Episcopal Ministry

Today's Church & Today's World

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Section V

It was a laudable and meritorious enterprise to devote an entire section of this pre-Lambeth Report to 'Episcopal Ministry'. The authors of this section have been well chosen; they know what they are writing about and give a just and favourable impression of the functioning of episcopacy within the Anglican Communion. Three out of the nine writers are bishops, and two out of the nine are not Anglicans. Reading over this section one gains the impression that Anglicans are rightly proud of the possession of episcopacy, but not without a necessary vein of self-criticism in their use of it. No unjustified claims, whether historical or theological, are made on behalf of the institution, but no impartial reader can fail to be convinced that the episcopal ministry is part of the very essence of Anglicanism.

The essay I enjoyed most was written by a non-Anglican, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. Penetrating, informed by his own experience as a bishop in South India, sensitive to Anglican attitudes, it is a brilliant ecumenical achievement. One must not fail to note the significance of the fact that two of the articles in this book are contributed by bishops in a united church who themselves come from the Presbyterian tradition. The other one (it occurs in Section IV) is by my old friend from student days, Donald Kennedy, Bishop of Bombay in the Church of North India. These are portents: the catholic episcopate has been successfully integrated into unions of churches drawn from many Reformed traditions. Presbyterian clergy have succeeded (and these are not the only examples) in showing us Anglicans something of what episcopacy can be. The institution is not ours in fee simple; it is our trust, and when we hand it on to men of other traditions, they can find new riches in it.

The other outstanding essay in the six is the letter to a bishop on his consecration, written by Alan Ecclestone. No pious eulogy this, but a profound meditation on the implications of consecration to the episcopate in terms of the spiritual life. There is not much point in praising this essay further; one should read it. It is very significant that it is not written by one who has spent the years of his ministry among the outstanding luminaries of the Church of England, whether at Lambeth or Church House. I remember years ago reading the life of Father Dolling, and being immensely impressed with the drama of the occasion when Dolling was arraigned before Randall Davidson, then Bishop of Winchester, accused of ritualist practices. The contrast between the court-favourite Davidson, who had always belonged to the privileged class in the church, and the devoted,

determined Dolling, who had started with no advantages but had established an astonishingly effective ministry among the poorest and least privileged, could not have been more poignant. Well, this article comes from a Dolling, not a Davidson, and thus gains immensely in authenticity and force.

Those privileged figures! I suppose there may be fewer of them today than in Dolling's time. But they still exist. Having read Section V, I naturally went on to read Section VI, and there I found an article by Bishop Stephen Neill which seems to me to be sometimes relevant to our theme. He is writing about Anglicanism as such and he cannot deny himself a little congratulation on that admirable touch of illogicality about the English church which foreigners so unhappily fail to admire. I wonder what a Dyak Anglican bishop, or a Zulu Anglican bishop, or a Taiwanese Anglican bishop would make of this charming English lack of logic. Never mind! The dear fellows will soon learn all about it when they come to Lambeth. Indeed, according to Bishop Neill, 'the educational value of the Conference can hardly be over-estimated'. But he is careful to make it clear as well that 'The colonial boys, who are holding the fort in such areas as the Arctic and South-West Brazil and Sabah feel the need of it [Lambeth] more than the Bishops of Chester, and Rochester, and Winchester, and Worcester.' (p 278) He writes with his tongue in his cheek, but the appalling fact is that this statement is very largely true if taken literally. The relationship of the Church of England to the rest of the Anglican Communion is like that of the Unmoved Mover in Aristotle to the human race: they need him, but he has no need whatever of them. Indeed, he is unaware that they exist. And yet, as I hope to suggest later, it is the Church of England that should come as the learner to Lambeth as far as episcopacy is concerned.

