
A table of contents for *Anvil* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_anvil_01.php

To Be or to Do: Is That the Question?

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In the twenty-six years since the Paul Report was published the Church of England has continued to produce reports concerning the nature, purpose and future of the ordained ministry at a rate in excess of one per year.[1] Furthermore this debate must be set in the context of a Church which seeks to minister to the whole nation with a declining number of stipendiary ministers and which, perhaps now more than ever, is engaged in ministry in what is primarily a missionary situation, if not of overt unbelief, certainly of ignorance of the Christian faith.

Within this mass of literature it is possible to detect two different concepts of ministry which coexist with not a little discomfort. First, there is an ontological concept of the priestly character in part at least consequential upon ordination, as outlined by Moberly.[2] Secondly, there is a functional concept: ministry is what a Christian, lay or ordained, does, as outlined by Lightfoot.[3]

In this article I offer a key which might help to unlock this problem. Initially we pause to consider the place of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. (For as Schillebeeckx observes there is a fundamental 'confusion between two levels, the ontological level of the baptism of the Spirit and the functional level of the ministry'[4]; that all are called to be Christians and that ministry is a particular function done by a Christian person consequent upon their believing.) I then point out four types that illustrate the concept of ministry as outlined by most writers. In the light of these types I shall suggest three fundamental characteristics which illustrate the central tasks of the ordained ministry.

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1 L. Paul, *The Deployment and Payment of the Clergy*, CIO, Westminster 1964. The others are too numerous to list here. As well as these national reports, there have also been numerous diocesan reports published.

2 R. C. Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood* (2nd edn), Murray, London 1899.

3 J. B. Lightfoot, *St Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (3rd edn), Macmillan, London 1873.

4 E. Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face*, SCM, London 1985, p 206.

The Priesthood of All Believers

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers has its origins in the New Testament, principally in Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, 1 Pet. 2:9 and Rev. 5:10. Within these passages is revealed what might be called a doctrine of collective priesthood. All Christians are a priestly body whose objective is to be a living expression of the priesthood of Christ and so to declare the message of the reconciliation between God and humankind through him.

It was this notion of priesthood which became obscured and was subsequently recovered for the Church by Luther as a result of his biblical studies. He based his concept of ministry upon what he believed to be the New Testament doctrine, arguing that there could only be one Christian estate, which all believers entered by baptism and so were consecrated priests. The ordained ministry continued, but to fulfil specific functions called for by the Church. For Luther, ordination did not confer an indelible character upon an individual.

Küng is a contemporary writer for whom the priesthood of all believers is a linchpin of his doctrine of ministry. Like Luther, he recognises the importance of this doctrine in any attempt to describe the nature and purpose of the ordained ministry. However, he acknowledges that the priesthood of all believers is all too often used as a purely negative statement 'in order to reject the idea of priestly representation and mediation'.[1] In the New Testament there is no concept of a priestly office. Rather, priesthood is used, first to describe the ministry of Christ who alone is a priest and mediator between God and humankind (Heb. 8:6, 9:15, 12:24); and, secondly, to describe the Church itself as the people of God, a holy, royal priesthood (Rom. 12:1, Heb. 12:28, 13:15-16, 1 Pet. 2:5, Rev. 2:5, 4:6, 5:10, 20:6).

Küng offers five positive reasons why it is important to take the priesthood of all believers seriously. First, by grace and through faith all people have access to God which cannot be humanly interrupted. Secondly, the sacrifice people offer is of praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of salvation; it is not offered as an act of atonement, which is the work of Christ alone. Thirdly, the preaching of the word of God is entrusted to all, not in any narrow sense but by their personal Christian witness. Fourthly, the administration of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the forgiveness of sins are directed to all disciples of Jesus Christ. Finally, the priesthood of the believer is not just in relationship with God, but also reveals God's activity to the world.[2]

Thus the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is not the rejection of the ordained ministry; rather it is the affirmation of the ministry of all people. It is on this premise that particular persons may fulfil particular functions to which they are called by the Church. 'The priesthood of all believers means that as the church has the authority of Christ in ministering

1 H. Küng, *The Church*, Search Press, Tunbridge Wells 1968, p 372.
2 Küng, op. cit., pp 370-382.

and so can delegate that authority to ministers whose authority rests on that of the church, so the church can delegate its priestly authority to official priests whose authority rests upon the priesthood of Christ expressed in and through the priestly authority of the church.'[1]

A Fourfold Typology of Ministry

A typology is the attempt to recognise shared concepts (or types) by identifying the common threads that unite the thinking of different authors. Despite the range of thinking about the doctrine of ministry no real attempt has been made to provide a systematic typology of it.

