p. 46.

[52] *The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People. Christifideles Laici*, Pauline Books and Media, 1988, 18.

[53] *Christifideles Laici*

The Church's ministry is social and relational in form and substance because it emerges from and reflects the *koinonia* of the Church as sign and sacrament of salvation. The Church is central to the New Testament picture of salvation. In the Pauline corpus, for example, to be 'in Christ' is to be baptised into the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The communion of the Church is not, however, an end in itself for it serves the mystery of God's will (Ephesians 1:9), his plan to restore the broken unity of the universe (Ephesians 1:10). The Church, which holds within itself the fullness of Christ, is a sign of God's plan of salvation for the whole of creation (Ephesisans 1:23). *Koinonia* is, therefore, the salvific form of the Church, pointing to the trinitarian God and his kingdom as its ground and basis, and anticipating in its own life the final end of all things. '*The reality of the Church as Communion is*, then, the integrating aspect, indeed *the central content of the "mystery,"* or rather the divine plan for the salvation of humanity.'[54]

Concluding Reflections on the Diaconate and the Three-fold Ministry

The diaconate, as it was revived in various forms during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has been strongly identified with the social ministry of humble service. Our analysis raises serious doubts about the theological basis of this model. Ministry is first and foremost a manifestation of God's eschatological kingdom of peace and reconciliation. This, and not the general

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[54] *Christifideles Laici*, 19. Italics in the original.

call to charitable discipleship shared by all the faithful, should form the basis for reflection on the diaconate.

Recognition of this should help to allay the fear that a renewed diaconate would undermine the integrity of lay ministry. Nothing in our analysis has called lay ministry into question. On the contrary, it has underlined the representative nature of all ministry, lay and ordained. Ministry is by definition an action or service on behalf of the whole Church. It is a public and explicit expression of the life of the whole Christian community. It complements and does not detract from the common discipleship of all the baptised. As *BEM* puts it, 'Any member of the body may share in proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, may contribute to the sacramental life of that body. The ordained ministry fulfils these functions in a representative way, providing a focus for the unity of the life and witness of the community.'[55] The diaconate does not detract from the general calling of all the baptised. Alongside the other forms of ministry it is a representation of the emergence of the kingdom in the Spirit-filled life of the Christian community as a whole. Indeed, as we have shown, all forms of ministry loose their *raison d'etre* when they are detached from the life of the Church. Ministry is reflexive. It gains its substance as well as its form from the eschatological life of the Christian community as a whole.

Some of the churches represented on ANDREP have retained the historic threefold order of bishop, priest and deacon; all are committed to reconciliation on this matter by the Porvoo com-

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[55] *BEM*, p. 22.

mon statement. Our analysis, which highlighted the relational nature of ministry, touched on the particular case of the ordained ministry but did not address the question of its form. We were principally concerned with the relation of ministry to the *koinonia* of the Church. We now turn to a consideration of the form of the ordained ministry and the question of whether or not it is appropriate to describe it as having an 'internally' relational form.

It would be an over-simplification to argue that the historic three-fold order of ministry is directly trinitarian in form. We have been careful to avoid an over-hasty identification of ministry with the trinitarian being of God. Instead we argued that the Church and its ministry is integral to the revelation of God as Trinity. From an epistemological point of view the doctrine of the Trinity emerges out of the salvific reality of Christ, and the Church is the visible expression of this. Discussion of the relational form of ministry must always be set firmly within the wider context of the social nature of salvation. We can only say that ministry is trinitarian in form *because* it is a representation of the primary *koinonia* of the Church. The *koinonia* of the Church provides the substance of ministry; the question is whether it can also be said to determine the form of the ordained ministry.

There are clear trinitarian resonances to the language used by Ignatius of Antioch when talking about the threefold ministry:

> I exhort you to study all things with a divine harmony, while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with your deacons, who are most dear to me, and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ.[56]

It is noticeable that Ignatius avoids drawing exact parallels between the Trinity and the three orders. He does not, for example, imply that the precise number has special significance. Instead references are made to the first and second persons of the Trinity and to the council of the apostles. The frame of reference here is provided equally by the trinitarian names of God and the historic Christian community. While bishops are identified here with God the Father, elsewhere Ignatius identifies them with Jesus Christ. The trinitarian significance for Ignatius does not so much lie in the contingent fact that the traditional form of ministry is three in number but rather that it is relational in nature. The three orders exist in relation to one another, in relation to the Church and finally in relation to God. This is what led Ignatius to commend the three orders collectively and separately to his correspondents.