I noted three deficiencies in this discussion on episcopacy. I will list them in what I regard as the order of increasing importance. First, there should have been an article of the role of the bishop's wife. The bishop's wife is a lady who has had scant justice done to her. She began in deep obscurity, not to say obloquy. Right up to the nineteenth century she had no official recognition and tended to be put at the end of the queue on official occasions. Then came Trollope with his immortal Mrs Proudie – and that is about all the outside world knows about bishops' wives. It is time that we acknowledged them, appreciated them, gave them a place in our thinking. After all, this is the one most obvious aspect in which our concept of the episcopate differs from that of the rest of catholic Christianity. Instead of being slightly ashamed of them, we should insist that they are an important part of our understanding of the ministry. We are more primitive here than the rest of the catholic tradition. I can think of many a bishop's wife (and family), not least east and south of Suez, who themselves constitute a splendid testimony to the efficacy of the bishop's office.

Secondly, nobody in this group of six writers offers a theology of the episcopate. It is true that Professor Macquarrie writes very much to the point on the subject of the bishop and the theologians, Fr John Coventry

SJ with great reasonableness and understanding on the bishop as guardian of the faith, and Bishop Rayner very clearly and well on consecration as a sacrament. But that is not what I mean by a theology of the episcopate. What is the connection between episcopacy and the gospel? How is the bishop related to the ordained ministry as a whole? And how is the ordained ministry related to the church as a whole? These are the sort of questions I have in mind. It is true indeed that these questions do make their appearance at various points in Section V: Henry Chadwick raises some of them in his first essay on 'Episcopacy in the New Testament and Early Church'. And it is also true that this is not a very propitious time for demanding a theology of anything. Forty years ago, perhaps, we would have been offered a full and detailed theology of episcopacy by some disciple of Charles Gore, most of which would appear hopelessly out-dated today. If we cannot, as it seems, agree on a Christology, how can we expect to agree on a theology of ministry? But the very fact of the melting of our party divisions today ought to enable us to approach the theology of the ministry in a more relaxed way, and hence also the theology of episcopacy. I think the effort might have been made even if the result had only been a description of varying views. After all, a recent report on doctrine in the Church of England proved to be exactly that.

Thirdly, we should be paying far more attention to the Roman Catholic Church. This is a deficiency which runs all through the book, but is at its most glaring in Section V. At the last Lambeth Conference in 1968, the impact of Vatican II had not fully made itself felt. It is now fifteen years since that great Council and we should be able to assess the immense significance of what is happening. Rome's reorientation means the reorientation of every other part of the western church. I have no patience with those evangelicals who are always warning us of the immense and difficult questions which still separate us from the Roman Catholic Church. Most of them simply have not done their homework in the sense that they have not read the most important Roman Catholic theologians today (these theologians are mostly German or French, and there is a residual xenophobia in many Church of England breasts still). And I don't only mean Hans Küng: I mean Karl Rahner, Schillebeecqx, Kasper of Tübingen, and a host of others. We all now speak the same language, as we did not as recently as twenty years ago.

But episcopacy is the very point where we and Roman Catholics ought to be in closest consultation today. We share it with them. (It is true that we also share it with the Orthodox, but there are many reasons why we are much farther away from the Orthodox as far as concerns episcopacy.) We are both the heirs of the Middle Ages here, and what is more, the episcopal system in the Church of England has never been reformed in the way its doctrine and liturgy was (as is made clear in G. V. Bennett's essay). We inherit many of the same medieval defects. Our bishops (in England at least) have inherited the same burden of being regarded as pseudo-medieval figures. I suspect that many bishops in the Roman Catholic Church in the

West are undergoing something of a crisis of identity at the moment. Born in an age when a bishop expected and received unquestioning obedience from clergy and laity alike, they find themselves increasingly challenged, expected to explain their action, obliged to relate what they are doing to the Bible, to modern thought and to what the general public imagines is reasonable belief. I know this is happening in the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. There, unfortunately, historic divisions are so strong that the RC bishops would not dream of taking counsel with their Anglican counterparts, even in those parts of the country where such counterparts are to be found. What a pity, then, that this pre-Lambeth document did not persuade some Roman Catholic bishop to write an essay in which he freely set out his problems and sought to find out whether Anglican bishops could throw any light on them from their experience! The trouble is no doubt that these islands are not the most suitable place in which such mutual consultation could be fruitful. Historically conditioned attitudes would make it very difficult. But there are other areas of the world where the situation is very different. There are places in India and Africa where Anglican (or United Church) and Roman Catholic bishops do cooperate and do consult together. It is, I fear, a sign of the much too much England-centred stance of the Anglican Communion that no one apparently thought of seeking for guidance and illumination from those areas of the church.