Dulles offers five models of the Church, each of which supports a different concept of the ministry.[2] However, interesting though these are, they are not strictly types of ministry. Likewise, Anthony Russell offers three scenarios which could describe the future of the Church of England and its ministry. These are the 'church of the traditionalist future', the 'church of the adaptionist future' and the 'church of the reformist future'.[3] However, as Russell himself accepts, these are little more than conjectures about the possible shape of the future. They cannot strictly be called types.

I propose a basic four-fold typology for ministry which is a useful tool to align the common threads that link attempts to redefine the task of the ordained ministry in the Church of England. The four types are, first, the traditionalist, which is content with little or no change from that which presently exists; secondly, the ascetic, which draws its inspiration from a passive or reflective ministry primarily exercised through the Church, seen as the faithful gathered Christian community; thirdly, the charismatic, which seeks to understand the Church as a movement with a mission to those who are not identified as being God's people; and finally, the revolutionary, which completely rejects the inherited tradition and its ministry, believing that only through a new start will the Church be redeemed.

The Traditionalist Type

Fundamental to the traditionalist type is the importance of the institution which is the Church of England. The institutional aspect of the Church is regarded as having its own intrinsic value which needs to be guarded; yet at the same time it is acknowledged that 'No Church can offer its ministry of

1 R. P. C. Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined*, Lutterworth Press, Guildford 1979, p 28.
2 A. Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin 1976, pp 151ff.
3 A. Russell, *The Clerical Profession*, SPCK, London 1984, pp 297-304.

priesthood unless its organisation is reasonably congruent with its task.'[1] However, having entered this caveat, those upholding the traditionalist type accept the existing structures and system without any desire for significant change: 'Those, therefore, who wish to discard the parochial system or change it on the grounds that it is either out of date or sociologically inappropriate, may be underestimating its institutional importance.'[2]

In this type the Church tends to be clerically dominated, with the role of the vicar being paramount. It uses as its basis for describing the work of the vicar a model of professionalism which is inherited from the nineteenth century. This model, which has remained unchallenged, is that of the independent gentleman, as identified by Russell.[3] The traditionalist suggests two areas where the independence of the clergy is most under threat. First there is the relationship between the bishop and the priest. Carr notes with alarm the comment of one church-goer that 'Our vicar used to be a man who stood between us and God; now he seems to stand between us and the bishop.'[4] The second is the growth of collaborative ministries in the Church of England. This, Carr suggests, is witnessed by the rise of team and group ministries and by the vogue of the deanery and the consequent emphasis upon the the role of rural dean. He proceeds to draw attention to a number of issues. Where does authority ultimately reside in collaborative ministry? Where or how is ministry located? Which person is minister for which church? Will not collaborative ministry serve to isolate the priest from the people, particularly in rural areas? Finally, he notes that the deanery is not a unit that has any executive authority and therefore is unable to act decisively.

The traditionalist type, of which Carr's *The Priestlike Task* is a good example, assumes a basic structure of independent parishes each with its own vicar and believes that this will remain the only viable system for the foreseeable future, even if only by default. As a result much of the writing from traditionalists is in the form of handbooks for ministry representing a 'hints and tips' approach to pastoral theology.[5] It seeks to help the clergy to perform their priestly work more efficiently and stimulate their own ideas.

The strength of this type is its recognition of the importance and the strength of the institution. It has a thorough grasp of the significance of the tradition and its value to many people. However, one problem is that too often this type is defensive, even negative in tone; it attempts to praise and

1 W. Carr, *The Priestlike Task*, SPCK, London 1984, pp 297-304.
2 Ibid., p 60.
3 Russell, op. cit., p 255.
4 Carr, op. cit., p 64.
5 R. Martineau, *The Office and Work of a Priest* (Revised edn.), Mowbray, Oxford 1981; W. Carr, op. cit.; M. Hocking, *A Handbook of Pastoral Care*, Mowbray, Oxford 1977.

preserve. Combined with the conviction that the proven track record is evidence of the quality of the existing system, there is a fear of change. Change may be perceived as resulting in a loss of security, with the possible weakening or even disappearance of an institution that is understood and with which people feel comfortable.

The traditionalist type is probably heading towards the scenario described by Russell as the 'church of the traditionalist future', of rigidity of structures, decline and cultural irrelevance, leading ultimately to a slow self-induced destruction of the Church as any sort of force in the culture of the nation.