The struggle to secure a clear and honoured place for the ordained diaconate within the Church must be regarded as a matter that touches upon the very basis of the Church and its ministry. Any impairment in the standing of one of the orders affects the other two; such is the direct implication of relation-

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56 *Magnesians*, VI.

ality. Relationality is not an abstract principle; it refers to the concrete reality of the Church's communion in Christ. The baptised do not exist first as a group of individuals and only subsequently as a communion. They exist in communion. This is precisely the trinitarian form of baptised existence. It follows that if the three orders of bishop, priest and deacon are to be seen as an effective sign and representation of the *koinonia* of the kingdom, then equal significance must be granted to all three. To deny an equal place to one or other is to undermine the very basis of the relational nature of ordained ministry. As they are a representation of *koinonia* existence they must be understood as existing not only in relation to one another but also *in* one another. Just as the baptised exist in one another by their incorporation into Christ so too the three orders exist because of their participation in one another. They do not simply complement one another; they are formed always and only in relation to one another. The recovery of a distinctive diaconate is therefore vitally important for the recovery of the full symbolic and sacramental significance of the ordained ministry.

We have so far stressed the unity and interdependence of the threefold ministry but differentiation is an equally important feature of its relational form. Differentiation and unity are equally significant dimensions of the *koinonia* of the Church. Indeed, given the trinitarian basis of the life of the Church, they must be regarded as mutually constitutive forms of the very existence or being of the Church. As a communion in Christ, the Church exists as one in the many and as the many in the one. The apostle Paul captured this very effectively in his use of

the complex metaphor of the body. The model of the Church as the Body of Christ faces in two directions. First, it points towards the significance of the individual constituent parts of the body and their importance for the whole. Secondly, it points to the human body as an organic unity in which the individual parts have no separate existence apart from the whole. As with the human body, so with the Church. The unity of the Body of Christ is not that of a monolithic corporate body in which individual existence is simply subsumed. Quite the contrary, the Church is an organic unity in which persons receive their baptismal existence only in relation to the community. Individual existence, we might say, only becomes a truly personal existence through baptism or birth into the new community of the Church. Paul's model is thus both an anthropology and an ecclesiology of baptised existence. The Christian does not exist first in isolation and then choose to exist in relation to others. Communion in Christ is rather the very basis of personal existence. The *koinonia* of the Church is a sacrament of both the renewed community of God's kingdom and of the perfect fulfilment of human personal existence.

It has been widely recognised since New Testament times that God has granted diverse gifts and ministries to his Church. It is clear from the letters of Paul that this has sometimes been a cause of division and difficulty, with people claiming gifts that they do not possess or disputing the authority of those called to exercise leadership. Paul's response was to underline the degree of ministerial differentiation and to resist the idea of uniformity (1 Corinthians 12:27–31a).

Like the Church it represents, ministry is one, but it is also one in the many. Not all are called to the same ministry and not all ministries are the same. Differentiation is at the service of the unity of the Church. Just as the unity of the Godhead is revealed in the individual persons as well as in their communion, so the three orders of ministry are a constitutive factor in the *koinonia* of the Church.

Differentiation means that we must affirm the equal distinctiveness of the orders of bishop, priest and deacon; it also means that we must avoid the temptation to elevate one over the others. The episcopate is seen as the foundation of all ministry in the Anglican tradition and in some of the Lutheran churches. The bishop is the proper minister of ordination and is also the focus of unity for the local Christian community.[57] Although this view faithfully reflects the early tradition of the Church, great care must be taken in the choice of language used to describe ministerial primacy. Relationality means that the three orders are mutually constitutive. The primacy of the episcopate must not be expressed in a way that detracts from the significance of the other two orders. Hierarchical language is not necessarily inconsistent with trinitarian relationality but it must be conceptualised with great care. Some theologies of the Trinity, especially those from the East, see the Father as the focus of unity in the Godhead. God the Father is understood as the 'crown', even the divine source of the Trinity. The Son and the Holy

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57 See, for example, the discussion of this in the Church of England Report *Episcopal Ministry*. The Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate 1990, London, 1990, pp. 88ff & 275.

Spirit receive their divinity from the Father. There are distinct theological advantages to this approach. In particular it grounds the unity of the Godhead in the specific personhood of the Father, rather than in some abstract conception of divinity. For many this interpretation is more consistently trinitarian because it avoids the need to introduce an extra factor into the interpretation of the divine unity. That having been said, the Father's divinity is not at the expense of the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, for all together are one God and one Lord. Indeed, for his part, the Father is only such because he too exists in the Son and in the Holy Spirit.

Although priests and deacons may be said to receive their ministry from the bishop, there is also an equal sense in which the bishop exists only in relation to the priest and the deacon. This is the clear implication of the trinitarian grounding of the Church and its ministry. We would have to say then that, like the episcopate and the presbyterate, the diaconate is a full and equal order, which is constitutive of the one ministry of Christ in his Church.

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