This leads on to another criticism of this section on episcopacy: all the essays are written by Anglo-Saxons. I wish we could have had some written by bishops of other races and nationalities. After all, we do not lack variety in the Anglican Communion. How I would have liked something from Bishop Richardson, the patriarch of the Nicobar Islands! Or from Dehqani Tafti, the gifted Anglican bishop in Iran. Equally interesting would have been a contribution from Lebombo diocese, now under a Marxist regime. There are Karen bishops and Nubian bishops and Ibo bishops. What a symposium could have been arranged! Of course it would have taken long preparation, careful research, a labour of translation; but it could have been supremely worth while. It would also have made Section V a great deal more lively and interesting. It suffers from a surplus of generalization and a shortage of illustration from life. Let us hope that the report which will follow the Conference will make amends in this respect.

Episcopacy in England

During my thirty-seven years in the ministry I have been able to observe the working of episcopacy in at least four different churches. I was ordained in the Church of Ireland and, although I have only spent six years in the ministry in Ireland, I have always kept closely in touch with my home church. I spent twelve years in the Church of South India (CSI), during which I served in two different dioceses, Dornakal and Mysore. The rest of the time I have spent as a licensed clergyman in the Church of England.

But I have also spent some weeks in Eastern Nigeria, where I was in a good position to observe the working of the Anglican Church, and I have had occasional glimpses of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, notably Lesotho and Swaziland. So when I proceed to draw conclusions about the working of episcopacy, I am not without experience on which to draw.

This experience has driven one conclusion home to me with inescapable force: as far as the operation of episcopacy is concerned the weakest of all these churches is the Church of England. I will not go so far as to say that the episcopal system does not work in the Church of England. But when it comes to most of the qualities which we are entitled to expect from episcopacy, the system in England in comparison with any of the other countries I have known is like a candle compared to an arc-lamp. A bishop should be a spiritual father, well known to all his clergy, at least recognized by most of the faithful, closely in touch with what is happening in his parishes, easily accessible to his clergy at any time, a teacher, a local man in the sense that his activities are mostly confined to an area capable of being well-known by one man, not an awe-inspiring, prelatical or remote figure. In the Church of England today the vast majority of diocesan bishops have no desire to be remote, awe-inspiring, or prelatical, but the actual structures of the church compel them to appear to be just that. Burdened with dioceses far beyond the capacity of any man to oversee effectively, they seem to be faced with an agonizing dilemma: either attempt to be closely in touch with all the diocese and thereby work yourself to death in a few years, or become a long-range figure and delegate a large part of the functions that properly belong to the bishop. I will not quickly forget the bitterness in the voice of a clergyman whom I met not long ago. He had the task of mediating between the diocesan and a number of his clergy, handpicked for various reasons. It was meant to be an intimate, searching conference. It proved a complete flop: the diocesan never succeeded in getting on anything like intimate terms with the clergy he was meeting. They succeeded (and most of them desired exactly this) in keeping him at arm's length. This was not the fault of the diocesan: he just could not know all his clergy sufficiently intimately to have anything like a fruitful conference with them.

I have felt this particularly acutely coming from South India. I always knew my diocesan well in India. This does not mean that I did not respect him. On the contrary, he could and did tell me when I went wrong or did something foolish. One had direct access to him at all times. He was a friend. The contrast with what I encountered when I took up a job within the confines of the Church of England was chilling. I have hardly ever seen my diocesan; once or twice a year, that is all. This is not (repeat not) the fault of the diocesan. I have known two of them in fact, both men of genuine humility, both anxious to show the utmost friendliness and appreciation. But they were too remote physically for me to hope for anything but the most occasional contact. They had to operate through chaplains, archdeacons and committees. I have lived fifteen years in the

same parish and have never yet seen my diocesan officiate in my parish church.