The Ascetic Type

The ascetic type sees its foundation in the fostering of a true and deep awareness of the reality of God, the consequent expression of this in the life of the individual Christian and, through each person, in the life of the whole Church. The objective is not moral guidance to better living that 'aims at the eradication of bad fruit'; rather the ascetic aims 'at the creation of a good tree.'[1] What is sought is a compromise between the multitudinous pressure of caring for all souls in a parish, with the consequent lowering of Christian standards, and the sectarian notion that the priest is responsible only for tending the flock of Christ.

Crucial to this type is the concept of the faithful remnant. God has called a chosen people (originally Israel) to be his chosen elect, founded in purity of worship and faith. It is upon this faith of the chosen elect that the salvation of the world depends. This is highlighted by the vicarious principle of the remnant as epitomised in the servant poems of Isaiah. By ascetic training the Christian may grow closer to the calling to be Christ-like and so offer a real vision of God to the world. The discipline by which this asceticism can be put into practice is through the three-fold rule of the Church, which is found in the office, the eucharist and private prayer.

The ascetic rejects overt mission or evangelism as recruitment. What is advanced is the offering of the faithful Christ to those around: 'The Church lives at the point where the love of God is exposed to its final possibility of triumph or tragedy – the triumph of being recognised as love, the tragedy of so passing unrecognised that the final gift, the gift of which all other gifts are symbols, the gift of love itself is never known.'[2]

Thus, for Vanstone, the Church must be involved in a ministry which has an in-built potential of rejection and failure.[3] Wright's answer to the basic question, 'What is the pastor for?'[4] is: to point to a reality beyond himself, which is the mystery of God. 'Christianity has come into the world with a double purpose, to offer men the vision of God and to call them to the pur-

1 M. Thornton, *Pastoral Theology: A Reorientation*, SPCK, London 1964, p 10.
2 W. H. Vanstone, *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense*, Darton Longman and Todd, London 1977, p 1.
3 Vanstone, op. cit., pp 46, 107.
4 F. Wright, *The Pastoral Nature of the Ministry*, SCM, London 1980, p 1.

suit of that vision'.[1] The role of the clergy is, therefore, to service that goal and its achievement by the people so that 'In the visible Church man is aspiring to create something which expresses his recognition of the love of God.'[2]

The ascetic model draws heavily upon an ontological understanding of the ordained ministry. In his classic description of ministry Moberly[3] uses 'ministry' exclusively to describe an ordained 'priestly' ministry. For Moberly the ordained ministry symbolises and embodies much more. This is consequent upon his emphasis upon the need for incarnation, that the Church is the body of Christ and is both 'from above' and 'from below'. What Moberly presents is therefore a traditional institutional model of the Church, outside which there can be no salvation. Because of the givenness of the Church it can never be fundamentally changed, for this would be contrary to the Spirit.

One would not wish to challenge the spiritual beauty of this model and, despite its passivity, it is intensely positive in describing both the Church and its ministry. It invests both the structure and its ordained ministry with a real value and importance. However, the question may be asked whether, because of its very passivity, the vision of God it offers can be seen by the casual bystander. There is no way that the effectiveness of its ministry can be evaluated. The clergy are the servants of God and the Church. They are, if we take the description of the ascetic as being a reference to an athlete of God, the trainers of Christ's flock. However, for what are they training the people? They are training them to be but not necessarily to do. This appears to be a little one-sided. The ascetic type draws heavily upon the concept of the priestly character, a quality, rather than upon a concept of a priestly function, performing something; perhaps a little too much.

The Charismatic Type

'Charismatic' is a word that needs to be approached with caution if it is not to be misunderstood. We shall use the word to denote a type of ministry which is gift-based and which seeks to enable all Christian people to utilize their God-given gifts in the service of the gospel. Undoubtedly the insights of the charismatic or renewal movement have been influential in the development of the concept of the priesthood of all believers. In practice the concept of a charismatic type of ministry has expanded beyond any narrow boundaries.