'Ah! But you have had a suffragan bishop.' True, I have certainly known them as friends, have seen them quite often, have even occasionally witnessed their presence in my parish church. If the suffragan were a diocesan, I would have little or no complaint. But he isn't. He does not have some of the most important features which I require in a bishop: in the first place, he does not have a see. I was present at the consecration of the present Bishop of Hull (of whom hereafter) and I listened carefully while the Queen's mandate was being read. Her Majesty made it perfectly clear that she had chosen the title of Hull purely as a matter of convenience. She might just as well have directed the Archbishop to consecrate him as Bishop of Bugthorpe. There is no see of Hull, no cathedral of Hull, and the bishop has no real jurisdiction in Hull. The jurisdiction belongs to the Archbishop of York. A suffragan bishop is better than no bishop at all but he is not a complete bishop, and I utterly deplore and abominate our English practice of proliferating suffragans. It is a process by which the church is being subjected to acute bureaucratization. I do not demand bishops of brilliant intellect. Many of the bishops of the Church of Ireland whom I have known have been anything but men of brilliant intellect. But they have been real bishops. Bishop McNeice, who ordained me in 1941, was no Mandell Creighton (though he was the father of the distinguished poet). But in all things essential he was much more of a father-in-God than Mandell Creighton was ever able to be.

I have a horrid fear that what we are commending to our Free Church friends is the English system of episcopacy. Let me implore them firmly to refuse to accept it. It is ironical that the most literate, vocal and learned defenders of episcopacy in the Anglican Communion have been members of a church which manages episcopacy so badly. Members of the Church of England who have never known anything else are blissfully unaware of this. English clergy do not expect to be on a really friendly footing with their diocesan; some of them would be appalled at the thought. English diocesans do not go to Lambeth Conferences expecting to sit at the feet of Africans and Asians in the school of episcopacy, whatever else they expect to learn from them.

Of course almost none of this complaint of mine appears in the pre-Lambeth book. I suppose it would be invidious, almost ungrateful, if some Anglican from outside the Church of England were to say to that church: 'Put your house in order'. I think nothing but disastrously shrinking numbers will ever bring about a situation in which a diocesan bishop in the Church of England will be able to exercise a personal, spiritual oversight of his diocese. That is what has happened in Ireland and Wales. It is a direct result of the historical failure of the Anglican establishment in those countries. There is a certain melancholy interest in speculating whether the same process is not taking place in England. If it is, we shall at least have the benefit of knowing real bishops at last.

Successful episcopacy

For episcopacy to work well the bishop must be able to say 'No'. This may seem a negative and repressive feature, but it is surprising how essential it is. I remember many years ago returning for a day or so to a diocese in India where I had been working. I asked a friend who was still serving there what the new bishop (an Indian) was like; he had been appointed since I left. 'He is excellent,' my friend replied; 'The other day I went to see him about some plan I had in connection with the school, and he said quite definitely, "No".' Saying 'No' and telling people when they have made a mistake is not an enjoyable experience for most people. The sort of leader who likes to be popular does not like to have to do this sort of thing. Too often he shirks it or delegates it. On one occasion I was the 'fall guy' in that sort of a situation. A certain missionary had got hopelessly at odds with the local church. It was obvious that he would have to go. But the bishop (a different one, of course, to the man I have just referred to) did not fancy the task of telling him so. He deputed me to do it. I remember at the time thinking that this was unfair: he who receives the primacy of honour ought not to shirk the unpleasant tasks which this primacy inevitably brings with it. Of course there is the type of man that positively enjoys saying 'No', and in other historical circumstances such a man might well attain the episcopate. But modern, more democratic, processes of election make it unlikely that such a man will become a bishop today. A far more eligible type is the man who is popular with everyone, who does not like hurting anybody's feelings. His temptation is to avoid ever saying 'No'. If he gives way too much to this temptation he ends by pleasing no one.

The ideal bishop is also supposed to be a teacher. The essayists in Section V have given some attention to this, especially Professor Macquarrie and Fr Coventry. They are both well aware of the difficulties which face a modern bishop in this part of his duty. Bible study and theology have become highly professionalized and often extremely technical. Only an ignoramus will lightly make sweeping judgements about the burning questions which are of such importance to Christian faith today: the question of Christology, for instance, or the relation of theology to philosophy. On the other hand, the bishop can hardly afford to say nothing about these questions. He is supposed to know what sort of doctrine his clergy preach. I do not see how he can possibly hope to do this in the English situation: he hardly ever hears the average parish priest preaching, and certainly the average parish priest does not expect his bishop to take any interest in the content of his sermons. It would be an advantage if more diocesans were sufficiently well qualified in academic theology to be able to offer their clergy a stimulating set of lectures once every three years or so, but it would be unreasonable to expect every diocesan to be able to do this. What we can expect is that the bishop should be abreast of what is going on and be able to make a reasonable interpretation of it. In

other words, the bishop as teacher nowadays means the bishop as interpreter. I do not believe that in the Church of England we take this part of the bishop's duties very seriously. But if it is ignored it can bring disastrous consequences.

I saw an example of this when I was in America in 1972. I was attending a vast conference in Los Angeles. Nearly every academic religious organization in the USA was represented. They all held meetings at various times during the three days that the conference lasted. Out of curiosity I decided to attend the meetings of the Roman Catholic organizations. To my amazement I found that the prevailing ethos in all of them was one of total doctrinal unorthodoxy. I shall never forget my shock when a certain Father Something, from Notre Dame College Somewhere, began to speak. After five minutes it dawned on me that his viewpoint was not Catholic, not Protestant, not even Christian—somewhere in the area of Zen Buddhism seemed to be his religious habitat. At another meeting a young priest gave a paper on Christology. It was an intelligent paper, I thought; not orthodox of course, in the sense that he rejected the Chalcedonian solution of the problem. But the moment he finished the air was filled with protests, not at his unorthodoxy, but at his conservative, reactionary approach to the question. I had been used to the very conservative Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, and I wondered what had happened.

I was enlightened later on by one or two friends who knew the situation. The trouble is, they said, that the RC bishops in the USA were not theologians. They knew the correct answers from the text book all right; but bishops were expected to be administrators, money-raisers, promotional figures: not thinkers. Intellectual curiosity was not a characteristic likely to ensure rapid access to the bench. Consequently, when the theological ferment precipitated by Vatican II burst upon the RC Church in America, the bishops were taken by surprise. They had no idea whatever why everyone seemed to be going so unorthodox. They did not even see that there were any problems, far less why the old answers would not serve. They were so totally out of touch that they could not even issue excommunications for heresy. They didn't know where to begin. The men who should have been interpreters were dumb. This was the awful nemesis which can follow theological ignorance among the bishops.

But we are thinking of episcopacy, not just of the bishop; and I propose now to outline seven different situations that I have encountered during the last thirty years, in each of which the value of episcopacy has been illustrated. This is by way of showing how it should and can work effectively and the circumstances in which it functions best. I think this is a better way of proceeding than an abstract discussion of the qualities necessary for successful episcopacy.

a) Not very long after I went out to India, but long enough for me to have learned the vernacular adequately, I was present at a crucial meeting between an Indian bishop of CSI and some of the Anglican clergy in his area. The meeting concerned an exacerbated dispute which had originally

been sparked off by the unexpected action of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) a few months before union in 1947, whereby they decided that they could not continue to support their work in South India if the Christians concerned entered CSI. Bishop Sumitra, the CSI bishop in that area, was meeting the Anglican clergy (recently cut off by SPG) to help them to make up their minds whether to continue in CSI with very uncertain financial prospects, or to return to the continuing Telugu Church which SPG's action had called into existence and in which there would be a certainty of a salary for the clergy. Sumitra himself came from the Congregationalist tradition and had only been a bishop for two or three years. The clergy were uncertain, suspicious, looking for someone to order them to take one course or another. I had half expected Sumitra to put strong pressure on them to stay in CSI, or I thought he might declare that, not being an Anglican, he washed his hands of them altogether. He did neither. He simply put the issues before them as clearly as he could and then he said: 'You must make up your own minds before God. It is a matter of conscience. I have no right to try to influence you one way or the other.' I can remember them saying: 'Honourable Father, you tell us what we must do and we'll do it', and his answering: 'No, you must make up your own minds as responsible Christians.' It dawned on me that here was something like a new dimension in episcopacy, at least as we had known it in India. The bishop was not the man who orders you about; he is the man who enables you to make up your own mind before God.