Of primary importance is the idea that the local church, the body of Christ, is responsible for its own ministry. The origins of the revival of this concept of the Church as the body of Christ are impossible to pin-point. However, we may offer two pointers, but these are in no sense the complete answer. First, there was the awareness of the inability of the

1 Wright, op. cit., p 12.
2 Vanstone, op. cit., p 106.
3 Op. cit.

traditional, inherited concepts of the ordained ministry and its associated structures in the Church of England, to cope with the demands made upon it.[1] Secondly, there was the impetus from new theological insights into the nature and purpose of the ordained ministry. This renewed interest in the nature and purpose of the ordained ministry was marked by the recognition of the diversity of the forms of ministry in the New Testament and the realisation that the universality of the three-fold order of ministry was only established in the third century. At the same time there had arisen a new emphasis upon the biblical image of the body of Christ as being of central importance in describing the nature of the Church. It is but a small step to the view that the Church is the active people of God who are enabled to minister by the gifts which God gives for this very reason.[2]

Consequently church structures are not regarded as being divinely instituted or appointed, but are viewed from a more pragmatic viewpoint. All structures are open to question. The Church is regarded as a movement with a mission to tell those who do not believe or have not heard the good news of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the love of God and to be an active agent for the Kingdom of God in this world. However, 'It would be a strange conclusion to reach that the Church has been radically wrong for two thousand years, and therefore needs a completely new structure.'[3] While the emphasis is upon an every-member ministry, yet it does not advocate the complete rejection of the ordained, professional ministry. Rather, what is advocated is its transformation to being a collaborative or (perhaps a better description might be) corporate ministry and leadership.

This assumes a model of the Church that Dulles would call the Church as communion. This model he describes as a reaction against the excessive institutionalism of previous ages and as one which is built upon the central image of the Church as the people of God. The minister is ordained not as one who has an inherent power but who serves as the congregational leader. He is the one who is commissioned to fulfil a certain function within the community.[4]

The charismatic type proposes what is essentially an active theology of ministry. It is one in which all Christians are called to *do*; to *be* is not enough. Tiller argues that the basic commission for ministry is baptism, that 'Every baptised Christian has been called to and authorised for Christian service in Christ's name, as a member of the body of Christ, the people of God.'[5] This statement calls into question the practice of wholesale infant baptism, especially of those who have no active connection with the Church as a worshipping community. Ministry is for all Christians – it is a call to action. The strength of this model is that it does

1 G. Reid, ed, *Hope for the Church of England?*, Kingsway, Eastbourne 1986, p 194.
2 Rom. 12:4-8, 1 Cor. 12:12-31, Eph. 4:4-16.
3 M. Harper, *Let My People Grow*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1977, p 170.
4 Dulles, op. cit., p 154.
5 J. Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church's Ministry*, CIO, London 1983, p 63.

not overvalue the structures and is therefore implicitly quite flexible. Its weakness is that it could be seen as undervaluing ordination and the ordained ministry in its willingness to recognise the importance of the ministry of all people. Taken to its logical conclusion this could lead to uncertainty over the root of authority within the Church.

Theologically the charismatic type draws upon Lightfoot.[1] The charismatic type demands commitment from church members. It rejects the maintenance of the *status quo* as a valid goal, and overtly seeks growth in the numerical size of the local church and the maturity of faith attained by its members.

The Revolutionary Type

In 1982 an article in *The Guardian* had the headline 'Vicar's departure sets Church a problem.'[2] In the article there was a brief interview with the Revd Christopher Clay, the vicar of St Peter's, Macclesfield. He and a large proportion of the congregation (including most of the PCC) decided to leave the Church of England and to form an independent church. According to the article, the principal reason for this dramatic action was the desire to impose a more stringent adult only baptism policy. This incident, which is not unique, illustrates the fourth type, the revolutionary, epitomised by the rejection of all denominations. It is argued that despite their long history, not all of which has been bad, they have ultimately proved to be a failure in the task of being part of God's mission to offer salvation to all through Jesus Christ. The denominations are rejected as compromising the total obedience demanded by the gospel with the claims of the secular world. This movement has sometimes been identified as the 'house church movement', but following Andrew Walker[3] it is probably better given the title Restorationism.

Like the charismatic type, this type stresses the primacy of Eph. 4 in any concept of ministry. Indeed, there is outright rejection of the appropriateness of any ministry which is not found in the New Testament. Traditionally the Church of England has argued that any form of ministry is valid provided it is not contrary to Scripture.[4] Originally Restorationism upheld a five-fold ministry, though this division is purely functional and not in theory a hierarchical one. (However, the fact that Restorationism has continued to develop is significant.) First, there were apostles. These were those who were called by God to plant new churches and who subsequently were responsible for their oversight. An apostle cannot be made or appoin-

1 Op. cit.
2 *The Guardian*, 19 April 1982.
3 A. Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1985. Walker's book is one of the best, clearest and fairest descriptions and analyses of the development of the Restorationist movement and is the source of most of my information.
4 Article 34.

ted, but earns recognition as such by the church. There are relatively few apostles. Secondly, there were elders who exercised a ministry combining pastoring and teaching in the local church, and who formed the backbone of the movement. Thirdly, there were the role of the diaconate, which was in part assumed by the leaders of small cells or home groups. Fourthly, there were the various ministries of specific gifts; for example evangelists, prophets and teachers. These were not nearly so closely defined as the first three ministries. Finally, there were those who are members of an apostolic team. They were those who, having widely-recognised gifts, were released by their local churches in order to help the apostles fulfil their role of evangelism and decision-making.