b) The scene is Dornakal in 1948. The country round about is in a condition of chaos, since the Nizam of Hyderabad's forces have just abandoned the area, and the forces of the recently established Dominion (now Republic) of India have not yet reached us. Consequently there is no law and order. We have brought the boys and girls from the boarding school into the cathedral for safety at night, and all sorts of people have taken refuge in the bishop's large bungalow, including the Brahmin station-master and the RC nuns from the convent the other side of the railway. The bishop (an Irishman, I am glad to say) has become the natural leader of the community in Dornakal. In the middle of the night a message comes that the mob from the town is about to cross the railway and invade the Christian compound in order to loot. The bishop got up with the utmost alacrity, even cheerfulness, and proceeded in his pyjamas to the gate at the compound, ready to receive the mob. They did not arrive, the rumour proved false; but had they come he would have received them, and probably turned them back too. He was the very epitome of Christian courage and leadership.

c) A woman with definite powers of healing, a convert from Hinduism, came to the vicinity of Bangalore. She said that God had revealed to her a certain place in the forest on the road between Bangalore and Mysore where he should settle down and establish a centre of Christian healing. She was herself a Telugu, speaking virtually no other language, but the area in which she chose to settle was Kannada speaking. The bishop was

informed of the situation by local clergy and at the same time received a request that someone who spoke Telugu should go out and celebrate the eucharist for her and her family. The bishop was determined that she should not fall into the hands of people who might exploit her healing powers in a dangerous way, since, though very intelligent and genuinely Christian, she was not very highly educated. He asked me to come, as I spoke Telugu. Out we went, eighteen miles along the road from Bangalore to Mysore, till we found her house in the forest by the wayside. I met her and heard her whole story, which I will not relate. Then we had the eucharist on the verandah of her house, seated on the floor, herself and her family, the bishop and myself. I celebrated in Telugu. She was greatly pleased to meet the bishop, and I went away feeling convinced that the church had established the right relationship with someone who was potentially a great influence for good. Here, I think, is a good example of the bishop representing the local church in the right way.

My last four examples do not come from India and are therefore less colourful and dramatic. But I quote them because I believe they illustrate the right use of episcopacy as well as the first three do:

d) Two years ago I visited Eastern Nigeria for the second time. I spent four weeks teaching in Nsukka University, and I had the opportunity to meet three of the Ibo Anglican bishops, and also to discuss the church situation with several Anglican clergy. It was only a very few years after the end of the traumatic civil war, in which the Ibos had made an attempt to establish an independent East African state, and had been crushed after a bitter two-year campaign. I wondered what sort of an Ibo church I would meet. Would it be like the condition of the southern states after the civil war in America a hundred years ago? I was deeply impressed by what I found. The Ibo Anglican Church had been prepared for total indigenous leadership before the civil war. The conquest of Ibo territory by the troops of the central government carried with it the expulsion of all missionaries who were in the area. The necessary leaders from among the Ibos themselves were there already. The church I found was managing its own affairs, appointing its own bishops, planning forward moves, supporting itself financially. There was wise and firm leadership from the Ibo bishops. I got the impression of a church that looked forward confidently to the future. The contrast with both Methodist and Presbyterian Churches was painful. Both of these churches were riven by divisions, partly paralysed by squabbles over leadership. I have no doubt that these two churches will ultimately recover themselves, but I could not avoid the conclusion that it was the leadership of the indigenous bishops that had saved our church in an emergency situation. Episcopal leadership rightly used is the best remedy for such conditions. One Presbyterian missionary said to me: 'What our church needs is bishops.'

e) This is a small incident that could be paralleled in many other Anglican churches, but it struck me because I never benefited myself from what I regard as proper episcopal care in this respect. In the area

where I work, we have a young Anglican priest from a mid-western diocese in Canada who is spending a couple of years in a parish in England in order to broaden his experience. He has got good degrees and should be something of an intellectual leader in his own area when he returns. Before he left, his bishop had a long interview with him and his wife, and promised them a suitable post when they came back. Very simple and obvious, perhaps, but it could not happen in the Church of Ireland because of their inflexible system of appointments; and I doubt if it could easily happen in the Church of England to a man who was not a member of the in-group—I mean a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge. I think the Canadian bishop was right and that this is one aspect of a bishop's job.