At present Restorationism forms what Weber would describe as a church in its primary stage and a charismatic movement (in the sociological and not the theological sense). Its weakness, as Walker suggests, is that it seems likely that Restorationism is not only becoming sectarian but, far from marking the beginning of a pure, denomination-free church as it hopes, runs the risk of itself becoming ultimately one more Christian denomination.[1] In short it is in danger of becoming that which it sought to reject.

The strength of this type is its stress upon the necessity of the individual believer having total commitment to Christ and Christ alone. Because it stands outside the historic traditions it has a brashness of youth which makes it unafraid to ask questions. The question it poses is whether the price of redemption for the churches is bought only at the cost of dying in order to be reborn in Jesus Christ. The essential mark of this type is its rejection of the traditional and its desire to make a fresh start.

Ministry: A Pragmatic Argument

The argument of this article is that ministry can be described only as a function. However, this is not a universally held understanding of ministry. According to Oden, 'not everyone is authorised by the whole church to act representatively on its behalf, to offer the eucharist, to teach the community in pastoral prayer, to preach and counsel. Jesus and the apostles anticipated our religious needs by providing the *laos* with an ordered ministry of word, sacrament and care. This requires committed and informed persons who have studied in more than a slapdash way as a serious lifelong pursuit and intentional vocational commitment and who have been set aside both by their inner sense of calling and by the outward action of the church.'[2]

Oden describes a ministry that is essential in the life of the Church and has always been so. However Hanson suggests, 'The church developed the official ministry because it needed the official ministry, neither in response to the demand of logical significance attaching to the offices assumed, nor

1 Walker, op. cit., pp 252, 289.
2 T. C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, Harper and Row, San Francisco 1984, p 88.

as a kind of hedge against disillusion and fading enthusiasm. In the history of a great many institutions and religions the first careless rapture is succeeded by a period of sober consolidation . . . Pressures and problems both outside the church and within made it essential for the church to develop a permanent ministry, and if permanent then official, and if official then ordained.'[1]

The questions to be asked are, therefore, not about the existence of the ordained ministry but: 'What should it mean? How should it function? What is its relation to the church as a whole?'[2] This functional concept of the ministry is one which accords with the charismatic type.

I suggest three specific areas as describing most fully the nature and purpose of the ordained ministry. First, the ordained ministry is responsible for the guardianship of the catholicity of the Church. Secondly, it fulfils a representative function. Finally, ministry is primarily a matter of fulfilling a recognised function in the Church.

1 Guardians of Catholicity

At the outset, we need to be sure that we understand what we mean when we speak of 'guardians of catholicity'. A way forward is to consider the matter under two headings: first, the ordained ministry as a focus of unity; secondly, catholicity and apostolic succession.

1.i A Focus of Unity

The New Testament talks almost exclusively of the local Christian community rather than the universal Church.[3] Tiller, in discussing the future of the ordained ministry, suggests that 'The local church, as the body of Christ in a particular place, should be responsible for undertaking the ministry of the gospel in its own area.'[4] This is a logical result of any attempt to take seriously the challenge of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The result could be many independent churches.

However, as Schillebeeckx recognises, 'No Christian community can call itself autonomously the ultimate source of its own ministries.'[5] 'While the individual local Church is *an* entire Church, it is not *the* entire Church . . . Then again inasmuch as each local Church makes present the entire

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1 R. P. C. Hanson, op. cit., p 93.
2 Ibid., p 95.
3 J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, SCM, London 1977, p 121. Dunn's argument is that the New Testament is the product of various writers and divergent cultures. Most of the writing in both the Pauline and Pastoral Epistles is addressed to specific churches facing particular problems.
4 Tiller, op. cit., p 95.
5 L. Grollenberg, J. Kerkhofs, A. Houtepen, J. J. A. Vollebergh and E. Schillebeeckx, *Minister? Pastor? Prophet?*, SCM, London 1980, p 72.

Church, it too may be called catholic.'[1] Küng is here arguing that the local church is catholic in so far as it is representative of the wider, the universal Church. At the simplest level, the presence of a person trained in and by the wider Church should broaden and enhance the local self-sufficiency of the parish church. That is not to suggest the ordained minister is a source of catholicity. In this respect his function is to uphold the catholicity of the local church.