f) I met the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin the other day; an old friend, as we were at College together and have kept in touch in between. He told me that he had recently spent an entire day in the school in a small town on the coast in the southern part of his diocese. (You must know that almost all primary schools in the Republic of Ireland are denominational; this would be an Anglican school.) He taught each class, he got to know the children, he had time to talk with the teachers. I thought that splendid. No doubt it was possible only because he had relatively small numbers to look after; but Dublin is by far the most populous Anglican diocese in the Republic. This is something like the personal touch that should be possible for a bishop. No doubt an English bishop could do it in theory, but can they spare the time?

g) We run a post-graduate seminar in the theology department in the University of Hull on the subject of 'The Relation of the Old Testament to the New'. It meets once a term and someone reads a paper of a pretty high academic standard. The remarkable phenomenon to which I want to draw your attention is this: the last meeting of the summer was attended by the new Bishop of Hull (he whose consecration I was present at), and he is to give the paper at the next one. I have known the last three Bishops of Hull, all men of pastoral devotion and all possessing a high sense of duty, but none of them would have dreamed of attending a seminar in academic theology, far less of contributing to it. And I do not think we should say merely that this Bishop of Hull *happens* to be interested in theology in the way that another one might happen to be interested in stamp-collecting. A bishop *ought* to be interested in theology and to be prepared to make a place for it in his timetable.

I think this sufficiently outlines what I believe are some of the ways in which episcopal ministry ought to work and can work. To be fair, I suppose I ought to give an equal number of incidents in which episcopal ministry patently did *not* work. I could do so quite easily: I think of the (suffragan) bishop who interviewed me when I first applied to SPG in 1943 to go to teach in a theological college overseas. I now realize that he had no notion whatever of what service overseas meant spiritually or culturally and could only talk about purely domestic matters. I think of the letter I received from an English diocesan when, on my return after twelve years in India, I

applied (now a CMS missionary) for a parish in his diocese: 'I have no vacancy at present for an evangelical.' Proud and contemptuous prelate, he thought of people as categories, not persons! I think of a certain bishop I once encountered who had a unique capacity for reducing all public occasions, including public worship, to the level of low comedy. But I need not go any further. Suffice it to say that bad episcopal ministry is worse, much worse, than no episcopal ministry at all.

Anglican episcopacy

One is led to ask at the end: Is there a specifically Anglican type of episcopal ministry? This is not the same thing as asking: Is there an Anglican doctrine of episcopacy? I don't think there is, but there might be an Anglican style of episcopacy.

Perhaps one should look first in the Book of Common Prayer. Certainly in the order for the consecration of a bishop some marked characteristics do emerge. The service is steeped in the atmosphere of the Pastoral Epistles (as are the other two ordination services). This is no doubt a Calvinistic feature. The Reformers believed that the New Testament did provide something like a blueprint for the ministry. The Pastoral Epistles seemed at times to be legislating for the Pauline churches, and one could hardly expect an earlier version of ministry than that. The result is a very pietistic, almost moralistic, approach to the ministry. The Pastoral Epistles, we now know, give us a picture of the church at the turn of the century rather than in Paul's day, and we would not look in them for any deep theological insights into the nature of ministry. But they are early enough to give us a model of the church leader which is neither as liturgically nor as sacramentally orientated as it would have been a hundred years later. This is in line with the changed attitude towards the priesthood which the Reformation brought about in the Church of England; a re-orientation round the pastoral function rather than an almost exclusive emphasis on the eucharistic function such as the medieval church exhibited. As such the change was right and necessary, but it need not have been expressed so strongly in the language and ethos of the Pastorals.