However, the ordained ministry is not only a focus of unity of the local church in relation to the wider Church but also internally in the local church itself. One way in which the minister functions as an agent of catholicity is in his role as a focus of unity within in the local church. Following 1 Cor. 7:7 and 12:7, Boff argues that the Church is the variety of God-given gifts. However, these all need bringing together in harmony and for the common good of the community: 'The New Testament speaks of the charism of direction and governance (1 Cor. 12:28), and of those who preside in the community (1 Thess. 5:12, Rom. 12:8, 1 Tim. 5:17). The presbyters (the elders), the bishops (*episkopoi*), and the deacons are the vehicles, or vessels of the charism of unity, of oneness, in the community.'[2]

While the Church is created out of variety, variety is also a source of tension and even conflict. Many churches are composed not of a single-minded group but of people with a wide variety of hopes, desires and expectations. There is a real need for this tension to be managed creatively to prevent internal conflict and to enable the church to adhere to the demands of the gospel in a constructive way.

1.ii Catholicity and Apostolic Succession

The apostles were of foundational importance for the early Church. They were commissioned by the risen Christ to be missionaries, to proclaim the gospel and to plant churches. Thus with the death of the apostles, especially Paul, a huge gap was left in the life of the primitive Church. The primitive Church had looked to these men as a living link with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This living link was in turn replaced by the written link of the New Testament in the preservation of the tradition as it had been inherited. Indeed the passing on of the tradition was an important function of the apostles. As Dunn suggests, 'In particular, it was his responsibility to pass on the gospel given to him by the risen Lord in his commissioning as confirmed by his fellow apostles.'[3]

Therefore we can see that the preservation of the tradition was not only by means of the Gospel writings 'but also by the special commissioning of ministries intended to preserve the original apostolic testimony.'[4] This

1 Küng, op. cit., p 300.
2 L. Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*, Collins, London 1986, p 94.
3 Dunn, op. cit., p 111. cf. 2 Tim. 2:2.
4 Küng, op. cit., p 425.

became particularly important in the light of the rise of Gnosticism and Montanism. Thus, according to Küng, apostolic succession is about keeping faith with the apostles.

Catholicity is therefore about unity. It is a unity that joins the Church of today with the apostles and so with Christ. 'There is no route to the Lord which bypasses the apostles. The Churches can only know him through their witness. The original and fundamental witness of the apostles is the source and norm of the Church's existence in preaching, faith and action, alike in all times and places . . . Apostolic succession is therefore a question of continual and living confrontation of the Church and all its members with this apostolic witness.'[1]

Russell, describing the principal roles of the rural clergyman, speaks of him as an agent or guardian of the apostolic catholicity of the church in which he serves 'to ensure that the church continues to fulfil its ancient function as a church.'[2] The minister is to ensure that the church fulfils this arduous task and to redirect it should it go astray, although, as the priesthood of believers reminds us, all Christians are called to share in the proclamation of the gospel and so participate in the apostolic task. 'Within this whole process of tradition, ministry is important, but it is only one of many authorities which are concerned to preserve and keep alive and intact the gospel of Jesus Christ and therefore of apostolicity.'[3]

However, the ordained minister is recognised as being an official representative of the Church. It is this representative function of the ordained ministry we shall need to examine next.

2 Ordained to Represent

In any discussion of the ordained ministry as having a representative function, it must be made clear that this is not intended in any priestly sense as one who represents either humanity to God or God to humanity: this position is occupied by Christ alone. Rather the the ordained ministry is representative because it is a 'gathering up of roles which belong to the whole Church.'[4]

We shall examine the representative nature of ministry under three subheadings: first, that as a recognised representative of the Church an ordained minister has authority; secondly, that ministry has a prophetic and missionary function in representing the Church; and finally, that the representative nature of the ministry is a symbolic role.

2.i Ordination, Ministry and Authority

Ordination is the ritual by which the Church publicly recognises the validity of a person's vocation to the ministry as initiated by God and calls

1 Küng, op. cit., p 356.
2 A. Russell, *The Country Parish*, SPCK, London 1986, p 271.
3 Schillebeeckx, op. cit., p 117.
4 A. M. Ramsey, *The Christian Priest Today* (Revised edn), SPCK, London 1987, p 6.

them to exercise this ministry. This is then authenticated by the laying on of hands and prayer. 'Thus the ordained ministry is a product of the church. Let us rather say it is the product of the Holy Spirit acting in the church. We must not claim . . . that the ministry descends by transmission with a clerical order from Christ independently of the church.'[1] Thus Hanson describes ministry as originating in the need of the early Church 'to commission agents who should be seen to bear the authority of the church'.[2] Ordination serves to legitimate the ministry of the person both for the person and in the eyes of the Church. Ordination is the visible sign that the person is recognised to stand in the apostolic traditions of the Church.