There was some medieval carry-over. I wonder whether the reference to the wolf in the exhortation to the bishop after his consecration may not be an example of this: 'Be to the flock of Christ a shepherd, not a wolf; feed them, devour them not.' This is not simply a reference to the Good Shepherd discourse in John 10. In that passage the opposite of the true shepherd is not the wolf, but the hireling. The wolf is Satan. Medieval bishops were in a position to behave to their dioceses like wolves; a mercenary bishop could loot his diocese, and this was to some extent possible for the English bishop till well into the nineteenth century. The famous Dean Hook, in his classical work in the history of the archbishops of Canterbury (1860) seriously discusses how far a bishop is under obligation to provide jobs for his relatives from among those in his gift. But the

warning against being a wolf is an anachronism today. The modern bishop may be a fox, a sheep, or an ass, but he cannot be a wolf. Modern reorganization has seen to that.

It has sometimes been claimed that Anglicans hold a Cyprianic doctrine of episcopacy, since they repudiate the universal jurisdiction of the Pope, and regard rule over the church as lying in the hands of the episcopate as a corporate body. There may be a very general resemblance here, in the sense that Anglicans do appeal to the church of the first few centuries, and that was a period in which the claims of the Pope were much less universal and authoritarian than they became subsequently. But in actual historical fact it would be absurd to depict the English bench between Elizabeth I and Victoria as a model of Cyprianic episcopocracy, since in fact during that period the bench was very far indeed from bearing independent rule over the church. It was tightly subordinated to the crown in a way quite inconsistent with Cyprian's ideal. Only for a period of about a hundred years from 1850 till 1950 was the parallel with Cyprian's ideal of the episcopate at all close, the period during which the bishops were considerably freer *vis-à-vis* the state and were not yet being asked to share their rule to any great extent with clergy and laity. It is no coincidence that this period saw the phenomenon of an Archbishop of Canterbury (Benson) who was an ardent admirer of Cyprian and found time while he was archbishop to write a magisterial work about him.

Though I do not think it is accurate to say that there is a definitely recognizable Anglican form of episcopacy, it is perfectly reasonable to claim that between the Reformation and the present-day Anglican episcopacy has played an essential and salutary part in the orthogenesis of the whole church. Anglicans have shown that catholic episcopacy in the West does not necessarily depend on the papacy and can function on almost a global scale without the papacy. This is not to say that we would all be very much better off without the papacy. Many thoughtful Anglicans have held ever since the Reformation that the Bishop of Rome as patriarch of the West, *primus inter pares,* holding a primacy of honour, could be a desirable and strengthening element in the church as a whole. It may be indeed that, thanks to the process inaugurated by Vatican II, the period during which Anglicans alone upheld the ideal of pure episcopacy is coming to an end. We hear talk of 'collegiality' in the Roman Catholic Church, though it seems to be mostly talk as yet. It is possible that, after five hundred and fifty years, we are entering something like a second conciliar period in the history of the western church. It seems very likely indeed that the next Pope and his immediate successors will present a much less autocratic image to the world. There will be more variety within local and national Roman Catholic churches. Latinization as an ideal has collapsed. Roman Catholic bishops are beginning to accustom themselves to consulting clergy and laity before acting or speaking. Their methods are beginning to be less coercive and more persuasive. This is surely a time in which the operation of the Anglican episcopate may be a model and an

encouragement to some of our Roman Catholic friends.

Bishop Stephen Neill, in his essay in Section VI, at one point tries to pin-point the unity which holds Anglicans together. He claims that former ties of unity, such as the Book of Common Prayer or adherence to the Thirty-nine Articles, no longer hold today. He voices some alarm lest questions such as the ordination of women may prove too much for our unity. He concludes that God still has work for us to do as Anglicans. I am sure that God has work for us to do, that we should be proud of being Anglicans today; but I am much less sure that our best contribution will be made in the future by our continuing to stress our Anglicanism. I believe that in the last resort God has called us, though a strange and not always creditable historical process, to live in such a way as to make it clear to the rest of the Christian world that it is not only possible but extremely desirable to exist in the church just as catholic Christians and no more —not Protestant or Evangelical Catholics, not Anglo-Catholics, not Roman Catholics, not even Anglican Catholics, but just Catholics. I would unhesitatingly apply to Anglicanism as a whole the motto of the Irish School of Ecumenics, *floreat ut pereat!*

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