'All authority in the Church is ultimately derived from the Lord . . . this holds true for the congregation and each individual . . . also for the leader of the congregation in his particular vocation . . . he must not say only what the congregation likes to hear . . . but what the Lord of the Church through his gospel requires of him and the congregation in this particular situation.'[3] Ordination is an authority to represent the apostolic catholicity of the Church, recognising that the minister stands within the apostolic succession of the faith.

Halliburton asks where authority is located in the Church of England. He offers six possible sources of authority: the Anglican Consultative Council, the Lambeth Conference, the Crown in Parliament, the Convocations, the Church Courts and the General Synod. In the end he concludes, 'the Church looks to its bishops for particular guidance as it does in so many other instances. For in the search for the location of authority within the Church of England, . . . through the web of bureaucracy, democracy and establishment, the historic role of the bishop as guardian of the Christian tradition and representative and spokesman of the whole Church emerges with considerable strength.'[4]

To sum up, the ordained minister represents and is authorised by the Church to act on its behalf. He represents the needs of the people he serves, and transmits the beliefs and traditions of the historic Church to its contemporary members and to the wider world. While the priest fulfils this role within the local church, a similar role is occupied by the bishop within the diocese and beyond. However, this representative authority is not absolute. It is tempered first by the fact that the ordained minister is primarily a member of the community of faith and the servant of the Church, and secondly by the democratic synodical structure through which the Church of England seeks to make its decisions.

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1 A. T. and R. P. C. Hanson, *The Identity of the Church*, SCM, London 1987, p 145.
2 Ibid.
3 H. Küng, *Why Priests?*, Doubleday, New York 1972, p 96.
4 J. Halliburton, *The Authority of a Bishop*, SPCK, London 1987, p 8.

2.ii A Missionary and Prophetic Function

According to Boff, 'If the church itself sprang from a decision, it will continue to live if Christians and men and women of faith in the risen Christ and his Spirit permanently renew this decision, and incarnate, enflesh the church in new situations with which they are confronted.'[1] The call of the Church is to encourage people to respond to Christ by living Christian lives. It is important that ministry should not just be concerned with the congregation but should challenge the church to look beyond its own immediate internal concerns. The missionary and the prophetic have a great deal in common, for they are both concerned with making people listen to what God is saying to the world. In a society where many people have a concept of God that bears only a minimal resemblance to Christian doctrine, the missionary and prophetic role is becoming increasingly important. However, 'The majority of the clergy in all churches seemed to have next to no idea how to cope with a frankly missionary situation which now faced them. New apostolate – the house mass, prayer groups, retreats, small conferences, clerical commitment to special social needs and much else – were tried at times and by some, but the toughness and versatility required both in the minister and his congregation by genuinely missionary situations were too seldom in evidence.'[2]

It would be an error if mission were to be understood solely in terms of evangelism in its narrowest sense. Mission must also include a prophetic awareness of the needs of the world. According to Schillebeeckx, the prophetic role of the Church is to interpret 'the signs of salvation and disaster in the world in which it lives'.[3] It involves representing the call of God to all who will listen; it involves not just a spiritual call but must also challenge and be a dynamic Christian critique of people and society in the light of the gospel. The missionary and the prophetic are therefore complementary. Both should challenge the world to hear God's word and to respond in an appropriate way.

2.iii The Representative as a Symbolic Role

Three times Paul urges his correspondents to be 'imitators of me' (1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1, Phil. 3:17) and once to be 'imitators of us' (1 Thess. 1:6), referring to himself and his fellow-workers. Hanson, commenting on 1 Cor. 4:16, suggests: 'From it we learn that the task of ministry is to serve the Church, but to serve it by itself first living out the suffering redeeming life of Christ in the world in order that the Church as a whole may do likewise.'[4]

The task of the minister is to provide a role-model for Christian living. This is not the narrow symbolism that is sometimes suggested, that the

1 Boff, op. cit., p 56.
2 A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*, Collins, London 1985, p 615.
3 Grollenberg *et al.*, op. cit., p 80.
4 A. T. Hanson, *The Pioneer Ministry*, SCM, London 1961, p 62.

minister in celebrating the eucharist represents God, whom we experience principally in the male person of Jesus Christ. It is the call to be truly Christ-like. The ministry is not undertaking something the Church cannot do; rather it is pointing the way for the Church, just as Christ shows the way for all of us.

3 Ministry as Function

Lightfoot sought to challenge the sacerdotal concept of the priesthood of the ordained: 'The Kingdom of Christ, not being a kingdom of this world . . . has no sacred days or seasons, no special sanctuaries . . . Above all it has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man.'[1] However, he acknowledges that all societies require structures, rules and officers to maintain them. Lightfoot seeks to trace the biblical and historical origins of the threefold pattern of ministry. Ultimately he concludes that the priesthood of the minister is derived from the priesthood of the whole people of God. Therefore he suggests that ordained ministry is representative and functional.

Schillebeeckx also argues that ministry is functional. It is a job done within the life of the Church: 'ministry is defined essentially in ecclesiastical terms and not as an ontological qualification of the person of the minister, apart from his function in the church.'[2]

Alastair Campbell suggests that: 'The problem is the structures and the leaders . . . tend to become invested with an importance and a spiritual status well beyond their true function in the community of believers. Instead of being viewed as merely functionally necessary to ensure some kind of order and continuity, the nominated or ordained leaders become paradigmatic for all Christian ministry, and those Christians who are not ordained become viewed as lesser Christians'.[3]

Ministry, ordained or otherwise, is service done in the diverse life of the Church. The function of the ordained ministry is necessarily varied according to the job it is doing. However, I would nominate three particular characteristics.

First, the ordained ministry is professional.[4] Ministers, by reason of their specialist training and education, experience and position should assist the Church to fulfil its call to be the people of God. However, they must eschew all claims they hold any power over those they serve. Such claims are incompatible with the priesthood of all believers.

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1 Lightfoot, op. cit., p 179.
2 Grollenberg *et al.*, op. cit., p 59.
3 A. V. Campbell, *Paid to Care*, SPCK, London 1985, p 21.
4 There is a great deal of material about what constitutes a profession, however, good introductions for the ordained ministry are A. Russell, *The Clerical Profession* and A.V. Campbell, *Paid to Care?*

Secondly, the ordained ministry is concerned with leadership, authority and service in the Church.[1] Perhaps a better description of Christian leadership is to suggest that the ordained minister has a presiding function in the life of the local church. This implies that the minister's authority is not simply personal, but an authority that is exercised through the whole group.

Thirdly, the ordained minister should have a defined job in the life of the Church. The use of job descriptions for all appointments would not only focus attention on the tasks and functions to be performed but by providing a basis for regular assessment would also throw clearly into relief when and what sort of support might be required.[2]

Thus ministry is defined by what it does and not by the character or status of those who minister. All Christians are called to discipleship, to be with Jesus and to follow him. Baptism, as Schillebeeckx recognises, is the outward sign of the ontological life in the Spirit of all Christian people. This must not be confused with the functional level of the particular type of ministry the individual fulfils.[3] Ordination is the sign of but one expression of ministry.

The Church and its ministry are a means to an end, not the end in itself. An essential aspect of the charismatic concept of the Church is that ministry and structure are agents of its purpose or vision, which is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Ministry is pragmatic: it is the servant of this goal. The form of its outward expression is of secondary importance to the fulfilment of its purpose. Ministry is pragmatic or functional because ultimately it is concerned with the result of its activities.

There seems to be a great deal of confusion in the thinking of the Church of England concerning ministry, ordained or lay. Much of this confusion is the result of an attempt to reconcile by coexistence an ontological understanding of the stipendiary ministry and a functional or charismatic concept of non-stipendiary and women's ministry. This article suggests that a functional concept of ministry, based upon the priesthood of all believers, offers a solid foundation from which it is possible to explore ministry in all its aspects.

I would not wish to challenge the threefold order. However, if my main premise is accepted, hard questions must be asked concerning the manner in which ministry functions overall and, in order to assess their validity within the Church, how the various intrinsic parts contribute and mesh together. The ordained ministry should fulfil a defined function within a charismatic concept of the Church of England. This I hope is no mere reductionism. Although the ordained ministry can rightly be described as a job, it is also a vocation. All ministers, lay or ordained, are called to be involved in the representation of Christ to people and people to Christ. This priesthood is not the exclusive property of the ordained few; it is the property of all Christians.

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1 For an introduction see Grollenberg *et al.*, op. cit., pp 41-56; A. Dulles, *Models of the Church*.
2 M. Jacobs, *Holding in Trust*, SPCK, London 1989.
3 Schillebeeckx, op. cit., p 206.